

ABSTRACT

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Research on homophobia has mostly addressed the attitudinal and behavioral components, whereas the affective component has been largely ignored. Two of the studies explored the structure of affective reactions to a homosexual social situation and related these reactions to homophobic attitudes. An affect adjective checklist was used to obtain with a paper-and-pencil test an adequate measure of affect. Factor analysis detected two affective components of homophobia, *Homophobic Anger* and *Homophobic Guilt*. Homophobic Anger had a higher correlation with the cognitive component of homophobia than Homophobic Guilt did, as measured by an attitude test. Studies have shown that changes in attitudes toward homosexual individuals and homosexuality are often of short duration. The results suggest that to achieve lasting changes in attitudes toward homosexual individuals and homosexuality, it may also be necessary to change people's affects toward homosexual individuals and homosexuality in a positive direction.

A third study explored the controversial issue of a possible relationship between homophobia and beliefs in a learned/chosen or innate cause of homosexuality. Cross-cultural data from four societies showed that those who believed that homosexual individuals are "born that way" held significantly less negative attitudes toward homosexual individuals than those who believed homosexual individuals "learn/choose to be that way."

A fourth study investigated how subjects understood words denoting a homosexual individual, such as *gay*, *fag*, and *queer*, when they first heard the words, and later in life. Subjects reported that they learned the words without understanding their denotations, whereas they understood that their connotations were *negative* and that the person referred to was *weak*. Later in life most subjects came to understand the correct denotations of words denoting a homosexual individual, and they then associated the negative connotations with the concept of a homosexual individual. Although they still understood the words negatively, many subjects eventually modified, in a less negative direction, their understanding of the connotations of words denoting a homosexual individual. Results also showed that personal contacts with homosexual individuals were important events when positive attitude change occurred.

Research has shown that homophobia is commonplace, but there do exist positive stereotypes regarding homosexual individuals. For instance, many low-homophobic individuals seem to believe that gay men are overrepresented among the most beautiful men. This stereotype has sometimes been called the "gay-prett-boy stereotype," and a fifth study confirmed this belief. Females rated facial photographs of three physically attractive males as significantly more physically attractive when they believed that the males were gay than when they believed that the males were heterosexual.

Key words: homophobia, homosexuality (attitudes toward), affect, adjective checklist, homophobia development, attitude formation, prejudice, physical attractiveness

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