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Gay Men's Experiences of Heterophobia: A Mixed-Methods Investigation

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Gay Men’s Experiences of Heterophobia: A Mixed-Methods Investigation

by

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Dedication

For my parents, John and Gail Chester, who have endlessly supported my endeavors.

Thank you for your unwavering love and encouragement. I love you.

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Gay Men's Experiences of Heterophobia: A Mixed-Methods Investigation

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Heterophobia, or gay men's fear or avoidance of straight men, is an overlooked phenomenon that may contribute to gay men's social isolation and disconnectedness (Haldeman, 2006; Provence, Parent, Rochlen, & Chester, 2018). The present study explored heterophobia in two distinct phases. Phase one employed structural equation modeling to examine associations between heterophobia and constructs relevant to gay men's experiences of minority stress in a sample of 356 self-identified gay men. Variables included in the model were age, race, education, developmental experiences of rejection from straight men, degree of outness, number of straight male friends, internalized homonegativity, gay-related rejection sensitivity, conformity to masculine norms, experiences of heterosexist harassment and discrimination, gay group identity, and perceived social support. Phase two of my study used qualitative methodologies to interview 11 gay men who scored highly on a heterophobia measure in phase one. My findings are exploratory in nature and contribute to an emerging body of empirical research that` examines gay men's concerns, fear, or avoidance of straight men. Findings are discussed in context of existing theory and research on heterophobia.

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Introduction

A growing body of literature reveals significant mental health disparities among sexual minority individuals compared to their sexual majority counterparts (Bruce, Harper, & Bauermeister, 2015; Botswick, Boyd, Hughes, & McCabe, 2010; Lewis, 2009; Meyer, 2003, 2007). For example, lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people are at greater risk for alcohol and illicit drug use, anxiety, and depression than heterosexual people (Bostwick et al., 2010; Cochran, 2001; Cochran & Mays, 2009; King et al., 2008; Lewis, 2009; Silenzio, Pena, Duberstein, Cerel, & Knox, 2007). Other research has found a higher prevalence of body image and eating disorders among some sexual minorities (Kaminski, Chapman, Haynes, & Own, 2005). Finally, LGB individuals are at increased risk for suicidal ideation and suicide attempts (Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006; Lewis, 2009; Silenzio et al., 2007).

In considering these negative mental health outcomes, gay men may be particularly vulnerable. Indeed, gay men are more likely to experience depression and anxiety than heterosexual men (Lewis, 2009) and sexual minority women (Bostwick et al., 2010). A meta-analysis of 12 national-level studies found that gay men's rates for depression are 1.5 to 3.6 times higher than heterosexual men; rates for anxiety are 1.3 to 2.6 times higher than heterosexual men (Lewis, 2009). Gay men are also more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to both ideate and attempt suicide (Lewis, 2009; Silenzio et al., 2007). Moreover, gay men are more likely to engage in risky health behaviors relative to heterosexual men, such as sexual compulsivity (Grov, Parsons, & Bimbi, 2010) and illicit drug use (Cochran, Ackerman, Mays, & Ross, 2004).

Central to understanding the precipitants of gay men's negative mental health outcomes has been the theoretically strong and frequently applied Minority Stress Model (Meyer, 2003). Meyer's model posits that sexual minorities face unique stressors due to their sexual identities that contribute to negative health outcomes. Specifically, there are two forms of stressor in this model: proximal (internal) stressors and distal (external) stressors. Proximal stressors include factors such as internalized heterosexism and rejection sensitivity. Distal stressors include factors such as victimization, microaggressions, and discrimination (Meyer, 2003). Extant literature demonstrates

that both internal and external stressors are associated with deleterious mental health outcomes (Brewster, Moradi, Deblaere, & Velez, 2013; Hatzenbuehler, McLaughlin, Keyes, & Hasin, 2010; Huebner & Davis, 2007; Lewis, Derlega, Clarke, & Kuang, 2006; Meyer, 2003; Mereish & Poteat, 2015; Mills et al., 2004; Newcomb & Mustanski, 2010). Researchers have also proposed that internal stressors (e.g., internalized heterosexism, rejection sensitivity) occur as a result of negative environmental events (Landolt, Bartholemew, Saffrey, Oram, & Perlman, 2004; Pachankis, Goldfried, & Ramrattan, 2008; Rivers, 2004).

In the minority stress framework, experiences of social isolation and loneliness are strong predictors of the negative mental health consequences that frequently confront gay men (Fenaughty & Harre, 2003; Hatzenbuehler, McLaughlin, & Xuan, 2012; Joiner et al., 2009; McAndrew & Warne, 2010; Paul et al., 2002; Westefeld, Maples, Buford & Taylor, 2001). Compared to straight men, gay men have lower self-esteem, are more fearful of negative social evaluation, and are more socially anxious (Pachankis & Goldfried, 2006). An adverse consequence of gay men's social anxiety is that it may interfere with the attainment of social support, which can be a strong buffer against stress (Pachankis & Goldfried, 2006). In fact, empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that strong social support positively impacts gay men's overall well-being and serves as an important protective factor (Fenaughty & Harré, 2003;, 2006; Munoz-Plaza, Quinn, & Rounds, 2002; Peterson & Bakeman Sattler, Wagner, & Christiansen, 2016).

While social support appears to be a key predictor of psychological well-being for gay men, friendships between men across sexual orientation appear to be uncommon (Barrett, 2013). Importantly, empirical and theoretical attempts to understand friendships between straight and gay men have typically done so using the concepts of homophobia or heterosexism (Barrett, 2013; Kimmel, 2000; Pascoe, 2005; Plummer, 1999). A dominant theory has emerged that heterosexual men's attitudes toward gay men create barriers toward the development and maintenance of friendships with gay men (Barrett, 2013; Hatzenbuehler et al., 2012; Herek, 2000). For instance, heterosexual men have significantly stronger homonegative attitudes toward gay men than other sexual-minorities (Herek, 2002; Kite & Whitley, 1996). Adherence to traditional masculinity and

gender norms has also been shown to be related to homonegative attitudes in heterosexual men (Keiller, 2010; Kite & Whitley, 1996; Levant, 2011). Indeed, heterosexual men's homonegative attitudes play an important role in gay men's social isolation by impeding friendships between gay and straight men.

While heterosexual men's homonegativity and heterosexism may impede cross-orientation friendship, another possible explanation exists relevant to gay men's perspectives and attitudes. More specifically, it may be that gay men avoid or withdraw from friendship with straight men due to their own negative attitudes about straight men (Haldeman, 2006; Provence, Rochlen, Chester, & Smith, 2014; Provence et al., 2018). The term *heterophobia* has been utilized to account for this phenomenon (Haldeman, 2006; Provence et al., 2018). This emerging construct and its implications on gay men's health and relationships are the core areas of inquiry for the present study.

Heterophobia is an alternative new construct hypothesized to be an internal stressor developed in gay men as a result of negative environmental events, congruent with the Minority Stress Model (Meyer, 2003; Provence et al., 2018). Heterophobia may contribute to gay men's overall stress and impact their lives in a number of ways and modalities. For example, Haldeman (2006) posited that heterophobia disrupts gay men's abilities to cultivate and maintain positive interpersonal relationships with straight men across various domains (e.g., family, work, school, peers). Heterophobia may even "contaminate" gay men's abilities to foster intimate relationships with other gay men. The possibility of heterophobia contaminating relationships with other gay men is particularly problematic, since having gay friends decreases social isolation and assists in the development of a positive sense of identity (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1991; Savin-Williams, 1994; Schneider & Witherspoon, 2000). Moreover, "it is with other men that gay men create the nuclei of [their] romantic and familial lives" (Haldeman, 2006, p. 309).

Although current literature has been instrumental in the conceptual understanding of heterophobia, there are no studies examining factors that contribute to heterophobia or how gay men explain the development or precursors to this concept. For example, Haldeman (2006) posited

that heterophobia would develop as a result of past experiences of prejudice, discrimination, and trauma from straight men (Haldeman, 2006; Provence et al., 2018). Indeed, it is reasonable to assume that gay men with negative past experiences with straight men are likely to develop heterophobic attitudes. However, no empirical research has been performed to examine or validate this theoretical claim. A significant barrier to research on heterophobia has been a lack of means to quantify it. However, researchers have recently turned their attention to the development of a scale to measure this important construct, fostering opportunity to examine it in greater depth.

Provence, Parent, Rochlen, and Chester (2018) introduced the first and only quantitative measure of heterophobia to date – the Heterophobia Scale (HS). The HS was developed and validated using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. Importantly, the scale is comprised of three subscales, as follows: Unease or Avoidance, Disconnectedness, and Expected Rejection. The development of this measure signifies a critically important step for the study and understanding of cross-orientation friendship between men. Research employing this measure is needed in order to deepen understanding of heterophobia, and its impact on gay men's mental health, social isolation, and friendships with straight men. My study aims to provide exploratory analysis of this newly emerging construct and measurement tool. As such, it represents a necessary and unique addition to an understudied aspect of gay men's social support.

Overall, current understanding of gay men's heterophobia stands to benefit from additional analysis. First, exploratory attention needs to be devoted to the relationship between heterophobia and constructs relevant to the Minority Stress framework (e.g., internalized heterosexism, rejection sensitivity, internalized homonegativity). Second, additional research is needed about how gay men describe their lived experiences of heterophobia. The current study is a mixed-method investigation of heterophobia that aims to fill these gaps in the literature.

The Present Study

The present study sought to explore gay men's experiences of heterophobia both quantitatively and qualitatively. First, I wanted to uncover relationships between variables of minority stress and heterophobia using the Heterophobia Scale. I also wanted to understand how

gay men, in their own words, described and understood their relationships with straight men. To achieve these goals, I recruited a number of gay men to participate in phase one, which included administering a series of self-report quantitative measures (reviewed in the next section). Next, I contacted phase one participants who scored above the midpoint of the Heterophobia Scale, indicating that they more strongly endorsed concerns and fears about straight men. These individuals were invited to participate in phase two of the study, which included qualitative interviews. Using this mixed-methods design, I aimed to answer the following three research questions:

1. What is the relationship between heterophobia and relevant variables regarding gay men's minority stress?
2. What are the central life experiences that contribute to the development of gay men's heterophobia?
3. How does heterophobia impact the lives of gay men?

Phase One: National Survey and Structural Equation Modeling

Phase one is dedicated to the first research question. As discussed, scant research currently exists on the associations between heterophobia and constructs relevant to gay men's experiences. In phase one, I seek to address this gap by exploring and elucidating these relationships. Specifically, structural equation modeling was utilized to explore the relationship between heterophobia and age, race, education, developmental experiences of rejection from straight men, number of straight male friends, degree of outness, internalized homonegativity, gay-related rejection sensitivity, conformity to masculine norms, experiences of heterosexist harassment and discrimination, gay group identity, and perceived social support. Methods employed and results from phase one are included below.

Participants

Following pilot testing, a large nationwide sample was recruited via a combination of methods, including email requests, professional listservs, and social media advertisements. Specifically, targeted Facebook advertisements were used to promote the study to men who identified romantic interest in other men. As an incentive to participation, recruits were entered into a raffle to earn four $100 Amazon gift certificates. Participants entered this raffle by submitting their e-mail address to the researchers, which was kept separate from the anonymously coded questionnaires. Three raffle winners were then chosen via random number generator.

The final sample included 356 self-identified gay men over the age of 18. Prior to analyses, data were collected from 548 self-identified gay men. After inspecting data, 182 cases were incomplete or did not begin answering survey questions after reading the consent. There was no clear pattern in missing responses, suggesting that missing items occurred at random. The 182 incomplete cases were deleted, leaving 366 participants. Due to a limited number of responses, participants were excluded from the final data set on the basis of race/ethnicity if they identified as American Indian or Alaska Native (3 cases), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (2 cases), or Other (5 cases). These 10 cases were deleted, leaving a final total of 356 participants.

In terms of age, 63.9% of participants were under 30 years old, 20.5% were between 30 and 39, 8.4% were between 40-49, 5.1% were between 50 and 59, and 2.2% were 60 and older. Participants were also asked to identify their highest educational level completed, with 11.8% completing high school, 2.8% with an associate's degree, 29.8% with some college, 27.2% receiving a bachelor's degree, 4.8% with some graduate school, and an additional 23.6% with a graduate degree. Finally, participants represented a broad range of geographic locations within the United States, with Texas (17.7%), Washington (6.5%), and California (5.9%) containing the highest percentages of participants.

Procedures

A survey was distributed to participants via Qualtrics, a survey-hosting website. First, participants read and acknowledged an Informed Consent document outlining potential risks and benefits of participation. Participants answered the question, "Do you self-identify as a gay male?" Any person who selected "no" was prevented from accessing the survey. For this reason, 100% of the participants who completed the survey indicated they self-identify as gay men. Participants were then asked to complete a Demographic Questionnaire. Following demographics, participants completed nine other self-report measures, including heterophobia and hypothesized predictors. Relevant data for each of these measures, including hypothesized relationships, inclusion criteria, sample items, and validity/reliability information are included below.

Table 1: *Demographic Characteristics of Phase One Participants (N* = 356)

Demographic Characteristic	n (%)
Race/Ethnicity	
White	284 (79.8)
Asian / Asian-American	14 (3.9)
Hispanic / Latino	31 (8.7)
Black / African American	9 (2.5)
Biracial / Multiracial	18 (5.1)
Age Range (years)	
18 to 29	227 (63.9)
30 to 39	73 (20.5)
40 to 49	30 (8.4)
50 to 59	18 (5.1)
60 and older	8 (2.2)
Highest Education Completed	
High School	42 (11.8)
Associate's Degree	10 (2.8)
Some College	106 (29.8)
Bachelor's Degree	97 (27.2)
Some Graduate School	17 (4.8)
Graduate Degree	84 (23.6)
Geographic Location	
Texas	63 (17.7)
Washington	23 (6.5)
California	21 (5.9)
Other States	249 (69.9)

Hypotheses

As discussed, little research currently exists on the associations between minority stress variables and heterophobia. Within the present study, I seek to address this gap in the extant literature by specifically examining minority stress constructs and heterophobia within a single, exploratory model. Demographic variables of age, race, and education were included in the model as control variables, but were not hypothesized to have an effect on outcomes. I propose the

following specific hypotheses based on current theory and literature on heterophobia and minority stress.

I hypothesized that developmental experiences of rejection from straight men would have a positive relationship with all heterophobia factors (Hypothesis 1). I hypothesized that number of close, personal straight male friends would be negatively associated with all heterophobia subscales (Hypothesis 2). Turning to outness, I predicted outness to be negatively associated with all three heterophobia subscales (Hypothesis 3). I also hypothesized internalized homonegativity would have a positive relationship with all heterophobia subscales (Hypothesis 4). With regard to rejection sensitivity, I predicted rejection sensitivity would have a positive relationship with all heterophobia factors (Hypothesis 5). I expected conformity to masculine norms to have a positive relationship with heterophobia subscales (Hypothesis 6). Next, I hypothesized that experiences of heterosexist harassment would positively relate to unease/avoidance and expected rejection, but not disconnectedness from straight men (Hypothesis 7). I also predicted gay group identification would have a positive relationship with all heterophobia factors (Hypothesis 8). Finally, I expected perceived social support to have a negative relationship with heterophobia subscales (Hypothesis 9).

Measures (See Appendix A for Complete Study Measures)

The Heterophobia Scale. The Heterophobia Scale (HS) is designed to measure gay men's fear and avoidance of heterosexual men (Provence et al., 2018). The HS includes 20-items on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly* Disagree to 7 = *Strongly Agree)* across three subscales: Unease and Avoidance (e.g., "When using a restroom, I am careful to keep my distance from straight men"), Disconnectedness (e.g., "I think most straight men could easily relate to me"), and Expected Rejection (e.g., "Straight men would be put off by hearing the details of my sexual life"). The subscales contain 7, 7, and 6 items, respectively. Disconnectedness items are reverse-coded, and item scores are averaged within each subscale. Higher scores indicate greater levels of the heterophobia dimension being measured. Provence et al. (2018) found the three heterophobia subscales to be intercorrelated. The intercorrelations between subscales were all

significant, showing a positive relationship between each subscale. However, the use of a higher order, total heterophobia score is not supported. Accordingly, I use the three heterophobia subscales as my outcome measures for phase one analyses.

The three Heterophobia subscales have demonstrated good psychometric properties. Regarding validity, Provence and colleagues (2018) reported convergent and discriminant validity evidence with theoretically consistent and significant correlations among HS subscale scores and heterosexist discrimination, internalized homonegativity, gay identity development, and social desirability. Regarding reliability, previous responses on the three subscales have yielded Cronbach's αs of .91, .86, and .86, respectively. Interscale correlations range between .303 and .616. In my sample, internal consistency estimates were .85 for Unease and Avoidance, .85 for Disconnectedness, and .82 for Expected Rejection. Interscale correlations ranged between .59 and .77 (see Table 4).

While use of a total heterophobia score is not empirically supported, an overall, mean heterophobia score was used for participant selection in phase two. A midpoint cutoff was used to determine and recruit eligible participants (see phase two Methods for further discussion). An overall Heterophobia score was used with extreme caution in the present study, and was not employed for phase one analyses. In the present study, Cronbach's α for the overall Heterophobia Scale was .93.

Demographic Questionnaire. The Demographic Questionnaire asked participants to self-report their age, race/ethnicity, geographic location, and education. The questionnaire also asked participants to confirm their self-identification as a gay male as a validity check for study participation. In addition to the aforementioned information, the Demographics Questionnaire included other questions addressing relationship history, number of close personal straight male friends, developmental experiences of rejection from straight men, outness to particular family members, and dating/relationship satisfaction. Demographic variables included in my final analyses included age, race / ethnicity, and education. Participants self-reported their age, which was treated as a continuous variable for analysis. Dummy variables were created for

race/ethnicity and education, with *White* and *Some College* as the reference groups, respectively. *White* and *Some College* were chosen as reference groups since they contained the largest numbers of participants.

Developmental Experiences of Rejection from Straight Men – Single-Item Indicator (DERSM). To assess developmental experiences of rejection from straight men, participants answered a self-report item used in previous research on heterophobia (Provence et al., 2018). The item reads, "Growing up, I experienced rejection from straight men." It is scored along a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree*). A higher score on this item indicates greater experiences of rejection with straight men while growing up. Provence and colleagues (2018) first introduced this item due to dearth of available measures that assess developmental experiences of rejection from straight men. In their study, the authors referred to the item simply as "Childhood Rejection." However, since the item itself does not explicitly mention childhood, I have renamed it: *Developmental Experiences of Rejection from Straight Men – Single-Item Indicator (DERSM).* The item previously yielded significant correlations with theoretically linked constructs, such as outness (r=.14) and heterophobia subscales: unease and avoidance (r=.39), disconnectedness (r=.13,), expected rejection (r=.35; Provence et al., 2018). In my sample, the item is also significantly correlated to all heterophobia subscales (r=.40, r=.37, r=.34, respectively), number of close straight male friends (r=-.23), heterosexist harassment and discrimination (r=.35) and rejection sensitivity (r=.28).

Close Personal Straight Male Friends (FRND). Participants were asked to indicate how many close, personal straight male friends they had. Due to lack of available measures on cross-orientation friendships between men, I created a single, self-report item to gather this information. Specifically, the item read, "Approximately how many close personal friends do you have who are straight men?" Participants typed a numeric value to indicate their number of close, straight male friends. Higher values indicate a participant with more close straight male friends. The definition of "close, personal friends" was not provided to participants, allowing

them to self-determine what constituted a close, personal friend. In the present sample, participants reported an average of 4.47 close, personal straight male friends (*SD* = 4.64).

Single-Item Outness Indicator (SIOI). The Single-Item Outness Indicator (SIOI) is a one-item scale designed to assess the degree to which people are open about their same-sex attraction (Wilkerson, Noor, Galos & Rosser, 2016). The single item reads, "I would say that I am open (out) as a gay, bisexual, or a man attracted to other men." It is scored along a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*Not at all open (out)*) to 5 (*Open (out) to all or most people I know).* A higher score on this inventory indicates greater outness. The Single-Item Outness Indicator was chosen over other outness inventories for several reasons. First, the SIOI has been shown to perform better than multi-item measures. For instance, one study (Wilkerson et al., 2016) found the SIOI to have higher discriminatory power than multi-item scales in predicting depressive symptoms and risky sexual behavior. Second, the SIOI was strongly correlated to another widely-used multi-item outness inventory (e.g., The Outness Inventory, Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). Third, the single-item measure reduces subject burnout since it is only one item compared to lengthier scales. Fourth, the SIOI allows participants to answer in a way that is more *internal* or subjective, compared to other external, "objective" measures. Stated another way, participants may be responding to their own internal sense of being out on the SIOI. In contrast, other multi-item outness inventories anchor outness to specific persons (e.g., friends, family, religious communities) and frequencies of conversation about sexuality (Wilkerson et al., 2016). In the present sample, mean outness score was 4.51 (*SD* = .84).

Internalized Homonegativity Inventory (IHNI). The Internalized Homonegativity Inventory (IHNI) is designed to measure the internalized negative attitudes toward homosexuality that sexual minority men adopt as a result of living in an antigay and heterosexist society (Mayfield, 2001). The IHNI includes 23-items across three subscales (i.e., Personal Homonegativity, Gay Affirmation, and Morality of Homosexuality). Sample items from the inventory include, "I feel ashamed of my homosexuality" and "I believe it is unfair that I am attracted to men instead of women." Each item is rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging

from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly Agree*). Scores are either summed within the three subscales or across the total scale, with higher scores representing greater IH. With regard to reliability, item responses on the INHI and its subscales have yielded Cronbach's αs of .70 or higher (Choi, Merrill, & Israel, 2017; Mayfield, 2001). Evidence for convergent, discriminant, and construct validity has also been documented (c.f., Mayfield, 2001; Choi et al., 2017). Further, use of a total IHNI score is supported via bifactor modeling and recommended when examining relations among IH and external variables (Choi et al., 2017).

Due to administrative error, the current study captured data from 22 of the 23 items from the IHNI (item 16 was excluded). I excluded item 16 from my analyses and proceeded with a modified, 22-item IHNI. Results from this study using the IHNI should be interpreted with caution. In my sample, internal consistency measures were .91 for the total scale.

Gay-Related Rejection Sensitivity (RS). The Gay-Related Rejection Sensitivity Scale (RS) is designed to measure an individual's sensitivity to social rejection based on sexual orientation (Pachankis et al., 2008). The RS is a 14-item scale that describes potential social rejection scenarios. An example of a rejection scenario is as follows: "You go get an STD check-up, and the man taking your sexual history is rude towards you." After reading a given scenario, participants rate the scenario on two aspects. First, participants rate how *anxious or concerned* they would be if this scenario occurred due to sexual orientation. Second, participants rate how *likely* it is that the event occurred due to sexual orientation. Each item is rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Very Concerned / Very Unlikely*) to 6 (*Very Concerned / Very Likely*). Overall scale scores are determined by summing the products of each item pairing (concern x likelihood score), then dividing by 14 to create an "average product" ranging between 1 and 36. Higher scores on this measure signify a higher sensitivity to gay-related rejection. With regard to reliability, coefficient alpha for the RS is .91. Validity for the RS was supported by significant positive correlations with Perceived Gay Discrimination, Fear of Negative Evaluation, and Interpersonal Sensitivity (Pachankis et al., 2008).

Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory-22 Item Version (CMNI). The Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory-22 Item Short Version (CMNI-22) measures the extent to which an individual conforms to a constellation of dominant cultural norms of masculinity in the United States. Items on the CMNI-22 are answered on a 4-point Likert-type scale, with scores ranging from 0 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 3 (*Strongly Agree*). The CMNI-22 was derived from the CMNI-94, a 94-item questionnaire that yielded 11 subscales related to masculinity (Hamilton & Mahalik, 2009 ; Mahalik et al., 2003). The CMNI-22 is comprised of the two highest-loading items from each of the 11 factors on the CMNI-94. The CMNI-22 correlates at .92 with the CMNI-94 (Mahalik et al., 2003). To yield a total masculinity score, scores for the CMNI-22 are calculated by summing scores from the items. A higher total masculinity score reflects increased adherence to masculinity norms. Regarding reliability, consistency coefficients for the CMNI-22 have been reported between .70 and .94 (Burns & Mahalik, 2008; Hamilton & Mahalik, 2009, Mahalik et al., 2003). In present study, $\alpha = .67$ for the CMNI-22.

Heterosexist Harassment, Rejection, and Discrimination Scale (HHRDS). The Heterosexist Harassment, Rejection, and Discrimination Scale (HHRDS) is a 14-item scale that measures the degree to which sexual minority individuals experience discrimination related to their sexual minority status *within the last year* (Szymanski, 2006). Sample items from this scale include "How many times have you been treated unfairly by strangers because you are gay?" and "How many times have you been treated unfairly by teachers or professors because you are gay?" Items are rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale, with scores ranging from 1 (*Never Happened to You*) to 6 (*Happened Often, e.g., Over 70% of the Time*). Total scores for this scale are generated by averaging the score across items, with participants' scores falling between a range of 1-6. A higher score on the HHRDS signifies more heterosexist harassment, rejection, and discrimination within the last year. The scale's psychometric properties have been examined and validated with sexual minority samples. Concurrent validity of the HHRDS was supported by significant positive correlations with depression, anxiety, and psychological distress. Regarding reliability, item responses on the HHRDS have yielded Cronbach's α of .90 and above

(Lehavot & Simoni, 2011; Mereish & Poteat, 2015; Syzmanski, 2006). Coefficient alpha for the current sample was .90.

Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Group Identity Measure (LGBGIM). The Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Group Identity Measure (LGBGIM; Sarno & Mohr, 2016) was developed through the use of an LGB-adapted 14-item version of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Roberts et al., 1999). The adapted measure assesses LGB identity. In this adaptation, items are reworded so that they ask about LGB community or LGB culture rather than ethnic community or culture. For example, the item "I have a clear sense of my *ethnic background* and what it means for me" is transformed to "I have a clear sense of my *sexual orientation* and what it means for me." Participants respond using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly Agree*). The LGBGIM includes three subscales: Behavioral Engagement, Cognitive Clarity, and Affective Pride. Subscales are scored by averaging item responses (after reverse scoring, as needed). The LGBIM allows for the calculation of an overarching measure of LGB group identity by averaging the three subscales, which is used in the present study. Higher scores indicate greater LGB group identification. Cronbach's α for the LGBGIM is .91, and it shows good convergent and discriminant validity (Sarno & Mohr, 2016). Coefficient alpha for the current sample was .88.

Perceived Social Support (PSS). Perceived Social Support (PSS) was measured using the Social Provisions Scale (SPS; Cutrona & Russell, 1987), one of the most widely used measures of PSS in psychological literature (c.f., Perera, 2016). The SPS consists of 24 self-report items that are designed to measure the extent to which participants perceive their social relationships as providing social support. Items are rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 4 (*Strongly Agree*). The SPS is designed to yield a global score and six social provision subscale scores (c.f., Weiss, 1974). Use of a global PSS score has been supported via bifactor exploratory structural equation modeling (Perera, 2016), and is employed by the current study. The SPS has received psychometric support with respect to its reliability, and convergent

and predictive validity (c.f. Cutrona & Russell, 1987; Perera, 2016). In the present sample, internal consistency for the full SPS was good (α = .93).

Structural Equation Modeling Results

Means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's αs among study variables (excluding race and education) are presented in Table 2. Correlations between race/ethnicity, education, and study variables are provided separately in Table 3. The distribution of all study variables met guidelines for univariate normality (i.e., skewness ≤ 3, kurtosis ≤ 10; Kline, 2011; Weston & Gore, 2006), with skewness values ranging from -1.75 to 2.43, and kurtosis values ranging from -.78 to 8.04. Regarding multivariate normality, five participants' responses emerged as multivariate outliers, with a Mahalanobis distance $p < .01$. However, upon visual inspection (Cousineau & Chartier, 2010), these participant's scores did not suggest a pattern of random responding (e.g., answering same numbers across measures, including items that were reverse scored), and thus data were not removed prior to analysis.

To test study hypotheses, I conducted SEM using SAS 9.4. The model is a just-identified model and fit the data perfectly $\chi2$ (0) =, 0.0; TLI = 1.00; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .00 (90% CI: .00, .00; SRMR = .00). Given its complexity, the structural equation model is illustrated per outcome in Figures 2, 3, and 4, with only significant relationships between variables represented. To review the overall conceptual model with all variables and outcomes, please see Figure 1. Residual correlations are also not illustrated in the figures. The residuals associated with the unease/avoidance and disconnectedness variables were significantly correlated (r = .37). The correlation between the residuals associated with unease/avoidance and expected rejection (r = .23) was statistically significant. The residuals with disconnectedness and expected rejection were also significantly correlated (r = .23). The model accounted for 48.2% of the variance in unease/avoidance scores, 37.7% of the variance in disconnectedness scores, and 44.0% of the variance in expected rejection scores. Table 5 provides all standardized parameter estimates with standard errors.

Developmental experiences of rejection from straight men significantly and positively predicted unease/avoidance, disconnectedness, and expected rejection from straight men (supporting Hypothesis 1). As expected, number of close, straight male friends significantly and negatively predicted unease/avoidance, disconnectedness, and expected rejection (supporting Hypothesis 2). Degree of outness was not significantly associated with unease/avoidance and disconnectedness (partially failing to support Hypothesis 3). However, degree of outness was negatively associated with expected rejection from straight men (partially supporting Hypothesis 3). Internalized homonegativity was not significantly associated with unease/avoidance or disconnectedness, but it significantly and positively predicted expected rejection from straight men (partially supporting Hypothesis 4). Gay-related rejection sensitivity significantly and positively predicted unease/avoidance, disconnectedness, and expected rejection (supporting Hypothesis 5). Conformity to masculine norms was not significantly associated with any heterophobia subscale (failing to support Hypothesis 6). Experiences of heterosexist harassment or discrimination positively and significantly predicted unease/avoidance and expected rejection, but had no significant association with disconnectedness from straight men (supporting Hypothesis 7). LGB Group Identity was positively and significantly associated with unease/avoidance, disconnectedness, and expected rejection (supporting Hypothesis 8). As anticipated, social provisions were negatively associated with unease/avoidance, disconnectedness, and expected rejection (supporting Hypothesis 9).

With regard to demographic variables, age had a significant and negative direct effect on unease/avoidance, disconnectedness, and expected rejection. Ethnicity or race did not significantly predict any of the heterophobia subscales. Attainment of a graduate degree was significantly and positively associated with disconnectedness and expected rejection from straight men, but not with unease or avoidance of straight men. Attainment of a bachelor's degree was also positively associated with expected rejection from straight men, but not other heterophobia subscales. Other educational attainment (i.e., high school diploma, associate's degree, some graduate school, some college) was not significantly associated with heterophobia subscales.

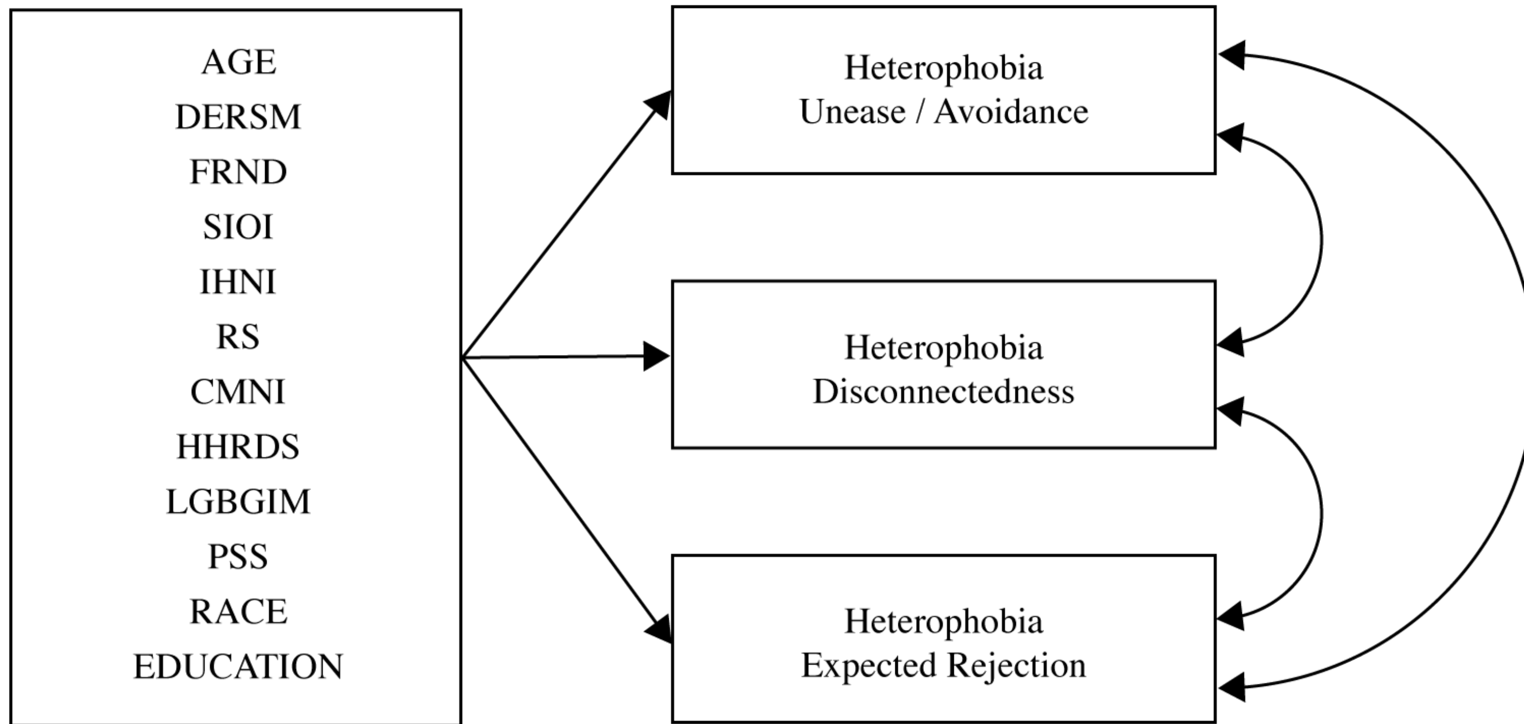

Figure 1. Structural equation model of hypothesized relationships among study variables and heterophobia subscales. AGE = Self-Reported Age; DERSM = Developmental Experiences of Rejection from Straight Men; FRND = Self-Report Number of Close Straight Male Friends; SIOI = Single-Item Outness Inventory; IHNI = Internalized Homonegativity Inventory; RS = Gay-Related Rejection Sensitivity; CMNI = Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory; HHRDS = Heterosexist Harassment, Rejection, and Discrimination Scale; LGBGIM = Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Group Identity Measure, PSS = Perceived Social Support; RACE = Race / Ethnicity, Dummy Coded; EDUCATION = Education, Dummy Coded.

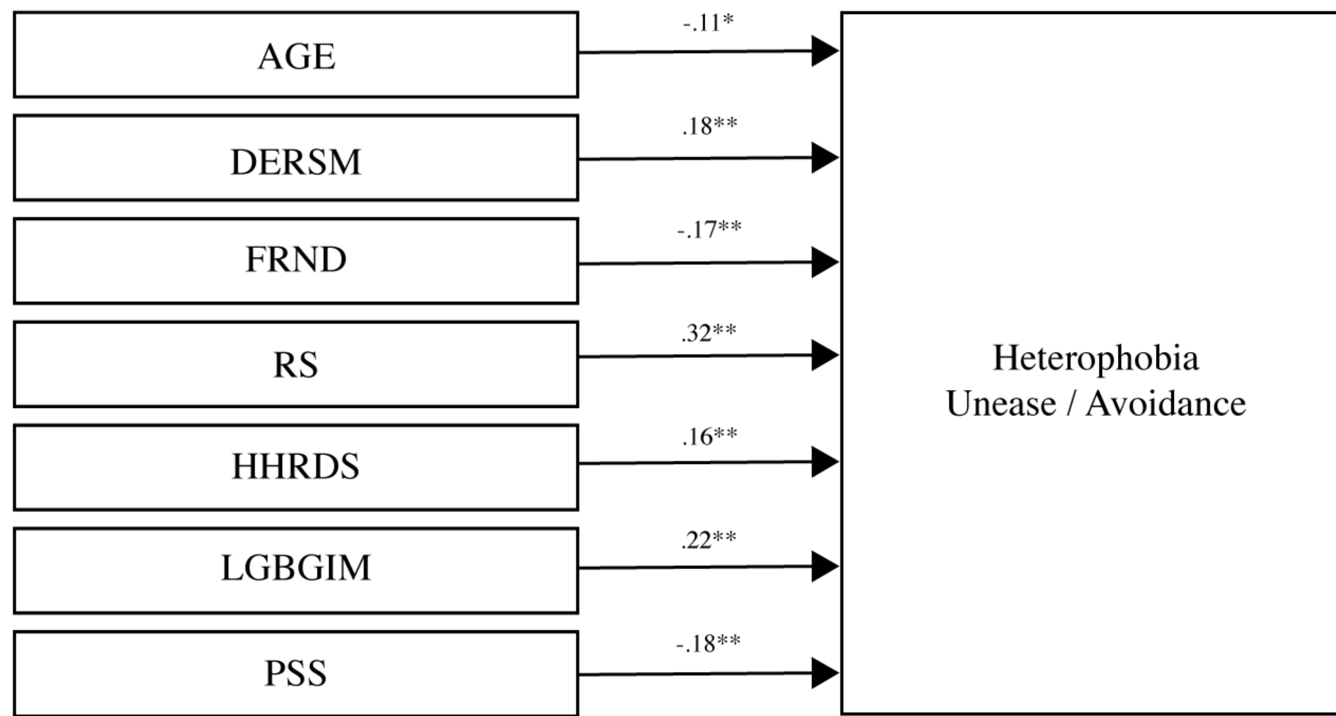

Figure 2. Structural equation model of significant relationships among study variables and unease / avoidance subscale. AGE = Self-Reported Age; DERSM = Developmental Experiences of Rejection from Straight Men; FRND = Self-Report Number of Close Straight Male Friends; SIOI = Single-Item Outness Inventory; RS = Gay-Related Rejection Sensitivity; HHRDS = Heterosexist Harassment, Rejection, and Discrimination Scale; LGBGIM = Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Group Identity Measure, PSS = Perceived Social Support. $^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$.

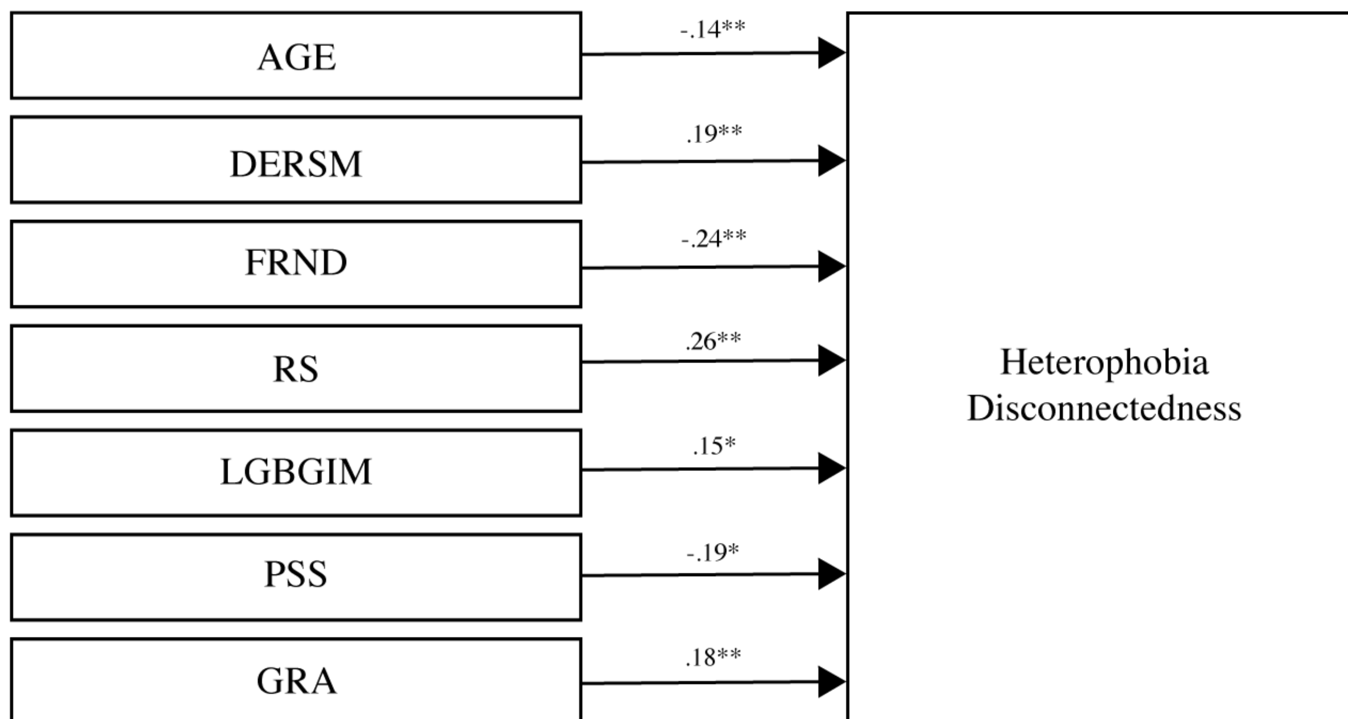

Figure 3. Structural equation model of significant relationships among study variables and disconnectedness subscale. AGE = Self-Reported Age; DERSM = Developmental Experiences of Rejection from Straight Men; FRND = Self-Report Number of Close Straight Male Friends; RS = Gay-Related Rejection Sensitivity; LGBGIM = Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Group Identity Measure, PSS = Perceived Social Support; GRA = Graduate Degree. $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$.

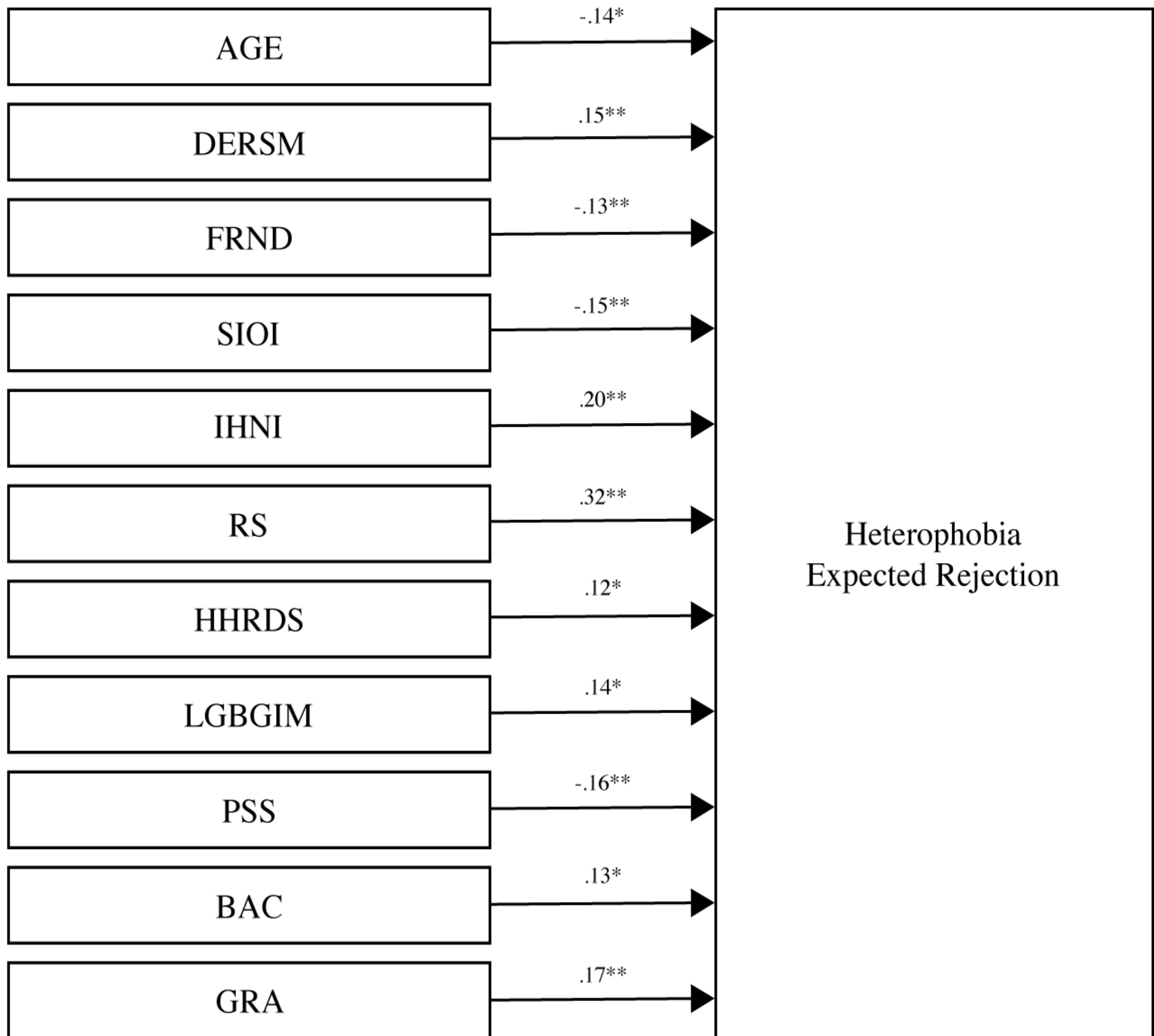

Figure 4. Structural equation model of significant relationships among study variables and expected rejection subscale. AGE = Self-Reported Age; DERSM = Developmental Experiences of Rejection from Straight Men; FRND = Self-Report Number of Close Straight Male Friends; SIOI = Single-Item Outness Inventory; IHNI = Internalized Homonegativity Inventory; RS = Gay-Related Rejection Sensitivity; HHRDS = Heterosexist Harassment, Rejection, and Discrimination Scale; LGBGIM = Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Group Identity Measure, PSS = Perceived Social Support; BAC = Bachelor's Degree; GRA = Graduate Degree. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics, Phase One

	UNE	DIS	EXR	AGE	DERSM	FRND	SIOI	IHNI	RS	CMNI	HHRDS	LGBGIM	PSS
M	3.22	3.47	4.67	29.15	4.74	4.47	4.51	39.99	14.19	25.96	2.05	4.68	80.84
SD	1.29	1.2	1.62	11.04	1.65	4.64	0.84	14.64	6.65	5.96	0.72	0.88	10.84
Range	1-7	1-7	1-7	18+	1-7	0+	1-5	22-132	1-36	0-66	1-6	1-6	24-96
α	.86	.85	.82	-	-	-	-	.91	.90	.64	.90	.88	.93

Note: N = 356; Higher scores indicate greater levels of the construct they are intended to measure. M = Mean=; SD = Standard Deviation; UNE = Unease / Avoidance Heterophobia Subscale; DIS = Disconnectedness Heterophobia Subscale; EXR = Expected Rejection Heterophobia Subscale; AGE = Self-Reported Age; DERSM = Developmental Experiences of Rejection from Straight Men; FRND = Self-Report Number of Close Straight Male Friends; SIOI = Single-Item Outness Inventory; IHNI = Internalized Homonegativity Inventory; RS = Gay-Related Rejection Sensitivity; CMNI = Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory; HHRDS = Heterosexist Harassment, Rejection, and Discrimination Scale; LGBGIM = Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Group Identity Measure; PSS = Perceived Social Support.

Table 3. Intercorrelation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1. UNE	-																					
2. DIS	.77 **	-																				
3. EXR	.65 **	.59 **	-																			
4. AGE	-.13 *	-.10	-.11 *	-																		
5. DERSM	.40 **	.37 **	.34 **	-.04	-																	
6. FRND	-.31 **	-.35 **	-.24 **	.15 **	-.23 **	-																
7. SIOI	-.04	-.03	-.20 **	.07	.05	-.06	-															
8. IHNI	.13 *	.11 *	.32 **	-.28 **	.08	-.05	-.48 **	-														
9. RS	.52 **	.41 **	.48 **	-.01	.28 **	-.16 **	-.03	.11 *	-													
10. CMNI	-.02	.00	.05	-.12 *	-.08	.08	-.05	.18 **	.02	-												
11. HHRDS	.43 **	.29 **	.34 **	-.08	.35 **	.00	.07	.08	.39 **	.15 **	-											
12. LGBGIM	.12 *	.06	-.08	.20 **	.03	.01	.43 **	-.69 **	.09	-.11 *	.14 **	-										
13. PSS	-.28 **	-.25 **	-.30 **	.11 *	-.07	.12 *	.20 **	-.34 **	-.12 *	-.07	-.21 **	.25 **	-									
14. ASN	-.07	.00	-.03	-.03	-.05	-.05	-.07	.06	-.05	.12 *	-.08	-.02	-.04	-								
15. AAM	-.12 *	-.03	-.10	.00	-.02	.20 **	.03	-.08	-.04	-.02	-.01	.01	.05	-.03	-							
16. HIS	-.03	.04	-.03	-.12*	.00	.00	.02	.04	.04	.04	.00	-.05	-.01	-.06	-.05	-						
17. BIR	.04	.07	.02	-.06	.01	-.04	.11 *	.00	-.03	-.03	.08	.00	-.04	-.05	-.04	-.07	-					
18. HIG	.07	-.01	-.04	-.26 **	.06	-.07	.03	-.04	.06	.07	.14 **	.03	-.16 **	-.07	-.06	.10	-.01	-				
19. ASSO	.00	-.01	-.02	.01	-.05	.06	-.02	-.05	-.03	-.09	.01	-.01	.00	-.03	-.03	.01	.04	-.06	-			
20. BAC	-.11 *	-.08	.01	.06	-.04	.07	.10	-.01	-.04	.03	-.10*	-.02	.05	-.03	.02	.03	.00	-.23 **	-.10 *	-		
21. SOG	.01	-.02	.00	.09	-.04	.00	-.14 *	.01	.06	-.06	-.05	.06	.07	-.05	-.04	-.02	-.05	-.08	-.04	-.14 **	-	
22. GRA	-.03	.09	.04	.48 **	.05	.01	.04	-.08	-.05	-.04	-.03	.04	.05	.06	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.21 **	-.09	-.34 **	-.12 *	-

Note : *N* = 356; * *p* < .05, ** p < .01; Cronbach α reported in parentheses along the diagnol of the correlation matrix. ASN = Asian or Asian-American; AAM = African American or Black; HIS = Hispanic or Latinx; BIR = Biracial; HIG = Completed High School; ASSO = Associate's Degree; BAC = Bachelor's Degree; SOG = Some Graduate School; GRA = Graduate Degree

Table 4. Standardized Parameter Estimates by Outcome

	Heterophobia Unease / Avoidance		Heterophobia Disconnectedness		Heterophobia Expected Rejection	
Predictor	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
AGE	-.11*	.05	-.14**	.06	-.14*	.05
DERSM	.18**	.04	.19**	.05	.15**	.04
FRND	-.17**	.04	-.24**	.05	-.13**	.04
SIOI	-.06	.05	-.07	.05	-.15**	.05
IHNI	.10	.06	.03	.07	.20**	.06
RS	.32**	.04	.26**	.05	.32**	.04
CMNI	-.03	.04	.04	.87	.04	.04
HHRDS	.16**	.05	.07	.05	.12*	.05
LGBGIM	.22**	.06	.15*	.06	.14*	.06
PSS	-.18**	.04	-.19*	.05	-.16**	.04
ASN	-.06	.04	-.01	.04	-.05	.04
AAM	-.05	.04	.05	.04	-.04	.04
HIS	-.04	.03	.03	.04	-.06	.04
BIR	.01	.03	.06	.04	.01	.04
HIG	-.06	.04	-.09	.05	-.08	.05
ASSO	.02	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04
BAC	-.03	.05	.04	.05	.13**	.05
SOG	-.01	.04	.01	.05	.01	.04
GRA	.02	.05	.18**	.06	.17**	.06

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. AGE = Self-Reported Age; DERSM = Developmental Experiences of Rejection from Straight Men; FRND = Self-Report Number of Close Straight Male Friends; SIOI = Single-Item Outness Inventory; IHNI = Internalized Homonegativity Inventory; RS = Gay-Related Rejection Sensitivity; CMNI = Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory; HHRDS = Heterosexist Harassment, Rejection, and Discrimination Scale; LGBGIM = Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Group Identity Measure. ASN = Asian or Asian-American; AAM = African American or Black; HIS = Hispanic or Latinx; BIR = Biracial; HIG = Completed High School; ASSO = Associate's Degree; BAC = Bachelor's Degree; SOG = Some Graduate School; GRA = Graduate Degree

Phase Two: Qualitative Study of Heterophobia

Phase two is dedicated to the second and third research questions and aimed to use qualitative methodology to provide more thematic, experience-based description of gay men's experiences of heterophobia. Participants from the first phase who scored above the midpoint on the Heterophobia Scale were invited to participate in qualitative interviews for phase two. I limited the sample based on Heterophobia Scale scores because I wanted to understand the experiences of gay men who shared similar heterophobic attitudes toward straight men. I aimed to understand how these men's lived experiences shape how they relate to straight men (Research Question 2). I also wanted to know how these men's concerns and worries about straight men impacted their lives (Research Question 3). Methods employed and results from phase two are discussed in detail below.

Selecting Participants

Phase two participants were recruited from the collection of participants in phase one who 1) expressed an interest in ongoing study participation in phase one and 2) scored above a total score of 3 (e.g., scale midpoint) on the Heterophobia Scale. The composite score was calculated by averaging participants' scores on the three heterophobia subscales. 274 participants qualified for phase two and were contacted to participate. Of the 274 individuals contacted, 151 responded with interest in participating. I sorted the 151 participants who responded on the basis of their heterophobia score. Of these 151 participants, I contacted 13 who had the highest composite scores on the heterophobia scale. All 13 participants completed the interview process. Participants who completed the interviews were provided a $50 Amazon gift card for their participation. Unfortunately, two interviews were unable to be transcribed due to technical recording issues that rendered the recordings indecipherable. Therefore, the final sample included 11 participants.

Participants

All 11 participants identified as cisgender gay men. They ranged in age from 18 to 49, with a mean of 28.55. They described their race/ethnicity as follows: seven as White, two as Black or African American, one as Hispanic or Latino, and one as Asian. They had a range of educational

experiences with five participants holding a bachelor's degree, three with a graduate degree, two with some college, and one with some graduate school. Finally, participants reported a range of geographic locations, with representation from 9 different States. Additional demographics are located in Table 5.

Interview Protocol and Procedures

Through email, participants agreed with researchers upon a convenient time for the initial interview. The PI and one PhD student in Counseling Psychology conducted interviews via video-teleconferencing services (e.g. Skype) or telephone. All interviews were audio-recorded and lasted between 35 and 75 minutes. A research team member transcribed the interviews. I then read over the transcription and noted areas to probe or clarify in the follow-up interview. The 15 to 30-minute follow-up interviews were conducted mostly over phone. Additional data gathered from the follow-up interviews were added to the initial interview transcripts as needed.

Interviews were phenomenological and semi-structured, with set questions, while allowing for follow-up questions or clarification as needed. The research team developed the interview protocol, which was based on my research questions and research about heterophobia and models of gay men's minority stress. I piloted the questions with one gay man and, based on his feedback, made slight adjustments to the protocol. Initial interviews were conducted over a 1-month period. Follow-up interviews contained three additional questions and any clarification questions. The full list of questions can be found in Appendix B.

Research Team

Given the importance of researcher identity and bias in conducting qualitative research (Hill et al., 2005), I assembled a research team that could provide a variety of perspectives on gay men's relationships with straight men. The final team was composed of five researchers: two straight White males (one professor and one doctoral student), two gay White male doctoral students, and one gay Latino male doctoral student.

Table 5. Demographic Characteristics of Phase Two Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Education	Race/ Ethnicity	Number of Close Straight Male Friends	Overall Heterophobia	Unease / Avoidance	Disconnect-edness	Expected Rejection
Trent	18	Some College	Asian	0	4.92	4.43	5.00	5.33
Ryan	27	Graduate Degree	White	0	5.56	5.29	5.57	5.83
Oscar	22	Some College	White	1	5.03	4.14	4.29	6.67
Max	21	Bachelor's	White	0	5.59	5.86	5.57	5.33
Kendrick	37	Bachelor's	African American	5	4.39	3.57	4.43	5.17
Jacob	27	Bachelor's	Latino	3	4.87	5.00	4.29	5.33
Derrick	25	Some Graduate School	White	6	5.17	5.43	5.57	4.50
David	49	Bachelor's	White	3	4.93	4.14	5.14	5.50
Darrel	36	Graduate Degree	African American	2	4.09	3.00	4.43	4.83
Brandon	29	Graduate Degree	White	5	5.02	5.29	4.43	5.33
Alex	23	Bachelor's	White	1	5.74	6.00	5.71	5.50

Note: Overall Heterophobia, Unease / Avoidance, Disconnectedness, and Expected Rejection refer to participant scores on the Heterophobia Scale and its subscales.

Data Analysis

Team members transcribed interviews verbatim, aside from filler words (e.g., “um,” “like,” “you know”) and encouragers from the interviewer (“mmhmm,” “okay,” etc.). Once the transcriptions were finalized, data analysis began. The data analysis process followed the general guidelines of Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR; Hill et al., 1997, 2005), which delineates a team-based approach to data interpretation.

First, team members independently developed domains, or topics of interest, by reviewing three randomly selected transcripts. Domains were developed using initial research questions and interview protocol. We then came together to discuss the domains and arrived at consensus. For example, one domain was “barriers or facilitators to connecting with straight men” (see Table 6 for examples). Second, team members developed a list of core ideas that described the themes appearing in the interviews. An example of a specific core idea is “feeling excluded or different.” Team members independently completed this task. We then came together to discuss the core ideas and arrived at a comprehensive consensus code list, including a list of representative quotations for each core idea.

Next, we independently applied our consensus code list to one transcript to test its applicability within a new subsample. We reconvened to collaboratively develop a final code list representing key thematic commonalities between participants. To avoid redundancies and overly specific core ideas, some core ideas were consolidated.

Using the final code list, at least two team members separately read and re-coded all 11 transcripts, applying codes to applicable excerpts from each interview. Using a consensus process (Hill et al., 1997), the team members assigned a single set of final codes for each transcript. Next, the PI entered all codes and excerpts into qualitative software, Dedoose, which facilitated organization and analysis of the data. Using Dedoose, this researcher compiled excerpts from all transcripts, organized by code category. A team member involved in the initial coding process audited this document to ensure validity.

Following an initial audit, the auditor requested team members reconvene to revise the specificity of code names and organization of the coding framework. The primary feedback of the auditor focused on reducing redundancies further with domains and core ideas. Team members met without the auditor to discuss and negotiate disagreements about the coding framework until consensus was reached. Next, a designated researcher used Dedoose to restructure the coding framework and compiled a document containing excerpts across all 11 transcripts, organized by code category. In the final step, the auditor reviewed this document, met with the PI to resolve discrepancies, and verified the final data set.

Validity Concerns

Concerns about validity were addressed in several ways. First, members of the data analysis team had diverse identities and experiences within their relationships with straight men, reducing the likelihood of researcher bias. Second, having the research team members individually code the interviews before coming to consensus allowed for all perspectives to be considered. Third, researchers asked clarifying questions in follow-up interviews, which allowed for additional engagement with participants and clarification of topics addressed during initial interviews. Fourth, the research team actively looked for data that did not fit into our core ideas and discussed these negative cases (Maxwell, 2013) to revise core ideas as needed. Finally, peer debriefing with one auditor who did not participant in the research itself served as both inquiry and confirmatory audits (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Consensual Qualitative Research Results

When analyzing the data based on research questions two and three, the coding team found that four different domains emerged. In this section, I will review the core ideas within these four domains – *Barriers or Facilitators to Connecting with Straight Men, Beliefs About Men and Masculinity, Identity Concealment with Straight Men,* and *Coming Out to Straight Men* – along with representative quotations. See Table 6 for a list of domains, core ideas, and frequencies.

Table 6*: Domains and Core Ideas*

***Domain*, Core Ideas**	n** (%)
Barriers or Facilitators to Connecting with Straight Men	
General discomfort with straight men	10 (90.9)
Feeling excluded or different	9 (81.8)
Potential danger with straight men	9 (81.8)
Sexual or romantic attraction with straight men	5 (45.5)
Building walls / self-blame for lack of connection	6 (54.5)
Avoiding straight men (or environments with straight men)	6 (54.5)
Lack of shared interests with straight men	9 (81.8)
Straight women as proxy	5 (45.5)
Perspective shift with straight men	9 (81.8)
Beliefs About Men and Masculinity	
Straight men as holding privilege	6 (54.5)
Straight men as different than gay men	11 (100)
Managing interactions or image with straight men	11 (100)
Coming Out to Straight Men	
Positive experience or reaction	8 (72.7)
Negative experience or reaction	7 (63.6)
Neutral / ambiguous experience or reaction	7 (63.6)
Identity Concealment with Straight Men	
Fear of rejection or judgement	4 (36.4)
Fear of harassment or conflict	10 (90.9)
Fear of straight men perceiving attraction from participant	5 (45.5)

Note: N =11. Categories that included fewer than three cases are not shown here.
** n = number of participants endorsing each category.

Barriers or Facilitators to Connecting with Straight Men

Barriers or facilitators to connecting with straight men included a number of core ideas related to gay men's experiences cultivating relationships with straight men. Participants highlighted challenges in relationships with straight men as well as facilitative elements that enabled connections with straight men. Importantly, men in my study discussed salient *past* life experiences with straight men in tandem with their *current* connections and relationships with straight men. For that reason, excerpts from participants include references to both past and present experiences of connecting with straight men.

General Discomfort with Straight Men. Nearly all participants, 10 of 11, described general feelings of discomfort with straight men. For example, one participant stated, "I don't feel completely comfortable around straight men." Another man indicated that he was "more comfortable with straight women" and "not as relaxed or gregarious" with straight men. Participants discussed a variety of settings in which they have experienced discomfort in the company of straight men, including sports bars or events, social events, and workplaces. One main commented, "when there's a big group of [straight] guys…it makes me uncomfortable." In discussing going to straight bars with friends, one man stated he experiences "a little bit of nervousness" and feels "out of [his] comfort zone, worried about how straight men are perceiving [him]."

Feeling Excluded or Alienated. Nine participants discussed feeling alienated or excluded from activities or relationships with straight men during various times in their lives. Specifically, participants reported experiences with straight men of "being made to feel as other, or ostracized, or less than." One respondent reflected, "Because of the exclusionary nature of my relationships with straight men I was younger…now I always have the mentality that I might be excluded." Another stated that the "main component" of his current challenge in establishing relationships with straight men was "how [he] was treated while growing up, not necessarily feeling included by straight men."

Participants discussed being excluded in a variety of domains, including with family, friends, or in extracurricular activities. One man noted he could tell his "father was able to connect with [his straight twin brother] more." Another reflected: "My twin older brothers didn't really like me. They wouldn't spend a lot of time with me." One respondent recounted a memory of "being the only one not picked for a basketball game going on at the park." Another man remembered, "When I was in fourth or fifth grade, there were a lot of guys on the playground playing tag and I wasn't invited outright." One respondent echoed this general theme when he shared, "I wasn't good at socializing with [straight men]. They would be off playing sports and talking about things that I didn't relate to. I always felt like I was not in their circle."

Potential Danger with Straight Men. A majority of participants, 9 of 11, endorsed concerns about their physical safety in the presence of straight men. Four men specifically discussed the possibility of straight men starting fights in bars after learning about their sexuality. One man noted, "I would not feel as safe at a straight bar because if there's alcohol… latent feelings of homophobia might manifest." Importantly, participants characterized environments with large groups of straight men as "uber masculine" or "very hetero spaces." One respondent echoed the sentiments of several participants: "It doesn't necessarily feel safe to be gay in those spaces."

Sexual or Romantic Attraction with Straight Men. Five participants discussed experiences of being attracted to straight men in their lives. A respondent described past experiences of "developing emotionally intense crushes on straight friends or acquaintances," noting that "it felt out of [his] control." One man described falling in love with a straight man as "self-destructive" while another identified it as "heartbreaking." All participants cautioned gay men against developing sexual or romantic attractions toward straight men. One man succinctly captured most participants' advice when he stated, "Don't fall for them."

Building Walls / Self-Blame for Lack of Connection. More than half of participants attributed their lack of connections to straight men to themselves. One man explained, "I'm not gonna blame them for lack of connection – I think it's all me." Another participant stated, "It's my fault… I don't know why I can't engage and I don't like feeling like I need to be engaging." One respondent attributed his difficulty connecting with straight men to his "lack of social skills" and described straight men as "very friendly and easy to talk to." Another man discussed his internal experience of relating to straight men:

> My own comfort levels are the biggest barrier. It's all in my mind, I'm just creating this idea that they're gonna call me – they're going to say, 'hey faggot.' They're going to shoot out a slur at me. It never happens, but it makes me nervous. I'm building it up in my mind that this is going to happen and it just never does.

Lack of Shared Interests. A majority, 9 of 11, participants discussed their lack of shared interests with straight men. One man stated, "I don't feel like I have as much in common with

them. I don't want to be around them. We don't have the same interests – I'm not interested in getting together and talking about women." One respondent noted that because he "didn't share the same interests" as straight men which made it "difficult to have casual conversations that lead to deeper conversations." While discussing straight peers during his childhood, one man stated, "I didn't have anything in common with them and I didn't know why."

All participants specifically talked about straight men as interested in sports, which they highlighted as a significant difference in interests. One man illustrated this idea: "Straight men talk about certain things, maybe girls, sports. I'm not into either of those." Another commented, "In high school, a lot of the straight men I knew were more into sports, where as I was in the theater and Dramatic Arts." Most participants also mentioned other perceived interests of straight men, including "being outside, going fishing," and "building things and putting together cars."

Straight Women as Proxy. Five respondents noted their friendships with straight women as a way to establish connections with straight men. One stated, "A nice entry way is through the significant other of the straight man. That's been a nice opener into relationships with straight men." Another indicated "the men in my life are self-selected by the women I'm around." Four participants discussed their female friends as a "gauge" or "litmus test" to determine if straight men are safe to befriend. One respondent stated, "The majority of straight male friendships I have now, the litmus test is done for me through female friends."

Perspective Shift with/about Straight Men. A majority, 9 of 11, participants noted experiences that positively shifted their perspectives about straight men. One man explained:

> It wasn't until late high school or early college where I started to realize I could find great, accepting, welcoming, warm, wonderful straight men I could be friends with. Often, straight men surprise me with how welcoming and accepting they are of gay men or myself. In general, I think I often portray them as what I talked about from my childhood—as the aggressive, sports-loving macho kind of men.

Another participant discussed his experience of participating in a gay softball league with straight male teammates where he witnessed "how playful and fun a straight man can be when he's comfortable being around gay men and not feeling threatened or uncomfortable." One man

highlighted that he "gained a lot of respect" witnessing straight men "arguing on our side" at a Pride parade. One participant outlined changes in his views as a result of friendships with straight men: "As you have straight male friendships, you realize you're not necessarily going to get sanctioned or disapproved by all of them."

Beliefs about Men and Masculinity

Beliefs about men and masculinity included core ideas that related to gay men's general beliefs and ideas about men and masculinity. Participants discussed their ideas about straight and gay men, as well as masculinity. It is important to note that respondents were asked about their general impressions of straight men, but not about masculinity explicitly. Participants also talked at length about how they manage interactions and their personal images with straight men.

<u>Straight Men as Holding Privilege.</u> Nearly all, 10 of 11, participants expressed ideas about straight men holding social privilege. For example, one man stated, "Straight men do typically have the upper hand in terms of social privilege." Another commented, "When someone finds out that you're gay, you don't get the same kind of dedication, appreciation, or respect that a straight man would get." One participant reflected that he "resented" that he had to consider sexuality in his physical interactions (e.g., hugs) with others, whereas "straight men don't have to think about it at all." Other men described straight men as a "dominant and privileged group" with "patriarchal privilege." One illustrated this privilege by describing the makeup of the leadership team in his company: "All the executives are straight. They have the power and the strength and numbers."

<u>Straight Men as Different than Gay Men.</u> All participants reflected on differences they perceived between straight and gay men. One participant noted that he believed "straight men are diametrically opposite" of gay men, which he attributed to masculinity "strengthening the barrier between gay and straight." Another man disclosed he believed "straight men are intimidated by gay guys… they don't know how to respond to us."

Several participants discussed emotional capacity of straight men. One participant echoed the sentiment of many when he disclosed, "I definitely see straight men as less open [than gay

men] with their feelings.” Another participant contrasted gay and straight men, describing straight men “assertive…the opposite of empathetic… [and] emotionally ignorant.” In discussing differences between straight and gay men, one participant shared:

> When you are having friendship with straight men, you have fundamental difference in experience because they can’t understand what it’s like to be gay… Straight men don’t want to just sit and talk about their plans or feelings…they want to play a sport, do a video game, go out drinking, or pick up women. They’re told don’t show emotion. They’re very concerned with conserving the image that they’re straight.

Managing Interactions or Image with Straight Men. All participants indicated that they made deliberative efforts to shape the way straight men perceive them during social interactions. Participants had a range of reasons for these efforts. For example, many participants indicated that they alter their behavior so as to not “incriminate” themselves as gay men in the presence of straight men. Another reason for shaping straight men’s perceptions included wanting to “fit in, or relate with their culture so that they [straight men] don’t feel threatened by my sexuality.”

Many participants discussed the importance of enacting masculinity with straight men. One respondent explained, “I have to put on an air of masculinity just to make it through safely with straight men.” Another participant highlighted past experiences with straight men: “I tried to act as much of a heterosexual man as I could to try and maintain relationships with them.” Participants enumerated the ways in which they alter their behavior or image around straight men. For instance, nearly all participants reported that their “voice gets deeper” around straight men. Other examples from various participants included the following: not wearing skinny jeans at work, stroking a straight man’s ego, asking straight men more questions about themselves to deflect questions about self, changing mannerisms, trying to be less flamboyant, not talking about pride, using gender neutral pronouns to talk about a boyfriend.

Coming Out to Straight Men

Coming out to straight men includes participants’ past experiences disclosing their sexual identity to straight men. Participants were asked to identify important straight men in their lives and discuss salient coming out experiences with these men. Participants also discussed their

coming out experiences with straight men more broadly. Respondents generally described their experiences as positive, negative, or neutral / ambiguous.

Positive Experience or Reaction. A majority of participants, 8 of 11, indicated they had at least one positive experience upon disclosing their sexual identity to straight men. One participant described straight men's reactions as wholly positive: "… reactions have been almost entirely positive. I can't remember an instance in which I came out and it was poorly received." Similarly, another participant shared, "It's surprising that I've had mostly good reactions from straight men."

Participants discussed positive experiences coming out to family members and close friends. One man commented that his father "was cool about it," while another reflected, "My father has been completely supportive of me from the get go." When discussing coming out to his siblings, one participant noted that his brother "punched [him] in the shoulder and was like, 'Why didn't you tell me first?'" Another respondent reflected on his best friend's response: "He was like, 'You could have always told me – you don't have to keep it a secret. Our friendship has nothing to do with our sexuality.'" One man recalled coming out to close straight friends in high school who "came up to [him] and said that they were totally chill with everything." Other men characterized coming out to straight male friends as "affirming" and "surprising." One man illustrated his experience of coming out with his straight best friend:

> I told him and he ended up being very understanding. What I did not find out until later was that despite my hesitations on making it weird for him, he opened up with me.

Negative Experience or Reaction. A majority of participants, 7 out of 11, indicated they had at least one negative experience upon disclosing their sexual identity to straight men. Participants discussed negative coming out experiences with a range of straight men, including family members, friends, and strangers. Three men discussed coming out to their fathers as a negative experience. One participant disclosed that his father "stopped talking to [him] for about two years after [he] came out." Another reflected that he and his father "have had very little contact" since his father called him: "He thought the spirit of Satan was upon me and needed to

be exorcised and was trying to convince me." Another participant also recalled his parents invoking religious language after coming out, "My father started quoting Bible verses."

One man recollected coming out to a good straight friend: "After he found out I was gay, he just blocked me [telephone number and social media] immediately without saying anything." Another respondent recalled a similar experience with his high school best friend, "He and I just stopped talking around the time that I started coming out to other people, so I assume that's the reason why we stopped talking." Respondents also discussed negative coming out experiences with straight men in social group settings. One participant illustrated this experience:

> At least on one occasion, there was a straight guy who I had to come out to in a group setting. It was clear that the had an upbringing or current beliefs about homosexuality that it was wrong and he started to say it. When he realized this was going to be a point of contention, he shut down, exited the conversation, and kept his distance for the rest of the evening.

Neutral or Ambiguous Experience or Reaction. In addition to positive and negative experiences, seven participants described neutral or ambiguous experiences or reactions. Participants generally characterized these experiences as a "non-issue," and "more or less undramatic." When discussing coming out to his roommates and brothers, one participant noted, "They were kind of shocked because they had no idea but they didn't react too memorably. They're pretty nonchalant." Another man stated, "Heterosexual males that I have come out to, it's been very neutral." One respondent commented that his straight friends already knew about his sexuality, "A lot of the straight guys I came out to said they already knew, they were waiting for me to say it."

Identity Concealment with Straight Men

Identity Concealment with Straight Men includes core ideas about why or how gay men conceal their sexual identity with straight men. During interviews, participants were asked about factors that impact their decision-making with regard to coming out to straight men. In order for an excerpt to be included in this code category, a participant must have been explicitly discussing the concealment of his sexual identity.

Fear of Rejection / Judgement. Overall, four gay men discussed concealing their sexual identity due to fear of rejection or judgment from straight men. One man described his concern that coming out would be a potential "friendship deal-breaker for the straight men in [his] life," while another disclosed concerns that straight men would be "weirded out" by his sexuality. One participant reported concealing his identity in the workplace because he did not want to be "sanctioned." Another respondent illustrated his concern that straight men may not accept his sexuality:

> I'm always very cautious revealing my sexuality around straight men… I'm constantly scared…if they'll be accepting, what they'll think, even though it's not anything they need to bother themselves with. So, I just have a very hard time becoming friends and friendly with straight men and being open with straight men.

Fear of Harassment or Conflict. Nearly all participants, 10 of 11, discussed concealing their sexual identity from straight men due to concerns about physical or verbal harassment or conflict. For example, one man recalled a memory of talking with a group of straight men at a party: "I didn't want to get my ass kicked, so I didn't say anything about my sexuality." Another man stated, "If I think it's gonna be a problem, I just don't say anything. I just don't want to risk it," he continued, "I don't want to invite dissenting conversation about gay stuff with straight men." Most participants related past experiences of being harassed to present-day decisions about disclosure. One participant illustrated:

> I got on the train with my boyfriend… a group of straight men got on the train, saw me and my boyfriend, and started dropping disparaging comments about sexuality. I did not feel comfortable riding the train with them because you do not know exactly what is going to happen. Now, I don't want to be as visible with my sexuality for my own safety.

Similarly, another participant who experienced harassment from straight men in the past explained: "Now when I see them, I think of them as possibly aggressive if they know that I'm gay." Other participants expressed that they expect "insulting" comments or "homophobic slurs" from straight men as a result of harassment in their families or communities of origin.

Participants outlined processes and consequences of concealing their identity for fear of harassment or conflict. For example, one participant explained:

> Coming out to straight men, I always have the slightest bit of reservation, whereas with just about anyone else – whether they identify differently or are female – I don't bat an eye coming out to them. With straight males, there is always a little bit of a barrier to coming out – like, "Should I do this? What is the reaction going to be? Is it going to be aggression?"

Another man related, "I can't share this huge part of my life with straight men, out of fear for my own wellbeing."

Fear of Straight Men Perceiving Attraction from Participant. Five men indicated concealing their sexual identity due to concerns that straight men may perceive physical or romantic attraction. One participant summarized, "If you come out as gay, then the straight men will think you're gonna be hitting on them." Another commented about waiting to come out to straight men: "I don't come out right away to them… I want them to know I'm not doing it to get you naked." One man echoed the sentiments of many: "I don't want them to think that because I'm vulnerable with them or we're sharing these intimate moments that I'm into them."

Discussion

Overall, my study aimed to explore gay men's experiences of heterophobia using quantitative and qualitative methods. In phase one, I used minority stress and heterophobia theories as a framework to elucidate relations between three heterophobia subscales (i.e., unease / avoidance, disconnectedness, and expected rejection) and outness, internalized homonegativity, gay-related rejection sensitivity, conformity to masculine norms, heterosexist harassment and discrimination, gay group identity, and perceived social support among a sample of adult, gay men. In phase two, I interviewed 11 gay men about their central life experiences that contributed to heterophobia and the impact of heterophobia upon their lives.

Phase One

Exploratory analyses from phase one revealed important relations between heterophobia subscales and variables of interest to gay men's mental health. As expected, all heterophobia subscales were positively related to developmental experiences of rejection from straight men. That is, participants in my sample who had experienced more rejection from straight men while growing up were more likely to experience unease, feel disconnected, and expect rejection from straight men. These findings affirm theoretical conceptualizations of heterophobia as a response to early negative experiences with straight men (Haldeman, 2006; Provence et al., 2018).

As hypothesized, experiences of heterosexist harassment and discrimination were positively associated with unease/avoidance and expected rejection, but had no significant association with disconnectedness from straight men. This finding suggests that gay men who have experienced more heterosexist harassment in the last year experienced unease and expected rejection from straight men, but did not feel disconnected from straight men. It is possible that heterosexist harassment and discrimination did not significantly relate to disconnectedness since the measure (HHRDS) asked respondents to reflect on discriminatory experiences only *within the past year.* Combined, my results support the notion that unease/avoidance and expected rejection may develop quickly in response to recent harassment, yet disconnectedness may be more responsive to early experiences of rejection from straight men.

Number of close straight male friends was negatively related to all three heterophobia subscales. That is, participants with more straight male friends likely experienced less avoidance, disconnectedness, or expectations of rejection from straight men. One possible explanation for this relationship may be the impact of intergroup contact in reducing prejudice. In a major meta-analysis, Pettigrew & Tropp (2006) found greater intergroup contact to be associated with *less* prejudice (r = -.21). These effects are not as large for minority groups (r = -.175) as for majority groups (r = -.227; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). And while not necessary to produce the effect, *optimal contact conditions* (i.e., equal status, common goals, no intergroup competition, and authority sanction) facilitated greater decreases in intergroup prejudice (Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011). Importantly, friendship often promotes optimal contact conditions that decrease prejudice: it involves cooperation, common goals, and repeated equal-status contact over time (Pettigrew et al., 2011). Friendship also facilitates self-disclosure, which is an important mediator of intergroup contact's positive effects (Pettigrew et al., 2011). In my study, gay men who have close friendships with straight men may have more significant and *positive* intergroup contact with straight men, thereby dismantling heterophobic feelings.

In contrast, identification with gay group identity positively related to all heterophobia subscales. In other words, gay men who more strongly identified with the gay community were more likely to experience unease, disconnectedness, and expect rejection from straight men. One potential explanation is that gay men who identify strongly with the gay community may ignore, reject, or simply have less contact with straight men. It is possible that ignoring straight men may reify gay men's unease, disconnectedness, and expectations of rejection from straight men. [Note: it is critical to highlight that gay men may have legitimate reasons for socializing with only demographically similar men, since this may buffer experiences of discrimination or marginalization and serve as an adaptive coping strategy.]

Degree of outness was negatively associated with expected rejection, however, it was not significantly related to unease/avoidance or disconnectedness. That is, gay men who considered themselves as more public about their sexual identity were less likely to expect rejection from

straight men. This may be possible for several reasons. First, degree of outness is related to better quality friendships since gay men are able to share important identity information that increases intimacy (Beals & Peplau, 2006). Second, greater degree of outness also corresponds to later stages of gay identity development which may involve positive reevaluations of straight men based on new interactions (Cass, 1984; White & Franzini, 1999). Thus, gay men who consider themselves to be more "out" may have more opportunities for positive, corrective experiences that decrease expected rejection from straight men.

Internalized homonegativity positively predicted expected rejection from straight men, but was not associated with unease/avoidance or disconnectedness. That is, gay men who felt more negatively about their own sexual identity were more likely to expect rejection, but not necessarily experience avoidance or disconnectedness from straight men. While internalized homonegativity did not predict all heterophobia subscales, its relationship with expected rejection aligns with previous research related to rejection. For example, Feinstein, Goldfried, and Davila (2012) demonstrated that sexual minorities with more discrimination experiences were more likely to anticipate future discrimination (i.e., rejection sensitivity) and feel negatively about their sexuality (i.e., internalized homonegativity).

As anticipated, rejection sensitivity was positively associated with all heterophobia subscales. This finding indicates that gay men who anticipated future discrimination on the basis of their sexuality were more likely to experience unease, feel disconnected, and expect rejection from straight men. It is possible that rejection sensitivity may lead to decreased support-seeking and decreased contact with majority group members (Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002; Pachankis et al., 2008). Thus, gay men who score highly on rejection sensitivity may decrease intergroup contact with straight men, thereby increasing heterophobia. Another explanation is related to expectations of antigay bias and interpersonal rejection. That is, gay men who scored highly on rejection sensitivity anticipated others to be disapproving of their sexuality. Gay men's expectations of gay-related disapproval may be especially pronounced from straight men, who have significantly stronger homonegative attitudes toward gay men than other sexual minorities

(Herek, 2002; Kite & Whitley, 1996). Therefore, gay men may anticipate straight men to hold stronger antigay views, anticipate rejection from this group, and cultivate heterophobic attitudes.

Contrary to hypotheses, conformity to masculine norms did not have significant associations with heterophobia subscales. This finding is surprising since adherence to traditional masculinity norms impacts quality of male friendships, limits men's emotional expressiveness, and discourages closeness between men (Levant, 2011; Migliaccio, 2009). Further, traditional masculinity places a taboo on male-male closeness, which may be especially distressing to gay men (Sanchez et al., 2009). Finally, gay men are at increased risk to experience strain between notions of traditional masculinity and their sexual identity, also known as gender role conflict. Gender role conflict has been linked with low self-esteem, reduced intimacy, and social discomfort (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995; Hayes & Mahalik, 2000; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991). Thus, I expected gay men who conform to traditional masculine norms to report greater degrees of heterophobia. It is possible that the lack of significant findings may be representative of methodological issues of the CMNI-22 which has come under recent scrutiny (e.g., Owen, 2011). Another explanation may be related to gay men's lack of adherence to traditional masculine norms. For example, previous research has indicated that gay men tend to identify less strongly with traditional masculine norms than straight men (Wade & Donis, 2007). As a result, gay men may be less susceptible to the adverse interpersonal consequences that accompany adherence to traditional male norms.

As predicted, perceived social support was negatively associated with heterophobia subscales. Participants in my sample who perceived themselves as having more general social support endorsed less avoidance, feelings of disconnectedness, and expectations of rejection from straight men. Although not hypothesized to have relations with heterophobia, age was negatively associated with all heterophobia subscales. It is possible that older gay participants have had more time and opportunity than younger men to seek positive social support from straight men. For example, a 37-year old gay man may have had more sheer contact with straight men than a 19-year-old gay man by virtue of age, thereby increasing his odds for positive social connection. It is also plausible that older gay men may be farther removed from a history of rejection from straight

men compared to younger men, or be at a later stage of identity development. Interestingly, attainment of a graduate degree was positively related to disconnectedness and expected rejection from straight men, but not with unease or avoidance. Attainment of a bachelor's degree was also positively associated with expected rejection from straight men, but not other subscales. Additional research should examine the role of educational attainment on relationships with straight men as it pertains to heterophobia. Race was not significantly associated with any study outcomes.

Phase Two

Analyses from phase two revealed several key themes amongst men who scored highly on the Heterophobia Scale. First, gay men identified a number of barriers to developing connections with straight men, including feeling excluded from or different than straight men. A majority of my participants discussed a general sense of discomfort around straight men, which was often foregrounded by experiences of heterosexism and homophobia at the hands of straight men. Negative, heterosexist experiences also contributed to my participants sensing danger in the presence of straight men or avoiding environments with straight men altogether. However, some gay men attributed their lack of connection with straight men to themselves (e.g., self-blame). Most gay men commented on their lack of shared interests with straight men, which was frequently identified as a strong barrier to cultivating meaningful friendships.

These findings provide support for previous theoretical hypotheses that gay men develop heterophobia as a result of past experiences of prejudice, discrimination, and trauma from straight men (Haldeman, 2006). Specifically, many of my participants described painful developmental experiences that contributed to their current fears and worries about straight men. Participants' experiences included negative relationships with and isolation from same-gender peers in school; loss of emotional connection to other males during childhood; experiences of being bullied as a child by straight boys; and family issues, particularly with straight male figures and siblings. Gay men in my study highlighted the hurt associated with being excluded from a variety of activities with straight men while growing up, which often led them to feel disconnected from straight men in their adult lives. Some men also discussed experiences of

developing romantic attractions to their straight friends, which they unanimously cautioned against and described as destructive or harmful.

In addition to barriers, phase two participants highlighted experiences that positively expanded their notions of straight men and friendship. They especially noted the importance of straight female friends who serve as social proxies to straight men. This finding coheres with other literature that has recognized the significant benefits of friendships between straight women and gay men (Lewis, Al-Shawaf, Conroy-Beam, Asao, & Buss, 2012; Lewis et al., 2011). For example, Grigoriou (2004) found that gay men consider straight female friends to be trustworthy sources of romantic advice and social support. My findings suggest that straight women may also serve another socially supportive function for gay men, in that they provide a bridge to relationships with straight men. Many of my participants discussed becoming friends with their straight female friends' boyfriends. Gay men noted it helpful to have a female friend conduct a "litmus test" to determine a straight man's stance on sexual identity issues.

Participants also discussed their broad beliefs about men and masculinity. Most participants reflected on straight men's social privilege, which they viewed as significantly different from their social standing as gay men. A majority of interviewees described stark contrasts between straight and gay men and identified methods they employ to manage interactions with straight men, such as behavioral shifts so as to not transgress masculinity (e.g., lower pitch of voice, eliminate effeminate behavior). Participants talked about disclosing or concealing their sexual identity with straight men, and had a range of positive, negative, and neutral coming out experiences. In addition to topics related to disclosure, participants outlined reasons for concealing their identity with straight men, including fear of rejection or harassment, and fear that straight men might perceive sexual attraction.

Integrated Summary

Overall, my participants' experiences contribute unique insight into the development and perpetuation of heterophobia. Gay men's heterophobia appears to be connected to early, negative experiences with straight men. Across phases, gay men reported a range of early, negative

experiences with straight men. The qualitative stories shared with men from phase two illustrated painful experiences of isolation, rejection, and alienation from straight men. Participants across phases reported higher heterophobia if they did not have many close, straight male friends.

Interestingly, although most participants reported positive experiences coming out to straight men, they continued to expect rejection, experience discomfort, or avoid straight men. That is, gay men continued to report heterophobic attitudes even after a host of positive coming-out experiences with straight men. This finding suggests that positive identity-disclosure experiences are not enough *in and of themselves* to alter gay men's heterophobia. Therefore, gay men may need more than positive coming-out reactions alone to alter perceptions of straight men that were likely formed and reified during their early development.

Current literature suggests that heterophobia may be lessened by "corrective experiences" with warm, straight male figures (Haldeman, 2006; Provence, Rochlen, Chester & Smith, 2014). A majority of my participants reported experiences that positively shifted their perceptions of straight men, yet they continued to endorse heterophobic attitudes. These results suggest that the positive experiences my participants had with straight men were not significant enough to mitigate participants' heterophobic attitudes. It is possible that changes in gay men's fear of straight men may require a greater degree of intervention than experienced by the men in my study. My results indicate that corrective experiences may need to come in the form of deeply meaningful interpersonal connection or friendship to impact heterophobia. One study highlighted this approach by demonstrating that gay men experienced less heterophobia by intimately connecting with straight men in mixed-orientation group therapy (Provence, Rochlen, Chester, & Smith, 2014).

Limitations and Future Directions

The present study's results provide one of the first, exploratory analyses of gay men's experiences of heterophobia. However, the results must be interpreted in context of limitations of the present study. First, I chose to limit the study participants to gay men, chiefly because the Heterophobia Scale was developed for use with gay men, and preliminary research on

heterophobia uses gay men (Provence et al., 2018). Thus, the conclusions reached about the study population should not be generalized to bisexual men, or other men who identify in a way other than "gay." Second, my sample was limited in its diversity, with a strong majority of respondents identifying as highly educated, White men under 40. I also did not collect information related to socioeconomic status. Therefore, my final sample does not accurately represent a true cross-section of gay male demographics and should not be generalized as such.

Other important limitations relate to my methods of data collection. Phase one analyses included observational data, which should not be used to make causal inferences about gay men's experiences of heterophobia. Further, data from both phases of the present study were provided by participant self-report. It is possible that the data in my study may have been influenced by participants' desires to be perceived in a particular light (i.e., social desirability bias).

A further study limitation is that, in the second phase of the study, I recruited only gay men who scored highly on the heterophobia measure. I limited the sample in terms of heterophobia score because I wanted participants to have enough similar experiences, so caution should be taken to not generalize to gay men broadly. It is possible gay men with lower heterophobia scores would have significantly different experiences than the men in my study.

My study indicates a number of promising implications for future research on heterophobia. First, it is critical to better understand the relationship between heterophobia and masculinity. My qualitative participants discussed the importance of masculinity as it pertains to their relationships with straight men. However, there were no significant relationships between heterophobia and conformity to traditional masculine norms in my quantitative examination. This discrepancy should be examined in future work. It is possible that the lack of significant results in this area may be representative of methodological challenges related to gay men's conformity to masculine norms. It may be helpful to initiate quantitative research that utilizes measures that capture nontraditional male role norms (e.g., Wade & Donis, 2007).

While my study provides foundational understanding of the direct relationships between heterophobia and other relevant constructs, I would like to see further development of a conceptual model of heterophobia. For example, researchers might test for moderators of heterophobia. Potential moderators to be tested include the current and past quality of gay men's friendships with straight men. It might also be useful for researchers to test whether positive coming out experiences with straight men or level of trauma history serve as moderators to heterophobia factors. Future research may also examine whether heterophobia factors serve as mediators between rejection experiences and other mental health outcomes, such as depression, anxiety, and suicidality. It may also be helpful to design experimental studies to determine the malleability of heterophobia. Finally, future qualitative studies should examine the experiences of gay men who do *not* endorse high degrees of heterophobia. This area of study may provide important insight into what experiences *do* contribute to less heterophobia. A study of this nature may provide knowledge about life experiences that inform positive relationships with straight men.

A number of important implications for clinical practice can also be noted. Counselors working with gay men might consider employing the heterophobia scale to better understand their clients' relationships with straight men if clinically indicated. (It is important to note that not every gay male client will score highly on the heterophobia measure or require clinical intervention related to relationships with straight men.) The heterophobia subscales may be especially helpful for straight-identified male clinicians that work with gay men. My study may provide insight into some unique challenges in building the therapeutic alliance between straight clinicians and gay clients. For example, straight male clinicians would likely benefit from understanding the link between developmental experiences of rejection with straight men and heterophobia. Understanding heterophobia factors may also help straight male clinicians determine the clinical utility and potential consequences of disclosing their sexual identity to gay male clients. In addition to individual counseling, group facilitators may also benefit from understanding heterophobia factors in their gay male clients. Provence et al (2014) found that

supportive contact with straight men in group counseling served as a “corrective experience” for gay men experiencing heterophobia. For gay men presenting with concerns related to heterophobia, positive emotional experiences with straight men in therapeutic groups may be particularly helpful. In order to facilitate these positive experiences, group clinicians should be particularly mindful of heterophobia and its predictors.

Conclusion

In summary, the current study provides compelling insights into heterophobia and related constructs. It is my hope that this study might promote awareness about gay men’s unique history with a dominant majority group of straight men. It is also hoped that awareness of these issues might catalyze additional research about gay men’s unique experiences with straight men. In particular, it will be important to continue examining the emerging concept of *heterophobia* and its impact on gay men’s social support, isolation, and mental health.

Appendices Note

Note: The appendices contain two different types of information. Appendices A and B include information about the study methods. Appendix C includes the expanded literature review.

Appendix A

Study Measures

Survey Instructions and Demographic Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in this survey!

- You will be asked a number of questions relating to your experiences as a gay man.

- There are **x short blocks** of questions, each with its own scale and set of directions.

- You can track your progress using the **progress bar** at the bottom of the screen.

- Information on **entry into lottery** is provided at the end of the survey.

1. What is your age? ______
2. How do you identify your race/ethnicity?

   American Indian or Alaska Native

   Asian

   Black or African American

   Hispanic or Latino

   Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

   White

   Biracial or Multiracial

   Other ______ (add your own)

3. In what state (or country) do you currently reside? ___________
4. What is the highest educational level you have completed?

   Did not finish high school

   High school degree or GED

   Associate's Degree

   Some college

   Bachelor's Degree

   Some graduate school

   Graduate Degree

5. Do you self-identify as a gay male? Yes No

6. I have been satisfied with my dating/relationship experiences with other men.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. Growing up, I experienced rejection from straight men.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. Approximately how many close personal friends do you have who are straight men?

9. Of the following, who knows about your sexual identity/orientation (check all that apply):

- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Both Parents
- ☐ Guardian
- ☐ None

Heterophobia Scale (HS)

Directions: Please answer each question using the following 1-7 scale.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Some questions will ask you to imagine yourself in hypothetical situations. When the term "straight men" is used, we are referring to men you either ***know to be*** or ***perceive to be*** heterosexual.

1. When I'm the only gay man in a social setting, I feel unsafe.
2. In social situations, I'm just as comfortable being with straight men as gay men.
3. When interacting with a straight man, I tend to wonder whether he will accept me.
4. I become uneasy making small talk with straight men.
5. I feel equally free to be myself among gay men and straight men
6. Straight men wouldn't want to hear about my coming out experience.
7. The idea of going to a predominantly straight gym makes me anxious.
8. It is easy for me to enjoy myself when spending time with straight men.
9. I think some straight men might feel uncomfortable if they know I'm gay.
10. I feel tense in my interactions with most straight men.
11. Straight men share my basic values
12. Straight men would judge me if they found out about my sexual orientation.
13. I believe that a straight man may behave violently toward me if he knew that I was gay.
14. I think most straight men could easily relate to me.
15. Straight men would be put off by hearing the details of my sexual life.
16. I tend to avoid straight men.
17. I would readily join a group or club that included mostly straight men
18. I don't talk about dating with straight men.
19. When using a restroom, I am careful to keep my distance from straight men.
20. I am equally likely to interact with gay or straight men at social gatherings.

Single-Item Outness Indicator (SIOI)

Directions: Please answer each question using the following 1-5 scale.

1. I would say that I am open (out) as gay, bisexual, or a man attracted to other men.

Not At All Open (Out)		Somewhat Open (Out)		Open (Out) to All or Most People I Know
1	2	3	4	5

Internalized Homonegativity Inventory (IHNI)

Directions: The following statements deal with emotions and thoughts related to being gay. Using the scale below, please give your honest rating about the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement

Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

1. I believe being gay is an important part of me.
2. I believe it is OK for men to be attracted to men in an emotional way, but it's not OK for them to have sex with each other.
3. When I think of my homosexuality, I feel depressed.
4. I believe that it is morally wrong for men to have sex with other men.
5. I feel ashamed of my homosexuality.
6. I am thankful for my sexual orientation.
7. When I think about my attraction towards men, I feel unhappy.
8. I believe that more gay men should be shown in TV shows, movies, and commercials
9. I see my homosexuality as a gift.
10. When people around me talk about homosexuality, I get nervous.
11. I wish I could control my feelings of attraction toward other men.
12. In general, I believe that homosexuality is as fulfilling as heterosexuality.
13. I am disturbed when people can tell I'm gay.
14. In general, I believe that gay men are more immoral than straight men.
15. Sometimes I get upset when I think about being attracted to men.
16. In my opinion, homosexuality is harmful to the order of society.
17. Sometimes I feel I might be better off dead than gay.
18. I sometimes resent my sexual orientation.
19. I believe it is morally wrong for men to be attracted to each other.
20. I sometimes feel that my homosexuality is embarrassing.
21. I am proud to be gay.
22. I believe that public schools should teach that homosexuality is normal.
23. I believe it is unfair that I am attracted to men instead of women.

Gay-Related Rejection Sensitivity Scale (RS)

Directions: For each item below, please answer these two questions using the following scale.

A. How ***anxious/concerned*** would you be if this situation occurred due to your sexual orientation?

Very unconcerned ***Very concerned***

1 2 3 4 5 6

B. How ***likely*** is it that this event occurred due to your sexual orientation?

Very unlikely ***Very likely***

1 2 3 4 5 6

1. You bring a male partner to a family reunion. Two of your old-fashioned aunts don't come talk to you even though they see you.
2. A 3-year old child of a distant relative is crawling on your lap. His mom comes to take him away.
3. You've been dating someone for a few years now, and you receive a wedding invitation to a straight friend's wedding. The invite was addressed only to you, not you and a guest.
4. You go to a job interview and the interviewer asks if you are married. You say that you and your partner have been together for 5 years. You later find out that you don't get the job.
5. You are going to have surgery, and the doctor tells you that he would like to give you an HIV test.
6. You go to donate blood and the person who is supposed to draw your blood turns to her co-worker and says, "Why don't you take this one?"
7. You go get an STD check-up, and the man taking your sexual history is rude towards you.
8. You bring a guy you are dating to a fancy restaurant of straight patrons, and you are seated away from everyone else in a back corner of the restaurant.
9. Only you and a group of macho men are on a subway train late at night. They look in your direction and laugh.
10. You and your partner are on a road trip and decide to check into a hotel in a rural town. The sign out front says there are vacancies. The two of you go inside, and the woman at the front desk says that there are no rooms left.

11. You go to a party and you and your partner are the only gay people there. No one seems interested in talking to you.

12. You are in a locker room in a straight gym. One guy nearby moves to another area to change clothes.

13. Some straight colleagues are talking about baseball. You force yourself to join the conversation, and they dismiss your input.

14. Your colleagues are celebrating a co-worker's birthday at a restaurant. You are not invited.

The Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI)

Directions: The following items contain a series of statements about how men might think, feel or behave. The statements are designed to measure attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors associated with both traditional and non-traditional masculine gender roles.

Thinking about your own actions, feelings and beliefs, please indicate how much **you personally agree or disagree with each statement** by circling SD for "Strongly Disagree", D for "Disagree", A for "Agree", or SA for "Strongly agree" to the right of the statement. There are no correct or wrong answers to the items. You should give the responses that most accurately describe your personal actions, feelings and beliefs. It is best if you respond with your first impression when answering.

1.	My work is the most important part of my life	SD	D	A	SA
2.	I make sure people do as I say	SD	D	A	SA
3.	In general, I do not like risky situations	SD	D	A	SA
4.	It would be awful if someone thought I was gay	SD	D	A	SA
5.	I love it when men are in charge of women	SD	D	A	SA
6.	I like to talk about my feelings	SD	D	A	SA
7.	I would feel good if I had many sexual partners	SD	D	A	SA
8.	It is important to me that people think I am heterosexual	SD	D	A	SA
9.	I believe that violence is never justified	SD	D	A	SA
10.	I tend to share my feelings	SD	D	A	SA
11.	I should be in charge	SD	D	A	SA
12.	I would hate to be important	SD	D	A	SA
13.	Sometimes violent action is necessary	SD	D	A	SA
14.	I don’t like giving all my attention to work	SD	D	A	SA
15.	More often than not, losing does not bother me	SD	D	A	SA
16.	If I could, I would frequently change sexual partners	SD	D	A	SA
17.	I never do things to be an important person	SD	D	A	SA
18.	I never ask for help	SD	D	A	SA
19.	I enjoy taking risks	SD	D	A	SA
20.	Men and women should respect each other as equals	SD	D	A	SA
21.	Winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing	SD	D	A	SA
22.	It bothers me when I have to ask for help	SD	D	A	SA

Heterosexist Harassment, Rejection, and Discrimination Scale (HHRDS)

Directions: For each question, please circle a number that best reflects your experience in the last year. The rating scale is as follows:

Never Happened to You	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Happened Often (Over 70% of Time)
1	2	3	4	5	6

1. How many times have you been treated unfairly by teachers or professors because you are gay?
2. How many times have you been treated unfairly by your employer, boss, or supervisors because you are gay?
3. How may times have you been treated unfairly by your co-workers, fellow students, or colleagues because you are gay?
4. How many times have you been treated unfairly by people in service jobs (by store clerks, waiters, bartenders, waitresses, bank tellers, mechanics, and others) because you are gay?
5. How many times have you been treated unfairly by strangers because you are gay?
6. How many times have you been treated unfairly by people in helping jobs (by doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, caseworkers, dentists, school counselors, therapists, pediatricians, school principals, and others) because you are gay?
7. How many times were you denied a raise, a promotion, tenure, a good assignment, a job, or other such thing at work that you deserved because you are gay?
8. How many times have you been treated unfairly by your family because you are gay?
9. How many times have you been called a heterosexist name like faggot, fairy, or other names?
10. How many times have you been made fun of, picked on, pushed, shoved, hit, or threatened with harm because you are gay?
11. How many times have you been rejected by family members because you are gay?
12. How many times have you been rejected by friends because you are gay?
13. How many times have you heard anti-gay remarks from family members?
14. How many times have you been verbally insulted because you are gay?

The Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Group Identity Measure (LGBGIM)

Directions: Please respond to the following items related to your connection to the lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) communities and your identity as an LGB person.

Strongly disagree	**Disagree**	**Disagree somewhat**	**Agree somewhat**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
1	2	3	4	5	6

1. I have spent time trying to find out more about the LGB community.
2. I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly LGB people.
3. I have a clear sense of my sexual orientation and what it means for me.
4. I am happy that I am a member of the LGB community.
5. I am not very clear about the role of my sexual orientation in my life.
6. In order to learn more about LGB culture I have often talked to other people about LGB culture.
7. I have a lot of pride in the LGB community and its accomplishments.
8. I participate in LGB cultural practices such as pride events, benefits, or marches.
9. I feel a strong attachment towards the LGB community.
10. I feel good about being a part of the LGB community.

The Social Provisions Scale (SPS)

In answering the next set of questions, think about your current relationship with friends, family members, coworkers, community members, and so on. Please describe to what extent you agree that each statement describes your current relationships with other people.

Use the following scale to give your opinion. So, for example, if you feel a statement is very true of your current relationships, you would indicate "strongly agree". If you feel a statement clearly does not describe your relationships, you would respond "strongly disagree".

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

1. There are people I can depend on to help me if I really need it.
2. I feel that I do not have close personal relationships with other people.
3. There is no one I can turn to for guidance in times of stress.
4. There are people who depend on me for help.
5. There are people who enjoy the same social activities I do.
6. Other people do not view me as competent.
7. I feel personally responsible for the well-being of another person.
8. I feel part of a group of people who share my attitudes and beliefs.
9. I do not think other people respect my skills and abilities.
10. If something went wrong, no one would come to my assistance.
11. I have close relationships that provide me with a sense of emotional security and well-being.
12. There is someone I could talk to about important decisions in my life.
13. I have relationships where my competence and skills are recognized.
14. There is no one who shares my interests and concerns.
15. There is no one who really relies on me for their well-being.
16. There is a trustworthy person I could turn to for advice if I were having problems.
17. I feel a strong emotional bond with at least one other person.
18. There is no one I can depend on for aid if I really need it.
19. There is no one I feel comfortable talking about problems with.
20. There are people who admire my talents and abilities.
21. I lack a feeling of intimacy with another person.
22. There is no one who likes to do the things I do.
23. There are people I can count on in an emergency.
24. No one needs me to care for them.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Initial Interview:

1. One of the things we are interested in knowing more about is the important straight men in your life. Could you please tell me some about important straight men throughout the course of your life?
    a. [if not addressed by participant] Could you also please describe your family and in particular, the important men in your family. [If unclear or unspecified: out of those men, how many of them are straight men?]
    b. How did these men shape your ideas about being a man?
    c. How has being gay impacted your relationship with these important men?
    d. How do your early experiences with straight men shape what you expect from straight men?
    e. How did your relationships with these important straight men impact how you relate to straight men now?

2. How out are you to straight men in your life?
    a. Can you please briefly describe the experiences you've had coming out to straight men in your life?
    b. How would you describe or characterize the feedback or responses have you received from straight men after coming out? Describe for me the reactions you've experienced.
    c. How did your coming out experiences to straight men compared to others in your life?
    d. If you aren't out to particular straight men in your life, can you briefly discuss your reasons for staying in the closet with these people?

3. How do you go about developing friendships or relationships with straight men?
    a. How do you determine if straight men are safe to open up to? Safe to come out to? Safe to be in relationships with?
    b. Can you recall any situations where you felt discomfort or unease around straight men? Please describe that/those situations and why you felt discomfort or unease.
    c. How do you think these experiences have impacted your general relationships with straight men in your life?
    d. What are some barriers you see to establishing intimate relationships with straight men?

4. How have interactions with straight men changed depending on where you are (e.g., work, family, friends)?
    a. Are there instances/environments/contexts where you feel uncomfortable around straight men? Can you tell me a bit more about those environments?
    b. How would you describe your general impressions of straight men?

c. How have your experiences as a gay man shaped your general impressions of straight men? Your feelings toward straight men?

5. Have you had any experiences that have changed your impressions of straight men? If so, what are they? Please tell me more about these experiences.

6. How has masculinity impacted your relationships with straight men?
   a. How does masculinity impact your thoughts or feelings about straight men?
   b. What has being a gay man taught you about friendship with other men, and in particular, straight men?
   c. How have your relationships with straight men changed over time?

7. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your relationships with straight men that we did not get to discuss today? Perhaps anything that might be helpful for others to know about relationships with straight men?

<u>Follow-up Interview:</u>

1. How would you describe your experience being interviewed for this study?

2. Were there any particularly positive, negative, or otherwise important aspects to your interview?

3. Is there any feedback you would provide for improving your experience as a participant in this study?

4. After completing the one-hour interview, did you have any new thoughts, feelings, or memories about your experiences with straight men?

5. Do you have any remaining questions about the purpose of the study or your participation?

Appendix C

Extended Literature Review

Defining Key Terminology

Terminology germane to the topic of sexuality is fluid and changes over time. Extant sexuality literature contains a litany of terms relevant to the concept of heterophobia (e.g., sexual minority, LGB, internalized homophobia). In the present manuscript, several of these terms are used in order to discuss issues relevant to a sample of gay men. In order to elucidate the meaning of these terms, I define them in detail here.

First, *sexual minority* refers to any individual whose sexual orientation is not heterosexual (Meyer, 2003). The term *sexual minority* most often subsumes another frequently-used term, *LGB* (lesbian, gay, bisexual). However, it also encompasses identities beyond this, such as asexual, pansexual, closeted, or bicurious. As understanding of sexual identity transforms, the term *sexual minority* may also come to encompass other terms not listed here. In the present manuscript, *sexual minority* and *LGB* are used interchangeably to refer to people of non-dominant sexual orientation. I have elected to use *LGB* instead of *LGBTQ* since the latter term encompasses transgender individuals. While an important area of study, *gender identity* is a different construct from sexual orientation that includes its own distinct developmental process (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005).

Second, the present study uses *sexual identity* and *sexual orientation* interchangeably to refer to an individual's identified feelings of sexual and romantic attraction toward a given gender. Other important terms used include *sexual stigma, homonegativity, homophobia, and heterosexism.* These terms all refer to a constellation of negative feelings and attitudes toward sexual minority individuals and may be preceded by the term *internalized* to signify feelings toward onself. These terms may be used interchangeably in the present study, though heterosexism and homonegativity will be the most commonly applied terms since they reflect current literature and the measures employed in the present study. Finally, *stigma consciousness*

(Doyle & Molix, 2014) and *rejection sensitivity* (Feinstein et al., 2012) are both used to explain sexual minorities' expectations of rejection, discrimination, and stigma from the majority group.

Gay Men's Social Health

Research has consistently shown that social support can act as a buffer against stress and aid in coping abilities of individuals confronting a variety of life stressors (Munoz-Plaza et al., 2002). Conversely, experiences of social isolation and loneliness are strong predictors of negative mental health consequences, such as depression and suicidality (Fenaughty & Harre, 2003; Hatzenbuehler, McLaughlin, & Xuan, 2012; Joiner et al., 2009; McAndrew & Warne, 2010; Paul et al., 2002; Westefeld, Maples, Buford & Taylor, 2001). Social isolation and loneliness are especially problematic for sexual minority youths (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2012) and older adults (Dykstra, van Tilburg, & de Jong Gierveld, 2005; Fredriksen-Goldsen, Kim, Barkan, Muraco, & Hoy-Ellis, 2013). For instance, studies indicate that high-school and college-aged sexual minorities experience elevated rates of loneliness and social isolation from peers (Cech & Waidzunas, 2011; Munoz-Plaza et al., 2002; Westefeld et al., 2001). Further, gay and lesbian youth have also been found to have lower social status (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2012), feel less connected to schools (Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006), and receive less support from peers (Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006; Safren & Heimberg, 1999) than heterosexual youths, likely due to their stigmatized sexual identities (Meyer, 2003; Munoz-Plaza et al., 2002).

Sexual minority men are especially vulnerable to social isolation and loneliness (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2012). Studies consistently demonstrate that gay men have the lowest percentage of same-gender friends relative to heterosexual men, heterosexual women, and lesbian women (Diamond & Dubé, 2002; Schneider & Witherspoon, 2000). Specifically, estimates of same-gender friendships range from 43-49% among gay men versus 73-84% for heterosexual men, 57-76% for heterosexual women, and 73-84% for lesbian women (Diamond & Dubé, 2002; Schneider & Witherspoon, 2000). Gay males also tend to have the lowest proportion of friends who share their sexual orientation (Schneider & Witherspoon, 2000). Moreover, gay males are least likely to have a same-gender best friend (Diamond & Dubé,

2002). Evidence also suggests that gay men have lower self-esteem, are more socially anxious, and are more fearful of negative social evaluation than heterosexual men (Pachankis & Goldfried, 2006), especially in situations involving heterosexuality and stereotypic male behavior (e.g., sports, family gatherings). An adverse consequence of gay men's social anxiety is that it may interfere with the attainment of and satisfaction with social support (Pachankis & Goldfried, 2006). In a sample of gay and lesbian youth, social anxiety was associated with less satisfaction with social support, which was predictive of depression and suicidality (Safren & Pantalone, 2006). Conversely, empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that strong social support positively impacts gay men's overall well-being and serves as an important protective factor (Fenaughty & Harré, 2003; Munoz-Plaza et al., 2002; Peterson & Bakeman, 2006; Sattler, Wagner, & Christiansen, 2016).

Relational Cultural Theory contends that individuals develop through connections with others – relationship, rather than autonomy, is the cornerstone of growth (Duffey & Somody, 2011; Jordan 2000). The basic tenets of RCT suggest that people are "hard-wired to desire connection," and that such connections foster psychological growth and wellbeing (Duffey & Somody, 2011, p. 226; Jordan, 2000, 2009). In contrast, experiences of relational and sociocultural disconnection negatively impact mental health (Mereish & Poteat, 2015; Jordan, 2009). For example, experiences of disconnection may result in confusion or lack of clarity about self and other, decreases in energy, an inability to act, decreased self-worth, and withdrawal from social contact (Comstock et al., 2008; Duffey & Somody, 2011; Hartling, Rosen, Walker, & Jordan, 2000).

Disconnections are likely to occur when minority individuals experience discrimination or marginalization (Duffey & Somody, 2011). Indeed, sexual minority individuals are especially likely to experience disconnection and its consequences (Mereish & Poteat, 2015). Sexual minorities have less power than heterosexuals and experience stigma and discrimination in various ways (e.g., hate crimes, microaggressions, civil inequality; Hatzenbuehler et al., 2010; Herek, 2009; Mereish & Poteat, 2015; Meyer, 2003). Disconnection and marginalization also

contribute to the development of identity concealment motivations and internalized homonegativity, which can result in negative health consequences for sexual minority individuals (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2010; Meyer, 2003; Mereish & Poteat, 2015; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Morris, Waldo, & Rothblum, 2001; Newcomb & Mustanski, 2010). Moreover, feelings of loneliness are particularly problematic because they fuel isolation from others, particularly supportive peers in the LGBT community who may be a strong source of social support (Doty, Willoughby, Lindahl, & Malik, 2010; Mereish & Poteat, 2015). Overall, it is clear that lack of social support is associated with deleterious outcomes for sexual minority individuals.

Heterophobia

Historically, the study of sexual minorities' attitudes toward straight individuals has been done without the benefit of a validated measure (Provence et al., 2018). For example, White and Franzini (1999) conducted a survey of "heteronegativity" in order to explore sexual minority individuals' attitudes toward heterosexuals. White and Franzini (1999) adapted language of the The Hudson and Ricketts Index of Homophobia (IHP) to assess for these attitudes. For instance, "I would feel comfortable working closely with a male homosexual" was reworded to "I would feel comfortable working closely with a male heterosexual" (White & Franzini, 1999; p. 71). The use of this translated measure failed to adequately capture the complex nature of heterophobia as a construct (Provence et al., 2018). In response, researchers proposed theoretical and conceptual models for understanding heterophobia that significantly differentiated it from "reverse homophobia" (e.g., Haldeman, 2006; Provence et al., 2018).

Heterophobia is theorized to be a relatively stable trait that encompasses a constellation of negative thoughts, feelings, or behaviors regarding straight men, particularly fear and avoidance (Haldeman, 2006; Provence et al., 2018). Haldeman first defined the term *gay male heterophobia* as the "common fear that many gay and bisexual men harbor of heterosexual men" (2006, p. 303). While considered to be a relatively stable trait, researchers (Haldeman, 2006; Provence et al., 2018) have theorized that heterophobia may respond to intervention. For

example, in a clinical case study, Haldeman (2006) outlined a course of treatment for heterophobia that included an analysis of its origin and developmental underpinnings.

Importantly, Haldeman posited that gay men develop heterophobia as a result of past experiences of prejudice, discrimination, and trauma from straight men. Specifically, he noted several possible developmental factors, such as negative relationships with same-gender peers in school; loss of emotional connection to masculine/paternal figures during childhood; experiences of being bullied as a child; family issues, particularly with straight male figures/siblings; and other relevant, traumatic experiences with straight men. Haldeman (2006) emphasized the importance of gay men undergoing "corrective experiences" with warm, straight male figures as a way to lessen heterophobia. One recent study (Provence, Rochlen, Chester, & Smith, 2014) also highlighted the importance of corrective emotional experiences for gay men with heterophobic attitudes: gay men reduced their heterophobia by intimately connecting with straight men in mixed-orientation group therapy. Provence et al. (2014) noted that half of their participants experienced a decrease in their heterophobia as a result of intimacy with straight men.

It is critical to distinguish heterophobia from clinical psychopathology. The term *phobia* has been used diagnostically to refer to an irrational fear of a particular stimulus. For example, the DSM-5 for *Specific Phobia* specifies that diagnosable phobia must cause significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. The DSM-5 further indicates that such fears must be disproportionate to the actual danger that the object or situation poses.

In the context of heterophobia, the distinction between rational and irrational appears to be unclear. Gay men who have experienced significant rejection at the hands of a powerful majority group of straight men may understandably fear, avoid, or feel disconnected from this group. Heterophobia may be an adaptive and normative response for gay men who may have experienced developmental rejection by straight men. In other instances, it is plausible that heterophobia may prevent or interfere with gay men's opportunities to cultivate potentially

fulfilling relationships with straight men. However, I expect that heterophobia develops as a result of significant, negative experiences with straight men. Therefore, this term should not be used to diagnose or pathologize individuals, but rather to indicate a specific set of psychological events and experiences.

Cross-Orientation Friendships Among Men

Given the pernicious effects of isolation and the importance of social support, researchers have turned their attention to sources of social support for gay men. Studies consistently demonstrate that gay men have the lowest percentage of same-gender friends relative to heterosexual men, heterosexual women, and lesbian women (Diamond & Dubé, 2002; Schneider & Witherspoon, 2000). Specifically, estimates of same-gender friendships range from 43-49% among gay men versus 73-84% for heterosexual men, 57-76% for heterosexual women, and 73-84% for lesbian women (Diamond & Dubé, 2002; Schneider & Witherspoon, 2000). Gay males also tend to have the lowest proportion of friends who share their sexual orientation (Schneider & Witherspoon, 2000). Finally, gay males are least likely to have a same-gender best friend (Diamond & Dubé, 2002).

While friendships between men across sexual orientation exist, they appear to be uncommon (Barrett, 2013). Empirical and theoretical attempts to understand friendships between straight and gay men have typically done so using the concepts of homophobia or heterosexism (Barrett, 2013; Pascoe, 2005; Plummer, 1999). A dominant theory has emerged that heterosexual men's attitudes toward gay men create barriers toward the development of friendships with gay men (Barrett, 2013; Hatzenbuehler et al., 2012; Herek, 2000). For instance, heterosexual men have significantly stronger homonegative attitudes toward gay men than other sexual-minorities (Herek, 2002; Kite & Whitley, 1996). Adherence to traditional masculinity and gender norms is strongly related to homonegative attitudes in heterosexual men (Keiller, 2010; Kite & Whitley, 1996; Levant, 2011). In fact, a meta-analysis (Kite & Whitley, 1996) found that "heterosexual men may see gay men's violations [of gender role norms] as particularly egregious because men tend to adhere more strongly to gender role norms than women" (p. 344). Indeed, heterosexual

men's homonegative attitudes play an important role in gay men's social isolation by impeding friendships between gay and straight men. Although research about cross-orientation friendship has primarily focused on straight men's heterosexism and homophobia, recent studies indicate that gay men may avoid or withdraw from friendships with straight men due to their own heterophobic attitudes (Provence et al., 2018).

Coming Out, Degree of Outness, and Heterophobia

The decision to either conceal or disclose one's sexual identity is a source of significant stress for gay individuals (DiPlacido, 1998; Meyer, 2003). Overall, concealment of one's sexual identity is associated with a range of negative outcomes including suicidality (Morris, Waldo, & Rothblum, 2001), fewer job promotions (Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007), lower satisfaction in same-sex relationships (Mohr & Fassinger, 2006), incidence of cancer, and progression of HIV infections (Cole, Kemeny, Taylor & Visscher, 1996). Conversely, research reports a positive association between sexual identity disclosures and mental health outcomes (e.g., Beals, Peplau, & Gable, 2009; Bybee, Sullivan, Zielonka, & Moes, 2009). Examples include diminished stress of secrecy (Rosario, Hunter, Maguen, Gwadz, & Smith, 2001), increased self-esteem (Corrigan & Matthews, 2003), and less internalized homophobia (Frost & Meyer, 2009).

The risks associated with coming out may be especially pronounced for gay men. Evidence suggests that gay men are more often the targets of sexual prejudice than lesbian women and bisexual men (Bogaert & Hafer, 2009; Herek, 2009). In comparison to lesbian women, gay men are more likely to engender stronger negative affective reactions, be regarded as mentally ill, and be perceived as child molesters (Herek, 2002). Further, gay men experience more heterosexist violence, property crimes, threatened violence, and verbal abuse than bisexual men and lesbian women (Herek, 2009). It is possible that gay men experience more violence because straight men's antigay sentiments are most often directed at gay men (Balsam, Rothblum, & Beauchaine, 2005; Bogaert & Hafer, 2009).

Current coming-out literature suggests that gay men may use a variety of disclosure methods in order to manage their sexual identity. Orne (2011) coined the term "strategic

outness" as a way of conceptualizing the various disclosure goals, motivations, and strategies used to manage sexual identity. Strategic outness emphasizes the role of social context in sexual identity disclosures. For example, Orne (2011) found that individuals used varying coming out strategies (e.g., direct disclosure, clues, speculation) depending on their audience (e.g., friends, family, coworkers). Indeed, evidence suggests that gay men employ a variety of indirect and direct disclosure strategies, such as online disclosure (Anderson, 2011; Chester et al., 2016; Owens, 2016), mentioning a same-gender partner (Balsam & Mohr, 2007), revealing LGB-related work or charity affiliations (Orne, 2011), or a third-party disclosure (Beals & Peplau, 2006). Given the variety of methods gay men use to manage their sexual identity, I seek to explore gay men's strategic disclosure choices and the implications of these choices with regards to straight men.

Another important facet of coming out is the *degree* to which a gay man is open ("out") about his sexual orientation to others, also known as *outness* (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). Research demonstrates that a community's social attitudes toward homosexuality influence sexual minorities' degree of outness (Ross et al., 2013). Specifically, sexual minorities are more likely to be closeted when their communities are more homonegative (Ross et al., 2013). This is an important finding as it relates to gay men's involvement with straight male communities, since straight men have significantly stronger homonegative attitudes toward gay men than other sexual minorities (Herek, 2002; Kite & Whitley, 1996). Further, heterosexual men who adhere to traditional masculinity and gender norms are more likely to have homonegative attitudes (Keiller, 2010; Kite & Whitley, 1996; Levant, 2011). It is possible that gay men opt to not disclose information about their sexual identity to straight men due to straight men's homonegative attitudes and homophobia (Barrett, 2013; Hatzenbuehler et al., 2010; Herek, 2000). Heterophobia may therefore serve a protective function against experiences of homonegativity from straight men.

Gay men are more likely to come out to their straight female friends, mothers and sisters than their male friends, fathers or brothers (Beals & Peplau, 2006). Determining if, when, and

how to come out to straight men may pose its own unique host of challenges for gay men since they experience physical, social, and psychological abuse at the hands of straight men (Balsam et al., 2005; Bogaert & Hafer, 2009). Importantly, one study (Barrett, 2013) found that gay men employed a variety of coming out strategies with their straight male friends, sometimes opting for non-direct disclosure methods (e.g., social media, implicit understanding) over direct, verbal disclosure. However, gay men tend to have better quality friendships with individuals they have directly told about their sexual orientation than with people who find out in an indirect manner (Beals & Peplau, 2006). It is possible that a bidirectional process is at work: gay men selectively disclose identity information to those they like and trust, and the sharing of this important identity information enhances friendship (Beals & Peplau, 2006). This process may pose a unique barrier to establishing meaningful relationships with straight men since gay men are less likely to disclose their sexual identities to straight men. As a result, gay men may have fewer opportunities to foster and deepen relationships with straight men. High levels of heterophobia may be predicted by low degree of outness. Conversely, gay men who are more open about their sexuality with straight men may have more opportunity to strengthen these bonds, foster intimacy with straight men, and reduce heterophobia. These hypotheses are supported by evidence that suggests that gay men who are more closeted expected rejection from straight men, felt uneasy and avoidant of straight men, and disconnected from straight men (Provence et al., 2018).

In sum, I hypothesize that heterophobia employed to *protect* gay men from homonegativity may also *impede* gay men's formation of meaningful bonds with potentially supportive straight men. This hypothesis is informed by prior research (Herek et al., 2009) that suggests that minorities enact "self-preservation strategies," such as isolation, identity concealment, and avoidance, as a result of experiences of felt stigma. Gay men who conceal their sexual identity are likely to have poorer quality friendships since they do not share this important identity information that increases intimacy. Finally, outness corresponds to later stages of gay identity development which may involve positive reevaluations of heterosexuals based on new

interactions. Gay men who consider themselves to be more out may have greater opportunity to have intimate, corrective experiences with heterosexual men.

Internalized Homonegativity

While a general definition of internalized homonegativity is provided above, a more detailed description is provided here. Internalized homonegativity refers to sexual minority individuals' internalization of prevailing negative societal attitudes and assumptions about homosexuality (Meyer, 1995; Syzmanski, Kashubeck-West, & Meyer, 2008). A majority of LGB identity development theories posit that these identities are formed in a cultural context of extreme stigma toward same-sex sexuality (Huebner, Davis, Nemeroff, & Aiken, 2002). As such, sexual minority individuals likely internalize these attitudes as a result of their socialization. Internalized homonegativity impacts sexual minority individuals to varying degrees throughout their lifetimes, and can range in intensity from mild (e.g., tendency of self-doubt) to severe (e.g., overt self-hatred) (Gonsiorek & Rudolph, 1991; Huebner et al., 2002; Syzmanski et al., 2008). It is important to note that internalized homonegativity results from pervasive external heterosexism, rather than pathology on an individual or intrapsychic level (Syzmanski et al., 2008).

Internalized homonegativity is linked to a litany of negative outcomes, including increased anxiety and depression (D'Augelli, Grossman, Hershberger, & O'Connell, 2001; Igartua, Gill, & Montoro, 2003; Newcomb & Mustanski, 2010; Rosser, Bockting, Ross, Miner, & Coleman, 2008), increased substance abuse (Ross et al., 2001), increased risky sexual behavior (Ross, Rosser, Neumaier, & Team, Positive Connections, 2008), poor relationship quality (Frost & Meyer, 2009), and insecure attachment (Sherry, 2007). Furthermore, gay men with high levels of internalized homonegativity have lower self-esteem (Syzmanski et al., 2008), are less likely to be out (Moradi et al., 2010), experience greater fear of intimacy in same-gender relationships (Szymanski & Hilton, 2013), and harbor decreased expectations of relationship longevity (Otis, Rostosky, Riggle, & Harmin, 2006).

Importantly, gay men who are more homonegative experience unease and avoidance around straight men and also expect rejection from straight men (Provence et al., 2018). Research indicates that a given community's social attitudes toward homosexuality influence internalized homonegativity (Ross et al., 2013). Namely, sexual minority individuals are more likely to experience greater internalized homonegativity if their communities are more homonegative (Ross et al., 2013). Evidence suggests that straight men may may represent a homonegative community whose attitudes inform the development of gay men's internalized homophobia. For example, extant literature demonstrates that straight men are aggressors toward gay men for a host of reasons, including enforcing traditional gender norms, proving heterosexuality and masculinity, and reducing anxiety elicited by intrapsychic conflicts between gender and sexuality (Balsam et al., 2005; Bogaert & Hafer, 2009; Franklin, 2000; Kimmel, 2000; Kite & Whitley, 1998).

Masculinity and Heterophobia

Heterophobia and male gender role socialization may be related. Research about men and masculinity demonstrates that traditional masculine norms continue to impact the attitudes and behaviors of men (Levant, 2011). Scholars have developed a Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI) to assess a person's adherence to these norms (Mahalik et al., 2003). Subscales of this inventory include Pursuit of Status, Disdain for Homosexuality, Power Over Women, Primacy of Work, Dominance, Playboy, Self-Reliance, Risk-Taking, Emotional Control, Winning, and Violence (Mahalik et al., 2003). Extant evidence suggests that the more men adopt masculine characteristics, the more likely they are to engage in higher-risk sexual behavior (Mahalik, Lagan, & Morrison, 2006), consume more alcohol tobacco and illicit drugs (Blazina & Watkins, 1996; Mahalik et al., 2003), and engage in risky health practices (Mahalik, Burns, & Syzdek, 2007). Further, evidence suggests that conformity to masculinity may limit men's emotional expressiveness, intimacy, and quality of male-male friendships (Levant, 2011; Migliaccio, 2009).

It is important to note that gay men and straight men alike are subject to the same gender role socialization process, which prioritizes heterosexuality, devalues femininity, and discourages closeness between men (Levant, 2011; Wade & Donis, 2007). As such, gay men experience conflict between traditional notions of masculinity and their sexual identity (Kimmel & Mahalik, 2005), a phenomenon known as *gender role conflict*. Gay men are summarily at increased risk for gender role conflict since traditional masculinity is defined, in part, by disapproval of homosexuality (Mahalik et al., 2003; Sanchez, Westefeld, Liu, & Vilain, 2010). Importantly, greater gender role conflict has been linked with lower self-esteem (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995), reduced intimacy (Sharpe & Heppner, 1991), and social discomfort (Hayes & Mahalik, 2000).

Gay men may also be devalued by straight and gay men alike if their behavior is perceived as not masculine enough (Sanchez, Greenberg, Liu, & Vilain, 2009; Sanchez & Vilain, 2012; Taywaditep, 2001). The devaluation of gay men for insufficient masculinity is particularly problematic since adherence to masculine norms has negative effects on gay men's self-image (Sanchez et al., 2009). For example, one study (Sanchez et al., 2010) found that gay men who reported themselves to be more masculine, prefer masculine partners, and have masculine ideals had more negative sexual identities. Further, traditional masculinity places a taboo on male-male closeness and intimacy, which may be especially distressing since male-male intimacy lies at the nucleus of gay men's romantic and familial lives (Haldeman, 2006; Levant, 2011; Sanchez et al., 2009). Additionally, Provence et al. (2014) found that gay men avoid pursuing cross-orientation friendships with men out of fear that their attempts will be misinterpreted as sexual advances.

The present study posits that heterophobia may develop as a result of two processes related to masculinity. First, gay men are socialized under the umbrella of traditional masculine gender norms, which devalue and make taboo intimacy between men. The central tenets of masculinity inhibit the development and maintenance of close relationships between gay and straight men. Second, I argue that gay men learn to engage with restraint in social situations involving straight

men due to threat of homonegativity or stigma. Consequently, I expect that conformity to masculine norms and experiences of sexual stigma to predict gay men's heterophobia scores.

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