

Challenging Homosexual Masculinity: A Test of the Masculine Overcompensation Hypothesis in Gay Men

Brodie J. Lewis, Cassandra Hesse, Briana Cook, Kaylee Skoda, & Cory L. Pedersen



Introduction

- ❑ Masculine overcompensation is a phenomenon that occurs when a male exhibits hypermasculine characteristics in response to threats to his masculinity (Willer, Rogalin, Conlon, & Wojonowicz, 2013)
- ❑ Heterosexual males have been found to respond to gender identity threats with the following:
 - Higher levels of stereotypically masculine characteristics
 - Antisocial behaviour
- ❑ Homosexual males tend to exhibit more feminine characteristics:
 - Targets of bullying
 - Maltreatment

Rationale

- ❑ To determine the extent to which gay males exhibit the masculine overcompensation compared to heterosexual males.
- ❑ To replicate the results of Willer et al. (2013) with the following changes:
 - A larger, more globally representative sample
 - Additional questions regarding rape myths
 - Additional questions regarding attitudes towards erotica

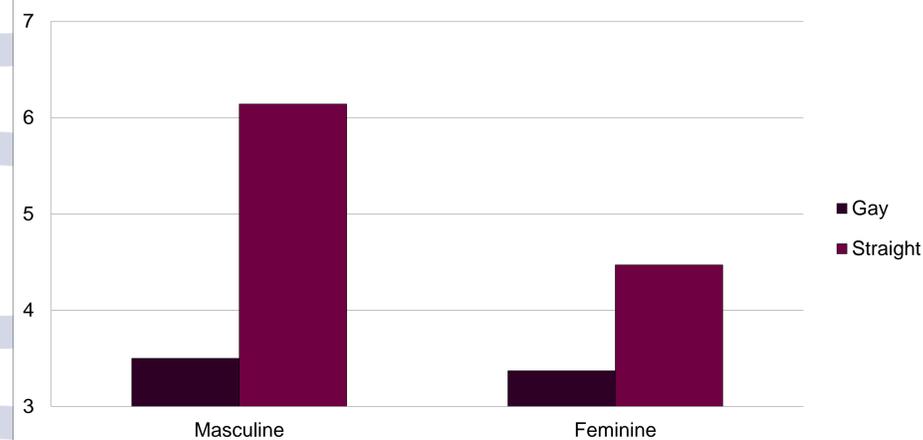
Methods

- ❑ **Participants:**
 - Final sample of 867 participants (661 gay men)
 - Mean age = 25.15 years ($SD = 7.61$ years)
- ❑ **Procedure:**
 - Participants recruitment: research participant pool at a large, Western Canadian university, community posters, online forums (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Reddit)
 - Participants directed to an online survey site (www.fluidsurveys.ca) where an anonymous survey could be accessed.
 - All participants given randomly generated feedback identifying them as either "masculine" or "feminine"
- ❑ **Measures:**
 - Demographics
 - Political Views Survey (Willer et al., 2013)
 - Attitudes toward Erotica Questionnaire (ATEQ; Lottes, Weinberg, & Weller, 1993)
 - Rape Supportive Attitudes Scale (RSAS; Lottes, 1991)

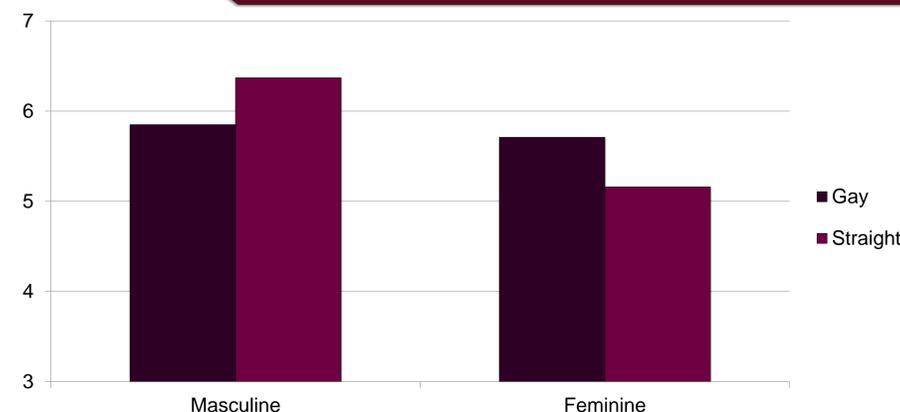
Results Summary

- ❑ Significant main effects of:
 - Gender self-expression and sexual orientation on the ATEQ (harmful effects composite)
 - Sexual orientation on the ATEQ (restriction composite)
 - Gender self-expression and sexual orientation on the RSAS (victim callousness)
- ❑ Significant interactions of:
 - Gender self-expression X sexual orientation on the Support for War composite
 - Gender self-expression X sexual orientation interaction on the Negative Attitudes toward Homosexuality composite

Support for War



Negative Attitudes Toward Gays



Discussion

- ❑ False gender expression feedback did not influence either gay or straight participants' attitudes toward war, gays, pornography, or rape myth
- ❑ Possible explanations for a lack of masculine overcompensation as follows:
 - Threats issued through an online survey may not be seen as valid as those issued in face-to-face interactions
 - Strength of IV in general → perhaps the terms "moderate masculinity" and "moderate femininity" were not strong enough challenges to masculinity
 - A more global sample may not replicate masculine overcompensation → this phenomenon may be unique to Americans
- ❑ Further research is needed to understand whether alternative manipulations explain the attitudes of gay/straight participants to controversial topics like pornography, rape, homosexuality, and war.

References

- Blakemore, J. E. O. (2003). Children's beliefs about violating gender norms: Boys shouldn't look like girls, and girls shouldn't act like boys. *Sex Roles, 48*, 411–419.
- Bosson, J. K., Vandello, J. A., Burnaford, R. M., Weaver, J. R., & Wasti, S. A. (2009). Precarious manhood and displays of physical aggression. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 35*, 623–634.
- Boyden, T., Carroll, J. S., & Maier, R. A. (1984). Similarity and attraction in homosexual males: The effects of age and masculinity-femininity. *Sex Roles, 10*, 939–948.
- Corliss, H. L., Cochran, S. D., & Mays, V. M. (2002). Reports of parental maltreatment during childhood in a United States population-based survey of homosexual, bisexual, and heterosexual adults. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 26*(11), 1165–1178.
- Courtenay, W. H. (2000a). Behavioral factors associated with disease, injury, and death among men: Evidence and implications for prevention. *Journal of Men's Studies, 9*(1), 81–142.
- Courtenay, W. H. (2000b). Engendering health: A social constructionist examination of men's health benefits and behaviors. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity, 1*(1), 4–15.
- Funk, L. C., & Werhun, C. D. (2011). "You're such a girl!" The psychological drain of the gender-role harassment of men. *Sex Roles, 65*, 13–22.
- Glick, P., Gangl, C., Gibb, S., Klumpner, S., & Weinberg, E. (2007). Defensive reactions to masculinity threat: More negative affect toward effeminate (but not masculine) gay men. *Sex Roles, 57*, 55–59.