

EFFECTS OF EXPOSURE TO ANTI-HOMOSEXUAL HUMOR ON INDIVIDUALS'
TOLERANCE OF AND ANTICIPATED FEELINGS OF COMPUNCTION ABOUT
DISCRIMINATION

by

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Abstract

This research examines the effect of exposure to anti-gay humor on individuals' tolerance of anti-gay discrimination. Participants were exposed to one of four conditions in a 2 (message type; joke or statement) x 2 (disparagement; anti-gay or neutral) design. They read vignettes that contained anti-gay jokes or statements, or neutral jokes or statements. Individuals' sexual prejudice, humor styles, discrimination tolerance, feelings of compunction, and perceptions of others' tolerance were also measured. Results showed that individuals exposed to humorous stimuli were more tolerant of discrimination, compared to those exposed to non-humorous stimuli. Further, levels of discrimination tolerance were significantly related both to individuals' levels of sexual prejudice and their preference for an aggressive humor style. No significant interaction effects were found among these variables. These findings contribute to the literature on disparaging humor by examining its effects on targets of a different social group, and by incorporating humor style as a potential moderating variable.

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CHAPTER 1 - Introduction

In today's cultural climate, the importance of political correctness is frequently emphasized, and has been found to result in feelings of constraint among individuals who disagree with the need to censor themselves (Martin, 2007). This, in turn, may lead to a pressing urge to break from socially imposed constraints. One of the ways that individuals may cope with this feeling is through the use of humor that allows them to express these constrained feelings. As Martin notes, people are more likely to get away with expressing malevolent or unpopular (e.g., politically incorrect or prejudicial) attitudes if those attitudes are expressed in a humorous manner, as opposed to a serious one.

Mindess (1971) suggested that this use of humor could be described as a sort of coping mechanism; it helps to manage the constraints individuals may feel as a result of societal pressures. Specifically, Mindess asserts that social norms may require the suppression of impulses and desires that are not socially acceptable (e.g., expressing negative or prejudicial views toward a minority group). As a result, people may experience feelings of self-alienation, or loss of authenticity because they feel they cannot express their true thoughts or feelings. The nature of humor allows for liberation from the normal expectations; in short, using humor to express oneself can be cathartic because it allows for the purging of tensions induced by societal pressures—individuals can use it to express less acceptable views in a more acceptable fashion.

Humor may be especially likely to relieve tension from social pressures when it evokes feelings of superiority, which often occurs when it is used to belittle others. In fact, the idea of feeling superior to another group is the basis for Zillman and Cantor's (1976) disposition theory of humor and mirth, which proposes that people are likely to find something humorous if it is directed at a group toward which they have negative feelings—it makes them feel superior to a

group they dislike. So, given that the expression of negative feelings toward a group is not generally socially accepted, Zillman and Cantor's theory takes Mindess's (1971) concept a step further: individuals will be likely to use humor that belittles a group they dislike because it allows them liberation from suppressive norms, and simultaneously makes them feel superior. In order to effectively describe this particular use of humor, the term *disparagement humor* has been identified in social psychology as the use of humor to denigrate, belittle, or malign an individual or social group (Zillman, 1983).

Disparagement Humor as Justification for Prejudice

In order to more fully understand the concept of disparagement humor, it might be helpful to examine it through the lens of the justification-suppression model of prejudice (JSM; Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). The JSM asserts that individuals possess genuine prejudices that are developed uncontrollably as a function of social, cultural, developmental, and cognitive factors. However, social norms (e.g., political correctness), personal beliefs, values, and standards act as suppressors to prejudice, inhibiting its expression. Crandall and Eshleman argue that this becomes frustrating, because it takes a significant amount of cognitive resources and mental energy, and often creates a negative mood. As a result, people feel the need to express their prejudice through justification, which provides a way for prejudice to be expressed without personal or social repercussions, and thus releases energy, creating a sense of relief.

The theories and observations put forth by Mindess (1971), Zillman and Cantor (1976), and Martin (2007) all pointed to a similar general conclusion; they indirectly suggested that humor could act as a way to justify prejudice. As Crandall and Eshleman (2003) define it, a justification is any psychological or social process that allows an opportunity to express prejudice without being internally or socially punished for doing so. Further, they proposed six

categories of justifications: naturalistic fallacy and the preservation of the status quo; celebration of social hierarchy; attributions and personal responsibility; covering; beliefs, values, religion, and stereotypes; and intergroup processes. Each of these categories has a set of specific beliefs and/or tendencies that accompany them; for the purposes of this review, however, the focus will be on the use of covering as a method of justification.

Covering is the process by which the underlying prejudice that arouses an emotion, behavior, or cognition is disguised by focusing attention on an alternative explanation that is more socially or personally accepted (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). Using humor as one's alternative explanation (e.g., "It's just a joke") provides what Crandall and Eshleman describe as *situational ambiguity*—when a discriminatory behavior might be mistaken for a neutral or socially acceptable action, allowing for the release of prejudice. By telling a disparaging joke about a particular group or member of a group, an individual is allowed the chance to release prejudicial feelings while playing off his or her behavior as simply joking around. Since joking around is a more socially acceptable action than blatantly stating personal prejudice, the joke becomes the justification for the prejudice expression.

Ethnic Humor as a Force Against Prejudice

Having considered the justification-suppression explanation for the use of disparagement humor, it seems plausible that enjoyment of a disparaging joke would be a rather accurate measure of prejudice, and has been used as such in previous studies (e.g., Crandall, Eshleman, & O'Brien, 2002; Monteith, 1993). However, it is important to emphasize that by no means does this explanation imply that any individual who tells, or even laughs at, an ethnic or sexist joke is racist or sexist. Rappoport (2005) contends that the primary nature of racial-ethnic humor is playful, not malicious. He emphasizes that the purpose of this variety of humor is to play with

and exploit stereotypes, not create them, and that ethnic humor has actually become an important force *against* prejudice.

Citing the sword and shield metaphor, Rappoport (2005) suggests that many comedians who are minority group members use humor to confront stereotypes, draw attention to how unreasonable they are, and rise above them. So while ethnic humor can serve as a sword, to ridicule and insult, it can also serve as a shield, to defend minority groups against prejudice. However, the way the humor is taken by its audience is dependent upon the context. If a comedian makes an ethnic joke about the group with which he or she identifies, odds are that it would be perceived as funny. But it might be taken very differently if repeated by someone else who is not considered a member of that group.

Rappoport (2005) acknowledged that the question of whether or not racial-ethnic humor promotes prejudice probably cannot be answered in a way that will satisfy everyone; however it is important to note that much of his research on ethnic humor differs from what has been found with respect to disparagement humor. Rappoport's positive ideas about ethnic humor are based on the dynamics between a professional comedian and his or her audience, while researchers who have found more negative effects have examined disparagement humor in an everyday context (e.g., Ford, 1997, 2000; Ford & Ferguson, 2004; Ford, Wentzel, & Lorion, 2001). These studies are centered on everyday people experiencing deeply embedded prejudice, and—whether consciously or not—finding some way to express it. Unlike Rappoport's studies, they have not examined ethnic humor as expressed by professional stand-up comedians. As such, it is possible that this difference in context could be a reason for the difference in positive versus negative effects on prejudice and discrimination tolerance, possibly as a result of how the humor is perceived.

More specifically, when a disparaging joke is told in an everyday situation, there are a variety of contextual variables that might impact how an individual reacts, such as the personal characteristics of the joke teller and listener, the listener's perceptions of joke teller intentions, or the listener's perceptions of what is appropriate for the situation. In the context of a professional comedian's performance, on the other hand, these variables might be interpreted very differently, thus influencing what a listener takes from a joke, and in turn how it affects his or her attitudes toward the targeted group. These contextual variables could influence how funny the listener perceives the humor to be, and therefore affect his or her reaction to it. The current research will focus on disparagement humor as experienced in an everyday context, because previous research suggests it is more likely to increase the expression of prejudice and tolerance of discrimination.

The Effects of Exposure to Disparagement Humor

In a study examining the effects of stereotypical portrayals of Blacks on people's perceptions of the group, Ford (1997) asked participants to view comedy skits from a popular television program that portrayed Blacks in either a stereotypical or neutral manner. The clips that used stereotypical portrayals did so through the humorous depiction of Black characters as poor, uneducated, and prone to acts of crime and violence. Following this task, participants were asked to complete a judicial review study, and then provide feedback on the TV clips they viewed. For the judicial review, participants were given a scenario to read that described an incident in which a college student was allegedly assaulted by his roommate. In half of the conditions, the alleged attacker was White; in the other half, he was Black. The race of the victim in all conditions was unspecified. Participants were then asked to rate how likely it was that the attacker was guilty, and how strong the evidence was against him. Finally, they rated the

funniness of the previously viewed comedy skits, as well as the amount of disparagement displayed in them.

As expected, Ford (1997) found that judgments of the Black target were more negative for participants who had viewed the stereotypic skit than for those who had viewed the neutral skit. However, the methods of the study did not allow the researchers to determine if the effect was due to the humorous aspect of the skit, or simply the portrayal of the minority group. Later studies conducted by Ford and his colleagues, as well as other researchers, addressed this issue.

One of these studies, conducted by Olson, Maio, and Hobden (1999), tested the effects of exposure to disparaging humor, nondisparaging humor, and nonhumorous disparaging information on individuals' stereotypes and attitudes toward men and lawyers (chosen out of concern for ethical implications that could arise with the use of other groups). After several analyses across three experiments, the researchers were able to find only one significant effect in the predicted direction: that reading disparaging humor led to the expression of less favorable attitudes toward the targeted group. However, the majority of analyses in the study revealed no significant results, and Olson et al. concluded that disparaging humor did *not* significantly impact participants' feelings about the targeted groups. A noteworthy weakness of Olson and colleagues' study is that it neglected to measure the participants' attitudes and stereotypes toward the target groups *prior* to being exposed to the manipulation. Therefore, researchers did not assess whether or not social perceptions had truly been affected.

Ford (2000) addressed this issue by pre-testing participants to gain a baseline measure of their attitudes toward the target group—in this case, women. Male participants completed Glick and Fiske's (1996) Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, which measures both hostile and benevolent sexism. Hostile sexism relates to feelings of antagonism or indignation toward women, whereas

benevolent sexism is associated with positive feelings toward women, often related to sex-typed views of them as caring, beautiful, and delicate, etc. Two to five weeks after completing this measure, participants returned to complete what was presented as a separate study on communication behavior. The participants read a series of vignettes describing situations that involved different forms of sexism. The first vignette, which established the conditions, described a situation in which a female student made a sexist joke, a sexist statement, or a neutral joke to her female classmates. The second vignette, which was consistent for all participants, described a situation in which a female was sexually harassed by her male superior at work. Filler vignettes were included between these scenarios to distract from the intent of the study. Results showed that exposure to the sexist humor condition (in the first vignette) led individuals who scored high on hostile sexism to indicate that sexist behavior (in the second vignette) was socially acceptable, thus increasing tolerance of sex discrimination (Ford, 2000).

In another experiment, Ford (2000) more closely examined the effects of humor on individuals' reactions to the vignettes. The study employed the same procedure as previously described, but a portion of participants was also asked to critically evaluate the content of the jokes. Participants in this condition received directions to critically evaluate the jokes by analyzing the content and underlying message being presented. The result of this manipulation demonstrated that even among individuals high in hostile sexism, critical evaluation led to lower funniness ratings of the jokes, and less approval of sex discrimination, compared to participants high in hostile sexism in the non-critical evaluation control condition (Ford, 2000).

A subsequent experiment by Ford (2000) varied the sex of the individual who told the sexist joke or made the sexist statement. The results of this experiment exhibited that the participants high on hostile sexism who read a vignette which described a woman telling the

sexist joke rated the sexist event in the work scenario as more tolerable, compared to participants who read a vignette that described a man telling the sexist joke. This suggests that participants perceived sexist jokes—and in turn, sexist behavior—to be more acceptable when a woman was telling the joke. Ford (2000) proposed that this effect results because sexist jokes told by men are interpreted more critically, and recognized as socially unacceptable, whereas sexist jokes told by women are viewed as tolerable because they are being told by a member of the group that is being mocked. Thus, disparaging jokes told by members of the disparaged group appear more likely to increase the tolerance of offensive behavior toward that group, compared to disparaging jokes told by individuals outside the disparaged group. It is possible, however, that this finding may not be true for all targets. It may be more acceptable for the majority to disparage certain social groups because they are viewed in a generally negative way by the majority of the population. For example, while most people recognize it is not socially accepted to degrade women, there may be a much lower number of individuals who agree that this is true for gay men and lesbians. Because many Americans continue to hold a negative view of this group (often referred to as sexual prejudice; Herek, 2000b), it may be more likely that they perceive a norm that allows for the degradation of its members.

The Influence of Perceived Norms

Ford, Wentzel, and Lorion (2001) continued to assess the effects of exposure to sexist humor in a study that examined participants' levels of perceived normative tolerance (PNT)—that is, their predictions of how tolerant their peers in the same study would be of sexism. Using the same vignette procedure as in previous studies, the researchers additionally asked participants to rate the extent to which they believed other participants would be offended by the vignette that described a sexist event in the workplace. Results showed that participants high on

hostile sexism who had been exposed to a sexist joke were more likely to rate others as tolerant of the sexist event (that is, they scored higher on PNT), compared to those individuals who were low on hostile sexism and also exposed to the sexist joke. Further, of all the individuals high on hostile sexism, those who had been exposed to a sexist joke scored higher on PNT than those who were exposed to the neutral joke or to the sexist statement.

These results make sense if we consider the concept of normative influence, or the effect that social norms elicit on individuals' behavior. In their studies on normative influence and the expression of prejudice as a function of helping behavior, Dovidio and Gaertner (1983) found that social responsibility norms (i.e., norms that state that individuals should help others) and race relation norms (i.e., norms that state that individuals should try not to appear prejudiced) influenced helping behavior. In their procedure, households on a call list received what they thought were wrong-number phone calls, which quickly developed into a request for help. The callers were identifiable as Black or White based on their dialects. When it became apparent that the caller was in need of assistance, as described in their conversation, the social responsibility norm was activated for the call recipients. As a result of this activation, recipients were less likely to discriminate against Blacks than against Whites, because failing to help would violate social helping norms, and could appear racist (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1983).

Similar results were also found in another of Dovidio and Gaertner's (1983) studies using locus of control as the manipulation for salience of social helping norms. Participants received requests to give help to either a Black or White individual completing a task. The request came from either the individual needing the help (internal locus), or from a third party confederate (external locus). When the individual needing help requested it, participants exhibited prejudice toward Blacks and helped them less, attributing the problem to their failure to work hard

(internal locus of control). When a third party suggested the participant help the individual with the task, participants exhibited less prejudice toward Blacks because they attributed the problem to the task being too difficult (external locus of control). Thus, in the external locus condition, both races were helped equally in an attempt to comply with both helping and race relation social norms (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1983).

Additionally, Blanchard, Lilly, and Vaughn (1991) found similar effects for normative influence in a study that examined discussion of racial issues on a college campus. Specifically, when asked about their feelings about a racist incident on their campus, participants were more likely to strongly express their opinions if they were presented with a comment (by a confederate) that matched that opinion—they experienced a strong normative influence. In particular, participants were most likely to express strong antiracist opinions after hearing others express attitudes that also rejected racism. They were less likely to strongly express these sentiments when they overheard others expressing acceptance of racism.

Given these findings, the results of Ford et al.'s (2001) study are not surprising. When prejudiced individuals who are tolerant of discrimination also perceive others as being the same way, it simulates the effect of normative influence, and makes it easier for them to express their own tolerance of discrimination or prejudice. Clearly, perceived normative tolerance is a key factor in disparagement humor's influence on a person's affect toward discrimination, and his or her tolerance of it.

Prejudiced Norm Theory

The relationships discovered by Ford and colleagues' line of research have led to the development of a theoretical explanation for the social consequences of disparagement humor, identified as prejudiced norm theory (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). The theory posits that in a

situation involving the use of disparagement humor toward a target group, individuals high in prejudice toward that group will regulate their behavior (i.e., most likely increase their expression of prejudicial beliefs) based on the norms (or level of tolerance) implied by the humor.

Ford and Ferguson (2004) suggest that this process occurs through four interrelated sub-processes. First, humorous communication activates a “rule of levity” which signals to the audience that the message should be interpreted in a non-serious mindset. This is most often true of disparaging humor; people will tend to be less critical of derogation when it is expressed lightly (i.e., in joke form), unless the situation suggests that such an interpretation is inappropriate. Second, upon switching to this mindset, the individual hearing the communication implicitly accepts a norm for the context—he or she perceives a norm of discrimination tolerance—that the opinion expressed is acceptable, and he or she need not critically evaluate the content of the humor being conveyed. Third, this norm becomes a source of self-regulation, leading the individual to monitor his or her behavior based on what is perceived as permissible for the situation. If the humor being used is in fact expressive of prejudice, this series of events in processing the humorous comment will most likely lead to the fourth and final step in the model—increased tolerance of prejudice and discrimination (Ford & Ferguson, 2004).

Additionally, the level of prejudice a person holds toward the group being targeted moderates his or her reaction to the disparaging humor, and therefore his or her perceptions of the level of discrimination tolerated on normative and personal levels in the situation. As such, Ford and Ferguson (2004) suggest that, upon being exposed to disparagement humor, individuals who hold higher levels of prejudice are more likely to perceive a norm of discrimination tolerance than individuals who hold lower levels of prejudice. This is likely to result in high-

prejudiced individuals having greater tolerance of other instances of discrimination against members of the targeted group.

Compunction

Given that the focus of this study is discrimination, it is important to consider that when individuals commit discrimination, they may experience feelings of compunction, or negative self-directed affect. The concept of compunction has been heavily studied in relation to prejudice, starting with Allport's (1954) suggestion that despite the "freedom and justice for all" doctrine, White Americans still exhibit prejudice toward Black Americans. He suggested that when people become aware of this dissonance, they experience feelings of guilt or self-criticism—that is, compunction. As Zuwerink, Monteith, Devine, and Cook (1996) suggest, any individual who realizes that his or her behavior does not align with his or her beliefs is likely to experience some level of cognitive dissonance (e.g., Aronson, 1968; Carver & Scheier, 1990; Duval & Wicklunk, 1972; Higgins, 1987). This is especially likely if the dissonance occurs in relation to one's own standards of personal conduct (e.g., Carver, Lawrence, & Scheier, 1999; Devine, Monteith, Zuwerink, & Elliot, 1991; Higgins, Bond, Klein & Strauman, 1986; Moskowitz, Gollwitzer, Wasel, & Schaal, 1999). Thus, it is logical that when someone low on prejudice becomes aware that his or her behavior is actually somewhat prejudiced, this individual will likely experience cognitive dissonance, which will then lead to feelings of compunction.

More specifically, Devine and colleagues (1991) found that low-prejudiced individuals are likely to feel guilty or self-critical when they indicate that what they *would* do in a situation with a minority (e.g., interaction with a Black person or a homosexual) is different from what they think they *should* do. Further, these feelings of compunction can then lead to self-regulation of expressed prejudice; individuals do not want to feel guilty for behaving in a prejudiced

manner that differs from what they believe, so they become more careful about what they express. Monteith (1993) found that individuals low in prejudice toward homosexuals effectively inhibited prejudicial responses to jokes about homosexuals when they experienced compunction because their personal standards were violated. Zuwerink and colleagues (1996) found similar results in low-prejudiced individuals who responded to questions about Blacks. Conversely, high-prejudiced individuals tend to experience less compunction as a result of feeling prejudice toward homosexuals (Monteith, 1993) and Blacks (Zuwerink et al., 1996).

In relation to disparagement humor, an individual's feelings of compunction may be affected by the norm of tolerance perceived as a result of hearing a disparaging joke. When Ford and his colleagues (2001) examined perceived normative tolerance (PNT), they also examined participants' feelings of compunction. In addition to rating what they perceived to be the norm of tolerance for others in their immediate setting, participants were asked to rate how they expected they would feel about themselves, and how critical they would be of themselves if they had been the boss in the vignette, and had initiated the discriminatory behavior.

The researchers found that because participants high in hostile sexism who were exposed to sexist jokes were more likely to think other participants would be tolerant of sexism (or score higher on PNT), they were also significantly less likely than individuals in other conditions to anticipate feelings of compunction upon hypothetically initiating the discrimination. In fact, perceptions of normative tolerance mediated the relationship between message type (e.g., sexist jokes/statements) and compunction ratings; exposure to sexist humor resulted in less compunction and higher discrimination tolerance for high-prejudiced individuals because they perceived other participants as also being tolerant of the sex discrimination (Ford et al., 2001).

To summarize, it is clear that a fairly consistent pattern has emerged in the research in this area; namely, exposure to disparagement humor may result in several detrimental outcomes. Specifically, Ford's (1997) early work showed that negative portrayals of a minority group in the media increased the likelihood that people would make negative judgments of that group in other contexts. With respect to sexist behavior, disparaging humor has been found to predict tolerance of sexist events (Ford, 2000), and increase perceptions of others' tolerance of sexism (Ford et al., 2001). Prejudiced norm theory proposes that these detrimental effects occur as a result of the listener's non-serious interpretation of the disparaging humor. That is, when the listener does not critically evaluate the content of the humor, it leads to the assumption that in that context, discrimination is acceptable, and as a result, a high-prejudiced listener then subliminally experiences an overall increase in discrimination tolerance, and few (if any) feelings of compunction.

These findings provide great insight into the effects of disparagement humor on people's perceptions of discrimination tolerance, but at this point we cannot be sure that the findings extend to other minority groups. The majority of the research on disparaging humor thus far has neglected to examine a variety of target groups. As a possible explanation for the null effects found in Olson et al.'s (1999) study on stereotypes and attitudes toward men and lawyers, the researchers concluded that disparagement humor might only affect the recipient's feelings toward a group if that group is relatively disadvantaged or lower in status. Given that the target groups in Olson and colleagues' study were men and lawyers—groups not traditionally disadvantaged or low in status—and that the findings of Ford and his colleagues were significant when using women as the disparaged group, this explanation seems plausible. Yet, with the exception of Ford's (1997) study on the portrayals of Blacks on sitcom television, there has been

no research published to date that addresses the possible effects of disparagement humor with any other minority group.

The Current Study

It is the focus of the current study to expand disparagement humor research and prejudiced norm theory as it applies to other minority groups. The majority of previous work has focused on the disparagement of women. While it is extremely important to demonstrate that sexist humor can lead to increased tolerance of sexism, it does come with somewhat of a caveat—that many people easily recognize it is against the social norm to put down women. And, while they may or may not *agree* with the reason for that norm, it does make people more likely to closely monitor the sentiments they express. The present study, however, will examine the disparagement of homosexuals. This particular group is of interest for several reasons.

Namely, within the context of disparagement humor, no research to date has been published using homosexuals as a target group, so exploring the effects of targeting homosexuals would significantly expand the current body of literature. As previous research in this area has shown (for women and Blacks), it is important to examine social situations that have the potential to perpetuate the discrimination of minority groups. Homosexuals have long dealt with discrimination and continue to do so today. In fact, to gain perspective on the persecution of this group, it is important to consider that sexual orientation is one of the leading reasons for hate crimes; it was the third most commonly cited hate crime bias (following race and religion) in 2007. In fact, there were 1,265 reported incidents motivated by sexual prejudice, making up over 16% of all hate crime incidents that year (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008).

Further, some would argue that homosexuals have yet to receive some of their basic civil rights, such as legal recognition of their relationships, regulated access to employer-provided

health care, the ability to openly serve in the military, and federal protection from discrimination in the workplace (Human Rights Campaign, 2009). In short, homosexuals are quite possibly one of the few remaining minority groups in America for which intolerance is so widely and blatantly accepted. With respect to this study, we presume that this acceptance of intolerance may be reflected in the results; many people may view it as acceptable to make belittling or offensive jokes toward homosexuals.

However, it is also important to acknowledge that society's current views toward homosexuals are improving somewhat, which may lead to further insight into the dynamics of prejudiced norm theory. In particular, there has been a marked increase in support for civil unions and gay marriage in some U.S. states over recent months (Goodnough, 2009), and acceptance of gays in the military is also on the rise (Bumiller, 2010; Dropp & Cohen, 2008). But at the same time, Herek (2000b) has shown that in the United States, although there has been a rise in support of basic civil liberties for homosexuals among American adults, there is still widespread sexual prejudice toward the group, in terms of moral views and personal discomfort. Many Americans—regardless of their personal beliefs—still recognize that there is a stigma toward the group (Herek, 2004). This stigma could mean that disparagement toward homosexuals is still likely to be viewed as more socially acceptable than toward other groups, making it less likely that people might suppress negative prejudice.

To further increase the contribution of the current research to the existing literature, this study will incorporate a measurement of humor style, or how individuals use humor on a day-to-day basis. The literature published thus far on the effect of disparaging humor on attitudes toward disparaged groups has not accounted for this individual difference variable, which could play a crucial role in how a person interprets a humorous comment, as well as how she or he

reacts to that comment. To measure humor style, the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ; Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003) will be used to assess the ways in which individuals use humor in their everyday lives, especially in relation to social interaction.

The HSQ identifies four specific humor styles: self-enhancing, self-defeating, affiliative, and aggressive. According to Martin et al. (2003), those who prefer *self-enhancing* humor use it to enhance the self in a way that is non-threatening and acceptable to others, whereas people who use *self-defeating* humor tend to do so at their own expense to gain the approval of others. Individuals who prefer *affiliative* humor use it to improve their relationships with others in a relatively benign manner, while individuals who use *aggressive* humor tend to do so with the intention of criticizing others by using sarcasm, ridicule, derision, or potentially offensive (e.g., racist or sexist) types of humor, among other forms of disparagement. Individuals who use aggressive humor also tend to compulsively express it, even when it is socially inappropriate (Martin, 2003).

Given the tendency for individuals with an aggressive humor style to use potentially offensive forms of humor and the tendency for those who have an affiliative style to use more benign forms of humor, it seems logical that humor style could affect individuals' reactions to disparaging humor. This, in turn, could thereby influence tolerance of a discriminatory event. For example, an individual with aggressive humor tendencies might find disparaging humor more enjoyable or funny, or might simply be more open to a joke that makes fun of another person or group. This could then increase the likelihood that he or she would judge the message in a non-serious mindset, making the individual more susceptible to increased tolerance of discrimination against the disparaged group. In comparison, someone who tends to use more affiliative forms of humor might be less likely to find a derogatory joke humorous, which could

prevent the “non-serious mindset” from being activated, and therefore make the person less likely to tolerate discrimination against the derogated group. As such, participants’ HSQ scores will be used to assess a possible moderating effect of humor type on the relationship between message type (e.g., disparaging joke/comment), and both tolerance of discrimination, as well as anticipated levels of compunction upon imagining oneself as the initiator of a discriminatory event.

In sum, the present research will investigate the effect of disparagement humor on individuals’ tolerance of discrimination toward homosexuals by addressing a set of three objectives. First, the current study will investigate whether exposure to anti-homosexual disparaging humor affects individuals’ feelings about discrimination against homosexuals. Given that previous research has been done on disparaging humor and sexist attitudes, it is expected that this will indeed be the case. Second, this research will examine whether an individual’s humor style—or tendency to use humor in certain ways—affects how he or she reacts when presented with disparaging humor, and consequently, how he or she reacts to discriminatory behavior. To date, the research on disparaging humor has yet to examine this variable, but it is expected that depending on one’s humor style, results will show either increased or decreased tolerance of discrimination, and either greater or fewer feelings of compunction, after being exposed to disparaging humor. Finally, this study will investigate whether an individual’s perception of other people’s tolerance of discrimination toward homosexuals determines his or her reaction to disparaging humor, and in turn, his or her own level of tolerance. Specifically, it is predicted that a mediational relationship will result, such that the type of message people receive will influence their feelings of compunction and tolerance of anti-homosexual discrimination because they perceive others as also being tolerant of that discrimination.

Hypotheses

H₁: Participants exposed to disparaging humor messages will be more tolerant of discriminatory behavior toward homosexuals, and less likely to anticipate feelings of compunction about anti-homosexual discrimination, compared to participants exposed to other types of messages.

H₂: Prejudice level will moderate the relationship between message type and participants' responses to discrimination, such that:

H_{2a}: Individuals who score higher on prejudice toward gay men who are exposed to disparaging humor will be more likely to express tolerance of discrimination, and less likely to anticipate feelings of compunction, compared to individuals who score lower on prejudice toward the group.

H₃: Humor style will moderate the relationship between message type and the participants' responses to anti-homosexual discrimination, such that:

H_{3a}: Individuals who are exposed to anti-homosexual humor and score higher on the aggressive humor style will also be more likely to express tolerance of discrimination, and less likely to anticipate feelings of compunction upon imagining that they engaged in anti-homosexual discrimination, compared to individuals exposed to the same communication type, but who have different humor styles.

While relationships between the other three humor styles (affiliative, self-enhancing and self-defeating) and message condition may exist, there is not enough previous literature on these variables to support specific hypotheses for these relationships. As such, these relationships will be probed in an exploratory fashion.

H₄: Perceived normative tolerance will mediate the relationships between message type and participants' feelings of compunction and tolerance, such that exposure to disparaging

humor will decrease compunction and increase discrimination tolerance because they perceive others as tolerant of the discrimination.

CHAPTER 2 - Method

Participants

The sample ($N = 152$) consisted of undergraduate introductory psychology students who volunteered to participate in exchange for course credit. The participants ranged in age from 18-25 ($M = 19.2$, $SD = 1.42$) and were 57.2% female, 93.4% heterosexual, 83.6% White, 73.7% Christian, and 87.5% were in their first or second year of college.

Predictors

Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLG)

Participants were asked to complete Herek's (1988) Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLG) scale. This scale has been validated and shown to provide an accurate indication of individuals' attitudes toward homosexuals (Herek, 1988). This measure essentially acted as a substitute for the sexism measures used in Ford's work, since it is specific to attitudes toward the target group in this study—homosexuals.

The ATLG is a 20-item Likert format with two, 10-item subscales: Attitudes Toward Lesbians (ATL) and Attitudes Toward Gay Men (ATG) (Herek, 1988). The statements, such as "*If a man has homosexual feelings, he should do everything he can to overcome them*" and "*Lesbians just can't fit into our society,*" are presented to participants with a scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 9 (*Strongly Agree*). Total scores (ATL and ATG combined) were calculated by averaging all scores for the items on both scales, such that higher scores indicated

more negative attitudes. See Appendix A for the full scale; items that were reverse-scored are indicated.

Social Desirability Scale (SDS)

Social desirability refers to a need for social approval and acceptance, and the belief that this can be attained by means of culturally acceptable and appropriate behaviors (Marlowe & Crowne, 1961). In a psychometric survey situation, this tendency would be evident in a participant's perception of statements as culturally approved or disapproved, and in turn, his or her indication of agreement with those statements.

In order to control for individual tendencies to respond in a socially desirable manner, the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (M-C SDS; Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) was included. The MC-SDS tests whether individual differences to seek social approval are influencing scores on a measure that examines a potentially sensitive topic (in this case, views toward homosexuals). It consists of 33 items with true or false response categories. An example item is "*I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble.*" Scoring the scale consisted of summing the total number of socially desirable responses; the higher the score, the more likely the participant is to respond in a socially desirable manner. See Appendix B for the full scale; socially desirable responses are indicated.

Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ)

This measure was designed to distinguish between potentially beneficial and detrimental humor styles (Martin et al., 2003). The construct validity and discriminant validity of each scale on the Humor Styles Questionnaire has been strongly supported (Doris, 2004; Kazarian & Martin, 2004; Kuiper et al., 2004; Martin et al., 2003; Saroglou & Sariot, 2002). Martin (2007) reported that scores on each scale have been strongly correlated with peer ratings, and the two

scales measuring positive styles (affiliative and self-enhancing) correlate positively with other well-validated self-report measures, such as the Sense of Humor Questionnaire (SHQ; Svebak, 1974), Situational Humor Response Questionnaire (SHRQ; Martin & Lefcourt, 1984), and Coping Humor Scale (CHS; Martin & Lefcourt, 1983). The more negative styles (aggressive and self-defeating) generally do not relate to other measures, suggesting these styles are not well-measured by previous scales (Martin, 2007). The Humor Styles Questionnaire is the first (and only) self-report measure to assess social and psychological functions of humor that are less desirable, which is one of the aims of the current study.

Four scales comprise the HSQ—one for each humor style. Participants rated, on a scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 9 (*Strongly Agree*), their agreement with each statement. An example of an item from the aggressive subscale is “*When telling jokes or saying funny things, I am usually not very concerned about how other people are taking it,*” while an item from the affiliative scale is, “*I don’t have to work very hard at making other people laugh – I seem to be a naturally humorous person.*” An example of the items on the self-defeating scale is “*I let people laugh at me or make fun at my expense more than I should*”, and an example of the items on the self-enhancing scale is “*Even when I’m by myself, I’m often amused by the absurdities of life.*”

Participants completed all four scales, thus receiving four separate scores, one for each humor style. Each score was calculated by reverse coding the appropriate items, and determining the mean score for each humor style (making the range for each style 1 to 9). It should be noted that the only humor style for which a specific relationship was hypothesized was the aggressive style. Due to the lack of research relating disparagement humor and humor style, the investigation of affiliative, self-enhancing, and self-defeating styles will be purely exploratory.

Appendix C provides the full questionnaire; the subscale to which each item belongs is shown at the end of the item, and items that were reverse-scored are also indicated.

Dependent Measures

Perceived Normative Tolerance (PNT)

PNT is the extent to which participants perceive others in their immediate setting to be tolerant of the discrimination described in the vignette. It was measured using questions modeled after those verified by Ford's (2001) study. After completing the vignette readings, participants were asked, *"Please rate on the scale above how offended, if at all, you think other participants in this study would be by the boss's behavior toward the employee."* To measure how critical they perceived others to be, they were also asked, *"Please rate on the scale above how critical, if at all, you think other participants in this study would be of the boss's behavior toward the employee."* The Likert-type scale ranged from 1 (*Not at all*) to 9 (*Very much*) for both items (see Appendix E for this questionnaire). Ford (2001) found that these two items were strongly correlated ($r = 0.69$), and produced a combined measure of PNT by averaging the scores of the two items. The same procedure was followed for the current study.

Tolerance of Discrimination

Participants were also asked to rate how offensive they viewed the boss's behavior to be, as well as their own (hypothetical) behavior, after imagining they initiated the harassment. They also rated how critical they were of the boss's behavior, and their own (hypothetical) behavior. Specifically, they were asked: *"Please rate on the scale above how offended you are, if at all, by the boss's behavior toward the employee"; "Please rate on the scale above how critical you are, if at all, of the boss's behavior toward the employee"; "Please rate on the scale above if you think your actions, if you had been in the boss's position and said the same things to the*

employee, would be offensive”; and *“Please rate on the scale above if you would be critical of your actions, if you had been in the boss’s position and said the same things to the employee.”*

Again, the scale ranged from 1 (*Not at all*) to 9 (*Very much*), and these scores were averaged to produce an overall score for tolerance (see Appendix F for this questionnaire).

Compunction

Considering what is known about compunction, prejudice, and disparaging humor (e.g., Devine et al. 1991; Ford et al., 2001; Monteith, 1993; Zuwerink et al. 1996), compunction was also included as a dependent variable in the current study. It was expected that when individuals were asked to imagine that they had committed an act of prejudice against a gay man, it would make salient their personal views toward homosexuals. According to Ford’s work, measuring the amount of compunction felt after thinking about this situation would provide some indication of their feelings about anti-homosexual prejudice. Similar to Ford’s (2001) study, and with the addition of items used in Monteith’s (1993) experiment, participants were asked to imagine themselves as the boss in the work scenario, having initiated the harassment. They then rated, on a scale of 1 (*Not at all*) to 9 (*Very much*), how bothered, uneasy, uncomfortable, guilty, annoyed, self-critical and disappointed in themselves they thought they would feel in that situation. As Ford did, these scores were averaged to obtain an overall score for the dependent variable of compunction (see Appendix G for complete set of items).

Monteith (1993) also measured positive emotions, (including: friendly, good, happy, and optimistic) as well as depressive emotions (including: low, sad, and depressed). These indexes were also included in the current study to draw attention from the other items.

Joke Enjoyment

Participants' enjoyment of the jokes and statements (i.e., funniness ratings) were measured for two reasons. First, funniness ratings were needed in order to conduct a manipulation check, to verify that the jokes included in the vignettes were indeed perceived to be more humorous than the statements. Second, the funniness ratings were used to investigate any correlational relationships with scores on the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay men scale.¹ Participants will be asked to rate the jokes they read in the vignettes on a scale of 1 (*Not at all funny*) to 9 (*Very funny*). The jokes and statements were restated, with the instructions "*Please rate on the above scale how funny you perceive this to be.*" (See Appendix H for this questionnaire.)

Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to a condition in a 2 (message type) x 2 (disparagement) design. The message type aspect of each condition consisted of either a joke or a statement, while the disparagement aspect of each condition was either disparaging or neutral. This resulted in four conditions: a disparaging joke (DJ) condition, a neutral (non-disparagement) joke (NJ) condition, a disparaging statement (DS) condition, and a neutral statement (NS) condition. The format followed Ford's (2000) paradigm, using four vignettes—the first of which was a filler; the second of which was the assigned condition; the third, another filler; and the fourth, a description of an incident of discrimination toward a homosexual. Appendix D provides the full set of vignettes that were included in the study.

Depending upon the condition to which participants were randomly assigned, the second vignette described a situation in which a person either a.) told a disparaging joke about homosexuals, based on stereotypes about that group (DJ condition); b.) told a non-disparaging

joke, unrelated to group identification (NJ condition); c.) made a disparaging statement (a non-humorous translation of the joke used in the DH condition) about homosexuals (DS condition); or d.) made a neutral statement (NS/control condition). The neutral statement group (NS condition) was given a third filler vignette.

The final vignette, which all participants read, described a situation in which a homosexual man encounters discrimination in the form of a verbal insult from his boss at work. Because this is the first study to focus on the effects of exposure to disparaging humor on individuals' acceptance of discrimination toward homosexuals, and since attitudes toward gay men tend to be more negative than those toward lesbians (Herek, 2000a; Whitley, 2001) the sex of the target was held constant as male.² Participants were then asked to rate how they would feel if *they* had been in the boss's position and had instigated the harassment in the scenario. They were then asked to complete the dependent measures, SDS, ATLG, and the Humor Styles Questionnaire. Upon completion, participants were debriefed and dismissed.

Before progressing, it is important to consider the impact of the joke teller's gender and sexual orientation on the potential effects of exposure to anti-homosexual disparaging humor; recent research has found that there are gender differences with respect to sexual prejudice. Herek (2000a) illustrated this when he examined the views of heterosexual men and women toward homosexuals of both genders. He found that heterosexual women generally hold similarly negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians, whereas heterosexual men do not. Heterosexual men are more likely than heterosexual women to view gay men more negatively than lesbians, but they also tend to display more favorable attitudes toward lesbians in certain situations.

Specifically, when asked first about their feelings toward lesbians, then about gay men, heterosexual men reported less negativity toward lesbians, compared to when the question order was reversed. Being asked first about their feelings toward gay men, then toward lesbians, resulted in more negativity toward both groups, which Herek (2000a) suggests may be the result of the activation of masculine identity, and the need to prove one's own masculinity by rejecting gay men. The activation of this schema is then presumably carried over to the questions about lesbians.

Conversely, the presentation of lesbian items first most likely activates a different schema, possibly related to personal values or sexual fascination with lesbians (neither of which would activate an intense need to dissociate from homosexuality). This notion is also supported by Whitley (2001), who found that participant gender, hypermasculinity, and endorsement of traditional gender-role beliefs were all predictive of attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Because this previous work suggests it is more common for males to have more intense negative attitudes toward gay men, the victim in our vignettes was a gay man, and the joke teller was a supposedly heterosexual male. This provides a starting point for this line of research, as future studies can progress by altering the gender and sexual orientation of the characters in the vignettes.

CHAPTER 3 - Results

Data Filtering

Prior to running any analyses, demographic data from the original sample ($N = 152$) were examined. Given the topic of the study, we asked participants about their sexual orientation, because non-heterosexual participants may have had a tendency to respond differently to several of the items on the survey, compared to heterosexual participants. Of the total sample, three

participants identified their sexual orientation as homosexual, three as bisexual, and four as “other,” while one did not respond to the item. These participants’ responses were filtered out of the data set, leaving only heterosexuals’ responses to be analyzed. We removed these participants from further analyses rather than using sexual orientation as a predictor variable, given the low numbers ($n = 11$) of non-heterosexual participants. Additionally, packets were coded based on a suspicion check given at the end of the survey packet, which asked participants to write what they believed the study to be about. Responses that included any mention of the focus of the study (e.g. “humor and how it affects people’s attitudes toward others” or “jokes and people’s interactions”) were coded as suspicious ($n = 15$) and filtered from the analyses. After excluding data from non-heterosexual and suspicious participants, the final sample size used in the analyses was 128.

These 128 participants were exposed to one of four conditions, varying in combination of message type and disparagement. Those exposed to the joke level of message type received either anti-gay disparaging jokes ($n = 36$) or neutral jokes ($n = 32$). Likewise, those exposed to statements read either anti-gay disparaging statements ($n = 31$) or neutral statements ($n = 29$). Each cell was similar in the number of participants to which it was assigned, fulfilling the full-factorial assumption.

Manipulation Checks

In order to verify the effectiveness of the jokes and statements used as stimuli in the vignettes, a series of manipulation checks was conducted to verify that the jokes were perceived as significantly funnier than the statements. Manipulation checks were also used to verify that the disparaging jokes and statements were perceived as significantly more degrading than the neutral jokes and statements. After reading through the vignettes, participants were asked to rate

all of the jokes and statements used in all of the conditions (regardless of the condition to which they were assigned) on funniness and degradation. Funniness was rated on a scale from 1 (*Not at all Funny*) to 9 (*Very Funny*). Disparagement was measured on a scale from 1 (*Not at all Degrading*) to 9 (*Very Degrading*). “Degrading” was chosen for use on the survey because we thought that participants would be more familiar with the term, as opposed to “disparaging.”

Funniness

Descriptive statistics were examined for the items. The mean funniness ratings for the jokes, which ranged from 2.47 to 5.09, were higher than those for the statements, which ranged from 1.42 to 2.41. To ensure that these differences were significantly different, a 2 (message type: joke or statement) x 2 (disparagement: anti-gay or neutral) repeated measures ANOVA was conducted. Four new variables were computed to obtain each participant’s mean funniness rating of the set of disparaging jokes, the set of neutral jokes, the set of disparaging statements, and the set of neutral statements. These variables were entered into the analyses, which revealed a significant main effect for message type, indicating that average funniness score for the jokes were significantly higher than for the statements ($F(1, 127) = 312.10, p < .001$). There was also a significant main effect for disparagement, indicating that average funniness scores for the neutral items (jokes and statements) were significantly higher than for the anti-gay items ($F(1, 127) = 6.09, p = .015$). Further, a significant interaction emerged between message type and disparagement ($F(1, 127) = 39.24, p < .001$). Examination of the means revealed that, interestingly, the average funniness ratings for neutral jokes ($M = 4.44, SD = 1.83$) were significantly funnier than for disparaging jokes ($M = 3.51, SD = 1.86$). It is possible that the reason this occurred is that participants did not feel comfortable acknowledging that the anti-gay humor was funny.

Paired samples *t*-tests were also conducted for further comparison of the items. Results showed that the disparaging jokes were rated as significantly less funny than the neutral jokes ($t(127) = -4.81, p < .001$). The disparaging jokes were, however, significantly funnier than both the neutral statements ($t(127) = 11.14, p < .001$) and the disparaging statements ($t(127) = 11.08, p < .001$). The neutral jokes were also rated as significantly funnier than the neutral statements ($t(127) = 16.98, p < .001$), and the disparaging statements ($t(127) = 13.15, p < .001$). Neutral statements were significantly less funny than the disparaging statements ($t(127) = -2.03, p = .045$).

Degradation

The mean degradation ratings for the disparaging items, which ranged from 2.84 to 7.63, were higher than those for the neutral items, which ranged from 1.31 to 1.78. To ensure that these differences were significantly different, a 2 (message type: joke or statement) x 2 (disparagement: anti-gay or neutral) repeated measures ANOVA was again conducted. Four new variables were computed to obtain each participant's mean degradation rating of the set of disparaging jokes, the set of neutral jokes, the set of disparaging statements, and the set of neutral statements. These variables were entered into the analyses, which revealed a significant main effect for disparagement. Analyses revealed a significant main effect disparagement, such that the disparaging items were rated as significantly more degrading than the neutral items ($F(1, 126) = 854.54, p < .001$). There was no significant main effect for message type ($F(1, 126) = 0.81, p = .37$), suggesting that the jokes were not rated as more or less degrading than the statements. There was also no significant interaction between message type and disparagement ($F(1, 126) = 0.27, p = .61$), which suggests that the perceived degradation did not vary for message type, depending on disparagement, or vice versa.

Again, paired samples *t*-tests were conducted to further compare the items. Disparaging jokes were not significantly different in degradation ratings compared to the disparaging statements ($t(126) = 0.16, p = .87$). However, the disparaging jokes were rated as significantly more degrading compared to both the neutral statements ($t(126) = 26.75, p < .001$) and the neutral jokes ($t(126) = 25.65, p < .001$). Disparaging statements were also rated as significantly more disparaging compared to neutral statements ($t(126) = 29.99, p < .001$) and neutral jokes ($t(126) = 26.77, p < .001$). Neutral statements did not differ in degradation ratings from neutral jokes ($t(126) = 1.01, p = .32$).

Overall, these analyses verify the use of the jokes and statements included in the vignettes. In general, disparaging items were seen as more derogatory than neutral items, and jokes were rated as funnier than statements. The disparaging jokes were seen as less funny than the neutral jokes, and while it may be worthy of noting, we did not view this as any cause for concern, because the anti-gay jokes were still rated as funnier than any of the statements. Table 1 contains the means and standard deviations on funniness and degradation for each set of items.

Preliminary Analyses

Sex

Independent samples *t*-tests revealed a significant difference between sexes on tolerance of discrimination ($t(1, 126) = 3.43, p = .001$) with men being significantly more tolerant of discrimination ($M = 3.65, SD = 1.90$) than women ($M = 2.61, SD = 1.53$). A significant sex difference was also found for compunction ($t(1, 126) = -2.08, p = .039$), with men feeling significantly less compunction ($M = 2.80, SD = 1.28$) than women ($M = 3.29, SD = 1.33$).

With respect to humor styles, the only significant sex difference to emerge was for the aggressive humor style ($t(1, 126) = 3.76, p < .001$) on which men ($M = 5.00, SD = 0.90$) scored

significantly higher than women ($M = 4.43, SD = 0.80$). Interestingly, significant sex differences also emerged on ratings of perceived normative tolerance ($t(1, 126) = 2.78, p = .006$), indicating that women ($M = 3.03, SD = 1.63$) perceived other participants in the study to be less tolerant of the anti-gay discrimination described in the final vignette than did men ($M = 3.82, SD = 1.56$). No sex differences were found for sexual prejudice scores or social desirability, but because of the differences in DV scores and in humor style, sex was controlled for in all further analyses.

Social Desirability

Unsurprisingly, scores on the MC-SDS were highly negatively correlated with aggressive humor style ($r = -.28, p = .001$), suggesting that individuals who score highly on the aggressive humor subscale are less concerned with providing socially desirable responses. However, compunction was negatively correlated with social desirability ($r = -.25, p = .004$), which oddly suggests that individuals who tend to give socially desirable responses felt less compunction. Because MC-SDS scores were significantly correlated with one of the DVs, social desirability was controlled for in all future analyses. See Table 2 for a complete listing of correlations.

Religious Affiliation

Religion was coded into a three-level variable such that participants were categorized as having a Christian, non-Christian, or non-religious affiliation. A series of one-way between groups ANOVAs were conducted in order to see if there was an effect of religious affiliation on either of the dependent variables, or on the continuous predictor variable of ATLG scores, in order to determine if religion should be controlled for in future analyses. Religion had no significant effect on tolerance of discrimination ($F(2, 125) = 0.38, p = .67$), or compunction ($F(2, 125) = 0.17, p = .84$), suggesting that it was not necessary to include religion as a covariate in the multivariate analyses. However, religion did have an effect on individuals' attitudes toward

lesbians and gay men (ATLG scores; $F(2, 125) = 3.40, p = .037$). Multiple comparisons using Tukey's HSD revealed that there was a significant difference ($p = .04$) between individuals who identified as having no religion ($M = 2.92, SD = 1.72$), and those who identified as Christian ($M = 4.03, SD = 2.07$). Significant differences between religious groups also emerged when examining scores on the HSQ subscales. There were significant mean differences in scores on the affiliative subscale between individuals who identified as Non-Christian ($M = 5.85, SD = 1.67$) and those who identified as Christian ($M = 7.64, SD = 0.84$) ($p < .001$), and between Non-Christians and those who identified as having no religion ($M = 7.22, SD = 1.10$) ($p = .003$). Additionally there were significant differences between groups on the self-enhancing subscale ($p = .013$) such that those who identified as Christians scored significantly higher ($M = 5.95, SD = 1.30$) than those who identified as Non-Christian ($M = 4.45, SD = 0.96$). As such, religion was controlled for in regression analyses examining ATLG and HSQ scores.

Multivariate Analysis of Variance

Testing of Assumptions

Prior to conducting the analysis, the assumptions of MANCOVA were tested. Examination of Mahalanobis' Distances revealed no multivariate outliers. Box's M test was not significant ($p = .09$), showing that the assumptions of homogeneity of variance and covariance were met. Shapiro-Wilk tests for normality revealed that several of the distributions were skewed. For the independent variable of disparagement, the distribution of discrimination tolerance was positively skewed for both disparaging ($W(67) = .92, p < .001$) and neutral conditions ($W(61) = .90, p < .001$), meaning that regardless of whether participants were exposed to disparaging or non-disparaging items, the majority of participants indicated that they were fairly intolerant of the discrimination described in the vignettes. Unsurprisingly then, the

distributions of perceived normative tolerance scores for both disparaging and neutral conditions were also non-normal. In the disparaging conditions, scores were significantly positively skewed ($W(67) = .93, p = .001$), as were those in the neutral conditions ($W(61) = .96, p = .026$), indicating that regardless of their exposure to disparaging stimuli, participants generally perceived others as being intolerant of the discrimination described in the vignette. The distribution of compunction scores for the disparaging conditions was significantly negatively skewed ($W(67) = .96, p = .039$), but not for the neutral condition ($W(61) = .97, p = .20$), meaning that most of the participants exposed to disparaging items indicated higher compunction, while those exposed to neutral items had a somewhat normal distribution of scores. Visual inspections of these distributions confirmed these results.

When examining the distributions with respect to message type, similar patterns emerged. Scores on tolerance of discrimination were positively skewed for both joke ($W(68) = .93, p = .001$) and statement ($W(60) = .91, p < .001$) conditions, meaning that regardless of the type of message to which participants were exposed, they were generally intolerant of the discrimination described to them. Similarly, scores on perceived normative tolerance were also positively skewed for both joke ($W(68) = .96, p = .039$) and statement ($W(60) = .90, p < .001$) conditions, indicating that participants tended to perceive other participants as also intolerant of the discrimination, regardless of whether they read jokes or statements. Finally, the distribution of compunction scores was significantly negatively skewed for the statement conditions ($W(60) = .95, p = .022$), but not for the joke conditions ($W(68) = .97, p = .064$), suggesting that individuals who were exposed to statements experienced more feelings of negative self-directed affect than those exposed to jokes. Again, visual inspection of the distributions confirmed these findings.

While analysis of variance tests are fairly robust to violations of normality, it is important to keep these violations in mind when interpreting the results of the following MANCOVA.

In order to test the first hypothesis, that participants exposed to disparaging jokes would be more tolerant of discriminatory behavior toward gay men, and less likely to anticipate feelings of compunction about anti-gay discrimination, compared to participants exposed to other types of messages, a 2 (message type) x 2 (disparagement) MANCOVA was employed. The demographic variable of sex and scores on the Marlowe-Crowne social desirability scale were entered as covariates. Pillai's Trace revealed that message type had a significant effect on the combined DVs of discrimination tolerance and compunction ($F(2, 121) = 4.22, p = .017, \eta^2 = .065$), but disparagement did not ($F(2, 121) = 0.39, p = .68$). The interaction between message type and disparagement was not significant ($F(2, 121) = 0.82, p = .44$).

The initial univariate MANOVA revealed a significant main effect for message type on discrimination tolerance ($F(1, 122) = 8.51, p = .004, \eta^2 = .07$), such that participants exposed to jokes were more tolerant of anti-gay discrimination ($M = 3.48, SD = 1.80$) compared to participants exposed to statements ($M = 2.56, SD = 1.77$). No significant effect was found for message type on compunction ($F(1, 122) = 0.01, p = .91$), disparagement on tolerance of discrimination ($F(1, 122) = 0.00, p = .99$), or disparagement on compunction ($F(1, 122) = 0.78, p = .38$). Because there was no significant interaction between message type and disparagement on tolerance of discrimination ($F(1, 122) = 1.65, p = .20$), or compunction ($F(1, 122) = 0.01, p = .91$), no further analyses were conducted. See Table 3 for complete listing of analyses.

Testing ATLG and Aggressive Humor Style as Moderators

ATLG as a Moderator

To test the second hypothesis, that ATLG scores would moderate the relationship between message type and disparagement on each DV, two series of hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted—one predicting tolerance, and one predicting compunction. Step 1 of the regressions controlled for demographic variables of sex (male or female) and religious orientation (Christian, non-Christian, or non-religious, dummy coded into two predictor variables), as well as SDS scores. Step 2 entered the dummy coded variables for message type and disparagement, along with their standardized ATLG scores. The third step carried the 2-way interaction terms between message type, disparagement style, and ATLG. The fourth step carried the 3-way interaction term between message type, disparagement style, and ATLG.

Step 1 improved the model significantly ($R^2 = .10$, $F(4, 123) = 3.41$, $p = .011$). There was a unique, significant, negative relationship found between sex and tolerance of discrimination ($\beta = -.30$, $t = -3.42$, $p = .001$) indicating that women were less tolerant of discrimination than were men. Step 2 improved the model above and beyond Step 1 (R^2 change = .35, F change (3, 120) = 15.62, $p < .001$). There was a unique, significant, negative relationship found for message type ($\beta = -.21$, $t = -2.77$, $p = .007$), indicating that participants exposed to jokes were more tolerant of anti-gay discrimination. Additionally, the unique, significant, positive relationship found for standardized ATLG scores ($\beta = .47$, $t = 6.01$, $p < .001$) suggests that individuals who held more negative attitudes toward homosexuals were also more tolerant of discrimination toward them. The steps carrying the interactions did not improve the model above and beyond previous steps. See Table 4 for the complete set of effects for each step.

To test ATLG as a moderator on the relationship between message type and disparagement on compunction, another regression was conducted with the same variables

entered in each step, but with compunction as the DV. The only step to improve the model was the first ($R^2 = .098$, $F(4, 123) = 3.35$, $p = .012$). As found previously, there was a unique, significant, positive relationship found for sex ($\beta = .18$, $t = 2.10$, $p = .038$), indicating that women were more likely to anticipate feelings of compunction, compared to men. There was also a unique, significant, negative relationship found for social desirability ($\beta = -.25$, $t = -2.86$, $p = .005$), indicating that, consistent with previous analyses, individuals who scored higher on social desirability felt less compunction. Table 5 contains the complete set of effects for each step.

Aggressive Humor Style as a Moderator

To test the third hypothesis, that humor style would moderate the relationship between message type and disparagement on each DV, another series of multiple regressions was conducted with the same independent variables entered in each step, but substituting aggressive HSQ scores (AgHS) for ATLG scores. Thus, the first step controlled for sex, religious affiliation, and SDS. The second step contained the dummy coded variables for message type and disparagement style, as well as standardized AgHS scores. The third step carried the 2-way interaction terms between message type, disparagement style, and AgHS, and the fourth step carried the 3-way interaction terms between message type, disparagement style, and AgHS.

Step 1 improved the model significantly ($R^2 = .10$, $F(4, 123) = 3.41$, $p = .011$). As in the previous analysis, there was a unique, significant, negative relationship found between sex and tolerance of discrimination ($\beta = -.30$, $t = -3.42$, $p = .001$) indicating that women were less tolerant of discrimination than were men. Step 2 improved the model above and beyond Step 1 (R^2 change = .20, F change (3, 120) = 5.08 $p = .002$). A unique, significant, negative relationship was again found for message type ($\beta = -.25$, $t = -2.99$, $p = .003$), indicating that participants exposed to jokes were more tolerant of anti-gay discrimination. The unique, significant, positive

relationship found for standardized aggressive humor style scores ($\beta = .23, t = 2.56, p = .012$) suggests that individuals who had higher scores on the aggressive humor subscale were more tolerant of discrimination toward homosexuals. The steps carrying the interactions did not improve the model above and beyond previous steps. See Table 6 for complete results.

To test aggressive humor style as a moderator on the relationship between message type and disparagement on compunction, another regression was conducted with the same independent variables entered in each step and with compunction as the DV. The only step to improve the model was the first ($R^2 = .10, F(4, 123) = 3.35, p = .012$). As in previous analyses, there was a unique, significant, positive relationship found for sex ($\beta = 0.18, t = 2.10, p = .038$), indicating that women were more likely to anticipate feelings of compunction, compared to men. Once again, there was also a unique, significant, negative relationship found for social desirability ($\beta = -.25, t = -2.86, p = .005$), indicating that individuals who scored higher on social desirability felt less compunction. See Table 7 for complete results.

Mediational Analyses

Finally, in order to test for mediation of perceived normative tolerance on the relationship between message type and the dependent variables, two series of multiple regressions were conducted using Baron and Kenny's (1986) mediational approach—one predicting tolerance, and one predicting compunction. First, in order to establish significant relationships between each set of variables, discrimination tolerance was regressed on message type and disparagement. A unique, significant, negative relationship was found for message type ($\beta = -.26, t = -3.04, p = .003$), but not for disparagement ($\beta = .02, t = .28, p = .779$). Second, discrimination tolerance was regressed on perceived normative tolerance (PNT) and a significant, positive, unique relationship was found ($\beta = .52, t = 6.91, p < .001$). Third, PNT was regressed on message type

but no significant relationship was found ($\beta = -.08$, $t = -.84$, $p = .402$), indicating that PNT could not act as a mediator between message type and discrimination tolerance. However, to complete the full mediation analyses, discrimination tolerance was regressed on message type, controlling for PNT. There was a unique, significant, negative relationship found for PNT ($\beta = .51$, $t = 6.89$, $p < .001$), and a negative relationship found for message type ($\beta = -.22$, $t = -3.04$, $p = .003$). See Figure 1 for a representation of these analyses.

To test PNT mediation between message type and disparagement on compunction, a similar set of regressions was conducted. First, compunction was regressed on message type and disparagement. No unique, significant relationships were found for message type ($\beta = -.016$, $t = -.19$, $p = .853$), or disparagement ($\beta = -.108$, $t = -1.22$, $p = .227$), indicating that PNT could not act as a mediator between message type or disparagement and compunction. However, to complete the mediational analyses, the rest of the paths were tested. Compunction was regressed on PNT, but there was no significant relationship found ($\beta = -.06$, $t = -.71$, $p = .477$). Compunction was then regressed on message type, controlling for PNT, and again, no significant relationship was found for PNT ($\beta = .07$, $t = .73$, $p = .469$) or message type ($\beta = -.02$, $t = -.25$, $p = .800$). See Figure 2 for a representation of these analyses.

Correlational Analyses

In addition to the analyses that addressed hypotheses, exploratory correlational analyses (see Table 2) were conducted to further investigate possible relationships between the variables of interest.

Humor Styles

Not surprisingly, affiliative humor style scores were strongly and positively correlated with self-enhancing humor style scores ($r = .36$, $p < .001$), which supported previous findings

from Martin and colleagues' (2003) validation of the HSQ. Additionally, affiliative humor was negatively correlated with compunction ($r = -.26, p = .003$), which seems logical, given that individuals with an affiliative humor style tend to have high self-esteem, and express mostly positive emotions (Martin et al., 2003). Individuals who scored higher on self-enhancing humor scores were also lower on compunction ($r = -.24, p = .007$), which also makes sense given that, according to Martin and his colleagues, these individuals generally have a positive outlook on life, and are often amused by its incongruities.

Individuals who scored higher on aggressive humor also scored higher on the self-defeating humor subscale ($r = .24, p = .006$), which again supported the findings from the HSQ scale validation. Additionally, individuals higher on aggressive humor were more tolerant of anti-gay discrimination ($r = .26, p = .003$), a finding that was consistent with the original predictions of the study, and based on Martin and colleagues' (2003) notion that individuals who use aggressive humor do so by belittling and deriding others—often members of certain social groups. Finally, self-defeating humor was significantly positively correlated with compunction ($r = .28, p = .001$), suggesting that individuals who often allow themselves to be the “butt” of the joke, possibly to gain social approval or to hide negative feelings, are more likely to report negative self-directed affect in response to reading about anti-gay discrimination.

ATLG Scores

Some interesting relationships emerged when examining participants' sexual prejudice scores. As expected, higher scores on the ATLG were significantly correlated with disparaging joke enjoyment ($r = .24, p = .006$), suggesting that individuals with more negative attitudes against homosexuals rated the derogatory jokes as funnier, compared to participants who held more positive attitudes of homosexuals. There was also a significant negative relationship

between ATLG scores and disparaging statement ratings ($r = -.25, p = .005$), indicating that the more negative individuals' attitudes were toward homosexuals, the less derogatory they rated the disparaging statements. Unsurprisingly, ATLG was positively correlated with both tolerance of discrimination ($r = .48, p < .001$), and perceived normative tolerance ($r = .29, p = .001$). This indicates that individuals who held more negative attitudes toward homosexuals were not only more tolerant of discrimination against them, but also more likely to perceive other participants as being tolerant of it as well.

CHAPTER 4 - Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to examine the effect of exposure to anti-gay humor on individuals' tolerance of and compunction about discrimination against homosexuals, while accounting for participants' sexual prejudice levels and humor styles. The results are somewhat consistent with previous findings on the topic of disparaging humor and prejudice norm theory, and contribute to the literature through theoretical extensions incorporating the justification-suppression model of prejudice. Additionally, this is the first study to examine humor style as a trait variable that could influence the steps in prejudice norm theory.

Effects on Discrimination Tolerance

Hypothesis 1 predicted that compared to those who were exposed to neutral jokes, neutral statements, or anti-gay statements, participants who were exposed to anti-gay jokes would be more tolerant of discrimination against homosexuals. This hypothesis was partially supported. Although no interaction effect was found between message type and disparagement, a main effect of message type suggested that participants who were exposed to jokes (both neutral and anti-gay) were more tolerant of discrimination than those who had read either type of statement.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that participants' scores on the ATLG scale would moderate the relationships between message type and disparagement on tolerance of discrimination. However, our findings indicated that this was not the case. Rather, those individuals who held more negative attitudes toward homosexuals were more tolerant of discrimination, regardless of condition. In other words, the situation variable (i.e., the joke or statement that was either disparaging or neutral) was not powerful enough to override or interact with the person variable (i.e., sexual prejudice) in predicting tolerance of discrimination against homosexuals.

Similarly, Hypothesis 3 predicted that participants' scores on the aggressive humor style subscale of the HSQ would moderate the relationships between message type and disparagement on tolerance of discrimination. Again, moderation was not supported but results showed that people who scored higher on aggressive humor were more tolerant of discrimination toward homosexuals, regardless of the disparaging or neutral joke or statement to which they were exposed.

It is possible that the reason for these findings is a result of the type of disparaging jokes that were chosen. Although all of the jokes were rated as funnier than the statements, and did appear to invoke a non-serious mindset (as indicated by the main effects of message type), the anti-gay jokes may have targeted an aspect of homosexuality (i.e., somewhat non-threatening stereotypes) that did not elicit the kinds of negative attitudes toward homosexuals that might lead to more tolerance of discrimination against them. Perhaps the jokes needed to target characteristics of homosexuality that cause people to feel threatened (e.g., more direct violations of traditional gender roles and standards of masculinity), which may then increase the likelihood that discrimination against the group would be tolerated. Additionally, the lack of support for the hypothesized relationships may have occurred because a large portion of participants—the

majority of those who were exposed to disparaging stimuli—indicated that they were generally intolerant of discrimination. There may not have been enough variance in levels of discrimination tolerance in the sample to observe an effect.

Effects on Compunction

It was also hypothesized as part of Hypothesis 1 that individuals exposed to disparaging jokes, as compared to all other categories, would exhibit higher levels of negative self-directed affect, or compunction. This hypothesis was not supported, nor were predictions that ATLG scores and aggressive humor style would moderate the relationships between the independent variables and compunction.

Rather, the distribution of compunction scores was skewed such that most participants who were exposed to disparaging items (both jokes and statements) indicated that they felt higher levels of compunction. This ceiling effect suggests that the stimuli used in the vignettes may have acted as a suppression factor. That is, it was clear from the vignette that the boss was the antagonist in the story. So regardless of participants' agreement with the boss's actions and their own levels of sexual prejudice, when imagining themselves in his position, they may have recognized that the behavior in which they were hypothetically engaging was socially unfavorable, and indicated more compunction as a result.

In essence, individuals' compunction scores seem to have been influenced more by the situation variable (i.e., the description of discriminatory behavior) than by individuals' prejudicial attitudes, or an interaction between the situation and the attitudes. It is possible that using more ambiguous stimuli, in which it is not so obvious that the boss is acting inappropriately, would result in more justification of the discrimination, and lower feelings of compunction among those individuals with higher levels of sexual prejudice.

Perceived Normative Tolerance as a Mediator

It was predicted that perceived normative tolerance (PNT) would act as a mediator between the independent variables and discrimination tolerance, as well as compunction. This hypothesis was not supported, contradicting previous research which found that exposure to disparaging humor caused an increase in tolerance of discrimination against a target group because participants higher on prejudice perceived others in the situation as being accepting of that discrimination as well (Ford et al., 2001; Ford, Boxer, Armstrong, & Edel, 2008). Given the floor and ceiling effects that were previously described, it is not surprising that our mediation hypothesis was not supported. It is possible that a more ambiguous discrimination incident, or jokes that address aspects of homosexuality that are more threatening to traditional gender role standards might confirm our mediation hypothesis. The reason for this is that previous research has suggested that individuals' negative attitudes toward gay men may be rooted in traditional gender role attitudes (Kerns & Fine, 1994). That is, because homosexual men violate societal standards of masculinity, they are seen as a threat to heterosexual males' social power. Thus, if jokes were to prime the violation of traditional roles, it is possible that they would elicit increased tolerance of discrimination.

Contributions

In general, this study contributes to the literature on disparaging humor by attempting to extend prejudice norm theory to a different social group. Despite some advances in social policy, such as the increase in legalization of gay marriage (e.g., Urbina, 2010), and the recent push to end the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" military policy (Bumiller, 2010) homosexuals remain a social group against which disparagement is still seen as somewhat acceptable. The majority of states in the U.S. do not recognize gay marriage, and there are over 1,000 rights and benefits that

are afforded to individuals in marriage, but not to those in civil unions (Human Rights Campaign, 2010). Further, gay and lesbian individuals continue to be refused adoption rights in some locations, and are denied legal protection against discrimination at work (Human Rights Campaign, 2009). They also remain the third most common target of hate crimes (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008). In addition to these examples of legal discrimination, homosexuals may experience interpersonal struggles on a daily basis. One way this may be expressed is through the use of disparaging humor. As suggested by the justification-suppression model of prejudice (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003), individuals may express their prejudices through more socially acceptable forms, such as covering. This allows for the expression of one's true feelings under the guise of other behavior—in this case, joking. That is, in everyday situations, individuals may use humorous comments as a way to express the prejudice they know is not otherwise socially acceptable to convey. This allows them to make a joke or other humorous comment, using the “It's just a joke” defense, and as a result they may be able to avoid social punishment for the sentiment they are expressing.

Although the current research was not designed to reduce prejudice, it serves as an important step in gaining understanding of the ways in which people react to this disparaging humor, and how it affects attitudes toward homosexual individuals. By examining a realistic situation in which disparaging humor might be used, we investigated whether that kind of situation is strong enough to elicit prejudice that might normally be suppressed. In this case, although the evidence was not as clear as predicted, the relationships that emerged between the variables of message type and discrimination tolerance do suggest that exposure to humorous material led individuals to develop a non-serious mindset. This then carried over into their

appraisal of a discriminatory incident against a gay man as somewhat more acceptable, compared to the appraisals of participants who were not exposed to humorous stimuli.

Further, by incorporating the aspect of humor style, we have introduced a variable that may have an effect on individuals' use of or reaction to disparaging humor as a method of justifying the expression of prejudice. Although the moderation hypotheses were not supported, there was a correlation between scores on aggressive humor and tolerance of anti-gay discrimination. This provides inspiration for future research to investigate aggressive humor style as a justification mechanism. Because people who have an aggressive humor style tend to use disparaging humor frequently as a method of criticizing or belittling others (Martin, et al., 2003), it is possible that they may be more prone to justifying the expression of prejudice by framing their humor style as an excuse for their behavior (e.g., "That's just the type of humor I use."). At the very least, it may be important to account for humor style in future research on disparagement humor and its relationship to prejudice.

Limitations and Implications

When considering the results of the current study, it is important to keep in mind that the sample used may not be representative of the total population that might use disparaging humor. Because the sample consisted of traditionally-aged college students enrolled in a general psychology course who were participating in the study for credit, the results may not be generalizable to the larger population. Another possible limitation of the current study is that although the jokes were rated as significantly funnier than the statements, most participants found the jokes, in general, to be only moderately funny; most ratings fell below the midpoint on our 9-point funniness scale. Future research should examine whether jokes rated as extremely funny would produce a larger effect on individuals' tolerance of discrimination.

Future studies in this area should also examine the effect of less obviously discriminatory stimuli on individuals' tolerance of discrimination. It is possible that the vignettes used in this study were not ambiguous enough in their description of the discriminatory incident, and asking participants to imagine themselves in that situation may have invoked an incidental suppression factor. That is, even though they may have felt tolerant of the incident, they may not have indicated that sentiment because they knew it was an obviously negative situation in which to put themselves. Future research should implement a more ambiguous situation in which less blatant, more implicit discriminatory behavior is performed against the homosexual character. Perhaps rather than using an explicit, derogatory slur, the individual in the vignette who makes the discriminatory remarks could make an insulting comment that still implies a social category, but could be defended as not referring to homosexuals (e.g., "I wouldn't expect anything else from someone like you.") Using a more veiled comment like this could lead to justification of the behavior among individuals higher in sexual prejudice.

Further, it may be valuable to examine the strength of the non-serious mindset and norm of tolerance invoked by disparaging humor to see if tolerance of discrimination still occurs, even when the humor has been presented after the discrimination, rather than before it. Currently, Ford's work on prejudiced norm theory suggests that individuals higher in prejudice will be more tolerant of discrimination only when disparaging humor is presented *prior* to that discrimination. But, if the suggestions we have made for future research are successful in extending this theory, it may be interesting to investigate the possibility that these norms are strong enough to show a retroactive effect on discrimination tolerance. That is, upon exposure to a discriminatory incident, followed by disparaging humor, would individuals higher in prejudice still show increased tolerance of that discrimination? Or, could the socially negative aspects of the

discrimination lead to a sort of spillover effect, in which the humor is not perceived as funny, and therefore does not elicit a non-serious mindset and therefore lower discrimination tolerance? These questions are beyond the scope of the current study, but may have interesting implications for prejudiced norm theory.

In conclusion, the present research has suggested that exposure to humor may lead to the mentality that derogation of homosexuals is acceptable. This may then lead to further discrimination against this group, as this (false) norm could guide individuals' behavior, making it less likely that they would suppress the expression of prejudice toward homosexuals. These findings contribute to the general literature on the degradation of social groups by demonstrating that disparaging humor—in a social context—can contribute to the spread of discrimination tolerance.

Footnotes

¹However, this potential relationship is not a main focus of the study, and joke enjoyment will not be used by itself as an indicator of prejudice.

²Exploring the effects of the target's gender would be a logical step for further research.

Table 1 Mean Rating of Stimuli on Funniness and Degradation

Item Group	Funniness	Degradation
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Disparaging Jokes	3.51 (1.86)	6.47 (1.80)
Neutral Jokes	4.43 (1.83)	1.48 (1.04)
Disparaging Statements	1.83 (1.55)	6.45 (1.62)
Neutral Statements	1.57 (1.27)	1.57 (1.16)

Table 2 Correlations Among Independent and Dependent Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Social Desirability	--								
2 Affiliative HS	.01	--							
3 Self Enhancing HS	.17	.36**	--						
4 Aggressive HS	-.28**	.09	.09	--					
5 Self Defeating HS	-.03	-.03	.07	.24**	--				
6 ATLG	.10	.01	.00	.08	-.05	--			
7 PNT	.07	.05	.01	.15	-.08	.29**	--		
8 Discrimination Tolerance	.09	-.05	.01	.26**	-.07	.48**	.52**	--	
9 Compunction	-.25**	-.26**	-.24**	.09	.28**	-.01	-.06	-.02	--

** $p \leq .01$

HS = Humor Style

ATLG = Attitudes Against Lesbians and Gay Men

PNT = Perceived Normative Tolerance

Table 3 Multivariate Analysis of Variance

Source	Multivariate		Univariate	
	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i> ^a	Discrimination Tolerance ^b	Compunction ^b
Disparagement (D)	1	0.39	.00	.78
Message Type (MT)	1	4.22**	8.51**	.01
D*MT	1	0.82	1.65	.01
<i>MSE</i>			2.74	1.66

** $p \leq .01$

Note. Multivariate *F* ratios were generated from Pillai's statistic.

^aMultivariate *df* = 2, 121. ^bUnivariate *df* = 1, 122.

Table 4 Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Moderation of ATLG on Discrimination Tolerance

Variable	β	t	p	R^2	R^2 Change
<i>Step 1</i>				.10	.10**
Social Desirability	0.08	0.92	.359		
Christian	0.07	0.44	.663		
No Religion	0.15	0.88	.381		
Sex	-0.30	-3.43	.001		
<i>Step 2</i>				.35	.25***
D	0.04	0.50	.619		
MT	-0.21	-2.77	.007		
zATLG	0.47	6.01	.000		
<i>Step 3</i>				.36	.01
MT x zATLG	-0.21	-0.88	.381		
D x zATLG	-0.04	-0.18	.858		
MT x D	-0.19	-0.57	.572		
<i>Step 4</i>				.36	.00
MT x D x zATLG	-0.08	-0.10	.919		

** $p \leq .01$

*** $p \leq .001$

Note. In Step 1, "Christian" and "No Religion" are the names of the dummy coded predictor variables constructed from religious identification.

D = Disparagement

MT = Message Type

zATLG = standardized scores for Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men

Table 5 Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Moderation of ATLG on Compunction

Variable	β	t	p	R^2	R^2 Change
<i>Step 1</i>				.10	.10**
Social Desirability	-0.25	-2.86	.005		
Christian	-0.13	-0.80	.423		
No Religion	-0.08	-0.47	.638		
Sex	0.18	2.10	.038		
<i>Step 2</i>				.11	.01
D	-0.07	-0.79	.429		
MT	-0.01	-0.13	.897		
zATLG	0.53	0.58	.561		
<i>Step 3</i>				.11	.00
MT x zATLG	-0.18	-0.66	.512		
D x zATLG	0.10	0.36	.722		
MT x D	-0.02	-0.05	.964		
<i>Step 4</i>				.11	.00
MT x D x zATLG	0.63	0.71	.480		

** $p \leq .01$

*** $p \leq .001$

Note. In Step 1, "Christian" and "No Religion" are the names of the dummy coded predictor variables constructed from religious identification.

D = Disparagement

MT = Message Type

zATLG = standardized scores for Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men

Table 6 Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Moderation of Aggressive Humor Style on Discrimination Tolerance

Variable	β	t	p	R^2	R^2 Change
<i>Step 1</i>				.10	.10**
Social Desirability	0.08	0.92	.349		
Christian	0.07	0.44	.663		
No Religion	0.15	0.88	.381		
Sex	-0.30	-3.43	.001		
<i>Step 2</i>				.20	.10**
D	0.01	0.08	.934		
MT	-0.25	-2.99	.003		
zAgHS	0.23	2.56	.012		
<i>Step 3</i>				.23	.03
MT x zAgHS	-0.39	-1.51	.135		
D x zAgHS	0.18	0.69	.493		
MT x D	-0.40	-1.13	.261		
<i>Step 4</i>				.23	.00
MT x D x zAgHS	-0.48	-0.56	.577		

** $p \leq .01$

*** $p \leq .001$

Note. In Step 1, "Christian" and "No Religion" are the names of the dummy coded predictor variables constructed from religious identification.

D = Disparagement

MT = Message Type

zAgHS = standardized scores for aggressive humor style subscale

Table 7 Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Moderation of Aggressive Humor Style on Compunction

Variable	β	t	p	R^2	R^2 Change
<i>Step 1</i>				.10	.10**
Social Desirability	-0.25	-2.86	.005		
Christian	-0.13	-0.80	.423		
No Religion	-0.08	-0.47	.638		
Sex	0.18	2.10	.038		
<i>Step 2</i>				.11	.02
D	-0.07	-0.85	.396		
MT	-0.02	-0.20	.843		
zAgHS	0.11	1.13	.260		
<i>Step 3</i>				.13	.02
MT x zAgHS	0.18	0.66	.509		
D x zAgHS	0.39	1.37	.173		
MT x D	0.03	0.07	.944		
<i>Step 4</i>				.13	.00
MT x D x zAgHS	-0.18	-0.20	.846		

** $p \leq .01$

*** $p \leq .001$

Note. In Step 1, "Christian" and "No Religion" are the names of the dummy coded predictor variables constructed from religious identification.

D = Disparagement

MT = Message Type

zAgHS = standardized scores for Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men

Figure 1 Mediation model of perceived normative tolerance on the relationship between message type and discrimination tolerance

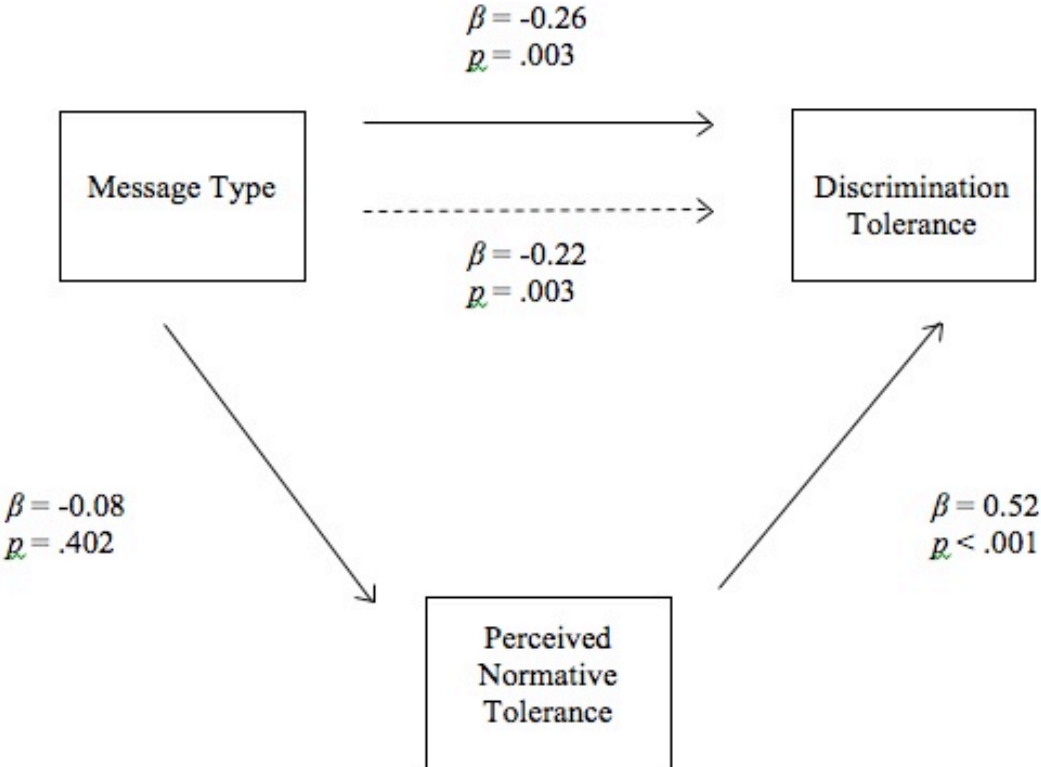
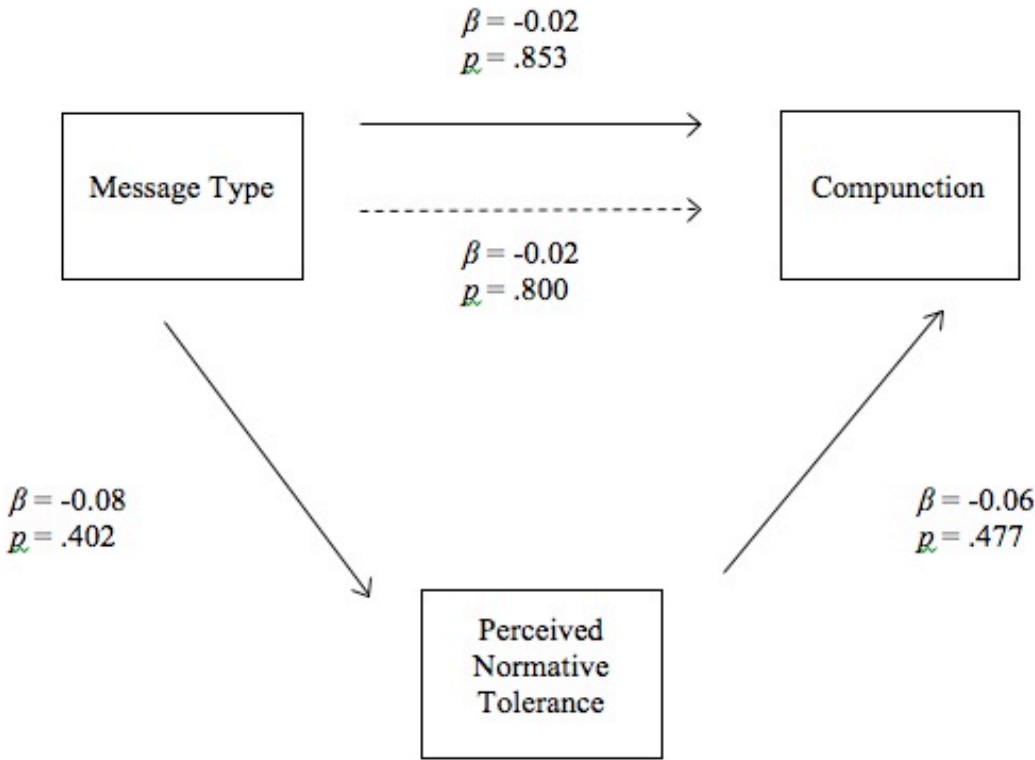


Figure 2 Mediation model of perceived normative tolerance on the relationship between message type and compunction



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Appendix A - Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLG) Scale

Please use the 9 point scale below to indicate your agreement with each statement.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

1. _____ Lesbians just can't fit into our society.
2. _____ A woman's homosexuality should not be a cause for job discrimination in any situation.*
3. _____ Female homosexuality is detrimental to society because it breaks down the natural divisions between the sexes.
4. _____ State laws regulating private, consenting lesbian behavior should be loosened.*
5. _____ Female homosexuality is a sin.
6. _____ The growing number of lesbians indicates a decline in American morals.
7. _____ Female homosexuality in itself is no problem, but what society makes of it can be a problem.*
8. _____ Female homosexuality is a threat to many of our basic social institutions.
9. _____ Female homosexuality is an inferior form of sexuality.
10. _____ Lesbians are sick.
11. _____ Male homosexual couples should be allowed to adopt children the same as heterosexual couples.*
12. _____ I think male homosexuals are disgusting.
13. _____ Male homosexuals should not be allowed to teach school.
14. _____ Male homosexuality is a perversion.
15. _____ Just as in other species, male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in human men.*

16. _____ If a man has homosexual feelings, he should do everything he can to overcome them.
17. _____ I would *not* be too upset if I learned that my son was a homosexual.*
18. _____ Homosexual behavior between two men is just plain wrong.
19. _____ The idea of male homosexual marriages seems ridiculous to me.
20. _____ Male homosexuality is merely a different kind of lifestyle that should *not* be condemned.*

* *Indicates items to be reverse scored.*

Appendix B - Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (M-C SDS)

Listed below are a number of statements concerning personal attitudes and traits. Read each item and decide whether the statement is true or false as it pertains to you personally. Write "T" (for true) or "F" (for false) beside each item number to indicate your answers.

1. _____ Before voting I thoroughly investigate the qualifications of all the candidates. (T)
2. _____ I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble. (T)
3. _____ It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged. (F)
4. _____ I have never intensely disliked someone. (T)
5. _____ On occasion I have had doubts about my ability to succeed in life. (F)
6. _____ I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way. (F)
7. _____ I am always careful about my manner of dress. (T)
8. _____ My table manners at home are as good as when I eat out in a restaurant. (T)
9. _____ If I could get into a movie without paying and be sure I was not seen, I would probably do it. (F)
10. _____ On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability. (F)
11. _____ I like to gossip at times. (F)
12. _____ There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right. (F)
13. _____ No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener. (T)
14. _____ I can remember "playing sick" to get out of something. (F)
15. _____ There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone. (F)
16. _____ I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake. (T)
17. _____ I always try to practice what I preach. (T)

18. _____ I don't find it particularly difficult to get along with loud mouthed, obnoxious people. (T)
19. _____ I sometimes try to get even, rather than forgive and forget. (F)
20. _____ When I don't know something I don't at all mind admitting it. (T)
21. _____ I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable. (T)
22. _____ At times I have really insisted on having things my own way. (F)
23. _____ There have been occasions when I felt like smashing things. (F)
24. _____ I would never think of letting someone else be punished for my wrongdoings. (T)
25. _____ I never resent being asked to return a favor. (T)
26. _____ I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own. (T)
27. _____ I never make a long trip without checking the safety of my car. (T)
28. _____ There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others. (F)
29. _____ I have almost never felt the urge to tell someone off. (T)
30. _____ I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me. (F)
31. _____ I have never felt that I was punished without cause. (T)
32. _____ I sometimes think when people have a misfortune that they only got what they deserve. (F)
33. _____ I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings. (T)

Note: Letters in parentheses indicate socially desirable response.

Appendix C - Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ)

Please use the 9 point scale below to indicate your agreement with each statement.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

1. _____ I usually don't laugh or joke around much with other people. *Af**
2. _____ If I am feeling depressed, I can usually cheer myself up with humor. *SE*
3. _____ If someone makes a mistake, I will often tease them about it. *Ag*
4. _____ I let people laugh at me or make fun at my expense more than I should. *SD*
5. _____ I don't have to work very hard at making other people laugh—I seem to be a naturally humorous person. *Af*
6. _____ Even when I'm by myself, I'm often amused by the absurdities of life. *SE*
7. _____ People are never offended or hurt by my sense of humor. *Ag**
8. _____ I will often get carried away in putting myself down if it makes my family or friends laugh. *SD*
9. _____ I rarely make other people laugh by telling funny stories about myself. *Af**
10. _____ If I am feeling upset or unhappy I usually try to think of something funny about the situation to make myself feel better. *SE*
11. _____ When telling jokes or saying funny things, I am usually not very concerned about how other people are taking it. *Ag*
12. _____ I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders, or faults. *SD*
13. _____ I laugh and joke a lot with my closest friends. *Af*
14. _____ My humorous outlook on life keeps me from getting overly upset or depressed about things. *SE*
15. _____ I do not like it when people use humor as a way of criticizing or putting someone down. *Ag**
16. _____ I don't often say funny things to put myself down. *SD**

17. _____ I usually don't like to tell jokes or amuse people. *Af**
18. _____ If I'm by myself and I'm feeling unhappy, I make an effort to think of something funny to cheer myself up. *SE*
19. _____ Sometimes I think of something that is so funny that I can't stop myself from saying it, even if it is not appropriate for the situation. *Ag*
20. _____ I often go overboard in putting myself down when I am making jokes or trying to be funny. *SD*
21. _____ I enjoy making people laugh. *Af*
22. _____ If I am feeling sad or upset, I usually lose my sense of humor. *SE**
23. _____ I never participate in laughing at others even if all my friends are doing it. *Ag**
24. _____ When I am with friends or family, I often seem to be the one that other people make fun of or joke about. *SD*
25. _____ I don't often joke around with my friends. *Af**
26. _____ It is my experience that thinking about some amusing aspect of a situation is often a very effective way of coping with problems. *SE*
27. _____ If I don't like someone, I often use humor or teasing to put them down. *Ag*
28. _____ If I am having problems or feeling unhappy, I often cover it up by joking around, so that even my closest friends don't know how I really feel. *SD*
29. _____ I usually can't think of witty things to say when I'm with other people. *Af**
30. _____ I don't need to be with other people to feel amused – I can usually find things to laugh about even when I'm by myself. *SE*
31. _____ Even if something is really funny to me, I will not laugh or joke about it if someone will be offended. *Ag*
32. _____ Letting others laugh at me is my way of keeping my friends and family in good spirits. *SD*

Af = Affiliative *SE* = Self-Enhancing
Ag = Aggressive *SD* = Self-Defeating

* Indicates items to be reverse scored.

Appendix D - Vignettes

The following series of vignettes describes coworkers engaging in various communication behaviors. Please read each vignette and answer the questions that follow.

Part 1 (Recount of Staff Member's Weekend)

It was noon on Monday, and a few of Allison's coworkers stopped by her desk to see if she wanted to go get some lunch with them. She decided that going out sounded better than eating what she had brought, so she said grabbed her purse to head out to the parking lot with the group. They arrived at the restaurant, and were seated shortly thereafter. After the waiter took everyone's order, Allison's friend, Jeannie, asked her how her weekend had been. She replied that it had been fairly uneventful; she had stayed in on Friday, but went to dinner and a movie with a friend on Saturday. They had gone to [a comedy], which had been in theaters for a while, so Allison asked if anyone else had seen the film. A few of the coworkers had seen it the previous weekend, and they began reciting funny lines they had enjoyed in the show.

Part 2 (Manipulation)

Disparaging Humor (DH) Condition:

After talk of the film's funny scenes lulled, the group discussion gave way to an exchange of the staff members' favorite jokes. Here are a few of those jokes.

"What's the difference between this joke and a funny one?"

"Everything."

"Funny thing...I was thinking of you all day yesterday. I was watching *Will & Grace*."

"How many gays does it take to change a light bulb?"

"Seven. One to change the bulb, and six to shriek, 'Faaaaaaabulous!'"

"What do you call a gay bar with no stools?"

"A fruit stand."

"I heard someone talking the other day about gays in the military, and how we're spending so much money to find them. Why not just walk up to a guy, say "Clang Clang Clang!" and see what he does? If he says, "went the trolley," you've found one!"

Neutral Humor (NH) Condition:

After talk of the film's funny scenes lulled, the group discussion gave way to an exchange of the staff members' favorite jokes. Here are a few of those jokes.

"Why don't aliens eat clowns?"

"Because they taste funny."

"What do you call a fish with no eyes?"

"A fsh."

"Two snowmen are standing in a field. One says to the other, 'Funny, I smell carrots too'."

"What do you get when you cross an elephant and a rhino?"

"el-if-i-no."

"Two peanuts walk into a bar."

"One was a salted."

Disparaging Statement (DS) Condition:

After talk of the film's funny scenes lulled, the group discussion gave way to an exchange of social commentaries. The following statements are excerpts from that discussion.

"I think the service at this restaurant could use some improvement."

"One of the workers at our office reminds me of some character on *Will and Grace*, he seems obnoxiously gay."

"I hate it that gay people can't do anything without being so flamboyant."

"Most of the gay guys I know are just a bunch of fruits."

"It seems like gay men are constantly talking in feminine voices and walking around singing songs from musicals."

Neutral Statement (NS) Condition:

After talk of the film's funny scenes lulled, the group discussion gave way to an exchange of social commentaries. The following statements are excerpts from that discussion.

"I think the service at this restaurant could use some improvement."

"It seems like lots of shows on television are violent these days."

"I'm so stressed out from work lately."

“Things have been pretty tight financially for me, I hope I have enough money to get my car fixed after my next paycheck.”

“I can’t wait until I can take a vacation and get away from work for a while.”

Part 3 (Staff Member’s Account of Recent Trip w/ a Friend)

When lunch was over and Allison and her coworkers were waiting for the waiter to bring the check, a familiar face entered the restaurant. It was Jared, a new employee who had recently started working at the office. Allison waved, and Jared reluctantly headed toward the table. She noticed that he seemed a little down, and asked him if everything was okay. When he said it was, she asked him why he was taking such a late lunch. Jared explained that he was just a little stressed and very hungry; he had commuted to a nearby town for a meeting that morning, and the only time their boss, Dave, had been available to meet and discuss the meeting with him was over the noon hour. Allison said she regretted that he was unable to join them for lunch, but hoped he could make it the next time they went out. Jared quietly thanked her as the hostess came by to take him to his own table, and the rest of the group left to return to the office.

Part 4 (Discriminatory event)

Toward the end of the day, Allison was finishing up some work on a big project, when she heard a knock on her door. “Come on in,” she said, and as she looked up she was greeted by Jared, who seemed to have something on his mind.

“I just wanted to apologize if I seemed a little rude at lunch today,” he explained.

“Well I didn’t think you were being rude at all, but I was concerned that something was bothering you,” Allison replied.

“Well...you’re an observant woman, Allison,” he said. “Do you mind if I tell you something? I don’t want to make you feel uncomfortable, but I feel like you’ve been a little more friendly toward me than some of our coworkers.”

“Not at all. What is it?” she asked.

“Okay. I don’t know if you’ve heard, because I don’t like to talk about it at work, but I really feel like I can trust you, so here it goes... I’m gay. Normally I wouldn’t have brought it up, but something happened earlier, and it has to do with what I just told you.” Jared then went on to explain that in his meeting with their boss over the lunch hour, he had felt very uncomfortable and rather offended by some of the comments that Dave had made. He felt that

he had been patronized and made fun of for being gay, when all he had done was politely comment that he liked Dave's suit and tie. Instead of thanking him for the compliment, Dave called Jared a "fag" and said he didn't need to be flaunting his sense of style in the disguise of a compliment.

Concerned for Jared, Allison said she was sorry he had been put through that, but that she was glad he had felt comfortable telling her. She suggested that he file a report with Human Resources, but since Jared was new, he wasn't quite sure of the correct person to contact. Allison gave him the name of the individual, and told him that if there were any way she could help, she would be glad to do it.

Appendix E - Perceived Normative Tolerance Items

Considering the vignettes you have just finished reading, please use the scale below to indicate your opinion of each statement.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Not at All **Very Much**

1. _____ Please rate on the scale above how offended, if at all, you think other participants in this study would be by Dave's behavior toward Jared.

2. _____ Please rate on the scale above how critical, if at all, you think other participants in this study would be of Dave's behavior toward Jared.

Appendix F - Tolerance of Discrimination Items

Considering the vignettes you have just finished reading, please use the scale below to indicate your opinion of each statement.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Not at All									Very Much

1. _____ Please rate on the scale above how offended you are, if at all, by Dave’s behavior toward Jared.

2. _____ Please rate on the scale above how critical you are, if at all, of Dave’s behavior toward Jared.

3. _____ Please rate on the scale above if you think *your actions*, if you had been in Dave’s position and said the same things to Jared, would be offensive.

4. _____ Please rate on the scale above if you would be critical of *your actions*, if you had been in Dave’s position and said the same things to Jared.

Appendix G - Compunction Items

The following questions are part of a questionnaire that is typically included in most psychological research. Please rate, on the scale below, how much you feel each word describes you at this moment.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Not at All **Very Much**

- 1. ____ Bothered
- 2. ____ Friendly
- 3. ____ Low
- 4. ____ Uneasy
- 5. ____ Good
- 6. ____ Sad
- 7. ____ Uncomfortable
- 8. ____ Happy
- 9. ____ Guilty
- 10. ____ Optimistic
- 11. ____ Depressed
- 12. ____ Annoyed
- 13. ____ Critical of Myself
- 14. ____ Disappointed in Myself

Appendix H - Joke Enjoyment Items

Please rate the following jokes and statements on the scale below.

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | |
| Not at All Funny | | | | | | | | | Very Funny |
1. _____ “Funny thing...I was thinking of you all day yesterday. I was watching *Will & Grace*.”
 2. _____ “How many gays does it take to change a light bulb?”
“Seven. One to change the bulb, and six to shriek, ‘Faaaaaaabulous!’”
 3. _____ “What do you call a gay bar with no stools?”
“A fruit stand.”
 4. _____ “I heard someone talking the other day about gays in the military, and how we’re spending so much money to find them. Why not just walk up to a guy, say “Clang Clang Clang!” and see what he does? If he says “went the trolley,” you’ve found one!”
 5. _____ “It seems like lots of shows on television are violent these days.”
 6. _____ “I’m so stressed out from work lately.”
 7. _____ “Things have been pretty tight financially for me, I hope I have enough money to get my car fixed after my next paycheck.”
 8. _____ “I can’t wait until I can take a vacation and get away from work for a while.”
 9. _____ “Why don’t aliens eat clowns?”
“Because they taste funny.”
 10. _____ “What do you call a fish with no eyes?”
“A fsh.”
 11. _____ “Two snowmen are standing in a field. One says to the other, ‘Funny, I smell carrots too’.”
 12. _____ “What do you get when you cross an elephant and a rhino?”
“el-if-i-no.”
 13. _____ “Two peanuts walk into a bar.
“One was a salted.”
 14. _____ “I think the service at this restaurant could use some improvement.”

15. _____ “One of the workers at our office reminds me of some character on *Will and Grace*, he seems obnoxiously gay.”
16. _____ “I hate it that gay people can’t do anything without being so flamboyant.”
17. _____ “Most of the gay guys I know are just a bunch of fruits.”
18. _____ “It seems like gay men are constantly talking in feminine voices and walking around singing songs from musicals.”