

Ambivalent Homoprejudice towards Gay Men: Theory Development and Validation

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Abstract

Myriad social groups are targets of hostile and benevolent (i.e., ambivalent) prejudice. However, prejudice towards gay men is typically conceptualised as hostile, despite the prevalence of benevolence towards gay men in popular media. This paper aims to compare gay men with other targets of ambivalent prejudice (i.e., women and elderly people), and draw upon the stereotype content and microaggressions literatures in order to develop a theory of ambivalent homoprejudice. The resultant framework, comprising repellent; adversarial; romanticised; and paternalistic homoprejudice was investigated using seven focus groups of heterosexuals and gay men ($N = 22$) and the findings were consistent with stereotype content theory. Directions for future research into the deleterious effects of ambivalent Homoprejudice and possible empowering interventions are discussed.

Key words: Ambivalence, Prejudice, Gay Men, Attitudes, Stereotype Content

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“Have you guessed the must-have accessory every woman needs? I’ve got one, so does Linda and Martine, Janet’s got several actually – coming out of her ears, sometimes! What am I talking about? A G.B.F.: A gay best friend.” – Ruth Langsford, *Loose Women*, ITV Studios (2016)

Decades ago, it might have seemed unthinkable that a popular daytime television show such as *Loose Women* would discuss the topic of homosexuality so openly – let alone in such an admiring manner. Evidently, Western attitudes towards gay men have not simply tempered (Twenge, Sherman, & Wells, 2016); in many ways, they have undergone a drastic reversal. Historically, anti-gay sentiment was enshrined in law and medicine. Prior to the Sexual Offences Act (1967), homosexual behaviour between men was illegal in the United Kingdom and it was also considered to be a mental illness in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders until the DSM-III was published in 1973.

Nowadays, however, a range of positive attitudes towards gay men have been documented in the literature. Gay men are stereotyped as being emotionally available, and are associated with having skills such as fashion (Massey, 2009, 2010; Morrison & Bearden, 2007; Walls, 2008). As well as this, gay men are a common sight in popular media – particularly in relation to other sexual and gender minority groups (GLAAD, 2012-2016) – and these portrayals have been argued elsewhere to have had a transformative impact upon heterosexuals’ negative attitudes towards gay men (Bonds-Raacke, Cady, Schlegel, Harris, & Firebaugh, 2007). There is also evidence to suggest that gay men are especially coveted as friends for their purportedly desirable social traits and skillsets (Worthen, 2013).

For the most part, the psychological literature on prejudice towards gay men has not accounted for this seeming attitudinal shift. Indeed, Allport’s (1954) characterisation of prejudice as antipathy has been described as “the bedrock on which virtually all prejudice theories are built” (Glick et al., 2000, p. 763), which is especially true of the literature studying prejudice towards sexual minorities. For instance, ‘old-fashioned’ sexual prejudice is couched in the beliefs that sexual

minorities are deviants, mentally ill, and a corrupting influence (Herek, 1984). Modern conceptualisations of anti-gay prejudice similarly focus on hostile attitudes, including the beliefs that: 1) gay men and lesbian women make illegitimate demands for change; 2) discrimination against gay men and lesbian women is a thing of the past; and 3) gay men and lesbian women exaggerate the significance of their sexual orientation and ostracise themselves from mainstream culture as a result (Morrison & Morrison, 2003).

Although the transition from old-fashioned to modern conceptualisations of prejudice is a promising sign of academics' responsiveness to shifting sociocultural norms and pressures that influence the overtness of people's expressions of prejudice (cf. Crandall & Eshleman, 2003), scholars have been less responsive to the seeming change in attitudinal valence towards gay men. As such, this paper aims to account for this attitudinal shift using an ambivalent prejudice framework – an approach that has already been adopted to explain hostile and benevolent attitudes towards women (Glick & Fiske, 1996) and elderly individuals (Cary, Chasteen, & Remedios, 2016). Here, we present multiple strands of evidence as to why attitudes towards gay men are ambivalent and present findings from a series of focus groups, which will validate and extend a novel theory of ambivalent homoprejudice towards gay men in the United Kingdom.

Ambivalent Prejudice

The notion of 'ambivalent prejudice' might initially seem somewhat contradictory. Whereas prejudice is routinely defined in terms of hostility, an ambivalent attitude is not a uniformly negative evaluation (Wegener, Downing, Krosnick, & Petty, 1995). Yet, scholars have identified ambivalent prejudices towards targets whom were once thought to be targets of purely hostile sentiments.

One such theory, ambivalent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996; 1999), draws upon Jackman's (1994) theory of paternalism, which argues that the use of force to dominate other groups simply prompts resistance. To complement this, paternalistic ideology offers a way for the dominant

group's goals to be reinterpreted as being for the good of all. Glick and Fiske (1996; 1999) argue that paternalism is integral to benevolent sexism and is necessary because of (most) men and women's mutual need for heterosexual intimacy. If men only ever expressed their sexism in hostile ways, they would have little success in attaining heterosexual intimacy – thus, benevolent sexism emphasising men and women's positive-stereotypic gender roles serves to strike a delicate balance between subjugating and cherishing women (Bohner, Ahlborn, & Steiner, 2010). Although such attitudes are superficially positive in tone, they enforce restricted and disempowering stereotypes about women.

Gay men are similarly stereotyped as sensitive and possessing superior aesthetic tastes in comparison to heterosexual men (Cotner & Burkley, 2013; Massey, 2009; 2010; Mohr, Chopp, & Wong, 2013; Morrison & Bearden, 2007). Media portrayals of gay men are often vehicles for these stereotypes (Hart, 2004; Shugart, 2003) and, for many people, this will likely be their only contact with them (Linneman, 2008). While these traits may appear positive to the person ascribing them, they have possible negative implications for gay men. For example, the belief that gay men are more affluent than heterosexuals (despite the evident disadvantage they experience) negatively predicts support for gay rights (Hettinger & Vandello, 2014). Positive stereotypes about gay men may also lead to exoticisation, whereby prospective friends are chosen on the basis of their sexuality (Worthen, 2013) and pressured to conform to such stereotypes in order to be accepted (Cohen, Hall, & Tuttle, 2009).

Attitudinal ambivalence has more recently been applied to the study of ageism. Cary et al. (2016) point out that elderly people are commonly stereotyped in ambivalent ways. With reference to the stereotype content model (SCM), which characterises groups along axes of warmth/coldness (i.e., whether or not an out-group has positive intentions towards one's in-group) and competence/incompetence (i.e., whether or not an out-group has the power, resources, or skills to achieve their goals), elderly individuals are considered to be warm, yet, incompetent

(Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). These perceptions may translate into facilitating behaviours such as over-accommodation (e.g., patronising speech; Brown & Draper, 2003), which – despite having positive intentions – has the unintended consequence of undermining the personal autonomy and confidence of the recipient (Hehman & Bugental, 2015). In a qualitative study carried out by Conley, Calhoun, Evett, and Devine (2002), sexual minority participants reported that heterosexuals who portray themselves as non-prejudiced sometimes act overcautiously in the presence of them, having the similarly unintended effect of demeaning them.

Evidently, gay men have shared experiences of hostile and benevolent prejudice with women and elderly people, yet limited academic attention has been paid to developing such a theory of ambivalent prejudice towards gay men. Quite the contrary, more attention has been paid to developing psychometric scales that measure such multidimensional attitudes (see Massey, 2009 and Walls, 2008), despite this lack of theory. Therefore, there is a great need for theoretical clarity with regards to the complex ways in which gay men appear to be evaluated.

Ambivalent Homoprejudice

Before proceeding with our theoretical rationale, it is first necessary to introduce and justify the term ‘homoprejudice’ used herein. The term ‘homophobia’ has been criticised for its pathologising connotations (Herek, 1984) and research evidence suggests that ‘homophobia’ resembles prejudice rather than phobia (Schiffman, Delucia-Waack, & Gerrity, 2006). Other available terms such as ‘Sexual prejudice’ (Herek, 1984) and ‘Homonegativity’ (Morrison, Parriag, & Morrison, 1999) are also not appropriate for the purposes of this paper because of their definitional and linguistic focus on *negatively*-valenced attitudes towards gay men. ‘Heterosexism’ was avoided here due to the varying definitions that have been employed in the literature – some of which similarly frame heterosexism as hostility (Herek, 1992). Thus, ‘Homoprejudice’, a term advanced by Logan (1996), was settled on due to its limited reference to attitude valence.

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Heterosexual individuals may experience ambivalence towards gay men for many reasons. Findings from the political science literature have shown that core value conflicts decrease support for gay rights and gay men (Callahan & Vescio, 2011; Craig, Kane, & Gainous, 2005). Religious individuals may also struggle to reconcile their religious beliefs about nonheterosexuality with their desire to be egalitarian (Bean & Martinez, 2014). Similarly, Hegarty, Pratto, and Lemieux (2004) highlight heterosexuals' frequent value conflict between heterocentrism – accepting traits associated with heterosexuality as descriptive and prescriptive of all sexualities – and egalitarianism. Although such an individual may endorse egalitarian ideals and report tolerant attitudes towards sexual minorities, this is in tension with their internalised heterocentric norms.

Another possibility is that women's ambivalence towards gay men is related to their ambivalence towards men in general. As a result of men's paternalistic attitudes towards them, women may be resentful of men (Glick & Fiske, 1999). However, women are more likely than men to endorse positive stereotypes about gay men (Massey, 2010; Morrison & Bearden, 2007) and may view them as more trustworthy than heterosexual men because they are sexually non-threatening and non-competitive (Russell, Ta, Lewis, Babcock, & Ickes, 2015). Nonetheless, gay men still retain a stake in the maintenance of patriarchy and ensuing male privilege (Shugart, 2003), so women may be prone to endorsing both positive and negative attitudes towards gay men because of their intersecting group identities.

In comparison to the more conflicted forms of ambivalence discussed thus far, heterosexuals may also experience unconflicted ambivalence (Glick & Fiske, 1996) towards gay men, whereby they delineate their (dis)liking for certain subgroups of gay men. For instance, gay men as a superordinate group are perceived to be moderately warm and competent by heterosexuals (Asbrock, 2010; Cuddy et al, 2009; Fiske et al, 2002). However, different subgroups of gay men are stereotyped in vastly different ways. Gay men in the leather/biker subculture are stereotyped as contemptible (i.e., cold and incompetent), effeminate gay men are stereotyped as

pitiful (i.e., warm but incompetent), activists are stereotyped as enviable (i.e., cold but competent), and artistic gay men are stereotyped as somewhat admirable (i.e., warm and competent; Clausell & Fiske, 2005). Further parallels can be drawn here between ambivalence towards gay men and towards women insofar as women are also categorised into loved (e.g., housewives) and loathed (e.g., promiscuous) subtypes (Glick & Fiske, 1997). These affective responses are related to different behaviours towards out-group members. The behaviour from intergroup affect and stereotypes (BIAS) map (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007) posits that groups stereotyped as cold are actively harmed (e.g., assaulted), warm groups are actively facilitated (e.g., defended), competent groups are passively facilitated (e.g., tolerated), and incompetent groups are passively harmed (e.g., excluded). Stereotyped groups therefore experience varying patterns of active and passive harm and/or facilitation.

This entire catalogue of behaviours, attitudes, and stereotypes towards gay men have been documented in the literature. Contemptuous forms of homoprejudice are especially well-conceptualised; gay men are stereotyped as incompetent due to their perceived physical weakness (Massey, 2010) and femininity (Madon, 1997), and as cold due to their association with disease (Grenfell et al, 2011) and subversion of traditional values (Clarke, 2001). These stereotypes are used to justify harm against gay men. For instance, anti-gay lobbying efforts typically make use of demonising imagery (Irvine, 2005), refer to a conspiratorial 'gay agenda' (McCreanor, 1996), and frame gay rights as 'propaganda' (Burridge, 2004). We term this component of homoprejudice 'repellent homoprejudice' and define it as a constellation of hostile attitudes towards gay men comprising contempt, disgust, and moral indignation.

Envious forms of homoprejudice are also evident in the literature – though their envious content is somewhat obscured. Envy proper, defined by Smith and Kim (2007) as “feelings of inferiority, hostility, and resentment caused by an awareness of a desired attribute enjoyed by another person or group of persons” (p. 46) is often present in modern opposition to gay men.

Sexual equality is often framed as ‘special privileges’ (Brewer, 2003) and many believe that gay men are treated better than heterosexuals in the United Kingdom (YouGov, 2014), despite clear evidence to the contrary (Wildman & Davis, 1995; Case & Stewart, 2010). Such envious attitudes are also captured in psychometric measures of modern homophobia. For example, the modern homonegativity scale taps heterosexuals’ concern for inequity with items such as “If gay men want to be treated like everyone else, then they need to stop making such a fuss about their sexuality/culture” (Morrison & Morrison, 2003, p. 25). We term these attitudes ‘adversarial homophobia’ and define it as envious beliefs that gay men exaggerate the significance of their sexuality and their experiences of prejudice in order to obtain undue advantages over heterosexuals.

Admiration of gay men’s perceived positive traits also appears to be increasingly studied in academic discourse. As was discussed earlier, gay men are often stereotyped as warm and competent (Conley et al, 2002; Cotner & Burkley, 2013; Massey, 2009; 2010; Mohr et al, 2013; Morrison & Bearden, 2007; & Walls, 2008;). These stereotypes are commonly embodied in ostensibly positive depictions of gay characters in the media (Linneman, 2008) but, as was noted earlier, such stereotypes are not as benign as they appear (Hettinger & Vandello, 2014). Given the social dividends (e.g., friendship) afforded to those gay men who conform to these stereotypes (Worthen, 2013; Russell et al, 2015), gay men may be pressured to act in prescribed ways. We term this construct ‘romanticised homophobia’ and define it as the subscription to exaggerated positive stereotypes about gay men, which idealises certain ‘types’ of gay men, penalises deviations from such an ideal, and glosses over gay men’s continuing experiences of hardship.

Pitying affect towards gay men has received less academic attention. However, the knowledge that gay men are particularly susceptible to mental health issues (Boysen, Fisher, Dejesus, Vogel, & Madon, 2011) and an increasing awareness of sexuality-based inequality may elicit sympathetic and pitying feelings towards them (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005). Feelings of pity

towards gay men are a significant predictor of gay rights support among heterosexuals (Cottrell, Richards, & Nichols, 2010), suggesting that this may motivate facilitative behaviours. However, Conley et al's (2002) qualitative findings suggest that such facilitation may be perceived as over-accommodation, akin to that experienced by the elderly (Hehman & Bugental, 2015). Sympathetic attitudes towards gay men might also misrepresent their lived experience as one of personal tragedy exemplified through phrases such as "What courage you show" (Corbett, 1994, p. 349). Such facilitation may cause passive harm, transmitting a patronising sentiment that undermines gay-affirmative identity (Thurlow, 1987). We term these attitudes 'paternalistic homoprejudice' and define it as sympathetic attitudes towards gay men that simultaneously overstate their powerlessness, transmit patronising messages, and diminish identity pride.

In summary, we propose four facets of ambivalent homoprejudice towards gay men (displayed in figure 1), as suggested by the SCM (Fiske et al, 2002) and the BIAS map (Cuddy et al, 2007): 1) Repellent; 2) Adversarial; 3) Romanticised; and 4) Paternalistic. The SCM and BIAS map is a particularly useful foundation for such a theory because the universal dimensions of warmth and competence can be applied regardless of the context generating these ambivalent attitudes. Altogether, these constructs represent a wide and nuanced account of heterosexuals' increasingly complex attitudes towards gay men. Nevertheless, the two benevolent components of this theory – romanticised and paternalistic homoprejudice – represent relatively newer lines of inquiry in a field dominated by hostile characterisations of homoprejudice. Therefore, our research aims are to: 1) Use deductive qualitative coding to validate the ambivalent homoprejudice framework; 2) Use inductive qualitative coding to expand upon the ambivalent homoprejudice framework and incorporate new concepts into the framework; and 3) Compare heterosexuals' interpretations of their attitudes and behaviours with gay men's interpretations and experiences of those attitudes and behaviours.

INSERT FIGURE 1 AROUND HERE

Methodology

Participants

Twelve heterosexual (3 men and 9 women) and ten gay individuals participated in one of seven focus groups, conducted on a University campus in the East of England. Their ages ranged from 18 to 50 ($M = 25.3$) and 19 to 52 years ($M = 31.2$), respectively. Of the heterosexual participants, ten were White, one was Black, and one was Asian. All of the gay men were White. The highest level of education attained was a Master's level degree and the lowest level of education attained was the British A-level school leavers' qualification. The participant pool included students and skilled and unskilled professionals. No further participant information was collected prior to the discussions, but contextual information offered by the participants during the discussion will be highlighted in our analysis where relevant. Sample size was guided by the data saturation principle (Morse, 1995) and through an examination of qualitative sample sizes in similar research areas (e.g., Nadal et al., 2011). Heterosexuals and gay men took part in separate discussions and were organised in this way in order to facilitate both feeling comfortable about sharing with the group.

Sampling

As we had no theoretical inclination towards specific cohorts of interest, we utilised a convenience sampling method for this study. Heterosexual participants were recruited from local social media community pages ($n = 4$) and online message boards (e.g., Gumtree; $n = 2$), as well as from the psychology department in exchange for course credit ($n = 6$). Gay participants were recruited from gay-oriented social media pages ($n = 5$), local message boards ($n = 1$), from the

psychology department in exchange for course credit ($n = 1$), and from geospatial social networking apps (e.g., Grindr; $n = 3$, cf. Burrell et al, 2012; Usher et al, 2014).

Design

A focus group design was concluded to be the best way to collect the data because of the potentially controversial nature of the discussions. As a result, we anticipated (dis)agreements between the participants and elaboration on each other's points, providing interesting interactional sequences to analyse. Deliberate focus group composition can also manufacture a group dynamic whereby heterosexual participants (who may be reticent about their attitudes towards gay men) outnumber the gay facilitator, allowing them to be more forthcoming during the discussions. Likewise, holding separate discussions for gay men to share their experiences and beliefs will empower them to talk about what is important to them without their lived experience being overruled by the heterosexual participants. A further reflexive consideration we made was the potential influence of the facilitator's own experience of much of the prejudice under investigation on the lines of questioning pursued. Rather than engage in the fruitless task of suspending this experience, we opted to fully acknowledge – or 'bracket' (Ahern, 1999) it – by using this experience alongside our research aims to inform the vignettes in the topic guides (available as Appendix I).

Procedure

The participants were seated around a table in a room at a university in the East of England and invited to read and sign documentation regarding their participation. In order to facilitate open discussion, participants were encouraged to be respectful of other participants and their right to confidentiality, as well as to listen and interact with each other during the course of the focus group. This research obtained ethical approval from the authority delegated by the institution to assess ethical adherence.

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Two semi-structured topic guides guided the heterosexual and gay focus groups. The focus group discussions lasted between 90 and 120 minutes and, upon completion, participants were debriefed and invited to supply an email address that the researcher could use to send a £15 shopping voucher as a token of appreciation for their time. Course credit was offered to student participants. Participants were then thanked for their time and emailed their remuneration.

Analysis

The focus group recordings were transcribed verbatim and the data were analysed in NVivo 10. A thematic analysis procedure outlined by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) was used to analyse the data. First, a selection of deductive codes emanating from the SCM, BIAS map, microaggressions literature, and other relevant research areas were defined in a coding manual *a priori*. Next, the data were read, re-read, and coded using these codes. The data were then summarised around the main discussion points and coded inductively. The first and corresponding author both coded the first transcript and no notable differences in interpretation were reported at this stage. Both sets of codes were then grouped into themes that described recurring patterns in the data. Finally, these themes were corroborated by scrutinising their constituent codes in collaboration with the other co-authors to ensure they were a faithful representation of the data. Interpretative disagreements at this stage were discussed among the co-authors and adapted where necessary.

Findings

Adversarial Homoprejudice

Based on the SCM (Fiske et al, 2002) and the BIAS map (Cuddy et al, 2008), adversarial homoprejudice was theorised here as perceptions of gay men as cold and competent, patterns of passive facilitation and active harm, and envious feelings regarding perceived reverse inequality.

The heterosexual participants in focus group one especially spoke of gay men as being cold. Grace, (19, heterosexual, internal undergraduate student) offered descriptions of gay men as “quite offensive” (FG1; 105), “loud and brash” (FG1; 137), and “intimidating” (FG1; 140) – traits that have also been associated with cold stereotypes of envied subgroups of women elsewhere (Wade & Brewer, 2006). Fiona, (18, heterosexual, internal undergraduate student) spoke of them as having uninvited sexualised interactions with women, “they’re [gay men] also quite weird with girls... they’ll grab your boobs or your bum” (FG1; 574-575) and Luca (26, heterosexual, internal undergraduate student) corroborates this as a man, recalling “they [a gay couple] grabbed my arse, one of them... they were just complimenting me and I don’t want it” (FG1; 583-585). Lara, (19, heterosexual, internal undergraduate student), reiterated this perception of gay men as an imposing presence, “If they’re being flamboyant and maybe overly exposing themselves... like walking around in skimpy clothes and shouting... shut up, go away and put some clothes on” (FG2; 897-899).

Such conduct was commonly alluded to when engaging in scapegoating and victim blaming (i.e., active harm). For instance, Hakeem (26, heterosexual, internal postgraduate student) argued, “if you keep putting it [nonheterosexuality] out there, people are gonna resist more... I think it’s just becoming a vicious circle there, and every time you shove it down our throats, we get more aggressive” (FG2; 563-567). Later, Hakeem comments that “you never see a heterosexual parade, but you only see the gay parade” (FG2; 571), suggesting envy of nonheterosexuals’ perceived undue influence in society. Gay men’s stereotyped competence was also linked to their purported immunity to criticism due to their protected minority status, as an exchange between Fiona and Luca reveals:

Fiona: If you see like a guy at a pub at the bar grabbing the waitress’s arse-

Luca: You would hit them

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Fiona: Yeab, they'd make such a big deal out of it whereas a gay guy can just do it and be like 'oh I was just joking'

Luca: If I would have done that, he would have said it's against us

Fiona: It would be homophobic (FG1; 586-591)

Most interesting in this extract is that Fiona and Luca are not recounting any specific experience they have had. Rather, they are co-curating a straw man argument whereby they can present their objections to gay men's behaviour as warranted (given the unambiguously negative behaviour of the imagined gay man), yet unjustly quashed by undue accusations of prejudice. They also very explicitly counterpoise this with the rightfully hostile reactions to that same behaviour if it were performed by a heterosexual man instead. The invoking of straw man arguments such as this may be a key part of how heterosexuals maintain their belief that gay men enjoy advantages over heterosexuals (despite the abundance of evidence to the contrary), which has also been found in White people's claims of reverse racial discrimination (Killian, 1985).

As well as claiming that gay men used their sexuality and accusations of prejudice as a shield against criticism, the majority of participants in focus group one also claimed that gay men used their sexuality to get special privileges at work. For instance, Grace argued "at work, they [gay men] suck up – it's a personality trait – they suck up to the manager... a lot of people wouldn't get away with that, or they get like privileges" (FG1; 327-328). Indeed, when asked how they thought gay men were treated in relation to heterosexuals in the United Kingdom, Grace, Fiona, and Luca all claimed that gay men were treated better than heterosexuals. Paul (48, gay, self-employed) also alludes to this special treatment in the workplace, "It almost gives you a form of protection in the work environment that people have to be careful what they say now because you've identified yourself as gay" (FG3; 69-70). The UK's anti-LGBT discrimination laws seem to be central to the belief that gay men receive undue privileges in society. Indeed, at the time of these focus group discussions, a Belfast bakery run by Evangelical Christians had recently refused to

bake a cake decorated in support of same-sex marriage – a case that made it to the UK supreme court, which decided in favour of the bakers in October 2018.

Repellent Homoprejudice

Repellent homoprejudice was theorised here as perceptions of gay men as cold and incompetent, active and passive harmful behaviours, and contemptuous and disgusted feelings towards gay men.

Given the old-fashioned contents of these attitudes, which appear to be in decline in Western investigative contexts (Twenge et al., 2016), heterosexuals did not widely report holding these beliefs, so much of the evidence for these attitudes come from the experiential accounts of the gay participants. One exception was Hakeem, who spoke of the exclusion of nonheterosexuals among his sports social circles, “If you’re gay, you’re- even the coach will probably not wanna train you, he doesn’t wanna be associated with you because they don’t think fighting is much of a feminine thing” (FG4; 182-183). Such perceptions of weakness and femininity may be related to heterosexuals’ knowledge of receptive (colloquially referred to as ‘bottoming’) and penetrative (colloquially referred to as ‘topping’) sex roles among some gay men. Indeed, Hakeem often spoke from a “guy’s perspective” (FG2; 172). Further, Grace pondered, “I wonder who goes on top and who’s on bottom because you associate it with certain personality traits” (FG1; 254). Howard (19, gay, external undergraduate student), elaborated more on these perceived personality traits, “They [heterosexuals] assume that if you are a bottom then you’re less of a man and you’re a lot more feminised whereas, if you’re a top, then it’s a lot more masculine” (FG7; 401-403). Oliver (31, gay, teacher), criticised this as “heterosexualis[ing] us” (FG4; 428-429) and Jim (52, gay, administrator) speaks of heterosexuals’ apparent disbelief of gay men who do not engage in anal sex, “There’s [sic] a lot of gay guys who don’t do anal sex and they [heterosexuals] go... “yeah, but, you can’t be having gay sex if you’re not having anal sex”” (FG5; 410-414).

The gay participants also reported instances of being stereotyped as sexually threatening. For instance, Carl (34, gay, administrator), recalled a gay friend's experiences of working as a teacher, "A friend of mine, a teacher – a primary school teacher – he would be nervous about being outed because... people still conflate homosexual behaviour with suspect sexual tendencies" (FG4; 763-766). Jim and Oliver similarly recounted gay friends' concerns that they were oversexualised because of their employment working with children. Paul also reported being oversexualised by his daughter, "She's got two friends in the house that are gay and, you know, she decided that I couldn't stay in her digs... because I'm gay, I'm gonna try and shag both her friends" (FG3; 208-212). In particular, the exclusionary consequences of this latter example points towards the passive harmful effects of repellent homoprejudice.

Gay discussants also spoke of their experiences of physical and verbal abuse (i.e., active harm), which they claimed was due to their sexual orientation. This occurred in school environments, as Matt, (19, gay, internal undergraduate student), recalls, "I came out when I was in year 12 and I think I got bullied about being gay before I even came out" (FG3; 350-351). Jim also shared his experience of verbal harassment, "I've walked home on a Sunday afternoon with my significant other hand and we've been arm in arm... suddenly some chav will come by in a car and literally deliberately slow down, hang out the car, and you'll get a torrent of abuse" (FG5; 68-70). Similarly, Howard, spoke of his experience of physical abuse, "I've been beaten up for being gay, which was definitely dehumanising" (FG7; 667).

Romanticised Homoprejudice

Romanticised homoprejudice was theorised here as perceptions of gay men as warm and competent, the idealisation of these characteristics, and active and passive facilitative behaviours towards gay men who live up to these admired stereotypes.

Gay men were associated with a range of competencies by the heterosexual discussants. Chris (24, heterosexual, bartender) noted their supposed sartorial finesse – a common indicator of

social status (Mast & Hall, 2004), “They’ve [gay men] always been really... very good at knowing what shirts to put on someone else” (FG2; 745-746) and this stereotype was also shared by Luca, “I like them [gay men] *because* they dress nice” (FG1; 787, own emphasis). The use of the word “because” in this latter excerpt suggests that some heterosexuals’ favouring of gay men may be contingent upon them adhering to such a stereotype. Indeed, Oliver speaks of the discouraging reactions he experiences when he fails to live up to the stereotype that gay men enjoy clothes shopping, “People can be disappointed sometimes... like ‘come on let’s go clothes shopping’ and it’s like, I hate clothes shopping” (FG4; 63-65) and Paul similarly argued, “I think we’ve got that label where we’re *supposed* to be good at fashion and things like that, which you can tell that’s one thing I’m terrible at” (FG3; 123-124, own emphasis). Paul’s use of the word “supposed” and Oliver’s experience of disappointing others by not living up to positive stereotypes about gay men suggest that these stereotypes are prescriptive rather than merely descriptive because they convey clear expectations of what gay men *should* be like (North & Fiske, 2013).

However, like Paul and Oliver, other gay discussants shared the ways in which they fail to live up to the apparent expectations placed on gay men by heterosexuals. Howard claims, “most of the qualities that are automatically assumed on homosexuality for gay males is [sic] usually good... I feel I genuinely don’t live up to a lot of them” (FG7; 781-783), and others engage in similarly self-deprecating commentary, such as Neil (24, gay, IT technician), who admits, “I have no fashion sense at all, so that’s another stereotype broken” (FG7; 134) and Mark, who claims, “They [heterosexuals] think we know how to dress. To be fair, you can see what I’m wearing, you know, I can’t dress to save my life” (FG5; 41-42). The self-deprecation in these extracts came to be labelled as the “failed gay” (FG4; 66) by Carl (22, gay, self-employed), the “Failed homosexual” (FG7; 794) by Neil, and “not gay enough” (FG4; 67) by Oliver. Elsewhere, Howard recalled, “I’ve just been called, like, oh you’re the worst gay, you’re terrible at it” (FG7; 182) and Neil similarly recounted being called “practically straight” (FG7; 184) for not living up to prescriptive stereotypes.

Warmth traits were also ascribed to gay men by some of the heterosexual participants. Luca claimed that, “in general, gay men are more friendly” (FG1; 80-81), Fiona described gay men as “happy and enthusiastic” (FG1; 705), “entertaining” (FG1; 737), and “sassy and outgoing” (FG1; 76; a significant departure by Fiona from her previous allegation of widespread sexual misconduct by gay men), and Katie (50, heterosexual, housewife), suggested that gay men are “more caring [and] more in touch with [their] emotions” (FG6; 144). The women participants particularly spoke of an expectation of safety around gay men. Emma (35, heterosexual, academic) recalled, “I remember feeling safer going to gay clubs in Toronto... we didn’t have to worry about where our drinks were” (FG6; 169-171) and Katie similarly explained, “As a woman, you can’t there’s lots of guys, you know, you might not be able to trust them... but if you know he’s gay, then maybe you think well, okay, so he’s- he’s not going to be aggressive” (FG6; 165-168). Gay participants similarly spoke of women’s apparent comfort around gay men. Liam attributes this to a lack of sexual compatibility between heterosexual women and gay men, “it’s to do with sexual attractions, maybe. ‘Cause, like, getting changed in front of someone who is straight, you might be like, oh, they might fancy me” (FG3; 154-156) and Howard attributes this to a lack of sexual competition between heterosexual women and gay men, “it’s basically having all the qualities of a friend who’s a girl, but without any competitiveness in that area, so if we’re both looking for a boyfriend, for example, very rarely is it gonna be the same person you’re after” (FG7; 141-143). These sentiments have been echoed elsewhere in quantitative research findings (Russell et al, 2016).

Both heterosexual and gay participants cited a range of media sources that perpetuated positive stereotypes about gay men and emphasised the supposed “special kind of friendship between heterosexual women and gay men” (Shepperd, Coyle, & Hegarty, 2010, p. 212). Emma quotes a line from *Sex and the City* (HBO, 1998-2004), “gay men know what’s important: cocktails, compliments, and cocks” (FG6; 148-149; the actual quote refers to ‘clothes’ rather than ‘cocktails’) and she also discussed the film *Kickass* (Lionsgate, 2010) where a female character says, “I’ve

always wanted a gay friend” (FG6; 96). Paul also names the TV shows ‘*Are you Being Served?*’ (BBC, 1972-1985) and ‘*Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*’ (Bravo, 2003-2007) as other sources of positive stereotypes about gay men (the latter of which has been problematised elsewhere by Westerfelhaus & Lacroix, 2006). Altogether, these factors appeared to motivate women’s interpersonal contact with gay men (i.e., passive facilitation). However, gay men who do not live up to these stereotypes (or do so in a way that is appraised as negative) are penalised with active and passive harm that would otherwise be associated with pitiful, envious, and contemptuous stereotypes. This theorised process can be seen in Figure 2.

INSERT FIGURE 2 AROUND HERE

Paternalistic Homoprejudice

Paternalistic homoprejudice was conceptualised here as feelings of pity towards gay men due to their perceived incompetence and warmth, resulting in active facilitation and passive harm.

Heterosexual participants spoke of a range of ways in which they thought gay men were disadvantaged in society (i.e., incompetent). Jane (30, heterosexual, internal postgraduate student), explained, “I don’t have to worry if I walk... holding my partner’s hand, whereas homosexual people, if the wrong person sees them, they could, you know, be beaten up” (FG2; 446-450). Emma similarly alludes to the potential for gay men to be victims of violence, noting that “Matthew Shepard was in my generation” (FG6; 86) and she spoke of her own feelings of frustration at the discrimination that gay men may experience, “If a friend had told me a story where they were discriminated against, I would definitely, I’d probably feel anger and- and frustration” (FG6; 547-548).

Witnessing such discrimination appeared to prompt protective behaviours (i.e., active facilitation) in heterosexual bystanders. Jane recalls an instance of her mother standing up for a (assumed) gay man being harassed in a betting shop, “this jockey had obviously decided that he was [gay]... and he kept going “do you fancy him?”... and my mum just sorta turned to this jockey and went “Why don’t you leave him alone?”” (FG2; 220-223). Tara (18, heterosexual, internal undergraduate student), also recalled defending a gay friend who suffered bullying at a Catholic school, “on quite a few occasions I did start – not fights, but – arguments, and quite heated debates about the way they were speaking about my friend” (FG2; 146-147).

While challenging problematic talk (which might otherwise be suffered in silence; Lapointe, 2015) is a valuable aspect of heterosexuals’ alliance with sexual minorities, there was evidence that such protective responses were imposing and condescending at times. For example, Neil recalled his experiences of working with a protective manager when he first came out, “she practically mothered me because she assumed that I’d fall to pieces every time I was challenged... it was this need to be taken care of because... I was less of a man and I wasn’t able to stand my ground and I needed a mother figure to look after me because, obviously, I was more emotional and all these things, which I wasn’t” (FG7; 813-816). Imposing assistance was also implicated during the coming out process. Paul shared, “When I first came out, the first person I told was my brother who’s 9 years older than me and he didn’t react, and the first thing he said afterwards was “Do you want me to talk to mum and dad?”, to which my answer was “I’m fucking 40, I can talk to my own parents”” (FG3; 564-566). Liam similarly shared an interaction he had with a counsellor about sexuality disclosure, “they [the counsellor] were like, if you don’t tell people, if you’re not out with it, some people might see that as you being ashamed of who you are” (FG3; 934-936). Paul’s brother and Liam’s counsellor likely had positive intentions in trying to help them navigate a particularly challenging part of their respective sexual identity development. However, Paul’s brother’s actions were interpreted as infantilising and Liam felt like his desire for privacy were

being overruled, as he explains “sometimes you feel like you’re entitled [sic] to let people know that you’re gay, otherwise it’ll come across that you’re ashamed” (FG3; 930-931).

Well-meaning – yet imposing – behaviours by heterosexuals were also reported in the context of match-making. Neil explained, “I don’t think I’ve ever necessarily wanted anybody to help me find somebody and I never want anyone to assume I needed [sic] somebody and that kind of assumption can make you feel maybe slightly more insecure about yourself because you might give off a vibe that you can’t portray yourself as a strong independent person” (FG7; 55-58). Oliver suggested that match-making may arise from heterosexuals’ awareness of the relatively small size of the gay population, “at a party I went to... it was kind of like, well you two should be a couple because there’s not many [gay men] out there kinda thing... they think they’re being nice but at the same time, they are being like quite funny” (FG4; 54-56) and, later in the focus group, he explained the more objectifying messages transmitted when trying to match-make, “she was like “I want them to be boyfriends”, it was almost for her and it’s like, oh, then I’ve got two little gays that I can take out with me” (FG4; 206-207). Luca also recalled his past attempt at matchmaking and considered its paternalistic connotations, “I’ve wanted to be the match-maker between two gay people, it was wrong [laughs], but my intentions was [sic] right and I wanted something nice but it was like too much, I was thinking too much for them and it was wrong” (FG1; 679-681). These findings are consistent with the predictions of the SCM that paternalism towards out-groups arises from perceptions of warmth (or merely the lack of coldness) and incompetence, which prompt active facilitation such as overaccommodation (which was also found by Conley et al., 2002), but also cause passive harm due to their demeaning and patronising interpretations.

Conclusions

Repellent, adversarial, romanticised, and paternalistic homoprejudice substantiate and expand upon extant accounts of ‘old-fashioned’ and ‘modern’ hostile prejudice towards gay men, while also introducing novel benevolent conceptualisations of homoprejudice to the social

psychological literature. This is the first study to propose a substantive framework of ambivalent homoprejudice towards gay men *and* validate this using qualitative inquiry. This methodological approach was valuable because it allowed for the validity of ambivalent homoprejudice theory *vis-à-vis* the SCM and BIAS map to be assessed, and for novel concepts not yet covered in the academic literature, such as ‘the failed gay’, to emerge.

These findings necessitate a reconceptualization of prejudice towards gay men as a multidimensional construct comprising both negative *and* positive attitudes. Research findings suggest that ‘homophobia’ is on the wane in the Western world (Clements & Field, 2014; Twenge et al., 2016), leading some scholars to claim that it is of declining significance (McCormack, 2013). Although repellent homoprejudice may be in decline, this study illuminates the benevolent subdomains of homoprejudice that appear to be thriving in the United Kingdom. In light of the evidence presented here, academics must be reactive to the changing nature of homoprejudice as they have with regards to sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996; 1999) and ageism (Cary et al., 2016).

Repellent, adversarial, romanticised, and paternalistic homoprejudice were mostly consistent with the combinations of warmth/coldness and (in)competence stereotypes proposed by the SCM (Fiske et al., 2002). One discrepancy was that paternalistic homoprejudice was not associated with warmth stereotypes about gay men – though they were also not associated with coldness stereotypes. Paternalistic homoprejudice appears to be more strongly linked to the appraisal of gay men’s structural incompetence as unjust and unwarranted.

The subdomains of homoprejudice were also largely consistent with the active and passive harmful and facilitative behaviours outlined in the BIAS map except for one theoretically interesting deviation: adversarial homoprejudice was associated with passive facilitation, and both active and passive harm, whereas the BIAS map does not associate such envious prejudice with passive harm (Cuddy et al., 2007). This discrepancy may be because the BIAS map does not account for the suppressive sociopolitical factors that can inhibit active harmful behaviours against

minority groups (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003) – after all, much of our evidence for often-suppressed repellent homoprejudice was provided through the experiential accounts of our gay participants. One suppressive factor may be the way in which gay competence was characterised in the focus group discussions. As compared to stereotyped competence in other envied outgroups such as Jews and Asians (e.g., wealth and intelligence, respectively), adversarial homoprejudice stereotypes gay men as using social manipulation (i.e., accusations of homophobia) to achieve their goals. Such a perception would, then, necessitate passivity because active harm would be more easily labelled homophobic, thus furthering gay men’s purported goals. This is also likely influenced by the United Kingdom’s Equality Act (2010) codifying anti-LGBT discrimination protections into law – an intervention that is present in other countries (e.g., Canada) and may also contribute towards adversarial homoprejudice cross-culturally.

These findings are also consistent with the recent body of work on microaggressions, which asserts that the (positive) intentions of the ‘aggressor’ are not equivalent to the (negative) experience of target (Sue, 2010). While the heterosexual participants (and those heterosexuals who were spoken of by the gay participants) likely had positive motivations when they expressed romanticised and paternalistic homoprejudice, they can potentially be interpreted as exoticising and demeaning, as has been found in other qualitative studies (Conley et al., 2002; Nadal et al., 2011). Furthermore, the everyday occurrence of subtle prejudice means that sexual minorities may not be able to find respite from it, which may have an additive negative impact on their wellbeing (Jewell, McCutcheon, Harriman, & Morrison, 2012).

One such impact may be that targets feel unable to challenge speech and behaviour they find objectionable. Because benevolent prejudice is superficially positive in tone, it is therefore harder to challenge (Becker, Glick, Ilic, & Bohner, 2011). For this reason, targets of romanticised and paternalistic homoprejudice may instead ruminate on the experience, as is often the case when microaggressions go unchecked (Sue, 2010). As such, future research should explore possible

interventions that would empower sexual minorities to challenge and resist perceived romanticised and paternalistic homoprejudice, investigate other possible deleterious effects of ambivalent homoprejudice, and identify which groups (e.g., young gay men and boys) are most vulnerable. One major limitation to this study related to this research path, however, is the unfortunate lack of ethnic diversity in the sample – particularly among the gay participants. Asian gay men, for example, are known to experience unique stigmas that White gay men do not (Han, 2007). Any future investigation of empowering interventions seeking to ameliorate the effects of ambivalent homoprejudice must account for the effects of intersectionality on experiences of homoprejudice (Bowleg, 2013).

We are also limited by our decision to use qualitative methods. Although thematic analysis allows for the presentation of discrete and persistent patterns of data, these themes are often interconnected (Braun & Clarke, 2012), which is especially true of the themes identified in the present study given their anchorage to SCM and BIAS map quadrants that share aspects of warmth, competence, activeness, and harm. The consequence of this is that it is not clear from these findings how discrete the components of homoprejudice presented here are without quantitative evidence. Although, psychometrics research has explored these issues with some analogous hostile components of homoprejudice – old fashioned and modern homonegativity – discerning them by their discrete – yet highly correlated – response patterns on questionnaires (Morrison, Morrison, & Franklin, 2009).

It is also difficult to argue using qualitative data that these constructs are inter-related to the extent that they constitute ambivalence and not just multidimensionality. Although Fiona, in particular, spoke of gay men in both adversarial and romanticised terms, it is not clear whether this is a consistent ambivalent response and whether others also respond in this way. Considerably less psychometric research exists delineating analogues of the two benevolent components of homoprejudice advanced herein and correlating them with hostile components of homoprejudice.

As discussed in the introduction, those studies that do attempt this (Massey, 2009; Walls, 2008) do so on insubstantial theoretical foundations – a void we have now addressed here. As such, future research should seek to use this theoretical advancement to statistically differentiate the concepts we have presented as thematically distinct and correlate them to establish their so-called “ambivalent alliance” (Glick & Fiske, 2001, p. 109). Final, our use of focus group methodology and specific lines of questioning limited the extent to which the participants could elaborate more fully on their answers. It is therefore difficult to identify the ideologies and values (e.g., gender role beliefs) that contribute to these attitudes from these data. In-depth interviews with a more inductive methodology would provide more insight into these contributing factors.

In conclusion, ambivalent homoprejudice is a novel and necessary reinterpretation of prejudice towards gay men that has been advanced in response to the literature exposing and problematising ostensibly positive attitudes towards gay men. It is anticipated that this new theoretical framework will open up innovative avenues for scholarly enquiry in this area in order to gain a more nuanced and holistic understanding of prejudice towards sexual minorities.

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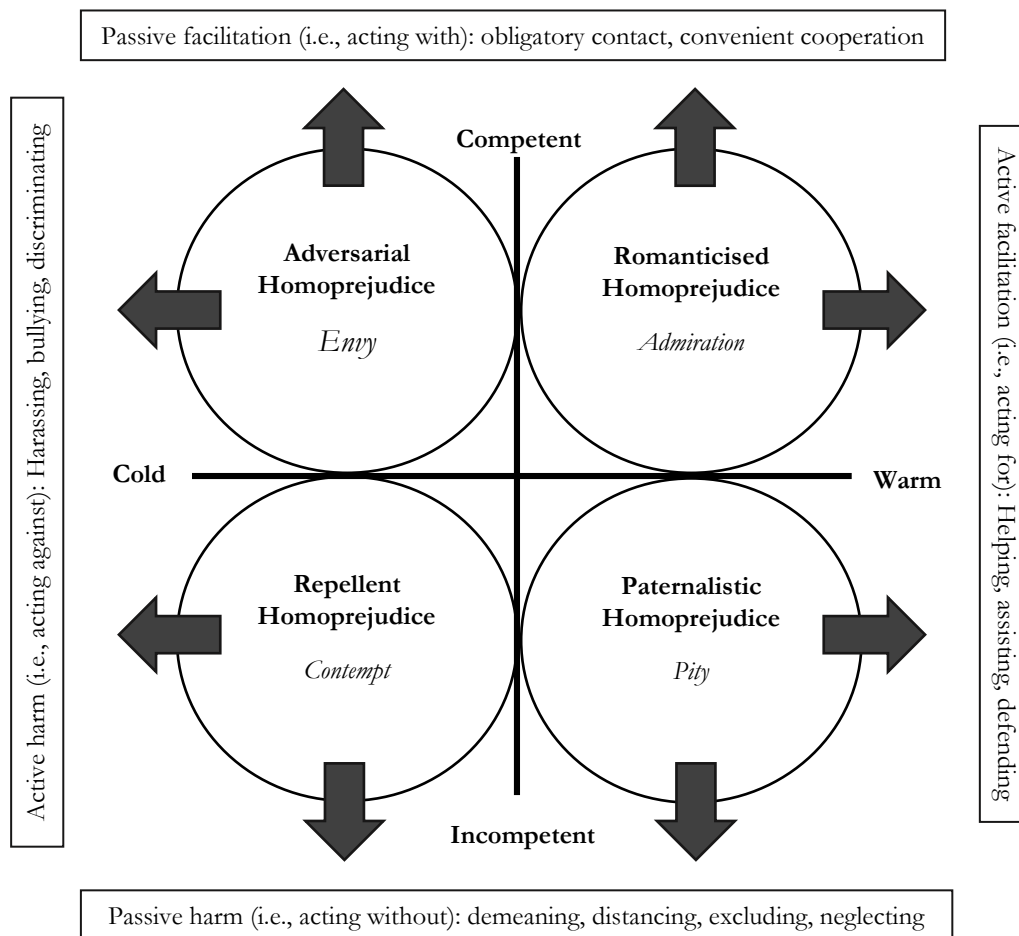
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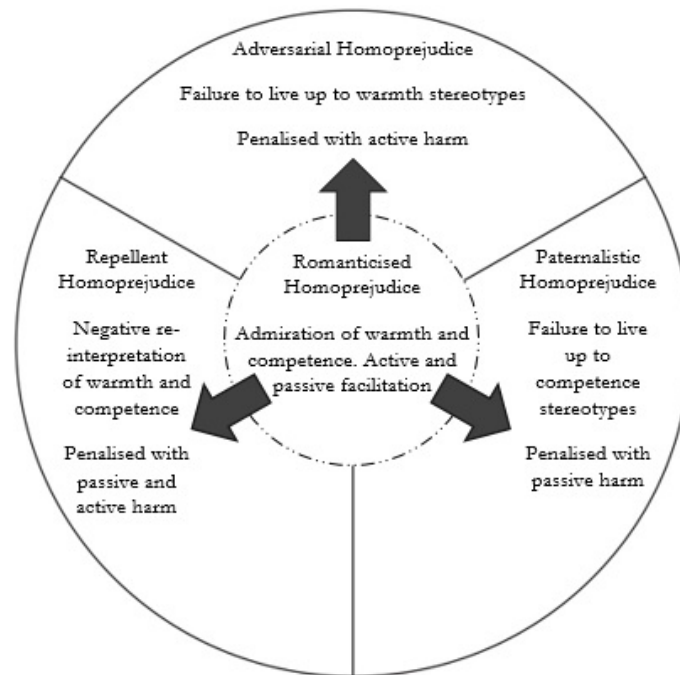
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Figure 1: A graphical representation of ambivalent homoprejudice and its affective, behavioural, and cognitive (i.e., stereotypic) components



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Figure 2: A diagrammatic representation of heterosexuals' penalisation of gay men relative to their congruence with prescriptive stereotypes



Appendix I

Key:

*gay focus group content

† heterosexual focus group content

1) Rapport:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in today's focus group. Firstly, I'm inviting you to be as open and honest as possible. I'm not here to make judgements about you as individuals based on your contribution here and, likewise, I would encourage you all to be respectful of each other's contributions – one of the best and most helpful ways you can do this is by talking with each other about the points you all raise over the course of the focus group. Everything you say here – I won't disclose what you say to anyone outside of my research team, except in the form of anonymised quotes that will not make you identifiable. In the interest of getting open and honest discussion from you, please respect this confidentiality also. Is this okay with everyone?

Before we go on to the actual discussion, I think it would be a good idea to break the ice a bit and get everybody more comfortable speaking among the group so I would like you to say your name (or use a pseudonym) and tell us all about why you wanted to take part in this study.

2) Orienting

Thank you for sharing a little bit about yourselves. We'll be discussing a few different things during the focus group. We're going to start off by looking at two vignettes – short stories involving some interactions between straight people and gay people – and we'll discuss them as a group. After that, we'll then look at some data collected recently from the general public looking at how they think gay people are treated nowadays. I'll also have you respond to their opinions and share how you believe that you are treated in relation to [*heterosexuals/†gay men]. We'll then explore your views on [*'benevolent' attitudes towards gay men/†things called 'microaggressions'] which I'll explain to you.

3) Vignettes:

We'll be discussing two vignettes together and each will be looking at some interactions between gay people and straight people and then we'll be discussing what happened, and taking different perspectives in discussing the interaction and what it may mean for different people.

Vignette 1:

James is an 18 year old openly gay man and is moving in to student halls of residence for his first year of university. While moving in, he strikes up a conversation with his new neighbour, Diane. Wanting to be open with everyone from the outset, he drops into

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conversation that he's gay and Diane reacts enthusiastically, exclaiming "Awesome! I've always wanted a gay friend! My cousin's gay, you'd look totally cute together!"

James goes along with it, not wanting to spoil a potential friendship, but the comments make him feel uncomfortable.

*How often do you encounter reactions like Diane's?

*How do reactions like Diane's make you feel about yourself? (Separate into gay friend/gay cousin components) Why?

*Have you ever challenged somebody who reacted in this way? Why? How was this received?

*In your opinion, are gay people seen to have qualities that makes them better 'friend material' than straight people? What qualities? How do you feel about these assumptions?

*Is Diane's reaction okay because she was just trying to be nice, despite making James feel uncomfortable? Why?

†Why might James feel uncomfortable about Diane's comments?

†Is James's discomfort justified? Why?

†If you were Diane and James challenged what you said, how would you react?

†Why might Diane specifically want a gay friend?

†Have you heard or made these kinds of comments in real life? How do you feel about these kinds of comments?

Vignette 2:

Later in the year James meets Yotam, another gay student on his course, and they start dating each other. After a month of dating, they decide that things are going so well that they should be introduced to each other's friends. James brings Yotam along to a night out and his friends get along with Yotam very well. As James's friends drink more, they become bolder in the topics they talk about around the pair and one friend, Yasmin, asks them "Soooo... Who does what when you... Y'know what I mean"

Although James tries to evade the topic, Yotam tells Yasmin to mind her own business and Yasmin later remarks to James that she doesn't like Yotam because he is "moody"

*How often do you encounter comments like Yasmin's?

*How do questions like Yasmin's make you feel about yourself and your sex life?

*Have you ever challenged questions like Yasmin's (like Yotam did)? Why? How was this received?

*Do you believe that straight people are often preoccupied with the sex lives of gay men? Why? Examples?

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*What do you believe is the intent behind these kinds of questions? Are straight people just trying to be nice or are they simply being insensitive?

†Why might Yotam have reacted in the way he did?

†Was Yotam's reaction justified? Why?

†If you had asked Yasmin's question to a gay couple and had been told to mind your own business, how would you react?

†Have you heard or asked these kinds of questions in real life? How do you feel about these kinds of questions?

†Should gay men be more laid back about these kinds of questions? Why?

4) Data Discussion

Now we'll talk about some data that was collected by YouGov shortly after the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act (2013) came into force in March 2014. 1,958 British adults were asked 'Do you think that gay people in the UK are generally treated equally, better, or worse than straight people?'

a) Before we look at how these respondents answered, [*do you believe that your sexuality means that you are treated worse than, better than, or the same as heterosexuals/†how do you think gay people are treated in relation to straight people?] Why? Can you provide some examples?

Now we'll take a look at how the 1,958 respondents answered: 42% said that gay people were treated equally to straight people, 33% said that gay people were treated worse than straight people, 11% said that gay people were treated better than straight people, and 14% said that they didn't know.

Let's look first at the 42% of people who said that gay people were treated equally to straight people in the UK. What does sexual orientation equality look like to you?

If you believe gay people do not yet have equality, how far do we have to go before reaching equality? How many more rights do gay people need?

Now let's look at the 33% of people who said that gay people were treated worse than straight people in the UK.

*In what ways do you feel you are treated worse than straight people on the basis of your sexuality?

*Do you feel pitied by straight people? Can you provide any examples of times where this pity has made you feel inferior or lesser? Prompts: babied? Undermined? Dehumanised?

Now we'll turn to the 11% of people who said that gay people were treated better than straight people in the UK.

*Have you ever felt that you are treated better than straight people on the basis of your sexuality? Why?

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*How do you respond to the suggestion that you are treated better than straight people because of your sexuality?

*Do you sometimes feel envied by straight people? Can you provide any examples of times where this envy has been unrealistic?

†Have you ever felt that a gay man has been treated better than you on the basis of his sexuality? Why?

†Do you sometimes think that gay men have it easier than straight people? Why? Can you give any examples?

†Do you feel a degree of envy towards gay men because of these examples? In what ways?

5) *Benevolent Prejudice towards Gay Men

Now we'll be looking at so-called 'benevolent' prejudice. I'll assume you all have an idea about what prejudice is but does anybody here know what benevolence is and what, together, benevolent prejudice might be?

Whereas 'benevolence' is usually associated with kindness and other positive emotions, some researchers have put forward the idea that benevolent attitudes towards certain minority groups can be prejudicial. Here is a quote from them that I have adapted for our talk about benevolent attitudes towards gay men:

“[Benevolent homoprejudice is] a set of interrelated attitudes towards [gay men] that are [prejudicial] in terms of viewing [gay men] stereotypically and in restricted roles but that are subjectively positive in feeling tone (for the perceiver)... We do not consider benevolent [homoprejudice] a good thing, for despite the positive feelings it may indicate for the perceiver, its underpinnings lie in traditional stereotyping and [heterosexual] dominance [(e.g., heterosexuality being the 'gold standard')], and its consequences are often damaging.”

Adapted from Glick and Fiske (1996)

To give you an idea of the kinds of things I'm interested to hear about, I'll give you an example from my own personal experience: I once stayed at my best friend's house and closed the curtains (which were tied up in a very tidy and ornamental way) in the bedroom to go to bed. The next day my best friend's Mum noted that I'd left the curtain closed and, when I offered to fix it, she said not to worry because she had a certain tidy and symmetrical way she liked to do it. She then suddenly changed her mind and said “actually, you're gay, you'll know what to do with them”.

Can you think of any occasions when straight people make these kinds of 'nice' assumptions about you because of your sexuality? How do these kinds of assumptions make you feel?

Can you think of any occasions when straight people come across as overprotective, overbearingly nice to you, or overly helpful towards you because of your sexuality? Prompt: people saying “I've always wanted a gay friend!” or trying to set you up with someone. How do these behaviours make you feel?

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Can you think of any occasions when straight people impose themselves on spaces which are typically meant for gay men such as gay bars, clubs, groups, meetings, or job posts meant for gay men? How does this make you feel?

Can you think of any occasions when straight people have seemingly been in awe of your sexuality, as if you're an 'exotic' outsider? Prompt: people 'taking an interest' by asking invasive, intimate, or inappropriate questions about your sex life or suggesting that they are like an 'honourary gay'. How does this make you feel?

Can you think of any occasions when straight people have said that you have it easier or receive special benefits because of your sexuality? How does this make you feel?

Can you think of any occasions when straight people have been overwhelmed you with assurances that they are not prejudiced, that they consider gay people equal to straight people, or that your sexuality is 'fine' with them? How does this make you feel?

When straight people make unrealistic assumptions about you (e.g. that you're highly fashionable), do you feel that your self-esteem takes a hit or that you feel negative about yourself? In what ways?

When these comments and behaviours are directed at you, do you feel as if you are a target of prejudice or do you think the person is just trying to be nice? Why? Are good intentions an excuse?

5) †Microaggressions

Finally, we'll talk about things called 'microaggressions'. Before I provide a definition, does anybody want to try and guess what a 'microaggression' is?

Definition: "Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults towards members of oppressed groups" (Nadal, 2008, p. 23)

Microaggressions are directed towards members of oppressed groups. Do you believe that gay men are oppressed in society? Why?

Returning briefly to the vignettes we looked at earlier, do you believe that Diane's and Yasmin's comments were microaggressive? Why?

I'll provide you with some examples of things that some researchers consider to be microaggressive. For each one, I'd like to know whether you agree or disagree that it is microaggressive and why

- Using phrases such as "that's so gay"
- Asking a gay man, if you find him too flamboyant, to "tone it down"
- Assuming that gay men have some qualities (e.g. fashionable) and lack others (e.g. sporty)
- Treating gay men as if they are 'exotic' and being in awe of how they differ to you
- Expressing discomfort at talking about male homosexuality
- Downplaying how significant anti-gay sentiment is to gay men
- Being preoccupied with the sexual aspects of gay men

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Can you recall any examples of when you have used microaggressions towards gay men – intentionally or unintentionally – perhaps similar to the examples you have in front of you? Elaborate. Were you challenged about your comments?

Do you feel that people should be excused when they accidentally use microaggressions that upset gay men? Why?