

## University of Southampton Research Repository

Copyright © and Moral Rights for this thesis and, where applicable, any accompanying data are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners. A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge. This thesis and the accompanying data cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder/s. The content of the thesis and accompanying research data (where applicable) must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holder/s.

When referring to this thesis and any accompanying data, full bibliographic details must be given, e.g.

Thesis: Author (Year of Submission) "Full thesis title", University of Southampton, name of the University Faculty or School or Department, PhD Thesis, pagination.

Data: Author (Year) Title. URI [dataset]



**University of Southampton**

Faculty of Environmental and Life Sciences

School of Psychology

**Exploring the Link Between Adolescent Masculinity and Homophobic Aggression**

by

**Ffion Heulwen Davies**

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-4026-8787

Thesis for the degree of Doctorate in Educational Psychology

August 2023



### Abstract

Homophobic-name-calling and aggression in adolescence is linked to the policing of masculinity. Although the definition of masculinity changes as society changes, one thing which has remained constant across time is the need to prove it, often through enactments of homophobia and homophobic aggression. Chapter one outlines the wider societal context, background literature and rationale for this thesis. Chapter two presents the systematic review and meta-analysis which explores the relationship between masculinity and homophobic-name-calling in adolescents. This paper is the first to review this relationship quantitatively, with a meta-analysis revealing a statistically significant relationship between masculinity and homophobic-name-calling. This review sheds light on the role of homophobic-name-calling as a mechanism for enforcing masculinity within friendship groups. Additionally, the narrative synthesis in this review identifies empathy as a potential protective factor against homophobic-name-calling. Chapter three, an empirical study, proposes a new model for understanding masculinity, equating its functioning to that of narcissism, and explores how this leads to homophobic aggression in adolescents. Participants included 226 young people between the ages of 12 and 19 from one United Kingdom (UK) secondary school and this study adopted a quantitative methodology. Multiple linear regression, mediation and moderation analysis led to a final path model which illustrated the mechanisms behind homophobic aggression for the boys in this sample. Findings suggest that empathy plays an important role in the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression. Findings also add weight to the novel theory that masculinity functions in a similar way to narcissism.

*Keywords:* masculinity, homophobia, homophobic-name-calling, narcissism, empathy



**Table of Contents**

Abstract .....3

Table of Contents .....5

Table of Tables .....9

Table of Figures .....11

Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship .....15

Acknowledgements.....17

Definitions and Abbreviations.....19

Exploring the Link Between Adolescent Masculinity and Homophobic Aggression .....21

Chapter 1. Introduction.....23

    Wider Societal Context.....23

    Research Context.....24

    The Current Research .....25

    Axiology and Rationale .....25

    Dissemination Plan .....27

Chapter 2. Adolescent Masculinity and Homophobic-Name-Calling: A Systematic Review  
and Meta-Analysis .....29

    Abstract .....29

    Introduction.....29

        Masculinity.....29

        Masculinity and Homophobia.....30

        Masculinity and Adolescence .....31

        Homophobic-Name-Calling and the Policing of Masculinity.....31

        Research Questions .....32

    Method .....33

        Literature Search .....33

        General Characteristics of Articles Included .....36

        Quality Appraisal.....37

        Meta-Analysis Method .....37

    Results .....38

        Results of Meta-Analysis .....38

        Narrative Synthesis .....38

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Discussion.....   | 43 |
| Strengths and Limitations of Studies Included in the Review.....                    | 45 |
| Strengths and Limitations of the Review .....                                       | 46 |
| Implications for Educational Psychology Practice.....                               | 47 |
| Conclusion .....  | 48 |
| Chapter 3. Exploring the Similarities Between Fragile Masculinity and Narcissism in |    |
| Adolescents’ Homophobic Aggression: A Proposed Model .....                          | 49 |
| Abstract .....  | 49 |
| Introduction .....  | 49 |
| Fragile Masculinity .....   | 49 |
| The Link Between Fragile Masculinity and Narcissism .....                           | 51 |
| The Current Study .....   | 53 |
| Method.....   | 54 |
| Procedure .....   | 54 |
| Participants.....   | 55 |
| Ethics  | 55 |
| Measures.....   | 55 |
| Results.....  | 57 |
| Preliminary Analysis .....  | 57 |
| Correlation Analysis.....   | 59 |
| Regression Analysis: Homophobic Aggression.....                                     | 62 |
| Regression Analysis: Homophobic Attitudes .....                                     | 63 |
| Mediation and Moderation Analysis.....  | 64 |
| Final Model.....  | 69 |
| Discussion.....   | 70 |
| Strengths and Limitations of the Study.....   | 72 |
| Directions for Future Research .....  | 73 |
| Implications for Practice.....  | 74 |
| Appendix A Search Terms.....  | 77 |
| Appendix B Study Characteristics Table .....  | 78 |
| Appendix C Quality Appraisal .....  | 84 |



C.1 Quality Appraisal of Studies Included in the Review .....84

C.2 Quality Appraisal Checklist.....85

Appendix D Hypothesis Table .....87

Appendix E Confirmation of Ethical Approval.....89

Appendix F Parent Information Sheet .....90

Appendix G Parent Opt-Out Consent Form .....92

Appendix H Under 16 Participant Information Sheet and Assent .....93

Appendix I Over 16 Participant Information Sheet and Consent .....96

Appendix J Debrief .....99

Glossary .....101

References.....103



**Table of Tables**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Table 1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria .....   | 35 |
| Table 2 Comparison of Means between Boys and Girls .....   | 58 |
| Table 3 Descriptive Statistics and Pearson’s Correlations Among Variables for Boys.....  | 60 |
| Table 4 Descriptive Statistics and Pearson’s Correlations Among Variables for Girls .....  | 61 |
| Table 5 Multiple Regression Results for Homophobic Aggression in Boys.....   | 62 |
| Table 6 Multiple Regression Results for Homophobic Attitudes in Boys.....  | 64 |
| Table 7 Results of Moderation Analysis: Masculinity Predicting Homophobic aggression with<br>Cognitive and Affective Empathy as Moderators ..... | 67 |
| Table 8 Results of Moderation Analysis: Masculinity Predicting Homophobic Aggression with Self-<br>Esteem as a Moderator.....                    | 68 |
| Table 9 Search Terms.....  | 77 |
| Table 10 Overview of Included Studies and Their Key Characteristics.....   | 78 |
| Table 11 Quality Appraisal Ratings for Studies Included in the Review .....  | 84 |



**Table of Figures**

Figure 1 PRISMA flowchart outlining the final search process, where ‘n’ refers to the number of studies .....34

Figure 2 Forest Plot of the Effect Sizes for Masculinity and Homophobic-Name-Calling.....38

Figure 3 Predictors in the Multiple Regression Model for Homophobic Aggression.....63

Figure 4 Predictors in the Multiple Regression Model for Homophobic Attitudes .....64

Figure 5 Path Model of the Relationships Between Masculinity, Homophobic Attitudes, and Homophobic Aggression .....65

Figure 6 Path Model of the Relationships Between Masculinity, Affective Empathy, and Homophobic Aggression .....66

Figure 7 Path Model of the Relationships Between Masculinity, Cognitive Empathy, Affective Empathy, and Homophobic Aggression.....67

Figure 8 Simple Slopes Graph for the Moderator Affective Empathy on the Relationship Between Masculinity and Homophobic Aggression .....68

Figure 9 Path Model of the Relationships Between Masculinity, Self-Esteem, and Homophobic Aggression.....69

Figure 10 Final Path Analysis Model .....70









**Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship**

Print name: Ffion Heulwen Davies

Title of thesis: Exploring the Link Between Adolescent Masculinity and Homophobic Aggression

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission

Signature: .....

Date: .....



## Acknowledgements

Education has always been my passion and I don't have the space to thank all the people who have helped me along the way, from teachers, lecturers, sports coaches, friends, family, and strangers. I would, however, like to express my gratitude to several people in particular.

Thank you to my supervisors Cora Sargeant and Sarah Wright, for all your support and guidance throughout this journey. Thank you for being as passionate about my thesis as I am, I have learnt so much from both of you. Thank you to all of the staff on the doctorate, the guest speakers, and my placement supervisors for passing on your wisdom and passion for Educational Psychology. A special thank you to Hanna Kovshoff for inspiring me to pursue this career and for your guidance along the way.

To my fellow Trainee Educational Psychologist, thank you for being by my side on this doctorate journey. From sharing in the stress, the successes, and everything in between, this would not have been the amazing experience it has been without each and every one of you. We did it! To my friends outside of the doctorate, thank you for your support and patience while I have been a 'walking-talking-thesis'. To Ross, thank you for always believing in me, comforting me in times of stress, and celebrating every win along the way.

Thank you to my family. To my parents, Aldwyth and Jeff, thank you for always encouraging me and supporting me in achieving my dreams, you are the reason I am where I am today, and I am eternally grateful. To my brother Rhys, thanks for all the laughs and inside jokes, for reading endless CVs, and most of all, for being my role model from day one.

A special mention for my Academic Support Animal, Twiggy, who I adopted a month before I started the course and who has brought so much joy. My unofficial feline co-author for the hours spent by my side while writing this thesis.

Lastly, thank you to the school and young people who participated in my research and made all of this possible, I am so grateful for your time and dedication.



**Definitions and Abbreviations**

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| $\alpha$ ..... | Cronbach’s alpha  |
| AffEmp .....   | Affective empathy   |
| AMES .....     | Adolescent Measure of Empathy and Sympathy                    |
| AMIRS .....    | Adolescent Masculinity Ideology in Relationships Scale        |
| APA.....       | American Psychological Association                            |
| ASI .....      | Ambivalent Sexism Inventory                                   |
| $B$ .....      | Unstandardised beta   |
| $\beta$ .....  | Standardised beta   |
| CI .....       | Confidence interval   |
| CogEmp .....   | Cognitive empathy   |
| $df$ .....     | Degrees of freedom  |
| $f$ .....      | F ratio   |
| H .....        | Hypothesis  |
| HAgg .....     | Homophobic aggression   |
| HAtt .....     | Homophobic attitudes  |
| HCAT .....     | Homophobic Content Agent Target scale                         |
| HNC .....      | Homophobic-name-calling                                       |
| $I^2$ .....    | Percentage of variance statistic                              |
| LGBTQ+ .....   | Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual |
| LL .....       | Lower limit   |
| M .....        | Mean  |
| MAMS .....     | Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity Scale                      |
| MASC .....     | Masculinity   |
| MRAS .....     | Male Role Attitudes Scale                                     |
| $n$ .....      | Number (of cases)   |
| NICE .....     | National Institute for Health and Care Excellence             |
| $p$ .....      | Probability (statistical significance)                        |

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| PRISMA .....   | Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses  |
| PSHE .....     | Personal, Social, and Health Education  |
| $r^2$ .....    | The proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variable(s) in a regression model |
| $r$ .....      | Correlation coefficient   |
| SD .....       | Standard deviation  |
| SE .....       | Standard error  |
| SE B .....     | Standard error for unstandardised beta  |
| SENCO .....    | Special Educational Needs Coordinator   |
| $t$ .....      | T-test statistic  |
| Totalemp ..... | Total empathy   |
| UK .....       | United Kingdom  |
| UL .....       | Upper limit   |
| USA .....      | United States of America  |
| WEIRD .....    | Western, educated, industrialised, rich, and democratic   |
| $\chi^2$ ..... | Chi-square statistic  |

**Exploring the Link Between Adolescent Masculinity and Homophobic Aggression**





## Chapter 1. Introduction

### Wider Societal Context

Toxic masculinity has been used in everyday language and in feminist literature as shorthand for the misogynistic and homophobic speech, views, and behaviours of some men and boys, and has recently become a popular topic for discussion in society, particularly on social media (Harrington, 2021). Despite the dangers associated with toxic masculinity for all, there are certain corners of society which promote it. The first being through the internet subculture of ‘incels’, a community of men who identify as ‘involuntarily celibate’ (Hoffman et al., 2020). This subculture is comprised mostly of young men who operate on internet forums such as Reddit and 4chan, with some forums reaching as many as 40,000 members (Fowler, 2021; Ging, 2019). Due to its online presence, adolescents and young adults may be particularly susceptible to this culture’s promotion of misogyny and toxic masculinity (Conley, 2020). Incels frame their masculinity around extreme misogynistic views, antifeminism, and hatred for women, often blaming women for their failings in life (Ging, 2019). The incel community perceives women as a threat to their masculinity, which, in some cases, has led to incels committing violent crimes (Fowler, 2021; Morris, 2023), particularly against women (Scaptura & Boyle, 2019). Crucially, several murders in the USA and the UK have been attributed to incel culture (Hoffman et al., 2020), including the Plymouth Shooting in 2021 (Morris, 2023)

Toxic masculinity has also been promoted in more mainstream media, particularly via the social media channels of Andrew Tate, who is known for promoting extremely misogynistic and homophobic views to his millions of followers on social media (Das, 2022). His influence appears to have reached adolescent boys in schools across the UK, with anecdotal evidence of teenage boys repeating Tate’s rhetoric in classrooms and displaying concerning misogynistic attitudes and behaviours, which has raised concern among teachers, parents, and even parliament (Weale, 2023). The endorsement of this toxic masculinity, misogyny, and homophobia by problematic role models on social media, highlights the fact that sexism and homophobia are still present and poses a cultural threat in UK schools. Adolescence and early adulthood is a time where attitudes are highly susceptible to change (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989) and adolescent gender norms are particularly influenced by peer groups (Kågesten et al., 2016). If the rhetoric of Tate, incel culture, and toxic masculinity are present within peer groups, this may result in a normalisation of these misogynistic and homophobic attitudes in adolescent boys. Therefore, research is needed to further understand adolescent masculinity and the attitudes and behaviours which coincide with it.

## Research Context

The wider societal context justifies a need for research on adolescent masculinity; this leads to the question, of what shapes gender attitudes and norms in early adolescence. A systematic review of 82 studies found that, globally, characteristic features of adolescent masculinity included, physical strength, toughness, and competitiveness (Kågesten et al., 2016). Interestingly, across cultures, boys and girls believed that boys should not display characteristics associated with femininity, such as expressions of emotion or weakness. This review found that the onset of puberty and the increasing influence of the peer group were crucial in shaping gender attitudes and norms. The gender attitudes of boys between the ages of 10 and 14 years old were particularly influenced by the peer group and boys often felt they had to prove their masculinity through displays of physical toughness and challenges between friends (Kågesten et al., 2016). The review found that boys were often targets of teasing and bullying if they transgressed masculine gender norms. Interestingly, three studies in this review found that gender attitudes became less stereotypical with age, suggesting that the need to conform to strict and stereotypical gender norms may peak in early adolescence.

An interesting finding within this review by Kågesten et al. (2016) was that boys were less likely than girls to challenge gender norms and were more likely than girls to perpetuate gender inequalities. The authors suggest several possibilities as to why boys were less likely to challenge gender norms. Firstly, this may be due to the lack of role models who display less stereotypical masculine norms. Secondly, perhaps as boys receive more gender privilege due to the patriarchal structure of society, boys may also be less motivated to challenge gender inequalities as this would result in loss of status and power associated with their gender (Kågesten et al., 2016). Thirdly, boys may be less likely to challenge gender norms due to the social stigma and ridicule they receive from peers when transgressing stereotypical masculine norms.

The review by Kågesten et al. (2016), also found that in the UK and United States of America (USA), adolescent masculinity was also closely linked with homophobic attitudes. Indeed, boys who did not conform to masculine norms or acted in ways stereotypically viewed as feminine, such as showing emotional weakness, were often met with homophobic insults from their peers. Homophobic bullying has been found to be common in schools, particularly between boys. A review by Moyano and Sánchez-Fuentes (2020) investigated homophobic bullying in schools across 90 studies. The review looked at prevalence of homophobic bullying and found that up to 50% of sexually diverse young people in the studies had been victims of homophobic bullying. The most frequent type of bullying was homophobic-name-calling. Although this review did not explore masculinity specifically, it did find that boys were more likely to be both victims

and perpetrators of homophobic bullying compared to girls. The authors suggested this may be because boys held more homophobic attitudes than girls.

### **The Current Research**

Homophobic-name-calling (HNC) is used by boys more frequently than girls, and research suggests that boys are also more often the targets of HNC compared to girls (Moyano and Sánchez-Fuentes, 2020). Masculinity therefore appears to be an important factor in HNC. Indeed, adolescent masculinity has been found to be linked to homophobia, and boys who transgress stereotypical masculine norms are often the targets of homophobic ridicule (Kågesten et al., 2016). Therefore, the aim of chapter two was to further explore the relationship between masculinity and HNC in adolescents. To address this aim, a systematic review and meta-analysis of the quantitative literature was conducted. Much of the literature which investigates this relationship is ethnographic or qualitative in nature, therefore this is the first quantitative literature review using a meta-analysis. A meta-analysis was chosen to pool effect sizes from the limited quantitative field studies in order to find the overall effect size of the relationship between masculinity and HNC in adolescents. Finding the overall effect size across studies is important to understand the strength of the relationship between these constructs. A narrative synthesis was included to enable a more nuanced synthesis of common factors related to the relationship between masculinity and HNC across the studies in the meta-analysis.

Chapter three proposes a new model of how masculinity leads to homophobic aggression in adolescents and how this relationship functions in a similar way to narcissism and bullying. A regression analysis was chosen over correlation as this enabled me to identify causality. Furthermore, moderation and mediation allowed me to explore interacting factors within the relationship and to build a theoretically driven path model. This study was novel in making the link to narcissism and offers a new and unique perspective to our understanding of masculinity and homophobic aggression in adolescents.

### **Axiology and Rationale**

I adopted a social constructivist epistemology for both research papers in this thesis. Social constructivism is the understanding that scientific knowledge is created and understood through the unique lens of the researcher (Detel, 2001). I acknowledge that my beliefs and prior knowledge will impact the interpretation of the research.

My own beliefs, values, and experiences influenced my motivation and ultimate decision to select this topic for my thesis. Having attended school in the early 2000s, the implications of Section 28 were still felt by teachers and schools in the UK. The Local Government Act (1988), which has become known as 'Section 28' in common parlance, was an act passed by parliament

under Margaret Thatcher, which prohibited teachers from discussing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+) relationships or depicting them in a positive way. The act was repealed in England in 2003. However, a report by the organisation Stonewall found that, even in 2014, 11 years after the act had been revoked, 37% of primary school teachers still did not know if they were allowed to talk about LGBTQ+ issues (Guasp et al., 2014). The same report found that in 70% of primary schools, teachers had heard students use language such as “that’s so gay” (Guasp et al., 2014). Indeed, this was my experience of school. I remember hearing boys at my school use the word ‘gay’ synonymously with ‘lame’ or ‘bad’. I also remember boys calling other boys ‘gay’ (and more offensive terms) if they were engaging with something typically associated with girls, such as wearing pink or liking particular music or TV shows. In contrast, if girls expressed interests typically associated with boys they were called ‘tomboys’, which makes no reference to their sexual orientation. In retrospect, what interested me most, was that I only heard boys using HNC and homophobic language and it was always directed at other boys. This was the first motivation to choose this topic, to explore why it was boys specifically who used this language and whether this still happened in schools even 20 years after the repeal of Section 28.

The second value and belief of mine which underpinned the choice of this topic is feminism. For me, feminism is the advocacy of gender equality. To me this means gender equality for all genders, not just women. Feminism for me includes advocating for women’s rights, trans rights, LGBTQ+ rights, and the rights of marginalised groups, in order to achieve equity within society. To achieve equality and equity in society, I believe we must first deconstruct the patriarchal nature of society. A patriarchal society is one in which men hold power and privilege over women and other genders (Nash, 2009). Feminism recognises that men hold power in society through the patriarchy and its manifestation within the social, political, economic, legal, and religious jurisdictions (Nash, 2009). The patriarchy legitimises men’s oppression of women (Hunnicut, 2009); some believe that the patriarchy is purely beneficial for men and harmful for women and other genders. However, my belief is that the patriarchy can also be harmful for men. The patriarchy legitimises power and privilege only for certain men, those who adhere to traditional masculinity and gender norms (Stanaland & Gaither, 2021). This creates pressure for boys and men to act in a certain ‘masculine’ way and individuals face stigma when they violate these norms (Kågesten et al., 2016). Haider (2016), summarises this as ‘masculinity under patriarchy turns toxic’ (p. 555). Boys and men are often under pressure to show strength, and not show appearances of weakness or vulnerable emotion (Stanaland & Gaither, 2021). This is extremely harmful for mental health and wellbeing. Indeed, men have been found to avoid seeking help for mental health issues due to the association of appearances of ‘weakness’ as a feminine trait and the pressure to conform to traditional masculine ideals (Lynch et al., 2018). This contributes to the high rates of suicide in men and adolescent boys, which has been directly linked to the pressure to conform to traditional masculine norms (Cleary, 2012). The social stigma

men and boys experience around talking about their emotions is something I consider a feminist issue. To challenge this stigma, we must challenge the social structures that surround it, including the patriarchy and toxic masculinity. To challenge toxic masculinity and the influence of the patriarchy, we must first understand them, which was a key motivation in my choice of this topic for my thesis.

When studying masculinity, it is important to reflect on the researcher's understanding of gender. I argue against the assumption of cisnormativity, the belief that all individuals identify as the gender they were assigned at birth. My understanding, and that of many scholars, is that sex-assigned at birth does not invariably predict gender identity (Hyde et al., 2019). I also argue against the notion of gender as binary and believe that masculinity and femininity are just two constructs within a spectrum of gender expressions (for a full review see Hyde et al., 2019; Jourian, 2015). I also agree with Lev (2004) that gender identity and gender-role expression are separate constructs. Gender identity is the social construct of gender to which people identify, including but not limited to woman, man, transgender woman, transgender man, non-binary, agender and genderfluid (Hyde et al., 2019). Gender-roles are socially constructed expressions of gender, including but not limited to androgyny, masculinity, and femininity (Jourian, 2015). Any individual may express masculine gender-roles regardless of their sex assigned at birth or their gender identity. Therefore, when referring to masculinity within this thesis, I refer to gender-expression, and when referring to men or boys, I refer to gender-identity, rather than sex-assigned at birth.

### **Dissemination Plan**

I am passionate about making research, and psychology in general, accessible to wider audiences, including professionals working in education. I have therefore developed a dissemination plan to share my thesis in a number of ways. I have chosen to submit both papers to the journal *The Psychology of Men and Masculinities*. This journal covers topics including masculine norms and ideologies, boys' experiences and perpetration of bullying, gender role conflict, gay and bisexual men's experiences, and boys' relationships with each other. These themes are all relevant to my thesis. I chose this journal for chapter two specifically as the journal editors have expressed interest in meta-analyses and reviews on the topic of masculinity. This is in line with the second chapter of my thesis, which is the first to review the quantitative literature in the field of masculinity and homophobic-name-calling in adolescents using meta-analysis. I also chose this journal for chapter three as the journal editors expressed interest in 'conceptual manuscripts that propose new theories', which is in line with my third chapter, in which I propose a novel idea of masculinity as functioning in a similar way to narcissism.

Publishing within a journal is an effective way of reaching academic audiences with access to university library databases. However, journals are often behind a paywall and therefore are not always accessible to people outside of academia. The second part of my dissemination plan therefore is to submit a pre-publication manuscript of my thesis to the University of Southampton Educational Psychology Research Blog. This is an open access blog which publishes essays, academic critiques, and theses written by students on the University of Southampton Educational Psychology Doctorate. This is a blog which many practising Educational Psychologists are aware of and access regularly.

The third phase of my dissemination plan is sharing my research in conferences. I will be presenting my thesis at the University of Southampton Post Graduate Research Conference in June 2023. The audience will include staff members from the Psychology department at the University of Southampton and other post graduates, including Trainee Educational Psychologists, Trainee Clinical Psychologists and PhD students. I have also been accepted to present my research in July 2023 at the International School Psychology Conference in Bologna, Italy. The audience will include academics and professionals within the discipline of Educational and School Psychology from across the world. This will be an opportunity to present my thesis to a wider audience outside of the UK.

The last phase of my dissemination plan is to video record a condensed version of my conference presentation and publish this on my own website. As my thesis is written with the intention of publication in a scientific journal, it uses subject specific and scientific language, which may not be accessible for all audiences. My hope is that a more informal oral presentation of 15 minutes will be accessible to a wider, non-academic audience. In this presentation, I will emphasise the implications of my research for schools and Educational Psychologists. Overall, I hope that this dissemination plan will help my research to reach a wide and diverse audience, including academics, practicing Educational Psychologists and other professionals within education such as teachers and SENCOs.

## **Chapter 2. Adolescent Masculinity and Homophobic-Name-Calling: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis**

### **Abstract**

The enduring link between masculinity and homophobia has been well documented in the research in both men and boys. Homophobic epithets and name-calling continue to be common parlance in some schools and friendship groups. This name-calling is often perceived as innocuous ‘banter’ among friends as opposed to homophobic bullying directed at sexually diverse individuals. Research suggests that homophobic-name-calling in adolescent friendship groups is used to police masculinity rather than sexuality and is used to enforce conformity to traditional gender norms. This review is the first to quantitatively measure the relationship between masculinity and homophobic-name-calling in adolescents using a meta-analysis and narrative synthesis. The review included seven studies, six of which were included in the meta-analysis and showed a statistically significant relationship between masculinity and homophobic-name-calling. Findings from the narrative synthesis indicate that several factors interact within this relationship, including peer groups, bullying, and age. Overall, findings suggest there are two functions of homophobic-name-calling; the first being jokes or banter within peer groups, which is in line with previous research, and the second being as a direct form of homophobic bullying. Importantly, both functions of homophobic-name-calling are rooted in the policing of masculinity. Findings also indicate that empathy appears to be a protective factor against homophobic-name-calling and therefore may be a useful area for future research and intervention.

*Keywords:* adolescence, masculinity, homophobic-name-calling, bullying, peer groups

### **Introduction**

#### ***Masculinity***

There are many attributes, behaviours and roles typically associated with masculinity. Connell (2005) argued that there are different types of masculinity, with hegemonic masculinity being the prevalent in society. Connell (2005) describes hegemonic masculinity as a social construct which shifts and changes with society, therefore its definition and characteristics are fluid and dynamic. In today’s society, hegemonic masculinity is characterised by what are considered ‘traditional’ masculine traits such as anti-femininity, achievement, adventure, risk, lack of empathy, and avoidance of appearances of weakness or expression of emotion (APA, 2018; Connell, 2005; Kupers, 2005). Masculinities which do not align with these characteristics are considered ‘subordinate masculinities’ according to Connell (2005).

Hegemonic masculinity is also associated with socially destructive traits such as misogynistic attitudes and homophobia (Harrington, 2021). Connell (2005) argues that men who adhere to hegemonic masculinity also hold institutional power due to the patriarchal society in which we live. A patriarchal society is one in which men hold power and privilege over women (Beechey, 1979). Furthermore, in a patriarchal society, men who adhere to hegemonic masculinity, also hold power and privilege over other men who do not adhere to this type of masculinity (Connell, 2005). This leads to the marginalisation of the subordinate forms of masculinity and the marginalisation of women in society. Haider (2016, p555) states that 'masculinity under patriarchy turns toxic', which illustrates that it is not masculinity itself that is toxic, but the patriarchy that legitimises the subordination of other forms of masculinity, violence against women, and homophobia to maintain the institutional power of men who adhere to hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005; Haider, 2016).

### ***Masculinity and Homophobia***

Hegemonic masculinity reinforces patriarchal norms, disempowering women and femininity. Consequently, this invites men to distance themselves from femininity, and this anti-femininity is an essential component of hegemonic masculinity (APA, 2018; Connell, 2005; Kupers, 2005). Sexuality and gender are often incorrectly conflated, and research suggests that men who adhere to hegemonic masculinity view homosexual desire as inherently 'feminine' (Kimmel, 1994) and therefore undesirable. Pascoe (2005) argues that homophobia as a component of hegemonic masculinity is perhaps more about gender, sexism, and misogyny rather than homophobia. Homophobia is inherently linked to one's view of their own masculinity and is driven not by a fear of gay men but a fear of being perceived as insufficiently masculine by other men (Kimmel, 1994; Pascoe, 2005). Anderson (2009) defines this fear of being perceived as insufficiently masculine as 'homohysteria'. Homohysteria operates in that, in order to prove one's masculinity, men routinely distance themselves from things or behaviours which are socially coded as 'feminine', and therefore, by default, coded too as homosexual (McCormack & Anderson, 2014).

Homohysteria cultures endorse hegemonic masculinity to such an extent that homosexuality is marginalised. In homohysteria cultures, men are restricted to a hegemonic form of masculinity and homophobia is used as a way of policing gender and to avoid being perceived as gay (Anderson, 2009). Globally, studies have shown that men hold more homophobic views than women and homophobia is a key component of hegemonic masculinity (Diefendorf & Bridges, 2020a; Kagesten et al. 2016). For a full review of the relationship between masculinity and homophobia, see Diefendorf and Bridges (2020).



### ***Masculinity and Adolescence***

Pressure to adhere to hegemonic masculinity starts from an early age. Two studies by Renold found that hegemonic masculinity norms appear as early as primary school, with boys showing misogynistic attitudes, homophobic behaviours, and sexualised forms of harassment towards girls (Renold, 2002, 2003). As with men, adolescent masculinity has also been linked with homophobia (Gough et al., 2021; Kågesten et al., 2016; Pascoe, 2005). A systematic review by Kågesten (2016) found that, globally, boys believed typical masculine characteristics included physical strength and toughness and that boys should avoid traits considered 'feminine', such as showing weakness or emotions. This review suggested that boys adhere to gender norms due to the social stigma of transgressing typical masculine norms. This review also found that boys feared they would be targets of homophobic-name-calling (HNC) if they did not conform to hegemonic masculinity norms or if they displayed traits or behaviours typically viewed as 'feminine' (Kågesten et al., 2016). Therefore, this review concluded that "boys experience restrictions not from being boys, but because they are the wrong sort of boys" (Kågesten et al., 2016, p25).

Adolescence is a critical time in gender identity formation for young people (Beal, 1994), and between the ages of 10 and 14, adolescent gender norms are particularly influenced by peer groups (Kågesten et al., 2016). Adolescent male peer groups have been found to police masculinity gender norms, particularly through the use of homophobic language and name-calling (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2018; Fulcher, 2017; Odenbring & Johansson, 2021; Pascoe, 2005; Reigeluth & Addis, 2021).

### ***Homophobic-Name-Calling and the Policing of Masculinity***

Some scholars suggest that homophobia is in decline, particularly in the UK and USA, according to opinion polls (Anderson & McCormack, 2018). However, opinion polls only measure self-reported views, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Importantly, these polls do not measure behaviour or covert attitudes (i.e., those attitudes which individuals may choose not to disclose). Anderson and McCormack (2018) describe a cultural lag in attitudes and behaviour, as phrases such as "that's so gay" continue to be common parlance in some settings (Anderson & McCormack, 2018; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020). While HNC and homophobic language generally are common, they are often directed at heterosexual targets (Fulcher, 2017). Furthermore, adolescents who use homophobic language often do not view themselves as homophobic (Fulcher, 2017) and perceive the language as innocuous 'banter' within peer groups (Odenbring and Johansson, 2021).

Homophobic epithets and HNC are often a form of gender regulation among peers, rather than acts of homophobic aggression directed at sexually diverse individuals (Pascoe & Diefendorf,

2019; Pascoe, 2005). Research suggests that in adolescent peer groups, HNC is used to indicate to peers that they are expected to conform to hegemonic masculinity norms (Odenbring and Johansson, 2021; Kågesten et al., 2016; Reigeluth & Addis, 2021). Pascoe argues that HNC may not have “explicit sexual meanings, but it always has gendered meanings” (Pascoe, 2005, p 342), suggesting that this language is used to police adolescent masculinity within peer groups.

This policing of hegemonic masculinity norms ostracises those who do not conform to them (McCann et al., 2010; Odenbring & Johansson, 2021; Reigeluth & Addis, 2021). Pascoe described that homophobic epithets are used against boys who behave in a way that is socially coded as feminine and is used to imply that they are not masculine (Pascoe, 2005). Indeed, HNC is a way to “assert one’s masculinity by denying it to others” (Pascoe, 2005, p342). This HNC is key to constructing and empowering heterosexual masculine identities by policing its boundaries (McCann et al., 2010; Odenbring & Johansson, 2021; Reigeluth & Addis, 2021).

While HNC and homophobic language might not solely target sexually diverse communities, they remain its primary casualty. It cannot be denied that HNC is also used as a direct form of aggression against sexually diverse young people (Rinehart et al., 2020), however HNC as a form of ‘banter’ within peer groups seems to serve a different function, namely to police gender rather than sexuality. Regardless of the function or desired effect, HNC is harmful and prejudiced. When used in schools, this language fosters a hostile environment for sexually diverse young people (DeLay et al., 2017).

Although research suggests that adolescents who use homophobic language would refrain from doing so in the presence of someone they knew to be gay (Fulcher, 2017), this does not protect sexually diverse young people who are not openly disclosing their sexuality. Indeed, there are also negative consequences of this behaviour for individuals of all sexualities and/or genders (Birkett et al., 2009; Rinehart et al., 2020). Research has found that being the target of homophobic verbal aggression (rather than a non-homophobic verbal aggression) increases anger and aggression in heterosexual targets, and increases avoidance in sexually diverse targets (Mullane, 2012). It is therefore important to eradicate this type of language among adolescents, even when it is only used as a ‘joke’.

### ***Research Questions***

A systematic review in 2020 explored the prevalence of homophobic bullying in schools, and identified school-related risk and protective factors, such as belonging and social support (Moyano & Sánchez-Fuentes, 2020). However, this review will be the first to focus specifically on the role of masculinity on HNC in adolescents, and the interacting factors within this relationship. Much of the current literature exploring masculinity and HNC is qualitative in design (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2018; Fulcher, 2017; McCann et al., 2010; Odenbring & Johansson, 2021).

Therefore, this review is the first to review the quantitative literature on the link between masculinity and HNC in adolescents, using a meta-analysis and narrative synthesis. This review will address the following question:

- How does hegemonic masculinity lead to homophobic aggression in young people?

The secondary questions are:

- Are adolescent hegemonic masculinity and HNC statistically related concepts?
- What other factors interact with the relationship between adolescent hegemonic masculinity and HNC?

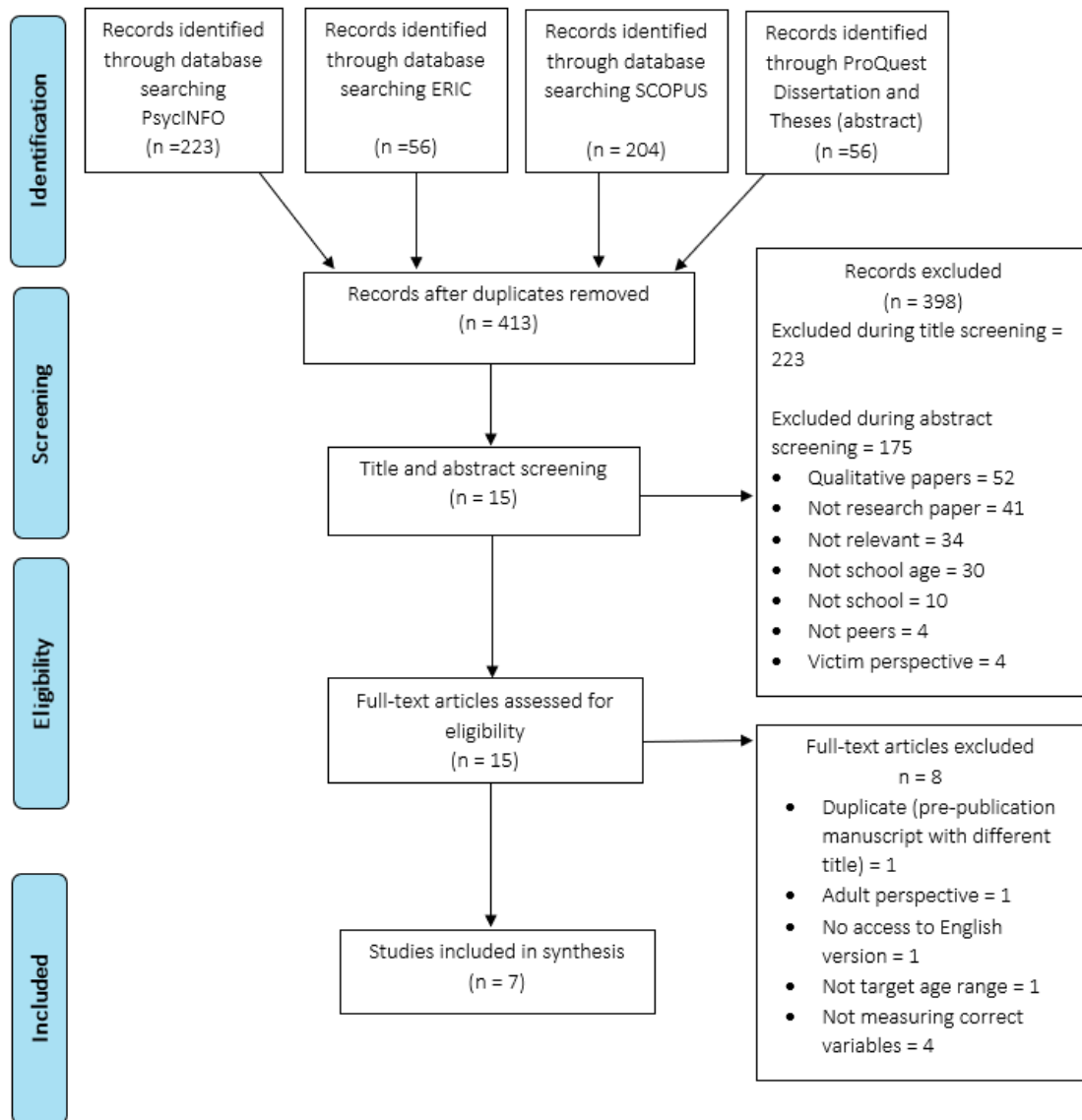
## **Method**

### ***Literature Search***

This review followed the guidelines outlined by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) (Page et al., 2021). See the PRISMA diagram (Figure 1) detailing the process of identification, screening and inclusion of papers. Studies were identified through the following databases: PsychInfo, ERIC and SCOPUS. These databases were chosen as they include articles related to psychology and education. To access peer-reviewed articles not published in academic journals a grey literature search was conducted using ProQuest's Dissertation and Theses database: this was to reduce the impact of the publication bias of only publishing research which report statistically significant results. Search terms for all concepts of the research question were used including alternative spellings and terms relating to the same concept. The search terms included the concepts of traditional masculinity, homophobic aggression and school aged children (Appendix A). The systematic search produced 413 papers after duplicates were removed (see Figure 1). Titles were screened for relevance before abstracts were examined and studies excluded based on the chosen inclusion and exclusion criteria (Table 1). Finally, full-text articles were read in depth and further studies were excluded according to the exclusion criteria. A total of seven studies were included in this review.

**Figure 1**

*PRISMA flowchart outlining the final search process, where 'n' refers to the number of studies*



a

**Table 1**

*Inclusion and exclusion criteria*

| Study feature | Inclusion criteria  | Exclusion criteria  |
|---------------|---|---|
| Article type  | <p>Full text articles</p> <p>Full text published or available in English</p> <p>Article is published and peer reviewed or unpublished</p> <p>Article is of any age</p> <p>Study is conducted in any country</p>                               | <p>No full text articles</p> <p>Full text is not published or available in English</p> <p>Paper is a thesis, and a published paper is available which uses the same data</p>          |
| Participants  | <p>Studies including participants between 10-and 19-years-old at study onset</p> <p>Studies conducted in mainstream schools</p> <p>Participants are of any nationality and ethnicity</p>  | <p>Studies which measured teacher or adult perceptions</p> <p>Studies which measured only victim perspectives</p> <p>Studies conducted outside of educational settings or schools</p> |
| Methodology   | <p>Empirical studies</p> <p>Studies using quantitative research design</p> <p>Studies which quantitatively measured homophobic aggression (an act or name-calling against peers)</p> <p>Studies which quantitatively measured masculinity</p> | <p>Review studies</p> <p>Chapters in books</p> <p>Studies using qualitative designs</p>   |

### ***General Characteristics of Articles Included***

**Sample Characteristics.** Most of the studies were conducted in the USA, with the exception of one conducted in Norway. The studies included children enrolled in Middle School or High School, therefore the age range, as defined by the inclusion criteria, was 10 to 18. Six of the studies reported sample characteristics in terms of ethnicity (Birkett & Espelage, 2015; Borgen, 2016; Espelage et al., 2018; Merrin et al., 2018; Poteat et al., 2011; Valido et al., 2022). Five studies reported percentage of girls and boys in the sample and one study only measured male participants (Borgen, 2016). Boys constituted 49.98% of the overall sample. Two studies reported participant sexual orientation (Slaatten et al., 2014; Valido et al., 2022) and two studies reported percentage of 'low income' measured by access to free school lunches (Espelage et al., 2018; Valido et al., 2022). See Appendix B for study and sample characteristics as reported in each study.

**Study Design.** Three of the studies used a cross-sectional design (Borgen, 2016; Poteat et al., 2011; Slaatten et al., 2014) and two used a longitudinal design (Espelage et al., 2018; Merrin et al., 2018). Two used both cross sectional and longitudinal design to compare between-person effects (at one time point) as well as within-person effects (across time) (Birkett and Espelage, 2018; and Valido 2022).

**Measurement and Analysis.** All studies measured masculinity, four of the studies used the Adolescent Masculinity Ideology in Relationships Scale (AMIRS; Chu et al., 2016) or items from this scale. Two studies used the Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity (Oransky & Fisher, 2009a) and one study used the Male Role Attitudes Scale (Pleck et al., 1994). All of the studies measured HNC using the Homophobic Content Agent Target scale (Poteat and Espelage, 2005). Other measures in the studies included bullying behaviours, attitudes to bullying, empathy, self-esteem, attitudes towards sexual harassment, violence, and friendships. All studies included in the review used structural equation modelling to represent the observed and latent variables in the analysis. All but one of the studies also reported individual correlation-coefficients for the variables in the model. These correlation coefficients were extracted to be included in the meta-analysis. The authors of the study (Merrin et al., 2018) which did not report these correlation coefficients were contacted to request the missing data, however no response was received and therefore this study was not included in the meta-analysis.

Two studies (Espelage et al., 2018; Valido et al., 2022) included in the meta-analysis created several models, with variations in control variables and interactions included in each model. Model 5 from Espelage et al. (2018) and Model 8 from Valido et al. (2022) were included in the meta-analysis as they were the most comprehensive models reported in these studies. These models also differed on between-person effects and within-person effects. The between-

person effects models were included in the meta-analysis as the remaining seven studies only measured between-person effects.

Effect sizes from Study 2 by Poteat et al. (2011) were used rather than Study 1 as Study 2 explored male role attitudes and HNC which is the most similar to the measures used in the other studies included in the meta-analysis. Study 1 measured 'male activities' rather than attitudes and therefore was not included in the meta-analysis.

Slaatten (2014) separated the Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity Scale and the Homophobic Content Agent scale into their subscales and looked at each interaction individually. In the current meta-analysis, the effect size from the regression of heterosexism and the target 'a friend' was used as this, as heterosexism is most similar to measures of masculinity used in other scales and is most reflective of the homophobia which the literature argues drives HNC. Further, the target 'directed at a friend' subscale was used as literature (McCann, 2010; ODenbring and Johansson 2020; Pascoe 2005) argues that boys use HNC to police masculinity in friendship groups.

### ***Quality Appraisal***

The quality of each study was assessed using an adapted version of the NICE Quality Appraisal Checklist (Appendix C) for correlational studies, with a maximum score of 30 (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2012). If a study scored below 16, it would be excluded from the review. Scores ranged from 18 to 29 with Borgen (2016) receiving the lowest score. All studies were of sufficient quality based on answers to the questions and therefore none were excluded during this process.

### ***Meta-Analysis Method***

A random-effects model was used to conduct the meta-analysis. It has been found that in meta-analyses on correlation coefficients, random-effects models generally produce accurate estimates of the true correlation (Field, 2005). Random-effect models assume the populations in each study are heterogeneous and therefore effect sizes in the population vary from study to study (Field & Gillett, 2010). Random-effects models allow inferences from the results that generalise beyond the studies included in the meta-analysis. Furthermore, a random-effects model was chosen as the studies included in the meta-analysis draw from real world data, which do not conform to the assumption of fixed population parameters (Field, 2005; Field & Gillett, 2010). The statistical software MedCal was used to run the meta-analyses, which uses the DerSimonian and Laird (1986) method to calculate the Correlation Coefficient under the random effects model.

To assess for heterogeneity the Cochran’s Q statistic and  $I^2$  were used. The Cochran’s Q test indicated a significant level of heterogeneity  $\chi^2(5) = 98.43, p < .0001$ . The  $I^2$  also indicated a high level of heterogeneity,  $I^2 = 94.52\%$ , as values above 60% are generally considered to indicate substantial heterogeneity.

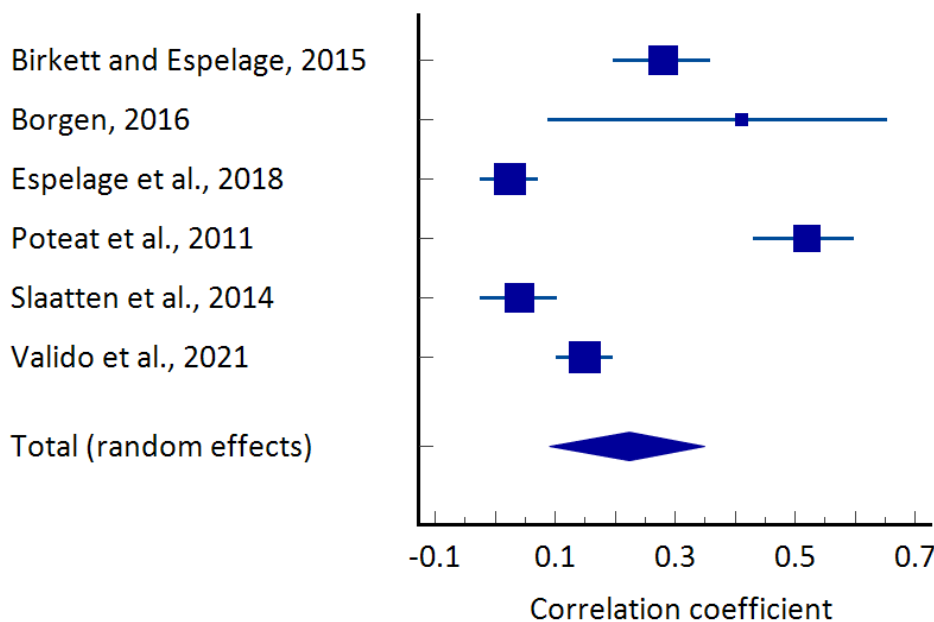
**Results**

**Results of Meta-Analysis**

A random effects model produced an overall effect size of  $r(5) = .22, p = .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.09, 0.35]$ . The meta-analysis therefore shows a statistically significant association between hegemonic masculinity and HNC. The forest plot for the meta-analysis is shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Forest Plot of the Effect Sizes for Masculinity and Homophobic-Name-Calling*



*Note.* Bars show 95% confidence intervals. Merrin et al. (2018) was not included in the meta-analysis due to missing data.

**Narrative Synthesis**

**Masculinity and HNC.** Birkett and Espelage (2015) found that hegemonic masculinity was significantly correlated with HNC at both waves of their longitudinal study, which included 493 young people between the ages of 10 and 14 in the USA. Furthermore, for the participants in this study, peer group levels of masculinity predicted individual levels of HNC, however this effect decreased over time. Valido et al (2022) explored risk and protective factors for HNC perpetration in young people between the ages of 10 and 16 years in four schools in the USA. They found that individuals with higher average levels of hegemonic masculinity, compared to their peers, also



reported higher levels of HNC across time. Poteat et al. (2011) investigated the interaction between beliefs supportive of violence, hegemonic masculinity, and HNC in adolescents between the ages of 11 and 18 in the USA. This study found that hegemonic masculinity was significantly associated with HNC for boys but not girls. They also found that engaging in activities stereotypically viewed as 'masculine' was associated with HNC for both boys and girls.

Merrin et al. (2018) and Espelage et al. (2018) found no statistically significant relationship between hegemonic masculinity and HNC. The study by Merrin et al. (2018) included 190 adolescents and explored HNC, bullying and hegemonic masculinity within friendship networks in a longitudinal study across three waves. The study by Espelage et al. (2018) was also longitudinal and collected data from 1,655 participants across four waves. Participants in both the Merrin et al. (2018) and Espelage et al. (2018) studies were between the ages of 10 and 14. The study by Borgen (2016) however, included participants between the ages of 14 and 18 and did find a significant correlation between hegemonic masculinity and HNC. This may suggest that the relationship between masculinity and HNC is more apparent in older adolescents. Indeed, the study by Espelage et al. (2018) found that HNC did increase with age. It is important to note that the 35 participants in the study by Borgen (2016) were all high school American Football players. Borgen (2016) suggests that masculinity and homophobia play important roles in this sport and therefore this may add further weight to the relationship found between masculinity and HNC in this study.

In contrast to the other studies in this review, Slaatten et al. (2014) looked at how hegemonic masculinity was related to male participants' HNC directed at specific targets. These targets were a friend, someone they did not know, someone they did not like, someone they thought to be gay, and someone they did not think to be gay. This study also isolated the subscales of their hegemonic masculinity measure, the Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity scale (MAMS; Oransky & Fisher, 2009), to explore how each subscale correlated with each target of HNC. Several of the subscales were significantly correlated. The subscale Emotional Restriction was significantly correlated with all of the target subscales except for 'a friend'. The subscale Heterosexism was significantly correlated with the targets 'someone they thought to be homosexual', and 'someone they did not know'. The subscale heterosexism was not significantly correlated with the target 'a friend', which was the effect size included in the meta-analysis. This study also used logistic regression analysis to explore whether subscales of the MAMS predicted HNC directed at different targets. Boys who scored higher on the Emotional Restriction subscale were more likely to have used a homophobic name in the last week directed at someone they did not think to be gay, someone they did not like and someone they did not know. Boys who scored higher on the Social Teasing subscale were more likely to have used a homophobic name in the last week directed at a friend and less likely to have called someone they did not know a

homophobic name in the last week. Boys who scored high on the subscales Constant Effort or Heterosexism were not more or less likely to have called anyone a homophobic name in the last week.

**Mediating Factors.** The studies included in this review also looked at other factors in relation to HNC and hegemonic masculinity. These included individual differences such as age and gender, social factors such as bullying and peer groups, and risk and protective factors.

**Gender.** Several studies included in this review found that male participants had higher levels of both hegemonic masculinity and HNC compared to their female peers (Birkett & Espelage, 2015; Slaatten et al., 2014; Valido et al., 2022). Slaatten et al. (2014), found that a majority (74%) of boys studied had called another boy a homophobic name in the last week compared to 54% of girls. Interestingly, the target of the HNC in this study also differed in terms of gender as 34% of boys and 29% of girls had called a girl a homophobic name in the last week. This suggests that HNC is used more by and directed towards boys (Slaatten et al., 2014).

**Age.** HNC also differed with age. Valido et al. (2022) found that older adolescents reported higher use of HNC, which is similar to results found by Espelage et al. (2018) that HNC increased with age, although rate of acceleration slowed. Further, Birkett and Espelage (2015) found that seventh and eighth grade students used more HNC and had higher levels of hegemonic masculinity compared to fifth or sixth grade students.

**Peer Groups.** Three of the studies explored how masculinity and HNC were related to friendships and peer groups. Young people tended to be friends with peers with similar levels of HNC as their own, and changes in an individual's level of HNC was predicted by the HNC in their friendship group. (Merrin et al., 2018). Similarly, Birkett and Espelage (2015) found that peer group levels of HNC significantly predicted individuals' HNC approximately six months later, even after controlling for individuals' original use of HNC. Peer group masculinity seems to play an important role in peer group HNC as Birkett and Espelage (2015) found that peer group level of hegemonic masculinity predicted individual levels of HNC six months later. This study also found that peer groups with high levels of HNC victimisation later went on to show high levels of HNC perpetration, which researchers believed was related to normalisation of this language within the peer group as a form of 'banter'.

Indeed, Slaatten (2014) found that adolescents were four times more likely to call a friend a homophobic name than someone they did not know and were 1.7 times more likely to call someone they did not think was gay a homophobic name than someone they did believe to be gay. Furthermore, boys who scored higher on the Social Teasing subscale of the MAMS were 1.4 times more likely to have directed their HNC at a friend and 1.5 times less likely to have called someone they did not know a homophobic name. This implies that for these adolescents, their

HNC was exclusively used within friendships as part of social teasing or 'banter'. Perhaps this suggests that the use of HNC is not to insult or bully, but is part of peer group language, and serves a different, social, function.

Merrin (2018) found that increasing HNC was associated with increasing popularity up to a point, however those with the highest levels of HNC were not more likely to receive friendship nominations. Although we cannot draw conclusions as to why this is, based on Merrin's study (2018), it suggests there is a degree of nuance and complexity to the perpetration of HNC and its function within peer groups. Furthermore, HNC appears to be a phenomenon more prevalent within male friendship groups as compared to female as Slaatten (2014) found that 54% of boys had called a friend a homophobic name, compared to 30% of girls. However, this may be due to the fact that boys tended to use more homophobic names overall, compared to girls (Slaatten et al., 2014).

**Bullying.** Several of the studies included in this review found that bullying was associated with HNC. Espelage et al. (2018) found both within-person and between-person effects of bullying and HNC, namely that when participants reported higher rates of bullying perpetration compared to their average, they also showed higher rates of HNC at the same time point. Further, participants with higher average rates of bullying perpetration also had higher average rates of HNC over time compared to those with low average rates of bullying (Espelage et al., 2018). This association between bullying perpetration and HNC was also found by Merrin et al. (2018), Borgen (2016), and Birkett & Espelage (2015).

The relationship between bullying perpetration and HNC has been found to be greater in male peer groups than female. The study by Birkett and Espelage (2015) found gender to be a significant moderator in the relationship between bullying and HNC, with the relationship being stronger in male peer groups. This suggests a connection between HNC, bullying and masculinity, however the studies in this review which explored this connection between HNC, masculinity and bullying found mixed results. Firstly, Poteat et al. (2011) found a significant association between masculinity and bullying in boys. This association was significantly moderated by beliefs supportive of violence, in that higher masculinity ratings predicted more frequent bullying perpetration for boys with beliefs supportive of violence (Poteat et al., 2011). In contrast, Borgen (2016) found that masculinity and bullying were not significantly correlated. Furthermore, Borgen (2016) used a regression analysis to explore the link between HNC, hegemonic masculinity and bullying, and found that although bullying perpetration significantly predicted HNC, this effect became insignificant when including hegemonic masculinity as a mediator. It is important to note however, that this study only included 35 participants, all of whom were football players and therefore these findings may not be generalisable. The relationship between masculinity, bullying

and HNC is nuanced and requires further exploration, however these findings show that bullying and HNC are distinct but related concepts.

**Risk Factors.** The studies included in this review found several risk and protective factors which influenced the likelihood of HNC in young people, some of which may be related to hegemonic masculinity. The risk factors included sexual harassment, impulsivity, and violence. A component of hegemonic masculinity is objectification of and sexual harassment towards girls (APA, 2018; Connell, 2005; Kupers, 2005) and therefore dismissive attitudes towards, or engagement in, sexual harassment may be a construct of hegemonic masculinity. Indeed, Espelage et al. (2018) found that within-person increases in sexual harassment, compared to the individual's mean levels, were associated with increased HNC. Furthermore, participants higher in mean sexual harassment also showed higher levels of HNC over time, compared to individuals with lower mean levels of HNC. The study by Espelage (2018) also explored individuals' dismissive attitudes towards sexual harassment and found that these attitudes moderated the relationship between bullying and HNC. The relationship between bullying and HNC was highest for those also high in dismissive attitudes towards sexual harassment at both within- and between-person levels.

Impulsivity was also found to be a risk factor for HNC in young people. Valido (2022) found that at time points when individuals reported higher rates of impulsivity than their mean, participants also reported higher rates of HNC at the same time point. Furthermore, individuals with higher average rates of impulsivity than their peers also reported higher rates of HNC across time. This finding was also observed in the study by Merrin (2018) which found that impulsivity was a significant risk factor for HNC.

Violence may also be a risk factor for increased levels of HNC in young people and normalisation of violence is a component of hegemonic masculinity (APA, 2018; Connell, 2005; Kupers, 2005). Valido (2022) found a within-person effect for neighbourhood violence and a between-person effect for family violence. At time points when individuals reported higher rates of neighbourhood violence than their average level, they also reported higher HNC. Further, individuals with higher average rates of family violence reported higher average HNC across time, compared to peers with lower rates of family violence. This may be due to the relationship between attitudes towards violence and hegemonic masculinity, as beliefs supportive of violence have been found to significantly moderate the association between hegemonic masculinity and HNC among boys (Poteat et al., 2011). Engagement in 'masculine' activities and hegemonic masculinity were both significantly associated with beliefs supportive of violence and aggression in boys (Poteat et al. 2011), suggesting that hegemonic masculinity and violence are inherently linked.

**Protective Factors.** In the included studies, there were comparatively few factors investigated and identified which reduced the rate of HNC in adolescents. The study by Valido et al. (2022) was unique in exploring several factors which may be considered positive and likely to reduce the rate of HNC in adolescents. At time points when participants scored higher on empathy, school belonging, parental monitoring and adult support compared to their average they also reported lower levels of HNC. This effect was also found at between-person levels, as participants who had higher average empathy, school belonging, and adult support reported lower HNC across time than their peers. Interestingly, although support from adults at school was a protective factor against HNC, family support was not. Although family support may be perceived as a positive thing, individuals who had higher average levels of family support reported higher HNC across time compared to their peers (Valido et al., 2022), however this effect was not found at a within-person level. Valido et al. (2022) suggest that this relationship between family support and HNC may be due to the family system upholding homophobic views, and therefore family support in this context would encourage HNC in the adolescent children. Overall, there were comparatively few protective factors against HNC explored in the studies included in this review and therefore more research is needed.

## **Discussion**

The meta-analysis in this review found a significant correlation between hegemonic masculinity and HNC in adolescents. This is in line with previous qualitative literature which illustrates the use of HNC in adolescent boys' friendship groups (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2018; McCann et al., 2010; Odenbring & Johansson, 2021). Indeed, the studies in this review found that boys used HNC more than girls (Birkett & Espelage, 2015; Slaatten et al., 2014; Valido et al., 2022). Previous research has suggested that the main mechanism for HNC is its use to police masculinity within friendship groups as a form of banter, and often the perpetrators do not perceive themselves as homophobic (Pascoe, 2005). Findings from the studies in this review support this hypothesis. However, there were also strong links between HNC and bullying. This suggests that there may be two underlying mechanisms for HNC, one as a form of banter in friendship groups, and the other as a form of bullying. An alternative hypothesis is that the underlying function in both is to police masculinity.

The first function of HNC illustrated in this review is the use of homophobic names as innocuous teasing within friendship groups. A study in this review found that boys were more likely to engage in HNC with a friend than someone they did not know and were more likely to call someone they did not think to be gay a homophobic name than someone they did think to be gay (Slaatten et al., 2014). This is in line with previous research which suggests that perpetrators of HNC do not perceive themselves to be homophobic and would not use HNC towards someone they believed to be gay (Fulcher, 2017). This suggests HNC is used within male friendship groups,

rather than as a direct aggressive act towards the LGBTQ+ community. Indeed, friendship groups play an important role in HNC perpetration as peer group levels of HNC significantly predicted an individual's level of HNC perpetration six months later (Birkett & Espelage, 2015). The studies in this review suggest this phenomenon is mostly found in male friendship groups. For example, Slaatten et al. (2014) found that HNC was used more by boys than girls and directed more towards boys than girls. Peer groups high in masculinity also had higher HNC (Birkett & Espelage, 2015), which suggests that these peer groups may be using HNC as a way of policing masculinity between friends. Particularly where peer groups value a hegemonic form of masculinity, HNC becomes a policing of its borders (Oransky & Marecek, 2009).

Although in adolescent peer groups, HNC may be used as a joke, often the boundaries of this joke can become blurred and escalate into aggression (McCann et al., 2010; Odenbring & Johansson, 2021). Indeed, the studies in this review found significant correlations between HNC and bullying (Birkett & Espelage, 2015; Borgen, 2016; Espelage et al., 2018; Merrin et al., 2018). This suggests that there is a different function of HNC as a more direct form of homophobic bullying. The study by Slaatten et al. (2014) found that heterosexism (a construct of hegemonic masculinity) was significantly correlated with using a homophobic name towards someone participants did not know. This suggests a use of HNC as a way of 'othering' or ostracising people outside of a friendship or 'in-group'. Indeed, previous literature suggests HNC may be a way to punish and ostracise boys who do not conform to hegemonic masculinity (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2018; McCann et al., 2010; Plummer, 2001). This suggests that the two functions of HNC, as banter within peer groups and as a direct form of homophobic bullying, are both rooted in the policing of hegemonic masculinity.

The studies in this review also found several risk factors which contributed to an increase in HNC: impulsivity, violence, and sexual harassment. Interestingly, all of the identified 'risk factors' are also considered definitional features of hegemonic masculinity (APA, 2018; Connell, 2005; Kupers, 2005), particularly sexual harassment (Robinson, 2005); perhaps these are not independent risk factors, but actually further evidence of the link between hegemonic masculinity and HNC.

Similarly, a protective factor against HNC that was found by one study in this review was empathy (Valido et al., 2022) and this may also be related to hegemonic masculinity, rather than a separate factor. A component of hegemonic masculinity is emotional restriction (Oransky & Fisher, 2009b), and empathy is often considered a somewhat feminine trait (Ivtzan et al., 2012). Therefore, perhaps a lack of empathy is also a component of hegemonic masculinity as boys who adhere to hegemonic masculinity are motivated to avoid anything coded as feminine, including perhaps, showing empathy. An interesting direction for future research may be to explore the

relationship between empathy, masculinity and HNC, and interventions to increase empathy could perhaps be a useful tool in reducing HNC in boys (APA, 2018).

### ***Strengths and Limitations of Studies Included in the Review***

The quality of each study included in this review was assessed and scored using a NICE quality appraisal checklist (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2012; Appendix C). All studies were assessed as being of sufficient quality. Although Borgen (2016) scored lowest, this study also included the smallest sample size and meta-analysis weights studies based on sample size. We can therefore be confident in conclusions drawn from the meta-analysis.

Three of the studies in this review used a cross sectional design. These are useful in recording a snapshot in time of a particular phenomenon, however, as these studies were conducted several years ago it may be difficult to draw conclusions as to the relevance of these findings today. However, a benefit of systematic reviews and meta-analysis is the comparison of research, and as two of the studies in this review were longitudinal and two were both cross sectional and longitudinal, a degree of protection has been provided from the limitations of cross-sectional designs. A further strength of this review is that all of the studies included used the same scale to measure HNC. The Homophobic Content Agent Target scale (Poteat & Espelage, 2005) is a widely used measure and has been found to have good convergent and discriminate validity (Poteat & Espelage, 2005). Nevertheless, as the Homophobic Content Agent Target scale relies on adolescents to self-report HNC it may be vulnerable to social desirability bias. As overt homophobia is declining and there is a shift in society towards appreciation of sexual diversity, adolescents may under-report their actual levels of HNC in fear of being reprimanded for using such language and to appear more inclusive (McCormack, 2012). In future research, it may be beneficial to triangulate levels of HNC using teacher-reported scales or observational data, in order to minimise the impact of this social desirability bias.

Although the studies in this review used the same outcome measure for HNC, there was some variability in the way studies measured hegemonic masculinity. Birkett and Espelage (2015), Merrin (2018) and Espelage et al. (2018) used the Adolescent Masculinity Ideology in Relationships Scale (Chu et al., 2016). This scale was developed to measure hegemonic masculinity, specifically in adolescents and has been found to have good reliability and validity. Borgen (2016) and Slaatten et al. (2014) used the Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity Scale (Oransky & Fisher, 2009b). This scale was also developed specifically for adolescent populations and has been found to have good internal reliability and convergent validity. Poteat et al. (2011) was unique in using the Male Role Attitudes Scale (Pleck et al., 1994) to measure hegemonic masculinity. Although this scale has been found to have good discriminant validity, it was initially created in 1994 and used data from 1988 to develop the questions, therefore it may be outdated.

### ***Strengths and Limitations of the Review***

At the time of writing, this was the first systematic review to look specifically at quantitative studies exploring the link between hegemonic masculinity and HNC. Furthermore, the inclusion of a meta-analysis in this review enables definite inferences from the data to be drawn, whereas systematic reviews, without meta-analysis, often reach uncertain conclusions (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). A benefit of meta-analysis is that pooling several studies increases the power to detect small effect sizes. When pooled together insignificant effect sizes from studies can contribute to an overall effect size. Due to increased statistical power, a meta-analysis can detect effects that may be missed in individual studies (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006) or overlooked in systematic reviews.

In this review, the sample sizes ranged from 35 to 1,655. A strength of meta-analysis is that it is weighted based on sample size, whereas, in traditional systematic reviews, studies are often judged as having the same weight of evidence, regardless of sample size. Although there are many benefits to conducting a meta-analysis, it is important to note that this is a comparatively small meta-analysis, due to the limited quantitative research in this field. Meta-analyses are improved with a greater number of studies (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006) therefore it would be useful to replicate this analysis if and when more quantitative studies are conducted.

A common limitation in systematic reviews is the impact of publication bias (Ferguson & Heene, 2012). Research is more likely to be published in journals when reporting a statistically significant result and, often, the greater the effect found, the better the journal they are published in (Ferguson & Heene, 2012). To minimise this bias, a grey literature search was conducted using the database ProQuest to identify unpublished theses.

A common obstacle in meta-analysis is the need to transform effect sizes into the same statistic in order for them to be pooled together (Field & Gillett, 2010). However, all the studies in this review used correlation or regression analysis and therefore no transformations were needed. However, the study by Slaatten et al. (2014) was unique in separating the hegemonic masculinity and HNC measures into their individual subscales and did not report the overall correlation between the two scales. Therefore, a decision was made to determine which effect size should be included in the meta-analysis, as it was not possible to include more than one as this would be drawing from the same population which violates the assumptions of meta-analysis (López-López et al., 2018). The effect size of the correlation between the subscale heterosexism and the target 'a friend' was used as this was in line with previous literature that states that boys use HNC within friendship groups to police masculinity. Heterosexism is the most in line with previous literature that states that the motivation to police masculinity is to avoid things coded as feminine. Alternatively, it may also have been interesting to include the correlation between



heterosexism and the target 'someone they thought was homosexual' as this correlation evidences the other function of HNC as a direct form of homophobic bullying. However, as the other studies in this review mostly explored HNC as a social function in friendship groups, it was decided that the correlation between heterosexism and 'a friend' target was the most comparable. Although Merrin et al. (2018) did calculate an effect size for the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and HNC, it was not included in the meta-analysis as the statistic was not reported in the paper and attempts to contact authors were unsuccessful. This statistic, although insignificant would have been a valuable contribution to the meta-analysis.

A significant limitation of this review is that most of the studies were conducted in the USA. It is therefore difficult to generalise these findings outside the Western world. Much of psychology is conducted in WEIRD (Western, educated, industrialised, rich and democratic) cultures, and this review contributes to this shortcoming of the discipline (Henrich et al., 2010). This is yet more problematic due to the understanding that masculinity is a social construct and varies between cultures (Liu, 2005). A previous review (Kågesten et al., 2016) found that hegemonic masculinity is apparent in many cultures across the world, therefore it is important that future research explores the relationship between masculinity and HNC in different countries and cultures as this review cannot be generalised.

A further limitation of this review is that, at the time of writing, several of the studies included were conducted over five years ago (Birkett & Espelage, 2015; Borgen, 2016; Espelage et al., 2018; Slaatten et al., 2014) and one was conducted over 10 years ago (Poteat et al., 2011). Therefore, it is likely that these studies, and therefore this review, may become less relevant. In fact, it is one of my hopes that this review will become outdated as this will mean society is becoming more accepting and appreciative of sexual diversity and that HNC becomes a thing of the past.

### ***Implications for Educational Psychology Practice***

It is important to understand the mechanisms behind HNC and hegemonic masculinity in order to challenge them. Research suggests that overt homophobia and heteronormativity continue to be problematic in society and in schools and educational settings in particular (Birkett et al., 2009). It is important that HNC is prevented as although boys may not intend to be homophobic in their use of HNC, it creates a hostile and damaging environment for sexually diverse young people, particularly those who do not disclose their sexuality (Birkett et al., 2009; DeLay et al., 2017). Therefore, future research should use our better understanding of hegemonic masculinity and HNC in order to create interventions in educational settings to reduce the negative aspects of hegemonic masculinity and hopefully, in turn, reduce HNC. This may be through promoting more diverse forms of masculinity or decreasing the effect of the 'ingroup

mentality' of hegemonically masculine peer groups by increasing contact and knowledge of other forms of masculinity (Sherriff, 2007).

As stated above, it may also be beneficial to create interventions which draw on protective factors against HNC, such as increasing empathy (APA, 2018). It will be important to include the voices of young people in future research which aims at finding ways to reduce HNC and build on situations where HNC is not present. Schools and educational settings will play an important role in the creating and delivering of these interventions as research has shown that hegemonic masculinity in schools is one of the greatest challenges to tackling HNC or bullying in educational settings (Hong & Garbarino, 2012). The first step is for educational settings to create school policies which specifically address and prohibit HNC and bullying. Recent research suggests although schools have anti-bullying policies, few of them specifically address homophobic bullying (Adams et al., 2004). Schools and educational settings with positive school climates and protective policies has been found to be a protective factor against HNC or homophobic bullying for sexually diverse young people (Espelage et al., 2019). As Connell argues, there are many forms of masculinity, and currently these are marginalised by hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005). It is important going forward that other, more diverse, forms of masculinity are encouraged and celebrated in society, to improve the lives of boys and the people around them, particularly sexually diverse young people.

### ***Conclusion***

This review was the first to quantitatively compare studies exploring the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and HNC in adolescents. The meta-analysis showed a statistically significant relationship between the two concepts and therefore we can conclude that hegemonic masculinity underlies the use of HNC in adolescents. In particular, adolescent boys use HNC as a way to police masculinity within peer groups and punish those who do not conform to traditional notions of masculinity. Several factors interact within this relationship, including peer groups, bullying, and age. It is important to better understand this phenomenon in order to find ways to counteract it and, in turn, create more inclusive, accepting and positive environments for gender or sexually diverse young people and make space for more diverse expressions of masculinity.

### Chapter 3. Exploring the Similarities Between Fragile Masculinity and Narcissism in Adolescents' Homophobic Aggression: A Proposed Model

#### Abstract

Research suggests that masculinity is a fragile concept and requires maintenance to sustain. Threats to masculinity cause men to overcompensate with extreme and stereotypical masculine behaviours such as sexism, homophobic attitudes, and aggression. The aim of this study was, therefore, to investigate the novel hypothesis that fragile masculinity leads to homophobic aggression in adolescents. A further aim of this research was to explore whether adolescent boys experience masculinity threat, as has been evidenced in men. This study adopted a survey methodology to measure masculinity, homophobic aggression, homophobic attitudes, sexism, empathy, and self-esteem in 226 participants from one United Kingdom (UK) secondary school. A quantitative design was adopted using multiple linear regression, mediation, and moderation analysis. The findings add weight to the hypothesis that boys experience masculinity threat. The final path model illustrates two mechanisms underlying the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression. Firstly, masculinity significantly predicted homophobic attitudes in boys and homophobic attitudes significantly predicted homophobic aggression. Secondly, masculinity directly significantly predicted homophobic aggression, and this was moderated by affective empathy. Findings are discussed in line with the novel hypothesis that fragile masculinity functions in a similar way to fragile self-esteem in narcissism and the important role empathy plays in the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression. Directions for future research to further explore this new theory of fragile masculinity are identified.

*Keywords:* fragile masculinity, narcissism, homophobia, adolescence, empathy

#### Introduction

##### *Fragile Masculinity*

The definition of masculinity changes as society changes, however one thing which has remained constant across time is the need to prove it (Vandello & Bosson, 2013). Today's stereotypical masculinity is characterised by risk taking, aggression, strength, independence, and perhaps most importantly, antifemininity (APA, 2018; Connell, 2005). This antifemininity is characterised by avoidance of showing one's emotions and appearances of weakness. Linked with this antifemininity, is homophobia. Due to heteronormative assumptions, sexuality and gender are often incorrectly convoluted for men, and so an avoidance of femininity also includes an avoidance of homosexuality (APA, 2018). Research suggests that the link between masculinity and

homophobia is based on the fear of being discovered as 'insufficiently masculine' in the eyes of other men, rather than a fear of gay men as the term 'homophobia' may suggest (Diefendorf & Bridges, 2020).

Masculinity is fragile as it is highly valued in society, but narrowly defined and therefore true conformity is likely to be impossible (Willer et al., 2013). This results in a continuous need to 'prove' one's masculinity, which has been described in the Precarious Manhood Theory (for a full review see Vandello & Bosson, 2013). Precarious Manhood Theory is based on three basic principles: first, that masculinity is a status that must be earned; second, that masculinity once earned can be easily lost; and third, that masculinity must be socially proven as it is confirmed by others rather than the self. Vandello and Bosson (2013) describe masculinity as 'hard won and easily lost' (p. 101). In this paper the term 'fragile masculinity' will be used to refer to this notion of masculinity as a precarious status (DiMuccio & Knowles, 2020). Willer et al. (2013), argue that although men are motivated to continuously strive towards these unattainable standards, masculinity is under constant threat and feeling insufficiently masculine is a persistent, rather than occasional, occurrence and one that can cause significant anxiety

The consequences of threatened fragile masculinity can be dangerous. The over-compensatory reaction to identity threat has been well documented in the research, specifically when a valued component of one's identity is threatened, people react with extreme or exaggerated attitudes and behaviours associated with the valued identity (Burke & Stets, 2009). As masculinity is highly valued and easily threatened, research has found that men who receive threatening feedback relating to their masculinity, react with extreme masculine behaviours and attitudes in an attempt to recover their 'lost' masculine identity, a phenomenon which has been referred to as the 'masculine overcompensation thesis' (Willer et al., 2013, p. 980). Research has found that men whose masculinity has been threatened in a controlled laboratory setting respond with increased anger, sexism and sexualisation of women (Dahl et al., 2015), more negative attitudes towards gay and transgender people (Konopka et al., 2021), more support for war (Willer et al., 2013) and physical aggression (Bosson et al., 2009). Threats to masculinity have also been found to increase men's use of homophobic and sexist jokes (Dodson, 2014) and increase amusement toward homophobic and sexist jokes (O'Connor et al., 2017).

Similar results are found outside of controlled experimental settings, for example, one study found that stress in attempting to conform to constructs of masculinity (masculinity threat on a societal level) was associated with violent fantasies in men (Scaptura & Boyle, 2019). Similarly, men who reported societal threat to masculinity also reported more homophobic attitudes, support for war, and belief in male superiority (Willer et al., 2013). These findings support the hypothesis that masculinity is constantly threatened and fragile in society, and that the overcompensation of masculine attitudes and behaviours found in experimental conditions

when masculinity is threatened, are also found in the real world with dangerous consequences such as violence, sexism, and homophobia.

There is little to no research exploring masculinity threat in adolescents, perhaps due to the ethical implications of experimentally inducing such anxiety in young people. However, comparisons can be drawn in the literature. As stated above, in response to masculinity threat, men endorse and use more homophobic and sexist jokes (Dodson, 2014; O'Connor & Eisenhart, 1998). Research with adolescents has found that victims of homophobic-name-calling were more likely to go on to use more homophobic names themselves (Birkett & Espelage, 2018). Being the target of a homophobic name may induce this masculinity threat in adolescents and, in line with the masculine overcompensation thesis, boys may therefore target others with homophobic-name-calling in an attempt to reaffirm their own masculinity.

A further possible consequence of threatened fragile masculinity may be a reduction in empathy. One study found that, following masculinity threat, men showed less empathy and perspective taking compared to when their masculinity was assured (Vescio et al., 2021). This finding was unique to men and the researchers suggest this may be due to men feeling motivated to avoid or suppress expressions of empathy as this is stereotypically coded as a feminine emotion (Vescio et al., 2021). Indeed, research has found that men who scored high on measures of masculinity tended to suppress empathic concern for others as they viewed it as feminine (Burriss et al., 2016). However, when empathic concern was primed as masculine and strong, empathic concern increased for men who scored high in masculinity (Burriss et al., 2016). As high empathy is a protective factor against aggression (Loudin et al., 2003; Solis & Gabriela, 2021), this suppression of empathy in the face of masculinity threat may contribute to the aggression and anti-social reactions to masculinity threat found in the previously mentioned research.

### ***The Link Between Fragile Masculinity and Narcissism***

It is possible that fragile masculinity may function in a similar way to narcissism. Narcissism is a personality trait characterised by a grandiose sense of self, prioritisations of oneself over others, entitlement, and a need for admiration. Narcissism is also associated with exploitation, manipulation and lack of empathy towards others (Glover et al., 2012).

Both narcissism and fragile masculinity require maintenance to sustain the desired self-concept. Narcissists appear to have a fragile self-esteem characterised by inflated self-views that are easily threatened and vulnerable to negative feedback from others (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Motivated by a need to protect their unstable self-esteem, narcissists tend to distort information to confirm a positive self-concept (Dickinson & Pincus, 2005) and blame situational factors for their failures (Campbell et al., 2000). This need to protect an unstable self-esteem is similar to the

Precarious Manhood Theory which suggests masculinity requires maintenance and is confirmed by others rather than the self (Vandello & Bosson, 2013).

Narcissism and fragile masculinity are both characterised by precarious self-concepts and are particularly vulnerable to threat, and both are concerned with avoiding the undesired self. For example, Diefendorf and Bridges (2020), suggest that the link between fragile masculinity and homophobia is based on the fear of being discovered as 'insufficiently masculine' (p. 1269) rather than a fear of gay men; similarly, research suggests that it is a fear of the undesired self that drives narcissism, rather than excessive self-love (Barnett & Womack, 2015).

The literature describes narcissism as having a dual-processing model of self-esteem in which narcissists have high explicit self-esteem and low implicit self-esteem (Sandstrom & Jordan, 2008). This creates cognitive dissonance characterising the fragile nature of narcissists' self-concept and defensive self-esteem (Campbell et al., 2007; Sandstrom & Jordan, 2008). It may be possible that this is also the case in fragile masculinity, as it follows that those who align strongly with masculinity and strive for these (unattainable) characteristics would also have high explicit self-esteem, due to the high social value of masculine traits in society (Willer et al., 2013). However, as masculinity is so narrowly defined and therefore almost impossible to attain, this may cause low implicit self-esteem, suggesting that fragile masculinity too has a dual-processing model of self-esteem.

Narcissists experience more distress than non-narcissists when their self-esteem is threatened (Twenge & Campbell, 2003). When narcissists' fragile self-esteem is threatened, they react with aggression towards others, even directing their aggression towards innocent bystanders (Twenge & Campbell, 2003). This is to reduce the cognitive dissonance of an ego-threat and reinforce their self-concept as superior (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Sandstrom & Jordan, 2008); scholars have described this as threatened egotism (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). Similarly, threats to fragile masculinity can trigger cognitive dissonance and a need to overcompensate with extreme performances of masculinity, including aggression towards others (Bosson et al., 2009).

Empathy also plays a role in both fragile masculinity and narcissism. Defending oneself against perpetual threat and maintaining self-esteem in the face of cognitive dissonance, takes attention and effort. Research highlights how narcissists are self-focused, and this is associated with low empathy (Urbonaviciute & Hepper, 2020), in particular, low affective empathy (vicariously feeling what others feel) (Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012). However, empathy also necessitates our attention to take the perspective of the other, to understand what and how they might be feeling; consequently, narcissism might not be associated with an inherent inability to empathise, but rather a bias in attention towards the self and away from the other, and perhaps a

lack of motivation to be communally focused, or motivation to avoid empathising (Hepper et al., 2014; Sargeant, 2013).

Indeed, given research has shown that empathy is costly as it takes up cognitive resources causing people to avoid it (Cameron et al., 2019), perhaps narcissists are motivated to use more cognitive resources on maintaining the desired self than on showing empathy towards others. Similarly, those high in masculinity are motivated to suppress expressions of empathy (Vescio et al., 2021). This may also be due to an attentional bias toward maintaining masculine identity, with the additional motivation to avoid empathy due to it being stereotypically viewed as a feminine trait (Burris et al., 2016).

To maintain their positive self-concept, narcissists employ a range of anti-social self-regulatory strategies such as aggression and bullying, and lack of empathy may be an important factor in narcissists' affinity to bully (Hart et al., 2018; Sargeant, 2013). Indeed, high narcissistic traits combined with a fragile self-concept have been linked to bullying behaviour in adolescents (Fanti & Henrich, 2015). It follows that a combination of threatened self-esteem leading to increased aggression, a focus on the self, and a lack of empathy are the perfect catalysts for narcissists to engage in bullying behaviour. In the same way, this may lead to homophobic bullying specifically in fragile masculinity due to the lack of empathy and the additional need to prove one's masculinity by enacting extreme masculine behaviours and attitudes, such as aggression and homophobia (Willer et al., 2013).

At the time of writing, only one study has looked at the link between narcissism and masculinity. Marchlewska et al. (2021) explored masculinity and collective narcissism (the belief of the in-group being superior which relies on external validation and is vulnerable to threat) and found that in heterosexual men, collective narcissism predicted negative attitudes towards the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) community. Researchers suggested these negative attitudes stemmed from perceived threat of the 'out-group' (i.e., the LGBTQ+ community). This research suggested that the need for an in-group (characterised by masculinity) to adopt narcissistic in-group identification is to defend against perceived threat and maintain positive group self-esteem and control (Marchlewska et al., 2021). This study only looked at collective narcissism and although it adds weight to the theory of masculinity functioning in a similar way to narcissism, more research is needed to further explore this hypothesis.

### ***The Current Study***

The aim of the current study was to investigate the hypothesis that fragile masculinity functions in a similar way to narcissism in adolescents and how this leads to homophobic bullying. To explore this, the study aims were to explore whether adolescents experience masculinity threat, how fragile masculinity is linked to self-esteem and empathy and how this ultimately leads

to homophobic attitudes and aggression in young people. The research questions and corresponding hypotheses (H) are stated below:

1. Do adolescent boys experience masculinity threat?
  - H1. Boys will score higher than girls on homophobic attitudes and homophobic aggression
  - H2. Boys will score higher on levels of sexism than girls
  - H3. High levels of masculinity will correlate with high levels of sexism
2. Does fragile masculinity function in a similar way to narcissism?
  - H4. High levels of masculinity will correlate with high or low self-esteem
  - H5. High levels of masculinity will correlate with low levels of empathy
  - H6. High levels of empathy will correlate with low levels of homophobic aggression
  - H7. High levels of masculinity will correlate with high levels of homophobic aggression
  - H8. Empathy will moderate the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression in boys
  - H9. Self-esteem will moderate the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression in boys
3. Is fragile masculinity related to homophobic attitudes and homophobic aggression in adolescents?
  - H10. High levels of masculinity will predict homophobic aggression
  - H11. High levels of masculinity will predict homophobic attitudes
  - H12. Homophobic attitudes will mediate the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression.

## **Method**

### ***Procedure***

The study used online questionnaires in the form of a survey to measure masculinity, homophobic aggression, homophobic attitudes, empathy, sexism, and self-esteem in young people. The survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete and included 84 questions. Qualtrics (Qualtrics, 2021) was used to create and distribute the survey using a private link. One large secondary school in the South-West of England was approached and invited to take part in the study. The school was identified opportunistically and attempts to recruit more broadly and include schools with more diverse populations were unsuccessful. Two tutor groups from each year from Year 7 to 11 were timetabled to take part in the study in place of one PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) lesson. A teacher from the school responsible for coordinating the



study chose which tutor groups would be included based on timetabling and room availability. A private link for the survey website was given to the coordinating teacher which loaded the survey onto computers or laptops in the classroom for the young people to take part. In addition, the survey link was distributed by the coordinating teacher to all sixth form students. As a thank you for taking part, participants were given the option to vote for one of four preselected charities; the most popular of whom would receive a donation from the research team.

### ***Participants***

The total number of participants included in the study was 226. Participant age ranged from 12-19 ( $M = 14.84$ ,  $SD = 1.58$ ). In the sample, 49.1% were female ( $n = 111$ ), 39.8% were male ( $n = 90$ ), 9.7% identified as non-binary, agender, genderqueer, gender-fluid, or had entered a preferred term ( $n = 22$ ), and 1.3% did not indicate their gender ( $n = 3$ ).

### ***Ethics***

Opt-out consent was sent to parents of children in the chosen tutor groups for years 7 to 11 via the school's usual communication channels, with parents who did not consent to their child taking part returning the form to school office. The school office recorded the names of the children whose parents declined for them to take part and these children did not complete the survey. The first page of the survey required the young person to enter their age which directed them to either an under-16 assent form, or an over-16 consent form. The assent and consent forms also included the participant information sheet which explained details of the study and informed participants of their rights. Participants could indicate consent by clicking a box. If the participants did not click this consent box and tried to continue, the survey would end automatically. Parental consent was not required for young people over the age of 16. The last page of the online survey was a debrief form which included signposting to supportive websites and resources. Young people who chose not to take part, or whose parents had opted-out, remained in the classroom and engaged in independent study on the laptop or computer, while their peers completed the survey.

### ***Measures***

**Masculinity.** The 27-item Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity Scale (MAMS; Oransky & Fisher, 2009) was used to measure masculinity. This measure uses a four-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (4) and none of the items were reverse coded. Items included statements such as "guys should try to appear manly in almost all situations" and "if a guy is upset about something he should hold it in". Higher scores on this scale indicated higher endorsement of traditional masculine norms. This scale was chosen as it is not specific to boys' perceptions of masculinity and can be used with all genders. The scale has good

convergent validity and correlates with other measures of adolescent masculinity (Oransky & Fisher, 2009). For this sample, this scale had good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .98$ ).

**Homophobic Aggression.** To measure homophobic aggression the measure from a study by Poteat et al. (2013) was used. Participants were presented with the statement “some kids call each other names or use phrases like that’s/you’re so gay, no homo, fag, dyke, queer, etc.”. They were then asked to indicate how many times in the last 30 days they had called a friend one of these words and someone they did not like one of these words. Item three on this scale asked participants how many times in the last month they had used a phrase like “that’s so gay” in a conversation. Item four asked how many times in the last month the participant had made a joke about the LGBTQ+ community, and item five asked participants to report how many times in the last month they had spread a rumour about someone being gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Response options were ‘zero times’ (1), ‘1 or 2 times’ (2), ‘3 or 4 times’ (3), ‘5 or 6 times’ (4), and ‘7 or more times’ (5). An average was calculated from these responses and higher scores indicated higher levels of homophobic aggression. This scale had high internal consistency for this sample ( $\alpha = .90$ ).

**Homophobic Attitudes.** To measure homophobic attitudes, a semantic-differential scale created by Vonofakou et al. (2007) was used. This measure has also been used in previous research (Poteat et al., 2013). Participants were presented with the question “when you think about gay and lesbian individuals as a group how would you describe your feelings?”, and this was followed by the dimensions ‘respect-disapprove’, ‘friendly-hostile’, ‘negative-positive’, ‘admire-dislike’, and ‘suspicious-trusting’. Participants used a nine-point scale to indicate their feelings in relation to each item and these ranged from extremely positive (1) to extremely negative (9). Items three and five were reverse coded. An average score was calculated for each participant and a higher score indicated more negative attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community. This scale had good internal consistency for this sample ( $\alpha = .95$ ).

**Empathy.** The Adolescent Measure of Empathy and Sympathy (AMES; Vossen et al., 2015) was used to measure empathy. This scale was selected as it can be used to measure affective and cognitive empathy as well as total empathy. Cognitive empathy is the ability to identify and understand how another person may be feeling, while affective empathy is vicariously feeling or sharing in another’s emotions (Vossen et al., 2015). Participants are required to respond to statements such as “I can easily tell how others are feeling” (cognitive) and “when a friend is angry I feel angry too” (affective) on a five-point Likert scale ranging from ‘never’ (1) to ‘always’ (5). None of the 12 items are reverse coded and the items are averaged to calculate a total score or can be separated into the subscales. Higher scores indicate higher levels of empathy. For this sample, both subscales had good internal consistency (cognitive empathy  $\alpha = .85$ , affective empathy  $\alpha = .82$ ).

**Sexism.** The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996) includes 22 statements such as “women are too easily offended” and “women seek to gain power by getting control over men” to measure levels of sexism. Statements are responded to on a six-point Likert scale ranging from ‘disagree strongly’ (1) to ‘agree strongly’ (6). Six of the items are reverse coded e.g., “feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men”. The scale has good convergent and discriminant validity (Glick & Friske, 1996). For this sample this scale had good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .89$ ).

**Self-Esteem.** The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) was used to measure explicit self-esteem and requires participants to respond to statements using a four-point Likert scale ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ (1) to ‘strongly agree’ (4). Items 2, 5, 6, 8, 9 are reverse coded and scores are added together to calculate a total with higher scores indicating higher self-esteem. This scale is widely used in research and for this sample this scale had good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .89$ ).

## Results

### *Preliminary Analysis*

Data were cleaned by excluding participants ( $n = 65$ ) who did not complete key measures (masculinity, homophobic aggression, homophobic attitudes, empathy, and self-esteem). Scale-level imputation (using an average of a participant's responses for the same scale) was used for measures where one or two responses were missing. The total number of participants was 226 after data cleaning. Participant gender was recoded into ‘boy’ ( $n = 90$ ), ‘girl’ ( $n = 111$ ), and ‘other’ ( $n = 22$ ), with ‘other’ including participants who identified as non-binary, agender, genderqueer and gender-fluid, or who had entered a preferred term outside of the provided options. Three participants did not report their gender.

To compare mean differences between boys and girls and address hypotheses 4, 5 and 6, independent samples t-tests were conducted for each measure. To address assumptions of this analysis, box-plots were created to identify outliers ( $n = 18$ ) and these were excluded in the analysis. A Levene's Test was included in the analysis to test for homogeneity of variances between groups. To reduce the risk of a Type 1 error, a Bonferroni adjustment was applied, meaning that only results with a  $p$  value of less than .006 were considered significant. The results of the independent samples t-tests are shown in Table 2. Boys held more negative homophobic attitudes than girls ( $t(181) = 7.45, p < .001$ ) and scored higher on homophobic aggression than girls ( $t(181) = 6.87, p < .001$ ). Boys also held more sexist views than girls ( $t(181) = 8.85, p < .001$ ).

**Table 2**

*Comparison of Means between Boys and Girls*

|             | <i>Boys</i> |           | <i>Girls</i> |           | <i>df</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>95% CI</i><br>[ <i>LL, UL</i> ] |
|-------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|------------------------------------|
|             | <i>M</i>    | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>     | <i>SD</i> |           |          |          |                                    |
| Masculinity | 2.15        | .67       | 1.46         | .37       | 181       | 8.41     | <.001    | [.53, .86]                         |
| HAgg        | 2.28        | 1.31      | 1.24         | .41       | 181       | 6.87     | <.001    | [.74, .1.34]                       |
| HAtt        | 4.22        | 2.30      | 2.12         | 1.24      | 181       | 7.45     | <.001    | [1.55, 2.66]                       |
| Sexism      | 3.51        | .71       | 2.53         | .55       | 130       | 8.85     | <.001    | [.77, .1.21]                       |
| CogEmp      | 3.33        | .83       | 3.60         | .59       | 181       | -2.54    | .012     | [-.49, -.06]                       |
| AffEmp      | 2.35        | .74       | 2.99         | .67       | 181       | -6.15    | <.001    | [-.85, -.44]                       |
| TotalEmp    | 3.09        | .68       | 3.35         | .45       | 181       | -5.24    | <.001    | [-.63, -.29]                       |
| Self-esteem | 23.05       | 1.80      | 22.51        | 1.70      | 181       | 2.08     | .039     | [.03, 1.05]                        |

*Note.* Bonferroni adjusted  $p = .006$ . HAgg= homophobic aggression, HAtt = homophobic attitudes, CogEmp = cognitive empathy, AffEmp = affective empathy, TotalEmp = total empathy, CI = confidence intervals,  $p$  = two-tailed significance value.

### ***Correlation Analysis***

Descriptive statistics, means and standard deviations for each measure are shown in Table 3 for boys and Table 4 for girls. Gender coded as 'other' was diverse in terms of gender and therefore was not included in the correlational analysis as it is unclear how they might interact with the variables of interest. Correlations between variables were calculated separately for boys and girls as the regression (see below) included only the boys' data and to aid comparison. For boys and girls, masculinity had significant correlations with homophobic attitudes (boys  $r = .52$ , girls  $r = .40$ ) and sexism (boys  $r = .62$ , girls  $r = .51$ ), indicating that those high in masculinity held more negative attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community and more sexist beliefs. For boys, but not girls, masculinity was also significantly correlated with homophobic aggression ( $r = .62$ ), indicating that those high in masculinity used more homophobic aggression. For boys, masculinity also correlated with self-esteem ( $r = .21$ ) indicating that those high in masculinity also had greater explicit self-esteem. For both boys and girls, significant inverse correlations existed between masculinity and total empathy (boys,  $r = -.35$ , girls  $r = -.43$ ) and affective empathy (boys  $r = -.37$ , girls  $r = -.41$ ), indicating that higher scores in the masculinity measure correlated with lower scores on the empathy measure, and in particular, the affective empathy subscale. For boys but not girls, large inverse correlations existed between homophobic aggression and all measures of empathy (cognitive empathy  $r = -.42$ , affective empathy  $r = -.52$ , total empathy  $r = -.60$ ), indicating that boys who used more homophobic names, also scored lower on measures of empathy.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics and Pearson's Correlations Among Variables for Boys*

|               | Descriptives |          |           | Correlations |        |        |       |        |      |      |   |  |
|---------------|--------------|----------|-----------|--------------|--------|--------|-------|--------|------|------|---|--|
|               | <i>N</i>     | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1            | 2      | 3      | 4     | 5      | 6    | 7    | 8 |  |
| 1. MASC       | 90           | 2.22     | 0.76      | -            |        |        |       |        |      |      |   |  |
| 2.HAgg        | 90           | 2.36     | 1.33      | .62**        | -      |        |       |        |      |      |   |  |
| 3.HAtt        | 90           | 4.32     | 2.39      | .52**        | .73**  | -      |       |        |      |      |   |  |
| 4.CogEmp      | 90           | 3.20     | 0.95      | -.15         | -.42** | -.27** | -     |        |      |      |   |  |
| 5.AffEmp      | 90           | 2.27     | 0.79      | -.37**       | -.52** | -.38** | .49** | -      |      |      |   |  |
| 6.TotalEmp    | 90           | 2.97     | 0.80      | -.35**       | -.60** | -.45** | .85** | .82**  | -    |      |   |  |
| 7.Self-esteem | 90           | 23.08    | 1.91      | .21*         | .26*   | .20    | -.04  | -.16   | -.16 | -    |   |  |
| 8.Sexism      | 90           | 3.49     | 0.74      | .62**        | .39**  | .45**  | .10   | -.31** | -.15 | .25* | - |  |

*Note.* HAgg = homophobic aggression, HAtt = homophobic attitudes, CogEmp = cognitive empathy, AffEmp = affective empathy, TotalEmp = total empathy, \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 4**

*Descriptive Statistics and Pearson's Correlations Among Variables for Girls*

|                | Descriptives |          |           | Correlations |       |        |       |       |       |     |   |  |
|----------------|--------------|----------|-----------|--------------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-----|---|--|
|                | <i>N</i>     | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1            | 2     | 3      | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7   | 8 |  |
| 1. Masculinity | 111          | 1.48     | 0.40      | -            |       |        |       |       |       |     |   |  |
| 2.HAgg         | 111          | 1.36     | 0.70      | .16          | -     |        |       |       |       |     |   |  |
| 3.HAtt         | 111          | 2.35     | 1.63      | .40**        | .59** | -      |       |       |       |     |   |  |
| 4.CogEmp       | 111          | 3.61     | 0.60      | -.05         | .08   | -.12   | -     |       |       |     |   |  |
| 5.AffEmp       | 111          | 2.97     | 0.68      | -.41**       | -.01  | -.22*  | .21*  | -     |       |     |   |  |
| 6.TotalEmp     | 111          | 3.53     | 0.47      | -.43**       | -.08  | -.30** | .61** | .83** | -     |     |   |  |
| 7.Self-esteem  | 111          | 22.54    | 1.82      | .07          | -.04  | .15    | -.23* | -.16  | -.19* | -   |   |  |
| 8.Sexism       | 111          | 2.58     | 0.61      | .51**        | .35** | .52**  | -.07  | -.13  | -.24* | .10 | - |  |

*Note.* HAgg = Homophobic aggression, HAtt = homophobic attitudes, CogEmp = cognitive empathy, AffEmp = affective empathy, TotalEmp = total empathy, \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Regression Analysis: Homophobic Aggression**

The aim of this research was to explore the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression in boys therefore the data set was separated by gender and a regression analysis was performed only on the data from boys. The study found that the assumptions for a linear regression, including homoscedasticity, normality of residuals, linear relationship, and multicollinearity, were met for boys. Furthermore, sexism was excluded from the regression model due to a significant number of incomplete responses ( $n = 19$ ) from the participants. Cook’s distances were calculated to detect cases with high points of leverage, that is, highly influential data points which may affect the outcome and accuracy of the regression. Values which were substantially larger than the rest (higher than 0.45) were excluded.

A multiple linear regression was conducted to explore the extent to which masculinity, homophobic attitudes, cognitive empathy, affective empathy, and self-esteem could predict homophobic aggression in boys. Results are shown in Table 5 and Figure 3 shows a visual representation of the model, highlighting significant predictors. The final model accounted for 68% of the variance in homophobic aggression in boys (total  $r^2 = .68$ ,  $f(5,84) = 35.74$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Masculinity ( $\beta = .28$ ) and homophobic attitudes ( $\beta = .47$ ) were the strongest predictors of homophobic aggression ( $p < .001$ ); high scores in masculinity and more negative attitudes towards the LGBTQI+ community both significantly predicted higher homophobic aggression in boys. Cognitive empathy significantly predicted homophobic aggression in boys ( $\beta = -2.44$ ,  $p = .02$ ), and this was an inverse relationship indicating that lower scores on cognitive empathy significantly predicted higher levels of homophobic aggression. The same was found for affective empathy in that lower scores on affective empathy significantly predicted ( $p = .06$ ) higher homophobic aggression in boys ( $\beta = -1.90$ ).

**Table 5**

*Multiple Regression Results for Homophobic Aggression in Boys*

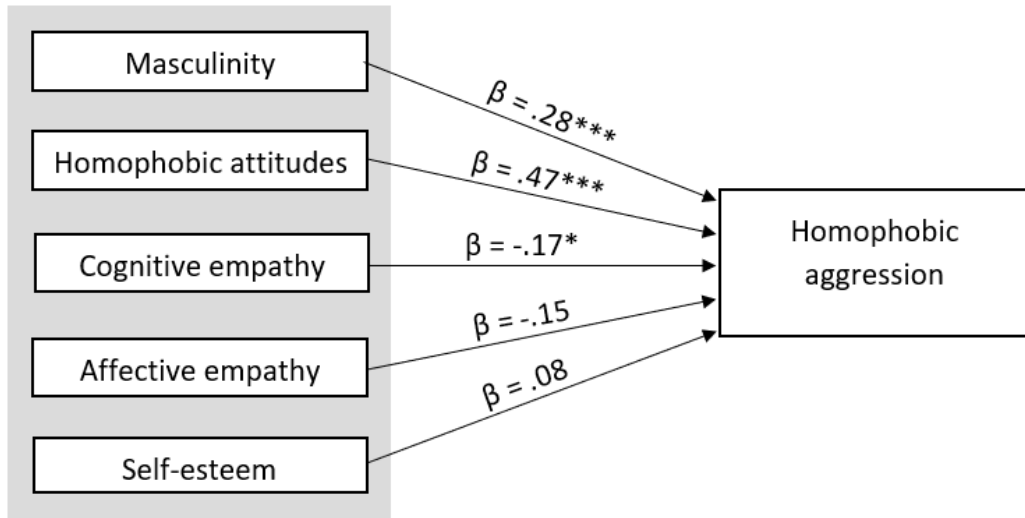
| Variable    | <i>B</i> | <i>SE B</i> | $\beta$ | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|-------------|----------|-------------|---------|----------|----------|
| Constant    | .25      | 1.01        |         | .22      | .82      |
| MASC        | .49      | .13         | .28     | 3.76     | <.001    |
| Attitudes   | .26      | .04         | .47     | 6.17     | <.001    |
| CogEmp      | -.24     | .10         | -.17    | -2.44    | .02      |
| AffEmp      | -.25     | .13         | -.15    | -1.90    | .06      |
| Self-esteem | .05      | .04         | .08     | 1.22     | .22      |

*Note.* MASC= masculinity, CogEmp = cognitive empathy, AffEmp = affective empathy.



**Figure 3**

*Predictors in the Multiple Regression Model for Homophobic Aggression*



Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Regression Analysis: Homophobic Attitudes**

A second multiple linear regression was conducted to explore the extent to which masculinity, cognitive empathy, affective empathy, and self-esteem could predict homophobic attitudes in boys. As above, sexism was not included in the regression model as a large number of participants did not complete the measure ( $n = 19$ ). Assumptions for regression were checked again and new Cook’s distances were calculated and distances which were substantially larger than the rest (above .50) were excluded from the analysis. As above, the regression analysis was performed only on the data from boys.

The results of the regression on homophobic attitudes are shown in Table 6 and a visual representation of the model, highlighting significant predictors, is shown in Figure 4. The final model accounted for 33% of the variance in homophobic attitudes in boys (Total  $r^2 = .33$ ,  $f(4,85) = 10.42$ ,  $p < .001$ ). High levels of masculinity significantly predicted ( $p < .001$ ) more negative attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community in boys, as measured by high scores on the homophobic attitudes scale ( $\beta = .43$ ). The remaining predictors included within the model did not reach statistical significance.

**Table 6**

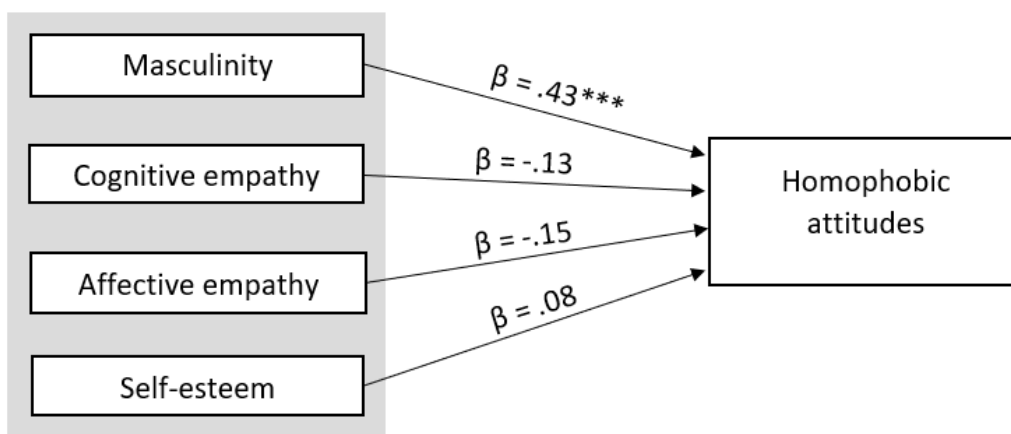
*Multiple Regression Results for Homophobic Attitudes in Boys*

| Variable    | <i>B</i> | <i>SE B</i> | $\beta$ | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|-------------|----------|-------------|---------|----------|----------|
| Constant    | 1.20     | 2.83        |         | .42      | .67      |
| MASC        | 1.34     | .31         | .43     | 4.39     | <.001    |
| CogEmp      | -.33     | .26         | -.13    | -1.28    | .20      |
| AffEmp      | -.46     | .33         | -.15    | -1.38    | .17      |
| Self-esteem | .10      | .11         | .08     | .85      | .40      |

*Note.* MASC = masculinity, CogEmp = cognitive empathy, AffEmp = affective empathy.

**Figure 4**

*Predictors in the Multiple Regression Model for Homophobic Attitudes*



*Note.* \**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01, \*\*\**p* < .001.

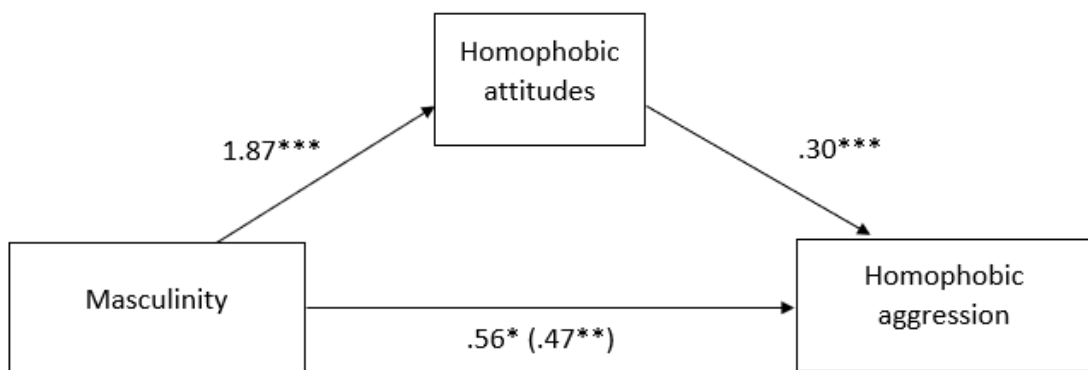
**Mediation and Moderation Analysis**

**Mediation: Homophobic Attitudes.** PROCESS (Model 4, version 4.3; Hayes, 2022) was used to test whether homophobic attitudes mediated the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression in boys. Figure 5 shows a visual representation of the model. Cognitive empathy, affective empathy and self-esteem were included as covariates in this model to control for their effects as these variables all correlated with masculinity, homophobic aggression, or both for boys. The total effect of masculinity on homophobic aggression was positive and significant (*b* = 1.04, *SE* = .14, 95% CI [.76, 1.31], *p* < .001). There was a significant positive relationship between masculinity and homophobic attitudes (*b* = 1.87, *SE* = .28, 95% CI [1.32, 2.42], *p* = .000) with higher scores on masculinity associated with higher scores on homophobic attitudes, indicating more negative views towards the LGBTQ+ community. There was also a significant positive relationship between homophobic attitudes and homophobic aggression (*b* = .30, *SE* = .05, 95% CI [.21, .39], *p* = .000). There was a significant direct effect of masculinity on homophobic aggression

even when accounting for the mediator ( $b = .47, SE = .14, 95\% CI [.19, .76], p = .001$ ). The indirect effect was significant, suggesting that masculinity can affect homophobic aggression via homophobic attitudes ( $b = 0.56, Bootstrapped SE = .13, bootstrapped 95\% CI [.34, .83]$ ). Overall, this analysis found a partial mediation: boys who scored higher on masculinity, scored higher on homophobic attitudes (i.e., held more negative attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community) which predicted higher levels of homophobic aggression perpetration.

**Figure 5**

*Path Model of the Relationships Between Masculinity, Homophobic Attitudes, and Homophobic Aggression*



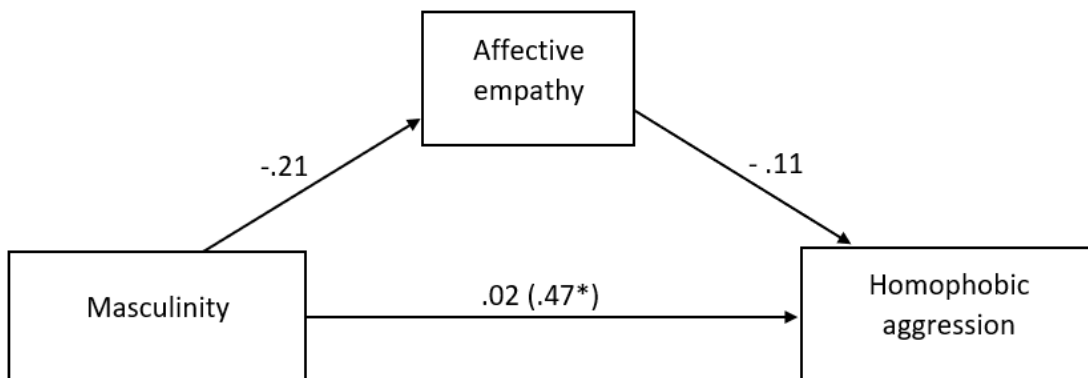
*Note.* \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Path coefficients are unstandardised regression coefficients. The value in parenthesis is the direct effect of masculinity on homophobic aggression.

**Mediation: Empathy.** For boys, there was a significant inverse correlation between affective empathy and masculinity and a significant inverse correlation between affective empathy and homophobic aggression. Low scores on affective empathy also predicted higher homophobic aggression in boys. Therefore, PROCESS (Model 4, version 4.3; Hayes, 2022) was used to test whether affective empathy mediated the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression in boys. Figure 6 shows a visual representation of the model. Cognitive empathy, homophobic attitudes and self-esteem were included as covariates in the model as these correlated with masculinity, homophobic aggression, or both for boys. In this model, the total effect of masculinity on homophobic aggression was positive and significant ( $b = .50, SE = .14, 95\% CI [.22, .78], p = .001$ ). High scores on masculinity were associated with low scores on affective empathy, however this relationship was not significant ( $b = -.21, SE = .13, 95\% CI [-.48, .05], p = .112$ ). Low scores on affective empathy were associated with high scores on homophobic aggression, however this relationship was also not significant ( $b = -.11, SE = .12, 95\% CI [-.35, .12], p = .351$ ). There was a significant direct effect of masculinity on homophobic aggression, even

when accounting for the mediator of affective empathy ( $b = .47, SE = .14, 95\% CI [.19, .76], p = .001$ ). However, the indirect effect of masculinity on homophobic aggression, via affective empathy was not significant ( $b = .02, Bootstrapped SE = .03, Bootstrapped 95\% CI [-.03, .11]$ ).

**Figure 6**

*Path Model of the Relationships Between Masculinity, Affective Empathy, and Homophobic Aggression*



*Note.* \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Path coefficients are unstandardised regression coefficients. The value in parenthesis is the direct effect of masculinity on homophobic aggression.

**Moderation: Cognitive and Affective Empathy.** To address hypothesis 8, masculinity was used as a predictor and affective and cognitive empathy were used as moderators in predicting homophobic aggression in boys using process (Model 2, version 4.3; Hayes, 2022). Self-esteem and homophobic attitudes were included as covariates in the model due to the correlations between variables (see Table 3) and results of the regression analysis (see Table 5). The model is shown in Table 7 and Figure 7 shows a visual representation of the model. The overall moderation analysis was significant ( $R^2 = .75, F(7,76) = 31.82, p < .001$ ), however affective empathy was the only significant moderator in this model. Figure 8 shows the simple slopes graph for this moderation. These results indicate that affective empathy most strengthens the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression in the context of high cognitive empathy. This may suggest that knowing how to hurt others (cognitive empathy) while not feeling the effects themselves (affective empathy), may contribute to the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression perpetration.

**Table 7**

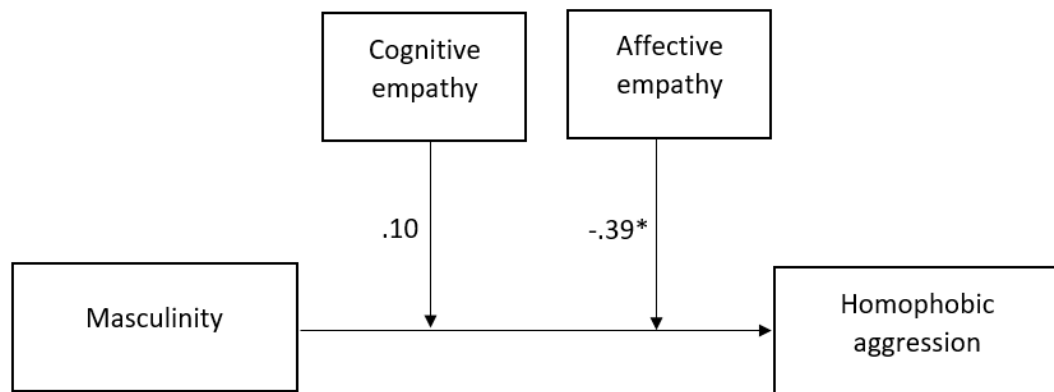
*Results of Moderation Analysis: Masculinity Predicting Homophobic aggression with Cognitive and Affective Empathy as Moderators*

|                                 | <i>B</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>95% CI</i> |
|---------------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|---------------|
| Masculinity                     | .42      | .15       | 2.92     | .005     | .13, .71      |
| Affective empathy               | -.15     | .12       | -1.26    | .210     | -.37, .08     |
| Cognitive empathy               | -.15     | .10       | -1.44    | .15      | -.36, .06     |
| Masculinity x affective empathy | -.39     | .15       | -2.58    | .012     | -.70, -.09    |
| Masculinity x cognitive empathy | .10      | .13       | .81      | .421     | -.15, .35     |

*Note.* CI = confidence intervals.

**Figure 7**

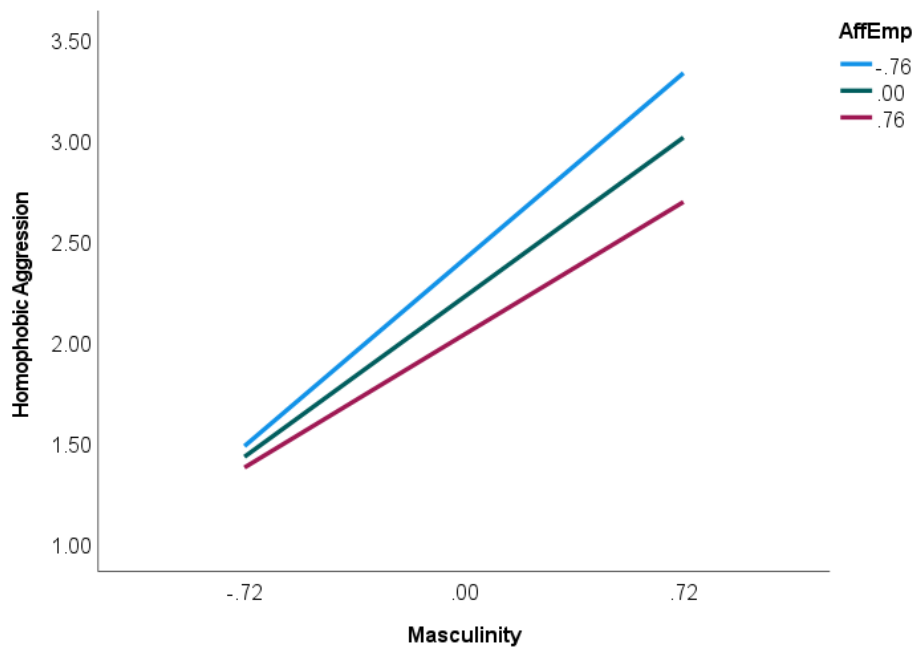
*Path Model of the Relationships Between Masculinity, Cognitive Empathy, Affective Empathy, and Homophobic Aggression*



*Note.* \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Path coefficients are unstandardised regression coefficients for the interaction between cognitive empathy and masculinity, and affective empathy and masculinity.

**Figure 8**

*Simple Slopes Graph for the Moderator Affective Empathy on the Relationship Between Masculinity and Homophobic Aggression*



Note. AffEmp = affective empathy.

**Moderation: Self-Esteem.** To address hypothesis 9, masculinity was used as a predictor and self-esteem was used as a moderator in predicting homophobic aggression in boys using PROCESS (Model 1, version 4.3; Hayes, 2022). Cognitive empathy, affective empathy, and homophobic attitudes were included as covariates in the model due to the correlations between variables (see Table 3) and results of the regression analysis (see Table 5). The model is shown in Table 8 and Figure 9 shows a visual representation of the model. The overall moderation model was significant ( $R^2 = .72, F(6, 77) = 33.28, p < .001$ ), however the moderator of self-esteem was not significant ( $p = .956$ ) and the interaction between masculinity and self-esteem to predict homophobic aggression was also not significant ( $p = .690$ ).

**Table 8**

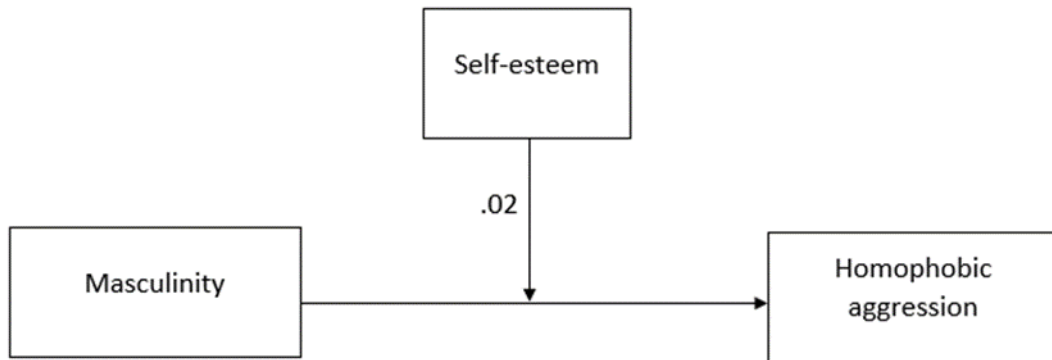
*Results of Moderation Analysis: Masculinity Predicting Homophobic Aggression with Self-Esteem as a Moderator*

|                           | <i>B</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>95% CI</i> |
|---------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|---------------|
| Masculinity               | .06      | 1.05      | .06      | .956     | -2.03, 2.15   |
| Self-esteem               | .01      | .11       | .06      | .956     | -.21, .22     |
| Masculinity x self-esteem | .02      | .04       | .40      | .690     | -.07, .10     |

Note. CI = confidence intervals.

**Figure 9**

*Path Model of the Relationships Between Masculinity, Self-Esteem, and Homophobic Aggression*



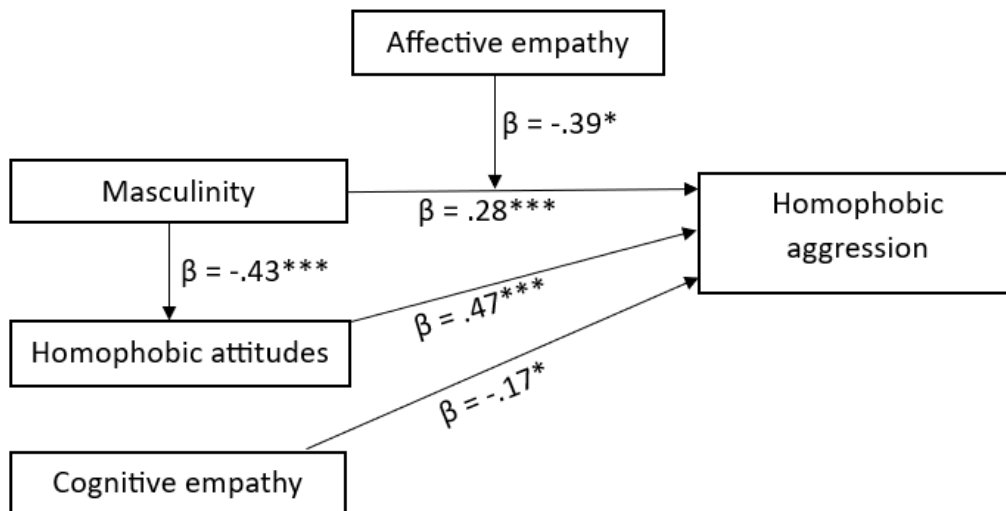
*Note.* \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Path coefficients are unstandardised regression coefficients for the interaction between self-esteem and masculinity.

***Final Model***

Figure 10 shows the final model for the theoretically guided path analysis. This model illustrates the two theoretical mechanisms behind masculinity leading to homophobic aggression in boys found in this study. Firstly, masculinity predicts homophobic attitudes ( $\beta = -.43$ ) and homophobic attitudes predict homophobic aggression ( $\beta = .47$ ). This suggests that the link between masculinity and homophobic aggression is partially due to the homophobic attitudes that masculinity predicts. The second mechanism is that affective empathy moderates the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression in boys ( $\beta = -.39$ ). This is an inverse relationship suggesting that the relationship between high masculinity and high homophobic aggression is strengthened in the context of low affective empathy. This shows that boys high in masculinity are more likely to perpetrate more homophobic aggression when they also have low affective empathy.

**Figure 10**

*Final Path Analysis Model*



Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Discussion**

The research aimed to explore the connection between fragile masculinity and homophobic aggression in adolescents, and how this may function in a similar way to narcissism. The first question examined whether adolescent boys experience masculinity threat. The second question explored the parallels between fragile masculinity and narcissism. Lastly, the research investigated the relationship between fragile masculinity, homophobic attitudes, and aggression in adolescents. Overall, the findings indicate that adolescent boys do experience masculinity threat, which amplifies homophobic attitudes and aggression in a manner akin to narcissism.

In relation to masculinity threat, the boys in this sample reported significantly higher homophobic attitudes than girls and high scores in masculinity significantly predicted high scores in homophobic attitudes in boys (H1). Furthermore, boys scored significantly higher than girls on the homophobic aggression scale, which measured homophobic jokes and name-calling. Although this does not directly evidence masculinity threat per se, previous research on men has also found that masculinity threats increase men’s use and endorsement of homophobic jokes (Dodson, 2014; O’Connor & Eisenhart, 1998). These findings add weight to the hypothesis that boys also experience masculinity threat, similar to men (Willer, et al. 2013).

Further support for the hypothesis that boys experience masculinity threat, is the relationship between masculinity threat and sexism. Research on men has shown that threats to their masculinity can increase sexist views and sexualisation of women (Dahl et al., 2015). The boys in this study reported more sexist views compared to girls (H2) and masculinity was



significantly correlated with sexism (H3). Although this study did not experimentally manipulate masculinity threat in adolescent boys, we can draw cautious conclusions from the data. The relationship between masculinity and sexism, and the relationship between masculinity and homophobic attitudes and aggression, together suggest that the boys in this sample may also experience masculinity threat on a wider societal level, as has been evidenced in men (Willer et al., 2013).

In the present study I sought to test the hypothesis that fragile masculinity functions in a similar way to narcissism and showed that high masculinity correlated with high explicit self-esteem in boys (H4). This is in accordance with research suggesting that narcissism features a dual processing model of self-esteem, with high explicit and low implicit self-esteem (Sandstrom & Jordan, 2008). Only explicit self-esteem was measured in the present study, therefore more research is needed to explore whether fragile masculinity also features a dual processing model of self-esteem which would further evidence the similarities between narcissism and fragile masculinity. It may also be possible that masculinity also has a dual processing effect; that is, implicit masculinity, the unconscious attitudes about one's own masculinity, and explicit masculinity, the outward expression of masculine gender norms. This may be an interesting area for future research.

The role empathy plays in the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression is a novel finding for this field of research. Narcissism is associated with low empathy (Urbonaviciute & Hepper, 2020) perhaps due to an attentional bias toward the self (Sargeant, 2013). Narcissists may be particularly motivated to avoid affective empathy (Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012) as it allows them to exploit others without vicariously feeling what the other person is feeling (Hepper et al., 2014). In this study, high masculinity correlated with low empathy, and in particular, low affective empathy (H5), and in fragile masculinity, men are motivated to avoid expressions of empathy due to it being stereotypically viewed as a feminine emotion (Burriss et al., 2015; Vescio et al., 2021). This lack of empathy and self-focus may be the underlying mechanism behind narcissists' tendency to bully (Sargeant, 2013).

Similarly, the regression analysis in this study showed that low empathy could significantly predict homophobic aggression in boys. The results of the moderation analysis (H8) suggest that knowing how to hurt others (cognitive empathy) while not feeling the effects themselves (affective empathy) may contribute to the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression, which suggests a similar mechanism to the relationship between narcissism and bullying.

The findings of this study suggest a similar relationship between empathy and bullying for both narcissism and fragile masculinity, however, the relationship between masculinity and empathy goes one step further: masculinity further reduces the motivation to show empathy due

to the effects of masculinity threat and the consequent need to avoid expressions of emotion coded as 'feminine'. The relationship between narcissism and empathy results in bullying, however the findings of this study suggest that in fragile masculinity, this relationship results specifically in homophobic bullying or aggression. This is due to masculinity threat resulting in the need for men and boys to show extreme attitudes and behaviours associated with masculinity, which includes homophobic acts and attitudes, which is evidenced in this study and in the previous literature (Dodson, 2014; Willer et al, 2013).

The final path model was theoretically guided and combines the findings from the mediation and moderation models and the linear regression analysis. This path analysis model illustrates the two mechanisms underlying the relationship between fragile masculinity and homophobic aggression. Masculinity significantly predicted homophobic attitudes in boys and homophobic attitudes significantly predicted homophobic aggression; this suggests that masculinity leads to homophobic aggression due to homophobic attitudes. Secondly, masculinity significantly predicted homophobic aggression, and this was moderated by affective empathy. This moderation suggests that boys who scored high on masculinity also scored high on homophobic aggression, and this relationship was strengthened if they scored low on affective empathy. This model suggests that masculinity and homophobic attitudes are risk factors for homophobic aggression in adolescent boys, and that affective empathy plays an important role in the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression.

The findings of this study add to the existing literature that has documented a link between masculinity and homophobic attitudes and aggression. In this study, high levels of masculinity significantly predicted homophobic aggression and attitudes in boys in this sample (H10 and H11). Previous research with adolescents has described how homophobic-name-calling and language is used to police masculinity in boys and is not always underpinned by homophobia (Fulcher, 2017; Pascoe, 2005). However, in this study, homophobic attitudes partially mediated the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression (H12), which suggests that use of homophobic language or jokes by teenage boys is driven, at least somewhat, by homophobia. These findings add to the literature proposing that masculinity is related to homophobic bullying in adolescents.

### ***Strengths and Limitations of the Study***

This study was the first to explore whether fragile masculinity functions in a similar way to narcissism and provides a useful model to further our understanding of the mechanisms behind homophobia and homophobic aggression in adolescent boys.

One of the aims of this study was to explore the effects of masculinity threat in adolescent boys. However, there are ethical implications to inducing such threat in young people

due to the anxiety inducing nature of threatening a valued identity construct. Therefore, I drew from the literature on masculinity threat in men to deduce whether adolescent boys feel masculinity threat without the need to induce it in an experimental design. Although the results of this study do suggest that adolescent boys feel masculinity threat, due to the differences in sexism, homophobic attitudes and homophobic aggression when compared to girls, only cautious conclusions can be drawn.

A methodological limitation of this study was that data was collected from only one school in the South-West of England. The secondary school is situated in a rural town with a population of 43,000 with 94% of the population being White British, indicating a considerable lack of diversity.

A general limitation of survey studies is that they only collect self-report measures. In this study, it may have been beneficial to triangulate homophobic aggression with teacher-reports, however this would have compromised the anonymity of the participants. Furthermore, self-report questionnaires are vulnerable to self-report and social desirability bias. This study measured several variables that may have been particularly vulnerable to social desirability bias due to their anti-social nature, namely, homophobic aggression, homophobic attitudes, and sexism. Furthermore, the secondary school used for data-collection had had an external agency come in to talk to the Year 9 boys about the dangers of toxic masculinity a few weeks prior to data-collection which may have influenced the results by increasing social desirability bias further. Although the study was anonymous and this was explained to participants in the information sheet, the boys of this age range may have been particularly conscious of how their teachers would wish them to respond, particularly to the masculinity, homophobic aggression, homophobic attitudes, and sexism questions.

### ***Directions for Future Research***

Firstly, more research is needed to replicate and extend the findings of this study to validate this new model of fragile masculinity and homophobic bullying which suggests that it functions in a similar way to narcissism and bullying. One important direction would be to explore the possibility of fragile masculinity featuring a dual processing model of self-esteem, as is evidenced in narcissism (Sandstrom & Jordan, 2008). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) used in the current study relies on self-report and therefore only measures explicit self-esteem. Implicit Association Tests may be useful tools in exploring implicit self-esteem in adolescent boys who score highly in measures of masculinity, which may provide more evidence for the similarities between narcissism and fragile masculinity.

Furthermore, it may be interesting to replicate studies which have explored the effects of inducing masculinity threat in men with an adolescent sample. It would be helpful to explore

whether the masculine overcompensation thesis is also present in adolescents, and whether this increases homophobic attitudes and aggression in a controlled experimental setting for adolescent boys as well as men. However, as previously mentioned, there are ethical implications to this, and research is first needed on how to reverse this effect should it be triggered.

Lastly, it may be possible to use this model to explore ways of reducing the effects of masculinity threat on homophobic attitudes and acts. The finding that empathy plays an important role in the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression suggests that empathy may be key to intervention. To explore this further, research could experimentally induce empathy and perspective taking in boys who score highly on masculinity and homophobic aggression and investigate the subsequent impact on their attitudes and behaviours. This may be a useful avenue for intervention to reducing homophobia and homophobic bullying in educational settings.

### ***Implications for Practice***

Despite some evidence of societal shifts towards greater acceptance and celebration of the LGBTQ+ community (McCormack, 2012), this study confirms that homophobia and homophobic aggression such as homophobic-name-calling and teasing are still present in UK secondary schools. While UK schools have policies to protect students against bullying (*Bullying at School*, n.d.), it is important that these policies are extended to include homophobic bullying specifically and to prohibit the use of homophobic language in any context. Homophobic-name-calling should be targeted even if it is framed as 'banter' within friendship groups as this can create a hostile environment, particularly for sexually diverse young people, whether or not they have disclosed their sexuality (DeLay et al., 2017).

This study has shown that empathy is a powerful protective factor. Schools and Educational Psychologists could consider incorporating empathy as a protective factor against homophobic aggression in environments where it is present. One effective method to enhance empathy is by encouraging individuals to adopt the perspectives of others, as suggested by Todd and Galinsky (2014). Through facilitating young people's understanding and appreciation of the perspectives of sexually diverse individuals, it may be possible to enhance their empathy, leading to a potential decrease in their engagement in homophobic aggression.

### ***Conclusion***

This study is the first to suggest a model of fragile masculinity leading to homophobic aggression in adolescents which functions in a similar way to narcissism and bullying. While further research is needed, this study also adds evidence to the argument that boys experience masculinity threat and this may be one of the underlying causes of homophobic attitudes and aggression. The initial step in bringing about change in attitudes and behaviours is to understand

the fundamental causes and mechanisms behind them. By understanding these factors, we can identify strategies and approaches to transform them. Indeed, this model reveals how empathy plays an important role in the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression and may be a protective factor to which future investigation and intervention could build upon to reduce homophobia and homophobic aggression in adolescents.



**Appendix A Search Terms**

**Table 9**

*Search Terms*

| <b>Search term</b>    | <b>Search strategy</b>   |
|-----------------------|--|
| Masculinity           | “hegemonic masculinity” OR “hypermasculine” OR<br>“hypermasculinity” OR “masculinity ideals” OR “masculine ideals” OR<br>“masculinity norms” OR “masculine norms” OR “threat to<br>masculinity OR “masculinity threat” OR “gender threat” OR “fragile<br>masculinity” OR “masculine overcompensation” OR masculinity<br>AND              |
| Young people          | “young adult” OR adolescen* OR youth* OR teen* OR “school age”<br>OR school or child* OR “young people” OR pupil* OR student*<br>AND   |
| Homophobic aggression | “homophobic bullying” OR “homophobic aggression” OR<br>“homophobic name calling” OR “homophobic harassment” OR<br>“homophobic teasing” OR homophobia OR “LGB* bullying” OR<br>“homophobic abuse” OR “homophobic verbal content” OR “queer<br>bashing” OR anti-gay OR “anti-LGB* harassment” OR “LGB*<br>harassment” OR “LGB* hate crime” |

*Note.* Databases: PsychINFO, ERIC, SCOPUS, ProQuest Dissertation and Theses

**Appendix B Study Characteristics Table**

**Table 10**

*Overview of Included Studies and Their Key Characteristics*

| <b>Study</b>                | <b>Population characteristics</b>   | <b>Design and analysis</b>  | <b>Relevant measures</b>  | <b>Key findings in relation to review question</b>   | <b>Effect size included in meta-analysis (correlation coefficient)</b> |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|--|--|
| Birkett and Espelage (2015) | 10-14 years old<br>5 <sup>th</sup> - 8 <sup>th</sup> grade<br>493 participants<br>USA | Longitudinal and cross sectional<br><br>Hierarchical linear modelling | Adolescent Masculinity Ideology in Relationships Scale (AMIRS)<br><br>Homophobic Content Agent Target scale (HCAT)<br><br>University of Illinois Aggression Scales (bullying)<br><br>Friendship nominations | Significant correlation between masculinity and HNC<br><br>Youth who were victims of HNC increased their rate of HNC to others<br><br>Bullying was associated with HNC for male peer groups<br><br>Peer group levels of masculinity predicted individual levels of HNC but this effect decreased over time | 0.28   |
| Borgen (2016)               | 10-14 years old<br>35 participants<br>Only males<br>USA                               | Cross sectional<br><br>Regression                                     | Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity Scale (MAMS)<br><br>Bullying attitudes<br><br>University of Illinois Bullying Scale  | Significant correlation between masculinity and HNC<br><br>Bullying behaviour significantly predicted HNC but became insignificant when the mediator masculinity was included  | 0.41   |



| Study                  | Population characteristics   | Design and analysis   | Relevant measures  | Key findings in relation to review question   | Effect size included in meta-analysis (correlation coefficient) |
|------------------------|--|---|--|---|---|
| Espelage et al. (2018) | 10-14 years old<br>5 <sup>th</sup> - 8 <sup>th</sup> grade<br><br>1,655 participants<br><br>USA  | Cross sectional and longitudinal<br><br>Multilevel growth modelling | Homophobic Content Agent Target scale (HCAT)<br><br>Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale<br><br>Adolescent Masculinity Ideology in Relationships Scale (AMIRS)<br><br>Homophobic Content Agent Target scale (HCAT)<br><br>University of Illinois Bullying Scale | The mediator of masculinity, when controlling for bullying, was not significantly predictive of HNC<br><br>Within-person increases in masculinity did not significantly predict increases in HNC<br><br>Higher average (between-person) levels of masculinity was not associated with higher levels of HNC<br><br>HNC increased with age but the rate of acceleration slowed<br><br>Higher between-person and within-person levels of bullying was associated with higher levels of HNC<br><br>Higher level of sexual harassment was associated with higher levels of HNC | 0.024   |
| Merrin et al. (2018)   | 11-14 years old<br><br>6 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> grade<br><br>190 participants<br><br>USA | Longitudinal<br><br>Stochastic actor-based model                    | Adolescent Masculinity Ideology in Relationships Scale (AMIRS)<br><br>Homophobic Content Agent Target scale (HCAT)   | Found no significant relationship between masculinity and HNC<br><br>Increasing HNC was related to increasing popularity but this relationship was not linear   | Not included in meta-analysis due to missing data.              |

| Study                | Population characteristics                 | Design and analysis                                 | Relevant measures   | Key findings in relation to review question  | Effect size included in meta-analysis (correlation coefficient) |
|----------------------|--|---|---|--|---|
|                      |  |   | Attitudes towards bullying<br>University of Illinois Bullying Scale<br>Femininity Ideology Scale<br>Impulsivity<br>Friendship nominations<br>Impulsivity<br>Dominance<br>Neighbourhood violence | Youth with the highest levels of HNC were less likely to be popular<br>Youth had similar levels of HNC to their friends<br>Changes in peer group HNC predicted individual levels of HNC<br>Impulsivity was a significant predictor of HNC  |   |
| Poteat et al. (2011) | 11-18 years old<br>284 participants<br>USA | Cross sectional<br>Hierarchical regression analysis | Normative masculine and feminine activities<br>Male Role Attitude Scale (MRAS)<br>Homophobic Content Agent Target scale (HCAT)<br>University of Illinois Bullying Scale<br>Fighting             | Masculinity was significantly associated with HNC for boys (but not girls)<br>Beliefs supportive of violence moderated the relationship between masculinity and HNC for boys (but not girls)<br>Engaging in normative masculine activities was significantly associated with HNC for boys and girls<br>Beliefs supportive of violence significantly moderated the relationship between | 0.52  |

| Study                  | Population characteristics                          | Design and analysis                             | Relevant measures   | Key findings in relation to review question  | Effect size included in meta-analysis (correlation coefficient) |
|------------------------|---|---|---|--|---|
|                        |   |   | Relational aggression<br>Beliefs Supportive of Violence Scale   | normative masculine activities and aggression, but not HNC for boys<br>Beliefs supportive of violence significantly moderated the relationship between engaging in normative masculine activities and HNC for girls  |   |
| Slaatten et al. (2014) | 9 <sup>th</sup> grade<br>916 participants<br>Norway | Cross sectional<br>Logistic regression analysis | Homophobic Content Agent Target Scale (HCAT)<br>Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity Scale (MAMS)<br>Sexual orientation | Various subscales of masculinity measure were associated with various subscales of HNC<br>Emotional restriction significantly correlated with all subscales of targets of HNC except for 'a friend'<br>Heterosexism was significantly correlated with the HNC subscales of 'someone they thought was gay', 'someone they did not think was gay' and 'someone they did not know'<br>Logistic regression revealed that boys high on emotional restriction or social teasing (while controlling for other variables) were more likely to call others homophobic names | 0.04  |

| Study                | Population characteristics   | Design and analysis   | Relevant measures   | Key findings in relation to review question  | Effect size included in meta-analysis (correlation coefficient) |
|----------------------|--|---|---|--|---|
| Valido et al. (2022) | 10-16 years old<br>5 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> grade<br>1,655 participants<br>USA | Longitudinal<br><br>Latent growth modelling-regression or multiple regression | Homophobic Content Agent Target Scale (HCAT)<br><br>Seven items from AMIRS<br><br>Impulsivity<br><br>Empathy<br><br>Social dominance<br><br>Family conflict and hostility<br><br>Parental monitoring<br><br>Family social support<br><br>Exposure to community violence | Boys are more likely than girls to use and be the targets of HNC<br><br>Boys are more 4x more likely to call a friend than person they did not know a homophobic name<br><br>Boys are 1.7x more likely to use homophobic names for someone they did not think was gay than something they did think was gay<br><br>Higher average (between-person) levels of masculinity associated with higher HNC across time<br><br>Higher average (between-person) rates of impulsivity, dominance, family violence and family support also associated with higher levels HNC<br><br>Higher than average compared to their | 0.15  |

| Study | Population characteristics | Design and analysis | Relevant measures  | Key findings in relation to review question | Effect size included in meta-analysis (correlation coefficient) |
|-------|----------------------------|---------------------|--|---|---|
|       |                            |                     | Social support from adults at school<br><br>Sense of school belongingness<br><br>Peer social support |   |   |

**Appendix C    Quality Appraisal**

## C.1    Quality Appraisal of Studies Included in the Review

**Table 11***Quality Appraisal Ratings for Studies Included in the Review*

| <b>Study</b>             | <b>Quality score (/30)</b> |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Birkett & Espelage, 2015 | 26                         |
| Borgen, 2016             | 18                         |
| Espelage et al., 2018    | 29                         |
| Merrin, et al., 2018     | 28                         |
| Poteat et al., 2011      | 26                         |
| Slatten et al., 2014     | 25                         |
| Valido et al., 2022      | 28                         |

C.2 Quality Appraisal Checklist

**Adapted version of the NICE quality appraisal checklist for quantitative studies reporting correlations and associations.**

Reference: National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. (2012). *Methods for the development of NICE public health guidance (third edition)*.  
<https://www.nice.org.uk/process/pmg4/chapter/introduction>

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Study title:  |              |
| Study design:   |              |
| <b>Section 1: Population</b>  | <b>Score</b> |
| <b>1.1 Is the source population or source area well described?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was the country (e.g., developed or non-developed, type of health care system), setting (primary schools, community centres etc), location (urban, rural), population demographics etc adequately described?</li> </ul>   |              |
| <b>1.2 Is the eligible population or area representative of the source population or area?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was the recruitment of individuals, clusters or areas well defined (e.g., advertisement, birth register)?</li> <li>Was the eligible population representative of the source? Were important groups underrepresented?</li> </ul>   |              |
| <b>1.3 Do the selected participants or areas represent the eligible population or area?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was the method of selection of participants from the eligible population well described?</li> <li>What % of selected individuals or clusters agreed to participate? Were there any sources of bias?</li> <li>Were the inclusion or exclusion criteria explicit and appropriate?</li> </ul>   |              |
| <b>Section 2: Method of selection of exposure (or comparison) group</b>   |              |
| <b>2.1. How was selection bias minimised?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How was selection bias minimised?</li> </ul>   |              |
| <b>2.2 Was the selection of explanatory variables based on a sound theoretical basis?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How sound was the theoretical basis for selecting the explanatory variables?</li> </ul>  |              |
| <b>2.3 How well were likely confounding factors identified and controlled?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were there likely to be other confounding factors not considered or appropriately adjusted for?</li> <li>Was this sufficient to cause important bias?</li> </ul>  |              |
| <b>2.4 Is the setting applicable to the UK?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did the setting differ significantly from the UK?</li> </ul>   |              |
| <b>Section 3: Outcomes</b>  |              |
| <b>3.1 Were the outcome measures and procedures reliable?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were outcome measures subjective or objective (e.g., biochemically validated nicotine levels ++ vs self-reported smoking -)?</li> <li>How reliable were outcome measures (e.g., inter- or intra-rater reliability scores)?</li> <li>Was there any indication that measures had been validated (e.g., validated against a gold standard measure or assessed for content validity)?</li> </ul> |              |
| <b>3.2 Were the outcome measurements complete?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were all or most of the study participants who met the defined study outcome definitions likely to have been identified?</li> </ul>   |              |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>3.3 Were all the important outcomes assessed?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were all the important benefits and harms assessed?</li> <li>• Was it possible to determine the overall balance of benefits and harms of the intervention versus comparison?</li> </ul>  |  |
| <p><b>Section 4: Analyses</b></p>   |  |
| <p><b>4.1 Was the study sufficiently powered to detect a correlation?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A power of 0.8 (i.e., it is likely to see an effect of a given size if one exists, 80% of the time) is the conventionally accepted standard.</li> <li>• Is a power calculation presented? If not, what is the expected effect size? Is the sample size adequate?</li> </ul>        |  |
| <p><b>4.2 Were multiple explanatory variables considered in the analyses?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were there sufficient explanatory variables considered in the analysis?</li> </ul>   |  |
| <p><b>4.3 Were the analytical methods appropriate?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were important differences in follow-up time and likely confounders adjusted for?</li> </ul>  |  |
| <p><b>4.4 Was the precision of association given or calculable? Is association meaningful?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were confidence intervals or p values for effect estimates given or possible to calculate?</li> <li>• Were CIs wide or were they sufficiently precise to aid decision-making? If precision is lacking, is this because the study is under-powered?</li> </ul> |  |
| <p><b>Section 5: Summary</b></p>  |  |
| <p><b>5.1 Are the study results internally valid (i.e., unbiased)?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How well did the study minimise sources of bias (i.e., adjusting for potential confounders)?</li> <li>• Were there significant flaws in the study design?</li> </ul>  |  |
| <p><b>5.2 Are the findings generalisable to the source population (i.e., externally valid)?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there sufficient details given about the study to determine if the findings are generalisable to the source population?</li> <li>• Consider: participants, interventions and comparisons, outcomes, resource and policy implications.</li> </ul>         |  |

|    |  |
|----|--|
| ++ | Indicates that for that particular aspect of study design, the study has been designed or conducted in such a way as to minimise the risk of bias.   |
| +  | Indicates that either the answer to the checklist question is not clear from the way the study is reported, or that the study may not have addressed all potential sources of bias for that particular aspect of study design. |
| -  | Should be reserved for those aspects of the study design in which significant sources of bias may persist  |
| NR | Not reported. Should be reserved for those aspects in which the study under review fails to report how they have (or might have) been considered.  |
| NA | Should be reserved for those study design aspects that are not applicable given the study design under review  |



**Appendix D Hypothesis Table**

| <b>Do adolescent boys experience masculinity threat?</b>  |  |
|---|--|
| H1. Boys will score higher than girls on homophobic attitudes and homophobic aggression                 | Boys held more negative homophobic attitudes than girls ( $t(181) = 7.45, p < .001$ ) and scored higher on homophobic aggression than girls ( $t(181) = 6.87, p < .001$ ).   |
| H2. Boys will score higher on levels of sexism than girls   | Boys held more sexist views than girls ( $t(181) = 8.85, p < .001$ ).  |
| H3. High levels of masculinity will correlate with high levels of sexism                                | Masculinity significantly correlated with sexism (boys $r = .62$ , girls $r = .51$ ).  |
| <b>Does fragile masculinity function in a similar way to narcissism?</b>                                |  |
| H4. High levels of masculinity will correlate with high or low self-esteem                              | For boys, masculinity correlated with self-esteem ( $r = .21$ ) indicating that those high in masculinity also had greater explicit self-esteem.   |
| H5. High levels of masculinity will correlate with low levels of empathy                                | For both boys and girls, significant inverse correlations existed between masculinity and total empathy (boys, $r = -.35$ , girls $r = -.43$ ) and affective empathy (boys $r = -.37$ , girls $r = -.41$ ).  |
| H6. High levels of empathy will correlate with low levels of homophobic aggression                      | For boys but not girls, large inverse correlations existed between homophobic aggression and all measures of empathy (cognitive empathy $r = -.42$ , affective empathy $r = -.52$ , total empathy $r = -.60$ ), indicating that boys who used more homophobic names, also scored lower on measures of empathy. |
| H7. High levels of masculinity will correlate with high levels of homophobic aggression                 | For boys, but not girls, masculinity was significantly correlated with homophobic aggression ( $r = .62$ ).  |
| H8. Empathy will moderate the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression in boys        | The overall moderation analysis was significant ( $R^2 = .75, F(7,76) = 31.82, p < .001$ ), however affective empathy was the only significant moderator in this model.  |
| H9. Self-esteem will moderate the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression in boys    | The overall moderation model was significant ( $R^2 = .72, F(6, 77) = 33.28, p < .001$ ), however the moderator of self-esteem was not significant ( $p = .956$ ) and the interaction between masculinity and self-esteem to predict homophobic aggression was also not significant ( $p = .690$ ).            |
| <b>Is fragile masculinity related to homophobic attitudes and homophobic aggression in adolescents?</b> |  |
| H10. High levels of masculinity will predict homophobic aggression                                      | Masculinity significantly predicted homophobic aggression ( $\beta = .28, p < .001$ ).   |
| H11. High levels of masculinity will predict homophobic attitudes                                       | High levels of masculinity significantly predicted homophobic attitudes ( $\beta = .43, p < .001$ ).   |
| H12. Homophobic attitudes will mediate the relationship between masculinity and homophobic aggression   | The total effect of masculinity on homophobic aggression was positive and significant ( $b = 1.04, SE = .14, 95\% CI [.76, 1.31], p < .001$ ). There was a significant positive relationship   |

between masculinity and homophobic attitudes ( $b = 1.87, SE = .28, 95\% CI [1.32, 2.42], p = .000$ ). There was also a significant positive relationship between homophobic attitudes and homophobic aggression ( $b = .30, SE = .05, 95\% CI [.21, .39], p = .000$ ). There was a significant direct effect of masculinity on homophobic aggression even when accounting for the mediator ( $b = .47, SE = .14, 95\% CI [.19, .76], p = .001$ ). The indirect effect was significant, suggesting that masculinity can affect homophobic aggression via homophobic attitudes ( $b = 0.56, Bootstrapped SE = .13, bootstrapped 95\% CI [.34, .83]$ ). Overall, this analysis found a partial mediation.

## Appendix E Confirmation of Ethical Approval

You are logged in as Ffion Davies (Log out) Accessibility Tools

ERGO II University of Southampton  
Ethics and Research Governance Online

Home Submissions ▾

My Submissions (3)

| Category | Submission ID | Project Title   | Status          |  |
|----------|---------------|---|-----------------|--|
| B        | 71517         | Hegemonic masculinity and homophobic aggression in young people | <i>Approved</i> | <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;"><span style="background-color: #004a7c; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">View</span></div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;"><span style="background-color: #4caf50; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">→ Create Amendment</span></div> <div><span style="background-color: #2196f3; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">📅 Request Extension</span></div> |

**Appendix F Parent Information Sheet****Parent or Carer Information Sheet**

**Study Title:** Hegemonic Masculinity and Homophobic Aggression in Young People

**Researcher(s):** Ffion Davies

**University email:** fhd1g14@soton.ac.uk

**Ethics/ERGO no:** 71517

**Version and date:** Version 1, 29/04/2022

**What is the research about?**

My name is Ffion Davies and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom.

I am inviting your child to participate in a study regarding masculinity and homophobic aggression in young people.

The aim of this research is to better understand factors which may lead to homophobic aggression including beliefs about masculinity, gender norms and levels of empathy. I hope that this research will contribute to the understanding of how to reduce homophobic aggression and bullying amongst young people in secondary schools.

This study was approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) at the University of Southampton (Ethics/ERGO Number: 71517)

**What will happen to me if I take part?**

This study involves completing an anonymous questionnaire which should take approximately 30 minutes of your child's time. If you **DO NOT** wish for your child to take part in this survey, you will need to complete the Opt-Out Consent form and return to the school office. If your child is aged 16 or over, they will be informed that their parent/guardian does not wish for them to take part in the study, but they may still choose to participate. This survey is anonymous therefore your child's name will not be recorded, and researchers and school staff will not be able to identify your child's responses to the survey.

**Why has your child been asked to participate?**

Your child's school have agreed to help collect data for this research, therefore every student's parent or guardian have been given an opt-out consent form asking their child to take part. Your child has been asked to take part because they are between the ages of 11 and 19. Your child's school is just one in several secondary schools I am hoping to collect data in. I am aiming to collect data from around 200 participants for this study.

**What information will be collected?**

The questions in this survey ask for information in relation to your child's attitudes towards masculinity and gender roles. It will also ask about homophobic attitudes and aggression. Lastly, it will ask things about personality such as empathy and self-esteem. The survey will also ask for your child's age and gender identity. This survey is anonymous and therefore will not ask for your child's name or other details which could identify them.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

If you decide to allow your child to take part in this study their participation will contribute to knowledge in this area of research.

Upon completion of the survey your child will also have the opportunity to vote for a charity. Whichever charity has the most votes by the end of the research will receive a donation of £50

From the researcher on behalf of all the participants. This is optional and your child's choice will not be recorded as part of the study.

The charities your child will be able to vote for are:

|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| The Proud Trust<br><i>A charity which supports<br/>LGBTQ+ young people</i> | Friends of the Earth<br><i>A charity dedicated to<br/>sustainability</i> | RSPCA<br><i>Protecting pets and<br/>wildlife</i> | Cancer Research<br><i>Funding research into<br/>beating cancer</i> |
|--|--|--|--|

Your child's school is also receiving a collection of books relating to Inclusion and Diversity as compensation for their participation.

### **Are there any risks involved?**

It is expected that taking part in this study will not cause your child any psychological discomfort and/or distress, however, should they feel uncomfortable they can leave the survey at any time by closing the window. If your child would like more information or support relating to LGBTQ+ topics or feel distressed after the survey they can visit the following websites for support:

|                                      |    |                                  |
|--------------------------------------|----|----------------------------------|
| The Proud Trust<br>theproudtrust.org | or | Young Minds<br>youngminds.org.uk |
|--------------------------------------|----|----------------------------------|

### **What will happen to the information collected?**

All information collected for this study will be stored securely on a secure server. Anonymous data will be kept on the University data repository (ePrints Soton) for use in future research and for people to check the validity of this research.

The information collected will be analysed and written up as part of the researcher's thesis and published in a journal. The data collected will be anonymous and reports will not include information that can directly identify your child or their school.

The University of Southampton conducts research to the highest standards of ethics and research integrity. In accordance with our Research Data Management Policy, data will be held for 10 years after the study has finished when it will be securely destroyed.

### **What happens if there is a problem?**

If you are unhappy about any aspect of this study and would like to make a formal complaint, you can contact the Head of Research Integrity and Governance, University of Southampton, on the following contact details: Email: [rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk](mailto:rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk), phone: + 44 2380 595058.

Please quote the Ethics/ERGO number above. Please note that by making a complaint you might be no longer anonymous.

More information on your rights as a study participant is available via this link:  
<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/about/governance/participant-information.page>

**Thank you for reading this information sheet and considering taking part in this research.**

Appendix G Parent Opt-Out Consent Form

OPT-OUT CONSENT FORM

Study title: Hegemonic Masculinity and homophobic aggression in young people

Researcher name: Ffion Davies

ERGO number: 71517

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

|   |  |
|---|--|
| I <u>DO NOT</u> wish for my child to take part in this research project |  |
|---|--|

Name of child (print name).....

Name of parent or carer .....

Signature of parent or carer .....

Date.....

Name of researcher (print name).....

Signature of researcher .....

Date.....

## **Appendix H Under 16 Participant Information Sheet and Assent**

### **Under 16 Combined Participant Information Sheet and Assent Form**

**Study Title:** Hegemonic Masculinity and Homophobic Aggression in Young People

**Researcher(s):** Ffion Davies

**University email:** fhd1g14@soton.ac.uk

**Ethics/ERGO no:** 71517

**Version and date:** Version 1, 29/04/2022

#### **What is the research about?**

My name is Ffion Davies and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom.

I am inviting you to participate in a study regarding masculinity and homophobic aggression in young people. My aim is to better understand factors which may lead to homophobic aggression including beliefs about masculinity, gender norms and levels of empathy. I hope that this research will contribute to the understanding of how to reduce homophobic aggression and bullying amongst young people in secondary schools.

This study was approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) at the University of Southampton (Ethics/ERGO Number: 71517)

#### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

This study involves completing an anonymous questionnaire which should take approximately 30 minutes of your time. If you are happy to complete this survey, you will need to tick (check) the box below to show your assent. You can decline to assent to taking part in this research at any point. As this survey is anonymous, the researcher and staff at your school will not be able to know who provided which answers therefore after you have completed the survey it will not be possible to withdraw your responses.

#### **Why have I been asked to participate?**

Your school have agreed to help collect data for this research, therefore every student's parent or guardian have been given a consent form asking their child to take part. You have been asked to take part because you are between the ages of 11 and 19 and your parent or guardian have given consent for you to participate. Your school is just one in several secondary schools I am hoping to collect data in. I am aiming to collect around 200 participants for this study. A member of staff at your school has a list of names of young people who have parental consent to take part and those who do not.

#### **What information will be collected?**

The questions in this survey ask for information in relation to your attitudes towards masculinity and gender roles. It will also ask about homophobic attitudes and aggression. Lastly, it will ask things about your personality such as empathy and self-esteem. The survey will also ask for your age and gender identity. This survey is anonymous and therefore will not ask for your name or other details which could identify you.

#### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

If you decide to take part in this study your participation will contribute to knowledge in this area of research.

Upon completion of the survey you will also have the opportunity to vote for a charity. Whichever charity has the most votes by the end of the research will receive a donation of £50 From the researcher on behalf of all the participants. This is optional and your choice will not be recorded as part of the study.

The charities you will be able to vote for are:

|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| The Proud Trust<br><i>A charity which supports<br/>LGBTQ+ young people</i> | Friends of the Earth<br><i>A charity dedicated to<br/>sustainability</i> | RSPCA<br><i>Protecting pets and<br/>wildlife</i> | Cancer Research<br><i>Funding research into<br/>beating cancer</i> |
|--|--|--|--|

Your school is also receiving a collection of books relating to Inclusion and Diversity as compensation for their participation.

### **Are there any risks involved?**

It is expected that taking part in this study will not cause you any psychological discomfort and/or distress, however, should you feel uncomfortable you can leave the survey at any time by closing the window. If you would like more information or support relating to LGBTQ+ topics or feel distressed after the survey you can visit the following websites for support:

|                                      |    |                                  |
|--------------------------------------|----|----------------------------------|
| The Proud Trust<br>theproudtrust.org | or | Young Minds<br>youngminds.org.uk |
|--------------------------------------|----|----------------------------------|

### **What will happen to the information collected?**

All information collected for this study will be stored on a secure server. Anonymous data will be kept on the University data repository (ePrints Soton) for use in future research and for people to check the validity of this research.

The information collected will be analysed and written up as part of the researcher's thesis and published in a journal. The data collected will be anonymous and reports will not include information that can directly identify you or your school.

The University of Southampton conducts research to the highest standards of ethics and research integrity. In accordance with our Research Data Management Policy, data will be held for 10 years after the study has finished when it will be securely destroyed.

### **What happens if there is a problem?**

If you are unhappy about any aspect of this study and would like to make a formal complaint, you can contact the Head of Research Integrity and Governance, University of Southampton, on the following contact details: Email: [rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk](mailto:rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk), phone: + 44 2380 595058.

Please quote the Ethics/ERGO number above. Please note that by making a complaint you might be no longer anonymous.

More information on your rights as a study participant is available via this link:

<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/about/governance/participant-information.page>

**Thank you for reading this information sheet and considering taking part in this research.**



|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>I have read and understood the information sheet above (29.04.2022 /version no.1) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.</p>  |  |
| <p>I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my anonymous data to be used for the purpose of this study and kept on the University data repository (ePrints Soton) for use in future research and for people to check the validity of this research.</p> |  |
| <p>I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw, up until the point of survey completion, for any reason without my participation rights being affected.</p>  |  |
| <p>I understand that after I have completed the survey I will not be able to withdraw as data is anonymous and it will not be possible to identify my responses.</p>   |  |

## Appendix I Over 16 Participant Information Sheet and Consent

### Over 16 Combined Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

**Study Title:** Hegemonic Masculinity and Homophobic Aggression in Young People

**Researcher(s):** Ffion Davies

**University email:** fhd1g14@soton.ac.uk

**Ethics/ERGO no:** 71517

**Version and date:** Version 1 29/04/2022

#### What is the research about?

My name is Ffion Davies and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom.

I am inviting you to participate in a study regarding masculinity and homophobic aggression in young people. My aim is to better understand factors which may lead to homophobic aggression including beliefs about masculinity, gender norms and levels of empathy. I hope that this research will contribute to the understanding of how to reduce homophobic aggression and bullying amongst young people in secondary schools.

This study was approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) at the University of Southampton (Ethics/ERGO Number: 71517).

#### What will happen to me if I take part?

This study involves completing an anonymous questionnaire which should take approximately 30 minutes of your time. If you are happy to complete this survey, you will need to tick (check) the boxes below to show your consent. You can decline to consent to taking part in this research at any point. As this survey is anonymous, the researcher will not be able to know who provided which answers therefore after you have completed the survey it will not be possible to withdraw your responses.

#### Why have I been asked to participate?

You have been asked to take part because you are between the ages of 11 and 19.

I am aiming to recruit around 200 Participants for this study.

#### What information will be collected?

The questions in this survey ask for information in relation to your attitudes towards masculinity and gender roles. It will also ask about homophobic attitudes and aggression. Lastly, it will ask things about your personality such as empathy and self-esteem. The survey will also ask for your age and gender identity. This survey is anonymous and therefore will not ask for your name or other details which could identify you.

#### What are the possible benefits of taking part?

If you decide to take part in this study your participation will contribute to knowledge in this area of research.

Upon completion of the survey you will also have the opportunity to vote for a charity. Whichever charity has the most votes by the end of the research will receive a donation of £50 from the researcher on behalf of all the participants. This is optional and your choice will not be recorded as part of the study.

The charities you will be able to vote for are:

|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| The Proud Trust<br><i>A charity which supports<br/>LGBTQ+ young people</i> | Friends of the Earth<br><i>A charity dedicated to<br/>sustainability</i> | RSPCA<br><i>Protecting pets and<br/>wildlife</i> | Cancer Research<br><i>Funding research into<br/>beating cancer</i> |
|--|--|--|--|

**Are there any risks involved?**

It is expected that taking part in this study will not cause you any psychological discomfort and/or distress, however, should you feel uncomfortable you can leave the survey at any time by closing the window. If you would like more information or support relating to LGBTQ+ topics or feel distressed after the survey you can visit the following websites for support:

The Proud Trust                      Young Minds  
 theproudtrust.org                      or                      youngminds.org.uk

**What will happen to the information collected?**

All information collected for this study will be stored on a secure server. In addition, all data will be pooled and only compiled into data summaries or summary reports. Only the researcher and their supervisors will have access to this information.

The information collected will be analysed and written up as part of the researcher’s thesis and published in a journal. Anonymous data will be kept on the University data repository (ePrints Soton) for use in future research and for people to check the validity of this research.

The University of Southampton conducts research to the highest standards of ethics and research integrity. In accordance with our Research Data Management Policy, data will be held for 10 years after the study has finished when it will be securely destroyed.

**What happens if there is a problem?**

If you are unhappy about any aspect of this study and would like to make a formal complaint, you can contact the Head of Research Governance, University of Southampton, on the following contact details: Email: [rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk](mailto:rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk), phone: + 44 2380 595058.

Please quote the Ethics/ERGO number above. Please note that by making a complaint you might be no longer anonymous.

More information on your rights as a study participant is available via this link:  
<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/about/governance/participant-information.page>

**Thank you for reading this information sheet and considering taking part in this research.**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>I have read and understood the information sheet above (29.04.2022 /version no.1) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.</p>  |  |
| <p>I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my anonymous data to be used for the purpose of this study and kept on the University data repository (ePrints Soton) for use in future research and for people to check the validity of this research.</p> |  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw (up until the point of survey completion) for any reason without my participation rights being affected.</p> |  |
| <p>I understand that after I have completed the survey I will not be able to withdraw as data is anonymous and it will not be possible to identify my responses.</p>          |  |

## Appendix J Debrief

**Study Title:** Hegemonic Masculinity and Homophobic Aggression in Young People

**Researcher(s):** Ffion Davies

**University email:** fhd1g14@soton.ac.uk

**Ethics/ERGO no:** 71517

**Version and date:** Version 1, 07/05/2022

The aim of this research was to better understand factors which may lead to homophobic aggression including beliefs about masculinity, gender norms and levels of empathy. Your data will help our understanding of how to reduce homophobic aggression and bullying amongst young people in secondary schools. Once again results of this study will not include your name or any other identifying characteristics. The research did not use deception. You may have a copy of this summary if you wish.

If you are feeling distressed you may talk to [*member of staff name*] or if you would like more information or support relating to LGBTQ+ topics you can visit the following websites for support:

The Proud Trust                      Young Minds  
 theproudsttrust.org              or              youngminds.org.uk

If you have any further questions about this research, please contact me (Ffion Davies) at fhd1g14@soton.ac.uk.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel that you have been placed at risk, you may contact the University of Southampton Head of Research Integrity and Governance (023 8059 5058, rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk).

Thank you for your participation in this research. You may now vote for a charity. Whichever charity has the most votes by the end of the research will receive a donation of £50 from the researcher on behalf of all the participants. This is optional and your choice will not be recorded as part of the study. If you do not wish to vote you may now close the window.

You may select from the following charities:

|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| The Proud Trust<br><i>A charity which supports LGBTQ+ young people</i> | Friends of the Earth<br><i>A charity dedicated to sustainability</i> | RSPCA<br><i>Protecting pets and wildlife</i> | Cancer Research<br><i>Funding research into beating cancer</i> |
|--|--|--|--|



## Glossary

- Affective empathy ..... The ability to feel another person's emotions.
- Axiology..... The exploration of values held by a researcher and their impact on the research.
- Banter ..... Teasing in a humorous and playful manner
- Cisnormativity ..... The assumption that everyone identifies with their gender assigned at birth.
- Cognitive dissonance ..... The experience of discomfort when one holds conflicting attitudes, beliefs, values, or behaviours.
- Cognitive empathy ..... The ability to recognise and understand another person's emotions or thoughts.
- Epistemology ..... The philosophical study of the nature, origin, and scope of scientific knowledge.
- Gender norms ..... Ideas about how people of certain genders are expected to behave.
- Gender roles ..... Social roles or behaviours considered acceptable and appropriate to a particular gender.
- Heterogeneity ..... The state of being diverse or different, e.g., variability in population, data, or outcomes.
- Heteronormativity ..... The assumption that heterosexuality is the norm and the privileging of heterosexuality over other forms of sexual orientation.
- Heterosexism ..... Discrimination against the LGBTQ+ population and the privileging of heterosexuality.
- Homogeneity ..... The state of being the same or similar e.g., no variability in population, data, or outcomes.
- Linear regression ..... Statistical analysis used to predict the relationship between two variables.
- Mediation analysis ..... Statistical analysis to measure whether the independent variable (X) affects the dependent variable (Y) via a third mediator variable (M). A mediator variable may explain the relationship between X and Y.
- Meta-analysis ..... Statistical analysis that combines the results of multiple scientific studies to determine overall trends or effects.

- Moderation analysis ..... Statistical analysis to measure whether the effect of an independent variable (X) on the dependent variable (Y) differs across different levels of a third moderator variable (W). Moderator variables may affect the strength and direction of the relationship between X and Y.
- Non-binary ..... A collective term for gender identities which are not defined by the binary of 'man' or 'woman', e.g., agender, genderqueer, gender-fluid.
- Path analysis ..... A type of structural equation modelling to examine the effect of several variables on an outcome variable via multiple causal pathways using multiple linear regressions.
- Social constructivism ..... An epistemological position in which scientific knowledge is considered to be created and understood through the unique lens of the researcher.



## References

- Adams, N., Cox, T., & Dunstan, L. (2004). 'I am the hate that dare not speak its name': Dealing with homophobia in secondary schools. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 20*(3), 259–269. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0266736042000251826>
- Anderson, E. (2009). *Inclusive Masculinity: The changing nature of masculinities*. Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/Inclusive-Masculinity-The-Changing-Nature-of-Masculinities/Anderson/p/book/9780415893909>
- Anderson, E., & McCormack, M. (2018). Inclusive Masculinity Theory: Overview, reflection and refinement. *Journal of Gender Studies, 27*(5), 547–561. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2016.1245605>
- APA. (2018). *APA Guidelines for psychological practice with boys and men* [Data set]. American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/e505472019-001>
- Barnett, M. D., & Womack, P. M. (2015). Fearing, not loving, the reflection: Narcissism, self-esteem, and self-discrepancy theory. *Personality and Individual Differences, 74*, 280–284. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.PAID.2014.10.032>
- Beal, C. R. (1994). *Boys and girls: The development of gender roles*. McGraw-Hill. <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/toc/mh021/93006422.html>
- Beechey, V. (1979). On patriarchy. *Feminist Review, 3*(1), 66–82. <https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.1979.21>
- Birkett, M., & Espelage, D. L. (2015). Homophobic name-calling, peer-groups, and masculinity: The socialization of homophobic behavior in adolescents. *Social Development, 24*(1), 184–205. <https://doi.org/10.1111/SODE.12085>
- Birkett, M., Espelage, D. L., & Koenig, B. (2009). LGBT and Questioning Students in Schools: The Moderating Effects of Homophobic Bullying and School Climate on Negative Outcomes. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 38*(7), 989–1000. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-008-9389-1>
- Borgen, C. S. (2016). *Bullying, masculinity, and homophobia in high school football players* [D.Ps., Kean University]. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2434741398/abstract/F0FB82B77A504FD3PQ/1>
- Bosson, J., Vandello, J., Burnaford, R., Weaver, J., & Wasti, S. (2009). Precarious Manhood and displays of physical aggression. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin, 35*, 623–634. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167208331161>

- Bullying at school*. (n.d.). GOV.UK. Retrieved April 17, 2023, from <https://www.gov.uk/bullying-at-school>
- Burke, P. J., & Stets, J. E. (2009). *Identity Theory*. Oxford University Press.  
<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/identity-theory-9780195388282?cc=gb&lang=en>
- Burris, C. T., Schrage, K. M., & Rempel, J. K. (2016). No country for girly men: High instrumentality men express empathic concern when caring is “manly.” *Motivation and Emotion, 40*(2), 278–289. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S11031-015-9525-7>
- Bushman, B., & Baumeister, R. (1998). Threatened egotism, narcissism, self-esteem, and direct and displaced aggression: Does self-love or self-hate lead to violence? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75*, 219–229. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.75.1.219>
- Cameron, C. D., Hutcherson, C. A., Ferguson, A. M., Scheffer, J. A., Hadjiandreou, E., & Inzlicht, M. (2019). Empathy is hard work: People choose to avoid empathy because of its cognitive costs. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 148*, 962–976.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0000595>
- Campbell, W. K., Bosson, J. K., Goheen, T. W., Lakey, C. E., & Kernis, M. H. (2007). Do narcissists dislike themselves “deep down inside?” *Psychological Science, 18*, 227–229.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2007.01880.x>
- Campbell, W. K., Reeder, G. D., Sedikides, C., & Elliot, A. J. (2000). Narcissism and comparative self-enhancement strategies. *Journal of Research in Personality, 34*, 329–347.  
<https://doi.org/10.1006/jrpe.2000.2282>
- Carrera-Fernández, M. V., Lameiras-Fernández, M., & Rodríguez-Castro, Y. (2018). Performing intelligible genders through violence: Bullying as gender practice and heteronormative control. *Gender and Education, 30*(3), 341–359.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1203884>
- Chu, J. Y., Porche, M. V., & Tolman, D. L. (2016). The Adolescent Masculinity Ideology in Relationships Scale: Development and validation of a new measure for boys.  
[Http://Dx.Doi.Org/10.1177/1097184X03257453](http://Dx.Doi.Org/10.1177/1097184X03257453), 8(1), 93–115.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X03257453>
- Cleary, A. (2012). Suicidal action, emotional expression, and the performance of masculinities. *Social Science & Medicine, 74*(4), 498–505.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.08.002>

- Conley, J. (2020). *Efficacy, nihilism, and toxic masculinity online: Digital misogyny in the incel subculture* [Thesis, The Ohio State University]. <https://kb.osu.edu/handle/1811/91688>
- Connell, R. (2005). *Masculinities* (2nd edition). Polity.
- Dahl, J., Vescio, T., & Weaver, K. (2015). How threats to masculinity sequentially cause public discomfort, anger, and ideological dominance over women. *Social Psychology, 46*(4), 242–254. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-9335/A000248>
- Das, S. (2022, August 6). Inside the violent, misogynistic world of TikTok's new star, Andrew Tate. *The Observer*. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/aug/06/andrew-tate-violent-misogynistic-world-of-tiktok-new-star>
- DeLay, D., Hanish, L. D., Zhang, L., & Martin, C. L. (2017). Assessing the impact of homophobic name calling on early adolescent mental health: A longitudinal social network analysis of competing peer influence effects. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 46*, 955–969. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-016-0598-8>
- DerSimonian, R., & Laird, N. (1986). Meta-analysis in clinical trials. *Controlled Clinical Trials, 7*(3), 177–188. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0197-2456\(86\)90046-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0197-2456(86)90046-2)
- Detel, W. (2001). Social Constructivism. In N. J. Smelser & P. B. Baltes (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (pp. 14264–14267). Pergamon. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B0-08-043076-7/01086-X>
- Dickinson, K. A., & Pincus, A. L. (2005). Interpersonal Analysis of Grandiose and Vulnerable Narcissism. <http://Dx.Doi.Org/10.1521/Pedi.17.3.188.22146>, 17(3), 188–207. <https://doi.org/10.1521/PEDI.17.3.188.22146>
- Diefendorf, S., & Bridges, T. (2020). On the enduring relationship between masculinity and homophobia. *Sexualities, 23*(7), 1264–1284. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460719876843>
- DiMuccio, S. H., & Knowles, E. D. (2020). The political significance of fragile masculinity. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences, 34*, 25–28. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.COBEHA.2019.11.010>
- Dodson, C. V. (2014). *Gender identity threat and harassment: Assessing the impact of identity threat on responses towards gender nonconforming others* [M.A., Michigan State University]. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1648414998/abstract/5BE7CB9F25504979PQ/1>
- Equality Act, (2010). <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>
- Espelage, D. L., Hong, J. S., Merrin, G. J., Davis, J. P., Rose, C. A., & Little, T. D. (2018). A longitudinal examination of homophobic name-calling in middle school: Bullying,

- traditional masculinity, and sexual harassment as predictors. *Psychology of Violence*, 8(1), 57–66. <https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000083>
- Espelage, D. L., Valido, A., Hatchel, T., Ingram, K. M., Huang, Y., & Torgal, C. (2019). A literature review of protective factors associated with homophobic bullying and its consequences among children & adolescents. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 45, 98–110. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2018.07.003>
- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2020). *A long way to go for LGBTI equality*. Publication Office of the European Union. <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/eu-lgbti-survey-results>
- Fanti, K. A., & Henrich, C. C. (2015). Effects of self-esteem and narcissism on bullying and victimization during early adolescence. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 35(1), 5–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431613519498>
- Ferguson, C. J., & Heene, M. (2012). A vast graveyard of undead theories: Publication Bias and psychological science's aversion to the null. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 7(6), 555–561. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691612459059>
- Field, A. P. (2005). Is the meta-analysis of correlation coefficients accurate when population correlations vary? *Psychological Methods*, 10(4), 444–467. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1082-989X.10.4.444>
- Field, A. P., & Gillett, R. (2010). How to do a meta-analysis. *British Journal of Mathematical and Statistical Psychology*, 63(3), 665–694. <https://doi.org/10.1348/000711010X502733>
- Fowler, K. (2021). From Chads to Blackpills, a discursive analysis of the incel's gendered spectrum of political agency. *Deviant Behavior*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2021.1985387>
- Fulcher, K. (2017). That's so homophobic? Australian young people's perspectives on homophobic language use in secondary schools. *Sex Education*, 17(3), 290–301. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2016.1275541>
- Ging, D. (2019). Alphas, betas, and incels: Theorizing the masculinities of the manosphere. *Men and Masculinities*, 22(4), 638–657. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X17706401>
- Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (1996). The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory: Differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(3), 491–512. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.70.3.491>
- Glover, N., Miller, J. D., Lynam, D. R., Crego, C., & Widiger, T. A. (2012). The Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory: A five-factor measure of narcissistic personality traits. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 94(5), 500–512. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223891.2012.670680>

- Gough, B., Milnes, K., & Turner-Moore, T. (2021). Young masculinities across five European countries: Performing under pressure. *Journal of Youth Studies, 24*(1), 77–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2019.1695763>
- Guasp, A., Ellison, G., & Satara, T. (2014). *The teachers' report; homophobic bullying in Britain's schools*. Stonewall.
- Haider, S. (2016). The shooting in Orlando, terrorism or toxic masculinity (or both?). *Men and Masculinities, 19*(5), 555–565. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X16664952>
- Harrington, C. (2021). What is “toxic masculinity” and why does it matter? *Men and Masculinities, 24*(2), 345–352. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X20943254>
- Hart, C. M., Hepper, E. G., & Sedikides, C. (2018). Understanding and mitigating narcissists' low empathy. In A. D. Hermann, A. B. Brunell, & J. D. Foster (Eds.), *Handbook of Trait Narcissism: Key Advances, Research Methods, and Controversies* (pp. 335–343). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92171-6\\_36](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92171-6_36)
- Hayes, A. F. (2022). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis* (3rd ed.). <https://www.guilford.com/books/Introduction-to-Mediation-Moderation-and-Conditional-Process-Analysis/Andrew-Hayes/9781462549030>
- Henrich, J., Heine, S. J., & Norenzayan, A. (2010). The weirdest people in the world? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 33*(2–3), 61–83. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X0999152X>
- Hepper, E. G., Hart, C. M., & Sedikides, C. (2014). Moving Narcissus: Can narcissists be empathic? *Personality and Social Psychology, 40*(9), 1079–1091.
- Hoffman, B., Ware, J., & Shapiro, E. (2020). Assessing the threat of incel violence. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 43*(7), 565–587. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>
- Hong, J. S., & Garbarino, J. (2012). Risk and protective factors for homophobic bullying in schools: An application of the social–ecological framework. *Educational Psychology Review, 24*(2), 271–285. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-012-9194-y>
- Hunnicut, G. (2009). Varieties of patriarchy and violence against women: Resurrecting “patriarchy” as a theoretical tool. *Violence Against Women, 15*(5), 553–573. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801208331246>
- Hyde, J. S., Bigler, R. S., Joel, D., Tate, C. C., & van Anders, S. M. (2019). The future of sex and gender in psychology: Five challenges to the gender binary. *The American Psychologist, 74*(2), 171–193. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000307>

- Ivtzan, I., Redman, E., & Gardner, H. E. (2012). Gender role and empathy within different orientations of counselling psychology. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 25(4), 377–388. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09515070.2012.711520>
- Jourian, T. J. (2015). Queering constructs: Proposing a dynamic gender and sexuality model. *The Educational Forum*, 79(4), 459–474. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2015.1068900>
- Kågesten, A., Gibbs, S., Blum, R. W., Moreau, C., Chandra-Mouli, V., Herbert, A., & Amin, A. (2016). Understanding factors that shape gender attitudes in early adolescence globally: A mixed-methods systematic review. *PLOS ONE*, 11(6). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0157805>
- Kimmel, M. S. (1994). Masculinity as homophobia: Fear, shame and silence in the construction of gender identity. In *Theorizing Masculinities* (pp. 119–141). SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452243627>
- Konopka, K., Rajchert, J., Dominiak-Kochanek, M., & Roszak, J. (2021). The role of masculinity threat in homonegativity and transphobia. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 68(5), 802–829. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2019.1661728>
- Krosnick, J. A., & Alwin, D. F. (1989). Aging and susceptibility to attitude change. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57, 416–425. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.3.416>
- Kupers, T. A. (2005). Toxic masculinity as a barrier to mental health treatment in prison. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 61(6), 713–724. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20105>
- Lev, A. I. (2004). *Transgender emergence: Therapeutic guidelines for working with gender-variant people and their families* (1st edition). Routledge.
- Liu, W. M. (2005). The study of men and masculinity as an important multicultural competency consideration. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 61(6), 685–697. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20103>
- Local Government Act*, (1988). <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/9/enacted>
- López-López, J. A., Page, M. J., Lipsey, M. W., & Higgins, J. P. T. (2018). Dealing with effect size multiplicity in systematic reviews and meta-analyses. *Research Synthesis Methods*, 9(3), 336–351. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jrsm.1310>
- Loudin, J. L., Loukas, A., & Robinson, S. (2003). Relational aggression in college students: Examining the roles of social anxiety and empathy. *Aggressive Behavior*, 29, 430–439. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.10039>

- Lynch, L., Long, M., & Moorhead, A. (2018). Young men, help-seeking, and mental health services: Exploring barriers and solutions. *American Journal of Men's Health, 12*(1), 138–149. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1557988315619469>
- Marchlewska, M., Górska, P., Malinowska, K., & Jarosław, K. (2021). Threatened masculinity: Gender-related collective narcissism predicts prejudice toward gay and lesbian people among heterosexual men in Poland. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2021.1907067>
- McCann, P. D., Plummer, D., & Minichiello, V. (2010). Being the butt of the joke: Homophobic humour, male identity, and its connection to emotional and physical violence for men. *Health Sociology Review, 19*(4), 505–521. <https://doi.org/10.5172/hesr.2010.19.4.505>
- McCormack, M. (2012). *The declining significance of homophobia: How teenage boys are redefining masculinity and heterosexuality*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199778249.001.0001>
- McCormack, M., & Anderson, E. (2014). The influence of declining homophobia on men's gender in the United States: An argument for the study of homohysteria. *Sex Roles, 71*(3–4), Article 3–4. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-014-0358-8>
- Merrin, G. J., Haye, K. de la, Espelage, D. L., Ewing, B., Tucker, J. S., Hoover, M., & Green, H. D. Jr. (2018). The co-evolution of bullying perpetration, homophobic teasing, and a school friendship network. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 47*(3), 601–618. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-017-0783-4>
- Morf, C. C., & Rhodewalt, F. (2001). Unraveling the paradoxes of narcissism: A dynamic self-regulatory processing model. *Psychological Inquiry, 12*(4), 177–196.
- Morris, S. (2023, January 18). Plymouth shooter fascinated by serial killers and 'incel' culture, inquest hears. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/jan/18/plymouth-shooter-jake-davison-fascinated-by-mass-shootings-and-incel-culture-inquest-hears>
- Moyano, N., & Sánchez-Fuentes, M. del M. (2020). Homophobic bullying at schools: A systematic review of research, prevalence, school-related predictors and consequences. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 53*, 101441. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.AVB.2020.101441>
- Mullane, W. A. (2012). Utilizing the articulated thoughts in simulated situations paradigm to examine the differential impacts of anti-gay verbal aggression and non-biased verbal aggression on heterosexual and sexual minority male college students [ProQuest Information & Learning]. In *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering* (Vol. 73).

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psych&AN=2012-99140-311&site=ehost-live>

Nash, C. J. (2009). Patriarchy. In R. Kitchin & N. Thrift (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (pp. 102–107). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-008044910-4.00982-2>

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. (2012). *Methods for the development of NICE public health guidance (third edition)*. <https://www.nice.org.uk/process/pmg4/chapter/introduction>

O'Connor, A. D., & Eisenhart, M. (1998). The cultural logic of gender in college: Heterosexism, homophobia and sexism in campus peer groups [University of Colorado at Boulder]. In *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*. <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/cultural-logic-gender-college-heterosexism/docview/304431820/se-2?accountid=13963>

O'Connor, E. C., Ford, T. E., & Banos, N. C. (2017). Restoring threatened masculinity: The appeal of sexist and anti-gay humor. *Sex Roles*, 77(9), 567–580. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0761-z>

Odenbring, Y., & Johansson, T. (2021). Just a joke? The thin line between teasing, harassment and violence among teenage boys in lower secondary school. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 29(2), 177–193. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1060826520934771>

Oransky, M., & Fisher, C. (2009). The development and validation of the Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity Scale. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, 10(1), 57–72. <https://doi.org/10.1037/A0013612>

Oransky, M., & Marecek, J. (2009). "I'm not going to be a girl": Masculinity and emotions in boys' friendships and peer groups. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 24(2), 218–241. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558408329951>

Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., Shamseer, L., Tetzlaff, J. M., Akl, E. A., Brennan, S. E., Chou, R., Glanville, J., Grimshaw, J. M., Hróbjartsson, A., Lalu, M. M., Li, T., Loder, E. W., Mayo-Wilson, E., McDonald, S., ... Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, 372, n71. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71>

Pascoe, C. J. (2005). 'Dude, you're a fag': Adolescent masculinity and the fag discourse. *Sexalities*, 8(3), 329–346.

Pascoe, C.J., & Diefendorf, S. (2019). No homo: Gendered dimensions of homophobic epithets online. *Sex Roles*, 80. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-018-0926-4>



- Petticrew, M., & Roberts, H. (2006). Synthesizing the Evidence. In *Systematic Reviews in the Social Sciences* (pp. 164–214). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470754887.ch6>
- Pleck, J., Sonenstein, F., & Ku, L. (1994). Attitudes toward male roles among adolescent males: A discriminant validity analysis. *Sex Roles, 30*, 481–501.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01420798>
- Plummer, D. C. (2001). The quest for modern manhood: Masculine stereotypes, peer culture and the social significance of homophobia. *Journal of Adolescence, 24*(1), 15–23.  
<https://doi.org/10.1006/jado.2000.0370>
- Poteat, V. P., DiGiovanni, C. D., & Scheer, J. R. (2013). Predicting homophobic behavior among heterosexual youth: Domain general and sexual orientation-specific factors at the individual and contextual level. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 42*(3), 351–362.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-012-9813-4>
- Poteat, V. P., & Espelage, D. L. (2005). Exploring the relation between bullying and homophobic verbal content: The Homophobic Content Agent Target (HCAT) scale. *Violence and Victims, 20*, 513–528. <https://doi.org/10.1891/vivi.2005.20.5.513>
- Poteat, V. P., Kimmel, M. S., & Wilchins, R. (2011). The moderating effects of support for violence beliefs on masculine norms, aggression, and homophobic behavior during adolescence. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 21*(2), 434–447. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2010.00682.x>
- Qualtrics. (2021). *Qualtrics*. <https://www.qualtrics.com/>
- Reigeluth, C. S., & Addis, M. E. (2021). Policing of Masculinity Scale (POMS) and pressures boys experience to prove and defend their “manhood.” *Psychology of Men & Masculinities, 22*(2), 306–320. <https://doi.org/10.1037/men0000318>
- Renold, E. (2002). Presumed innocence: (Hetero)sexual, heterosexist and homophobic harassment among primary school girls and boys. *Childhood: A Global Journal of Child Research, 9*(4), 415–434. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568202009004004>
- Renold, E. (2003). “If you don’t kiss me, you’re dumped”: Boys, boyfriends and heterosexualised masculinities in the primary school. *Educational Review, 55*(2), 179–194.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0013191032000072218>
- Rinehart, S. J., Espelage, D. L., & Bub, K. L. (2020). Longitudinal effects of gendered harassment perpetration and victimization on mental health outcomes in adolescence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 35*(23–24), 5997–6016.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517723746>

- Robinson, K. H. (2005). Reinforcing hegemonic masculinities through sexual harassment: Issues of identity, power and popularity in secondary schools. *Gender and Education, 17*(1), 19–37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0954025042000301285>
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton University Press.
- Sandstrom, M. J., & Jordan, R. (2008). Defensive self-esteem and aggression in childhood. *Journal of Research in Personality, 42*(2), 506–514. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JRP.2007.07.008>
- Sargeant, C. (2013). *Examining the relationship between sources of self-concept and forms of aggression in adolescence*. University of Southampton.
- Scaptura, M., & Boyle, K. (2019). Masculinity threat, “incel” traits, and violent fantasies among heterosexual men in the United States. *Feminist Criminology, 15*, 155708511989641. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1557085119896415>
- Sherriff, N. (2007). Peer group cultures and social identity: An integrated approach to understanding masculinities1. *British Educational Research Journal, 33*(3), 349–370. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920701243628>
- Slaatten, H., Anderssen, N., & Hetland, J. (2014). Endorsement of male role norms and gay-related name-calling. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 15*(3), 335–345. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033734>
- Solis, O., & Gabriela, M. (2021). Emotional intelligence, Empathy and Warmth as Protective Factors Against Physical Aggression in Adolescents. *CES Psicología, 14*(2), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.21615/cesp.5222>
- Stanaland, A., & Gaither, S. (2021). “Be a man”: The role of social pressure in eliciting men’s aggressive cognition. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 47*(11), 1596–1611. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167220984298>
- Todd, A. R., & Galinsky, A. D. (2014). Perspective-taking as a strategy for improving intergroup relations: Evidence, mechanisms, and qualifications. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 8*(7), 374–387. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12116>
- Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, W. K. (2003). “Isn’t it fun to get the respect that we’re going to deserve?” Narcissism, social rejection, and aggression. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 29*(2), 261–272. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167202239051>
- Urbonaviciute, G., & Hepper, E. G. (2020). When is narcissism associated with low empathy? A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Research in Personality, 89*, 104036. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JRP.2020.104036>

- Valido, A., Merrin, G. J., Espelage, D. L., Robinson, L. E., Nickodem, K., Ingram, K. M., El Sheikh, A. J., Torgal, C., & Fairclough, J. (2022). Social-ecological predictors of homophobic name-calling perpetration and victimization among early adolescents. *Journal of Early Adolescence*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02724316211002271>
- Vandello, J., & Bosson, J. (2013). Hard won and easily lost: A review and synthesis of theory and research on precarious manhood. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, *14*(2), 101–113. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029826>
- Vescio, T. K., Schermerhorn, N. E. C., Gallegos, J. M., & Laubach, M. L. (2021). The affective consequences of threats to masculinity. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *97*, 104195. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2021.104195>
- Vonofakou, C., Hewstone, M., & Voci, A. (2007). Contact with out-group friends as a predictor of meta-attitudinal strength and accessibility of attitudes toward gay men. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *92*, 804–820. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.5.804>
- Vossen, H. G. M., Piotrowski, J. T., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2015). Development of the Adolescent Measure of Empathy and Sympathy (AMES). *Personality and Individual Differences*, *74*, 66–71. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2014.09.040>
- Wai, M., & Tiliopoulos, N. (2012). The affective and cognitive empathic nature of the dark triad of personality. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *52*, 794–799. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2012.01.008>
- Weale, S. (2023, February 2). ‘We see misogyny every day’: How Andrew Tate’s twisted ideology infiltrated British schools. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/feb/02/andrew-tate-twisted-ideology-infiltrated-british-schools>
- Willer, R., Rogalin, C. L., Conlon, B., & Wojnowicz, M. T. (2013). Overdoing gender: A test of the masculine overcompensation thesis. *https://Doi.Org/10.1086/668417*, *118*(4), 980–1022. <https://doi.org/10.1086/668417>