



The role of machismo in prejudice toward lesbians and gay men: Personality traits as moderators



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 22 January 2014

Received in revised form 17 June 2014

Accepted 18 June 2014

Available online 18 July 2014

Keywords:

Prejudice

Lesbians

Gay men

Machismo

Personality

Latinos

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationships between machismo and attitudes toward gay men and lesbians in a Latino college sample. Machismo was examined as a predictor of prejudice toward lesbians and gay men. Potential moderation of gender and personality characteristics was also examined. Undergraduates from a public university in South Texas ($n = 330$) completed online measures of prejudice toward gay men and lesbians, machismo, personality, and demographics. Males reported significantly higher levels of machismo than females. No gender differences were found for levels of negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. A significant positive correlation was observed between machismo and prejudice toward lesbians and gay men. A series of regression analyses revealed that, contrary to predictions, higher levels of Openness to Experience strengthened the relationship between machismo and prejudice toward gay men and marginally strengthened the relationship between machismo and prejudice toward lesbians. Neither Agreeableness nor gender had a moderating effect. Machismo appears to be a gender-independent predictor of prejudice toward lesbians and gay men in Latinos. Efforts to reduce Latinos' prejudice should take traditional views toward gender roles into consideration.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Gender belief theory, machismo, and anti-gay prejudice

According to the [US Census \(2010\)](#), there has been an increase of 52% in the number of same-sex households over the previous ten years. Yet, prejudice toward lesbians and gay men seem to remain substantial. Attempts have been made to identify predictors of negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. An identified predictor of anti-gay prejudice is gender role beliefs. Gender belief theory ([Kite & Whitley, 1998](#)) suggests that perceived gender role violation of homosexuals elicits prejudice towards them. Consistent with this theory, a meta-analytic review ([Whitley, 2001](#)) concluded that gender-role beliefs explained a significant proportion of prejudice toward homosexuals. More recent studies have reported results similar to the conclusion. For example, [Brown and Henriquez \(2008\)](#) reported gender role beliefs as the strongest predictor of anti-gay prejudice. [Keiller's \(2010\)](#) study revealed that higher levels of male gender role conformity in heterosexual male college students were associated with higher levels of negative

attitudes toward gay men. [Parrott and Gallagher \(2008\)](#) reported female gender role as a predictor of attitudes toward lesbians in heterosexual college females. These findings seem to suggest that anti-gay prejudice may be prominent in individuals who tend to maintain traditional gender role beliefs (for an exception see [Cullen, Wright, & Alessandri, 2002](#)).

Predictions derived from Gender belief theory suggests that Latinos with high levels of cultural belief in machismo will show prejudice toward lesbians and gay men. Machismo is a culturally shaped and maintained gender role belief among Latinos. [Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, and Tracey \(2008\)](#) identified two factors of machismo: traditional machismo and caballerismo. Traditional concepts of machismo involve hypermasculine characteristics such as aggression, dominance over women, and control. Caballerismo describes characteristics including family protection and responsibility. As gender belief theory might suggest, Latinos with high levels of traditional machismo may perceive lesbian and gay couples as violating their views toward the genders demonstrating elevated negative attitudes toward them.

1.2. Gender difference on attitudes toward lesbians and gay men

Another identified predictor is gender. Recent literature has reported that such negative attitudes are stronger in males than

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females. For example, [Hinrichs and Rosenberg \(2002\)](#) conducted surveys with predominantly Caucasian samples across six colleges and revealed higher levels of prejudice toward both lesbians and gay men in males than in females. These gender differences in anti-gay prejudice seem to be culturally independent. A study with different ethnic groups, including Hispanics, found more favorable attitudes toward homosexuals in female students than in male students across the ethnic groups ([Ahrold & Meston, 2010](#)). [Gastic \(2012\)](#) reported significantly higher levels of favorable attitudes in Latinas than in Latinos toward homosexuals. Further, gender differences were prominent in attitudes toward gay men, showing more negative attitudes toward gay men among men than women ([Herek & Gonzalez-Rivera, 2006](#)). However, men and women, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds, reported similar levels of prejudiced attitudes toward lesbians (e.g., [Herek, 2002](#); [Herek & Gonzalez-Rivera, 2006](#)).

While gender may be a direct predictor of prejudice toward lesbians and gay men, gender and machismo together may play a complex role in the attitudes, as machismo has been reported stronger in males than females ([Gibbons, Wilson, & Rufener, 2006](#)). Specifically, when investigating machismo and gender together in relation to anti-gay prejudice in Latinos, gender might moderate the relationships between machismo and attitudes toward these individuals, such that the relationship might be intensified among Latino males.

1.3. Personality roles in attitudes toward lesbians and gay men

Personality dimensions such as Openness to Experience and Agreeableness of the five factor model (e.g., [Costa & McCrae, 1992](#)) have also been found to be related to prejudice toward different groups including homosexual individuals. For example, among college students in US, lower levels of Openness were found to be associated with higher levels of negative attitudes toward homosexuality in general (e.g., [Miller, Wagner, & Hunt, 2012](#)) and specifically gay men ([Barron, Struckman-Johnson, Quevillon, & Banka, 2008](#); [Cramer, Miller, Amacker, & Burks, 2013](#)). European studies have reported that both Openness and Agreeableness directly and indirectly predicted prejudiced attitudes toward different groups including homosexuals (e.g., [Ekehammar & Akrami, 2003, 2007](#)).

Potential roles of personality variables have been proposed within a theoretical model of prejudice, the Dual Process Motivational (DPM) approach ([Duckitt, 2001](#)). According to this model and a recent meta-analytic study ([Sibley & Duckitt, 2008](#)), there are two predisposing dimensions, Social Conformity and Tough-Mindedness, that directly and indirectly predict prejudiced attitudes for different groups of people. Evidence exists to support the conclusion that Social Conformity is strongly related to Openness to Experience and Tough-Mindedness is strongly associated with Agreeableness ([Duckitt, Wagner, Du Plessis, & Ribum, 2002](#)). Based on this model, low Openness and low Agreeableness are expected to be associated with elevated prejudice. Indeed, [Sibley and Duckitt's \(2008\)](#) meta-analytic study revealed that low Openness and low Agreeableness were direct and indirect (mediated by motivational dimensions) predictors of prejudice.

Personality may also serve as a moderator of the relationship between stressors/conflicts and interpersonal attitudes. While not investigating attitudes toward lesbians and gay men, [Bowling and Eschleman \(2010\)](#) reported that low Agreeableness intensified the relationship between stress levels and counterproductive work behavior. Moderating effects of Openness in psychological and behavioral issues have also been suggested ([McCrae & Sutin, 2009](#)). Given that elevated machismo may be a source of conflict between cultural belief and stress toward lesbians and gay men as supported by gender role theory and the above empirical results,

it seems logical to expect that personality would play a moderating role and direct role, in the relationship between machismo and prejudice toward homosexual individuals.

1.4. Objective & hypotheses

The objective of the current study was to examine the roles that machismo, gender, and personality (Agreeableness and Openness) play in prejudice towards gays and lesbians among Latinos. To address the objective, the following hypotheses were tested: (1) higher levels of machismo were expected to be associated with higher levels of prejudice towards lesbians and gay men; (2) higher levels of Openness and Agreeableness were expected to be related to lower levels of negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men; (3) the relationship between levels of prejudice toward gay men and lesbians was predicted to be stronger in males than in females; and, (4) the relationship between machismo and prejudice toward lesbians and gay men was predicted to be stronger in lower levels of Openness and lower levels of Agreeableness.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Participants were 330 Latino undergraduates at a state university in South Texas. The majority ($n = 276, 83.6\%$) were second generation Americans or higher. Of the participants, 277 (84%) were females. The majority of males (87%) and females (89%) were in their junior or upper year of college. The majority of the participants majored in Psychology ($n = 173; 52.4\%$) followed by Biology ($n = 31; 9.4\%$), Rehabilitation ($n = 26, 7.9\%$). The rest (30%) reported a variety of majors, such as Social Work, English, and Chemistry. The mean age for males was 24.5 ($SD = 5.86$) and for females was 22.6 ($SD = 4.56$), $t(325) = 2.54, p < .05$.

2.2. Measures

A *demographics questionnaire* included gender, age, ethnicity, year of education, and marital status.

Machismo Scale (MS; [Arciniega et al., 2008](#)): The MS is a 20-item, Likert-type scale that assesses traditional machismo and caballerismo found to make up the larger construct of machismo. Accordingly, it contains two subscales, each with 10 items. The current study used the Traditional Machismo subscale. Examples from the Traditional Machismo scale are “Men are superior to women,” and “It would be shameful for a man to cry in front of his children.” Respondents are instructed to rate statements on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Higher scores suggest higher levels of traditional machismo. Satisfactory internal consistency reliability estimates ($\alpha = .84-.85$ for Traditional Machismo) were reported ([Arciniega et al., 2008](#)). The alpha coefficient for the present sample was .70.

Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (ALGM; [Herek, 1988](#)). The ALGM contains 20 items in a 5-point Likert-type format (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). The scale is composed of two 10-item subscales: The ALGM Lesbians subscale (e.g., “Lesbians just cannot fit into our society.” “Lesbians are sick.”) and ALGM Gay Men subscale (e.g., “I think male homosexuals are disgusting.” “The idea of male homosexual marriages seems ridiculous to me.”). Higher scores indicate more negative attitudes towards these groups. Reported internal consistency reliability estimates for the total, lesbians scale, and gay men scale were .95, .90, and .91, respectively ([Herek, 1988](#)). The alpha coefficients for the lesbians and gay men subscales for the current sample were .91 and .93, respectively.

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