# Assessing Predictors of Homophobic Attitudes in Female College Students in a Socially Conservative State

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**Abstract**

Most of the existing literature investigating correlates of homophobic attitudes deals mostly with males. Female homophobic attitudes and their predictors have been studied far less. In order to address this disparity within the current literature, the following study investigated how religious fundamentalism, social dominance orientation, hostile sexism, and femininity related to homophobic attitudes of 186 primarily White, heterosexual, females at an Oklahoma university. The variables that had significant correlations with homophobic attitudes were hostile sexism, social dominance orientation, and religious fundamentalism. Regression analysis revealed that religious fundamentalism and social dominance orientation were significant predictors of homophobic attitudes.

*Key words:* homophobia, heterosexism, socially conservative state, emergent female adults

## Introduction

Previous research highlights a relationship between homophobic attitudes and several other proximal determinants exists (Davies, 2004; McDermott, Schwartz, Lindley, & Proirtti, 2014; Parrot & Zeichner, 2005; Sibley, Robertson, & Wilson, 2006; Whitley, 2001). While distal determinants undoubtedly have an effect on individuals' attitudes towards homosexuality, it is important to examine factors personal to the individual because they tend to be more significant predictors of homophobic attitudes (Agnew, Thompson, Smith, Gramzow, & Currey, 1993). Previous research has shown that there are many proximal determinants that can influence an individual's homophobic attitudes, including—but not limited to—religious fundamentalism (McDermott et al., 2014), social dominance orientation (Sibley et al., 2006), hostile sexism (Davies, 2004), and hypermasculinity (Parrot & Zeichner, 2005) or hyperfemininity (Whitley, 2001). These traits tend to correlate with homophobia, and have been studied a great deal in psychological literature. The current investigative study examined the relationships between the aforementioned variables and which variables contributed to an individual's homophobic attitudes.

Homophobia was originally coined and defined as persistent, irrational fear of homosexual individuals, and a strong desire to be nowhere near them (Weinberg, 1972). However, researchers have discussed the idea that different terminology should be adopted when discussing homophobic prejudices due to the fact that phobias are extreme, irrationally detrimental fears of a specific issue, and that there is very little data to suggest that anti-homosexual attitudes are truly representative of a phobia in the vast majority of cases (Fyfe, 1983; Herek, 2004; Logan, 1996). Some alternative suggestions to the term homophobia include sexual prejudice, homoprejudice, or anti-homosexual prejudice (Fyfe, 1983; Haaga, 1991; Herek,

2004; Logan, 1996). Herek (2004) also suggests that in most homophobic reactions, individuals express anger, anxiety, and disgust as opposed to fear. Additional research regarding the affective, behavioral, and cognitive aspects of homophobia to rework the terminology eventually led researchers to eventually generalize the term homophobia to encompass all negative actions, attitudes, and beliefs towards homosexual individuals (Haaga, 1991; Wright, Adams, & Bernat, 1999). Due to this shift in the connotations to the word homophobia, for the purposes of this paper homophobia will be operationally defined as any negative attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, or cognitions that an individual may have about homosexual individuals.

It has been well established that homophobia typically positively correlates with high levels of religiosity, and particularly with religious fundamentalist beliefs (McDermott, Schwartz, Lindley, & Proirtti, 2014; Nagoshi et al., 2008; Rowatt, Tsang, Kelly, LaMartina, McCullers, & McKinely, 2006; Schwartz & Lindley, 2005). Religious fundamentalism is defined as an individual's belief that their religion and its teachings are the only true set of beliefs, and that the teachings of said religions are absolutely unchangeable, and must be followed exactly (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992). Several studies have investigated the predictive power of religious fundamentalism on homophobic attitudes, and found that religious fundamentalism is a reliable predictor of homophobic attitudes (Laythe, Finkel, & Kirkpatrick, 2001; Laythe, Finkel, Bringle, & Kirkpatrick, 2002; Jonathan, 2008). One interesting finding from Vincent, Parrott, and Peterson (2011) suggests that some aspects of religious fundamentalism increase aggression towards homosexual individuals, while other aspects of religious fundamentalism can decrease aggression towards them; however, more research needs to be done on the subject in order to determine exactly what aspects cause this split. In a socially conservative state situated in the Bible Belt, it is important to investigate the relationships

between religious fundamentalism and homophobic attitudes in order to better understand factors that could play into prejudice and discrimination towards homosexual individuals.

Another proximal determinant of homophobic attitudes is a person's levels of social dominance orientation (SDO). SDO is defined as an individual's desire for their in-group to be the dominant, superior group in a society (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). SDO is typically correlated with homophobic attitudes (Pratto et al., 2000; Sibley, Robertson, & Wilson, 2006; Stones, 2006; Whitley, 1999). In a heterosexist society, ideologies of heterosexuality are accepted without question and individuals that have higher levels of SDO might firmly believe that homosexuality is a threat to the societal hierarchy in which heterosexuality is at the top of the pyramid. Findings by Stones (2006) suggest that while SDO does correlate with homophobic attitudes, that by itself it is not an accurate predictor of homophobic attitudes, but that Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) was. People high in RWA exhibit high levels of respect for authority figures, aggression and hatred towards outgroups condemned by authority figures, and support for traditional, conservative values expressed by authority figures (Altemeyer, 1981). However, other research has shown that SDO is more strongly correlated with homophobic attitudes than RWA (Whitley, 1999). Sibley, Robertson, and Wilson (2006) also point out in their research that the relationship between SDO and RWA is more additive in nature than it is interactive, and that therefore it is not necessary to test them together. Both SDO and RWA measure attitudes that can be used to see how people scoring high in these areas might create a hierarchy that places heterosexuality at the top, and any other sexual orientation below it, and want to ensure that it stays this way. Previous research confirms that it is not necessary to measure both SDO and RWA in the same study (Sibley, Robertson, & Wilson, 2006; Whitley, 1999).

Hostile sexism, as implied by the name, is a form of sexism in which an individual holds hostility stemming from faulty, stereotypic generalization (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Previous research has shown that hostile sexism is often correlated with homophobic attitudes (Davies, 2004; Nagoshi et al., 2008; Sakalli, 2002; Whitley, 2001). This tendency for hostile sexism and homophobic attitudes to be correlated may stem from the fact that hostile sexism operates through the implementation of gender-role expectations and stereotypes about the different sexes. Coupling this with the fact that society as a whole implements stereotypes that non-heterosexual individuals exhibit qualities typically associated with the opposite gender, there is a tendency for heterosexual people to dislike homosexual individuals because the way that society perceives them does not allow them to fit into traditional gender roles (Kite & Whitley, 1998; Whitely, 2001). This research leads to the conclusion that homophobic attitudes could stem from, and be predicted by, levels of hostile sexism.

Individuals that demonstrate homophobic attitudes also tend to exhibit strong beliefs in adherence to stereotypical gender roles (Whitely, 2001). Normative gender roles can be described as societal beliefs that specific personality traits, activities, items, and actions belong to either a masculine role or a feminine role, but not both (Deaux & Kite, 1987; Whitley, 2001). These traits are often accepted by the majority of people on an individual level, perpetuating rigid boundaries of the *right* activities a male or female can participate in, or the *proper* traits men and women are allowed to express in order to be read as a good woman or man (O'Neil, 1981).

Hypermasculinity, a personality construct in which one is extremely involved and invested in personal acceptance and expression of traditional male gender roles (Mosher, 1998), has been found to have significant correlations with homophobia in multiple studies. Previous

studies suggest there may be mediating factors between the two variables. Examples of these mediators could include prejudice against feminine traits (Hunt, Fasoli, Carnaghi, & Cadinu, 2016; Parrott, Adams, & Zeichner, 2002), conscious or unconscious homosexual arousal (Adams, Wright, & Lohr, 1996), and anxiety or disgust of homosexuality (Adams, Wright, & Lohr, 1996; Olatunji, 2008). The literature also suggests that men who are hypermasculine and express homophobic beliefs are the group of people most likely to express hostility or aggression against homosexual individuals, particularly gay men (Parrot & Zeichner, 2005; Parrot & Zeichner, 2007; Theodore & Basow, 2000). However, few studies have investigated how hyperfemininity and homophobia correlate. Like hypermasculinity, hyperfemininity is a personality construct in which one is extremely involved and invested in personal acceptance and expression of traditional female gender roles (Murnen & Byrne, 1991). Whitley (2001) found that females who adhered more strictly to societally imposed norms of femininity were a great deal like hypermasculine males in that both sets of individuals were much more likely to express anti-gay prejudice.

Previous research has ample evidence to suggest that SDO, hostile sexism, religious fundamentalism, and levels of adherence to gender roles are proximal determinants of homophobic attitudes. However, as discussed previously, there is a gap in the literature regarding extreme adherence to female gender roles and its relationship to homophobia. In fact, few studies focus on women and their attitudes towards homosexuality at all because literature has found that they typically express more tolerant attitudes than men do (Basow & Johnson, 2000; Herek, 1988; Herek & Glunt, 1993; Kite & Whitley, 1998). Due to the lack of research regarding females and homophobic attitudes, the current study aims to investigate correlations between several different variables and homophobia in an all-female sample. The main intention of this

study is to contribute to the existing body of literature regarding women and homophobic attitudes, particularly in regards to femininity. Based on the previous research, the author hypothesized that social dominance orientation, religious fundamentalism, hostile sexism, and femininity would all correlate with homophobic attitudes. It was also hypothesized that femininity, social dominance orientation, religious fundamentalism, and hostile sexism, would all be significant predictors of homophobic attitudes.

## Method

### *Participant Recruitment and Data Collection Procedures*

Participants enrolled in psychology or education courses at Oklahoma State University and 18 years old or older were eligible to participate in the study. The online study measured levels of homophobic attitudes, hostile sexism, religious fundamentalism, social dominance orientation, and levels of masculinity/femininity. The questionnaire was hosted by Qualtrics, an online questionnaire hosting service. Participants gained access to the survey through SONA Systems. Students at Oklahoma State University with either a psychology SONA account or a College of Education SONA account were invited to participate. Interested participants that clicked on the link to the questionnaire first read and approved the informed consent. After consenting to the study, participants were able to access the study and complete the online questionnaire. At the end of the questionnaire, participants recorded their age, race/ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. Individuals who accessed the questionnaire via SONA were awarded course credit for participating in the study. No other compensation was given. All procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board at Oklahoma State University.

### ***Measures***

#### *Homophobia*

Homophobic attitudes were measured using the Homophobia Scale (Wright, Adams, & Bernat, 1999). The Homophobia Scale is a list of 25 statements that assess a participant's attitudes about homosexuality. Items are scored using a 5-point Likert scale where (1)=Strongly agree, (2)=Agree, (3)=Neither agree nor disagree, (4)=Disagree, and (5)=Strongly disagree. Sample items from the measure include "Gay people make me nervous," and, "It does not bother me to see two homosexual people together in public." The Homophobia Scale has 25 items, and possible scores range from 25 to 125. Lower scores indicate higher levels of homophobic attitudes, while higher scores indicate more tolerant and accepting attitudes towards homosexuality. The Homophobia Scale has an "overall α reliability coefficient of $r = .936$, ($p < .01$) and a 1-week test-retest reliability coefficient of $r = .958$ ($p < .01$), computed on 84% of the original sample." (Wright, Adams, & Bernat, 1999, pg. 342). In the current sample, a similar Cronbach's α was observed (α = .93). The Homophobia Scale has established concurrent validity with the Index of Homophobia (IHP; Hudson & Ricketts, 1980), and yielded a significant Pearson correlation ($r = .658$, $p < .01$). This means that the IPH and the Homophobia Scale are both measuring the same construct.

*Masculinity/Femininity*

Participants' femininity levels were measured using the Short Form of the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1974). The Short Form PAQ is a list of 24 bipolar items that uses sex-role stereotypes in order to measure a participant's levels of masculinity and femininity. Items are scored using a 5-point scale. The scale is situated between a stereotypically 'masculine' trait, and a stereotypically 'feminine' trait. The extreme value on the 'feminine' side of the scale receives a score of 4, and the extreme value on the 'masculine' side of the scale receives a score of 0. The choice next to the extreme 'feminine' pole would receive a

score of 3, the center choice would receive a score of 2, and the choice next to the extreme 'masculine' choice would receive a score of 1. Sample items from the Short Form PAQ include "Not at all aggressive.... Very aggressive" and "Feelings not easily hurt... Feelings easily hurt". The Short Form PAQ has 24 items, and possible scores range from 0-96. Higher scores indicate that a person is more stereotypically 'feminine', and lower scores indicate that a person is more stereotypically 'masculine'. The PAQ has a Cronbach's α = .91 for women on the self-rating of femininity (Spence et al., 1974). The PAQ had a low reliability coefficient in the current sample with a Cronbach's α of .605.

*Hostile Sexism*

Hostile sexism was measured using the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996). The ASI is a list of 22 statements that assess a participant's hostile and benevolent sexism levels. Items are scored using a 6-point Likert scale where (0)=Disagree strongly, (1)=Disagree somewhat, (2)=Disagree slightly, (3)=Agree slightly, (4)=Agree somewhat, and (5)=Agree strongly. A sample item from the hostile sexism subscale of the ASI includes, "Women are too easily offended." The hostile sexism subscale of the ASI has 11 items, and possible scores range from 0-55. Lower scores indicate the participant holds fewer sexist beliefs, while higher scores indicate that the participant holds more sexist beliefs. The ASI has significant α reliability coefficients across 6 studies, with the average of the studies being ($\alpha$ = .87) (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The ASI has a similarly high reliability coefficient in the current sample (α = .92). The ASI has a moderately strong correlation with the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS; Spence & Helmreich, 1972), where ($r$ = .63, $p$ < .01). This concurrent validity between the AWS and the ASI means that the scale is a valid measure of sexism.

*Religious Fundamentalism*

Religious fundamentalism was measured using the Revised 12-Item Religious Fundamentalism Scale (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004). This scale is a list of 12 statements that assesses a participant's levels of religious fundamentalism. Items are scored using an 9-point Likert scale where (-4)=Very strongly disagree, (-3)=Strongly disagree, (-2)=Moderately disagree, (-1)=Slightly disagree, (0)=Neutral, (1)=Slightly agree, (2)=Moderately agree, (3)=Strongly agree, and (4)=Very strongly agree. A sample item from this scale is "God has given humanity a complete, unfailing guide to happiness and salvation, which must be totally followed." Scores on the12-Item Religious Fundamentalism Scale range from –48 to 48. Lower scores indicate that the participant is less fundamentalist in their religious beliefs, while higher scores indicate that the participant is more fundamentalist in their religious beliefs. The Revised 12-Item Religious Fundamentalism Scale has a high Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$ for students (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004), and in the current sample the Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$. This scale also has a high correlation with right-wing authoritarianism ($r = .79$)

*Social Dominance Orientation*

Social dominance orientation was measured using the 16-Item Social Dominance Orientation Scale (SDO; Pratto et al., 1994). This scale is a list of 16 statements that assesses how a participant's feels about different beliefs of social dominance orientation. Items are scored using a 7-point Likert scale where (1)=Very negative, (4)=Neutral, and (7)=Very positive. Sample items from this scale include, "Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups", and "Inferior groups should stay in their place." The 16-Item SDO scale has a score range of 16-112. Lower scores indicate that a participant is has lower adherence to SDO traits, and higher scores indicate that a participant has higher adherence to SDO traits. The 16-Item

SDO scale has a reliability coefficient of (α = .91; Pratto et al., 1994). The sample in the current study had a high reliability coefficient, α = .94.

## Results

*Participant Sociodemographics*

In total 247 participants accessed the study link. Of the participants, 186 identified their gender as female, 59 identified as male, 1 identified as transgender (female to male), and 1 identified as other. Since the current study focused on attitudes of cisgender women, only participants who identified their gender as female were included in the statistical analysis (*N* = 186).

The mean age for women in this study was 20.43 years (*SD* = 3.1). The majority of the women sampled identified as White-not of Hispanic origin (83.9%), followed by American Indian/Alaskan Native (5.4%), Hispanic/Latino(a) (3.2%), Black/African American (2.7%), Biracial/Multiracial (2.7%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (1.6%). One participant declined to answer. The majority of participants identified their sexual orientation as heterosexual (92.5%) with 4.8% as bisexual, 1.6% as lesbian, and 1.1% as other.

*Bivariate Correlations*

Correlations between homophobic attitudes, hostile sexism, religious fundamentalism, social dominance orientation, and masculinity/femininity levels were explored. For the women in this study, homophobia was negatively correlated with hostile sexism $r = -.440$, $p < .001$, religious fundamentalism $r = -.534$, $p < .001$, and social dominance orientation $r- = -.581$, $p < .001$. Homophobia did not have a significant correlation with masculinity/femininity $r = .136$, $p < .069$. Because masculinity/femininity did not correlate significantly with homophobic attitudes, the PAQ was excluded from the regression analysis.

*Regression Analysis*

Based on the significant correlations between the variables, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine which variables (hostile sexism, religious fundamentalism, and social dominance orientation) would predict a participant's level of homophobic attitudes. A significant regression model was found ($F(3, 182) = 67.889$, $p < .001$), with an $R^2$ of .528. The regression analysis revealed that for women that religious fundamentalism, $\beta = -.407$, $t(182) = -7.592$, $p < .001$, and social dominance orientation, $\beta = -.472$, $t(182) = -8.237$, $p < .001$, significantly predicted homophobic attitudes. Hostile sexism was not a significant predictor.

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to assess different predictors of homophobic attitudes in female college students in a socially conservative state. Due to the overall lack of literature investigating females and homophobic attitudes, it is important to investigate these relationships. In the current study, hypothesis one was partially supported. Significant correlations did exist between homophobic attitudes and hostile sexism, religious fundamentalism, and social dominance orientation. However, there was not a significant correlation between femininity and homophobic attitudes.

It was unexpected that an individual's level of adherence to gender norms did not significantly correlate with homophobic attitudes, although previous literature has found that the two variables often have high correlations with each other (Adams, Wright, & Lohr, 1996; Hunt, Fasoli, Carnaghi, & Cadinu, 2016; Olatunji, 2008; Parrott, Adams, & Zeichner, 2002; Parrot & Zeichner, 2005; Parrot & Zeichner, 2007; Theodore & Basow, 2000). Granted, these previous studies mostly examined the relationships between male adherence to gender norms and homophobic attitudes, but it has been suggested that females may follow the same pattern if they

adhere strictly to female gender norms (Whitely, 2001). Due to the dearth of research on relationships between hyperfemininity and homophobia, there remains a critical need for further exploration. Correlations and predictive capability that femininity levels would have with homophobic attitudes are said to typically mirror those of the relationship between hypermasculinity and homophobia (Whitely, 2001). The fact the PAQ was not significantly correlated with other constructs could be due to the cultural norms for which the measure was developed. The PAQ was originally developed by Spence and colleagues in 1974, and since that time a shift in sexual scripts, gender norms and roles, and cultural underpinnings have taken place (for more information see Twenge, 1997). Thus, future research is warranted which utilizes instruments that are reflective of current gender norms within society to determine if hyperfemininity remains important as a potential predictor of homophobic attitudes.

Hypothesis two was also partially supported. Not only was the PAQ not used as a predictor of homophobia for the regression analysis, only social dominance orientation and religious fundamentalism were significant predictors of homophobic attitudes, while hostile sexism was not. The results of this study partially mirror those of previous research. Social dominance orientation and religious fundamentalism were related to homophobic attitudes, which is a common occurrence in research (Jonathan, 2008; Laythe, Finkel, & Kirkpatrick, 2001; Laythe, Finkel, Bringle, & Kirkpatrick, 2002; Pratto et al., 2000; Sibley, Robertson, & Wilson, 2006; Stones, 2006; Whitley, 1999). Despite previous literature stating that hostile sexism often correlates with homophobic attitudes (Davies, 2004; Sakalli, 2002, Whitley, 2001), hostile sexism was not a significant predictor of homophobic attitudes in the current study.

Based on previous studies, it is unsurprising that the results of the current study showed that religious fundamentalism was a significant predictor of homophobic attitudes. With many

religion—particularly Christian religions—in the United States, being intolerant to homosexuality within their doctrines (Duck & Hunsberger, 1999; Greenberg & Bystryn, 1982), it is almost expected that this is the case. If an individual believes that their religious texts are to be followed precisely as they are written, then individuals who are higher in religious fundamentalist beliefs would also be more prone to express homophobic attitudes and behaviors (Schwartz & Lindley, 2005). However, just because there is a possible explanation for the relationship does not mean it is not problematic, or directly related to the development of homophobic attitudes. There is a high likelihood that individuals who firmly believe that their religion is the ultimate truth could be more prejudiced and discriminatory towards people who fall into areas outside of their beliefs system (Kirkpatrick, 1993). Since sexual minority group members are categorized as an out-group, deviating from perceived social norms, to most religious fundamentalists, this increases the chances that sexual minority individuals could be victims of discrimination.

It was also found that SDO is a significant predictor of homophobic attitudes. This, too, was to be expected, and can be explained through the dominant, heterosexist attitudes upheld by American society (Herek, 1995). If a heterosexual person scores high in SDO, the beliefs that their in-group, conforming with perceived societal norms, should dominate society will be reflected in their beliefs—conscious or unconscious—that homosexual individuals need to be lower than them in the societal hierarchy, and it is possible that they express homophobic beliefs in order to contribute to this internalized ideology (Pratto et al., 1994). This is problematic for sexual minority group members, and the relationship between SDO and homophobic attitudes should be examined more in future research, particularly in how it affects discrimination towards non-heterosexual individuals.

*Limitations*

There were several limitations in this study. The most significant limitation was that the measure chosen to analyze femininity was unreliable for the current study and thus this may have impacted the correlation with other constructs measured. The PAQ is over 50 years old, and relies heavily on sex-role stereotypes to generate scores of masculinity and femininity. While it is possible that the specific stereotypes used in the PAQ still exist, it is also likely that shifts in acceptable gender norms across time have effected how we see men and women today. It is also possible that the measure would have still been accurate for men since masculinity is a much more rigid construct than femininity is (O'Neil, 1981), but future studies are required to evaluate these relationships. In order to improve future studies on how adherence to gender roles and norms affects attitudes of homophobia, it is suggested that a more current measure of masculinity/femininity be implemented to assess an individual's personal gender role adherence.

The ASI proved to be an insignificant predictor of homophobic attitudes. This could have occurred for several reasons. One is that the hostile sexism subscale of the ASI measures sexist attitudes towards women. In an all-female sample, it is likely that this particular method of measuring hostile sexism was not the appropriate measure to use. Had the study analyzed male attitudes as well as females, the results may have shown that hostile sexism in males might have predicted homophobic attitudes better than it would in females. Another reason that the ASI may not have worked for the current study is because it does not really measure hostile sexism attitudes directed at males. If a scale such as this had been implemented, the results may have changed to where female scores of hostile sexism towards males did predict homophobic attitudes. The ASI relies heavily on gender stereotypes, much like the PAQ. Since femininity is typically regarded as more flexible than masculinity (Levy, Taylor, & Gelman, 1995; O'Neil,

1981), it is likely that future studies would still show that hostile sexism is a better predictor of males' attitudes of homophobia than it would be for females. However, future research will need to investigate the relationships between these variables.

It was originally hypothesized that the study being conducted in a more socially conservative state would affect the overall levels of homophobic attitudes to be higher than what they were. It is important to note that our sample consisted of college students, so it is possible that the sample surveyed may have been more liberal overall than a non-convenience, non-university sample may have been. While the current study found that SDO and religious fundamentalism were significant predictors of homophobia, this effect may be even larger within a different population of individuals. Research has found that in university settings and individual's SDO levels may decrease from times before they were in college because university environments are ones that, in general, environments that work towards equality between groups and reject social forms of inequality (Sinclair, Sidanius, & Levin, 1998). Psychology students tend to express lower levels of SDO than many other college majors because the field is a hierarchy-attenuating environment (Guimond, Dambrun, Michnov, & Duarte, 2003). Future studies should gather samples of participants from a wider age range in order to better generalize the results of the current study.

A final limitation was that the current study cannot determine causation. There is no causal evidence to suggest these variables lead to the development of homophobia. To assess potential causal pathways, experimental studies are necessary to investigate how proximal determinants of homophobic attitudes could possibly affect willingness to discriminate against non-heterosexual individuals. Ultimately, this line of research is essential for the development of

public health and social programming to advance the health and well-being of sexual minority individuals residing in socially conservative areas.

Although the current study has some clear limitations, there is still value in the results. Findings add to the nascent literature on women's attitudes of homophobia, which still remains an area in need of more research. Findings also provide insight into how proximal determinants affect an individuals' attitudes of prejudice and acts of discrimination. Eliminating prejudice and discrimination against non-heterosexual individuals remains a challenge, but with more empirical data and knowledge, could inform program development and interventions. Continued research is thus necessary to be able to better understand which factors make someone more likely to express their prejudice towards minority groups which remain underserved and under researched.

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