

# An Argument for Separate Analyses of Attitudes Toward Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Men, Bisexual Women, MtF and FtM Transgender Individuals

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Published online: 4 April 2012  
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**Abstract** While past research has certainly investigated a variety of correlates of U.S. attitudes toward lesbians, gays, bisexual men, bisexual women, male-to-female (MtF) and female-to-male (FtM) transgender (LGBT) individuals, there are no U.S. quantitative studies that could be located that examined attitudes toward each of these groups separately. This is especially important because efforts to combat prejudices are likely to be most successful if they are based in research that explores how attitudes are both similar and different across specified targets of prejudice. Toward that goal, this essay underscores the significance of examining U.S. attitudes toward LGBT individuals as separate constructs. Both the gender and sexual orientation of the target of prejudice and the gender and sexual orientation of the respondent are highlighted as important constructs that should be considered when investigating U.S. attitudes toward LGBT individuals. First, I review previous U.S. studies that have examined attitudes toward LGBT individuals. Second, I offer arguments for how the intersections of gender and sexual orientation may affect attitudes toward LGBT individuals. Third, I discuss future considerations in studies of attitudes toward LGBT individuals in the context of multiple intersectionalities. I suggest that U.S. initiatives to reduce sexual stigma, gender nonconformity stigma, and transgender stigma should be grounded in research that highlights prejudicial attitudes as they vary by the target of prejudice and the respondents' characteristics.

**Keywords** Attitudes · Bisexuals · Gays · Gender · Intersectionalities · Lesbians · Prejudice · Transgender · Stigma

## Introduction

Although popular U.S. media attention is usually focused on “gay marriage debates” (Thaler 2012), there may be important reasons to investigate how stereotypes about lesbians, gays, bisexual men, bisexual women, and male-to-female (MtF) and female-to-male (FtM) transgender individuals may vary, rather than just exploring prejudices directed toward “homosexuals.” (Although a glossary of terms does not adequately encapsulate the complexity behind such changing and embedded sociological concepts, Serano 2007, I provide definitions in Appendix A). While differences in racial/ethnic prejudices have been explored extensively in past literature (e.g. Bobo and Zubrinsky’s 1996, study of differential prejudices directed toward Hispanic and Black individuals), little U.S. research has investigated how attitudes toward lesbians, gays, bisexual men, bisexual women, and male-to-female (MtF) and female-to-male (FtM) transgender (henceforth “LGBT”) may differ. This is especially important because efforts to combat prejudices are likely to be most successful if they are based in research that explores how correlates of attitudes are both similar and different across specified targets of prejudice (Herek 2000). Specifically, programs and intervention practices to reduce prejudice and discrimination that are focused on the threats, negative stereotyping, and anxieties that are related to the individual targets of prejudice have been found to be most effective at reducing prejudices toward these particular groups (Oskamp 2000; Parker and Aggleton 2003; Stephan and Stephan 2000).

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In this essay, I focus on stereotypes and issues in U.S. society to construct an argument for separate analyses of attitudes toward LGBT individuals. All the empirical studies I review are based on U.S. samples unless otherwise noted. In general, studies of attitudes toward LGBT individuals using both college and general population samples reveal similar results. However, college samples may be limited in that they may be unrepresentative of both the college population and the larger population in general and they may represent a more liberal-leaning segment of society due to the well-documented relationship between education and supportive attitudes toward LGBT individuals (e.g. Astin 1998). In this essay, I outline literature from three areas. First, I review previous studies that have examined attitudes toward LGBT individuals. Second, I offer arguments for how the intersections of gender and sexual orientation may affect attitudes toward LGBT individuals. Third, I discuss future considerations in studies of attitudes toward LGBT individuals in the context of multiple intersectionalities.

### Attitudes Toward LGBT Individuals

#### Attitudes Toward Lesbian and Gay Individuals

In 1971, one of the first scales of its kind was designed to examine negative and homophobic attitudes toward “homosexuals” (Smith 1971). Since then, many researchers have employed a variety of scales to examine negative attitudes toward LGBT individuals, however, most of these studies have not differentiated between lesbians and gays as the target of prejudice (e.g. Altemeyer and Hunsberger 1992; Morrison and Morrison 2003; Riddle 1996) while a few researchers have included separate scales for measuring attitudes toward lesbians and gays in their studies (Herek 1984; MacDonald et al. 1973; Raja and Stokes 1998). (A summary of previously published scales can be found in Worthen 2012).

First developed in 1984, Herek’s Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLG) Scale offers two subscales (attitudes toward gays and attitudes toward lesbians) that are designed to understand heterosexuals’ affective responses to homosexuality and to gay men and lesbians (Herek 1998). This scale has been utilized in many studies (e.g. Herek and Capitanio 1996; Herek and Glunt 1993) and has been found to have high discriminant validity and internal consistency (Herek 1984, 1988, 1994). While the ATLG scale (Herek 1984) is widely used to understand attitudes toward gays and lesbians, there may be important reasons to update the scale.

In 1998, Raja and Stokes revisited past studies of “homophobia” and created the Modern Homophobia Scale using a sample of 322 undergraduate students. They specifically

addressed the much-needed updating of past homophobia scales to include contemporary shifts in attitudes toward gays and lesbians. They wanted to tackle modern-day homophobic prejudices, which are more likely to be covert, rather than overtly homophobic attitudes such as “homosexuals should be required to register with the police department where they live” (Black and Stevenson 1984, p. 86). Because the researchers argue that prejudices about gays and lesbians are likely to have different origins, their work includes separate scales for attitudes toward gays and lesbians (Raja and Stokes 1998).

#### Attitudes Toward Bisexual Men and Bisexual Women

Some studies have gone beyond the homosexual-heterosexual dichotomy to explore attitudes toward bisexual men and bisexual women (e.g. Eliason 1997; Mayfield and Carrubba 1996; Mohr and Rochlen 1999; Mulick and Wright 2002; Ochs 1996; Queen 1996; Rust 1995). In 1981, MacDonald highlighted four societal beliefs/stereotypes about bisexuality: (1) bisexuality is real and natural, (2) bisexuality is transitory (the bisexual will return to his or her original orientation), (3) bisexuality is transitional (the bisexual will become exclusive at the orientation opposite to his or her original orientation), and (4) bisexuals are in denial about their true “homosexual” orientation. While MacDonald’s (1981) work suggested that there are societal misconceptions and negativity surrounding bisexuality, studies examining attitudes toward bisexual men and bisexual women remained scarce. In 1997, Eliason published the first study to use a scale to examine heterosexuals’ attitudes toward bisexuals using data from 229 undergraduates. Eliason (1997) designed a survey that included “common” stereotypes about bisexuals determined from a review of the scant (at that point in time) literature about bisexuality. The results of Eliason’s (1997) study showed that negative attitudes toward bisexual men were more prevalent than negative attitudes toward lesbians or gay men, while bisexual women were rated as “most acceptable” among the four groups (lesbians, gays, bisexual men, and bisexual women). Herek’s (2002) national study of randomly selected adults ( $N=1,335$ ) showed that heterosexuals reported more negative attitudes toward bisexual men and bisexual women than their attitudes toward gays and lesbians. Such work suggests that biphobia and homophobia should be considered as distinct phenomena and that attitudes toward bisexual men and bisexual women differ. Eliason (1997) further proposed that the stereotypes that drive homophobia and biphobia may be different. For example, her study showed that bisexuals were stereotyped as “preoccupied with sex” and had “flexible attitudes about sex” more so than heterosexuals, gays, and lesbians (Eliason 1997, p. 324). Such findings suggest that attitudes toward “homosexuals” may actually

be different constructs than attitudes toward “bisexuals.” Furthermore, because attitudes toward bisexual men were more found to be more unfavorable than attitudes toward bisexual women in Eliason’s (1997) study, there is empirical support for using separate scales to examine attitudes toward bisexual men and bisexual women.

In 1999, Mohr and Rochlen developed the Attitudes Regarding Bisexuality Scale to assess undergraduate students’ attitudes about bisexual men and bisexual women. Their research identified three domains of potential prejudices toward bisexuals: (1) attitudes regarding moral tolerance for bisexuality, (2) attitudes regarding the legitimacy of bisexuality as a sexual orientation, and (3) attitudes regarding bisexuals’ reliability as romantic partners, friends, and community members. While the first domain may not be distinct to bisexuals (one could easily imagine a similar domain regarding moral tolerance for “homosexuality”), the other two domains speak to potentially unique areas of prejudice that may be especially important when examining attitudes toward bisexuals. For example, the “legitimacy” and “reliability” of bisexuality are stereotypes that often come into play when examining stereotypes about bisexuality. Other examples of prejudices that are perhaps unique to bisexuals include attitudes such as “no one [is] *really* bisexual” or that the bisexual label is “a politically incorrect and unauthentic identity” (Weinberg et al. 2009, p. 270) as well as the notion that people are either “gay, straight, or lying” (Dodge et al. 2008, p. 184). Results from Mohr and Rochlen (1999) found that “moral tolerance” was the most salient predictor of positive attitudes toward bisexuality. Furthermore, their study also showed that attitudes toward bisexual women were not the same as those toward bisexual men (Mohr and Rochlen 1999). Such findings further indicate the importance of examining attitudes toward “bisexuals” as unique from attitudes toward “homosexuals” and also suggest that it is essential to use separate scales to measure attitudes toward bisexual men and bisexual women.

#### Attitudes Toward MtF and FtM Transgender Individuals

Thus far I have discussed the importance of utilizing separate constructs to analyze attitudes toward gays, lesbians, bisexual men, and bisexual women. While exploring such prejudices are certainly important, understanding attitudes toward transgender individuals is equally imperative. A critical reader might question my decision to include prejudices toward transgender individuals in this essay because transgender identity is (usually) much more closely aligned with gender identity, not sexual orientation. Even so, the frequently used theoretical grouping of LGBT into a single acronym (although not without debate and controversy, see Finnegan and McNally 2002) often suggests that the issues that these individual groups face might be similar (although

some suggest the opposite, see Alexander and Yescavage 2003). While the story of the LGBT acronym is beyond the scope of this project, the fact that the LGBT acronym exists is pertinent to our discussion. For some, prejudices toward transgender individuals may be unique from their attitudes toward lesbians, gays, bisexual men, and bisexual women but they may also be related to a general aversion from anything they perceive as non-normative. Without exploring how attitudes toward transgender individuals are both similar and different from attitudes toward lesbians, gays, bisexual men, and bisexual women, such ideas are speculative.

While the published history of examining attitudes toward “homosexuals” dates back to 1971 and for “bisexuality,” 1981, the first published study examining general attitudes toward transgender individuals was conducted by Leitenberg and Slavin in 1983. This study included a general attitude question about “transsexuality” and “homosexuality” (“always wrong,” etc.) as well as four specific questions about job discrimination, biological causality, and adoption (Leitenberg and Slavin 1983, p. 341). Interestingly, Leitenberg and Slavin (1983) found that, overall, “transsexuality” was more accepted than “homosexuality” in their sample of 318 undergraduates (note that their study used the term “transsexual” but the term “transgender” is preferred by this essay’s author because it does not refer to certain biases related to those who have the ability to receive/pay for surgeries and those who do not have such resources, see Roen 2002; Serano 2007). It is difficult, however, to understand these findings in the context of contemporary society nearly three decades after their study. As Bauer et al. (2009) suggest, transgender people currently represent one of the most marginalized groups in the U.S.

To speak to this issue, Hill (2002) offered three interrelated theoretical constructs to examine negative attitudes toward transgender individuals: (1) transphobia: a revulsion to masculine women, feminine men, cross-dressers, transgender individuals, and/or transsexuals, (2) genderism: an ideology that reinforces the negative evaluation of gender non-conformity or incongruence between sex and gender, and (3) gender-bashing: assault and/or harassment of persons who do not conform to gender norms (see also Wilchins 1997). Hill’s (2002) conceptual framework was tested by Hill and Willoughby in 2005. The results of their three-part study yielded the 32-item Genderism and Transphobia Scale, which consisted of the three domains identified by Hill (2002): transphobia, genderism, and gender-bashing (although results of their factor analysis indicated that transphobia and genderism loaded similarly while gender-bashing was a significantly different construct). Items within the scale included non-gender-specific statements such as “If I found out that my best friend was changing their sex, I would freak out” and gender-specific statements such as “Men who act like women should be ashamed of themselves” and “I would avoid

talking to a woman if I knew she had a surgically created penis and testicles” (Hill and Willoughby 2005, p. 543). Using an undergraduate sample of 180 students drawn from Concordia University in Montréal, Canada, they found that negative attitudes toward transgender individuals were not rare (Hill and Willoughby 2005). Interestingly, the Genderism and Transphobia Scale was significantly correlated with the Homophobia Scale developed by Wright et al. (1999).

A few years later, Nagoshi et al. (2008) sought out to expand upon Hill and Willoughby’s (2005) study. They developed a 9-item Transphobia Scale from Bornstein’s (1998) work. None of the items in their scale were gender-specific. Statements included: “I believe that the male/female dichotomy is natural,” “I believe that a person can never change their gender,” and “I don’t like it when someone is flirting with me, and I can’t tell if they are a man or a woman” (Nagoshi et al. 2008, p. 530). Using an undergraduate sample of 310 students from the University of Arizona, they also found high levels of transphobia among college students. In addition, their transphobia scale was also significantly correlated with Wright et al. (1999) Homophobia Scale.

Nagoshi et al.’s (2008) and Hill and Willoughby’s (2005) studies suggest that transphobia may be evident within college samples; although the use of small sample sizes, the use of rather homogenous samples of college youth, and the use of non-randomly selected samples severely limit the generalizability of their findings. Thus, at this point in time, U.S. attitudes toward transgender individuals are still rather unknown. Furthermore, even though the results from these two studies found that transphobia was highly correlated with homophobia, the homophobia scale that they used (developed by Wright and colleagues in 1999) does not include items that are gender-specific; rather their scale includes statements such as “Homosexuality is acceptable to me” while the word “lesbian” is not found in any of their scale’s items. Thus, any nuances of how transphobia may be differentially related to attitudes toward lesbians and attitudes toward gays are entirely unknown. It is also important to note that despite their documented correlation, homophobia is a prejudice geared toward sexual orientation while transphobia is a prejudice geared toward gender identity. Indeed, transphobia may differ from homophobia because often transphobia involves irrational fears of feminine men and masculine women and is about larger issues of gender roles and gender identity, and not just sexual orientation (Nagoshi et al. 2008; Weinberg 1972). Thus, there are likely different roots behind such these prejudices that have yet to be uncovered.

Furthermore, most previous studies have neglected to explore differences in attitudes toward MtF and FtM individuals. In fact, early research on attitudes toward transgender people most often focused on MtF individuals (e.g.

Kando 1972) and virtually ignored FtM individuals (Green 2005). Furthermore, even though Hill and Willoughby’s (2005) 32-item Genderism and Transphobia Scale included gender-specific items that could allow for testing attitudes toward MtF and FtM individuals separately, the researchers did not include such explorations in their study. Although not focused specifically on prejudices, Grossman et al. (2005) study of 31 MtF and 24 FtM youth aged 15–21 showed some important differences. Specifically, their study showed that MtF youth experienced earlier and more frequent prejudicial treatment than FtM youth (Grossman et al. 2005). Compared to parents of FtM youth, parents of MtF youths were more likely to have told their children to stop expressing their cross-gender behaviors and to report that their children needed counseling related to their sexual orientation (Grossman et al. 2005). Thus, there may be evidence that MtF individuals have different experiences than FtM individuals (see also Gerhardtstein and Anderson 2010; Serano 2007). If we are to more fully understand prejudices toward transgender individuals, it could be especially informative to explore attitudes toward MtF and FtM individuals separately.

### Intersections of Gender and Sexual Orientation and Attitudes Toward LGBT Individuals

While it is certainly important to consider attitudes toward LGBT individuals as separate constructs, it is especially imperative to consider how the intersections of gender and sexual orientation affect attitudes toward LGBT individuals. This perspective highlights the significance of both the gender and sexual orientation of the respondent and the gender and sexual orientation of the target of prejudice. First, I discuss the patterns related to heterosexual men’s and women’s attitudes toward LGBT individuals as well as the arguments used to explain these patterns. Then, I offer a discussion of gays’ and lesbians’ attitudes toward bisexual and transgender individuals. Finally, I consider bisexual men’s and women’s attitudes toward gays, lesbians, and transgender individuals. The following discussion offers just some of the arguments posited in past studies that show how both the gender and sexual orientation of the respondent and of the target of prejudice affect attitudes toward LGBT individuals.

#### Heterosexual Men and Women: Attitudes Toward LGBT Individuals

In the United States, there is a documented “gender gap” whereby heterosexual men (compared to heterosexual women) have been found to be overwhelmingly less supportive of LGBT individuals. Overall, there are six general patterns

that have been documented. First, heterosexual men report lower levels of support of “homosexuals” than heterosexual women report (D’Augelli and Rose 1990; Goodwin and Roscoe 1988; Hinrichs and Rosenberg 2002; Kite 1984; Kurdek 1988; Larsen et al. 1980; Negy and Eisenman 2005). Second, heterosexual men report more negative attitudes toward “gays” and more positive attitudes toward “lesbians” while heterosexual women report similar attitudes toward “gays” and “lesbians” (Eliason 1997; Herek 1988; Kite and Whitley 1998) (although in some studies, heterosexual women reported more negative attitudes toward lesbians and more positive attitudes toward gay men than heterosexual men reported, see Gentry 1987; Herek 1988; Kite 1984; Raja and Stokes 1998). Third, there are mixed results regarding the ways that gender may affect attitudes toward bisexual men and bisexual women. For example, Eliason’s (1997) study of 229 undergraduates showed that compared to heterosexual women, heterosexual men were much more likely to agree with negative stereotypes about “bisexuals” (i.e. bisexuals are more likely to have more than one sexual partner at a time than heterosexuals; bisexuals are gays/lesbians who are afraid to admit they are gay; and bisexuals spread AIDS to lesbians and heterosexuals) while heterosexual women (compared to heterosexual men) have reported more positive attitudes toward “bisexuals” (e.g. Eliason 1997; Mohr and Rochlen 1999). In contrast, Herek’s (2002) national study of randomly selected adults ( $N=1,335$ ) showed that heterosexual women rated both bisexual men and bisexual women significantly less favorably than they rated gays and lesbians. Fourth, when asked specifically about their attitudes toward bisexual men and bisexual women, heterosexual men have more negative attitudes toward bisexual men and more positive attitudes toward bisexual women when compared to heterosexual women’s attitudes (Eliason 1997; Mohr and Rochlen 1999). Fifth, heterosexual men (compared to heterosexual women) report higher levels of hostility toward “transgender” individuals according to studies in the U.S. and Canada (Hill and Willoughby 2005; Leitenberg and Slavin 1983; Nagoshi, et al. 2008). Sixth, there is some evidence that heterosexual men (compared to heterosexual women) may be more antagonistic toward MtF individuals than they are toward FtM individuals (Gerhardstein and Anderson 2010; Serano 2007). Overall, these studies point to different “roots” of prejudices toward LGBT individuals and suggest that studies of attitudes toward LGBT individuals should reflect these differences.

The very fact that we see these patterns suggests strong support for (1) examining the gender and sexual orientation of the respondent in investigations of attitudes and (2) utilizing separate constructs to analyze attitudes toward gays, lesbians, bisexual men, and bisexual women, MtF and FtM transgender individuals. If we cluster “LGBT”

individuals into one group, we would likely mask these important differences. Furthermore, because we see that these attitudinal patterns differ by both the gender and sexual orientation of the respondent and of the target of prejudice, we must discuss the theoretical reasons why we would expect to see these differences.

Specifically, there are six theoretical reasons offered by past research to explain the six patterns (noted above) regarding heterosexual men’s and women’s attitudes toward LGBT individuals: (1) conflation of gays, bisexual men, and transgender individuals with AIDS, HIV, HIV infection, and HIV-positive serostatus (henceforth “AIDS and HIV”), (2) fear of sexual advances, (3) sexualization of lesbians and bisexual women, (4) “coveting” of gays by heterosexual women, (5) gender nonconformity prejudice, and (6) heterosexism, sexism, and cisnormativity. These explanations suggest the importance of examining both the gender and sexual orientation of the respondent and of the target of prejudice if we are to best understand attitudes toward LGBT individuals.

#### (1) Conflation of Gays, Bisexual Men, and Transgender Individuals with AIDS and HIV

First, heterosexuals may have different attitudes toward gays because they may associate gay lifestyles with AIDS and HIV while lesbian lifestyles are rarely associated with AIDS and HIV (Bouton et al. 1987; Fish and Rye 1991; Larsen et al. 1980; O’Brien and Vest 1988; Price and Hsu 1992; Sheehan et al. 1989). There is also evidence that heterosexual individuals may blame bisexuals (in most cases, bisexual men) for the transmission of HIV from the gay population to the heterosexual population (Doll et al. 1997; Herek and Capitanio 1999; McKirnan et al. 1995; Miller 2002; Rust 2002; Worth 2003). Indeed, HIV- and AIDS-related prejudices among heterosexuals have largely been associated with stigma directed toward the lifestyles of men who have sex with men (Ochs 1996; Peltzer et al. 2004). For example, in their study of 224 undergraduate students, Wright et al. (2007) found that the fear of AIDS and individuals with AIDS was associated with fear and discrimination of bisexual and “homosexual” individuals. In addition, transgender lifestyles have also been associated with AIDS and HIV (e.g. Kenagy and Hsieh 2005). While studies show that MtF and FtM individuals may engage in sexual risk behaviors and potentially contract HIV, the social and structural factors (e.g. poverty, discrimination, violence, etc.) that MtF and FtM individuals experience are important to consider when examining sexual risk behaviors (Bockting et al. 1998; Kenagy and Hsieh 2005; Nemoto et al. 1999; Rodriguez-Madera and Toro-Alfonso 2005). Even so, heterosexuals may perceive transgender lifestyles as “sexually risky” and as such, they may have negative attitudes toward transgender individuals.

Heterosexual men and women may differ in their levels of HIV- and AIDS-related stigma and this may affect their attitudes toward LGBT individuals. For example, heterosexual men who presumably predominately have sex with heterosexual women may not feel particularly at risk for contracting AIDS and HIV while heterosexual women may have greater concern about contracting AIDS and HIV because there is evidence that men who have sex with both men and women have elevated risk of transmission of AIDS and HIV to their female partners (Worth 2003). This perception of risk may be related to heterosexual men's and women's attitudes toward LGBT individuals. Furthermore, research shows that gender roles affect the safer sex practices of heterosexual women and heterosexual MtF individuals (Kenagy and Hsieh 2005; Margillo and Imahori 1998). Because traditional gender roles suggest that women are expected to cater to men's sexual pleasure, heterosexual women may feel more sympathetic toward heterosexual MtF individuals who engage in sexual risk behaviors in order to feel affirmed as women (Bockting et al. 1998; Namaste 2001; Nemoto et al. 1999; Rodriguez-Madera and Toro-Alfonso 2005). Indeed, the fear of rejection associated with the request to use a condom can be a very real consequence that may invoke sympathy from those who have experienced similar rejections. In contrast, heterosexual men may be less sympathetic and may perceive all LGBT individuals as "vectors" of disease (Morse et al. 1991). Overall, there may be important ways that heterosexual men and women differ in their attitudes toward LGBT individuals based on the ways they associate (or do not associate) LGBT lifestyles with AIDS and HIV.

## (2) Fear of Sexual Advances

A fear of sexual advances may be a reason for hostility among heterosexual men directed toward gays, bisexual men, and FtM individuals. Indeed, Eliason's (1997) study of 229 undergraduates found that heterosexual men felt threatened by gays and bisexual men because they were fearful that they might be solicited romantically by them. Heterosexual men may translate this fear of unsolicited sexual advances into negative attitudes toward gays and bisexual men. Past research shows that some heterosexual men actually locate their sexual prejudice in aversion to sexual advances from gay men (Bortolin 2010). In a qualitative study examining attitudes toward LGBT and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) individuals following experiences with an LGBTQ ally training program, Worthen (2011) found this pattern as noted by one heterosexual man who stated "I would now be more comfortable talking to gay people, as long as a homosexual man doesn't try to make a move on me" (p. 340). A reaction of this type certainly indicates that aversion to sexual attraction by gay and bisexual men may be a force behind heterosexual men's

sexual prejudice toward gay and bisexual men. Although no studies could be located, a similar argument could be made whereby heterosexual men have negative attitudes toward gay and bisexual FtM transgender individuals because they are fearful of sexual advances that these men could make.

Furthermore, heterosexual men may fear sexual attention from gay men because they perceive such sexual advances as a threat to their heteromascularity. As Weinberg (1972) originally suggested, homophobia is the "dread of being in close quarters with homosexuals" (p. 4). By being the recipient of sexual advances from gay men, heterosexual men may believe that they sent out a "gay vibe" and/or an "effeminate vibe" that dictates to gay men that they are interested in receiving sexual advances from them (Vannewkirk 2006). Because the fear of effeminacy is so pervasive (Bergling 2001; Serano 2007), heterosexual men may perceive a gay man hitting on them as a reflection of their real or imagined effeminacy, which may be a direct threat to their heteromascularity. Indeed, research among 1,463 adolescent men (aged 15–19) showed that "straight" men are reluctant to behave in a manner that would provide others with cause to question their sexual orientation and masculinity" (Marsiglio 1993, p. 16).

In addition, heterosexual men may also fear sexual advances made by heterosexual MtF individuals. Although MtF individuals are living as women (in most cases), a heterosexual man may actually be more uncomfortable with heterosexual MtF individuals (compared to heterosexual FtM individuals) because (1) he may fear that a heterosexual MtF individual would solicit him romantically and he would not know how to politely turn her down or (2) he may fear that he would be sexually attracted to a heterosexual MtF individual without knowing that she is transgender, and this may also be especially problematic to a heterosexual man because he may interpret this as "gay" sexual attraction. Indeed, Nagoshi et al. (2008) suggest that homophobia underlies heterosexual men's prejudice towards transgender individuals. Using this argument, if heterosexual men focus on the biological chromosomal sex of heterosexual MtF individuals, a MtF individual would be perceived as a "man" and thus, heterosexual men may perceive their attraction to a heterosexual MtF individual as a "gay" sexual attraction. Thus, fear of being "gay" may underlie men's negative attitudes toward MtF individuals. Indeed, their need to "prove" that they are not gay and the importance of defining, defending, and "showing off" their heterosexual orientation may be a key part of some heterosexual men's masculine identity (Herek 2002; Kimmel 2009; McCreary, 1994). Because heterosexual men may fear a sexual attraction to MtF individuals that could be perceived as "gay" sexual attraction, they perceive MtF individuals as threat to their own heterosexual identity and thus, heterosexual men may have negative attitudes toward MtF individuals.

Heterosexual women may also fear sexual advances from lesbians, bisexual women, and MtF lesbian and bisexual individuals. Because heterosexual women have a romantic attraction to men, they may be uncomfortable with romantic attention from women. Indeed, at least some studies show that heterosexual women report more negative attitudes toward lesbians compared to their more positive attitudes toward gay men (Gentry 1987; Herek 1988; Kite 1984; Raja and Stokes 1998). Such findings suggest that heterosexual women may also be uncomfortable with sexual advances from other women because they may fear they will be thought of as “lesbian” themselves. If they are viewed as a “lesbian,” they may no longer be viewed as a potential dating partner for heterosexual men. However, there is evidence that it may be more acceptable for heterosexual women to engage in same-gender sexual behaviors than it is for heterosexual men to engage in same-gender sexual behaviors—as long as these women are not defined as “lesbians.” Indeed, Rupp and Taylor’s (2010) qualitative investigation of “straight girls kissing” showed that college women engaged in a variety of “sexually fluid” girl-kissing-girl behaviors, but they were everything but lesbians (p. 29) (see also Diamond 2009). Although these women engaged in same-gender sexual behaviors, they recognized a clear delineation: “too much physical attraction or emotional investment [in women] crosses over the line of heterosexuality...the line between lesbian and non-lesbian...remains firmly intact” (Rupp and Taylor 2010, p. 32). This “line” may be especially important when understanding heterosexual women’s attitudes toward lesbians and bisexual women. If heterosexual women want to attract heterosexual men, they must be hyper-sensitive to the line between lesbian in non-lesbian behavior. Research shows that heterosexual women may distance themselves from lesbian women in order to attract desirable heterosexual men (Hamilton 2007). Indeed, in the heterosexual erotic marketplace, lesbian women are devalued (although same-gender eroticism among women is encouraged, but only for the enjoyment of men watching) (Hamilton 2007; Rupp and Taylor 2010). Thus, heterosexual women’s attitudes toward lesbians, bisexual women, and MtF lesbian and bisexual individuals may be influenced by their desire to distance themselves from these women so that they may appear attractive to heterosexual men.

### (3) Sexualization of Lesbians and Bisexual Women

Another way to understand why heterosexual men have more positive attitudes toward lesbians and bisexual women when compared to their attitudes toward gays and bisexual men may be the contemporary sexualization of both lesbians and bisexual women that is embedded in heteronormative conceptualizations of attractiveness within the patriarchal power structure of the United States. Indeed, some researchers

have speculated that heterosexual men eroticize lesbians and that this may contribute to positive attitudes toward lesbians among heterosexual men (Kite and Whitley 1998; Louderback and Whitley 1997; Raja and Stokes 1998). Furthermore, the over-eroticization of bisexual women (especially in pornography and other media) may have strong effects on heterosexual men’s attitudes toward bisexuality among women. While lesbians may be sexually titillating to heterosexual men, bisexual women might be the epitome of “sexy” because not only will they kiss girls, they may also kiss guys (Rupp and Taylor 2010). Moreover, “bisexuality” among women has become popularized and even commercialized. The “girls kissing girls” phenomenon has entered mainstream culture with Katy Perry’s (2008) hit song “I Kissed a Girl,” Madonna and Britney Spears’ kiss on the 2003 MTV Video Music Awards (Moss 2003), and Scarlett Johansson and Sandra Bullock’s kiss on the 2010 MTV Movie Awards (Torregrosa 2010). While none these women have publicly identified themselves as “bisexual” (possibly, with the exception of Madonna) mainstream culture has grabbed onto the sex appeal of girl-on-girl kissing behaviors (Torregrosa 2010). Researchers suggest that women may kiss other women to attract the attention of heterosexual men because they know it is a sexual turn-on to them (Rupp and Taylor 2010). The phenomenon is so visible that there is even a colloquial term for this: “barsexuals” are straight women who feign bisexuality for the sake of attention from heterosexual men in public places such as at parties and at bars (Russo 2009, p. 1). While it is true that many of these women who kiss girls may be doing so because they are genuinely attracted to other women (and perhaps may even be bisexual), Rupp and Taylor (2010) suggest that “Attention or attraction? Either way, they’ve got an audience” (p. 32). Such eroticized images of bisexuality among women likely contribute to positive attitudes toward bisexual women among heterosexual men. As heterosexual men place erotic value in lesbian and bisexual behavior among women, heterosexual women may do the same. This may also encourage sexual fluidity among women (Diamond 2009). These findings indicate that separate explorations of attitudes toward lesbians and bisexual women may reveal important gender differences steeped in sexualized imagery of heteronormative conceptualizations of “sexy” lesbian and bisexual women.

### (4) “Coveting” of Gays by Heterosexual Women

Heterosexual women may have more positive attitudes toward gays (when compared to their attitudes toward lesbians) because they may place higher social value in relationships with gays. Indeed, heterosexual women have been found to be most at ease around gay men compared to lesbians and bisexuals (Eliason and Raheim 1996). Investigating heterosexual nursing students who were 94 % women, Eliason and Raheim (1996) found that nursing students were equally uncomfortable around bisexuals and lesbians, but

least uncomfortable around gay men. It could be the case that women are most comfortable around gay men because they feel least threatened by them sexually. It could also be the case that relatively recent media attention focused on the gay man/heterosexual woman couple configuration as represented in the popular television show *Will and Grace* (Kohan and Mutchnick 1998–2006) and mainstream films such as *My Best Friend's Wedding* (Hogan 1997) and *Object of My Affection* (Hytner 1998) may generate more positive attitudes among women toward gay men (Shugart 2003). Heterosexual men may also see this type of duo as socially acceptable because it is quite pervasive in media representations. However, it is important to note that the gay man/heterosexual woman duo is also impaired by stereotypes (e.g. the gay man as “one of the girls”) and reinforced by heteronormative patriarchal standards. In sum, it would seem that another explanation for gender differences in attitudes toward gays and lesbians could be related to the “coveting” of gays by heterosexual women.

##### (5) Gender Nonconformity Prejudice

Gender nonconformity prejudice may be another reason behind heterosexual men's and women's attitudes toward LGBT individuals. Gender nonconformity prejudice is differential treatment and/or negative attitudes toward individuals whose gender expression does not follow traditional stereotypical gender roles and/or norms (Gordon and Meyer 2007). This type of prejudice may be quite prevalent in U.S. society because as Herek (1990) points out “people who transgress gender roles remain at the low end of the hierarchy of acceptability” (p. 328). For example, Simon's (1998) study ( $N=208$ ) determined that gays who were “unmasculine” and lesbians who were “unfeminine” were found to be “less liked” when compared to gays and lesbians who were more gender conforming. Indeed, gender nonconformity in the form of gender transgressive appearance and/or behavior has been found to be associated with stigma and violence (Bornstein 1998; Gordon and Meyer 2007; Lombardi et al. 2001; Sandfort et al. 2007; Wilchins 1997). For example, a study of 396 LGB respondents found that nearly twenty percent reported at least one occurrence of routine everyday discrimination they attributed to gender nonconformity (Gordon and Meyer 2007). There is also evidence that gender nonconformity can impair the likelihood of job attainment. For example, Badgett and Folbre (2003) found that undergraduate students ( $N=488$ ) rated hypothetical vignettes of gender nonconforming individuals (women in “low femininity” occupations and men in “high femininity” occupations) as less desirable than gender conforming individuals (men in “low femininity” occupations and women in “high femininity” occupations). Furthermore, Weinberg's (2009/2010) analysis of gender nonconformity, sexual orientation, and employment discrimination illustrates that gay

and lesbian individuals are victims of employment discrimination and tend to be targeted “not because of their sexual orientation and gender identity per se, but rather because they are gender nonconformists” (p. 3).

Gender nonconformity prejudice may be directed toward any and all individuals; however, most research indicates that people are less accepting toward men who exhibit non-stereotypical gender characteristics than gender nonconforming women (Herek 2000, 2002; Sandnabba and Ahlberg 1999; Schope and Eliason 2004). Indeed, some may have potentially different reactions to perceived gender nonconformity. As previous research has shown, heterosexual men have more negative attitudes toward gays, bisexual men, and transgender individuals when compared to heterosexual women's attitudes (e.g. Hill and Willoughby 2005; Nagoshi et al. 2008). One reason for this gender difference in attitudes may be related to the ways heterosexual men and women react to perceived gender nonconformity. Heterosexual men may be more likely to perceive and acknowledge gender nonconformity because heterosexual men (compared to heterosexual women) have less flexibility in their gender expressions (Kimmel 2009). As a result, heterosexual men may perceive gender nonconformity as especially problematic because they are more likely to desire high levels of conformity to strict gender roles when compared to heterosexual women (e.g. Herek 1986). Indeed, studies show that heterosexual men have more prejudices directed toward feminine men than directed toward masculine men (Blashill and Powlishta 2009; Lobel 1994) and that heterosexual men are more uncomfortable than heterosexual women around cross-dressing men (Ceglie and Lyons 2004). Researchers (e.g. LaMar and Kite 1998; Oliver and Hyde 1993; Thompson et al. 1985) suggest that greater gender nonconformity prejudice among heterosexual men may lead them to denigrate those who do not conform to strict gender norms while heterosexual women may be more likely to accept diversity among gender roles. Because “heterosexuality” has been suggested as a core component of masculinity (but not femininity), heterosexual men may be especially condemnatory of LGBT individuals who they perceive as gender-role violators (Kimmel 2009; Kite and Whitley 1998).

Furthermore, attitudes toward transgender individuals may not be directly associated with attitudes toward sexual behavior. Instead, attitudes toward transgender individuals may be related to stereotypical beliefs about gender roles and specifically, gender nonconformity prejudice. Research indicates that transgender individuals are frequently perceived as violating gender norms, thus it is likely that gender nonconformity prejudice may be directed toward transgender individuals (Gerhardstein and Anderson 2010). Because (generally) women's gender role socialization has been found to be more flexible than is men's (e.g. Basow 1992), it is likely



that women are more open to gender nonconformity and this may be related to positive attitudes toward transgender individuals among heterosexual women.

#### (6) Heterosexism, Sexism, and Cisnormativity

Some may view LGBT relationships as a threat to the traditional heterosexual cisgender male/man(dominant)-female/woman(subordinate) power structure in U.S. society (Faderman 1981). This perspective suggests that *all* relationships “should” be heterosexual couplings of opposite cisgender individuals. This does not allow for acceptance of LGBT relationships. Studies show that heterosexual men are more likely to hold traditional gender role perspectives about relationships when compared to heterosexual women (e.g. Whitley 1987). Thus, it could be the case that heterosexual men are less likely to support LGBT people because compared to heterosexual women, they are more likely to support the heterosexual cisgender male/man(dominant)-female/woman (subordinate) power structure (Thompson et al. 1985).

There may also be a heteronormative phenomenon whereby individuals erroneously assume that all LGBT individuals are “gay.” While it is true that gays and lesbians fit this assumption, it does not necessarily apply to bisexuals and transgender individuals. For example, people may assume that a man engaged in sexual behavior with another man is “gay” but he could actually identify as “bisexual.” Furthermore, while some transgender individuals identify as gay, it is certainly also true that some transgender individuals identify as heterosexual; however, some may conflate being transgender with being gay. For example, an individual who sees a male dressing as a woman may see this person as “gay;” however, this may be a misalignment of terms. In fact, seeing a male dressing as a woman (more than likely) has more to do with an individual’s gender identity, and less to do with an individual’s sexual orientation. Even so, individuals may see transgender behavior and identify it as “gay” behavior because some may perceive any non-gender conforming behavior as “gay.” Thus, any behavior that is not “straight” is (by default) “gay.” This assumption may be rooted in the fact that until the 1950s, those who today might identify with the term “transgender” were classified as “homosexual” by most of society (Weiss 2004). Today, we sometimes see this in discussions of Brandon Teena, the FtM transgender youth who was violently murdered in 1993 who is frequently a part of discussions involving violence against “gay” youth (Halberstam 2003). Brandon Teena was also described as “gay” even though he identified as heterosexual (Halberstam 2003). Thus, this type of heteronormative assumption clumps together LGBT individuals and does not allow for adequate understandings of the experiences of lesbians, gays, bisexual men, and bisexual women, MtF and FtM individuals. Heterosexual men may be more likely to make such heteronormative assumptions

because they are less likely to be sensitive to gender nonconformity, thus they may perceive all gender nonconformists as “gay” (e.g. Herek 1986; Kimmel 2009; Kite and Whitley 1998; LaMar and Kite 1998; Oliver and Hyde 1993; Thompson et al. 1985).

Heterosexism may also be especially salient in heterosexual men’s and women’s attitudes toward LGBT individuals. One heterosexist (and sexist cisnormative) perspective may be that heterosexual cisgender men are the dominant group in society. In this view, gays, bisexual men, non-cisgender individuals, and *all* women are inferior to heterosexual cisgender men (Feldblum 2000/2001). For heterosexual men who adhere to this perspective, LGBT individuals may be viewed especially negatively. While anyone can have heterosexist, sexist, and cisnormative perspectives, heterosexual men have been found to be more likely to promulgate such assumptions (e.g. Herek 1986; Kimmel 2009; LaMar and Kite 1998; Thompson et al. 1985). These assumptions may be a key reason why heterosexual men have more negative attitudes toward LGBT individuals when compared to heterosexual women. Furthermore, heterosexual men may be especially hostile toward these groups. In their study of undergraduate students (153 women and 157 men), Nagoshi and colleagues (2008) found that physical aggression, verbal aggression, and anger were predictive of transphobia among heterosexual men but none of these were significant predictors of transphobia among women. This implies that heterosexual men’s negative attitudes toward transgender individuals may be related to their high levels of hostility directed toward transgender individuals.

High levels of hostility directed toward transgender persons may actually differ by MtF and FtM status in ways that may be related to heterosexist and cisnormative assumptions. For example, heterosexual men who adhere to heterosexist and cisnormative assumptions may feel especially hostile toward MtF individuals because they may believe that MtF individuals are relinquishing their “superior” status as biological males by becoming women (Gerhardstein and Anderson 2010; Serano 2007). If individuals are relinquishing their status as males, this may suggest that men are not as valued in society. This is seen as especially problematic because it threatens the overall “superiority” of men in society. On the opposite end of this argument, heterosexual men may view FtM individuals less negatively than MtF individuals because they may see them as having the desire to obtain a “superior” status in society by becoming men, something that heterosexual men may also value. On the flip side, heterosexual men may see FtM individuals as threatening the “superiority” of men because they are encroaching upon heterosexual cisgender men’s powers in society. On the other hand, heterosexual men may perceive FtM individuals as weak competitors in society because they are not biological chromosomal

males, thus they are not able to threaten the power of heterosexual cisgender men (Gerhardstein and Anderson 2010).

Heterosexual women may also have heterosexist cisnormative assumptions that may affect their attitudes toward transgender individuals. For example, heterosexual women may feel negatively toward MtF individuals because they perceive them to be “incomplete” women (Kando 1972). Indeed, past studies have shown that heterosexual women sometimes feel that lesbians are “insufficient” women (Herek 2002; Schope and Eliason 2004). Thus, heterosexual women may have negative attitudes toward MtF individuals because they may feel that they are not “real” women. Furthermore, heterosexual women may also believe that heterosexual MtF individuals are not “real” competitors for the romantic attention of heterosexual men, and thus they may either (1) denigrate them accordingly, as with their behaviors toward lesbian women in some cases (Gerhardstein and Anderson 2010; Hamilton 2007), or they may (2) treat them positively, because they are not viewed as competitors.

Overall, research that examines attitudes toward LGBT individuals separately shows that heterosexual men and women differ in their attitudes toward LGBT individuals, which is a finding that may be masked if (1) the gender and sexual orientation of the respondent are not examined and (2) attitudes toward LGBT individuals are not examined as separate constructs. Without separate analyses, we are unable to understand the potentially different (or potentially similar) origins of LGBT prejudices. Furthermore, I offered six arguments that have been used to explain how heterosexual men and women differ in their attitudes toward LGBT individuals. Although there are certainly more, it is clear that being a heterosexual man or a heterosexual woman can affect attitudes toward LGBT individuals. As a result, we must focus on understanding such nuances so we can confront such prejudices and encourage positivity toward LGBT individuals.

#### Gays and Lesbians: Attitudes Toward LGBT Individuals

While there are certainly arguments in the literature that have focused on heterosexual men’s and women’s attitudes toward LGBT individuals (it should be noted that the arguments summarized above could theoretically be applied to gays’ and lesbians’ attitudes, although little research has done so), few studies have examined gays’ and lesbians’ attitudes about these issues. The literature that has examined gays’ and lesbians’ attitudes usually focuses on three genres: (1) gays’ attitudes toward lesbians and lesbians’ attitudes toward gays, (2) gays’ and lesbians’ attitudes toward bisexuality, (3) gays’ and lesbians’ attitudes toward transgender individuals.

With some women who have relationships with women identifying as “gay” or “gay women” and many young women now identifying as “queer,” the factions between

“gay” and “lesbian” may be less meaningful today (Savin-Williams 2005). However, it may be that gays see their struggle within society and the stigma they face as different from, or even more severe than, the struggles that lesbians encounter (and vice versa). There are certainly different stigmas that gay men and lesbian women encounter and perhaps there are also stigmas and stereotypes that gays have about lesbians and that lesbians have about gays. For example, lesbians may stereotype gays as “over-sexed,” “promiscuous,” and may even see them as poor relationship partners. On the other hand, gays may stereotype lesbians as “man-haters,” “overeager to jump into a serious relationship” or otherwise known as “U-Haul lesbians” who are victims of the “urge to merge” (Eliason 2010; Gordon 2006). Thus, there may be differences in lesbians’ attitudes toward gays and gays’ attitudes toward lesbians, providing further support for examining both the gender and sexual orientation of respondents and using separate scales to examine attitudes toward gays and lesbians.

Lesbians’ and gays’ attitudes toward bisexual and transgender individuals are also an important (but under-researched) topic of interest. In her article entitled “GL vs. BT,” Weiss (2004) clearly points out that “heterosexism against bisexuals and transgenders exists not only in the straight community, but in the gay and lesbian community as well” (p. 27). This highlights the differential experiences that lesbians, gays, bisexual men, and bisexual women, MtF and FtM transgender individuals have. Although the LGBT community is often thought of as “monolithic” it is certainly true that gays and lesbians may see bisexual men, bisexual women, and transgender individuals and the issues that they face as entirely separate from their own (Weiss 2004).

Among lesbian and gay populations, attitudes toward bisexuality are diverse. Some research suggests that bisexual men and bisexual women experience a double-stigmatization in which they are rejected from both heterosexual and gay/lesbian communities (Brewster and Moradi 2010; Mulick and Wright 2002; Ochs 1996; Weinberg et al. 2009). In one of the first published studies on this matter, Rust (1995) surveyed more than 400 lesbians about their perspectives toward bisexual women and found evidence that bisexuality is quite controversial within lesbian communities. Nearly half of the lesbians in her study questioned the authentic existence of bisexuality among women while others believed that women who called themselves “bisexual” were really just lesbians who weren’t fully comfortable coming out as “lesbian” (Rust 1995). Rust (1995) also found evidence that bisexuality among women challenged lesbian politics. Many of her lesbian respondents discussed the anger they felt toward bisexual women due to their ability “to enjoy the pleasures of lesbian sexuality and the comfort of a nurturing community of women while maintaining heterosexual privilege and avoiding the costs associated with being lesbian

in a heterosexist society” (Rust 1995; p. 84). The overwhelming majority of lesbians in her study believed that lesbians experienced more oppression than bisexual women and as a result, they believed “bisexuality is bad politics” (Rust 1995; p. 87).

Other research on bisexual politics suggests that both gays and lesbians have negative and dismissive attitudes about bisexuality among men and women (Baumgardner 2007; Brewster and Moradi 2010; Weiss 2004; Welzer-Lang 2008). Indeed, some gay and lesbian political groups suggest that “there are no bisexual issues” (Hutchins 1996, p. 241). Brewster and Moradi (2010, p. 452) suggest that such negative attitudes include (1) verbal accusations that bisexual men and bisexual women are “traitors” to the gay and lesbian movement (Ault 1996; Burleson 2005; Hutchins and Ka’ahumanu 1991; Rust 1995), (2) bisexuals are “colluders” in promoting heterosexist relationship norms (Stone 1996) and (3) bisexual men and bisexual women are just “junior members” of the gay and lesbian population who are “bi now, gay later” (Burleson 2005). Such arguments certainly create a schism between LG and B and suggest that lesbians and gays may have particular attitudes toward bisexual men and bisexual women that certainly deserve further attention (Weiss 2004).

To better understand these issues, Brewster and Moradi (2010) investigated bisexuals’ ( $N=350$ ) experiences with prejudice by developing two scales: one to examine bisexuals’ experiences of prejudice from lesbians or gays and one to assess bisexuals’ experiences of prejudice from heterosexuals. Each scale included three dimensions of anti-bisexual prejudice: (1) sexual orientation instability (the most prevalent prejudice found), (2) sexual irresponsibility, and (3) interpersonal hostility. The results of their study showed that bisexuals’ perceived all three dimensions of anti-bisexual prejudices from both heterosexuals as well as lesbian and gay people (Brewster and Moradi 2010). Although their results also showed that bisexual people may perceive more anti-bisexual prejudice from heterosexuals (as compared to perceived prejudices from lesbian/gay people), the effect size for the gap was small, thus their findings support the existence of anti-bisexual prejudices from both heterosexuals as well as lesbian and gay people (Brewster and Moradi 2010).

In contrast, Mohr and Rochlen’s (1999) study of 110 lesbians and 141 gay men (aged 15–52 years) determined that lesbians and gays were significantly more tolerant of “bisexuality” than heterosexuals (both women and men) and lesbians were most tolerant of both bisexual men and bisexual women. In addition, although Mulick and Wright (2002) did not include separate scales for attitudes toward bisexual men and bisexual women, they did explore undergraduate heterosexuals’, gays’, and lesbians’ ( $N=217$ ) attitudes toward bisexuals. Their Biphobia Scale included items such as

“Bisexual people want to have sex with everybody” and “I do not like bisexual individuals” (Mulick and Wright 2002, p. 57). Their study showed that heterosexual men reported the highest level of biphobia, followed by heterosexual women, while gays and lesbians had significantly lower scores on their Biphobia Scale (Mulick and Wright 2002). In addition, they found that heterosexuals reacted similarly towards “homosexual” and “bisexual” individuals while gays and lesbians reacted differently (Mulick and Wright 2002). Such results suggest that biphobia may be a distinct construct and it may be especially important to consider the sexual orientation of respondents when examining attitudes toward both bisexual men and bisexual women.

Lesbians and gays may also have particular attitudes toward transgender individuals. For example, they may see themselves and the issues they face as separate from transgender individuals and issues (even though transgender individuals may certainly identify as gay or lesbian and may also face the similar issues that gays and lesbians face) (Weiss 2004). For example, transgender issues may encompass topics such as improving access to hormone treatments and simplifying the processes involved in changing gender markers on birth certificates and driving licenses while gay and lesbian issues may focus on the fight for same-gender marriage. Lesbians and gays may also have a specific type of prejudice directed toward transgender individuals because they may perceive the decision to transition from MtF or FtM as an “embrasure of heterosexual practices and privilege” (Weiss 2004; p. 38). This suggests that gays and lesbians may see transgender individuals as wanting to appear/look/act in accordance with heteronormative practices. Thus, gays and lesbians may have prejudices directed toward the perceived heteronormativity of transgender lifestyles because it may threaten the gay and lesbian movement. But this prejudice falsely assumes that all transgender individuals are heterosexual and interested in embracing heteronormativity. Even so, Weiss (2004) suggests that this type of prejudice is an attempt by gays and lesbians to “disavow more ‘radical’ forms of sexuality” (p. 27) (which encompasses transgender behavior). In sum, gays and lesbians may have particular prejudices directed toward transgender individuals: “some gays [and lesbians] find themselves agreeing with straights who see in transgenders and assault on normative reality” (Weiss 2004; p. 42).

#### Bisexual Men and Bisexual Women: Attitudes Toward LGT Individuals

In addition to understanding heterosexual men’s and women’s attitudes and the perspectives of gays and lesbians, it is also important to understand bisexual men’s and bisexual women’s attitudes toward these issues. Studies that examine bisexual men’s and bisexual women’s attitudes often focus

on schisms between gays/lesbians and bisexual men/bisexual women. Indeed, evidence suggests that bisexual men and bisexual women sometimes separate themselves from lesbians and gays to solidify their political motivations as bisexuals. Not only are gays and lesbians sometimes opposed to bisexual politics, bisexuals may also be opposed to gay and lesbian politics. For example, bisexual political movements may encourage the inclusion of bisexuality in the current debates regarding same-gender marriages (Hutchins 1996, p. 241). This political move drives a wedge through the GLB acronym and creates a GL vs B scenario (Weiss 2004). As a result, research shows that bisexuality as a sexual identity is often misunderstood by heterosexuals, gays, and lesbians (Baumgardner 2007; Brewster and Moradi 2010; Weiss 2004; Welzer-Lang 2008). Such evidence suggests that to understand prejudices directed toward bisexual men and bisexual women, we must take into account the gender and sexual orientation of the prejudiced individual.

Bisexual men and bisexual women may also have particular attitudes toward non-bisexual transgender individuals. Weiss (2004) suggests gays and lesbians separate themselves from bisexuals and transgender individuals; however, there may also be a divide between bisexuals and transgender individuals. As Alexander and Yescavage (2003) note: “While some might think of B’s and T’s as mere “additions” tacked on to LG, we think that bisexuality and transgender have much to say to—and about—each other” (p. 4). Bisexuals may face issues that are unique from the issues that non-bisexual transgender individuals face. For example, bisexual men and bisexual women may be interested in promoting the right for multiple marriage partnerships in polyamorous relationships (Rust 2003) while non-bisexual transgender individuals may focus on gaining access to adequate health care from physicians trained in trans-specific medical practices. Furthermore, bisexual men and bisexual women may feel ostracized from the “gay and lesbian community” and may feel the need to further separate themselves from the “trans community” as a way to be/feel better connected to (and perhaps more similar to) the “gay and lesbian community” because it remains the dominant fixture in society (Alexander and Yescavage 2003). Indeed, the LGBT acronym may be useful for some, but the common vernacular is often focused on “gay rights” frequently emphasized in “gay pride parades.” Thus, bisexuals may want to align with lesbian and gay politics and may see distancing themselves from transgender politics as one way to accomplish this goal. As a result, there may be very real prejudices directed toward transgender individuals among bisexuals.

In sum, previous research provides some empirical support for: (1) understanding attitudes toward gays, lesbians, bisexual men, bisexual women, MtF, and FtM transgender individuals as separate constructs and (2) examining how the intersection of gender and sexual orientation of the

respondent affects such attitudes. From this research, there is limited support for understanding that these attitudes may have both similar and different origins. While past researchers have touched on these ideas (e.g. Logie et al. 2007), no single study has tackled the importance of understanding attitudes toward gays, lesbians, bisexual men, bisexual women, MtF, and FtM transgender individuals as separate constructs, thus, there is not enough evidence to suggest that we know anything definite about these attitudinal constructs. Moreover, studies often neglect important variables (i.e. the intersection of gender and sexual orientation of the target of prejudice and of the respondent), so little is actually known about the conclusiveness of most previous research. If we do not include important variables of interest to explore attitudes toward these groups as separate constructs, we will likely mask the important differences (and similarities) that may emerge in separate investigations. Furthermore, the complexities surrounding the development of prejudicial attitudes suggest that some of the best ways to overcome prejudices are through acknowledgement of why the specific target of prejudice is thought to be offensive, problematic, or threatening (Herek 2000; Stephan and Stephan 2000). If we are to begin to understand LGBT prejudices, we must first explore both similarities and differences in correlates of attitudes toward each of these groups. Only then can we infuse efforts to combat sexual stigma, gender nonconformity stigma, and transgender stigma with essential empirical research that is geared toward understanding targets of prejudice.

### Future Examinations of Attitudes Toward LGBT Individuals

Now that I have provided an argument for separate analyses of attitudes toward lesbians, gays, bisexual men, bisexual women, MtF, and FtM transgender individuals, what is the next logical step? After all, some studies have attempted to explore these divisions, and some have included important variables of interest. For example, Raja and Stokes’ (1998) study ( $N=322$ ) provides several key findings that demonstrate the importance of separate constructs for attitudes toward gays and lesbians and they also highlight the importance of gender as an interaction effect in attitudinal analyses. Even though they do not explore the sexual orientation of the respondent, their study speaks to many of the issues that are lacking in previous studies. Unfortunately, only a handful of studies have moved forward to investigate “modern” origins of prejudices toward LGBT individuals and the importance of the intersection of the gender and sexual orientation of the target of prejudice and of the respondent. Furthermore, very few studies have been conducted using similar predictors. Without more in depth qualitative research

as well as quantitative research with large randomly selected samples that include such variables, we cannot fully understand attitudes toward LGBT individuals.

While few studies have investigated attitudes toward LGBT individuals using similar predictors, there are four constructs that may operate similarly. First, the “contact hypothesis” that suggests that increased levels of contact have the potential to reduce biases toward a particular group (Allport 1954), has been found to be a rather universal predictor of attitudes toward LGBT persons (Smith et al. 2009). Studies show that those who know lesbians and gay men have more positive attitudes toward gays and lesbians (Basow and Johnson 2000; Herek 1988; Herek and Capitanio 1996; Herek and Glunt 1993; Hinrichs and Rosenberg 2002; Raja and Stokes 1998), those who know bisexuals have more positive attitudes toward bisexuals (Herek 2002; Eliason 1997; Mayfield and Carrubba 1996; Mohr and Rochlen 1999), and those who know transgender individuals have more positive attitudes toward transgender people (Hill and Willoughby 2005). Overall, past studies suggest that exposure to LGBT populations has rather uniform effects on attitudes toward LGBT individuals (although attitudes toward MtF and FtM individuals were not explored in any of these studies). Unfortunately, it is unclear how both the gender and sexual orientation of the target of prejudice and of the respondent may contribute these findings.

Beliefs about gender may be a second factor that predicts attitudes toward LGBT individuals in similar ways. Traditional/conservative attitudes toward men and women have been found to be related to less supportive attitudes toward “homosexuals” (Kurdek 1988; Marsiglio 1993), bisexuals (Mayfield and Carrubba 1996), and transgender individuals (Hill and Willoughby 2005). Although studies are certainly scarce, they suggest that conservative gender roles and stereotypes about men and women may have rather uniform effects on attitudes toward LGBT individuals. However, most of these studies did not include important distinctions about the gender of the target of prejudice and the gender and sexual orientation of the respondent, thus, conclusions may be provisional.

Third, beliefs about the existence of the “gay gene” and the belief that sexuality is a “choice” may affect attitudes toward LGBT individuals. While there is little scientific evidence to support the existence of the “gay gene,” many studies report that those who attribute the cause of “homosexuality” to genetics are more supportive of “homosexuals” while those who believe that “homosexuality” is a choice are less likely to support “homosexuals’ rights” and less likely to report positive attitudes toward “homosexuals” (Altemeyer 2001; Brookey 2002; Ernulf et al. 1989; Hegarty and Pratto 2001; Jayaratne et al. 2006; Matchinsky and Iverson 1996; Tygart 1999). While the biology vs. choice debate regarding bisexuality has been touched upon

(e.g. Eliason 1997; Hershberger 2001), Eliason’s (1997) research is the only study ( $N=224$ ) that documented any empirical findings. Her study showed that only about twenty-five percent of her undergraduate sample agreed that “People are probably born bisexual” (while 38 % disagreed and 36 % reported “don’t know”) (Eliason 1997, p. 147). In contrast, Leitenberg and Slavin (1983) found that a nearly half of their undergraduate sample ( $N=318$ ) was unsure about the idea that “transsexuality” may be biologically determined while less than ten percent believed that “transsexuals” were “born that way” (p. 342).

The “biological” roots of LGBT identities may affect attitudes toward LGBT individuals in two ways. First, individuals may feel more sympathetic toward others who “can’t change” who they are. Thus, if you are “born gay” you “can’t help it.” Such an argument seems to appeal to many individuals because those who attribute the causes of LGBT identities to genetics also report more positive attitudes toward LGBT individuals (e.g. Altemeyer 2001; Tygart 1999). Attribution Theory suggests that behaviors (and corresponding identities) that are seen as relatively uncontrollable (i.e. as biologically determined) are less stigmatized than behaviors and identities that are perceived to be a choice (Falomir-Pichastor and Mugny 2009; Weiner 1995). This argument, however, seems fundamentally flawed. For example, we certainly see sexism directed toward cisgender females who were “born female.” Thus, a second reason that those who believe in the “biological” roots of LGBT identities have more positive attitudes toward LGBT individuals may be the result of the dichotomous arguments that are traditionally offered in this context. For example, when given the option between “biology” or “choice” in regards to LGBT identities, individuals may opt for “biology” because they perceive it as less stigmatizing and perhaps, more supportive of LGBT individuals. They may also perceive their own sexuality as a biological construct rather than a “choice.” This type of dichotomous argument may be quite pervasive, but this type of thinking (and decision making) highlights extremes and neglects important nuances (Berlin 1990). Thus, more research is certainly needed that offers respondents with more than just “biology vs. choice” options so that we may best understand how these types of arguments may be related to LGBT attitudes.

Finally, religiosity is another factor that may be similarly related to attitudes toward LGBT persons. Studies show that negative attitudes toward “homosexuals” are correlated with higher levels of Christian religiosity (Hinrichs and Rosenberg 2002; Larsen, et al. 1980; Negy and Eisenman 2005; Selzer 1992; Tygart 1999). Further research indicates that church attendance and Christian religiosity are strong correlates of heterosexuals’ attitudes toward bisexuals (Herek 2002; Mohr and Rochlen 1999). Finally, transphobia has been found to be positively related to religious fundamentalism (Nagoshi et al.

2008). Other studies indicate that right-wing authoritarianism (a construct that is highly correlated with Christian religiosity according to Altemeyer and Hunsberger 1992) is also related to negative attitudes toward “homosexuals” (Basow and Johnson 2000), bisexuals (Herek 2002), and transgender persons (Nagoshi et al. 2008). While such findings suggest that higher levels of Christian religiosity may universally predict negative attitudes toward LGBT individuals, these studies did not adequately examine the gender of the target of prejudice or the gender and sexual orientation of the respondent as they may affect the ways that Christian religiosity is related to attitudes toward LGBT individuals. Furthermore, examinations of attitudes toward LGBT individuals in the context of religions and spiritualities that are non-Christian based might also yield informative results.

Overall, past studies have often neglected important constructs in their investigations of attitudes toward LGBT individuals. Furthermore, there is only limited support for any common predictors of attitudes toward LGBT individuals. While some evidence shows that contact with LGBT persons, liberal gender role ideologies, and belief in the biological roots of LGBT identities may contribute to more positive attitudes toward LGBT individuals, such findings should be interpreted with caution because previous studies have neglected to underscore the significance of both the gender and sexual orientation of the respondent and of the target of prejudice in their investigations.

#### New Directions in Examining Attitudes Toward LGBT Individuals: The Importance of Intersectionality

What does all of this mean in future explorations of attitudes toward LGBT individuals? First, it is imperative that both qualitative and quantitative studies utilize separate constructs to examine prejudices toward lesbians, gays, bisexual men, bisexual women, MtF, and FtM transgender individuals. If separation does not occur, it is likely that important correlates of attitudes toward these groups may be masked. Furthermore, greater efforts should be made that examine the perspectives and opinions of gays, bisexual men, bisexual women, MtF, and FtM transgender individuals, because the majority of current research has focused on heterosexuals’ opinions about LGBT individuals. (Note that this essay did not include a discussion of MtF and FtM transgender individuals’ attitudes toward LGBT individuals, suggesting a very real need for future research in this area). Second, it is important to note that there are likely important similarities in attitudes toward these groups. For example, conservative political beliefs may be universally related to attitudes toward LGBT individuals. However, at this point, both the similarities and differences in predictors of attitudes toward LGBT individuals are still unknown. It is essential that these relationships are explored in future research in

order to contribute to initiatives designed to improve support of LGBT individuals.

A third consideration in future research should be the inclusion of multiple intersectionalities (McIntosh 1993). Indeed, explorations of attitudes toward LGBT attitudes should not only consider the intersections of both gender and sexual orientation, but also the ways race/ethnicity may be related to attitudes. As Diaz et al. (2001) suggest, members of sexual minority and racial/ethnic minority groups in the United States may be affected by at least three socially oppressive factors: homophobia, poverty, and racial/ethnic discrimination. As a result, sexual minorities who are also members of racial/ethnic minority groups may be particularly stigmatized. Indeed, Fish’s (2008) investigation of the intersections of race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, and gender in the lives of Black and ethnic minority gay men and women showed that racism and heterosexism interact with one another. Her work determined that investigating multiple identities can reveal multiple oppressions and stigmas (Fish 2008). Furthermore, multiple studies suggest that sexism, racism, classism may act together to amplify sexual prejudice (Diaz et al. 2001; Fish 2008; Kertzner et al. 2009; Sandfort et al. 2007). Such research suggests that if we are to best understand attitudes toward LGBT individuals, we must consider multiple intersections of race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, and gender.

Finally, there is also a need to understand prejudices that may not be accurately illuminated in an analysis of prejudices directed toward MtF and FtM individuals. For example, people may not identify with “MtF and FtM” labels but may prefer descriptors such as “trans” or “genderqueer.” The term “genderqueer,” first published in 2002 (Nestle et al. 2002), typically refers to individuals who perceive and/or describe their gender identity as neither man nor woman, or as between or beyond genders, or as some combination of multiple genders (Green 2010). In contrast to MtF and FtM individuals who may identify with dichotomous gender structures and the desire to transition from one gender to another, genderqueer-identified individuals may reject the gender binary system and opt for more fluid conceptualizations of gender. Instead of transitioning from “him to her” as MtF individuals might prefer, genderqueer individuals might prefer to be identified with gender-neutral pronouns such as “ze” (Davidson 2007). Thus, a scale to measure prejudices directed toward genderqueer individuals may systematically differ from measurements of MtF and FtM prejudices. For example, an item on a scale designed to measure genderqueer prejudice might be “I think there is something wrong with a person who says that they are neither a man nor a woman” (item #2 on Nagoshi et al.’s 2008, Transphobia Scale, p. 530) or “I believe there are only two genders” while items on scales specifically measuring attitudes toward MtF and FtM individuals might be

“If a friend wanted to have his penis removed in order to become a woman, I would openly support him,” “I would avoid talking to a woman if I knew she had surgically created a penis and testicles” (items #5 and #16, respectively, on Hill and Willoughby’s 2005, Genderism and Transphobia Scale, p. 543) or “I believe it is wrong for females to permanently transition to live their lives as men.” Furthermore, prejudices directed toward genderqueer individuals might be based in the fear of the lack of uniform conformity to male/female and/or masculine/feminine dichotomies that genderqueer individuals may represent. This type of prejudice might be understood through responses to statements such as “It is fine with me if a person changes his/her gender from day to day” or “I believe that gender is fluid.” Such suggestions imply that transphobia may be a complex prejudice and analyses of prejudices directed toward those who identify under the “trans umbrella” should include diverse measurements that best encompass multiple conceptualizations of gender identity (Davidson 2007).

### Concluding Remarks

In 2001, Loftus found that the majority of U.S. society believed that “homosexuality” was immoral. Ten years later, U.S. President Barak Obama signed a doctrine officially ending the ban on the U.S. “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” military policy and on September 20, 2011, all gay and lesbian military members could officially serve openly (NYTimes.com 2011), although transgender military members are still closeted (Geidner 2012). It would seem that attitudes toward LGBT individuals are becoming more positive, but this seems like a slow process. Past studies provide some support for understanding the nuanced differences (and similarities) in attitudes toward LGBT individuals. It is quite exciting to think that future research might be able to uncover common predictors of prejudices toward LGBT individuals. Equally exciting is the idea that studies may reveal *different* predictors of such attitudes. However, more research is certainly needed that explores the intersections of the gender and sexual orientation of the respondent and the target of prejudice.

Overall, in this essay I have emphasized the importance of utilizing separate analyses to explore attitudes toward lesbians, gays, bisexual men, bisexual women, MtF, and FtM transgender individuals. Examining predictors of attitudes toward LGBT individuals may uncover findings that we can use to learn how to encourage positivity toward these groups. Specifically, there may be ways that empirical research can inform intervention practices designed to combat specific prejudices aimed at individual targets (Parker and Aggleton 2003). In order to promote LGBT rights and end sexual prejudice and discrimination at micro and macro levels, we must intervene through individual level efforts

and structural (law/policy) changes (Herek 2007; Parker and Aggleton 2003). As Parker and Aggleton (2003) suggest, confrontations of stigma and discrimination need to be framed to address both individuals and groups. To do so, future research might underscore the importance of investigating attitudes toward LGBT individuals as different (but likely related) prejudices. Such research can (1) inform individual level programs designed to reduce prejudice, (2) contribute to policy-oriented research, and (3) potentially affect structural (law/policy) changes (Herek 2007; Parker and Aggleton 2003).

**Acknowledgements** I would like to thank the editors and the anonymous reviewers for their guidance with this essay.

### Appendix A. Definitions

While it is certain that many of these “definitions” are changing constantly and may offer debate themselves, I feel it is important to offer a working definition of these terms as a way to discuss the issues relevant to this essay. Presented in alphabetical order:

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Biphobia       | A fear of those in the bisexual community (see Weiss 2004; Welzer-Lang 2008). Biphobia can be present in anyone: heterosexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, transgender, etc.  |
| Bisexual Man   | Those who self-identify as a “man” as their gender category who are sexually, romantically, physically, and/or emotionally attracted to both men and women. The sex (male/female) of these individuals may or may not align with their gender category (man/woman). This definition is limited, as it does not provide an adequate space for queer or genderqueer individuals (see Nestle et al. 2002). It is important to note that “bisexual” is a term that has many negative connotations and is therefore limited as a self-selected category by which individuals define themselves (see MacDonald 1981; Weinberg et al. 2009). |
| Bisexual Woman | Those who self-identify as a “woman” as their gender category who are sexually, romantically, physically, and/or emotionally attracted to both men and women. The sex (male/female) of these individuals may or may not align with their gender category (man/  |

	woman). Some limitations are noted above (see “Bisexual Man”).			category (man/woman).
Cisgender	A label for individuals who have a match between the sex they were assigned at birth, their bodies, and their personal gender identity (Schilt and Westbrook 2009).	Heteronormativity		The assumption that it is “normal” to be heterosexual (see Jackson 2006).
		Heterosexism		The bias that heterosexuality is “the only way to be” and those that are not heterosexual are somehow “wrong” (see Hill 2009; Jackson 2006).
Cisnormativity	The assumption that it is “normal” to be cisgender (Schilt and Westbrook 2009).	Homophobia		A fear of those in the gay and/or lesbian community (see Herek 2004). Homophobia can be present in anyone: heterosexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, transgender, etc.
FtM	Transgender individuals who have transitioned or are currently transitioning from having female/woman sex and/or gender characteristics to having male/man sex and/or gender characteristics (see Gerhardstein and Anderson 2010).	Lesbian		Those who self-identify as a “woman” as their gender category who are sexually, romantically, physically, and/or emotionally attracted to women. The sex (male/female) of these individuals may or may not align with their gender category (man/woman). As noted above, it is certainly true that some women who are attracted to women identify as “gay” (Kasindorf 1993).
Gender	A socialized construct that may or may not be associated with an individual’s sex organs. I include the categories of “man” and “woman” as an individual’s “gender” in this manuscript. It is important to note that this definition is also somewhat biased and limited, as it does not offer a space for genderqueer individuals (see Nestle et al. 2002).	MtF		Transgender individuals who have transitioned or are currently transitioning from having male/man sex and/or gender characteristics to having female/woman sex and/or gender characteristics (see Gerhardstein and Anderson 2010).
Genderqueer	Individuals who perceive and/or describe their gender identity as neither man nor woman, or as between or beyond genders, or as some combination of multiple genders (see Green 2010).	Sexual Prejudice		Negative attitudes toward an individual because of her or his sexual orientation (Herek 2004). According to Herek (2004), sexual prejudice conveys no assumptions about the motivations underlying negative attitudes, locates the study of attitudes concerning sexual orientation within the broader context of social psychological research on prejudice, and avoids value judgments about such attitudes (p. 19).
Gay	Those who self-identify as a “man” as their gender category who are sexually, romantically, physically, and/or emotionally attracted to men. The sex (male/female) of these individuals may or may not align with their gender category (man/woman). This is limited, as it is true that many identify as “gay” that do not fit this definition, for example “gay woman” has been used (Kasindorf 1993).	Sex		A biological construct, usually assigned at birth in relation to an individual’s visible genitalia. I include the categories of “male” and “female” as an individual’s “sex” in this manuscript. This definition is biased and limited, as it does not offer a space for intersex individuals (see Preves 2003).
Heterosexual	Those who self-identify as a “man” as their gender category who are sexually, romantically, physically, and/or emotionally attracted to women and those who self-identify as a “woman” as their gender category who are sexually, romantically, physically, and/or emotionally attracted to men. The sex (male/female) of these individuals may or may not align with their gender	Sexual Stigma		As defined by Herek (2007): “sexual stigma” is negative regard, inferior status, and relative powerlessness that



- society collectively accords to any non-heterosexual behavior, identity, relationship, or community. Sexual stigma is socially shared knowledge about homosexuality's devalued status in society (p. 906–7).
- Transgender** Working from Schilt and Westbrook's (2009) definition of "cisgender," I use "transgender" as a label for individuals who do not have a match between the sex they were assigned at birth, their bodies, and their personal gender identity (see also Grossman et al. 2005).
- Transphobia** A fear of those in the transgender and/or transsexual community (both MtF and FtM) (see Nagoshi et al. 2008). Transphobia can be present in anyone: heterosexual, bisexual, gay, etc.
- Transsexual** I only use "transsexual" when citing other researchers who used this term in their studies. There is some contention in the trans community regarding the term "transsexual" because it may refer to certain biases related to those who have the ability to receive/pay for surgeries and those who do not have such resources (see Roen 2002; Serano 2007).
- Trans Umbrella** This term describes the conceptualization of transgender as an umbrella that encompasses a wide range of people who play with, disrupt, or blend Euro-American cultural beliefs about binary sex and gender (see Davidson 2007, p. 60).
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