

Masculine identity research paper examples

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



Areas of Interest

Freudian view, masculine over compensation, and threat to masculine identity.

Thesis

Threatening men's masculine identity, results to homophobic attitudes as a way of overcompensation.

Introduction

Homophobia refers to hostility towards or fear of gay people (Cohen, 43). It also refers to social ideologies which stigmatize homosexuality (Cohen, 52). Negative attitudes or feelings against non-heterosexual behavior, relationships, community and behavior can lead to homophobic behavior (Cohen, 55). Homophobia is the main cause of discrimination against gays, bisexual, lesbians, and transgender (Cohen, 56). Homophobia can be manifested in different forms including physical attacks, homophobic jokes, negative media representation and discrimination in the work place (Cohen, 63).

The Freudian view on human nature and personality describes how homophobia influences men to react as a way of defending their masculine identity. The Freudian theory is basically deterministic (Rigby, 17). It is established on the belief that our behavior is determined by unreasoning forces, insensible motivations, both instinctual and biological drives as they develop through main stages in their first six years of their life (Rigby, 23). Freud argued that individuals are perpetually controlled by inner conflicts.

On his view on personality he concluded that the personality structure consists of three components namely: the ego, superego and the id (Rigby, 34). The id is the basic source of energy and the basis of instincts coming from the unconscious mind and is controlled by what is referred by Freud as “the pleasure principle.” This serves to reduce pain and tension while restoring pleasure. Ego regulates and controls personality, restoring reality while preparing plans of action to fulfill needs (Rigby, 36). Finally, superego is a personal moral code that an individual uses to judge whether an action is bad or good (Rigby, 36).

An important component of Freud’s approach is the anxiety concept (Rigby, 37). Anxiety refers to a feeling of tension which motivates people to take action so as to do away with the uncomfortable state (Rigby, 43). Even if Freud came up with a number of anxiety types, the way a person processes these inputs determines the impact these feeling have on the person and overall experience of living (Rigby, 44). On his personality theory Freud described that conflicts and traumas of early childhood can have endless effects (Rigby, 47).

Masculine overcompensation results due to homophobia where one’s masculinity is under threat (. Kimmel, 26)

A research carried out on men’s masculinity shows that incase men are threatened about their masculinity they in turn displays more homophobic attitudes, belief in male superiority, support for war and greater dominance attitudes(Kimmel, 33). Masculine over compensation refers to the idea that insecure men on their masculinity will try to compensate this by behaving in

an extremely masculine way (Kimmel, 36). Another study revealed that men with high levels of testosterone show stronger reactions to masculinity threats than those with low testosterone levels (Kimmel, 39). Together, the above results support the masculine over compensation thesis. This may play a role in macro social patterns of cultural and political attitudes, and identify a hormonal factor influencing the effect (Kimmel, 47).

Masculine overcompensation is said to be the root cause for many behaviors that arises everyday (Kimmel, 52). Research shows that men react to masculine threat by using extreme demonstrations of their masculinity. These efforts by men looking for masculinity in the face of insecurity is controlled by desires to recover masculine status both themselves and to others. The overcompensation which is dynamic differs from mere compensation (Kimmel, 53). Where compensation makes people to behave roughly as they would normally do, their behavior apparently unaffected by the threat, overcompensation leads to an extreme reaction, over and above men's behavior, when there is no threat (Kimmel, 60).

Macho attitudes arise where a man feels that his masculinity is being threatened or questioned (Malin, 19). Willer's study was involving a gender identity survey which involved over hundred females and males who were undergraduates of Cornell University (Malin, 28). After conducting the survey, Willer provided the participants with answers whether they had a feminine or masculine identity (Kimmel, 43). This feedback on feminine or masculine identity, however, was assigned randomly and did not relate to the test. Men's reactions were greatly affected by the responses while

women were not affected by the responses (Malin, 34). Those men who show the most masculine characteristics may actually be to hide their insecurities; their large masculine displays in fact strategic claims at masculine status, efforts to pass as something they fear they are not (Kimmel, 52) .

Theorists emphasized that being sensitive and responding to masculinity threats is common among men (Kimmel, 57). Hegemonic masculinity puts a strong social pressure, though it differs from other normal pressures as total conformity cannot be achieved (Kimmel, 64). In this case, true masculinity is for men an attainable ideal that they tirelessly they try to achieve(. Kimmel, 66) As a result, masculine insecurity is not a normal event, feelings of emasculation, and the suspicion of inadequate masculinity is always present in men(Kimmel, 71). These feelings and concerns of deficiency stimulate the enactment of masculinity in everyday life (Kimmel, 73). Because true masculinity is unattainable and fictional, a strain exists always, and the overcompensation is the result of such strain and continual striving for greater masculinity (Kimmel, 76).

Kimmel likened the role of men as that of “gender police,” referring homophobia as the fear among men that their insufficient masculinity will be detected by other men (Kimmel, 78). This fear of insufficiency is a source of shame to them thus they try to cover it up by using any possible feminine or inadequately masculine traits, ideally with stronger demonstrating how powerful and masculine they are (Kimmel, 79).

According to Kimmel he emphasized that masculinity is often something used to hide from being revealed as fraud, an extreme set of activities that

make possible for others to see us through us, and a strong effort to keep fear that are inside ourselves away (. Kimmel, 97) He emphasized that the existing definition of masculinity is an effort to camouflage against being sterilized (kimmel, 103).

Threat to masculinity leads to homophobia which results to homophobic attitudes as a way of overcompensation (Malin, 12). Masculine overcompensation is also related to theories of identity, which argue that people attempt to maintain identities that are highly held and valued socially (Malin, 19). Individuals are more motivated in acting in ways that maintain strongly-held and fundamental identities (Kimmel, 27). Identity theories describe how people maintain valued identities in interaction (Kimmel, 34). For instance, identity control theory suggests a model of relationships between behavior, self-concept and situational feedback (Kimmel, 41). In the model, people get information that is sufficient and relevant to a given, outstanding identity and figure out whether this feedback is in conformity with the identity (Kimmel, 49). When differences arise, they put in place behaviors planned to bring the situational feedback in line with their identity standard, they will come up with extreme versions related with that identity (Malin, 23). Thus, identity maintenance operates something like a thermostat; people responding to feedback that they have run out of expectations related with a valued self- concept are supposed to move beyond prototypical behaviors associated with identity, behaving in ways that are extreme versions of identity in order to acquire it(Kimmel, 58).

According to identity theory, gender identification as feminine or masculine controls gender-relevant actions, such as men who identify as strong and masculine behaving in a more competitive and dominant fashion (Kimmel, 63). Gender identities are commonly held strongly, and in the case of masculinity, strongly valued socially (Malin, 27). As a result, men are expected to be firmly driven to regain their masculine gender identity when they are confronted by situational feedback indicating that they are weak and that they lack masculinity, more than it would be expected for women to put effort their effort to retrieve back their femininity (Malin, 34). Moreover, men's reaction and behavior when they are faced by a threat should be overcompensatory rather than compensatory.

In an effort to derive a full impression of sufficient masculinity for others and themselves, men should put in place intense masculine actions or behaviors when they get feedback saying that they have insufficient or that they lack masculinity (Kimmel, 72). This is also known as gender identity threat, which makes men who are heterosexual to act in stereotypically male-typed gendered behavior (Malin, 46). While not all men who are threatened show more aggression against gays, certain threatened groups of men do.

Accordance to interviews with heterosexual, undergraduates reveals important traits and behaviors these men use in defining masculinity (Malin, 48). When they fail to live as dictated by this definition of masculinity, or are held responsible by their friends for failing to live according to the definition of masculinity, they feel under gender identity threat (Malin, 49). The

majority of these men find good ways of dealing with these threats (Malin, 55).

However, some of them respond to gender identity threat by engaging in bad gendered behavior such as drug use, violence, sexual coercion, and aggression towards women (Kimmel, 76). These all adverse behaviors are related to gender threat and social definition of “appropriately” masculine behavior (Kimmel, 81). Masculinity threatened men also are reported to have a feeling of shame, guilt, hostile and upset than those men who were free from masculine threat (Kimmel, 93). Masculinity threatened men also showed homophobic attitudes and even support for war and also displays animosity to homosexuals (Kimmel, 99).

Conclusion

In conclusion, homophobia is led by inner conflicts where an individual feels to be threatened and is more serious in men than in women (Kimmel, 19). Where one’s masculine identity is under threat the individual experiences homophobia(. Kimmel, 46) In an attempt to defend his masculine identity he will develop homophobic attitudes as a way of overcompensation (Kimmel, 53).

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