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## Masculine Threat and Anti-Gay Attitude

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Poster Presentation P7

MASCULINE THREAT AND ANTI-GAY ATTITUDE

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Anti-gay attitude is a large problem in the United States. In order to better understand this problem, we used Claude Steele's model of Self-affirmation to test the idea that threatening a man's masculine self-identity would lead to the expression of anti-gay attitude as a way of reaffirming the self-image.

In a pretest, college undergraduate participants completed a number of measures including the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ), a measure of self-perceived masculinity and femininity. Male participants were then contacted and asked to return for the second part of the study. This part included three conditions, one experimental and two controls. In all conditions, participants were hooked up to physiological recording equipment measuring heart rate, blood pressure, and blood flow through the heart, and a five-minute baseline was recorded. In the experimental condition, the *masculine threat* condition, participants took a 50-question, computerized test ostensibly measuring masculine knowledge that included questions about cars, sports and computers. The questions were administered in two fifty-minute blocks, and in between these blocks the participant saw false feedback on the screen reporting that he had scored below the average for male college students. The first control condition, the *general threat* condition, was identical except that the test was described as an assessment of general knowledge, and the questions were of a more general nature. The second control condition, the *no threat* condition, was exactly like the general threat condition, except the participant received no feedback in between the sets of questions. Physiological data was collected during this time. After the completion of the test, all participants completed a set of questionnaires including measures of attitudes towards gay men, women, Blacks, Arabs, fraternities and sororities, and other groups. It was hypothesized that participants in the threat conditions would report more negative attitudes on all the measures than those in the no threat condition, and that men in the masculine threat condition would report particularly negative attitudes towards gay men, especially if they tested highly on the masculine subscale of the PAQ. The physiological data was included to see if participants in the threat conditions showed the physiological patterns of threat, as validated by Tomaka et al. (1993).