It’s a man’s world: An investigation of masculinity and internalised homophobia amongst homosexual men

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Abstract

Gender norms often dictate areas of daily living which individuals ought to adopt and abide by. However, as a consequence of the heterosexist ideals associated with gender norms, sexual minority individuals often experience negative attitudes towards their own sexuality—internalised homophobia. As a result, gay men often feel the compulsion to compensate for their perceived lack of masculinity. The current thesis contains a series of two manuscripts which explore and critique hegemonic masculinity and its attributing role in the lives of homosexual males. The thesis draws attention to both hegemonic—heterosexual—masculinity and homosexual—straight-acting—masculinity.
Table of Contents

Abstract 1

List of Tables and Figures 4

Chapter One. Heterosexual and Homosexual Masculinities 5
  Abstract 5
  General Introduction 6
  Hegemonic Masculinity 7
  Homosexual Masculinity 8
  Homonegativity 9
  Masculinity and Homonegativity 10
  Conclusion 14

Chapter Two. It’s a Man’s World: An Investigation of Masculinity and Internalised Homophobia Amongst Homosexual Men 15
  Abstract 15
  General Introduction 16
  Hegemonic Masculinity 16
    Hegemonic Masculinity and the Gay Community 19
  Homonegativity 21
    Homonegativity and Homosexual Men’s Wellbeing 23
  Present Study 25
  Methods 25
    Participants 25
    Instruments 26
    Procedure 29
    Statistical Analyses 29
List of Tables and Figures

**Tables**

Table 1  Demographic Information for the Study Sample  26  
Table 2  Descriptive Statistics for the Study Sample  31  
Table 3  Descriptive Statistics Among Self-Assigned Gender Norm Characterisation Groups  32  
Table 4  Bivariate Correlations between Demographic and Various Factors  33  
Table 5  Bivariate Correlations between Internalised Homonegativity, Measures of Gender Norm Conformity, Perceived Distance/Similarity and Various Factors  34  
Table 6  Regression Coefficients of the Predictors on Internalised Homonegativity  35  

**Figures**

Figure 1  Model of direct and indirect effects between IH, MCS-Threat and Perceived Distance  37
Chapter One. Heterosexual and Homosexual Masculinities

Abstract

Gender norms are a pervasive social structure which can be both guiding and constraining towards an individual’s social behaviour. There is, however, a duality within social structures such as gender norms—they can be both the medium and outcome of individual action. Consequent to the heterosexist ideals which come hand-in-hand with gendered norms, sexual minority individuals often experience negative attitudes towards their own sexuality. The current paper draws attention to the masculine gender norm—specifically, what is perceived to be masculine, how non-heterosexual males relate to masculinity, and its attributing role in the lives of non-heterosexual males.
General Introduction

Gender, often mistaken for the physical and biological concept of sex (e.g., genetic make-up, reproductive organs, genitalia, and hormones), refers to the social traits and characteristics which differentiate between the traditional binary model of male and female—masculine and feminine (Macionis & Plummer, 2008). It encompasses individuals’ behaviours and cannot be identified as an inherent trait of their existing entity (Butler, 1999). Consider the notion of tabula rasa—a blank tablet (OED, 2017). From the moment the three words “it’s a boy” are exclaimed, the process of gender socialisation begins and individuals, consequently, impart gender norms onto the newborn baby. Individuals learn to perform gendered variations of acts, words, gestures, and even desires (Butler, 1999).

Gender norms are a pervasive social structure which can be both guiding and constraining towards an individual’s social behaviour (Mahalik et al., 2003). However, unlike gender stereotypes which provide generalised descriptions of gender-typical behaviour (e.g., men are strong), gender norms provide prescriptions of what gender-typical behaviour ought to be (e.g., men ought to be strong; Delacollette, Dumont, Sarlet, & Dardenne, 2013). They operate under a framework whereby standard gendered behaviours are prescribed in order to avoid derision (Gill, 2004). However, there is a duality within social structures such as gender norms—they can be both the medium and outcome of individual action (Giddens, 1984). That is, not only do gender norms dictate areas of daily living but, they can be shaped and changed by those same individuals who follow them (Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Rudman, 2010; Sayer, 1992). Butler (1999) describes this process as the ritualised legitimisation of gender. In Western and heteronormative contexts, women ought to be passive, sentimental, and emotive whilst men ought to be aggressive, stoic, and brave (Whicker & Kronenfeld, 1985). The current paper, however, draws particular attention to the masculine gender...
norm—specifically, what is perceived to be masculine, how non-heterosexual males relate to masculinity, and its attributing role in the lives of non-heterosexual males.

Hegemonic Masculinity

The psychological study of male gender roles has only been penned in literature starting from the late 1970s while only receiving full acceptance as a sub-discipline within the 1980s (O’Neal, 2008). As such, little is known about the various social and psychological outcomes of masculinity (O’Neal, 2008). Parent and Moradi (2009) argued that masculine norms prescribe nine distinct traits: emotional control, winning, playboy, violence, self-reliance, risk-taking, power over women, primacy of work, and heterosexual self-presentation. From these traits, it can already be ascertained that various aspects of masculinity, arguably, contribute to various detrimental issues plaguing males—both as an individual and in their relationships with others. O’Neal, Helms, Gable, David, and Wrightsman, (1986) argued that gender norms impede on an individuals’ abilities to actualise their potential.

The fear of femininity is argued to pervade the very definition of hegemonic masculinity (Kimmel, 1994). Gender Role Conflict theory (O’Neal, 2008) argues that the male fear of femininity contributes to four patterns of gender-role conflict: success, power, and competition; restrictive emotionality; restrictive affectionate behaviour between men; and conflict between work and family relations. Additionally, Brannon (1976, as cited in Kimmel, 1994) offers four phrases summarising masculinity: no sissy stuff, be a big wheel, be a sturdy oak, and give ‘em Hell. These phrases correspond with the ideals of anti-effeminacy, success, power, and competition, restrictive emotionality, and risk-taking, respectively. It is argued that these ideals result in the internalisation of gendered scripts, polarising perceptions of masculinity and femininity.

Additionally, masculinity contingency is an experience which refers to the degree an individual’s self-worth is contingent to their sense of masculinity (Burkley, Wong, & Bell,
Schmitt and Branscombe (2001) found that, when having their masculinity threatened, masculine-identifying men tended to rate in-group members (masculine men) as more likeable than outgroup members (effeminate men). In addition to the interpersonal effects of threatened-masculinity, it was found that masculine-identifying men tended to experience more negative affect when having their masculinity threatened. This suggests that individuals who harbour more negative attitudes toward effeminate men are also more likely to experience shifts in affect in relation to their sense of masculinity. As homosexuality is perceived as being synonymous to femininity (e.g., Provence et al., 2014), it can be argued there may be a connection between homonegativity, masculine-identity, and masculinity contingency.

**Homosexual Masculinity**

Homosexual masculinity is often referred to as ‘straight-acting’ masculinity (Bailey et al., 1997; Clarkson, 2006). It is argued to be an emulation of heteronormative masculinity—and, arguably, heterosexuality (Clarkson, 2006). Butler (2004) asserts that “heterosexuality doesn’t belong exclusively to heterosexuals” (p. 199). By this sense, heterosexuality can be argued to be a gendered performance. Like heteronormative masculinity, straight-acting masculinity is inclusive of anti-effeminacy ideals and homophobia (Clarkson, 2006). This heteronormative approach to masculinity may, arguably, be linked to various issues in gay men’s lives.

Additionally, the term straight-acting bears heterosexist overtones. Using the identifier straight-acting, in place of masculine, suggests an ideology that masculinity is a state of being exclusive to heterosexuality. Similarly, heterosexual masculinity is argued to be perceived as an authentic and natural gender performance while homosexual masculinity is perceived as a costumed drama (Duncan, 2008). A common perception of homosexuality includes: “homosexual men are more like women…Even the most masculine gay man is a bit sissy”
INVESTIGATING MASCULINITY AND INTERNALISED HOMOPHOBIA

(Eslen-Ziya & Koc, 2016; p. 804). This maintains the societal perception that gay men are intrinsically feminine. Given these two notions, it can be argued that the social construction of masculinity generates a reified oxymoron out of the phrase ‘homosexual male’ whereby both terms are perceived as direct oppositions of each other.

**Homonegativity**

Consequent to the heterosexist ideals which come hand-in-hand with gendered norms, sexual minority individuals often experience negative attitudes towards their own sexuality—internalised homonegativity (Mayfield, 2001). Other variations of the term include internalised homophobia, internalised heterosexism, and internalised sexual stigma. From all these variations, it can be seen how they describe the deeply conditioned experiences for individuals to feel negative attitudes toward homosexuality. Phrases such as “I am a man, therefore I may not love a man” (Butler, 2004; p. 199) and “you can’t be a man and be gay” (Provence, Rochlen, Chester, & Smith, 2014; p. 5) are common experiences among homosexual males.

In addition to common folk psychology, current literature maintains the societal perception of male homosexuals to be typically feminine (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009). Similarly, individuals commonly view male homosexuality to be both the opposite of masculinity and synonymous to femininity (Provence et al., 2014). Phrases such as “that is so gay” are often used as responses to masculine gender norm violations (Slaatten & Gabrys, 2014). Slaatten and Gabrys (2014) argued that phrases such as this are a form of social regulation to deter unwanted expressions of masculinity (or lack thereof). However, not only do phrases like this reflect society’s perceptions of homosexuality but also, they reflect heterosexist ideals. This further reinforces the notion that femininity and homosexuality are perceived as being synonymous and that homosexuality is something to be feared and held in
contempt. Kimmel (1994) argues that this fear can be found in males as young as six years old.

Additionally, homophobia is conceptualised as either the fear or hatred of homosexuality (do Amaral Madureira, 2007). However, O’Neal et al. (1986) offers an alternative definition which includes both the fear of homosexuals and the fear of being a homosexual. This definition offers a more holistic framework as it is inclusive of the experiences of both hetero- and homosexual individuals (i.e., internalised homophobia). However, when considering notions of homosexuality and femininity being synonymous (e.g., Provence et al., 2014), the definition of homophobia can, arguably, be revised to being ‘the fear of femininity and the fear of being effeminate’.

Masculinity and Homonegativity

Falomir-Pichastor and Mugny (2009) explained homonegativity through social identity theory and the relationship between in- and out-groups. They argued that male homosexuality poses a threat to hegemonic masculinity and, therefore, heterosexual males are motivated to maintain a distinct gender identity from homosexual males. Their study found a positive relationship between heterosexual males’ gender self-esteem and homonegativity. Additionally, heterosexual men’s perceived dissimilarity to homosexual men was positively correlated to both gender self-esteem and homonegativity. Martínez, Vázquez, and Falomir-Pichastor (2015) found that males who possessed higher anti-effeminacy ideals also tended to perceive themselves as dissimilar from homosexuals and hold higher degrees of homophobia. This further reinforces the notion of homosexuality and femininity being perceived as synonymous and men’s motivation to distinguish themselves from homosexuals (i.e., the fear of being perceived as homosexual).

Similarly, research indicates a change in socio-cultural trends since the 1950s whereby both males and females have shown an increase in masculine traits and have shown no
significant group differences in masculine trait endorsement (Twenge, 1997). This simultaneous increase is argued to be a reaction to the increase in females’ masculine trait endorsement (Twenge, 1997). As Falomir and Mugny (2009) suggested that males perceive homosexuality as a threat to masculinity, it can also be argued that males perceive the increase in females’ masculine trait endorsement as a threat to masculinity. It can be explicated that males who perceive this trend as a threat are motivated to create a more distinct gender identity whereby there is an increase in conformity to masculine norms.

Additionally, Glick, Gangl, Gibb, Klumpner, and Weinberg (2007) found that gay men who had their masculinity threatened tended to perceive effeminate gay men more negatively than gay men who did not have their masculinity threatened. These findings further support Schmitt and Branscombe’s (2001) study whereby masculine-identifying men were shown to perceive masculine men as likeable when their masculinity was threatened while also perceiving feminine men as less likeable. Glick et al. argued that men possess a desire to reject their own feminine traits while also perceiving others with such traits more negatively. This reinforces the notion of men’s fear of effeminacy and their fear of being effeminate.

Furthermore, men’s anti-effeminacy ideals are reflected through Glick, Wilkerson, and Cuffe’s (2015) study which demonstrated that negative attitudes towards effeminate men, but not any other non-traditional male subtypes (e.g., stay-at-home fathers), are significantly predicted by men’s group identification with masculinity. This suggests a strong link between masculinity and anti-effeminacy. Glick et al. argued that feminine men are perceived as threats to the masculine gender identity and are, therefore, subjected to harsher treatment than outgroup members (females). However, Glick et al.’s study did not examine men’s attitudes toward non-heterosexual male subtypes. Considering the notion that homosexuality and femininity are perceived as being synonymous (e.g., Provence et al., 2014), it can be argued that their findings can be extended to homosexual men.
Additionally, considering Glick et al.’s (2015) findings, it can be argued that gender non-conforming males receive more victimisation and harassment (Skidmore, Linsenmeier, & Bailey, 2006; Plöderl & Fartacek, 2009). Skidmore et al. (2006) found that both homosexual men’s childhood and adulthood gender non-conformity related to increased psychological distress (i.e., depression, anxiety). An insignificant relationship was also found amongst gender non-conforming lesbian women. This suggests that society holds greater derision towards men’s gender non-conformity (i.e., male effeminacy) as opposed to women’s. Considering the perception that homosexuality is synonymous to femininity (e.g., Provence et al., 2014) alongside the negative attitudes toward male effeminacy (e.g., Skidmore, Linsenmeier, & Bailey, 2006; Plöderl & Fartacek, 2009), it can be reasoned that gay men are highly susceptible to various gender-related stressors.

Research indicates that, despite increases in females’ endorsement of gender-atypical traits (i.e., masculinity) since the 1950s, males continue to show non-endorsement of feminine traits (Twenge, 1997). This suggests a rigidity in male gender norms, as compared to female gender norms, whereby social trends favour divergences from traditional gender norms for females but not for males. Twenge (1997) makes a comparison between the acceptance of females wearing either pants or dresses while males only wear pants. It is argued that the male fear of femininity contributes to the lack of feminine trait endorsement (e.g., O’Neal et al., 1986; O’Neal, 2008).

Additionally, it is questionable as to ‘why’ masculine gender norms are so rigid. Following the analogy of clothing items, it is questioned as to why that when we see an individual wearing a dress we assumed that the individual is female? Why is it that, when a biological male wears a dress, it is more socially acceptable if they possess more feminine characteristics as opposed to masculine (e.g., drag queens, passing transgendered females). That is to say, to what degree are they convincingly female? If male homosexuality is
perceived as feminine (e.g., Provence et al., 2014), to what degree must homosexual men conform to masculine norms in order to be convincingly male?

It is argued that homosexual males who place great concern on gender norms are compensating for a sense of inferiority derived from their sexuality (Sánchez et al., 2010). Participants in Sánchez, Greenberg, Liu, and Vilain’s (2009) study asserted that “you’re less of a man simply because you don’t sleep with women” (p. 78) and “we try to overcompensate and adopt masculinity to a cartoonish degree” (p. 78). Furthermore, it has been asserted by a participant that gay men’s striving for masculinity is conceptually flawed and unattainable (Duncan, 2008). It is argued that this compensation is a reach for perfect masculinity. However, it is also asserted that perfect masculinity is heterosexuality. This suggests that, not only do gay men use masculinity as a compensatory strategy but also, they perceive it to be antonymous to homosexuality. This perception of masculinity and homosexuality reflects heterosexist ideologies which underpin hegemonic masculinity.

It is further maintained that this drive for masculinity leads homosexual men to place great concern on physical appearance (e.g., muscularity) and other outward masculine pursuits (Duncan, 2008). Kimmel and Mahalik (2006) argued that internalised homonegativity is associated with body image dissatisfaction and masculine body ideal distress among homosexual men. Additionally, Sánchez and Vilain (2012) found that most gay men value masculinity and wish that they were more masculine than they currently perceive themselves to be. This sense of inferiority and drive for masculinity is arguably detrimental to the psychology of homosexual men. Alongside Sánchez and Vilain’s findings, it can be suggested that this phenomenon affects most gay men and is of vital importance to address.

According to the Gender-role Strain Paradigm, there exists three prominent types of gender-related strain: discrepancy, dysfunction, and trauma (Levant & Richmond, 2016).
Discrepancy strain is experienced when there is a failure to measure up to hegemonic masculine ideals (Levant & Richmond, 2016). Similarly, dysfunction is experienced when adhering to masculine norms results in negative implications (e.g., risk-taking, gambling addiction) while trauma is experienced when one’s experiences of gender-related strain are more severe than other gender subtypes (e.g., LGBTIQ individuals). From Sánchez et al.’s (2009) findings, it is already evident that homosexual males experience at least two of the three gender-role strains—namely, discrepancy and trauma strain. Similarly, there exists a social perception that gay men possess an intrinsic quality of effeminacy (Eslen-Ziya & Koc, 2016; p. 804). It can, therefore, be argued that the discrepancy strain experienced by homosexual males is unable to be adequately addressed until this stereotyped perception of homosexuality is dissolved and no longer contributes to the fostering of internalised homonegativity.

**Conclusion**

The current paper proposes that future researchers pay particular attention to the study of male gender norms and their effect on gay, bisexual, and other non-heterosexual male identities. Gender norms are argued to be a constraint on an individual’s ability to actualise their potential (O’Neal et al., 1986). Considering the continued perpetuation of masculine ideals and how this relates to homosexuality (e.g., Skidmore et al., 2006; Glick et al., 2007; Duncan, 2008; Sánchez et al., 2009), it is suggested that the rigorous enforcing masculine norms and the punishment of gender norm violation be dissolved. This is, arguably, a matter of society’s best interests and its expected outcomes will come to benefit more than just the gay community. Although socio-cultural trends suggest a rigidity in men's masculinity, it is argued that structures such as gender norms can be reconstructed (Twenge, 1997; Giddens, 1984). Society has the ability to construct particular beliefs and values among individuals. It too has the power to deconstruct such ideologies.
Chapter Two. It’s a Man’s World: An Investigation of Masculinity and Internalised Homophobia Amongst Homosexual Men

Abstract

Gender norms often dictate areas of daily living which individuals ought to adopt and abide by. However, as a consequence of the heterosexist ideals associated with gender norms, sexual minority individuals often experience negative attitudes towards their own sexuality—internalised homophobia. As a result, gay men often feel the compulsion to compensate for their perceived lack of masculinity. The study aimed to investigate the relationship and, more specifically, the predictive power of masculinity on gay men’s experiences of internalised homophobia. Additionally, the study examined childhood gender non-conformity and the perceived distance/similarity to other homosexual males. A sample of 489 self-identified Australian homosexual males over the age of 18 ($M=36$, $SD=12.20$) participated in an online survey on masculinity and homosexuality. Analyses revealed that CMNI and MCS-Threat were among the measures of masculinity which were superior predictors of internalised homophobia over and above demographic and other variables. Additionally, results revealed full mediation between internalised homophobia and perceived distance whereby the relationship was mediated by MCS-Threat. It is proposed that the systemically-rooted constructs of the gendered norms fostering internalised homophobia in men be reconstructed to better accommodate for non-heteronormative individuals.
General Introduction

Social structures (e.g., norms) continue to exist and take shape according to those who use them (Sayer, 1992). Throughout time, gender ideals/norms dictated areas of daily living that individuals ought to adopt and abide by (Moss-Racusin et al., 2010). This process is described as the ritualised legitimisation of gender (Butler, 1999). In Western and heteronormative contexts, women are expected to be passive, sentimental, and emotive whilst men are expected to be aggressive, stoic, and brave (Whicker & Kronenfeld, 1985). They can be both guiding and constraining (Mahalik et al., 2003).

However, these same heteronormative ideals play a similarly prominent role within the gay male community, where traditional masculine behaviour is rewarded and effeminate behaviour is stigmatised (Sánchez et al., 2010). As a consequence, sexual minority individuals often experience negative attitudes towards their own sexuality—internalised homonegativity (Mayfield, 2001). Therefore, it can be argued that gender-roles play a significant and potentially detrimental role in the lives of gay men. The present study intends to identify the socio-psychological underpinnings of internalised homophobia in order to better predict the salience and impact of internalised homophobia among Australian homosexual males.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Within masculinity, the fear of femininity is argued to be a leading factor in male gender-role conflict (O’Neal et al., 1986). Gender-role conflict theory (O’Neal, 2008) argues that the male fear of femininity contributes to four patterns of gender-role conflict: success, power, and competition; restrictive emotionality; restrictive affectionate behaviour between men; and conflict between work and family relations. Similarly, Brannon (1976, as cited in Kimmel, 1994) offers four phrases summarising masculinity: no sissy stuff, be a big wheel, be a sturdy oak, and give ‘em Hell. These phrases correspond with ideals of anti-effeminacy,
success, power, and competition, restrictive emotionality, and risk-taking, respectively. These ideals may result in men’s internalisation of gendered scripts which polarise perceptions of masculinity and femininity. For instance, Provence et al. (2014) found that males tended to perceive masculinity and homosexuality as being polarised—that is, homosexuality is equivalent to femininity.

Similarly, a study by Glick et al. (2015) found that men’s group identification with masculinity predicted negative attitudes towards effeminate men but not any other non-traditional male subtypes (e.g., stay-at-home fathers). It was argued that masculine men perceive feminine men as threats to their gender identity and treat them more harshly than outgroup members (females). This suggests a strong link between masculinity and anti-effeminacy. However, Glick et al.’s study did not examine men’s attitudes toward non-heterosexual male subtypes. Considering the notion that homosexuality and femininity are perceived as being synonymous (e.g., Provence et al., 2014), it can be argued that their findings can be extended to homosexual men.

As gender non-conforming men receive more negative attitudes than gender conforming men (e.g., Glick et al., 2015), it can be argued that gender non-conforming males receive more victimisation and harassment (Skidmore et al., 2006; Plöderl & Fartacek, 2009). A study by Skidmore et al. (2006) found that childhood gender non-conformity and adulthood gender non-conformity amongst homosexual men related to more psychological distress (namely, depression and anxiety). Additionally, it was found that this relationship was insignificant amongst gender non-conforming lesbian women. This suggests that there exists a greater negative implication to society’s attitudes toward gender non-conformity—most specifically, male effeminacy. Considering the perception that homosexuality is synonymous to femininity (e.g., Provence et al., 2014) alongside men’s and society’s
attitudes toward male effeminacy (e.g., Skidmore et al., 2006; Plöderl & Fartacek, 2009), it can be reasoned that gay men are highly susceptible to various gender-related stressors.

It has been suggested that gay males who are overly concerned with gender norms are compensating for their feelings of inferiority derived from their sexual orientation (Sánchez et al., 2010). In Sánchez et al.’s (2009) study, participants maintained that “you’re less of a man simply because you don’t sleep with women” (p. 78) and “we try to overcompensate and adopt masculinity to a cartoonish degree” (p. 78). This suggests that, not only do gay men use (hyper)masculinity as a compensatory strategy but also, they perceive it to be antonymous to homosexuality. It can, therefore, be maintained that males’ fear of femininity plays an attributing role in fostering internalised homophobia and that conceptions of hegemonic masculinity contribute to a strain unique to homosexual males, as compared to heterosexual males.

The Gender-role Strain Paradigm suggests that there exist three prominent types of gender-related strain: discrepancy, dysfunction, and trauma (Levant & Richmond, 2016). Discrepancy strain is argued to relate to men’s failure to measure up to masculine ideals, while dysfunction strain relates to the implications associated with adhering to masculine norms (e.g., risk-taking, gambling addiction), and trauma strain relates to groups whose experiences of gender-related strain are more severe (e.g., LGBTIQ individuals). From Sánchez et al.’s (2009) findings, it is already evident that homosexual males experience at least two of three gender-role strains—namely, discrepancy and trauma strain. Similarly, a study revealed the perception that “homosexual men are more like women…Even the most masculine gay man is a bit sissy” (Eslen-Ziya & Koc, 2016; p. 804). This maintains the social perception that gay men possess an intrinsic quality of effeminacy. It can, therefore, be argued that the discrepancy strain experienced by homosexual males is unable to be
adequately addressed until this stereotyped perception of homosexuality is dissolved and no
longer contributes to the fostering of internalised homophobia.

**Hegemonic Masculinity and the Gay Community**

Masculine behaviour among homosexual men is commonly referred to as ‘straight-acting’ (Bailey et al., 1997; Clarkson, 2006). It is argued that straight-acting masculinity is an emulation of heteronormative masculinity—and, arguably, heterosexuality (Clarkson, 2006). Butler (2004) argues that “heterosexuality doesn’t belong exclusively to heterosexuals” (p. 199). Heterosexuality can be argued to be a performance perpetuated through all societal norms. Like heteronormative masculinity, straight-acting masculinity is inclusive of anti-effeminacy ideals and homophobia (Clarkson, 2006). This heteronormative approach to masculinity may, arguably, be linked to various issues in gay men’s lives. In regards to mate preference, gay males often idealise masculinity and seek out other men who conform to these norms by explicitly stating that they are interested in “masc only” and “no femmes” (Remillard, 2015; p. 1). Compared to heterosexual individuals, personal advertisements placed by homosexual men tend to explicitly request gender-typical characteristics and ostracise gender-atypical individuals (Sánchez et al., 2010). The requesting of gender-typical traits is relatively unique to homosexuality and can be argued to be an extremely discriminative social practice.

Similarly, it has been revealed that gay men tend to rate masculine men as attractive and feminine men as unattractive (Bailey et al., 1997). In Bailey et al.’s (1997) study however, gay men who identified as feminine did not differ in ratings of targets’ attractiveness while self-identified masculine gay men demonstrated the most extreme differences. Similarly, Clarkson’s (2006) analyses of user comments from an online discussion board reveal anti-effeminate ideals among straight-acting gay men: “I’ve never found nelly’s [sic] attractive at all” (p. 203) and “if I can tell they’re gay, then they aren’t my
type (even a hint of femininity in a guy will turn me off)” (p. 203) for example. As masculinity and homosexuality are commonly perceived as being polarised (Provence et al., 2014), it can be argued that heteronormative masculinity reproduces an internalised contempt or lamentation of homosexuality and male effeminacy.

Prejudice towards effeminate gay men is common within the gay community and is argued to be perpetrated by others who were previously discriminated against for gender non-conformity (Taywaditep, 2001). This is consistent with Watson and Dispenza’s (2015) study which found that childhood harassment due to gender non-conformity predicted later adult life body shame among sexual minority men. Similarly, childhood gender non-conformity was also found to positively relate with anxiety among both heterosexual and homosexual males (Lippa, 2008). Incidentally, this relationship between childhood gender non-conformity and anxiety was not observed within females. This demonstrates the detrimental consequences of gender norms on males (particularly homosexual males) as opposed to females and society’s reinforcement of said norms. Taywaditep (2001) argues that gay men who experienced anti-effeminate prejudice during childhood may continue to experience gender-related strain and bear contempt towards others’ effeminacy.

Considering this, it can be maintained that the anti-effeminacy ideals expressed through hegemonic masculinity foster internalisations of gay men’s contempt towards male effeminacy and, arguably, a lamentation towards their own identity. Taywaditep (2001) argues that the discrimination between straight-acting and effeminate gay men, particularly within personal advertisements, normalises, and even glorifies, the divisive social practice. The gay community is often perceived as open and welcoming of diversity. Clarkson (2006), however, argues that the anti-effeminacy ideals perpetuated through hegemonic masculinities which favour heteronormative expressions of gender are jeopardising the very diversity the LGBTIQ community is known for.
Additionally, the term straight-acting, in itself, bears heterosexist overtones. Rather than using the term masculine, masculine gay men identify themselves as straight-acting. This suggests that masculinity is perceived to be a construct exclusive to heterosexuality. It was previously argued that homosexual men are commonly perceived to possess an intrinsic quality of effeminacy. Considering these two notions, it can be argued that hegemonic masculinity generates a gender-related strain among homosexual men whereby individuals experience a discrepancy between their gender and sexual identities. It is argued that the social construction of masculinity creates a reified oxymoron out of the phrase ‘homosexual male’ whereby both terms are perceived as direct oppositions of each other.

**Homonegativity**

Homophobia (or homonegativity) is conceptualised as either the fear or hatred of homosexuality (do Amaral Madureira, 2007). However, O’Neal et al. (1986) offers the definition of homophobia as being both the fear of homosexuals and the fear of being a homosexual. This definition provides a more holistic perception of homophobia as it considers the experiences of both hetero- and homosexual individuals (i.e., internalised homophobia). However, when considering notions of homosexuality and femininity being synonymous, the definition of homophobia can, arguably, be revised to being ‘the fear of femininity and the fear of being effeminate’.

A study by Falomir-Pichastor and Mugny (2009) aimed to explain homonegativity through social identity theory and the relationship between in- and out-groups. It was argued that homosexual males pose a threat to hegemonic masculinity and, therefore, heterosexual males are motivated to maintain a distinct gender identity. Their findings demonstrated a positive relationship between heterosexual males’ gender self-esteem and homonegativity. Additionally, heterosexual males’ perceived dissimilarity to homosexual males was positively correlated to both gender self-esteem and homonegativity. Given the notion that
homosexuality is perceived as synonymous to femininity (Provence et al., 2014), it can be argued that the study’s findings also corroborate the theory of male’s fear of femininity. Additionally, when considering O’Neal et al.’s (1986) definition of homophobia in conjunction with Falomir-Pichastor and Mugny’s (2009) findings, it can be argued that similar effects may be present within homosexual males where high levels of internalised homophobia correlate with higher adherence to masculine norms.

Martínez, Vázquez, and Falomir-Pichastor (2015) found that males who possessed higher anti-effeminacy ideals also tended to perceive themselves as dissimilar from homosexuals and hold higher degrees of homophobia. This further reinforces the notion of male’s perceptions of homosexuality and femininity being synonymous and male’s motivation to distinguish themselves from homosexuals—the fear of being (perceived as) homosexual. As the fear of femininity is a phenomenon unique to masculinity, it is questionable whether homosexual men also experience the motivation to distinguish themselves from (the stereotyped) homosexuals—that is, do homosexual males who conform to masculinity and possess anti-effeminacy ideals also perceive themselves as dissimilar to other homosexuals.

Glick et al. (2007) examined how gay men whose masculinity was threatened would perceive other gay men who were presented as either masculine or effeminate. Their findings revealed that gay men who had their masculinity threatened perceived effeminate gay men more negatively than those who did not have their masculinity threatened. It was argued that men possess a desire to reject feminine traits within themselves and, consequently, perceive others with such traits more negatively. This reinforces the notion of men’s fear of effeminacy and their fear of being effeminate. Glick et al. provided descriptions of the gay men which their participants were to assess. However, given the notion that gay men are perceived as stereotypically and intrinsically feminine (e.g., Eslen-Ziya & Koc, 2016;
Provence et al., 2014), it can be argued that, within an everyday occurrence whereby descriptors of other individuals are not known, homosexual men who reject their own effeminacy are more likely to perceive other gay men negatively.

Similarly, a more recent study by Hunt, Fasoli, Carnaghi, and Cadinu (2016) placed gay men within either masculinity-affirmed or masculinity-threatened conditions and presented vignettes describing both masculine and feminine gay men. Group differences were observed where individuals whose masculinity was threatened tended to rate a higher similarity to masculine gay men and lower desire to interact with feminine gay men. However, no group differences were observed in ratings of likeability or emotional valence. Additionally, Sánchez, Blas-Lopez, Martínez-Patiño, and Vilain (2016) examined group differences between white and Latino gay men on their experiences of masculinity and gay identity. Their findings showed similar degrees of masculinity-valuation (high), anti-effeminacy (moderate), and internalised homophobia (low) between the groups. This suggests that masculinity plays a similarly important role within the two cultures. However, it is curious how both groups reported low degrees of internalised homophobia. This result could be argued to reflect either changing societal attitudes toward homosexuality or methodological limitations (e.g., small sample size, weak scale). In consideration of Sánchez et al. and Hunt et al.’s results, it can be suggested that gay men value outward masculine self-presentation while not necessarily harbouring negative attitudes toward effeminate gay men. This further maintains Leverenz’s (1986) argument that male homophobia is, not necessarily a reflection of a fear of homosexuals but, a contempt of male effeminacy.

**Homonegativity and Homosexual Men’s Wellbeing**

Gay men, as compared to lesbians, often experience a higher degree of negative attitudes (Herek, 1988; Keiller, 2010). A study found that gay men who experience sexual discrimination and/or restrictive affectionate behaviour between men are more likely to
experience internalised homophobia and, consequently, depression (Szymanski & Ikizler, 2013). Similarly, Barnes and Meyer (2012) found that internalised homophobia predicted depressive symptoms and poorer wellbeing. Homosexual men lower in gender-role conflict are more likely to seek psychological aid and possess more positive mental health (Simonsen, Blazina, & Watkins, 2000). Furthermore, McLaren (2016) found that depression only partially mediated the relationship between internalised homophobia and suicidal ideation within gay men while there was full mediation within lesbians. This suggests that internalised homophobia has a more significant impact on the wellbeing of gay men, versus their lesbian counterparts. Given the negative social and mental health outcomes associated with gay men’s experiences of internalised homophobia, it can be maintained that examining the socio-psychological implications of masculinity and internalised homophobia among gay men is crucial to the advancement of positive queer health, wellbeing, and understanding.

Additionally, a recent study on South African gay men found an indirect effect between gender non-conformity and depression whereby the relationship was mediated by internalised homophobia (Sandfort, Bos, Knox, & Reddy, 2016). This suggests that gay men who present less conformity to masculine norms experience less internalised homophobia and, subsequently, less depressive symptoms. Conversely, it can be maintained that gay men who adhere more strictly to masculine norms are more likely to experience internalised homophobia and depression. Considering men’s fear of male effeminacy (O’Neal et al., 1986; O’Neal, 2008) alongside the notion that male homosexuality is synonymous to femininity (e.g., Provence et al., 2014), it can be argued that hegemonic masculinity plays an attributing role in (re)producing internalised homophobia. Given the negative mental health outcomes associated with internalised homophobia (e.g., Barnes & Meyer, 2012; Szymanski & Ikizler, 2013; McLaren, 2016; Sandfort, Bos, Knox, & Reddy, 2016), it can, therefore, be asserted that there is a vital importance in understanding the role of hegemonic masculinity in
gay men’s experiences of internalised homophobia as to better the lives and experiences of homosexual men.

**Present Study**

Despite common understandings that hegemonic masculinity relates to (and possibly produces) negative attitudes toward homosexuality, there exists limited research explicitly examining masculinity and internalised homophobia (e.g., Eslen-Ziya & Koc, 2016; Sánchez et al., 2016; Szymanski & Ikizler, 2013). The present study, therefore, aims to examine the relationship between masculinity and internalised homophobia within a sample of Australian homosexual men. It will explore: (a) the degree to which homosexual males conform and/or value masculine norms, (b) whether conformity/valuation of masculine norms predict internalised homophobia, (c) other factors predicting internalised homophobia, and (d) when controlling for these other factors, does the degree of conformity/valuation of masculine norms continue to predict internalised homophobia? In relation to the first question, it is hypothesised that individuals who score high on the IHNI will also score high on CMNI and MCS-Threat but low in MCS-Boost. Regarding the second question, it is hypothesised that individuals who score high on the IHNI will also score high in childhood gender non-conformity but low in perceived distance and perceived similarity to homosexuals. Additionally, it is hypothesised that, when controlling for demographics and other factors, internalised homophobia can be predicted by masculinity (i.e., CMNI, MCS).

**Methods**

**Participants**

A sample of 489 self-identified Australian homosexual males over the age of 18 ($M=36, SD=12.20$) participated in an online survey on masculinity and homosexuality. Those identifying as transgender were excluded from the study. Participants were recruited via advertisements through LGBTIQ networks (e.g., LGBTI Alliance of Australia, PFLAG,
QUAC). Participants were also recruited using social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and dating applications (e.g., Grindr). Advertisements included a link to the survey available on Qualtrics. Table 1 depicts the sample’s demographic.

Table 1

Demographic Information for the Study Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Information</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Queer Identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>40.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>59.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Norm Self-Characterisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>48.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither/Both</td>
<td>49.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Formal Education</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSC</td>
<td>6.30</td>
</tr>
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<td>Diploma/Certificate</td>
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<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>39.90</td>
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<td>Post-graduate</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious affiliation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Religion</td>
<td>66.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instruments

Demographics

A demographics questionnaire was utilised to ascertain participant’s background information—age, gender, ethnicity, post code, religion, and sexual orientation. Participants were also asked whether they identified as queer and whether they would describe themselves as masculine, feminine, or neither/both.
Internalised Homonegativity Inventory

The Internalised Homonegativity Inventory (IHNI; Mayfield, 2001) consists of 23 items and measures individuals’ Personal Homonegativity, Gay Affirmation, and Morality of Homosexuality using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). Items involve identifying the degree of one’s agreeability to a statement (e.g., “I feel ashamed of my homosexuality”). The IHNI is a reliable and valid measure of internalised homophobia in gay men and was developed in order to address limitations of content validity within previous scales measuring internalised homophobia (Mayfield, 2001). Each subscale showed good Cronbach’s $\alpha$ (Personal Homonegativity = .94, Gay Affirmation = .82, Morality of Homosexuality = .74).

Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory-46

The Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory-46 (CMNI-46; Parent & Moradi, 2009) includes 46 items and measures individuals’ conformity to masculine norms along nine subscales: Emotional Control, Winning, Playboy, Violence, Self-reliance, Risk-taking, Power over Women, Primacy of Work, and Heterosexual Self-presentation. Items involve identifying the degree of one’s agreeability to a statement (e.g., “It bothers me when I have to ask for help”) using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The CMNI-46 is a reliable and valid measure of males’ conformity to masculine norms and has omitted several items possessing poor construct specificity from the original Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (Mahalik et al., 2003; Parent & Moradi, 2009). All subscales demonstrated good Cronbach’s $\alpha$ (Emotional Control = .91, Winning = .81, Playboy = .78, Violence = .85, Self-reliance = .85, Risk-taking = .81, Power over Women = .73, Primacy of Work = .82, Heterosexual Self-Presentation = .90).
Masculinity Contingency Scale

The Masculinity Contingency Scale (MCS; Burkley et al., 2016) is a recently developed scale assessing a male’s self-worth in relation to his sense of masculinity (e.g., “I can’t respect myself if I don’t behave like a ‘real man’”). The MCS consists of 10 items and measures threats to masculinity (MCS-Threat) and boosts to masculinity (MCS-Boost) using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Both the MCS-Threat (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .94$) and MCS-Boost (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .95$) demonstrated excellent internal consistency.

Childhood Gender Non-conformity

A seven item scale, the Childhood Gender Non-conformity scale (CGNcS) assesses childhood harassment due to gender non-conformity (Bailey & Oberschneider, 1997; adopted from Lippa, 2008). Individuals are asked to rate their agreement to a statement along a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). An item may state “As a child I was called a ‘sissy’ by my peers”. The scale showed good internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .84$).

Perceived Distance

An adapted single item scale from Falomir-Pichastor and Mugny (2009) will be used to assess individuals’ perceived distance from (other) homosexuals (i.e., It is likely that someone would think I am a homosexual). The scale utilises a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very Unlikely) to 7 (Very Likely).

Perceived Similarity

A seven item scale used to assess individuals’ perceived similarity with (other) homosexuals (Falomir-Pichastor et al., 2010). Using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Absolutely Not) to 7 (Absolutely), individuals are asked “To what extent do you think you are similar to gay men with regard to each of the following aspects?”—Emotions, Needs,
Wishes, Intimate Relationships, Friendships, Professional Relationships, and General Similarity. The scale showed good internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .86$).

**Procedure**

An online survey (hosted by Qualtics) was utilised and made available through a hyperlinked text within the study’s advertisement. Individuals participated voluntarily and were informed that they may withdraw from the study at any given time. The details of the study (e.g., the Participant Information Sheet) were provided on the first page of the survey. The Participant Information Sheet provided details about the study, participant requirements, duration, use of data, and contact details of the supervisor if required under any circumstances. Once the participants read the Participant Information Sheet, they were informed that clicking on the “continue” button below the Participant Information Sheet constituted their consent to participate in the survey.

**Statistical Analyses**

Statistical analyses were conducted using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22 and, following data collection, participant data was screened for univariate and multivariate outliers. Using the $\pm 3.29$ z score criteria, 62 univariate outliers were identified and deleted from the sample. Additionally, with alpha set at .001, two multivariate outliers with Mahalanobis distance scores above 43.82 were identified and deleted. Once the data was screened, 489 participant datasets remained.

The study aim involves exploring: (a) the degree to which homosexual males conform and/or value masculine norms, (b) whether conformity/valuation of masculine norms predict internalised homophobia, (c) other factors predicting internalised homophobia, and (d) when controlling for these other factors, whether the degree of conformity/valuation of masculine norms continue to predict internalised homophobia. In accordance with aim A, descriptive statistics were examined. In line with Bailey et al.’s (1997) study which found group
differences between masculine and feminine gay men, the present study conducted Kruskal-Wallis nonparametric tests to examine whether self-identified masculine, feminine, and non-conforming (identified as neither/both masculine and feminine) gay men differed significantly among the dependent variables. Additionally, independent-sample t tests were utilised to explore whether there were group differences present amongst gay men who self-identify as queer and those who do not.

As a preliminary measure when exploring aims B, C, and D, Pearson product-moment correlations were conducted using all test variables and demographic variables in order to determine any significant relationships and the direction of such relationships. Subsequently, a sequential multiple regression was conducted using three models—Model 1 (demographic variables), Model 2 (demographic variables and perceived similarity/distance), and Model 3 (demographic variables, perceived similarity/distance, and measures of masculinity). Changes in $\Delta R^2$ were calculated and used to assess the predictive power of each model and, in relation to aim D, whether the degree homosexual men conform/value masculine norms predict internalised homophobia over and above demographic and other test variables.

**Results**

In viewing the sample means alone, it can be seen that participants tend to conform neither extremely highly nor extremely lowly to masculine norms ($M = 95.82, SD = 11.46$) whereby the CMNI-46 allowed for a possible minimum/maximum score of 46/184. Additionally, participants tended not to value masculinity very highly where MCS-Threat ($M = 11.22, SD = 6.40$) and MCS-Boost ($M = 18.92, SD = 8.04$) both allowed for a possible minimum/maximum score of 5/35 each. Table 2 displays participant mean scores in all measured variables.
Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for the Study Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IHNI</td>
<td>42.25</td>
<td>13.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Homonegativity</td>
<td>20.33</td>
<td>8.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Affirmation</td>
<td>15.72</td>
<td>5.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality of Homosexuality</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMNI</td>
<td>95.82</td>
<td>11.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Control</td>
<td>13.18</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning</td>
<td>14.06</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playboy</td>
<td>10.51</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>11.96</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reliance</td>
<td>11.32</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk-taking</td>
<td>11.40</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Over Women</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>8.40</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual Self-presentation</td>
<td>9.58</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat</td>
<td>11.22</td>
<td>6.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boost</td>
<td>18.92</td>
<td>8.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Gender Non-Conformity</td>
<td>26.76</td>
<td>9.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Distance</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Similarity</td>
<td>33.97</td>
<td>7.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To identify group differences between participant’s self-assigned gender norm characterisations (masculine, feminine, and neither/both) among the dependent variables (IHNI, CMNI, MCS-Threat, MCS-Boost, CGNcS, Perceived Distance, and Perceived Similarity), Kruskall-Wallis nonparametric tests were conducted to accommodate the uneven group sizes. Statistically significant differences were identified between the three groups among the variables MCS-Threat ($\chi^2 [2, N = 489] = 28.11, p < .001, \eta^2 = .06$), MCS-Boost ($\chi^2 [2, N = 489] = 19.76, p < .001, \eta^2 = .04$), CGNcS ($\chi^2 [2, N = 489] = 79.35, p < .001, \eta^2 = .16$), and Perceived Distance ($\chi^2 [2, N = 489] = 67.07, p < .001, \eta^2 = .14$). A series of 12 post hoc pairwise comparisons were conducted using Mann-Whitney U tests and an adjusted alpha of .004. Significant differences were found between feminine and neither/both groups along the Perceived Distance variable ($z [N = 254] = 2.97, p = .002, r^2 = .22$), between feminine and masculine groups along CGNcS ($z [N = 246] = 4.40, p < .001, r^2 = .45$) and Perceived
INVESTIGATING MASCULINITY AND INTERNALISED HOMOPHOBIA

Distance ($z \ [N = 246] = 4.60, p < .001, r^2 = .45$) variables, and between neither/both and masculine groups along MCS-Threat ($z \ [N = 478] = 5.04, p < .001, r^2 = .06$), MCS-Boost ($z \ [N = 478] = 4.24, p < .001, r^2 = .04$), CGNcS ($z \ [N = 478] = 8.23, p < .001, r^2 = .14$), and Perceived Distance ($z \ [N = 478] = 7.29, p < .001, r^2 = .11$). Table 3 displays group means among the three self-assigned gender norm characterisations.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics Among Self-Assigned Gender Norm Characterisation Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Masculine ($N = 235$)</th>
<th>Neither/Both ($N = 243$)</th>
<th>Feminine ($N = 11$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>$M$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IHNI</td>
<td>42.41</td>
<td>13.63</td>
<td>42.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMNI</td>
<td>96.46</td>
<td>11.47</td>
<td>95.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCS Threat</td>
<td>12.85</td>
<td>6.82</td>
<td>9.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCS Boost</td>
<td>20.61</td>
<td>7.47</td>
<td>17.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGNcS</td>
<td>22.78</td>
<td>9.03</td>
<td>30.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Distance</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>5.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Similarity</td>
<td>33.86</td>
<td>7.66</td>
<td>34.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, independent-samples $t$ tests were conducted to identify group differences between participant’s self-assigned queer identity on the dependent variables: IHNI, CMNI, MCS-Threat, MCS-Boost, CGNcS, Perceived Distance, and Perceived Similarity. As the sample was considered robust ($N = 489$), assumptions of normality were satisfactory. However, tests of homogeneity of variance were satisfactory for all but MCS-Threat and Perceived Distance—this was taken into account during analyses.

Statistically significant differences were identified between those identifying as queer and those who do not among the variables MCS-Threat ($t[487] = 3.53, p < .001$), MCS-Boost ($t[487] = 2.50, p < .05$), CGNcS ($t[487] = 4.52, p < .001$), Perceived Distance ($t[487] = 2.99, p < .01$), and Perceived Similarity ($t[487] = 4.32, p < .001$). Mean differences depicted lower scores on MCS-Threat ($MD = -1.97$, 95% CI $[-3.07, -.87]$) and MCS-Boost ($MD = -1.84$, 95% CI $[-3.28, -.39]$) among those identifying as queer, as compared to those who do not
identify as queer. A medium effect was found in MCS-Threat ($r^2 = .16$) while a medium to large effect was found in MCS-Boost ($r^2 = .11$). Additionally, mean differences found higher scores on CGNcS (MD = 4.04, 95% CI [2.29, 5.80]), Perceived Distance (MD = .47, 95% CI [.16, .78]), and Perceived Similarity (MD = 3.03, 95% CI [1.65, 4.41]) among self-identified queer participants compared to those who do not identify as queer. A medium effect was found in Perceived Distance ($r^2 = .13$) while a medium to large effect was found in CGNcS ($r^2 = .20$) and Perceived Similarity ($r^2 = .19$).

Pearson product-moment correlations were performed between the variables age, queer identity, gender norm characterisation, education, IHNI, CMNI, MCS-Threat, MCS-Boost, CGNcS, Perceived Distance, and Perceived Similarity using an alpha level of .05. As the sample was considered robust ($N = 489$), all assumptions were satisfactory. Table 4 and Table 5 depict correlations between all test variables.

Table 4

Bivariate Correlations between Demographic and Various Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Queer</th>
<th>Gender Norm</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Norm</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IHNI</td>
<td>-.16**</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<td>CMNI</td>
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<td>.05</td>
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<td>MCS-Threat</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCS-Boost</td>
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<td>-.11*</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>CGNcS</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>-.40**</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance</td>
<td>-.15**</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>-.36**</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarity</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Correlations marked with an asterisk (*) and double asterisk (**) were significant at $p < .05$ and $p < .01$, respectively.
Table 5

Bivariate Correlations between Internalised Homonegativity, Measures of Gender Norm Conformity, Perceived Distance/Similarity and Various Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>IHNI</th>
<th>CMNI</th>
<th>MCS-T</th>
<th>MCS-B</th>
<th>CGNcS</th>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Similarity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Queer</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Norm</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>IHNI</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMNI</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCS-Threat</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCS-Boost</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGNcS</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.12**</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.18**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarity</td>
<td>-.24**</td>
<td>-.25**</td>
<td>-.15**</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Correlations marked with a double asterisk (**) were significant at $p < .01$, respectively.

A sequential multiple regression was conducted in order to determine if the variables (age, queer identity, gender norm self-characterisation, education, CMNI, MCS-Threat, MCS-Boost, CGNcS, Perceived Distance, and Perceived Similarity) could predict IHNI. With an $N$ of 489, the sample was considered robust and assumptions of homogeneity were satisfactory. Results of the multiple regression are displayed within Table 6.
### Table 6

Regression Coefficients of the Predictors on Internally Internalised Homonegativity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>.05</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>-.20***</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>-1.11*</td>
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<td>Queer Identity</td>
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<td>-.07</td>
<td>-1.60</td>
<td>1.20</td>
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<td>.70</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-1.53</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>-.06</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>.55</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.78</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.55</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>-.05</td>
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<td>Perceived Distance</td>
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<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.68</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived Similarity</td>
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<td>-.21</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.13</td>
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<td>.06</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCS-Threat</td>
<td>.62***</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.30</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCS-Boost</td>
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<td>.08</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CGNcS</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Correlations marked with an asterisk (*), double asterisk (**), and a triple asterisk (***), were significant at \( p < .05, \ p < .01 \) and \( p < .001 \), respectively.

Model 1 shows the association between demographic information (i.e., age, queer identity, gender norm self-characterisation, and education) and internally internalised homophobia, while Model 2 shows the association when Perceived Distance and Perceived Similarity are added to the model. Additionally, Model 3 shows the association when various measures of gender norm conformity (i.e., CMNI, MCS-Threat, MCS-Boost, and CGNcS) are included in the model. The logistic regression was statistically significant in all three models; Model 1, \( R = .20, \ R^2 = .04, \ F(4, 484) = 5.12, \ p < .001 \), Model 2, \( R = .32, \ R^2 = .10, \ F(6, 482) = 9.03, \ p < .001 \), and Model 3, \( R = .52, \ R^2 = .28, \ F(10, 478) = 18.12, \ p < .001 \). Model 1 accounted for 3.30% (\( \Delta R^2 \)) of the variance in internally internalised homophobia while Model 2 and Model 3 accounted for 9.00% and 26.00% (\( \Delta R^2 \), respectively) of the variance in internally internalised homophobia. Changes in \( \Delta R^2 \) between Models 1 and 2 and between Models 2 and 3 were .06 and .17, respectively.

Model 1 depicts age as a significant predictor of internally internalised homophobia (\( B = -.20, \ p < .001 \)). Additionally, age continues to act as a significant predictor in Model 2 (\( B = -.20, \ p < .001 \)) and Model 3 (\( B = -.11, \ p < .05 \)). Model 2 shows a significant relationship between
Perceived Distance and internalised homophobia ($B = -0.78, p < .05$), as well as between Perceived Similarity and internalised homophobia ($B = -0.36, p < .001$). Additionally, Perceived Similarity remains a significant predictor in Model 3 ($B = -0.22, p < .01$) while Perceived Distance is no longer significant. Model 3 shows a significant relationship between CMNI and internalised homophobia ($B = 0.25, p < .001$), as well as MCS-Threat and internalised homophobia ($B = 0.62, p < .001$). The results demonstrate that age, perceived similarity, conformity to masculine norms, and self-worth in relation to threats to masculinity were sufficient to predict levels of internalised homophobia over and above other demographic variables, perceived distance to homosexuals, and other measures of gender norm conformity.

Subsequently, mediation analyses were conducted using the MEDIATE syntax from Hayes (2014) in SPSS. This was utilised in order to ascertain whether one measure of masculinity contributed to the lack of significance Perceived Distance possessed once the measures of masculinity were introduced into the model. Among the two significant predictors revealed by the sequential multiple regression, mediation analyses were conducted using MCS-Threat as Pearson product-moment correlations demonstrated that CMNI did not significantly correlate with Perceived Distance. As such, results indicated that the degree of internalised homophobia significantly related to both MCS-Threat and Perceived Distance. Participants were more likely to possess higher degrees of internalised homophobia and perceive themselves as dissimilar to other homosexual men when their sense of self-worth is susceptible to threats to their masculinity. When both internalised homophobia and MCS-Threat were included as predictors of Perceived Distance, MCS-Threat was significant, but internalised homophobia was not. A bias corrected bootstrap with 5000 samples indicated that the indirect effect through MCS-Threat was significant in that the 95% confidence
interval did not include zero. Figure 1 shows results for mediation effects between internalised homophobia, MCS-Threat and Perceived Distance.

![Diagram of mediation effects]

Figure 1. Model of direct and indirect effects between internalised homophobia, MCS-Threat and Perceived Distance.

Note. Coefficients marked with an asterisk (*), double asterisk (**), and a triple asterisk (***). Coefficients were significant at $p < .05$, $p < .01$ and $p < .001$, respectively.

Discussion

Homosexual Men’s Internalised Homonegativity and Masculinity

The present study sought to examine the degree homosexual males conform to and/or value masculine norms. In viewing descriptive statistics alone, it can be suggested that Australian homosexual males’ conformity to masculine norms tends to lean to neither extremes. Additionally, Australian homosexual males tend not to value masculinity very highly, as suggested by their sense of self-worth in relation to threats/boosts to masculinity. However, upon examining group differences between those who characterise themselves as masculine, feminine, and neither/both, analyses reveal significant differences among the variables MCS-Boost, MCS-Threat, CGNcs, and Perceived Distance. Post hoc comparisons reveal that feminine gay men tend to perceive themselves as closer to other gay men than
those who identify as neither/both. Feminine gay men also tend to have experienced more childhood gender non-conformity and tend to perceive themselves as closer to other gay men than those identifying as masculine. Additionally, those identifying as neither/both tend not to associate threats/boosts to their masculinity with their sense of self-worth, tend to have experienced more childhood gender non-conformity, and tend to perceive themselves as more closer to other gay men as compared to masculine gay men. However, it is interesting that, despite homosexual men’s gender norm self-characterisations, the three groups do not differ significantly in their conformity to masculine norms. It can, therefore, be argued that men’s self-characterisations as either masculine, feminine, or neither/both reflects their valuation of masculinity (as suggested by MCS-Threat and MCS-Boost) as opposed to their actual conformity to masculine norms. This suggests that, not only are self-characterisations an unreliable measure of men’s conformity to masculine norms but, masculine gay men tend to value masculinity highly and their self-worth is more highly contingent to their sense of masculinity.

Similarly, in examining the groups of those who identify as queer and those who do not, analyses reveal significant differences among all test variables save for IHNI and CMNI. Results demonstrate that homosexual males who identify as queer tend not to associate threats/boosts to their masculinity with their sense of self-worth, tend to have experienced more childhood gender non-conformity, and tend to perceive themselves as more closer and more similar to other homosexual males. This suggests that there may be socio-psychological differences between homosexual males who identify themselves as queer and those who do not.

In light of the group differences in MCS-Threat and MCS-Boost, it can be argued that individuals identifying as queer do not perceive gender norms as be-all-end-all ways of being and, therefore, are not constrained by them. Sánchez et al. (2009) and Sánchez et al. (2010)
suggested that homosexual males overly concerned with gender norms tend to use (hyper)masculinity as a compensatory device for their experiences of internalised homophobia. Given the current study’s findings, it can be suggested that homosexual males who do not concern themselves with gender norms also identify as queer. Additionally, it is argued that gender norms place constraints on individuals’ abilities to actualise their potential (O’Neal et al., 1986). It can, therefore, be argued that individuals who do not place great value on gender norms—notably those identifying as queer—are more likely to experience internalised homophobia and gender-related strain.

However, the present study’s results did not indicate any significant differences in internalised homophobia or conformity to masculine norms between both groups. This is perplexing as research (e.g., Sánchez et al., 2009; Sánchez et al., 2010) suggests that those who are concerned with masculine norms tend to adopt more masculine traits as a consequence of higher degrees of internalised homophobia. However, it can be argued that there were limitations in the study’s sample whereby only individuals identifying as homosexual were included in the research. Participants recruited via the dating app, Grindr, comprised 84.90% of the total sample. However, prior to eliminating data from those who do not meet the sample criteria, the study received data from participants identifying as bisexual and, surprisingly, heterosexual. It can be argued that same-sex attracted males who identify as heterosexual may not have yet come to accept their sexual identity and possess higher degrees of internalised homophobia. Therefore, it can be argued that the study’s results may only be representative of homosexual men who are comfortable with their sexual identity and, therefore, do not suffer extremely from internalised homophobia. It is recommended that future studies include and compare same-sex attracted males who identify as either heterosexual or bisexual, in addition to homosexual, as this would allow for a more holistic
Investigating Masculinity and Internalised Homophobia

Perspective of Men’s Conformity to Masculine Norms and Their Experiences with Internalised Homophobia.

Predicting Internalised Homonegativity

The study aimed to explore the degree to which homosexual men’s conformity and/or valuation of hegemonic masculinity predicted the degree of internalised homophobia experienced. It was hypothesised that, when controlling for demographics and other variables, measures of masculinity would continue to best predict homosexual men’s levels of internalised homophobia. Analyses partially supported the present study’s hypothesis whereby only the measures of Conformity to Masculine Norms and MCS-Threat remained as significant predictors of internalised homophobia. This suggests that individuals’ current conformity to masculine norms are stronger predictors of individuals’ experiences of internalised homophobia as compared to past conformity (e.g., childhood gender non-conformity). Additionally, the results suggest that the significance of threats to homosexual men’s masculinity are superior predictors of internalised homophobia as compared to the significance of boosts to their masculinity.

The present study’s results not only indicate that individuals who conform more to masculine norms tend to possess higher degrees of internalised homophobia than those who conform less to masculine norms but also, by knowing how strongly an individual adheres to masculine norms, one can predict the degree of internalised homophobia said individual harbors. From these findings, it can be explicated that either gay men who possess stronger internalisations of homophobia utilise masculinity as a compensatory strategy or that hegemonic masculinities foster internalised homophobia —resulting in masculine-conforming men to possess stronger internalised homophobia. In relation to the first explanation, it has been argued that gay men who are overly concerned with masculine norms utilise hyper-masculinity as a compensatory strategy for their perceived sense of inferiority.
INVESTIGATING MASCULINITY AND INTERNALISED HOMOPHOBIA

(Sánchez et al., 2009; Sánchez et al., 2010). Additionally, feminine men often receive more negative attitudes, social and romantic rejection, victimisation, and harassment from others, as compared to masculine men (Skidmore et al., 2006; Plöderl & Fartacek, 2009; Glick et al., 2015). Considering the notion that homosexuality is synonymous to femininity (Provence et al., 2014), it is no surprise that homosexual men experience as sense of inferiority/negativity regarding their own sexuality and aim to compensate by adopting (what they perceive to be) the opposite—masculinity. Furthermore, considering the quote “we try to overcompensate and adopt masculinity to a cartoonish degree” (p. 78; Sánchez et al., 2009) alongside the present study’s findings, it can be argued that homosexuality is perceived as the opposite of masculinity and that adherence to masculine norms is a compensatory strategy employed by individuals who harbor stronger internalisations of homophobia.

O’Neal et al. (1986) defines homophobia as being both the fear of homosexuals and the fear of being (perceived) a homosexual. Considering O’Neal et al.’s definition of homophobia alongside Provence et al.’s (2014) assertion that homosexuality is synonymous to femininity, it can be argued that, as a compensatory strategy, gay men who possess higher degrees of (internalised) homophobia reduce their likelihood of being perceived as a homosexual by conforming to what they perceive as being the antithesis of homosexuality—masculinity. This (arguably hyper-masculine) behaviour can be described as straight-acting. The term is argumentative, in itself as it is perplexing how gay men may refer to themselves as straight-acting rather than masculine. Additionally, gay men have expressed sentiment revealing the heterosexist discourse within gay men’s gender identity—for example: “gay men struggle to live up to the ‘unattainable’ masculine image” (Sanchez et al., 2009; p. 78), “if you’re gay, you’re not masculine” (Sanchez et al., 2009; p. 78), and “even the most masculine gay man is a bit sissy” (Eslen-Ziya & Koc, 2016; p. 804). This suggests that there
exists a pervasive ideology that masculinity is exclusive to heterosexuality—or in other words, masculinity is reified as the heterosexual male.

As it is maintained that male heterosexuality is perceived as being synonymous to masculinity, it is also maintained that male homosexuality is perceived as being synonymous to femininity (Provence et al., 2009). This societal understanding of gender and sexuality, therefore, presents an oxymoron in the phrase ‘homosexual male’. By this notion, the two terms ‘homosexual’ and ‘male’ can be regarded as direct oppositions of each other. A participant within Provence et al.’s (2009) study expressed similar sentiment: “you can’t be a man and be gay” (p. 5). It is no wonder that homosexual men may experience gender discrepancy strain. The Gender-role Strain Paradigm maintains that there exists three types gender-related strain: discrepancy, dysfunction, and trauma (Levant & Richmond, 2016). In conjunction with the present study’s results, it can be argued that homosexual men experience all three types of strain. It can, therefore, be argued that, in order for the strain experienced by homosexual males to be addressed, heteronormative understandings of gender and sexuality be revised.

Additionally, mediation analyses demonstrated full mediation between internalised homophobia and perceived distance whereby the relationship was mediated by MCS-Threat. This further supports Falomir-Pichastor and Mugny’s (2009) theory explaining homophobia through the conflicts of social identities—in- and out-groups. It was argued that homosexual males pose a threat to the masculine identity and, therefore, heterosexual males are motivated to maintain a distinct gender identity. Therefore, just as heterosexual men with higher degrees of homophobia dissociate their gender identities from homosexual men, so too do homosexual men with higher degrees of internalised homophobia perceive themselves as dissimilar to other homosexual men.
It has been suggested that homosexuality is perceived to be synonymous to femininity (Provence et al., 2014) and that homophobia involves both the fear of homosexuals and the fear of being (perceived) a homosexual (O’Neal et al., 1986). Given these two assertions, it can be argued that the study’s findings corroborate the theory of men’s fear of femininity and, in turn, men’s fear of homosexuality. Considering Pistachor and Mugny’s theory of homophobia, in conjunction with O’Neal et al.’s and Provence et al.’s (2014) arguments, it can be explicated that homosexual men’s experiences of internalised homophobia to be a result of a greater motivation to maintain a distinct gender identity separate from other homosexual men—otherwise perceived as feminine. It can, therefore, be argued that Pistachor and Mugny’s theory of heterosexual men’s experiences of homophobia can also be expanded to explain homosexual men’s experiences of internalised homophobia.

Likewise, Hunt et al. (2016) asserted that gay men whose masculinity is threatened tend to perceive other masculine gay men as being similar to themselves and present less of a desire to interact with feminine gay men, as compared to gay men whose masculinity is affirmed. This further supports the notion that homosexual men perceive other (feminine) gay men as posing a threat to their gender identity. Similarly, masculine gay men in Clarkson’s (2006) study have expressed the following sentiments in regards to feminine gay men: “I am somewhat scared of them … as if their aura would rub off on me” (p. 203) and “it was freaky. I stayed away from all that stuff” (p. 204). It can be argued that social distancing acts as a defence mechanism among homosexual, and (arguably) heterosexual, men whose masculinity is threatened. This effect of social distancing enacted through the creation of distinct social groups can be concisely expressed by the following laymen’s terms: ‘I’m gay but, I’m not one of those gays’. The present study examined this effect and has identified a link between internalised homophobia, threats to masculinity, and social distance.
Similarly, mate-seeking behaviour among gay men seem to discriminate and emphasise the group differences between masculine and feminine gay men. Within personal advertisements, gay men tend to explicitly request gender-typical characteristics and ostracise gender-atypical individuals (Sánchez et al., 2010). Statements such as “masc only” and “no femmes” (Remillard, 2015; p. 1) are only but a few of the discriminative behaviours one may encounter within the gay dating environment. However, the act of social distancing and creating distinct gender identities while dating is ostensibly larger than mate-seeking. The widespread discrimination between masculine and feminine gay men normalises, and even glorifies, a divisive social practice.

The distancing of the self from homosexuality and/or other homosexual men can be considered a distressing social phenomenon. Amongst a demographic considered a minority, it is an arguably alarming phenomenon whereby members of the demographic could isolate themselves from other members of the group. A study by Mereish and Poteat (2015) found that individuals experiencing high levels of internalised homophobia present less psychological distress the closer their relationship was with another LGBT friend. Additionally, psychological distress did not differ whether individuals had a close or distant relationship with a heterosexual friend. This suggests that gay men who are experiencing higher degrees of internalised homophobia should not be distancing themselves from other gay men but, conversely, seek a strong relationship with them.

Similarly, McLaren, Jude, and McLachlan (2008) found that gay men’s sense of belonging to both the gay community and to the general community directly and indirectly related to depression. It was argued that possessing a strong sense of belonging to one’s community contributes to gay men’s positive mental health outcomes. Considering McLaren et al.’s and Mereish and Poteat’s (2015) findings alongside the psychological risks associated with social isolation, internalised homophobia (McLaren, 2016; Szymanski & Ikizler, 2013),
and the poor mental health outcomes associated with sexual minority groups (e.g., Barnes & Meyer, 2012), it can be argued that the influence heterosexist gender ideals has in fostering internalised homophobia must be addressed. It is proposed that the systemically-rooted constructs of the gendered norms fostering internalised homophobia in men be redefined and reconstructed to better accommodate for non-heteronormative individuals. It is anticipated that a reduction in the stigmatisation of gender non-conformity, as well as homosexuality, can relieve males (both hetero- and homosexual) from experiences of gender-related strain.

In addition to masculinity, analyses revealed two other significant predictors of internalised homophobia — age and perceived similarity. It is demonstrated that older homosexual males tend to experience lower degrees of internalised homophobia, as compared to their younger counterparts, while those who perceive themselves as more similar to other homosexual males tend to experience less internalised homophobia. Regarding perceived similarity, the present study’s findings can be likened to Falomir-Pichastor and Mugny’s (2009) theory explaining homophobia through social identities—in- and out-groups. The Perceived Similarity scale (Falomir-Pichastor et al., 2010) does not provide vignettes depicting characteristics/traits of the other gay men, forcing participants to access their own understandings and perceptions of what other gay men are like. Using the concept of social identity, it can be argued that individuals high in internalised homophobia do not identify themselves with homosexual men as a collective and, therefore, perceive other gay men as an out-group and dissimilar to themselves.

However, the vagueness of the Perceived Similarity and Perceived Distance scales, which do not specify characteristics/traits of the other party, can be considered, arguably, a limitation. Previous studies (e.g., Hunt et al., 2016) provided vignettes describing the other individuals. The present study, however, argues that participants possess similar conceptions of masculinity and stereotypical homosexual males (i.e., effeminate). Previous studies,
however, have demonstrated individuals (regardless of gender or sexuality) to possess similar conceptions of gay men (e.g., Blashill, & Powlishta, 2009).

Regarding age however, the present study found that age significantly predicts an individual’s degree of internalised homophobia. That is, older homosexual males, as compared to their younger counterparts, tend to experience lower degrees of internalised homophobia. This finding is interesting as research suggests that public attitudes toward homosexuals has been more negative in the past as compared to more recent years (e.g., Hicks & Lee, 2006). Considering the societal norms of the period, it would reasonable to maintain that older homosexual males possess higher degrees of internalised homophobia than younger homosexual males who were not subject to higher degrees of homophobic attitudes. However, in light of the present study’s results, it can be argued that older individuals may experience less internalised homophobia as they have had more time to come to terms with their sexuality.

Similarly, a cohort study by Herrick et al. (2013) examined gay men’s resiliencies regarding internalised homophobia and various health outcomes. It was found that the degree of gay men’s internalised homophobia tended to decrease over time. Individuals who recently came to identify as gay, however, tended to demonstrate higher degrees of internalised homophobia regardless of their decade of birth. Herrick et al. argued that, unlike recent gay-identifying males, other gay men have had more time to develop a sense of self-acceptance. This suggests that, not only is internalised homophobia a constant issue throughout time but, there is hope in its reduction. Herrick et al. also found that individuals who resolved their internalised homophobia tended to present less negative health outcomes. In consideration of the present study’s results, it can be maintained that the common phrase ‘it gets better’ holds true in regards to homosexual men’s experiences of internalised homophobia. It can, therefore, be argued that programs and policies in support of individuals who have recently
come out (e.g., gay youths) should be improved and advocated in the aim of reducing/mitigating the effects of internalised homophobia.

Additionally, correlation analyses revealed a negative relationship between age and conformity to masculine norms. It can, therefore, be inferred that either gay men from older generations do not conform strongly to masculine norms or that, as gay men grow older, the less they are likely to conform to such norms. Considering the associations found between internalised homophobia and conformity to masculine norms within the present study alongside Herrick et al.’s (2013) results demonstrating gay men’s levels of internalised homophobia decreasing over time, it is reasonable to argue that, as gay men grow older, their adherence to hegemonic masculine norms decreases.

Results also indicate internalised homophobia to have a positive relationship with conformity to masculine norms, MCS-Threat, MCS-Boost, and perceived distance, while also having a negative relationship with perceived similarity. This suggests that homosexual males who possess stronger internalisations of homophobia also tend to conform more to masculine norms, relate their sense of self-worth with threats and boosts to their masculinity, and perceive themselves to be more distant and dissimilar to other gay men. Similarly, conformity to masculine norms has a significant positive relationship with MCS-Threat and MCS-Boost while also having a significant negative relationship with perceived similarity. This suggests that gay men who conform more strongly to hegemonic masculine norms, as compared to those who do not, tend to relate their sense of self-worth with threats and boosts to their masculinity. Additionally, gay men who conform more strongly to masculine norms tend to perceive themselves as dissimilar to other gay men when compared to those who do not conform strongly to masculine norms.
Limitations

However, a limitation of the study may include the vagueness of the Perceived Similarity and Perceived Distance scales which do not specify whether the other individual is feminine/masculine, introverted/extroverted, or any other personality traits. Previous studies (e.g., Hunt et al., 2016) provided vignettes describing the individual in question. The present study, however, assumes participants to possess similar conceptions of masculinity and the stereotyped homosexual male (i.e., effeminate). However, previous studies have demonstrated individuals (regardless of gender or sexuality) to possess similar conceptions of gay men (e.g., Blashill, & Powlishta, 2009).

Additionally, the present study’s sample only included individuals identifying as homosexual. It is recommended that future studies include other males of same-sex attracted identities, including heterosexual, as this would allow for a more diverse range of scores. It is argued that same-sex attracted males who identify as heterosexual may be experiencing conflicts with internalised homophobia and have not yet come to terms with their sexual identity. By examining other males of same-sex attracted identities, it is expected that studies can better understand the scope and impact internalised homophobia has on same-sex attracted males. Findings may come to contribute to the development of more informed strategies aimed at improving the social, psychological, and physical health outcomes of same-sex attracted males.

Implications and Conclusion

As a consequence of the heteronormative nature of gender norms, homosexual men internalise anti-effeminacy and homophobic ideals into how they perform masculinity. Homosexual men’s straight-acting masculinity is a reified adaptation of heteronormative masculinity/heterosexuality (Clarkson, 2006). Butler (2004) argues that “heterosexuality doesn’t belong exclusively to heterosexuals” (p. 199). In the context of the present study,
heterosexuality is masculinity and homosexuality is femininity (e.g., Provence et al., 2014). With these ideologies in place, homosexual men perceive their own identity—homosexual male—as an oxymoron and attempt to compensate/restore their perceived discrepancy by conforming more strongly to masculine norms. This heteronormative understanding of masculinity is, arguably, detrimental to the wellbeing and experiences of homosexual men.

Additionally, heteronormative masculinity is manifested through the distancing of the self from homosexuality/other homosexual men. Internalised homophobia, arguably, exacerbates the effects of men’s gender-related strain. Amongst a minority, it is a distressing social phenomenon whereby individuals may isolate themselves from other members of the group. Given the psychological risks associated with social isolation, internalised homophobia (McLaren, 2016; Szymanski & Ikizler, 2013), and the poor mental health outcomes (e.g., Barnes & Meyer, 2012) associated with sexual minority groups, it is proposed that the systemically-rooted constructs of gendered norms be redefined and reconstructed to better accommodate for non-heteronormative individuals. O’Neal et al. (1986) argue that (masculine) gender norms are a constraint on an individual’s ability to actualise their potential. In relation to the present study, it is anticipated that a reduction in the stigmatisation of gender non-conformity, as well as homosexuality, can relieve males (both hetero- and homosexual) from experiences of gender-related strain. Similarly, it can be argued that future research and educational policies on gender-related issues (e.g., transgender, non-binary, Safe Schools program) can be examined in light of the current findings.

Currently, there exists limited research explicitly examining masculinity and internalised homophobia (e.g., Eslen-Ziya & Koc, 2016; Sánchez et al., 2016; Szymanski & Ikizler, 2013). The current paper is an exploration into the phenomenon of internalised homophobia and its socio-psychological underpinnings. The current paper, therefore, hopes
that the current findings contribute to the empirical study of LGTIQ individuals— particularly, LGBTQ psychology (a discipline little over half-a-century old). Studies on internalised homophobia utilising an Australian sample and, even more so, qualitative methodologies (e.g., Berg, Munthe-Kaas, & Ross, 2016) are severely lacking. Future studies are urged to expand upon the knowledge and understanding acquired from the present study.
References


Schmitt, M. T., & Branscombe, N. R. (2001). The good, the bad, and the manly: Threats to one's prototypicality and evaluations of fellow in-group members. *Journal of*


Appendix A

Ethics Approval

REDI Reference: H12044

Risk Rating: Low 2 - HREC

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

7 March 2017

Doctor Tinashe Dune

School of Science and Health

Dear Tinashe,

I wish to formally advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved your research proposal H12044 “It's a man's world: An investigation of masculinity and internalised homophobia amongst homosexual men“, until 1 September 2018 with the provision of a progress report annually if over 12 months and a final report on completion.

In providing this approval the HREC determined that the proposal meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

This protocol covers the following researchers:

Tinashe Dune, Jack Thepsourinthone

Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report will be due annually on the anniversary of the approval date.

2. A final report will be due at the expiration of the approval period.

3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee prior to being implemented. Amendments must be requested using the HREC Amendment Request Form:
https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0012/1096995/FORM_Amendment_Request.docx

4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events on participants must be reported to the Human Research Ethics Committee via the Human Ethics Officer as a matter of priority.

5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the Committee as a matter of priority

6. Consent forms are to be retained within the archives of the School or Research Institute and made available to the Committee upon request.

7. Project specific conditions:

There are no specific conditions applicable.

Please quote the registration number and title as indicated above in the subject line on all future correspondence related to this project. All correspondence should be sent to the e-mail address humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au as this e-mail address is closely monitored.

Yours sincerely

Professor Elizabeth Deane

Presiding Member,

Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee
Appendix B

Participant Information Sheet

**Project Title:**
It’s a man’s world: An investigation of masculinity and internalised homophobia amongst homosexual men

**Project Summary:**
You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Jack Thepsourinthone (Master of Research candidate), under the supervision of Doctor Tinashe Dune (Lecturer/Supervisor) of the School of Science and Health. The purpose of this project is to investigate the interaction between homosexual men’s attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours relating to traditional notions of masculinity and their experiences of being gay. The study involves a single session during which you will be asked to complete a short survey containing questions about your experiences of identifying as a homosexual male, specific gender norms, and a range of other matters including childhood and perceptions of other homosexual men.

**How is the study being paid for?**
The study is being sponsored by the School of Science and Health at the Western Sydney University.

**What will I be asked to do?**
You will be asked to complete a short survey containing questions about your experiences of identifying as a homosexual male and related issues.

**How much of my time will I need to give?**
The survey will take approximately 20 minutes.

**What benefits will I, and/or the broader community, receive for participating?**
You will not receive specific benefits.
Will the study involve any risk or discomfort for me? If so, what will be done to rectify it?

We do not believe the survey will involve any discomfort for you. If, however, you anticipate that you may be uncomfortable answering questions about masculinity and experiences of being gay in an anonymous online survey then we suggest that you choose not to complete the survey. If you do experience discomfort from completing the survey, please contact Lifeline (13-11-14), BeyondBlue (1300-224-636), or 1800RESPECT (1800-737-732)—a 24/7 counselling helpline providing information/support for sexual- and family-related abuse. Alternatively, you may contact Doctor Tinashe Dune email t.dune@westernsydney.edu.au and she will advise on steps you may choose to take to rectify that.

How do you intend to publish or disseminate the results?

It is anticipated that the results of this research project will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that the participant cannot be identified. Participation in this online survey is anonymous. However, please be advised that, at the end of the survey, you will be asked if you would like to participate in an online interview as well. By providing your details in the space provided, your responses in this survey will no longer be anonymous.

Will the data and information that I have provided be disposed of?

Please be assured that only the researchers will have access to the raw data you provide and that your data will not be used in any other projects. Please note that minimum retention period for data collection is five years post publication. The data and information you have provided will be securely disposed of.

Can I withdraw from the study?

Participation is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged to be involved. If you do participate you can withdraw at any time without giving reason.
If you do choose to withdraw, any information that you have supplied will be deleted. You may withdraw from the online survey by either closing the page or the browser before the end of the survey. However, as the survey is anonymous and non-identifiable, there is no way of withdrawing your responses once the survey has been completed in its entirety.

**Can I tell other people about the study?**

Yes, you can tell other people about the study by forwarding the link that you followed that directed you to this survey.

**What if I require further information?**

Please contact Jack Thepsourinhone should you wish to discuss the research further before deciding whether or not to participate.

Jack Thepsourinhone (Master of Research candidate)

17538666@student.westernsydney.edu.au

Tinashe Dune (Supervisor) t.dune@westernsydney.edu.au

**What if I have a complaint?**

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through Research Engagement, Development and Innovation (REDI) on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 or email humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form. The information sheet is for you to keep and the consent form is retained by the researcher/s.

This study has been approved by the Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is H12044.
Appendix C

Participant Consent Form

Project Title: It’s a man’s world: An investigation of masculinity and internalised homophobia amongst homosexual men

I hereby consent to participate in the above named research project.

I acknowledge that:

• I have read the participant information sheet (or where appropriate, have had it read to me) and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s

• The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

• I agree that I am currently residing in Australia and that I am currently at or above the age of 18 years.

I consent to participating in an online survey.

I consent for my data and information provided to be used in this project and other related projects for an extended period of time.

I understand that my involvement is confidential and that the information gained during the study may be published and stored for other research use but no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without affecting my relationship with the researcher/s, and any organisations involved, now or in the future.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Western Sydney University. The ethics reference number is: H12044
What if I have a complaint?

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through Research Engagement, Development and Innovation (REDI) on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 or email humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Please note that clicking on the “Continue” button below constitutes your consent to participate in this study.
Appendix D

Instruments

Demographics

1. Is your country of residence Australia?
   - Yes
   - No (Exit questionnaire)

2. What is your age? (Values below 18 are directed to the end of the questionnaire)

3. Are you:
   - Male
   - Female (Exit questionnaire)
   - Intersex (Exit questionnaire)
   - Other (Exit questionnaire)

4. Do you identify as:
   - Straight or heterosexual (Exit questionnaire)
   - Gay or homosexual
   - Lesbian (Exit questionnaire)
   - Bisexual (Exit questionnaire)
   - Other (Exit questionnaire)

5. Do you identify as queer?
   - Yes
   - No

6. Do you consider yourself:
   - Masculine
   - Feminine
   - Both
7. How did you hear about this study?

- Flyer/Poster
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Grindr
- Friend/Family
- Other

**Internalised Homonegativity Inventory**

Thinking about your own actions, feelings and beliefs, please indicate how much you personally agree or disagree with each statement by selecting "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Slightly Disagree", "Slightly Agree", "Agree", or "Strongly Agree" to the right of the statement. There are no right or wrong responses to the statements. 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. I believe being gay is an important part of me.

2. I believe it is OK for men to be attracted to other 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 that 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.

**Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory**

Thinking about your own actions, feelings and beliefs, please indicate how much you personally agree or disagree with each statement by selecting "Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Agree", or "Strongly Agree" to the right of the statement. There are no right or wrong responses to the statements. 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. In general, I will do anything to win.

2. If I could, I would frequently change sexual partners.

3. I hate asking for help.

4. I believe that violence is never justified.
5. Being thought of as gay is not a bad thing.
6. In general, I do not like risky situations.
7. Winning is not my first priority.
8. I enjoy taking risks.
9. I am disgusted by any kind of violence.
10. I ask for help when I need it.
11. My work is the most important part of my life.
12. I would only have sex if I was in a committed relationship.
13. I bring up my feelings when talking to others.
14. I would be furious if someone thought I was gay.
15. I don't mind losing.
16. I take risks.
17. It would not bother me at all if someone thought I was gay.
18. I never share my feelings.
19. Sometimes violent action is necessary.
20. In general, I control the women in my life.
21. I would feel good if I had many sexual partners.
22. It is important for me to win.
23. I don't like giving all my attention to work.
24. It would be awful if people thought I was gay.
25. I like to talk about my feelings.
26. I never ask for help.
27. More often than not, losing does not bother me.
28. I frequently put myself in risky situations.
29. Women should be subservient to men.
30. I am willing to get into a physical fight if necessary.

31. I feel good when work is my first priority.

32. I tend to keep my feelings to myself.

33. Winning is not important to me.

34. Violence is almost never justified.

35. I am happiest when I'm risking danger.

36. It would be enjoyable to date more than one person at a time.

37. I would feel uncomfortable if someone thought I was gay.

38. I am not ashamed to ask for help.

39. Work comes first.

40. I tend to share my feelings.

41. No matter what the situation I would never act violently.

42. Things tend to be better when men are in charge.

43. It bothers me when I have to ask for help.

44. I love it when men are in charge of women.

45. I hate it when people ask me to talk about my feelings.

46. I try to avoid being perceived as gay.

**Masculinity Contingency Scale**

Thinking about your own actions, feelings and beliefs, please indicate how much you personally agree or disagree with each statement by selecting "Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Slightly Disagree", "Neither Agree nor Disagree", "Slightly Agree", "Agree", or "Strongly Agree" to the right of the statement. There are no right or wrong responses to the statements. 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.
MCS-Threat

1. I can’t respect myself if I don’t live up to what it means to be a “real man”.

2. My self-respect would be threatened if I didn’t consider myself macho.

3. My self-worth suffers if I think my manhood is lacking.

4. I can’t respect myself if I don’t behave like a “real man”.

5. I would feel worthless if I acted like “less than a man”.

MCS-Boost

6. When I act manly, I feel good about myself.

7. My self-esteem gets a boost if I feel macho.

8. I feel good when I am able to show off my masculine side.

9. When I feel masculine, I feel good about myself.

10. I feel proud when I am able to demonstrate my manliness.

**Childhood Gender Nonconformity Scale**

Thinking about your own actions, feelings and beliefs, please indicate how much you personally agree or disagree with each statement by selecting "Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Slightly Disagree", "Neither Agree nor Disagree", "Slightly Agree", "Agree", or "Strongly Agree" to the right of the statement. There are no right or wrong responses to the statements. 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. As a child I was called a “sissy” by my peers.

2. As a child I sometimes wished I had been born a girl rather than a boy.

3. As a child I preferred playing with girls more than boys.

4. As a child I often felt that I had more in common with girls than boys.

5. As a child I sometimes wore feminine clothing (such as dresses), makeup, or jewelry.
6. As a child I disliked competitive sports such as football, baseball, and basketball.

7. I was a feminine boy.

**Perceived Distance**

Thinking about your own actions, feelings and beliefs, please indicate how likely the following statement is by selecting "Extremely Unlikely", "Moderately Unlikely", "Slightly Unlikely", "Neither Likely nor Unlikely", "Slightly Likely", "Moderately Likely", or "Extremely Likely" to the right of the statement. There are no right or wrong responses to the statements. 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. It is likely that someone would think I am a homosexual.

**Perceived Similarity**

Thinking about your own actions, feelings and beliefs, please indicate to what extent do you think you are similar to gay men with regard to each of the following aspects? There are no right or wrong responses to the statements. 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. Emotions

2. Needs

3. Wishes

4. Intimate Relationships

5. Friendships

6. Professional Relationships

7. General Similarity
Demographics

Finally, we have a few more background questions for you.

1. Please specify your postcode.

2. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   - Primary
   - Year 10 Certificate
   - HSC
   - Diploma or Certificate
   - Bachelor’s Degree
   - Postgraduate Degree
   - No formal education

3. Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?
   - Yes
   - No

4. What is the area that best reflects your own cultural heritage?
   - United Kingdom
   - Other parts of Europe
   - Middle East or Western Asia
   - Africa
   - America
   - South Asia
   - Southeast Asia
   - Northeast Asia
   - Pacific Islands
   - New Zealand
- Australia
- Other (please specify)

5. Please indicate which religion you identify with.

- Buddhism
- Christianity: (Dropdown menu) Christian, Catholic, Anglican, Protestant, Presbyterian and Reformed, Eastern Orthodox, Baptist, Lutheran, or Other
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism
- No religion
- Other religions (please specify)