Masculine Consciousness and Anti-Effeminacy Among Latino and White Gay Men

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Gender stereotypes adversely affect gay men’s lives. Although research has linked the degree to which gay men are conscious of masculine stereotypes with symptoms of psychological distress, it is unclear whether different groups of gay men are equally conscious of gender stereotypes. Thus, we compared responses to an online survey between a closely matched group of Latino (n = 54) and White (non-Latino, n = 54) gay men who were U.S. citizens and resided in the U.S. We predicted that Latino men would score higher on questions related to (a) the importance of masculinity, (b) the importance of not being noticeably gay, (c) how conscious they were of their own masculine behavior, (d) negative attitudes toward effeminate gay men, and (e) dimensions related to a gay identity. Results showed that masculinity was equally important to both groups, but Latino men reported it was more important that they and their same-sex partners not be noticeably gay (Cohen’s d = 0.40 and 0.62, respectively). Furthermore, both groups expressed an equal degree of negative attitude toward effeminate gay men, but the Latino men were more conscious about their own masculine behavior (d = 0.50). Finally, different dimensions of their gay identity were salient for each group where Latino men were more concerned with keeping their sexual orientation private (d = 0.54) and wanting to be accepted by others (d = 0.57), whereas the White men had more difficulty with their coming-out process (d = 0.40). Further research should consider how one’s ethnicity is related to gender stereotypes and well-being among gay men.

Keywords: femiphobia, group differences, machismo, sissyphobia, straight-acting

“Man up, get tested.”

The slogan is a simple one. It was a slogan used in an STI-prevention campaign aimed at gay men. Although an important public health message related to sexual well-being, the images in the ad—namely the use of Black and Latino models—caused some controversy. For instance, one blogger wrote, “the ad suggests that Black and Latino men are particularly obsessed with their masculinity, more so perhaps than White men” (Barcelos, 2011, ¶ 3).

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Whether or not the ad truly suggested this, the ad seemed to reflect a self-image concern among gay men: Many gay men report valuing masculinity, however they define it, and express negative attitudes toward what they perceive to be effeminate gay men (Bergling, 2001). Furthermore, scholars have suggested that Latino gay men may be more concerned with masculinity compared with White gay men (e.g., Courtenay, 2000; Díaz, 1998), which Barcelos (2011) alluded to in her blog.

This emphasis on masculinity is not limited to gay men in the United States (U.S.), however, as qualitative studies that included gay men from other countries (e.g., Australia, Israel, and the United Kingdom) have also highlighted this issue (Bar-Lev & Tillinger, 2010; Connell, 1992; McKeown, Nelson, Anderson, Low, & Elford, 2010). A limited number of quantitative studies have now linked such attitudes among gay men to symptoms of depression and poor self-esteem (Robinson & Brewster, 2014; Szymanski & Carr, 2008; Sánchez, Westefeld, Liu, & Vilain, 2010). Consequently, better understanding of how gender stereotypes affect gay men may help promote their overall well-being.

As this area of research develops, it would be beneficial for researchers to consider the degree to which gender stereotypes affect the lives of different groups of gay men—specifically gay men of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. As is true of most research in the U.S., studies on gay men have largely focused on White (non-Latino; hereafter “White” for simplicity) gay men.
(Huang et al., 2010). Given that Latinos now constitute the largest “minority group” within the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), we were interested in seeing whether Latino gay men differed from White gay men in their attitudes regarding gender stereotypes. Furthermore, we were interested in determining whether Latino gay men experienced dimensions associated with a gay identity differently than White gay men. Before presenting our analysis of these variables, we will briefly review the literature on these constructs. Unless otherwise noted, the cited studies are based on U.S. samples.

**Masculine Consciousness Among Gay Men**

Definitions of masculinity vary from person to person and across cultures (Addis, Mansfield, & Syzdek, 2010; Lease et al., 2010). In the U.S., scholars have highlighted some of the core aspect of what constitutes masculine norms. For instance, David and Brannon (1976) suggested that four main rules are central to being masculine: men should not express stereotypically feminine interest and behaviors; men must be admired an respected; men should never show fear; and men should seek out adventure and risk. Similarly, O’Neil (2015) conceptualized traditional masculinity as consisting of four main factors: men should be successful, achieve power/status, and be competitive; men should restrict their emotions; men should restrict their affectionate behavior with other men; and men should be work/career driven.

Subcultures within the same country, however, may have some variation in their conception of masculinity (Connell, 2005). For instance, different racial and ethnic group in the U.S. have unique nuances in their definition of masculinity (Norwalk et al., 2011; Rivera-Ramos & Buki, 2011), even though there is general consistency across groups in the characteristics that are associated with the construct (Liang, Salcedo, & Miller, 2011; Lippa, 2005a). One concept commonly associated with Latino men is *machismo* or the “standard of behavior exhibited by men in Mexican culture” (Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Balnk, & Tracey, 2008, p. 19). *Machismo* is often misunderstood as solely referring to the negative aspects of masculinity (Félix-Ortiz, Abreu, Brian, & Bowen, 2001). Yet, scholars have suggested that the concept of *machismo* can be divided into the traditional stereotype of *machismo* (typically seen as negative) and the lesser known concept of *caballerosmo*, which is linked with emotional connectedness and social responsibility—both positive attributes of masculinity (Arciniega et al., 2008; Ojeda & Piña-Watson, 2014).

Another subculture consists of gay men. Qualitative reports have found that gay men in general refer to gender stereotypes when asked to define masculinity (e.g., interested in contact sports and being in control of one’s emotions; Halkitis, Green, & Wilton, 2004; Sánchez, Greenberg, Liu, & Vilain, 2009). Although individual gay men may have different variations in their definition of masculinity, most are very conscious of gender stereotypes and many report that traditional male norms are important to them (Sánchez et al., 2010).

This importance is most evident in gay men’s relationships. Studies on personal advertisements consistently found that most gay men who use such services tout an interest in stereotypically masculine hobbies, often self-identify as “straight-acting” (or not stereotypically gay), and request masculine mates (Bailey, Kim, Hills, & Linsenmeier, 1997; Bartholome, Tewksbury, & Bruzzone, 2000; Taywaditep, 2002). Furthermore, qualitative studies have highlighted how some gay men intentionally associate themselves with specific subgroups that are seen as personifying masculinity (e.g., the Leather and Bear subcultures; Hennen, 2005; Mosher, Levitt, & Manley, 2006) and engage in behaviors to enhance their masculine persona (e.g., bodybuilding; Halkitis, Moeller, & DeRaleau, 2008; Sánchez et al., 2009).

To some degree, this is not a surprise. Many cultures value traditional notions of masculinity, and males who violate these norms often face social penalties (e.g., Ben-Zeev & Dennehy, 2014; Rummell & Levant, 2014; Wallen, Mor, & Devine, 2014). As boys, most gay men recall hearing similar messages about gender roles compared with heterosexual men (Harry, 1982). What is less clear is whether gay men of different cultural groups vary in their consciousness of and preference for these norms. Only one published study has included statistics that allow for easy comparison between groups of gay men: Lippa and Tan (2001) presented descriptive statistics on Latino gay men (*n* = 26) and White gay men (*n* = 36) showing that on average White gay men endorsed greater interest in masculine-related traits and male-typical occupations/hobbies compared with Latino gay men (κ = 0.67 and 0.24, respectively).

The dearth of peer-reviewed studies comparing masculine consciousness between groups of men is not limited to the study of gay men. In fact, only two peer-reviewed studies have used one of the well-established masculinity-related instruments (Walker, Tokar, & Fischer, 2000; Wong, Steinfeldt, Speight, & Hickman, 2010) to compare Latino men with other groups of men. The first was by Long and Martinez (1997): They found that Latino professionals endorsed more masculine self-descriptors on the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974) compared to non-Latino men (97% White; *κ* = 0.59). The second was by Abreu, Goodyear, Campos, and Newcomb (2000) who used the Male Role Norms Scale (Thompson & Pleck, 1986): They found that Latino men rated the importance of one’s status—respect and engaging in physical fights to maintain one’s reputation as more important than White men (*κ* = .18 and .26, respectively).

Beyond direct comparisons, one can extrapolate by comparing the reported descriptive statistics of Latino-only samples with normative samples. For instance, another well-established masculinity-related instrument is the Gender Role Conflict Scale (O’Neil et al., 1986), which assesses the degree to which men are concerned with fulfilling traditional masculine roles (e.g., restricting emotions and avoiding affection with other men). When grouping the Latino-only samples of two peer-reviewed reports (Fragoso & Kashubeck, 2000; Liang et al., 2011) and comparing them with the norms for White adults (O’Neil, n.d.), the combined sample of Latino men scored higher on this measure (*κ* = 0.34).

**Negative Attitudes Toward Effeminacy Among Gay Men**

Popular notions about gay men link them with stereotypically feminine characteristics (Bosson, Taylor, & Prewitt-Freilino, 2006; Fingerhut & Peplau, 2006). Part of this association likely stems from the limited portrayal of gay men within popular media (Clarkson, 2005; Linneman, 2008). In addition, gay men on average do express attitudes and interests that are more stereotypically feminine than masculine (Lippa, 2005b), and many gay men...
Such an expression is not necessarily bad. However, stereotypically masculine characteristics are commodified in the U.S., and many people shun males who exhibit stereotypically feminine characteristics, which often leads to the accusation that one must be gay (Allen & Smith, 2011); and, this pattern is seen across cultural groups. For instance, within Latino communities, being gay is seen as antithetical to being macho or masculine—a highly valued trait for men—and many disparaging labels used for Latino gay men are often associated with stereotypically feminine concepts (Murray & Dynes, 1995). Furthermore, the perceived sexual role in gay relationships adds another layer of stigma for the submissive or receptive partner among many Latinos (Almaguer, 1993).

Given that gay men have historically been excluded from traditional notions of masculinity and are often victimized for their sexual orientation, it would seem that gay men would be accepting of all kinds of men. Yet, those familiar with the community have noted that traditional notions regarding gender roles have been a source of constant tension among gay men (Bailey, 1996; Taywaditep, 2002). In addition to the focus on masculinity among gay men, there are many who harbor negative feelings toward effeminate behavior by other gay men.

Returning to the aforementioned studies on gay men’s personal advertisements, researchers have found that many postings were outwardly rejecting of effeminate behavior in gay men (e.g., Bailey et al., 1997; Bartholome, Tewksbury, & Bruzzone, 2000), including statements denouncing those who were “obviously gay” (see Taywaditep [2001b] for examples). In addition, survey studies have shown that many gay men respond unfavorably toward gay men who are overtly effeminate (Glick, Gangl, Gibb, Klumpner, & Weinberg, 2007; Skidmore, Linsenmeier, & Bailey, 2006) and qualitative analyses have found that some gay men associate femininity with “characteristics that are easily noticed [as gay]” by people who do not know the person intimately” (Sánchez et al., 2009, p. 79). Consequently, it seems that—like heterosexual men—many gay men harbor negative attitudes toward effeminacy in other men.

Several reasons have been given for the negative attitudes toward effeminacy. Harry (1982) argued that because boys and men are socialized into avoiding behaviors that are perceived as weak or as a sign of inadequacy, gay men are simply expressing this internalized view of socially accepted behaviors to avoid persecution. Bailey (1996) posited that for some gay men this negativity was rooted in a desire to portray to mainstream society that gay men are no different than heterosexual men except in the object of their sexual attraction. He further suggested that some gay men want to protect their sexual self-esteem by avoiding association with femininity as it may cause them to be seen as sexually undesirable by other gay men.

Regardless of the reason for this trend, it is unclear whether gay men of different racial and ethnic backgrounds equally express such attitudes. The few qualitative studies that have focused on Latino gay men found that many expressed negative attitudes toward effeminacy and a strong desire not to be seen as feminine (e.g., Asencio, 2011; Bianchi et al., 2010; Thing, 2010). For instance, Kurtz (1999) reported that among his sample of Latinos in Miami, being called feminine was perceived as worse than being insulted for one’s sexual orientation. Although these findings seem to echo qualitative studies on White gay men, it is unclear how such attitudes compare between the two groups of gay men.

**Masculinity and Negative Gay Identity**

An often-stated hypothesis regarding gay men who are highly conscious of gender stereotypes is that it is a reflection of how they feel about being gay (Schwartzberg & Rosenberg, 1998). That is, gay men who are hyper-focused on masculinity and who are rejecting of effeminate behavior are really insecure about their sexual orientation (Haldeman, 2006). The idea of people from historically marginalized groups internalizing bigoted views about their group is one that has been demonstrated in other groups and found to be associated with poorer mental health outcome. Yet, only recently have quantitative studies tried to test this hypothesis regarding masculine norms among gay men.

In a mixed-group of 210 nonheterosexual men, Szymanski and Carr (2008) found that those most concerned with masculine roles reported more negative attitudes toward homosexuality in themselves and in others compared to those less concerned with masculine roles. Similarly, Sánchez et al. (2010, 2012) reported that the degree to which a gay man was concerned with aspects of traditional masculinity was significantly related to negative feelings about being gay. Among Latino gay men specifically, Estrada et al. (2011) found a positive correlation between the endorsement of traditional notions of machismo and internalized homophobia.

Yet again, it is unclear whether Latino and White gay men may differ in their degree of negative feelings about being gay. Some have argued that because the mainstream gay culture in the U.S. is seen as primarily White, that Latinos may feel excluded from the community and have less support to buffer feelings about their sexual orientation (Díaz, Ayala, & Bein, 2004). Others have argued that because Latinos are discriminated for their ethnic background and rely on their families and communities for support, then perhaps being gay is less of a worry for Latino men because they have had to cope with being discriminated against from a very early age whereas White gay men do not experience significant discrimination until they come out as gay (Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2004; Zea, Reisen, & Poppen, 1999).

Furthermore, it could be that it is different aspects of being gay that matter to White and Latino gay men. That is, there are many factors that gay men must struggle with when accepting that they are not heterosexual (Mohr & Kendra, 2011). Numerous developmental-stage-theories exist on this topic, but theories that include dimensions of experience can help describe some of the different aspects of identity formation (Fassinger & Miller, 1996; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). Such dimensions can include the degree to which one discloses a nonheterosexual sexual orientation to others (often termed “coming-out”), the strength of any internalized negative stereotypes about gay men, how strongly the person feels they need to be accepted by other, and whether or not someone discusses romantic and sexual relationships with others (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000).

Finally, in terms of negative gay identity, we were unable to find peer-reviewed quantitative studies that clearly compared Latino and White gay men on dimensions of sexual identity. Extrapolating from general research on Latinos, it is often suggested that...
Latinos are more likely to put the needs of one’s family and/or community before the self (e.g., Desmond & Turley, 2009; Fulgini, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Sarkisian, Gerena, & Gerstel, 2006). Thus, they may avoid association with an identity that may bring shame to their families.

Present Study

Given the lack of research on masculine consciousness and anti-effeminacy among gay men, we were interested in comparing a group of Latino and White gay men to measure the degree to which they differed in their attitudes regarding these concepts. We also wanted to compare the degree to which they felt negatively about being gay. Given the aforementioned studies, we predicted the following:

Hypothesis 1: Ratings for the importance of masculine looks and behavior would be higher for the Latino group compared with the White group.

Hypothesis 2: Ratings for the importance of not being noticeably gay would be higher for the Latino group compared with the White group.

Hypothesis 3: The Latino men would score higher on a measure of masculine consciousness compared with the White men.

Hypothesis 4: The Latino men would score higher on a measure of negative attitudes toward effeminate behavior compared with the White men.

Hypothesis 5: Compared to White men, Latino men would score higher on a measure assessing dimensions of a negative gay identity including the need for privacy, the need for acceptance, internalized homonegativity, and experiencing a difficult coming-out process.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The data for this report were collected as part of an ongoing study on the biopsychological basis for sexual orientation. We used the suggestions offered by Gosling, Vazire, Srivastara, and John (2004) in constructing and monitoring the online survey (e.g., monitoring IP addresses to guard against repeat responders). With the assistance of electronic mailing list managers, an e-mail solicitation notice was sent out to a variety of organizations, university centers, and community agencies associated with the gay community. The solicitation stated that the study was about gay men’s experience with gender roles; thus, it specified that the study was for men (age 18 or older) who self-identified as gay and lived in the U.S. Only cisgender men who were U.S. citizens were included in the sample. In all recruited participants, gay identity aligned with the Kinsey scale, (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948/1975); all the men were either a Kinsey 5 (predominately gay, but occasionally bisexual or heterosexual) or a Kinsey 6 (exclusively gay). PsychData.com housed the IRB-approved consent-form and survey.

To conduct our group comparisons, we focused on 108 surveys from the data pool. First, all self-identified Latino men were extracted from the dataset. Then an equal number of White gay men were selected so that they closely matched the Latino men on four key variables: age, number of years openly gay, education level, and region of the country. The reason for this matching procedure was to minimize unsystematic variability that may be attributable to these characteristics (see Table 1).

For the whole sample, the mean age was 30.57 (SD = 10.27) and the mean number of years openly identifying as gay was 14.80 (SD = 10.36). All had graduated from high school with 12% earning an Associate’s degree, 28% a bachelor’s degree, and 12% a graduate school degree. The median individual annual income was $35,000 (interquartile range = $37,850). All men identified as U.S. citizens currently living in the U.S.: West (45%), South (38%), Midwest (9%), and Northeast (7%). Fewer than half of the men (44%) reported currently being in a significant romantic relationship with two thirds of this subset currently living with their same-sex partner.

Instruments

Importance of masculinity. Six independent questions modeled after previous studies assessing masculinity concerns among gay men (Sánchez et al., 2010; Skidmore et al., 2006) were included to gauge the importance of masculinity and the importance of not being noticeably gay. Using a 7-point scale (1 = not at all important; 7 = extremely important), the men responded to three questions: “How important is it to you that you look (your clothes, hair, etc.) masculine in public?” “How important is it to you that you behave (your speech, mannerisms, etc.) masculine in public?” “How important is it to you that you NOT be perceived or noticed as being gay by strangers?” The questions were presented again with the phrase “your partner or anyone you are dating” substituted for the second “you” in each question.

Masculine consciousness. We used the Masculine Consciousness Scale (Taywaditep, 2001a, 2002), which was designed

Table 1
Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Latino</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAge (SD)</td>
<td>30.63 (10.38)</td>
<td>30.52 (10.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>18–61</td>
<td>18–62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myears_openly_gay (SD)</td>
<td>15.07 (9.58)</td>
<td>14.52 (11.17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school/equivalent</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s degree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate degree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Census region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Group characteristics did not significantly differ.
to specifically assess the degree to which gay men are preoccupied with how masculine and “straight-acting” their public appearance is. Participants used a 10-point scale (1 = not at all true for me; 10 = definitely true for me) to respond to 18 statements. Some examples include, “I often wonder whether people think I am masculine”; “I would feel good if someone presumed I was heterosexual”; and “When I hear my own recorded voice, I listen to see how masculine it sounds.” The ratings are summed to derive a score, with higher scores reflecting greater concern with one’s masculinity compared to lower scores. Cronbach’s alpha was .96 for the Latino men and .94 for the White men.

Anti-effeminacy. We used the Negative Attitude toward Effeminacy Scale (Taywaditep, 2001a, 2002), which was designed to specifically assess the degree to which gay men feel negatively toward overtly effeminate behavior by other gay men. Participants used a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) to respond to 17 statements. Some examples include, “It bothers me to see a gay man acting like a woman”; “When I meet a gay man for the first time, I would be turned off immediately if he acted effeminate”; and “The effeminacy of some gay men is detrimental to the public image of gay people in general.” The ratings are summed to derive a score, with higher scores reflecting stronger negative feelings toward effeminity compared to lower scores. Cronbach’s alpha was .95 for the Latino men and .94 for the White men.

Negative gay identity. To assess negative feelings about being gay, we included items from four subscales of the Lesbian and Gay Identity Scale (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). Participants responded to the items using a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). The six-item Need for Privacy Subscale assessed the degree to which the men felt that their sexual orientation was a private and highly personal characteristic (e.g., “I prefer to keep my relationships rather private.”). The five-item Need for Acceptance Subscale assessed the degree to which the men worried or were preoccupied with how others viewed their sexual orientation (e.g., “I often wonder whether others judge me for being gay.”). The five-item Homonegativity Subscale assessed the degree to which the men internalized negative perceptions about gay people (e.g., “Homosexual lifestyles are not as fulfilling as heterosexual lifestyles.”). The five-item Difficult Process Subscale assessed the degree to which the men perceived their sexual orientation identity development and “coming out” as having been slow and difficult (e.g., “Coming out to my friends and family has been a very lengthy process.”). Ratings for each subscales’ items are averaged to derive a score.

Mohr and Fassinger (2000) reported that the four subscales could further be averaged and combined to derive a global index referred to as the Negative Gay-Identity Index (NGI). The NGI was conceptualized as reflecting how negatively some respondents feel about being gay with a higher NGI score suggesting that the respondent feels more negatively than a respondent with a lower NGI score. Cronbach’s alpha for the four subscales and the NGI ranged between .67 and .87 for the Latino men and .76 and .90 for the White men.

Preliminary Data Screening

The data was screened before conducting statistical tests. First, we examined missing data points at the item level to determine how best to handle missing responses (Schlomer, Bauman, & Card, 2010). All participants responded to the six single-item questions regarding the importance of masculinity. However, 15 had one missing data point, and three had two missing data points (for separate scales) within the three measures used. We used mean substitution to correct for these omissions whereby the participant’s mean rating for the remaining items of the appropriate scale was used to fill in the missing data point (Dodeen, 2003).

Next, we examined univariate distributions by group to verify that they met the assumptions of normality (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2007). All six single-item questions were skewed: the four regarding masculinity were negatively skewed, and the two regarding not appearing gay were positively skewed. To correct these, a reflect-and-square-root transformation was used for the positively skewed distributions and a square-root transformation was used on the negatively skewed distributions. Among the scales, Homonegativity was substantially skewed to the right; thus, a Logarithm to the 10th power transformation was used to correct the skew.

To determine whether age may be a covariate when doing group comparisons, we examined correlation coefficients between age and the variables of interest for each group. The distribution for age among our sample was positively skewed. Thus, we transformed the ages using Logarithm to the 10th power. Significant correlations were found for age and different scaled scores within the two groups but not for the single item questions. To simplify the presentation of the statistical tests, we used ANCOVA for all group comparisons of the scale scores presented in Table 3.

Results

These results focus on the two groups of interest: Latino and White gay men. Tables 2 and 3 show the group comparisons. Effect size estimates are reported as Cohen’s d. The following benchmarks were used to interpret the effect sizes as small, medium, and large: .20, .50, and .80, respectively (Cohen, 1988).

Importance of Masculinity and Not Appearing Gay

The first goal was to compare responses to the six single-item questions assessing the importance of masculinity and the importance not appearing gay between the two groups. Table 2 presents the means for the groups on each item and the results of the independent sample t tests.

When comparing the responses for the four questions asking how important masculine looks and behavior were to the men themselves and in evaluating their partners, most men in both groups rated the items between 5 and 7 versus 1 to 4. Consequently, none of the group comparisons on these four items reached statistical significance (or p < .05). However, the mean difference for the importance of having a masculine behaving partner yielded a small effect size: the Latino men (M = 4.78, SE = 0.25) rated this slightly higher than the White men (M = 4.46, SE = 0.23) with an effect size of d = 0.24. Overall, Hypothesis 1, which predicted that Latino men would score higher than White men, was not supported.

When examining the responses for the two questions asking how important it was for the men that neither they nor their partners be noticeably gay in public, both groups fell close to the middle of the 7-point scale assessing importance. However, the
Table 2
Group Comparison Between Latino Gay Men and White (Non-Latino) Gay Men on Single-Item Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Whole sample (N = 108)</th>
<th>Latino men (n = 54)</th>
<th>White men (n = 54)</th>
<th>t(106)</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance of looking masculine</td>
<td>4.84 1.53</td>
<td>4.89 1.31</td>
<td>4.80 1.73</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.469</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of partner looking masculine</td>
<td>4.64 1.78</td>
<td>4.69 1.83</td>
<td>4.59 1.74</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.344</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of behaving masculine</td>
<td>4.57 1.57</td>
<td>4.67 1.53</td>
<td>4.48 1.62</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.259</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of partner behaving masculine</td>
<td>4.62 1.76</td>
<td>4.78 1.85</td>
<td>4.46 1.67</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of not being noticeably gay</td>
<td>3.00 1.77</td>
<td>3.35 1.82</td>
<td>2.65 1.65</td>
<td>−2.08</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of partner not being noticeably gay</td>
<td>2.91 1.71</td>
<td>3.41 1.76</td>
<td>2.41 1.50</td>
<td>−3.17</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Each item rated on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all important; 7 = extremely important). Means and standard deviations presented are before transformation. p = one-tailed test.

Masculine Consciousness and Anti-Effeminacy

The second goal of our analysis was to compare the degree to which Latino and White gay men were preoccupied with how masculine and “straight-acting” they appeared in public (Hypothesis 3) and the degree to which they harbored negative feelings about effeminate gay men (Hypothesis 4). Before conducting these group comparisons, an omnibus MANCOVA was performed where age was entered as the covariate and scale scores for masculine consciousness, anti-effeminacy, need for privacy, need for acceptance, homonegativity, and difficult coming out served as the dependent variables (negative gay identity index was not assessed). As a whole, the scores on the global index assessing negative feelings about being gay only showed a small group difference (d = 0.21) was found on scores regarding negative attitudes toward effeminate gay men. Overall, both groups of men expressed fairly similar attitudes regarding effeminate gay men, but the Latino men were more conscious of how masculine they were.

Negative Feelings About Being Gay

The third goal was to compare the degree to which Latino and White gay men experienced dimensions related to negative feelings about being gay (Hypothesis 5). Table 3 presents the group comparisons for the different dimensions regarding a gay identity assessed. As a whole, the scores on the global index assessing negative feelings about being gay only showed a small group difference (d = 0.17). However, there was a split between the groups on the subscales that factored into the Negative Gay-Identity Index. The Latino gay men expressed a greater need for privacy (M = 4.38, SE = 0.18, d = 0.54) and greater need for acceptance (M = 3.44, SE = 0.17, d = 0.57) compared with the White gay men (M = 3.68, SE = 0.18; M = 2.78, SE = 0.16, respectively), which supported our prediction. On the other hand, the White gay men (M = 3.57, SE = 0.21, d = 0.40) expressed having a more difficult coming-out process compared to the Latino gay men (M = 2.97, SE = 0.20), which contradicted our predic-

Table 3
Group Comparison Between Latino Gay Men and White (Non-Latino) Gay Men on Scale Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale score</th>
<th>Whole sample (N = 108)</th>
<th>Latino men (n = 54)</th>
<th>White men (n = 54)</th>
<th>ANCOVA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masculine consciousness</td>
<td>18–180</td>
<td>86.38 38.02 .95</td>
<td>95.41 40.11 .96</td>
<td>77.35 32.72 .94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-effeminity</td>
<td>17–119</td>
<td>54.30 24.16 .94</td>
<td>56.81 26.04 .95</td>
<td>51.78 22.09 .94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Gay-Identity Index</td>
<td>1–7</td>
<td>3.11 1.00 .88</td>
<td>3.20 0.98 .87</td>
<td>3.03 1.03 .90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for privacy</td>
<td>1–7</td>
<td>4.02 1.37 .81</td>
<td>4.38 1.33 .76</td>
<td>3.78 1.33 .83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homonegativityα</td>
<td>1–7</td>
<td>3.11 1.24 .73</td>
<td>3.44 1.22 .67</td>
<td>2.78 1.18 .76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult coming-out</td>
<td>1–7</td>
<td>2.04 1.60 .78</td>
<td>1.99 1.23 .80</td>
<td>2.10 1.13 .77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Group means were compared while controlling for the effect attributable to age (Log10Age). p = one-tailed test; d = Cohen’s d where positive values = Latino men scored higher and negative values = White men scored higher.

α Log10 transformation used for comparison.
tion. Likewise, our prediction that Latino men would express more internalized negative views on being gay was not supported as these scores only slightly differed between the two groups \( (d = 0.17) \). Overall, it appears that different dimensions associated with a gay identity are salient for Latino and White gay men.

**Discussion**

There is growing quantitative evidence—based mostly on samples of White men—that aspects of traditional gender roles adversely affect the well-being of gay men (Sánchez, Bocklandt, & Vilain, 2009; Szymanski & Carr, 2008). The aim of this analysis was to compare a sample of Latino and White gay men on different attitudes regarding masculinity and anti-effeminacy. Four main results came from this analysis. First, men in both groups reported that masculine looks and behavior were important to them. Furthermore, more men reported that it was important to them that their partners look and behave in masculine ways than not. This is consistent with previous studies that have assessed this importance via personal advertisements (e.g., Bailey et al., 1997) and by directly asking gay men how important masculinity was to them (Sánchez et al., 2010). The fact that the groups responded similarly to the questions suggests that both Latino and White gay men equally consider masculinity an important characteristic.

The second important finding is that, although most of the men reported that it was unimportant to them whether they were noticeably gay, the Latino men as a whole were more neutral on the two items in the survey. Thus, Latino men may be more conscious of their public presentation compared with White men. An alternative explanation for this pattern may be that the questions were too direct and that the wording primed the men to respond in a socially desirable fashion.

The third important finding was that the Latino gay men were slightly more conscious with how masculine and “straight-acting” their public appearance was compared with the White men. This does not mean that the White men were indifferent to their own masculine behavior but that the Latino men were more aware of it. It is unclear whether such a focus necessarily affects gay men’s well-being. Yet, the finding fits into theories that suggest the polarization of masculinity and femininity is stronger in Latino communities compared to mainstream U.S. society, which leads many Latino men to base their behaviors on conceptions of machismo (Carballo-Díéguez et al., 2004; Morales, 1989).

The fourth important finding was that different dimensions associated with negative feelings about being gay were more salient for each group of men. On the one hand, the White men reported having a more difficult coming-out process compared to the Latino men. On the other hand, the Latino men reported greater concerns with keeping their sexual orientation private and for wanting to be accepted by others compared to the White men. This seems to fit into worldview models in which European cultures focus more on the self (i.e., an internal locus of control and responsibility), whereas many Latin American cultures focus on their effect on others (i.e., the needs of the family/community take precedence over the needs of the self; Desmond & Turley, 2009; Fuligni et al., 1999).

**Limitations**

Several limitations should be kept in mind when considering the results of this report. First, although the groups were closely matched on key demographic characteristics to help minimize the effects of unsystematic variability, their life experiences are likely different (e.g., local communities they grew up in and institutions that they belonged to). Furthermore, by matching our participants on important socioeconomic variables, it is possible that they no longer represent the groups that we aim to represent. For example, if one group of gay men as a whole has received less education than the other, then our matching process may have created an artificial group. Thus, it is difficult to know what extrinsic factors beyond their ethnic identity may contribute to the slight differences we detected or whether they truly represent the groups that we had hoped to sample. Second, although all the participants were U.S. citizens living in the U.S., it is unsure whether any generational or acculturation issues may have contributed to the differences we detected (Glass & Owen, 2010). For instance, it is possible that some of the men were immigrants who became U.S. citizens whereas others were raised by parents who were immigrants. There could be a potential effect of perceiving oneself as being “non-White” or “non-American” that may deserve further investigation. Third, the two groups were treated as monolithic groups as we neither assessed the specific cultural background (e.g., Mexican vs. Cuban) nor the degree to which such background was salient or relevant to the individual participants. Thus, future research should better demarcate the ethnic background of participants including group affiliation and identity. Fourth, the responses were solely collected online; therefore, this may not generalize beyond men who have easy access to or regularly use the Internet. Fifth, the use of specific terminology may have influenced participation and responses to the scales. For example, the recruitment material specifying “gay identified men” may have excluded men who use different identity labels (e.g., “queer”) or do not identify with some terms. Furthermore, the term “homosexual” used in some of the scales may perpetuate negative stereotypes (Herek, Kimmel, Amaro, & Melton, 1991). A sixth limitation consists of possible measurement error: The single-item question regarding not wanting to be noticeably gay in public may be tapping into a different construct (e.g., social desirability).

**Implications for Future Research**

Notwithstanding these limitations, this report provides some insight into how gender stereotypes may uniquely affect different groups of gay men. For instance, may specific cultural values (e.g., individualism vs. collectivism, and centrality of ones family) moderate the degree to which certain traits associated with masculinity are important to gay men? To what degree does social privilege (e.g., White privilege) affect how one navigates the coming out process and responds to discrimination? Therefore, more research should be conducted that either compares groups of gay men or focuses on certain groups of gay men underrepresented in the literature.

Furthermore, research should be conducted to examine how these constructs may affect groups of men differently when it comes to health-related behavior and lifestyle choices. For instance, Parent, Torrey, and Michaels (2012) found that among a group of men who have sex with men, those who strongly en-
dorsed conforming with masculine norms were less likely to undergo HIV testing compared with those who were less conforming because it was seen as an “outing” activity that undermined their sense of masculinity. Yet, may the health-related behaviors for different groups of gay men be differentially affected by masculine norms?

Ultimately, the issue of gender stereotypes among gay men will continue to stir controversy whether it is through STI prevention campaigns or the pages of the popular press. It seems likely that those gay men who rigidly adopt traditional gender roles likely harm their own well-being and the well-being of those around them. Yet, not all aspects of traditional gender roles are necessarily problematic (Hammer & Good, 2010). Perhaps then there is something to learn from gay men who are able to integrate the prosocial aspects of stereotypical masculinity (e.g., camaraderie) and femininity (e.g., comfort with emotional intimacy) and who are unfazed by those who may not “man up” enough.

References


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