Prejudice and Intergroup Relations

Abstract Identity can be categorised at both individual and group levels. It is possible to emphasise one's individuality in some contexts and one's group membership in others. The very existence of social groups creates the risk of prejudice. First, the term 'homophobia' is defined. Second, the causal mechanisms of prejudice are discussed through the lens of significant theories from social psychology. Third, key themes from social psychological research into anti-gay prejudice are outlined. Fourth, intergroup prejudice *within* the gay community is explored. In this chapter, it is argued that prejudice takes multiple forms, is pervasive, and must be challenged.

Keywords Social identity · Prejudice · Homophobia

Homophobia: A Key Concern for the Social Psychology of Gay Men

Much research into the social psychology of gay men has focused on understanding the development of homophobia and, crucially, how it can be reduced. It is useful to begin with an overview of the term 'homophobia', which is common in both academic research and everyday language. The psychologist George Weinberg originally coined the term 'homophobia' in the early 1970s to refer to heterosexual people's 'dread

of being in close quarters with homosexuals' (Weinberg, 1972, p. 4). This publication represented a significant milestone at the time, since it constructed hostility towards gay men as an irrational *fear*, rather than as a rational response to moral turpitude, which of course was a pervasive social representation at the time (see Chapter 1). The term 'homophobia' served to shift the focus from gay people (as alleged perpetrators of immorality) to homophobes who harbour an irrational fear of gay people and, thus, express prejudice against them.

Although the term facilitated a shift in social representations of homosexuality, its accuracy in capturing the nature of prejudice against gay men has been the subject of debate. It must be noted that not everyone who manifests hostility towards gay men is necessarily fearful of gay men or of being 'in close quarters' with them. Several studies indicate that other negative affective responses, such as anger and disgust, rather than fear, characterise responses to gay men (e.g. Kiebel, McFadden, & Herbstrith, 2017).

Furthermore, the term 'homophobia' evokes connotations of psychopathology in the individual who is hostile towards gay men. In some cases, this is warranted—some perpetrators of brutality and hate crimes against gay men suffer from psychopathologies, such as psychopathy and paranoia. However, this is not true of all anti-gay people. Many express hostility towards gay men because of social identity processes and the psychological differentiation between 'us' (heterosexual people) and 'them' (gay people)—accordingly, they may perceive gay men as a threatening outgroup which challenges their group's norms, values or even existence.

The term also locates the roots of the problem in the individual, rather than acknowledging the broader social context (comprising distinct social group memberships) in which the hostile individual resides. Indeed, an individual socialised in a context characterised by anti-gay social representations that construct gay men as immoral, diseased or pathological is likely to accept, internalise and reproduce these social representations in both thought and action. The individual does not necessarily experience fear, disgust or anger in relation to gay men but believes that homosexuality is wrong and views this belief as 'common sense' due to coercive social representations. In this chapter, the psychological term 'prejudice' is used to refer to negative attitudes towards gay men.

Causal Mechanisms of Prejudice

Social psychologists have a long-standing interest in the causal mechanisms of prejudice and several theories have been proposed to explain why, and under which conditions, people manifest prejudice against outgroups. In this section, the authoritarian personality, social identity theory and intergroup threat theory are considered in relation to prejudice towards gay men.

Authoritarian Personality Theory

Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford (1950) postulated that particular personality traits predispose individuals to endorse totalitarian, authoritarian ideas, which in turn increase the risk of manifesting prejudice towards others. The F-scale (F for fascism) was developed in order to identify the authoritarian personality type, which predisposes the individual to prejudice. Using case studies of prejudice, psychometric testing and clinical interviews exploring the backgrounds and experiences of people expressing prejudice towards others, they concluded that individuals with an authoritarian personality tend to be steadfast in their beliefs, opinions and worldview; to endorse conventional, conservative and traditional values instilled in them since childhood; and to express hostility towards other people perceived to be of lower social status but obedience towards those of higher status.

Adorno and his colleagues indicated that people with an authoritarian personality were more likely to have had a strict upbringing by critical and coercive parents who instilled traditional and conservative values in them, often chastising any deviation from these values. Children unable to reason with their parents proceed to harbour hostility towards them but feel unable to express the resulting anger and hostility towards them due to their coercive upbringing and social disapproval of challenging one's parents. Therefore, they are likely to displace this internalised aggression onto 'safer', or simply weaker, targets, such as individuals from minority groups. As a less powerful, socially stigmatised group, gay men may face the internalised aggression of those with an authoritarian personality type.

It is easy to see why people with an authoritarian personality are more likely to manifest prejudice towards gay men (Smith, 1971).

They are inclined to safeguard conventional values which are perceived to be undermined by gay men who disengage from heteronormativity. Gay men may be perceived as possessing lower social status to heterosexual people. Those in authority (e.g. religious leaders, right-wing politicians) may advocate anti-gay social representations, which are then uncritically accepted by individuals with an authoritarian personality. Indeed, right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation have proven to be two of the strongest predictors of prejudice towards gay people (Whitley & Lee, 2000). This theory shows how personality traits (at an individual level) have implications for intergroup behaviour.

Social Identity Theory

In attempting to elucidate the origins and mechanisms of discrimination and ingroup favouritism, Tajfel developed social identity theory, which was outlined in Chapter 3. Social identity theory has since become one of the most important theories of intergroup relations in social psychology. In Chapter 3, the processes of social categorisation and social comparison were outlined. First, the individual positions himself in relation to particular social categories (e.g. gay vs straight) and then comparisons are made between the categories, which essentially imbue it with meaning and value. The consequences of these key processes in social identity may be ingroup favouritism and outgroup derogation.

Ingroup favouritism occurs as a result of the psychological motivation to derive positive distinctiveness from outgroups and self-esteem from membership in one's social group. Given that social identity arises when the individual's sense of identity is derived principally on the basis of membership in a particular group, that group membership becomes the principal source of distinctiveness and self-esteem. In other words, it is important that one's own group is sufficiently different from other groups, that it possesses high social status, and that individuals can feel good about themselves on the basis of membership in that group. One may favour one's own group by evaluating the ingroup positively and outgroups negatively, and by allocating resources in a way that is beneficial to the ingroup and less so to outgroups. Ingroup favouritism becomes more pronounced in the presence of a threat to self-esteem—that is, group members may express prejudice in a protective manner (Crocker, Thompson, McGraw, & Ingerman, 1987).

The downward comparison principle in social identity theory is an important means of deriving self-esteem through intergroup behaviour. The principle posits that group members may compare their ingroup with outgroups perceived to worse off than their own group. For instance, some gay men compare themselves with other gay men of a larger build, which correlates positively with both 'anti-fat' attitudes and better self-appearance evaluation (O'Brien et al., 2009). Conversely, upward comparisons—that is, with groups that are perceived to be better off than one's own—is associated with lower self-esteem, although this process can sometimes spur the ingroup to undertake proactive steps to improve its position. In Chapter 7, the case of 'bugchasing', which refers to the desire to become infected with HIV, is described. One of the reasons for engaging in this stigmatised behaviour is the desire to derive a sense of community which is perceived to be present among HIV-positive gay men but lacking among HIV-negative gay men. In short, from the perspective of the HIV-negative 'bugchaser', the HIV-positive outgroup is regarded as superior to the ingroup.

Intergroup Threat Theory

Intergroup Threat Theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000) provides a useful theoretical framework for describing and examining the nature of threats which can be represented and perceived as being posed by outgroups. The theory adopts a social-psychological approach to threat which argues that, whether or not threats have any basis in reality, the perception of threat in and of itself has consequences at both the psychological and intergroup levels.

The theory posits that there are two basic types of threat, both of which revolve around potential harm that an outgroup (e.g. gay men) could inflict on the ingroup, namely realistic and symbolic threats.

- *Realistic threats* are posed by factors which could cause the ingroup physical harm or loss of resources, and can also be represented as individual-level threats causing potential physical or material harm to individual group members as a result of their membership. For instance, there is a long-standing homophobic social representation that gay men are sexual predators who seduce young, unsuspecting boys into homosexuality. This social representation is perhaps most evident in the 1961 short social guidance propaganda film *Boys*

Beware (Davis, 1961) which constructs gay men as posing both psychological and physical threats to young boys.

- *Symbolic threats* represent threats to the meaning system(s) of the ingroup, such as challenges to valued ingroup norms and values, and at the individual level of analysis may be associated with loss of face, challenges to self-identity and potential threats to self-esteem. For instance, there is a social representation that gay men attempt to undermine 'traditional family values' and that they endorse attitudes and behaviours that are inconsistent with such values.

In their discussion of intergroup threat theory in the context of Islamophobic prejudice, Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010, p. 290) have argued that some groups can be positioned 'in such a way that they represent a hybridised kind of threat, that combines both realistic (e.g. physical well-being) and symbolic (e.g. cultural) threats to the dominant ethno-national ingroup'. Groups that are positioned as posing a hybridised threat are deemed to be particularly threatening, which can invite hostile responses from perceivers.

In some contexts, gay men are perceived to pose only symbolic threats (e.g. by rejecting heterosexual norms and values) while, in others, they may be regarded as posing realistic threats (e.g. by seeking to 'lure' unsuspecting young men into homosexuality). Yet, in some societies and social groups, gay men may be perceived as posing *hybridised threats* to heterosexual people by undermining their norms, values and worldview and by seeking to reduce the number of heterosexual people in the world. In such societies, gay men face significant prejudice (Jaspal, 2014b). In response to such threats, individuals may avoid contact with gay men, attempt to isolate and marginalise them, remove them from positions of influence or power, abuse them verbally, attack them physically, or even attempt to annihilate them.

GAY MEN AS TARGETS OF PREJUDICE

It is generally accepted that socio-economic factors, such as male gender, higher age, lower educational attainment, low socio-economic status, and religiosity all predict prejudice against gay men. For instance, in their study of attitudes towards pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV prevention, Jaspal, Lopes, and Maatouk (2019) found that attitudes towards gay men mediated the relationship between 'big' social identity

characteristics (namely, gender, ethnicity and religion) and attitudes towards PrEP. More specifically, being female, of White British ethnicity, and having no religion was all associated with more positive attitudes towards gay men. More generally, these 'big' social identity characteristics are known predictors of other forms of prejudice, such as antisemitism (Jaspal, 2014a). Yet, the theories presented in the previous section provide insight into other social psychological factors that lead people to engage in prejudice towards gay men. In this section, some research evidence is provided to shed light on the reasons why gay men might become targets of prejudice.

As discussed in Chapter 4, friendships between gay men and heterosexual men are relatively uncommon and, in some cases, heterosexual men may express hostility towards gay men. Indeed, in their experimental study, Talley and Bettencourt (2008) found that, regardless of their level of anti-gay prejudice, participants were more likely to distance themselves psychologically from other gay men than from heterosexual men. A potential reason for this is that heterosexual men are fearful of being labelled as gay due to the pervasive stigma of homosexuality in society. Consistent with social identity theory, this may partly be attributed to the desire for self-esteem, which may lead heterosexual men to reduce the risk of being miscategorised as gay—a stigmatised social category unlikely to provide feelings of self-esteem.

Concerns about masculinity appear to be a central feature of anti-gay prejudice in heterosexual men. Gay men are often perceived as challenging, or even violating, both traditional gender norms and traditional conceptions of appropriate sexuality, namely heterosexuality. These 'violations' may be construed as a symbolic threat, leading to the expression of anti-gay prejudice (Lehavot & Lambert, 2007). Similarly, Hirai, Winkel, and Popan (2014) found that machismo, which was prevalent in male respondents, was associated with more negative attitudes towards gay men. In an experimental study, when heterosexual male participants perceived their masculinity to be challenged, they manifested more aggression towards the gay male target—regardless of their level of anti-gay prejudice (Talley & Bettencourt, 2008). In another study, Parrott (2009) found that anti-femininity (the belief that men should refrain from engaging in stereotypical feminine behaviours) was associated with both anger in response to sexual intimacy between two men and aggression towards gay men, and that this relationship was mediated by gender

role stress, that is, stress experienced in relation to situations that challenge traditional gender norms.

In contrast to this research into intergroup differences, there is evidence that repressed homosexual arousal may actually underpin homophobia. In a fascinating experimental study, Adams, Wright, and Lohr (1996) asked a sample of self-identified heterosexual men to complete a measure of homophobia and exposed them to explicit erotic stimuli depicting heterosexual, homosexual male and lesbian videotapes. Using penile plethysmography to provide a physiological measure of sexual arousal, they found that, while both homophobic and non-homophobic men were aroused by heterosexual and lesbian videos, only men in the homophobic group were aroused by the male homosexual video. This suggests that homophobia is associated with either suppressed or actively denied homosexual arousal. By engaging in prejudice towards gay men, men with a homosexual orientation may be trying to distance themselves psychologically and socially (i.e. in the eyes of others) from gay men. They may be trying to seek solace in self-categorisation (and categorisation by other people) in a high status social group with the promise of self-esteem—namely the heterosexual group.

Prejudice towards gay men has also been discussed in terms of psychopathology, which echoes the content of earlier writings that led to the term 'homophobia'. In an experimental study with male heterosexual participants, Parrott and Zeichner (2006) found that psychopathy significantly predicted aggression against the gay, but not the heterosexual, male fictitious opponent in a competitive reaction time task. Anger as an affective response to homosexuality did not appear to underlie this association but rather psychopathy was said to be a trait that predisposes individuals to engage in aggression against less powerful, stigmatised social groups, such as gay men. It is unlikely that psychopathology alone is a sufficient explanation for prejudice towards gay men. However, it is possible that, in the presence of social psychological factors (e.g. perceived threat), people with psychopathology will be at greater risk of perpetrating prejudice.

As indicated in the previous section, authoritarianism (and, more specifically, right-wing authoritarianism) has been associated with the prejudice towards gay men. In two studies, Hoyt, Morgenroth, and Burnette (2019) found that heterosexual people with conservative political attitudes (a potential indicator of authoritarianism) held the social representation that gay and heterosexual people were fundamentally

different from one another, on the one hand, and rejected the social representation that sexual orientation is a fixed, immutable human characteristic, on the other hand. In an experimental study, Bahns and Crandall (2013) examined the relationship between social dominance orientation, which refers to the extent to which the individual endorses group-based hierarchies in society, and anti-gay prejudice. Social dominance orientation can be considered a component of right-wing authoritarianism. The researchers found that those who scored high on social dominance orientation expressed more hostility towards gay men when they were perceived to be gaining social status. The level of prejudice decreased significantly when gay men were perceived to have low status. This clearly demonstrates the important role of social context and, especially that of social identity, in explaining the incidence of anti-gay prejudice.

Perceived symbolic, realistic and, especially, hybridised threats to the ingroup can increase the risk of outgroup prejudice. In an interesting study of the impact of labels on attitudes towards sexual minorities, Rios (2013) showed that the label 'homosexual' evoked more prejudice than the label 'gay' in individuals who scored high on right-wing authoritarianism. This effect was attributed to the connotations of deviance evoked by the term 'homosexual' (versus 'gay'), which might pose a symbolic threat to heterosexual values. The term 'homosexual' may connote sexual behaviour more than identity and lifestyle—in part because of the morpheme 'sexual'—and it of course originates from an era in which same-sex desire was appended especially negative social representations. Furthermore, there is some evidence that outgroup members, such as gay men, are evaluated more negatively when they are perceived to be associated with one's ingroup (Lupo & Zarate, 2019). This could be attributed to the increased sense of threat of outgroup infiltration within the ingroup which could undermine the values of the ingroup, for instance.

It appears that low intergroup contact (between heterosexual and gay people) leads to an increased risk of prejudice towards outgroups. MacInnis, Page-Gould, and Hodson (2017) found that individuals who reported first-hand contact with gay men *and* those living in areas with greater contact with gay men expressed less prejudice towards this population. In their analysis of representative Eurobarometer data from 28 European Union Member States, Gorska, van Zomeren, and Bilewicz (2017) found that, in countries with legislation that is favourable

towards sexual minorities, public attitudes towards sexual minorities were more positive. This relationship was mediated by greater prevalence of intergroup contact between heterosexual and gay people.

GAY MEN AS PERPETRATORS OF PREJUDICE

Unfortunately, prejudice is pervasive in society—not only in majority groups but also in minority groups. As observable in both case studies presented in Chapter 1, prejudice can be based on many different factors. To the outside observer, the gay scene may seem a cohesive social context in which a superordinate gay identity exists which overshadows all other identity elements and group memberships. However, pervasive narratives of division, exclusion and loneliness on the gay scene are testimony to the group-based prejudice prevalent on the gay scene (Hobbes, 2017). In this section, the examples of gay racism, HIV stigma and anti-femininity are discussed to illustrate how intergroup relations and prejudice function at an *intragroup* level, that is, within the gay community. Put simply, the 'gay community' is in fact characterised by division and prejudice on the basis of various characteristics.

Gay Racism

There have been some media reports of racism on the (predominantly White) gay scene in Western countries, including the US and the UK. A BBC news article (Buttoo, 2010) highlighted British South Asian gay men's concerns about racism on the gay scene. Interviewees reported being refused service at bars or entry in clubs, as well as overt racism from White gay men, which led some to avoid the gay scene. Moreover, there was a feature on racism on the gay scene in *FS Magazine*, a gay men's health magazine, in which ethnic minority gay men described their multifarious experiences of racism and the impact it had on their wellbeing (Haggas, 2015; Jaspal, 2016).

Goode-Cross and Tager (2011) examined the experiences of young African American gay men who attended a predominantly White educational institution. Participants reportedly perceived their racial identity to be more salient than their sexual identity in on the gay scene, which they believed to constitute a barrier to fitting in. Ethnic minority gay men may feel 'hyper-visible' on the basis of their ethnicity/religion and, thus, feel unable to derive feelings of acceptance and inclusion on the gay

scene. They may anticipate and experience rejection on the basis of their minority identity.

In another study in the US, Battle, Cohen, Warren, Fergerson, and Audam (2002) conducted a large survey of African American gay men, in which they found that half of the respondents perceived racism as a problem in their relations with White people and that a third of respondents themselves reported negative intergroup experiences on the gay scene. Similarly, Brown (2008) has found that African American gay men generally feel that they are more likely to gain some acceptance and inclusion on the gay scene when they 'mute' or conceal their Blackness or when their Blackness is of *sexual* interest. Indeed, Teunis (2007) found that African American gay men felt sexually objectified, which made them feel obliged to perform particular roles in sexual encounters (e.g. being sexually 'top', sexually aggressive) that were not necessarily of their own choosing but rather due to the social representations held by their White partners.

Han et al. (2015) found that 65% of the 1996 African American, Asian/Pacific Islander and Latino gay men they surveyed reported feelings stressed as a consequence of racism experienced in the gay community, and that both stress from racism and avoidant coping with this stress was associated with engagement in sexual risk behaviour. Research conducted in the US suggests that Latino gay men with a darker complexion, more indigenous physical features, a greater period of time in the US and lower self-esteem reported greater levels of gay racism (Ibañez, van Oss Marin, Flores, Millet, & Diaz, 2009).

In their study of gay Arab and South Asian Muslim men in the US, Minwalla, Rosser, Feldman, and Varga (2005) observed that 'race' played an important role in the social dynamics in White gay culture, which could result in feelings of exclusion among non-White men. Moreover, Bassi (2008) writes that 'on the predominantly white commercial gay scene, gay and bisexual British Asians feel and carry the burden of racialization via the visible marker of their skin colour' (pp. 216–217). In his qualitative interview study of British South Asian gay men, Jaspal (2017) found that interviewees felt marginalised on the gay scene due to their ethnicity, identified subtle ways in which they were rejected by White gay men, and described the adverse psychological impact of multiple forms of rejection (i.e. racism, homophobia) associated with important social identities.

Given the stigma of overt prejudice, people may seek subtler ways of expressing it. Language is key. Riggs (2013) conducted an interesting study of the rhetorical dimension of racism (against Asian gay men) expressed by White Australian gay male users of the gay dating website Gaydar. He found that anti-Asian racism was rationalised in terms of a 'personal preference', through the construction of Asian men as less masculine, through the depiction of Asian men as a 'type' in the way that any other physical characteristic might constitute a type, and by apologising for not seeking Asian gay men. This study demonstrates that, like anti-gay prejudice, other forms of prejudice *within the gay community* (such as gay racism) are rationalised, justified and presented as acceptable through the use of similar rhetorical strategies. Yet, there is evidence that gay racism, which is often presented as 'personal preference' or 'sexual preference' and thus *not* racist, actually shares the same correlates of generic racism, demonstrating that both forms of racism have the same psychological underpinnings and are probably less delineable than gay men claim them to be (Callandar, Newman, & Holt, 2015).

HIV Stigma

HIV carries social stigma due partly to its public association with taboo issues, such as sexual promiscuity, sex work and drug use, and the beliefs that HIV is synonymous with AIDS and invariably life-limiting (see Chapter 8). Furthermore, for gay men living with HIV, their sexual orientation may represent an additional layer of stigma.

Gay men living with HIV may fear that they will be judged or mistreated if they disclose their HIV status to others, rendering them targets for discrimination and depriving them of the social support often needed to cope effectively with an HIV diagnosis. Given the negative stereotypes frequently appended to HIV-positive people concerning 'promiscuity' and 'abnormal' sexual behaviour, individuals living with HIV may come to feel marginalised from society. While some people are overtly discriminated and judged for being HIV-positive, others may feel that they are pitied and that their future prospects are overshadowed by widespread perceptions of sickness and mortality. Moreover, fear, which often results from the silencing of HIV, constitutes a component of HIV stigma. Some people associate HIV with contagion and believe that even casual interpersonal contact with HIV-positive individuals will put them at risk of infection.

HIV stigma in the gay community has led to intergroup divisions (Smit et al., 2012). For instance, men living with HIV may be positioned as being less socially and sexually desirable due to their positive serostatus. Fear of infection is a concern in the gay community. Individuals may be judged as having ignored the prevalent norm of condom use. There has also been a discussion of the notion of 'slut shaming' in the gay community which refers to the moral denigration of individuals due to their perceived or actual sexual behaviours (McDavitt & Mutchler, 2014). HIV may also be 'weaponised' in that it may be used as a means of controlling, coercing or even silencing the infected individual. For instance, others may involuntarily disclose an individual's HIV status in order to undermine, discredit or punish him.

It is easy to see how one's sense of self-esteem can be adversely impacted by HIV stigma. Stigma can be experienced, anticipated and/ or internalised. Greater levels of stigma are associated with poor mental health, including depression (Emlet, 2007). HIV-related shame, a by-product of stigma, is a significant predictor of reduced health-related quality of life among patients (Persons, Kershaw, Sikkema, & Hansen, 2010). Consequently, many gay men living with HIV seek to derive social support from other gay men living with HIV. This can provide respite from threats to self-esteem that stem from social stigma. The informal support group for people living with HIV can become a powerful group membership and even a social identity. Social identity built around HIV status can lead some individuals to avoid romantic partners or even friends of a different serostatus. They may anticipate stigma and prejudice from HIV-negative gay men. In other words, HIV status becomes a basis for social categorisation and social comparison, and social representations begin to emerge in order to characterise 'them' versus 'us'.

Anti-femininity

In the gay community, gay men may be categorised in terms of their gender expression. Hostility towards feminine characteristics in gay men—from within the gay community—has been described as a form of traditional sexism, which positions masculinity as superior to femininity and which pathologises those who do not express 'adequate' levels of masculinity (e.g. Serrano, 2007).

In a survey of 5000 gay men conducted by Attitude (2017), it was found that 71% of respondents were 'turned off' by a prospective partner

who had characteristics deemed to be feminine, while 29% viewed feminine traits as attractive. The survey revealed that 41% of gay men believe that effeminate men 'give the gay community a bad image or reputation'. Indeed, many of the gay men who participated in Bergling (2001) interview study believed that femininity in gay men was adversely impacting their quest for equal rights and that at gay pride events drag queens and other feminine gay men appeared to constitute the focus of media reporting, creating the impression that gay men are invariably feminine.

In this volume, it has been observed that gender norms are entwined with sexual orientation and sexual identity. Gay men report having manifested gender non-normative behaviours as children and many continue to do so in adulthood. Many are stereotyped by others as being feminine. There is a long-standing negative social representation of femininity in gay men, which is often resisted by gay men who self-categorise as being 'straight acting', that is, 'masculine' in appearance and behaviour (Nardi, 2000). This can include, but is not limited to, body appearance (such as being muscular and tall), clothing fashion, style of speaking (such as tone of voice, choice of language), and even sexual behaviours (being sexually insertive or 'top'). It is noteworthy that some gay men are stigmatised (by other gay men) for being sexually receptive ('bottom') and, thus, more feminine, which is often contrasted with being sexually insertive ('top') and, thus, more masculine (Maatouk & Jaspal, 2020).

It can be argued that self-categorisation as 'straight acting' constitutes a form of internalised homophobia because it suggests that being identifiable as gay (principally through the expression of non-masculine traits) is a negative phenomenon and, thus, one to be avoided. This form of self-categorisation positions heterosexuality (or at least a heterosexual image) as being more socially desirable than homosexuality (or a gay identity). In empirical research, there is an observed relationship between one's perceived masculinity, anti-femininity and internalised homophobia (Murgo, Huynh, Lee, & Chrisler, 2017).

This desire to be perceived as masculine may be related to the stigmatisation of feminine characteristics in male children and adolescents, which, as demonstrated in previous chapters, can result in decreased wellbeing. In empirical research, most gay men do appear to append importance to both their own self-presentation and their partner's self-presentation as masculine, and many aspire to be more masculine, demonstrating the coerciveness of the positive social representation of

masculinity (Sánchez & Vilain, 2012). In her study of gender and sexuality at a high school in California, Pascoe (2007) found that, while being gay was relatively acceptable among boys at the school, contravention of traditional masculinity (such as dancing, being concerned about one's clothing, or being too emotional) invited denigration including the use of demeaning terms such as 'fag'.

Femininity itself remains a source of social stigma—among heterosexual *and* gay men alike. Although gay men generally report showing feminine characteristics in childhood, many 'defeminise' during adolescence which may be attributed to the social stigma appended to femininity in men and the bullying and harassment that often accompanies this at school and college. In adulthood, many gay men attempt to 'pass' as heterosexual in order to avoid stigma in the workplace, for instance, and to gain social capital. Moreover, even on the gay scene, there appears to be a devaluing of femininity, which can lead to increased self-regulation to ensure that one self-presents, and is perceived by others, as being sufficiently masculine.

Indeed, the social representation, frequently internalised by gay men, that femininity is a negative trait can lead to attempts to reject it both in themselves and in potential partners. This is analogous to the case of heterosexual men who fear being miscategorised (or, in some cases, correctly categorised) as homosexual and who, thus, avoid, stigmatise and denigrate other gay men. Those who are categorised as being feminine face social stigma unless their femininity is of sexual interest to their partners. As in the study of gay racism, the internet dating profiles and social networking mobile application profiles of gay men provide important insights into the phenomenon of anti-femininity. Moreover, like gay racism, gay men may frame anti-femininity in terms of romantic or sexual preference. Gay men who perceive themselves, or are perceived by others, to be feminine face threats to their self-esteem as a result of the social stigma that is openly directed at them on online dating profiles and in encounters with other gay men (Baydoun & Vieira de Medeiros, 2017).

Overview

The social psychological underpinnings of prejudice are complex. Some explanations in social psychology have focused on personality, while others take the social group as the key starting-point. It is likely that a combination of both personality and social context shape the nature of

intergroup relations and the likelihood of prejudice in any given context. Moreover, the human motivation for distinctiveness and self-esteem appear to be central to intergroup behaviour and, in some cases, the root cause of prejudice. Anti-gay prejudice has understandably been the focus of much social psychological research into gay men's lives—gay men face high levels of prejudice which can have significant implications for their health and wellbeing (see Chapter 8).

Existing research suggests that gay men may become the target of prejudice because of their distinctiveness, the perception that they pose some kind of threat, and because of insecurities located within the anti-gay individual. A relatively under-explored form of prejudice in social psychological studies of gay men's lives is that perpetrated by gay men towards other gay men on the basis of their subgroup memberships. In this chapter, it has been shown that the social psychological roots of gay racism, HIV stigma and anti-femininity, all of which can have profoundly negative implications for those targeted, overlap with those of anti-gay prejudice. The observations in this chapter should spur further research and commentary on the complex dynamics of intergroup relations and prejudice among gay men. It is important to challenge prejudice in all its forms—both in the general population and in the gay community.

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