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Masculine Threat, Self-Esteem, and Homophobic Behaviors in College Men

Julie Longo

Illinois Wesleyan University

John Ernst, Faculty Advisor

Illinois Wesleyan University

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Poster Presentation P24

**MASCULINE THREAT, SELF-ESTEEM, AND HOMOPHOBIC
BEHAVIORS IN COLLEGE MEN**

Julie Longo and John Ernst*
Department of Psychology, Illinois Wesleyan University

Threatened masculinity may play a role in homophobic responses in college men. This idea is supported conceptually by Claude Steele's work on self-affirmational processes (1975, 1988, & 1993) and Roy Baumeister's work on self-esteem (1992; Baumeister & Tice, 1985; Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). Empirically, this is consistent with studies showing that masculinity and homophobia are positively correlated. In this study, homophobic or non-homophobic responses to a gay confederate were measured after a masculine threat or no threat manipulation. In the masculine threat condition, participants were given a test that was said to measure masculine knowledge and then received false feedback. The feedback that they received told them that their score was one standard deviation below the mean for college men. The no threat condition involved a general knowledge test in which no feedback of any kind was given. After the manipulation, the gay confederate would come in wearing a gay pride tee shirt and carrying a backpack with gay pride paraphenalia on it. We postulated that the masculine threat participants would have a homophobic response as a way of affirming their masculinity and their self-esteem. This response was measured by a professionalism questionnaire given to all participants. In this questionnaire, the participant was asked to rate the gay confederate ('experimenter') on a number of dimensions. We hypothesized that those who had been in the masculine threat condition would rate the experimenter poorly, thus exhibiting a homophobic response, when compared to the no threat condition. Results will be discussed.