

Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Manifestations of Antilesbian and Gay Prejudice: An Application of Personal Construct Theory

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This study extended research on prejudice against lesbian and gay (LG) persons by examining theoretically grounded links between intrapersonal and interpersonal manifestations of such prejudice. On the basis of G. A. Kelly's (1955/1991a, 1955/1991b) conceptualization of threat, the authors operationalized intrapersonal homophobia, or LG threat, as the extent to which the notion of being LG was perceived to cause undesirable change in the construal of self. Consistent with hypotheses, results with 175 participants indicated that level of LG threat was correlated positively with anti-LG attitudes. Furthermore, LG threat moderated the link of anti-LG attitudes with positive self-perception and self-presentation such that for persons with high levels of LG threat, anti-LG attitudes were related positively, whereas for persons with low levels of LG threat, anti-LG attitudes were related negatively to positive self-perception and self-presentation. Implications for prevention and intervention efforts to reduce anti-LG prejudice are explored, and directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: heterosexist attitudes, homophobic attitudes, antilesbian and gay threat, personal construct theory, prejudice

Understanding heterosexual persons' attitudes toward lesbian and gay (LG) persons is important for counseling psychologists because such attitudes can have critical consequences for interpersonal relations, LG persons' mental health and well-being, and societal welfare. Indeed, anti-LG attitudes have been linked to self-reports of past anti-LG behaviors such as being rude, making verbal threats, and physical aggression (Franklin, 2000; Roderick, McCammon, Long, & Allred, 1998; Schope & Eliason, 2000). Other studies have demonstrated that anti-LG attitudes are related to actual anti-LG behaviors such as aggressiveness toward an LG target (Bernat, Calhoun, Adams, & Zeichner, 2001), proposing funding cuts to LG organizations (Haddock & Zanna, 1998; Haddock, Zanna, & Esses, 1993), and forming negative impressions of and recalling less information about an LG target after an interpersonal interaction (Kite & Deaux, 1986). Experiences of anti-LG prejudice, in turn, have been linked to greater psychological symptomatology, physical health symptoms, substance use, suicidality, and lower job satisfaction of LG persons (e.g., Diaz, Ayala, Bein, Henne, & Marin, 2001; DiPlacido, 1998; Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995; Mays & Cochran, 2001; Meyer, 1995, 2003; Rosario, Rotheram-Borus, & Reid, 1996; Waldo, 1999). Such costs of anti-LG prejudice clearly impact individual targets and can also reach their social networks, work environments, and health care systems. As such, efforts to understand anti-LG prej-

udice are critical for informing counseling psychologists' scholarly and clinical work to promote individual and collective well-being (American Psychological Association, 1999) and social justice (Goodman et al., 2004; Vera & Speight, 2003).

Scholars have used various terms including *heterosexism*, *homophobia*, and *sexual prejudice* to refer to prejudicial attitudes toward LG persons. Although these terms have been used somewhat interchangeably in the literature, Herek (2000) provided a useful distinction between *institutional heterosexism*, defined as "societal-level ideologies and patterns of institutionalized oppression of nonheterosexual people" (p. 19), and *individual prejudice*—which can be described either as sexual prejudice, defined as "negative attitudes based on sexual orientation, whether the target is homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual" (p. 19), or more specifically as *homophobia*, defined as "individual antigay attitudes and behaviors" (p. 19). This latter more specific construct has been the focus of much of the extant literature and is also the focus of the present study. For clarity, we refer to this construct as *anti-LG prejudice*.

Extant literature on anti-LG prejudice has focused almost exclusively on interpersonal manifestations of such prejudice. As such, many instruments have been developed to assess attitudes and feelings of heterosexual persons toward LG persons (e.g., Herek, 1998; Kite, 1992; Raja & Stokes, 1998), and many studies have examined the correlates of such attitudes and feelings (Schwanberg, 1993). For example, anti-LG attitudes have been linked to anti-LG behaviors (e.g., Franklin, 2000; Roderick et al., 1998; Schope & Eliason, 2000), personality-related constructs (e.g., Cullen, Wright, & Alessandri, 2002; Whitley & Egidóttir, 2000), and background variables such as age, income, and education (e.g., Herek & Capitanio, 1995; Johnson, Brems, & Alford-Keating, 1997).

In contrast to the scholarly attention given to interpersonal aspects of anti-LG prejudice, however, little theoretical or empir-

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ical work has been devoted to understanding the intrapersonal manifestations of such prejudice, the link between intrapersonal and interpersonal anti-LG prejudice, and the function of expressing anti-LG prejudice in persons' larger sense of self. Kelly's (1955/1991a, 1955/1991b) personal construct theory provides a useful framework for understanding the links and functions of intrapersonal and interpersonal anti-LG prejudice for heterosexual persons. Personal construct theory is particularly useful in this regard because it represents a broad and fairly comprehensive theory of personality that elucidates interpersonal and intrapersonal processes and their links.

The foundation of Kelly's (1955/1991b) theory is the notion that individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are shaped by the ways that they construe experiences. More specifically, a construct is a representation of one's perceptions of an event, person, object, and so forth, and the self is considered an important or core construct. Furthermore, persons' realities are shaped by their construct systems (or network of construals), and variations in construct systems result in individual differences. Applied to the construal of LG persons, these principles suggest that each person will construe LG differently within her or his larger construct system and that these construals will shape her or his thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Kelly (1955/1991a, 1955/1991b) described the formulation of constructs as a process that involves contrasting elements or experiences: "In its minimum context a construct is a way in which at least two elements are similar and contrast with a third. There must therefore be at least three elements in the context" (Kelly (1955/1991a, p. 43). Thus, each construct is dichotomous and has two poles. The elements that make up each pole are like one another but different from the elements of the opposite pole. For example, a person might construe self and sister at one end of the pole (i.e., likeness end) and brother at the other end (i.e., contrast end) of the pole of a construct perceived as funniness, such that self and sister are construed as funny and brother is construed as humorless. In the same manner, persons' would construe LG on various poles of constructs (e.g., kind, happy, moral) within their construct systems. Construct systems, including those that involve the self, evolve through successive construals of experiences that result in revision of existing constructs and formation of new constructs.

Some constructs or experiences, however, are perceived to be so incompatible with one's construct system that construct refinement is unlikely to occur. Kelly (1955/1991b) noted that such perceived incompatibility might make the construct or experience threatening. More specifically, Kelly (1955/1991a) defined threat as "the awareness of imminent comprehensive *change* [italics added] in one's core structures" (p. 361). Situations are threatening to the extent that they are perceived to have the power to change one's core constructs, such as the self, in profound and intolerable ways. For example, a person who construes herself or himself as good, kind, and warm might feel threatened by being told that she or he is cruel because the notion of the self as cruel would fundamentally transform the person's self-concept in an undesirable manner. When faced with threatening material, Kelly (1955/1991a) posited that persons distance themselves from and reject the material completely and seek validation and reaffirmation of their original construal. In this case, rejecting the threatening material can be accomplished by expressing strong disdain for cruelty. Such re-

jection (a) validates the initial construal of cruel as incompatible with the self and (b) serves as a further expression of the self as good (i.e., "Cruelty is bad. I despise cruelty; therefore, I am good"). As such, expressing rejection of the threatening material serves to validate the initial construction of the self and reaffirm the self as good.

Kelly's (1955/1991a, 1955/1991b) conceptualization of threat can be used to understand the intrapersonal manifestation of anti-LG prejudice, its link to interpersonal expression of anti-LG attitudes, and the role of such expression in self-construal and self-presentation. According to this conceptualization, level of LG threat reflects the extent to which the notion of being LG is perceived as incompatible with one's existing construal of the self such that integrating the notion of being LG with the existing self-concept is experienced as intolerable. This intrapersonal experience of threat can be manifested interpersonally through the expression of anti-LG attitudes. Expressing anti-LG attitudes preserves the initial construction of the self by distancing the self from the threatening material (i.e., the notion of being LG). In addition, expressing anti-LG attitudes serves as an expression of positive self-construal and self-presentation by reinforcing the construal of LG as bad and in so doing reaffirming the construal of the self as good. Indeed, for persons who experience high levels of LG threat (i.e., self and LG as fundamentally incompatible), expressing anti-LG attitudes is a necessary component of construing and presenting the self as good (i.e., if self and LG are incompatible, self is good, and LG is bad). On the other hand, for persons who experience low levels of threat (i.e., self and LG are compatible), expressing low levels of anti-LG attitudes is necessary for positive self-presentation and construal (i.e., if self and LG are similar, self and LG are good). Thus, depending on the level of LG threat, high or low levels of anti-LG attitudes can serve as an expression of positive self-construal and self-presentation.

Attending to the self-presentation and construal functions of expressing anti-LG attitudes is consistent with self-presentation scholars' position that positive self-presentation and construal efforts, often operationalized as impression management or social desirability, are an integral part of identity maintenance that deserve substantive study beyond simple treatment as nuisance variables to be controlled (e.g., Schlenker & Pontari, 2000). Particularly important for the present study is the notion that positive self-presentation and construal efforts, whether conscious or unconscious, become heightened when matters of personal principles and core identity are involved (e.g., Schlenker, 1985; Schlenker & Pontari, 2000; Schlenker & Weigold, 1989). Indeed, Herek's (1987) analysis of the functions of anti-LG attitudes supported the notion that anti-LG attitudes serve, in part, self-construal and presentation functions. More specifically, Herek (1987) used content analysis of essays about anti-LG attitudes in two samples and used factor analysis of responses to the Attitude Functions Inventory in a third sample. Across these samples, participants' essays or ratings of Likert-type items about the functions of their attitudes indicated that for some participants, expressing negative attitudes served as an expression of positive self-concept (e.g., positive attitudes were part of being an open-minded and nonjudgmental person; negative attitudes were part of one's Christian identity). Thus, although not grounded directly in Kelly's (1955/1991a, 1955/1991b) theory, Herek's (1987) findings support the self-presentation and con-

strual functions of anti-LG attitudes that follow from Kelly's (1955/1991a, 1955/1991b) conceptualizations.

Another theme that emerged from Herek's (1987) findings about the functions of anti-LG attitudes was that for some participants, expressing anti-LG attitudes reflected anxieties and insecurities about gender or sexuality (e.g., discomfort about the possibility of being identified as lesbian or gay). This pattern is consistent with the expectation, grounded in Kelly's (1955/1991a, 1955/1991b) framework, that persons tend to distance themselves from and reject threatening material (in this case, LG persons). There is also some additional support for the notion that level of intrapersonal threat is related to interpersonal expression of anti-LG attitudes. For example, with a sample of heterosexual women, Swim, Ferguson, and Hyers (1999) found that the extent to which participants perceived themselves to be dissimilar from a lesbian confederate (an approximation of LG threat) was linked with anti-LG attitudes. More specifically, those with high levels of anti-LG attitudes perceived greater dissimilarity between the self and a lesbian confederate than did those with low levels of anti-LG attitudes. Similarly, Haddock et al. (1993) assessed the extent to which participants perceived a discrepancy between values that served as guiding principles in their own life and values of "a typical homosexual" (p. 1112). Level of discrepancy between personal values and perceived values of a typical LG person was correlated with higher levels of anti-LG attitudes, such that those who perceived high levels of value discrepancy reported more negative attitudes than did those who perceived low levels of value discrepancy. To the extent that Swim et al.'s and Haddock et al.'s examination of perceived discrepancy between construal of self and construal of LG is similar to LG threat, the findings of these studies can be interpreted as supportive of the proposition that LG threat should be related positively to expression of anti-LG attitudes. Nevertheless, these two studies were not grounded in or informed explicitly by Kelly's (1955/1991a, 1955/1991b) theory.

Some other studies, however, have used Kelly's (1955/1991a, 1955/1991b) theoretical framework to study LG threat. For example, Leitner and Cado (1982) computed LG threat scores on the basis of the discrepancy between participants' construal of the self "as I am right now" and the self "as I would be if I were homosexual" and found that participants with high LG threat scores expressed higher levels of anti-LG attitudes than did participants with low LG threat scores. In a more recent study, Burke (1997) assessed LG threat as the discrepancy between the construal of the self and the self as homosexual but also as the discrepancy between the preferred self and the self as homosexual. Burke's (1997) findings replicated those of Leitner and Cado and indicated that participants with high LG threat scores reported higher levels of anti-LG attitudes than did participants with low LG threat scores. The link between anti-LG attitudes and LG threat was evident regardless of whether LG threat was operationalized as discrepancy between self and LG self or discrepancy between preferred self and LG self.

Thus, extant findings appear to support Kelly's (1955/1991b) proposition that threat can be manifested through expressing rejection of the threatening construct. Nevertheless, a number of limitations of prior studies remain to be addressed. First, Leitner and Cado's (1982) findings were based on a small sample of 20 women and 20 men, and Burke's (1997) findings were based on a sample of 53 men. Thus, replication with larger samples is needed

to evaluate the generalizeability of these findings. Furthermore, measurement issues were a concern in both studies. More specifically, both studies used a measure that focused on attitudes toward gay men and did not assess attitudes toward lesbian women. In addition, Leitner and Cado used median splits to divide their already small samples into high- and low-threat groups, creating artificial range restriction that could have attenuated the strength of the relationships found in their study. Thus, analyses that consider the full range of individual differences in LG threat scores and anti-LG attitudes are needed. Third, both of these studies computed LG threat scores as the discrepancy between self and LG self, regardless of the valence of the discrepancy. For example, in Leitner and Cado's studies, the discrepancy between the self as cold and LG as warm would contribute to a higher LG threat score even if the respondent valued warmth as a desirable characteristic. Burke's (1997) use of the ideal self-LG self discrepancy did not address this issue fully because a discrepancy between ideal self and LG self does not necessarily equate with a discrepancy between self and LG self. Thus, the most precise measure of LG threat needs to reflect the extent to which LG self is construed as discrepant from the self in an undesirable manner. This can be achieved by operationalizing LG threat as the extent to which self and preferred self match but are construed as discrepant from LG self (Neimeyer, Epting, & Rigdon, 1984).

In addition to the need to address these methodological limitations, a key conceptual issue needs to be examined. Prior studies have not examined directly the theorized function of intrapersonal and interpersonal anti-LG prejudice for the construal and presentation of the self: the notion that depending on the level of LG threat, expressing high or low levels of anti-LG attitudes functions to preserve the construal and presentation of self as good. This is a key implication of Kelly's (1955/1991a) conceptualization of threat and his assertion that persons seek validation of their core constructs (e.g., self) and construct systems. On the basis of this conceptualization, construal of LG as bad validates the construal of self as good for those with high levels of LG threat but would have the converse effect (invalidating construal of self as good) for those with low levels of LG threat. In other words, for those who construe LG as incompatible with self (i.e., high LG threat), saying that LG is bad (i.e., expressing high anti-LG attitudes) is a component of positive self-construal and positive self-presentation. On the other hand, for those who construe LG as compatible with the construal of self (i.e., low LG threat), saying that LG is good (i.e., expressing low anti-LG attitudes) is necessary for positive self-construal and presentation. Thus, for persons with high levels of LG threat, expressing anti-LG attitudes should be related to positive self-perception and self-presentation, whereas for persons with low levels of LG threat, expressing anti-LG attitudes would be inconsistent with positive self-perception and self-presentation. This theoretically based notion that depending on the level of LG threat, expression of high or low anti-LG attitudes serves a positive self-construal and presentation function has not been examined empirically.

The present study addresses these methodological and conceptual gaps and extends the literature by using Kelly's (1955/1991a, 1955/1991b) personal construct theory as a framework for understanding the link between intrapersonal and interpersonal anti-LG prejudice. More specifically, the present study (a) addresses a number of methodological limitations in the literature by examin-

ing the link between LG threat and anti-LG attitudes with a larger sample, using continuous scores, and taking into account the valence of perceived discrepancy in computing LG threat scores and (b) evaluates the role of LG threat in shaping the link between anti-LG attitudes and positive self-perception and self-presentation. On the basis of prior literature and the principles of Kelly's (1955/1991a, 1955/1991b) theory, the present study tests the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Level of LG threat will be related positively to anti-LG attitudes.

Hypothesis 2: LG threat will moderate the link between anti-LG attitudes and positive self-perception and positive self-presentation, such that for persons with high LG threat scores, higher levels of anti-LG attitudes will be related to higher levels of positive self-perception and presentation, whereas for persons with low LG threat scores, lower levels of anti-LG attitudes will be related to higher levels of positive self-perception and presentation.

Method

Participants

Data were collected from a total of 186 participants. Given the focus of the study on heterosexual persons, 4 persons who identified as bisexual, 3 persons who identified as exclusively homosexual, and 1 person who did not report sexual orientation, along with 3 persons with large amounts of missing data, were excluded from analyses. As such, the final sample consisted of 175 undergraduate students (75% women and 25% men) who were from a large southeastern university and identified as exclusively (88%) or mostly (12%) heterosexual. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 34 years ($M = 20.31$; $Mdn = 20.00$; $SD = 2.21$). Approximately 69% of the sample identified as White-Caucasian, 16% identified as Hispanic-Latina/o, 5% identified as African American-Black, 4% identified as Asian American-Pacific Islander, 4% identified as multiracial or other, and less than 2% did not report their race-ethnicity. About 71% of the participants reported being single, and 29% were married or in a committed relationship. With respect to social class, 44% of the sample identified as middle class, 40% identified as upper-middle class, 12% identified as working class, 2% identified as upper class, and 2% identified as lower class.

Procedures

Students from undergraduate psychology courses were invited to participate in a survey study on attitudes and feelings toward LG persons. Persons willing to participate attended scheduled group sessions for completing the survey and received extra credit toward their course grade in the classes from which they were recruited. Procedures were described to participants, and written consent was obtained. Participants then completed a survey packet that included the following instruments and a demographic questionnaire.

Instruments

Lesbian/Gay Threat. The Lesbian/Gay Threat Scale used in the present study extended the work of Leitner and Cado (1982) and Burke (1997) and was informed by the extensive literature on assessment of death threat (Neimeyer, 1994; Neimeyer & Epting, 1992). The Lesbian/Gay Threat Scale consists of 30 bipolar constructs or personal characteristics reported by Burke (1995) as the most common personal constructs elicited from 160 participants using the Role Construct Repertory Test (Landfield, 1971).

Sample bipolar constructs include *successful or unsuccessful*, *shy or outgoing*, and *serious or carefree*. For each construct, respondents are asked to circle the pole with which they see themselves more closely associated. Participants complete this process three times, first for how they see themselves, next for how they would prefer to see themselves, and finally for how they would see themselves if they were LG. Preferred self responses provide the valence of each construct for each participant (i.e., which pole is viewed as positive). For example, if a participant circles *serious* as a characteristic of the preferred self, that pole is identified as desirable for that person. We followed procedures outlined by Neimeyer et al. (1984) to compute threat scores as the absolute number of self- and preferred self splits from LG self. Using this procedure, participants receive 1 point toward the LG threat score for each construct pole that is circled for both the self and the preferred self but not for the self as LG. For example, if a participant circles the pole *successful* for self and preferred self but circles the pole *unsuccessful* for LG self, that participant receives 1 point toward her or his total LG threat score. This process is repeated for each of the 30 constructs. The procedure takes into account individual differences in the perceived valence of each construct and results in LG threat scores that reflect, for each person, the extent to which LG is construed as having the potential to cause undesirable change in self-concept.

We deemed test-retest reliability (rather than internal consistency reliability) to be the most appropriate method for examining the reliability of LG threat scores for two reasons. First, LG threat scores should be fairly stable because they reflect, in part, persons' construal of the self, a core construct in Kelly's (1955/1991a, 1955/1991b) theory. Second, LG threat scores do not reflect ratings of a set of unidimensional-internally consistent items and are computed on the basis of discrepancies across ratings of self, preferred self, and LG self. Thus, estimating internal consistency reliability would not be appropriate. To assess test-retest reliability, we had 36 of the participants in the present study complete the Lesbian/Gay Threat Scale again approximately 2 months after their initial participation. We deemed a 2-month period long enough to minimize practice effects but short enough that actual substantial shifts in construals of self, preferred self, or LG should not have occurred for most participants. The 2-month test-retest reliability coefficient for LG threat scores was .72 ($p < .001$), supporting the stability of these scores.

With regard to validity, on the basis of the notion that persons who experience threat are motivated to avoid the threatening material (Kelly, 1955/1991a, 1955/1991b), we examined the link between LG threat scores and participants' reports of past, recent, and desired future socialization with exclusively heterosexual social groups. On the basis of items from the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid (Klein, Sepekoff, & Wolf, 1985), for past and recent socialization, we asked participants "What was the sexual identity of the people with whom you socialized?" throughout their life and within that past 12 months. For future ideal, we asked participants "What do you want to be the sexual identity of the people with whom you socialize?" Participants responded to these items on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *lesbian/gay/bisexual only* to 7 = *heterosexual only*, with the midpoint = *heterosexual and lesbian/gay/bisexual equally*). As expected, higher LG threat scores were associated with higher levels of past ($r = .22$, $p < .01$), recent ($r = .28$, $p < .001$), and desired ($r = .41$, $p < .001$) exclusive socialization with heterosexual persons. Furthermore, discriminant validity of LG threat scores was evidenced by the fact that LG threat scores were uncorrelated ($r = .03$, $p = .73$), with low self-concept operationalized as the level of discrepancy between participants' construal of self and preferred self.

Anti-LG attitudes. The Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (ATLG; Herek, 1998) was used to assess anti-LG attitudes, as this instrument was designed to assess condemnation versus tolerance of LG persons. Participants rate their level of agreement with the 20 items of this measure on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *disagree strongly* to 5 = *agree strongly*). Items include "Lesbians just can't fit into our society" and "I

think that male homosexuals are disgusting.” Appropriate items are reverse-scored, and item ratings are averaged to obtain overall scores, with higher scores indicating greater levels of anti-LG attitudes. Factor analyses of ATLG items suggest a stable general factor (Herek, 1994), and Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Attitudes Toward Gay Men subscale scores are highly correlated, with r s in the .80s (Kilianski, 2003; Whitley & Lee, 2000). These findings support the use of overall ATLG scores. Validity for ATLG scores is supported by positive correlations with variables associated conceptually with anti-LG attitudes, such as adherence to traditional gender role ideology, dogmatism, conservative political ideology, and lack of personal contact with LG persons (Herek, 1988, 1994). Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for ATLG scores have been in the .90s (Herek, 1988, 1994). Alpha for ATLG scores with the current sample was .96.

Positive self-perception and self-presentation. The Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (Paulhus, 1994) was used to assess self-deceptive enhancement and impression management. Self-Deceptive Enhancement (SDE) scores reflect “the tendency to give honest but inflated self-descriptions” (Paulhus, 1994, p. 2), and Impression Management (IM) scores reflect “the tendency to give inflated self-descriptions to an audience” (Paulhus 1994, p. 2). Paulhus (1994) suggested that SDE and IM scores represent substantive aspects of self-perception and self-presentation, with SDE scores consistently related to indicators of positive self-appraisal and IM scores sensitive to situational demands for self-presentation. Thus, high SDE scores indicate efforts toward positive self-perception, whereas high IM scores reflect efforts toward positive self-presentation. Each subscale consists of 20 Likert-type items (1 = *not true* to 5 = *very true*). As suggested by Paulhus, 1 point was awarded for each extreme response (i.e., rating of 5). Thus, subscale scores had a possible range of 0 to 20, with higher scores indicating greater positive self-perception and self-presentation. With regard to validity, Paulhus reported support for a two-factor structure corresponding to SDE and IM. Furthermore, SDE scores related positively to optimism and positive reappraisal, whereas IM scores related positively to scores on lie scales and role-playing measures. Paulhus reported alpha internal consistency reliabilities that ranged from .65 to .75 for SDE and from .75 to .80 for IM scores, and 5-week test–retest reliabilities of .69 for SDE and .77 for IM scores. The current study’s alpha internal consistency estimates for SDE and IM scores were .75 and .78, respectively.

Demographic questionnaire. The demographic questionnaire assessed participants’ demographic and background characteristics (e.g., age, gender, relationship status, social class, race–ethnicity). In addition, the demographic questionnaire assessed how participants identified with regard to sexual orientation on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *exclusively heterosexual*, 2 = *mostly heterosexual*, 3 = *bisexual*, 4 = *mostly homosexual*, 5 = *exclusively homosexual*).

Results

We examined LG threat data at the specific construct level to provide descriptive information about which particular constructs were the most common sources of perceived undesirable change or LG threat. The top five constructs that elicited threat in the largest percentages of participants were religiousness (25%), conservatism (23%), stubbornness (18%), happiness (16%), and tenseness (15%). Thus, large percentages of participants perceived that they would change undesirably on these constructs, if they were LG. Conversely, only 1% or fewer perceived LG threat in intelligence, trustworthiness, and generousness. It is important to highlight that for each construct, the nature of what was undesirable (e.g., conservative or liberal) varied from individual to individual and was reflected in construals of the preferred self.

Before conducting tests of the hypotheses, we wanted to identify demographic variables that should be included as potential covariates in analyses. Thus, we examined correlations (point-biserial in the case of dichotomous variables) between the variables of interest and demographic variables (i.e., gender, age, relationship status, social class, and racial–ethnic group [coded as Caucasian–White or non-Caucasian–White because of small sample sizes for specific racial–ethnic minority groups]). We found that gender and age (but none of the other demographic variables) were correlated significantly with predictor or criterion variables (see Table 1). More specifically, there were no gender differences in LG threat or impression management scores, but men reported higher levels of anti-LG attitudes and positive self-perception than did women. Furthermore, age was not related to LG threat, anti-LG attitudes, or impression management but was positively correlated with positive self-presentation. Given the few significant correlations of age and gender with predictor or criterion variables, to provide a more stringent test of our hypotheses, we included gender and age as covariates in our analyses.

To test Hypothesis 1, we computed partial correlations, controlling for gender and age, between anti-LG attitude and LG threat scores. As indicated in Table 1, the partial correlation (and zero-order correlation) of LG threat scores with ATLG scores was in the high .50s. This finding is consistent with Hypothesis 1, indicating that level of LG threat was related positively and significantly to expression of anti-LG attitudes, even after controlling for variance accounted for by gender and age. In addition, we performed an inverse transformation to reduce the skewness of the distribution

Table 1
Summary Statistics, Correlations, and Partial Correlations

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α
1. LG threat	—					2.43	3.38	.72 ^a
2. Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men	.58*** (.56***)	—				2.08	0.92	.96
3. Self-Deceptive Enhancement	.10 (.06)	-.02 (-.08)	—			2.69	2.77	.75
4. Impression Management	.06 (.05)	.06 (.05)	.53*** (.54***)	—		2.86	2.87	.78
5. Gender (1 = women, 2 = men)	.12	.16*	.25**	-.02	—			
6. Age	.13	.15	.20**	.13	.11	20.31	2.21	

Note. *N*s ranged from 174 to 175 because of missing data. Partial correlations are presented in parentheses and control for gender and age. LG = lesbian–gay.

^a Value reflects 2-month test–retest reliability coefficient.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

of LG threat scores and reexamined partial intercorrelations. Consistent with indications that the impact of skewness is typically minimal in sample sizes of approximately 100 or more (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996), we found that the magnitude of partial correlations of all variables of interest with transformed LG threat scores was almost identical, and the significance decisions were the same as that for untransformed LG threat scores.

To test Hypothesis 2 regarding the moderating role of LG threat in the link of expression of anti-LG attitudes to positive self-perception and self-presentation, we followed Baron and Kenny's (1986) recommendation to use hierarchical multiple regression procedures to test moderator effects. We conducted two moderator regression analyses, one with self-deceptive enhancement and one with impression management as the criterion variable. Several researchers have pointed out the statistical difficulties of detecting moderator effects and suggested that the contribution of interaction terms above and beyond main effects will be small (e.g., Frazier, Tix, & Barron, 2004; McClelland & Judd, 1993; Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991; Wampold & Freund, 1987). Thus, the use of liberal alphas (e.g., .10 or .25) in judging the significance of moderator effects has been recommended (McClelland & Judd, 1993; Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). Nevertheless, because of the fact that we were conducting two regressions to test Hypothesis 2, we set alpha at .05.

We followed Aiken and West's (1991) suggestion for using centered variables (i.e., mean deviation scores) in order to reduce multicollinearity between the interaction term and the main effects when testing for moderator effects. In each of these analyses, we entered the covariates (i.e., gender and age) at Step 1, the centered main effects (i.e., LG threat and anti-LG attitudes) at Step 2, and the interaction term (i.e., LG Threat \times Anti-LG Attitudes) at Step 3 of a hierarchical multiple regression. A significant standardized β and change in R^2 for the interaction term indicates a significant moderator effect.

As shown in Table 2, we found significant moderator effects in

each analysis, indicating that LG threat moderated the relationship of anti-LG attitudes to positive self-perception and positive self-presentation. More specifically, the interaction of LG threat and anti-LG attitudes was significant and accounted for 6% of variance in self-deceptive enhancement and 5% of variance in impression management, above and beyond the variance accounted for by demographic covariates and main effects of the predictor and moderator.

To explore patterns underlying the significant interaction effects, we conducted simple regression analyses as outlined by Aiken and West (1991). In this procedure, the criterion variable is regressed on the predictor, the moderator set at a conditional value (e.g., high or low), and the interaction of the predictor and moderator at conditional value. Thus, for each criterion, two regression equations are computed, one for moderator at high conditional value and one for moderator at low conditional value. The t test for the regression coefficient of the predictor variable (i.e., ATLG) in these equations reflects the significance and direction of the simple slope (i.e., whether the slope is significantly different from zero and whether it is positive or negative) at high or low levels of the moderator. As indicated in Table 3, we found that the relation between anti-LG attitudes and self-deceptive enhancement was significant and positive for those with high LG threat but significant and negative for those with low LG threat. Similarly, the relation between anti-LG attitudes and impression management was significant and positive for those with high LG threat but significant and negative for those with low LG threat. These findings were consistent with Hypothesis 2.

Finally, we explored whether controlling identification as mostly versus exclusively heterosexual would impact our findings. We found that (a) excluding participants who identified as *mostly* heterosexual or (b) controlling sexual orientation (i.e., *mostly* vs. *exclusively* heterosexual identification) as a covariate did not change our findings. More specifically, the magnitude of main and interaction effects was similar, and the direction and significance of effects remained identical across the sets of analyses.

Table 2

Moderating Effect of Lesbian–Gay (LG) Threat on the Relation Between Anti-LG Attitudes and Positive Self-Perception and Self-Presentation

Step	Variable	<i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2	R^2 increment	<i>F</i> increment	<i>dfs</i>
Positive self-perception (SDE)									
1	Age	0.22	.17	2.43*	.09	.08	.09	8.74***	2, 171
	Gender	1.70	.27	3.68***					
2	LG threat	–0.05	–.06	–0.56	.11	.09	.02	1.93	4, 169
	Anti-LG attitudes (ATLG)	–0.59	–.20	–2.25*					
3	LG Threat \times ATLG	0.24	.33	3.50**	.17	.15	.06	12.24**	5, 168
Positive self-presentation (IM)									
1	Age	0.15	.11	1.49	.02	.00	.02	1.48	2, 171
	Gender	–0.11	–.02	–0.23					
2	LG threat	–0.13	–.16	–1.43	.02	.00	.00	0.24	4, 169
	Anti-LG attitudes (ATLG)	–0.01	–.00	–0.05					
3	LG Threat \times ATLG	0.23	.31	3.09**	.07	.05	.05	9.53**	5, 168

Note. *B*, β , and *t* reflect values from the final regression equation. SDE = Self-Deceptive Enhancement; IM = Impression Management; ATLG = Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 3
Simple Slope Regression Analyses of Anti-LG Attitudes Predicting Positive Self-Perception and Self-Presentation at Low and High LG Threat

Variable	<i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>dfs</i>
Link between anti-LG attitudes and positive self-perception at high LG threat				
Age	0.22	.17	2.43*	5, 168
Gender	1.70	.27	3.68***	
Anti-LG attitudes	1.05	.35	2.05*	
High LG threat	-0.05	-.06	-0.56	
Anti-LG Attitudes \times High LG Threat	0.24	.50	3.50**	
Link between anti-LG attitudes and positive self-perception at low LG threat				
Age	0.22	.17	2.43*	5, 168
Gender	1.70	.27	3.68***	
Anti-LG attitudes	-2.23	-.74	-3.97***	
Low LG threat	-0.05	-.06	-0.56	
Anti-LG Attitudes \times Low LG Threat	0.24	.75	3.50**	
Link between anti-LG attitudes and positive self-presentation at high LG threat				
Age	0.15	.11	1.49	5, 168
Gender	-0.11	-.02	-0.23	
Anti-LG attitudes	1.57	.50	2.80**	
High LG threat	-0.13	-.16	-1.43	
Anti-LG Attitudes \times High LG Threat	0.23	.46	3.09**	
Link between anti-LG attitudes and positive self-presentation at low LG threat				
Age	0.15	.11	1.49	5, 168
Gender	-0.11	-.02	-0.23	
Anti-LG attitudes	-1.59	-.51	-2.60*	
Low LG threat	-0.13	-.16	-1.43	
Anti-LG Attitudes \times Low LG Threat	0.23	.70	3.09**	

Note. *B*, β , and *t* reflect values from the final regression equation. LG = lesbian and gay.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

The present findings extend prior research on anti-LG prejudice by examining theoretically grounded relationships between intrapersonal and interpersonal manifestations of such prejudice. More specifically, Kelly's (1955/1991a, 1955/1991b) conceptualization of threat was used to operationalize intrapersonal anti-LG prejudice or LG threat as the extent to which being LG was perceived to have the potential to cause undesirable change in the construal of self. Furthermore, on the basis of Kelly's (1955/1991a, 1955/1991b) theory, we hypothesized that level of LG threat would (a) correlate positively with expressing anti-LG attitudes and (b) moderate the link of expression of anti-LG attitudes to positive self-perception and self-presentation.

Consistent with Kelly's (1955/1991a, 1955/1991b) proposition that threat can elicit rejection of the threatening material, we found that level of LG threat was related positively with expression of anti-LG attitudes. The magnitude of this relationship ($r = \text{high } .50\text{s}$) was substantial enough to be meaningful but not too large to suggest construct or measurement redundancy. The facts that this relation was consistent with prior findings and persisted when methodological concerns about previous studies (e.g., small sample sizes, need for more precise and comprehensive assessment of LG threat and anti-LG attitudes) were addressed in the present study demonstrate the robust nature of the link between intrapersonal LG threat and interpersonal expression of anti-LG attitudes.

The present findings also offer some insight about the interactive functions of intrapersonal and interpersonal anti-LG prejudice

in efforts toward positive self-perception and self-presentation. Kelly's (1955/1991a, 1955/1991b) theory suggests that for those who experience high levels of LG threat, expressing anti-LG attitudes serves to validate and reaffirm positive self-construal and presentation. By contrast, for those who experience low levels of LG threat, not expressing anti-LG attitudes would be necessary for positive self-construal and presentation. Our findings were consistent with this conceptualization. More specifically, for participants with high levels of LG threat, expressing anti-LG attitudes was related positively to self-deceptive enhancement (i.e., efforts toward positive self-perception) and impression management (i.e., efforts toward positive self-presentation). These patterns were reversed for participants with low levels of LG threat for whom lower levels of anti-LG attitudes were associated with positive self-perception and self-presentation. Thus, depending on level of LG threat, expression of high or low levels of anti-LG attitudes appear to function, in part, to reaffirm construal and presentation of self as good.

This interpretation is consistent with Herek's (1987) findings about the functions of anti-LG attitudes. More specifically, the defensive function of attitudes identified by Herek (1987) fits with the present finding that higher levels of LG threat were related to greater levels of anti-LG attitudes (i.e., rejection of the threatening material). Similarly, Herek's (1987) finding that expression of positive or negative attitudes toward LG persons served a self-expressive function fits with the present findings that anti-LG attitudes were related to positive self-construal and presentation,

with the relation being positive for those with high levels of LG threat but negative for those with low levels of LG threat. Despite the fact that Herek's (1987) findings and those of the present study emerged from distinct theoretical frameworks, the findings are quite consistent, lending further support to the notion that intrapersonal aspects and self-construal and presentation functions of anti-LG prejudice should be considered along with expression of anti-LG attitudes.

The magnitudes of the interaction effects found in the present study are particularly noteworthy in the context of the substantial difficulties of detecting moderator effects in nonexperimental research compared with experimental research (McClelland & Judd, 1993). In nonexperimental research, limited control of variables of interest results in greater measurement error, and this measurement error is magnified when interaction terms are computed. Furthermore, change in the direction of the relationship between predictor and criterion variables is characteristic of interaction effects in experimental research but does not occur often in nonexperimental research (Frazier et al., 2004; McClelland & Judd, 1993). Such difficulties limit the magnitude of moderator effects observed in nonexperimental research, with such effects typically accounting for approximately 1%–3% of the variance in criterion variables (Frazier et al., 2004; McClelland & Judd, 1993). Thus, explaining 6% of variance in self-deceptive enhancement and 5% of variance in impression management with the interaction of anti-LG attitudes and LG threat is notable in the context of nonexperimental social science research. It is important to highlight that the aim of the present study was to examine the roles of intrapersonal and interpersonal anti-LG prejudice in positive self-construal and presentation but not to identify variables that predict self-construal and presentation. Thus, the significance of the interaction but not overall prediction of criterion variables was critical to testing the hypotheses. As such, the total variance accounted for in the regression equations (i.e., R^2 and adjusted R^2) was provided only for descriptive purposes but was not integral to the present hypotheses or aim of the study.

The findings of the present study can inform individual and group counseling, training, and prevention programs aimed to reduce anti-LG prejudice. Such efforts are important in light of potential personal and interpersonal costs of anti-LG prejudice (e.g., Bernat et al., 2001; Diaz et al., 2001; DiPlacido, 1998; Mays & Cochran, 2001; Meyer, 1995, 2003; Rosario et al., 1996; Waldo, 1999). Reducing anti-LG prejudice is critical in situations where the costs of such prejudice can be particularly high (e.g., counselor–client dyads that involve LG clients or LG counselors; organization and work settings where prejudice against LG co-workers could impede work effectiveness, success, and satisfaction; family therapy where parents' or children's prejudice could jeopardize family relationships). The strength of the relation between LG threat and anti-LG attitudes and the significant interaction effects found in the present study suggest that efforts aimed to reduce interpersonal expression of anti-LG attitudes may also need to attend to intrapersonal manifestation of such prejudice and the self-perception and self-presentation functions of expressing anti-LG attitudes. Thus, reducing level of LG threat might play an important role in reducing anti-LG attitudes.

Further research is needed to evaluate directly the impact of reducing LG threat on expression of LG attitudes. Findings from the death threat literature indicate, however, that exposure to death

(the threatening construct) can reduce level of death threat (Greyson, 1992). Similarly, providing positive and nonthreatening opportunities for persons to interact with LG peers might serve to reduce level of LG threat and anti-LG attitudes by normalizing the notion of being LG. In fact, contact with LG persons has been linked fairly consistently with low levels of anti-LG attitudes (Cullen et al., 2002; Herek, 1988, 1994; Schope & Eliason, 2000). Furthermore, interventions that involve positive contact with LG peers seem to be an effective method for reducing anti-LG attitudes. For example, Nelson and Krieger (1997) found, across six different classes, that students' baseline level of anti-LG attitudes decreased significantly after they had an opportunity to interact in a question-and-discussion period with LG peers. These authors stressed that for contact-based interventions to be effective, the LG persons should be peers of the intervention participants. In fact, interventions using nonpeers have not resulted in significant attitude change (e.g., Chng & Moore, 1991). Contact with LG peers might be particularly important because such contact challenges the construal of LG and self as fundamentally incompatible and therefore is likely to reduce LG threat. Clearly, contact-based interventions must pay close attention to the needs and experiences of the LG persons involved in the intervention, given that these individuals might be at the front lines of exposure to anti-LG prejudice from intervention participants.

An important caveat is that exploring LG threat or increasing contact with LG persons might be especially difficult for persons with very high levels of LG threat because they are likely to be motivated to ignore or reject any information that is incompatible with their initial construals. Thus, creating a safe space (e.g., in the counseling dyad when working with individual clients or in the supervision dyad when training counselors) that reduces anxiety associated with exploring LG threat and taking a very gradual approach to reducing threat would be critical for such persons. It is also important to keep in mind the finding that, for persons who experience high levels of LG threat, expressing anti-LG attitudes is part of positive self-construal and presentation. Indeed, on the basis of Kelly's (1955/1991a, 1955/1991b) theory, Fransella (1977) argued that stereotypes against outgroups serve to define the self as different from and better than those outgroups. Thus, asking persons with high levels of LG threat to not express anti-LG attitudes is akin to asking them to forgo one avenue (in their perspective) for validating their positive sense of self. Working with such persons should include efforts to transform their construal of LG in order to reduce level of LG threat while concurrently addressing the implications of such a shift in construal of their self-concept.

Although the present findings extend prior literature and provide useful information about the interactive functions of intrapersonal and interpersonal manifestations of anti-LG prejudice, these findings must be interpreted in light of a number of limitations. First, the present findings extended the generalizability of prior findings by using a much larger sample size. Nevertheless, replicating these findings in samples that include greater demographic diversity in terms of age, life experiences, gender, racial–ethnic background, socioeconomic status, and other variables will provide further evaluation of the robustness of the findings. It is conceivable that various dimensions of identity contribute to different construals of self, which in turn can shape level of LG-threat and the function of threat and anti-LG attitudes in positive self-construal and self-

presentation. One example of a fruitful area for exploration is the potential role of LG threat in explaining findings that heterosexual men's attitudes toward gay men are significantly more negative than heterosexual women's attitudes toward gay men, whereas gender differences are not robust in attitudes toward lesbian women (Kite & Whitley, 1996). Perhaps gay men represent a greater threat to heterosexual men compared with the threat that they represent to heterosexual women or the threat that lesbian women represent to heterosexual women and men.

In addition, Kelly's (1955/1991a, 1955/1991b) theoretical framework can be extended beyond the focus of the present study on heterosexual persons' construal of LG persons. More specifically, the notion of threat might facilitate understanding of LG persons' experiences of internalized homophobia. To date, most assessments of internalized homophobia rely on respondents' awareness and willingness to disclose their discomfort and shame about being LG (e.g., Herek, Cogan, Gillis, & Glunt, 1997; Mohr & Fassinger, 2000; Ross & Rosser, 1996; Shidlo, 1994). Supplementing such face-valid measures with assessment of internalized LG threat might provide a broader appraisal of LG persons' experiences of internalized homophobia.

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