

# HOMOPHOBIA AND GENDER ROLES

Homophobia and Beliefs about Gender Roles

By

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HONORS THESIS

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**Dedication**

For Dr. Tiffany Chenneville, Dr. Jennifer O'Brien, and Dr. Thomas Smith whose guidance and expertise resulted in an idea, a thesis, and hopefully a publication that I am so proud to call our own; and to my family, Oscar, Sarah, and Rachel who encouraged me and constantly reminded me what I was doing was important.

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between homophobia, use of homophobic epithets and gender beliefs among college students. Undergraduate psychology students at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg (N=273) completed an anonymous online survey containing four scales: (a) Demographic Scale (b) Homophobia Scale (c) Traditional Beliefs about Gender and Gender Identity Scale (TBGI) and the (d) Homophobic Content Agent Target Scale (HCAT). Results suggest that homophobic beliefs and the use of homophobic epithets are low among college students. Further, traditional beliefs about gender roles were relatively low among college students. However, there was a significant relationship between homophobic beliefs, beliefs about gender roles, and use of homophobic epithets. Results also suggest some differences in homophobic beliefs, traditional beliefs about gender roles, and use of homophobic epithets based on demographic variables (e.g., religion, sexual orientation, marital status). These findings have important implications with regard to better understanding homophobic beliefs and behavior.

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### Statement of the Problem

Stigma related to homosexuality persists, and homophobic epithets (e.g., “That’s so gay”) commonly are used as part of everyday jargon. According to Woodford and colleagues (2012), the word “gay” and the phrase “that’s so gay” are common and popular expressions of heterosexist language that are used frequently today to describe something as stupid. It is unclear whether the use of homophobic epithets is related to negative beliefs about homosexuality (i.e., homophobia) (Woodford, Howell, Silverschanz, & Yu, 2012). According to a recent study, “That’s so gay” has become so ubiquitous that it often is ignored across educational settings, including college (Woodford et al., 2012). Kimmel and Mahler (2003) described the phrase “that’s so gay” to be the single most common insult in any middle or high school in America. In addition, homophobic epithets are generally negative regardless of their direct relation to feelings of homophobia (Woodford, Howell, Silverschanz, & Yu, 2012). According to Kimmel and Mahler (2003), research has shown that homophobic beliefs serve as the foundation of heterosexual masculinity. Therefore, homophobic epithets may not be indicative of an irrational fear of people who are gay but used to demonstrate heterosexual masculinity to others (i.e., a way for a man to make sure others do not assume he is gay). Previous research has touched on gender socialization and gender roles, particularly on males and homophobic attitudes (Costa & Davies, 2012). For example, Carnaghi, Maass, and Fasoli (2011) examined the gender beliefs of males using the Traditional Beliefs about Gender and Gender Identity Scale. This research notwithstanding, the impact of beliefs about gender roles on homophobia and/or the use of homophobic epithets are unknown.



## Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to answer the following questions:

- 1) How common are homophobic beliefs among, and how often are homophobic epithets used by, college students?
- 2) What gender beliefs do college students hold?
- 3) What is the relationship between homophobia/use of homophobic epithets and beliefs about gender roles?

## Definitions

The following terms are used throughout this document. The definitions below, listed in alphabetical order, are intended to enhance the reader's understanding.

Covert homophobia is concealed, inconspicuous, or disguised unreasoning fear towards homosexuals or homosexuality.

Gender identity is one's own perception or sense of being male or female.

Gender roles are a set of expectations held by society about the ways in which men and women are supposed to behave based on their gender.

Homophobia refers to an unreasonable fear of or antipathy towards homosexuals or homosexuality.

Homophobic epithets are words, phrases, or expressions that are used in contempt, abuse or to express hostility towards homosexuality. Examples include *dyke*, *fag*, *homo*, *queer*, "that's so gay", etc.

LGBT refers to people who identify as being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. LGBT is used throughout this document except where referencing research that specifies this population differently (e.g., LGBTQ or GLB).

Overt homophobia is plain, apparent, or conspicuous unreasonable fear towards homosexuals or homosexuality.

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of the Literature

This chapter will include four major sections: (a) an overview of the relevant issues; (b) a review of the literature in the area of homophobia and homophobic epithets; (c) a review of the literature in the area of gender role stereotypes; and (d) a review of the literature examining the relationship between homophobia and beliefs about gender roles.

#### Overview

Estimates of the number of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) vary. According to Savin-Williams (2009), Kinsey estimated in the 1950s, that 10% of the population identifies as homosexual and more recent estimates are lower. According to Ellis, Robb, and Burke (2005), less than 4% of males and less than 2% of females identify as being non-heterosexual. Potential problems with these estimates include the fact that data was based on self-report. Specifically, four questions pertaining to sexual orientation were included on a longer mother-offspring questionnaire. Researchers wanted to see if prenatal factors had any effects on offspring to include their sexual orientation. It is important to note that this questionnaire was distributed between 1991 and 1997, which was a transitory period of time with regard to emerging acceptance of homosexuality in our society.

Until the 1990s, there was a greater consensus among Americans with regard to their disapproval of homosexuality. In recent years, Americans have become more accepting of homosexual and other non-traditional relationships (Kozloski, 2012). Legislative changes such as the 2011 repeal of the “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” military policy and the passing of laws in some states allowing for same sex marriage or civil unions reflect this change in opinion (Whitehead & Baker, 2012). An increase in acceptance of homosexuality in society has prompted these

changes and these changes have, in turn, further increased tolerance by many. Despite this shift, homosexuality related stigma persists. Homophobic slander and the use of homophobic epithets is not a new phenomenon. However, the use of homophobic epithets may or may not be related to homophobic beliefs. Sometimes homophobic epithets are simply used as a general negative adjective even though the underlying message being conveyed is not anti-gay (Woodford et al., 2012). According to Poteat and Espelage (2005), survey respondents explained that using homophobic epithets was not always related to sexual orientation but, rather, to make the other person feel less masculine. Phrases such as “That’s so gay”, which are used regularly, may be used as a derogatory comment directed towards someone who identifies as LGBT, but also may be directed toward heterosexuals (Woodford et al., 2012). Further, people who identify as LGBT may use epithets to express or identify with an in-crowd or in-group gay culture (Woodford et al., 2012). Therefore, the extent to which homophobic epithets relate to homophobic beliefs is unknown. Further, the relationship between homophobia and gender role stereotypes is unknown.

### **Homophobia**

Overt homophobia is not subtle. Rather, it involves conscious awareness of one’s behavior. According to Hom (2008), overt homophobia includes the semantic use of epithets, meaning the epithet is intentionally derogatory in any context and in any situation. As Woodford and colleagues (2012) pointed out “heterosexual students may use the expression as an intentional slight against a GLB person, someone perceived to be GLB, or even a heterosexual peer” (p. 429).

Covert homophobia is much more subtle than overt homophobia. People who engage in covert homophobia probably do not realize they are being offensive or, even if they do, are

expressing their homophobic beliefs in a milder fashion. Hom (2008) refers to covert homophobia as the pragmatic use of epithets, meaning the epithet is used in a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes, not just in a derogatory sense. For example, covert homophobia might take the form of using the term “them” when referring to people who identify as LGBT. When people speak or act as if people who identify as LGBT are not equal to themselves or are extremely different, they are engaging in covert homophobia. Woodford and colleagues (2012) illustrated covert homophobia by discussing epithets. For example, “that’s so gay” is almost universally used and can have different definitions such as “stupid” or “weird”.

Leets (2002) examined how individuals experience antigay language, or hate speech, regardless of the intended meaning behind the language (i.e., even if the person saying “That’s so gay” is not intending to be offensive). Using a questionnaire to examine responses to harmful homosexual slurs, Leets (2002) found that individuals who were on the receiving end of these epithets or hate speech experienced both short and long term consequences similar to other traumatic experiences. While often passive in their responses to antigay language, the negative effects were enduring and, in fact, many individuals pursued help after the experience. The use of homophobic epithets or hate speech can be detrimental to individuals as shown in the patterns described by Leets (2002).

According to Poteat, Mereish, DiGiovanni, and Koenig (2011), the use of homophobic epithets and homophobic victimization is associated with mental health and academic concerns for youth who are LGBT. Although homophobic victimization significantly affects individuals who identify as LGBT, there were universal negative effects on school belonging. Specifically, Poteat et al. (2011) described a lower sense of school belonging for all groups studied to include both homosexual and heterosexual students.

### **Gender Role Stereotypes**

Research on gender role stereotypes has included definitions of what is socially acceptable with regard to gender roles and how gender roles are expressed to conform to gender identity. According to O'Neil (2008), gender role conflict may exist, particularly among males where gender roles are based on, among other factors, constructs such as restrictive emotionality, power and competition issues, and obsession with achievement and success. Traditionally, middle or junior high school was considered to be the time when the first signs of gender socialization and popularity appeared. However, according to a study conducted by Adler, Kless, and Adler (1992), elementary school is the starting place for gender socialization. They observed elementary aged girls obtaining status by their appearance, to include clothing and grooming, their peer group, and romantic successes with popular boys. Boys observed in elementary school were demonstrating what might be considered traditional gender roles such as distancing themselves from academics and things that could be perceived as nerdy or feminine and challenging authority figures to appear cool, tough, or dominating (Adler et al., 1992). Different from boys, girls were shown to not only comply with rules but also to enforce them on others. Boys were observed to push to the limit in many areas of life (e.g., sports). Competition was high among boys as was the expression of a daring attitude. Girls were observed to focus more on domestic and maternal roles.

### **Relationship between Homophobia and Beliefs about Gender Roles**

The relationship between beliefs about gender roles and homosexuality has been studied in several different ways. Two key concepts are related to discussions of homosexuality: egalitarian and prejudice (Dasgupta & Rivera, 2006). Egalitarianism refers to the belief that there should be equality for every person, and prejudice refers to unfavorable and/or unreasonable

feelings or thoughts about a certain group. Dasgupta and Rivera (2006), in reference to antigay behavior, studied automatic prejudice and discriminatory behavior and its relationship with conscious egalitarian beliefs and behavior control. Results indicated that men held more heterogeneous beliefs about gender whereas women were more egalitarian beliefs. In the absence of conscious egalitarian beliefs and behavior control, both sexes exhibited biased prejudiced behavior (Dasgupta & Rivera, 2006).

In a longitudinal study examining the use of homophobic epithets over time, 188 boys and 192 girls were observed for 2 years from grades 7-12 (Poteat, O'Dwyer, & Mereish, 2012). Results revealed that the rate at which boys used and were the victims of homophobic epithets increased over time (Poteat, O'Dwyer, & Mereish, 2012). This was not true for girls; the rate at which girls used and were the victims of homophobic epithets decreased over time (Poteat, O'Dwyer, & Mereish, 2012). The authors suggested that gender socialization may attribute to these differences.

According to Poteat and colleagues (2005), homophobic behaviors such as homophobic epithets can be directed at people who identify as LGBT *or* heterosexuals. Gender roles are thought to be the reason why some people use homophobic epithets. That is, it is not sexual orientation, but deviations from typical masculine and feminine gender role expectations that illicit homophobic attitudes and associated behaviors to include the use of homophobic epithets (Poteat & Espelage 2005). For example, Poteat et al. (2012) found that heterosexual males used homophobic epithets to assert dominance, enforce gender roles, or to bully others.

### **Purpose of Study**

Despite a greater acceptance of people who identify as LGBT (Kozloski, 2012), the use of homophobic epithets persists (Woodford et al., 2012). Research designed to examine the

meaning behind the use of homophobic epithets and whether or not there is a relationship between epithet use and gender role stereotypes is lacking. The purpose of this study was threefold: (1) to assess the rates of homophobia and use of homophobic epithets among college students; (2) to assess gender role beliefs among college students; and (3) to determine if there is a relationship between homophobia, the use of homophobic epithets, and beliefs about gender roles.



## CHAPTER 3

### Method

#### Participants

Participants included 273 undergraduate students age 18 or older enrolled in courses at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg (USFSP). Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained from the University of South Florida prior to data collection.

Participants consisted of 237 (86.8%) females, 35 (12.8%) males, and 1 participant (0.4%) who wished not to answer. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 61 with a mean age of 24.08 (SD=6.704); however, it is important to note that only 165 participants reported their age, the reasons for which are unknown. The majority of participants were White (66.7%) and from the Southeast (64.8%). Most were unmarried (81.3%) and identified as heterosexual (87.9%). The majority of participants reported their religious affiliation to be Christian (61.2%). Most participants were Juniors (49.8%) or Seniors (40.3%) in college. Please see Table 1 for more detailed demographic information.

#### Measures

Measures included (a) a demographic scale, (b) the Homophobia Scale, (c) the Traditional Beliefs about Gender and Gender Identity Scale (TBGI), and (d) the Homophobic Content Agent Target Scale (HCAT).

The demographic scale included 13 items designed to illicit information about each participant's age, gender<sup>1</sup>, race/ethnicity, geographic region, sexual orientation, marital status, religious preference, and year in college. In addition, participants were asked how often they have said or heard the expression "That's so gay" and what they thought this expression meant.

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<sup>1</sup> Participants were asked to report "gender" and not biological sex.

The Homophobia Scale (HS) was designed to measure the cognitive, affective and behavioral components of homophobia (Wright, Bernat, & Adams, 1999). The HS contains three factors: (1) *Behavioral/Negative Affect*, which assesses negative affect and avoidance behaviors; (2) *Affect/Behavioral Aggressive*, which assesses aggressive behavior and negative affect; and (3) *Cognitive Negativism*, which assesses negative attitudes and cognition (Wright, Bernat & Adams, 1999). There are 25 Likert scale items on the HS with responses ranging from (1) strongly agree to (5) strongly disagree. Higher scores on the HS indicate higher levels of homophobia; please note that some items are reverse coded. Examples of the types of items included on this scale are “If I discovered a friend was gay I would end the friendship” and “Organizations which promote gay rights are necessary.” A copy of the HS and scoring instructions are included in Appendix A.

The Traditional Beliefs about Gender and Gender Identity Scale (TBGI) is a measure designed to assess individual differences on two subscales (Dasgupta & Rivera, 2006). The first subscale, Traditional Beliefs about Gender (TBG), is designed to determine if people endorse traditional prescriptive gender norms in various life domains while the second subscale, Traditional Beliefs about Gender Identity (TBI), focuses on the degree to which people are invested in emphasizing their heterosexual identity to others and to themselves. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each statement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. Examples of the types of items included on this scale are “A woman needs the support of a man to advance professionally” and “I would feel comfortable attending social functions where the majority of people are homosexuals of my own sex.” A copy of the TBGI is included in Appendix B.

The Homophobic Content Agent Target Scale (HCAT) measures the frequency in which

people act as agents of homophobic verbal content and the frequency in which people are the targets of homophobic verbal content within the time frame of a week (Poteat & Espelage, 2005). The HCAT includes ten items across two subscales: Agent and Target. For example, on the Agent factor, in response to the statement, “Some people call each other names such as gay, lesbo, fag, etc.”, respondents are asked to indicate the number of times they said these thing within the previous week and to whom (e.g., a friend, someone they knew). On the Target factor, participants are asked how many times in the last week they were called these things by other people and by whom (e.g., someone who did not like them, someone who thought they were gay). Participants were asked to answer from (1) never to (5) 7 or more times, referring to the number of times they said homophobic verbal content or were called homophobic verbal content. A copy of the HCAT is included in Appendix C.

### **Procedure**

The survey was administered via Qualtrics online survey software. Instructors provided a link to the survey to undergraduate students enrolled in courses at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg. Only instructors who agreed to offer students extra credit as an incentive to participate were provided with the survey link to distribute in their classes. Prior to entering the survey, the purpose and description of the study was presented to participants. Participants were notified that, by entering the survey, they were providing consent to participate. No identifying information was collected, and all responses were completely anonymous. Data was transferred from Qualtrics into Excel and then SPSS for data analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis procedures included correlations between the demographic scale, the Homophobia Scale, the Traditional Beliefs about Gender and Gender Identity Scale and the

Homophobic Content Agent Target Scale. One-way ANOVAs were conducted for each subscale with gender, race/ethnicity, geographic region, sexual orientation, marital status, religious preference, and year in college as between-subjects factors. Significant effects were further investigated using Fisher's LSD post-hoc comparisons. Alpha was set at .05.

## CHAPTER 4

### Results

#### Homophobia Scale

Scores on the Homophobia Scale (HS) ranged from 0 – 100 with subscales ranging as follows: (a) the Behavioral/Negative Affect scores ranged from 0 – 40; (b) the Affect/Behavioral Aggression subscale ranged from 0 – 40; and (c) the subscale Cognitive Negativism subscale ranged from 0-20. Higher scores across scales indicate higher levels of homophobia and lower scores indicate lower levels of homophobia. The overall mean score on the HS for this sample was 5.13 indicating low levels of homophobia. The mean score on the Behavioral/Negative Affect subscale was 5.78, indicating that most participants did not report negative affect or avoidance behaviors toward people who identify as homosexual. The mean score on the Affect/Behavioral Aggressive subscale was 4.99, indicating that most participants did not endorse negative behaviors, aggression, or negative affect related to people who identify as homosexual. The mean score on the Cognitive Negativism subscale was 4.65, indicating that most participants did not have negative attitudes or cognitions regarding individuals who identify as homosexual.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted with religion (Agnostic, Atheist, Islam, Judaism, Christian) as a between-subjects factor. Results indicate that religion had a significant effect on responses to the Behavioral/Negative Affect subscale of the HS,  $F(6, 266)=2.81, p<.05$  (please see Figure 1). Post hoc analyses suggest that participants who identified their religious affiliation to be Agnostic ( $M = 4.65, SD = 3.74$ ) had significantly lower scores on the Behavioral/Negative Affect subscale than participants who identified their religious affiliation to be Islamic ( $M = 13.66, SD = 13.72, p = .001$ ) or Judaism ( $M = 12.00, SD = 18.13, p = .019$ ). Participants who identified as Atheist ( $M = 5.26, SD = 5.69$ ) scored significantly lower on the factor

Behavioral/Negative Affect than participants who identified as Islamic ( $p = .003$ ) or Judaism ( $p = .042$ ). Participants who identified as Christian ( $M = 5.81$ ,  $SD = 5.92$ ) also scored significantly lower on the Behavioral/Negative Affect subscale than participants who reported their religious affiliation to be Islamic ( $p = .002$ ) and Judaism ( $p = .042$ ).

Results also indicated that religion had a significant effect on responses to the Affect/Behavioral Aggression subscale of the HS,  $F(6, 266)=3.04$ ,  $p<.05$  (please see Figure 2). Participants who identified as Agnostic ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = 3.30$ ) on the Affect/Behavioral Aggression subscale scored significantly lower than participants who identified as Christian ( $M = 5.26$ ,  $SD = 5.33$ ,  $p = .028$ ) and Islamic ( $M = 11.5$ ,  $SD = 8.85$ ,  $p = .001$ ). Participants who identified as Atheist ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = 4.09$ ) on the Affect/Behavioral Aggression subscale also scored significantly lower than participants who identified as Islamic ( $p = .001$ ).

A one-way ANOVA was also conducted with sexual orientation (bisexual, homosexual, heterosexual) as a between-subjects factor. Results indicate that sexual orientation had a significant effect on responses to the Affect/Behavioral Aggression subscale of the HS,  $F(3,269)=8.50$ ,  $p<.001$  (please see Figure 3). Post hoc analyses suggest that participants who identified as bisexual ( $M = 2.96$ ,  $SD = 3.35$ ) had significantly lower scores on the Affect/Behavioral Aggression subscale than participants who identified as heterosexual ( $M = 5.13$ ,  $SD = 5.26$ ,  $p = .042$ ). Participants who identified as homosexual ( $M = .80$ ,  $SD = .83$ ) scored marginally lower on the Affect/Behavioral Aggression subscale than participants who identified as heterosexual ( $p = .059$ ).

One-way ANOVAs were also conducted with gender, region, ethnicity, marital status, and year in college as between-subjects factors. No significant differences were found.

### **Traditional Beliefs about Gender and Gender Identity Scale**

Scores on the Traditional Beliefs about Gender and Gender Identity scale (TBGI) ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree) with higher scores indicating more traditional beliefs about gender and gender identity. The total mean total score among this sample was 2.87, indicating that, on average, participants did not endorse traditional beliefs about gender and gender identity. On the Traditional Beliefs about Gender (TBG) subscale, the mean score was 2.54, indicating that, on average, most participants did not agree entirely with traditional gender norms. On the Traditional Beliefs about Gender Identity (TBI) subscale, the mean score was 3.25, indicating that, on average, participants did not feel a need to emphasize their heterosexuality more to themselves and others, although this score was higher than the other subscales of the TBGI.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted with sexual orientation (bisexual, homosexual, heterosexual) as a between-subjects factor. Results indicate that sexual orientation had a significant effect on responses to the TBG subscale of the TBGI,  $F(3, 269)=10.13, p<.001$  (please see Figure 4) Post hoc analyses suggest that participants who identified as bisexual ( $M = 2.26, SD = .81$ ) had a significantly lower mean score than participants who identified as heterosexual. Participants who identified as homosexual ( $M = 1.4, SD = .47$ ) had a significantly lower mean score than participants who identified as heterosexual ( $M = 2.57, SD = .94, p = .017$ ). Also, participants who identified as bisexual ( $M = 2.15, SD = .93$ ) had significantly lower scores than those who identified as heterosexual ( $p = .037$ )

Results also indicated that sexual orientation had a significant effect on responses to the TBI subscale of the TBGI,  $F(3, 269)=10.91, p<.001$  (please see Figure 5). Participants who identified as bisexual ( $M = 2.37, SD = .86$ ) or homosexual ( $M = 1.26, SD = .26$ ) had significantly

lower scores than those who identified as heterosexual ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ;  $p$ 's = .001).

A one-way ANOVA also was conducted with marital status as a between-subjects factor. Results indicate that marital status had a significant effect on responses to the TBG subscale of the TBGI,  $F(4, 267) = 2.43$ ,  $p < .05$  (please see Figure 6). Post hoc analyses suggest that participants who identified as married ( $M = 2.81$ ,  $SD = .942$ ) scored significantly higher on the TBG than participants who identified as separated ( $M = 1.00$ ,  $SD = .00$ ;  $p = .012$ ), divorced ( $M = 2.71$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ;  $p = .022$ ), or not married ( $M = 2.52$ ,  $SD = .97$ ;  $p = .031$ ).

One-way ANOVAs were also conducted with gender, region, ethnicity, religion, and year in college as between-subjects factors. No significant differences were found.

### **Homophobic Content Agent Target Scale (HCAT)**

Scores on the Homophobic Content Agent Target Scale (HCAT) ranged from 5 – 25 with higher scores indicating a greater number of times that participants were either the Agent or Target of homophobic verbal content. On the Agent factor of the HCAT, the mean score was 5.95, indicating that, on average, most participants had not called others names involving homophobic verbal content during the previous week. On the Target factor of the HCAT, the mean score was 5.65, indicating that, on average, most participants had not been called homophobic verbal content very many times within the prior week.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted with religion (Agnostic, Atheist, Islam, Judaism, Christian) as a between-subjects factor. Results indicate that religion had a significant effect on responses to the Agent factor of the HCAT,  $F(6, 237) = 19.21$ ,  $p < .001$  (please see Figure 7). Post hoc analyses suggest that participants that identified their religion as Islamic ( $M = 15.33$ ,  $SD = 11.56$ ) scored significantly higher on the Agent factor of the HCAT than participants who identified their religion as Agnostic ( $M = 5.61$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ,  $p = .001$ ), Atheist ( $M = 5.47$ ,  $SD = .80$ ,



$p = .001$ ), Christian ( $M = 5.77$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ,  $p = .001$ ), or Judaism ( $M = 7.5$ ,  $SD = 5.00$ ,  $p = .001$ ).

Results indicate that religion also had a significant effect on responses to the Target factor of the HCAT,  $F(3, 237)=11.49$ ,  $p<.001$  (please see Figure 8). Post hoc analyses suggest that participants that identified their religion as Islamic ( $M = 11.33$ ,  $SD = 9.37$ ) scored significantly higher than participants who identified their religion as Agnostic ( $M = 5.37$ ,  $SD = .66$ ,  $p = .001$ ), Atheist ( $M = 5.88$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ,  $p = .001$ ), Christian ( $M = 5.54$ ,  $SD = 1.17$ ,  $p = .001$ ), or Judaism ( $M = 5.50$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ,  $p = .001$ ).

A one-way ANOVA was conducted with marital status (married, separated, divorced, widowed, and not married) as a between- subjects factor. Results indicate that marital status had a significant effect on responses to the Agent factor of the HCAT,  $F(4, 238)=4.26$   $p<.05$  (please see Figure 9). Post hoc analyses suggest that participants who identified as being divorced ( $M = 9.0$ ,  $SD = 7.75$ ) scored significantly higher on the Agent factor subscale of the HCAT than participants who identified as widowed ( $M = 5.00$ ,  $SD = .00$ ;  $p = .018$ ), married ( $M = 5.40$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ;  $p = .001$ ), or not married ( $M = 5.88$ ,  $SD = 2.19$ ;  $p = .001$ ).

Results also indicated that marital status had a significant effect on responses to the Target factor of the HCAT,  $F(4, 238)=6.45$ ,  $p<.001$  (please see Figure 10). Participants who identified as being divorced ( $M = 8.36$ ,  $SD = 7.5$ ) scored significantly higher on the Target factor of the HCAT than participants who identified as married ( $M = 5.20$ ,  $SD = .65$ ;  $p = .001$ ), separated ( $M = 5.00$ ,  $SD = .00$ ;  $p = .019$ ), widowed ( $M = 5.33$ ,  $SD = .57$ ;  $p = .013$ ), or not married ( $M = 5.57$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ;  $p = .001$ ).

One-way ANOVAs also were conducted with gender, region, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and year in college as between-subjects factors. No significant differences were found.

**Relationship between Scales**

All subscales of the Homophobia Scale (HS) were shown to have significant positive correlations with all subscales of the Traditional Beliefs about Gender and Gender Identity Scale (TBGI),  $p < .001$ . Both subscales of the Homophobic Content Agent Target Scale (HCAT) were shown to have significant positive correlations with the Traditional Beliefs about Gender (TBG) subscale of the TBGI,  $p < .001$ . All subscales of the HS were shown to have significant positive correlations with both subscales of the HCAT,  $p < .001$ . Please see Table 2 for a report of all correlation coefficients.

**CHAPTER 5**

**Discussion**

**Homophobic Beliefs and Use of Epithets**

Results from this study suggest that homophobic beliefs are relatively uncommon among college students. This finding may reflect increasing acceptance of homosexuality in our society; as Kozloski (2010) pointed out, we have seen greater acceptance of homosexuality since the 1990s. Despite low rates of homophobic overall, there were significant differences in homophobic beliefs based on religious affiliation. Individuals who reported their religious affiliation to be Agnostic, Atheist, or Christian expressed less negative affect toward individuals who identify as homosexual than individuals who reported their religious affiliation to be Islamic or Judaism. Individuals who identified as Atheist or Agnostic demonstrated less social avoidance or behavioral acting out toward individuals who are homosexual than individuals who identified as Christian or Islamic. The latter finding is not surprising given that neither Christianity, nor Islam condones homosexuality. According to a qualitative study of 20 homosexual respondents (10 females, 10 males) using semi-structured interviews conducted by Subhi and Geelan (2012), many conflicts about sexuality exist among Christians given that homosexuality is deemed sinful and incompatible with the Christian religion. Respondents in the Subhi and Geelan (2012) study described emotional effects related to such conflicts to include, but not limited to, depression, self-blame, guilt, and alienation.

There also were significant differences in homophobic beliefs based on sexual orientation with individuals who identified as homosexual or bisexual expressing less negative affect and behavioral aggression toward homosexuals than those who identified as heterosexual. This is not surprising given that individuals who identify as homosexual or bisexual are not

likely to express negative beliefs toward their own in-group.

Results from this study suggest that the use of homophobic epithets are relatively uncommon among college students, which is inconsistent with Woodford et al.'s (2012) finding that homophobic epithets were common among college students. However, there were differences in the use of homophobic epithets based on religious affiliation. Interestingly, results suggest that individuals who described themselves as Islamic were more likely than any other religious group to be the agents and targets of homophobic epithets, meaning they were the most likely to be the perpetrators and victims of homophobic name calling with homophobic content. This may reflect religious beliefs. Results from a Turkish study on homosexuality, where Islam is a common religion, found a relationship between religious beliefs and negative attitudes toward homosexuality (Sarac, 2012). This finding also may reflect the relationship between the use of homophobic epithets and traditional gender beliefs, which are common in some cultures. According to Sakalli (2002), Turkey is a male dominated culture where traditional gender roles are valued and strict norms for females and males endorsed.

Interestingly, there also was a difference in the use of homophobic epithets based on marital status. People who were divorced were more likely to be the targets of homophobic verbal content than those who were married, separated, widowed, or not married. Literature in this area is lacking, making it difficult to determine the possible reasons underlying this finding. It may simply be that people who are divorced are viewed more negatively. Alternatively, given that some homophobic verbal content does not mean anything derogatory even if it is still offensive (Leets, 2002, Woodford et al., 2012), this finding may be dubious.

### **Gender Beliefs**

Overall, results from this study suggest that college students do not hold strong traditional

beliefs about gender roles or gender identity. While this sample was predominantly female, there were no significant differences between men and women with regard to beliefs about gender roles and gender identity, which is inconsistent with Dasgupta and Rivera's (2006) finding that men are more likely to hold heterogeneous beliefs about gender roles while women are more likely to hold egalitarian gender beliefs. However, there were differences in traditional beliefs about gender roles and gender identity based upon sexual orientation. Traditional gender beliefs and traditional beliefs about gender identity were lower among individuals who identified as homosexual. Heterosexuals, on the other hand, were more likely to hold traditional beliefs about gender and gender identity and also had a greater need to emphasize their sexuality to themselves and others. This findings is not surprising given that individuals who identify as homosexual are, by the very nature of their expressed sexual identity, not conforming to traditional gender role stereotypes.

There also were significant differences in traditional beliefs about gender roles and gender identity based upon marital status. People who were married endorsed more traditional beliefs about gender and gender identity than participants who were divorced, widowed, or not married. It is difficult to determine whether or not people with more traditional beliefs about gender and gender identity are more likely to get married or whether marriage, in and of itself, alters beliefs about gender and gender identity. According to Guilbert, Vacc, and Pasley (2000), married females reported traditional beliefs about gender roles to be a factor related to marital instability. This was not true among men in this study. Men attributed other factors to be related to marital instability. Guilbert, Vacc, and Pasley's (2000) findings suggest that perhaps females are more concerned about gender roles and that egalitarian beliefs among married women may be a stressor in marriage, even when both males and females hold egalitarian beliefs.

**Relationship between Homophobia, Gender Beliefs, and the Use of Homophobic Epithets**

Despite low levels of homophobia, low rates of homophobic epithet use, and predominantly non-conforming gender beliefs among the majority of college students sampled in this study, results suggest there was a significant relationship between these variables.

Specifically, results suggest that homophobic beliefs are positively correlated with traditional beliefs about gender and the use of homophobic epithets. This finding confirms Poteat et al.'s (2005) claim that traditional gender beliefs are associated with the use of homophobic epithets. Understanding this relationship is important for better understanding homophobia and its negative outcomes.

**Limitations**

There were several limitations to this study. Participants in this study were undergraduate psychology students at USFSP, which may limit the generalizability of findings. Specifically, it is difficult to determine if current results generalize to a non-educated sample. The generalizability of findings is further limited by the fact that, consistent with demographics for psychology majors across the nation, the majority of the sample was female. It is difficult to determine if results generalize to men. Further, most participants were unmarried Caucasians who reported their religious affiliation as Christian. On the demographic scale, the question about gender did not differentiate between psychological gender and biological sex. Participants may have reported the former as opposed to the latter, which may have affected findings. Selection bias also might limit findings. As an incentive to participate, extra credit was offered. There may be differences between the college students who chose to participate in this study and those who chose not to for this and other reasons.

**Future Directions**

Future research in this area is still needed. Homophobia and the use of homophobic epithets is an important topic in today's society. The use of homophobic epithets may be offensive. In fact, national public service announcements are being aired to address the frequently used phrase, "That's so gay." Future studies may want to compare college students to non-educated samples to examine the impact of education on homophobic beliefs and use of homophobic epithets. Future studies might be designed to further investigate what exactly people mean when they use homophobic epithets. Qualitative studies, which include interview data, might be useful for this type of research. Given the lack of research on the relationship between homophobic epithets and marital status, future studies may want to focus in this area. Future studies also might want to look more closely at homophobic epithets and religious affiliations to better understand how different cultures perceive people who identify as homosexuals. Finally, future research might be directed toward educating the general public about the fact that using homophobic epithets may be offensive.

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**Appendix A**  
**Homophobia Scale<sup>2</sup>**

1. Gay people make me nervous. (R)
2. Gay people deserve what they get. (R)
3. Homosexuality is acceptable to me.
4. If I discovered a friend was gay I would end the relationship. (R)
5. I think homosexual people should not work with children. (R)
6. I make derogatory remarks about gay people. (R)
7. I enjoy the company of gay people.
8. Marriage between homosexual individuals is acceptable.
9. I make derogatory remarks like “faggot” or “queer” to people I suspect are gay. (R)
10. It does not matter to me whether my friends are gay or straight.
11. It would not upset me if I learned that a close friend was homosexual.
12. Homosexuality is immoral. (R)
13. I tease and make jokes about gay people. (R)
14. I feel that you cannot trust a person who is homosexual. (R)
15. I fear homosexual persons will make several advances towards me. (R)
16. Organizations which promote gay right are necessary.
17. I have damaged property of gay persons, such as “keying” their cars. (R)
18. I would feel comfortable having a gay roommate.
19. I would hit a homosexual for coming on to me. (R)
20. Homosexual behavior should not be against the law.
21. I avoid gay individuals. (R)
22. It does not bother me to see two homosexual people together in public.
23. When I see a gay person I think, “What a waste.” (R)
24. When I meet someone I try to find out if he/she is gay. (R)
25. I have rocky relationships with people that I suspect are gay. (R)

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<sup>2</sup> Wright, W.L., Adams, H.E., & Bernat, J. (1999). Development and validation of the homophobia scale. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, 21(4), 337-347.

**Appendix A (continued)****Homophobia Scale<sup>3</sup>**

Scoring information for the Homophobia Scale

1. Reverse score the following items: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25 (to reverse score the items 1= 5, 2= 4, 3= 3, 4= 2, 5= 1).

2. To calculate the total score, add items 1- 25, then subtract 25 from the total scale score. The range of scores should then be 0 -100, with a score of 0 being the least homophobic and 100 being the most homophobic.

3. To calculate the subscale scores: (after items have been reversed scored)

Factor/Subscale 1: (Behavior/Negative Affect): add items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 22, then subtract 10. Scores should range between 0- 40.

Factor/Subscale 2: (Affect/Behavioral Aggression): add items 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25, then subtract 10. Scores should range between 0 -40.

Factor/Subscale 3: (Cognitive Negativism): add items 3, 8, 16, 18, 20, then subtract 5. Scores should range between 0- 20.

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<sup>3</sup> Wright, W.L., Adams, H.E., & Bernat, J. (1999). Development and validation of the homophobia scale. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, 21(4), 337-347.

## Appendix B

### Traditional Beliefs about Gender and Gender Identity Scale<sup>4</sup>

1. It's important that men appear masculine and that women appear feminine.
2. It is inappropriate for a man to use clear nail polish on his fingernails.
3. If the aims of women's liberation are met, men will lose more than they will gain.
4. A woman needs the support of a man to advance professionally.
5. Children raised by single mothers are usually worse off compared to children raised by married couples.
6. Men who end up gay probably didn't have strong male role models during their childhood.
7. A man who is vulnerable is a sissy.
8. Openly expressing my affection to another person of my own sex is difficult for me because I don't want others to think I'm gay.
9. I would feel comfortable attending social functions where the majority of people are homosexuals of my own sex. (R)
10. I would feel comfortable knowing that members of my sex found me attractive. (R)
11. If a member of my sex made a sexual advance toward me I would feel angry.
12. I would be comfortable if I found myself attracted to a member of my sex. (R)
13. I would feel nervous being in a group of homosexuals of my own sex.
14. I would feel at ease conversing alone with a homosexual person of my own sex. (R)
15. I would feel comfortable with being labeled as homosexual. (R)

*Note.* Items 1–8 assess traditional beliefs about gender; Items 9–15 assess traditional gender identity. When presented to participants, these items were randomly intermixed. (R) indicates reverse-coded items. Five of the above items were borrowed from existing scales (Hudson & Ricketts, 1980; Jean & Reynolds, 1980; Snell, 1986).

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<sup>4</sup> Dasgupta, N., & Rivera, L. M. (2006). From automatic antigay prejudice to behavior: The moderating role of conscious beliefs about gender and behavioral control. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *91*(2), 268-280. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.91.2.268

# HOMOPHOBIA AND GENDER ROLES

## Appendix C

### Homophobic Content Agent Target Scale<sup>5</sup>

#### *Factor 1: Agent*

Some kids call each other names such as gay, lesbo, fag, etc. How many times in the last week did you say these things to:

A friend

Someone I did not know

Someone I did not like

Someone I thought was gay

Someone I did not think was gay

#### *Factor 2: Target*

How many times in the last week did the following people call you these things:

A friend

Someone I did not know

Someone who did not like me

Someone I thought was gay

Someone I did not think was gay

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<sup>5</sup> Poteat, V. P., & Espelage, D. L. (2005). Exploring the relation between bullying and homophobic verbal content: The homophobic content agent target (HCAT) scale. *Violence and Victims, 20*(5), 513-528. doi: 10.1891/vivi.2005.20.5.513

Table 1

*Demographic Statistics*

Variable Category		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	35	12.8
	Female	237	86.8
Region	North East	37	13.6
	North West	3	1.1
	South East	177	64.8
	South West	15	5.5
	Mid West	14	5.1
	Not U.S.	26	9.5
	No answer	1	.4
Ethnicity	Black	25	9.2
	Asian	6	2.2
	Hispanic	39	14.3
	White	182	66.7
	Other	8	2.9
	Multi	12	4.4
	No answer	1	.4
Sexual Orientation	Bisexual	25	9.2
	Homosexual	5	1.8
	Heterosexual	240	87.9
	No answer	3	1.1
Marital Status	Married	30	11.0
	Separated	2	.7
	Divorced	14	5.1
	Widowed	4	1.5
	Not Married	222	81.3
Religion	Agnostic	57	20.9
	Atheist	19	7.0
	Christian	167	61.2
	Islam	6	2.2
	Judaism	4	1.5
	Other	15	5.5
	No answer	5	1.8
Years in College	Freshman	3	1.1
	Sophomore	20	7.3
	Junior	136	49.8
	Senior	110	40.3
	More than 4 years	4	1.5

Table 2

*Correlations between subscales for Homophobic Scale, HCAT, and TBGI*

Scale		HSCALE			HCAT		TBGI		
Subscales		1. Beh./Negative Affect	2. Affect/Beh. Aggressive	3. Cognitive Negativism	4. Agent	5. Target	6. TBGI	7. TBG	8. TBI
HScale	1. Beh./Negative Affect	1	0.763	0.732	0.379	0.327	0.668	0.64	0.55
	2. Affect /Beh. Aggressive	---	1	0.506	0.401	0.284	0.631	0.585	0.536
	3. Cognitive Negativism	---	---	1	0.22	0.218	0.686	0.62	0.606
HCAT	4. Agent	---	---	---	1	0.676	0.202	0.268	0.104
	5. Target	---	---	---	---	1	0.132	0.252	-0.001
TBGI	6. TBGI	---	---	---	---	---	1	0.875	0.903
	7. TBG	---	---	---	---	---	---	1	0.584
	8. TBI	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	1

*Note.* Gray areas indicate significant correlations.



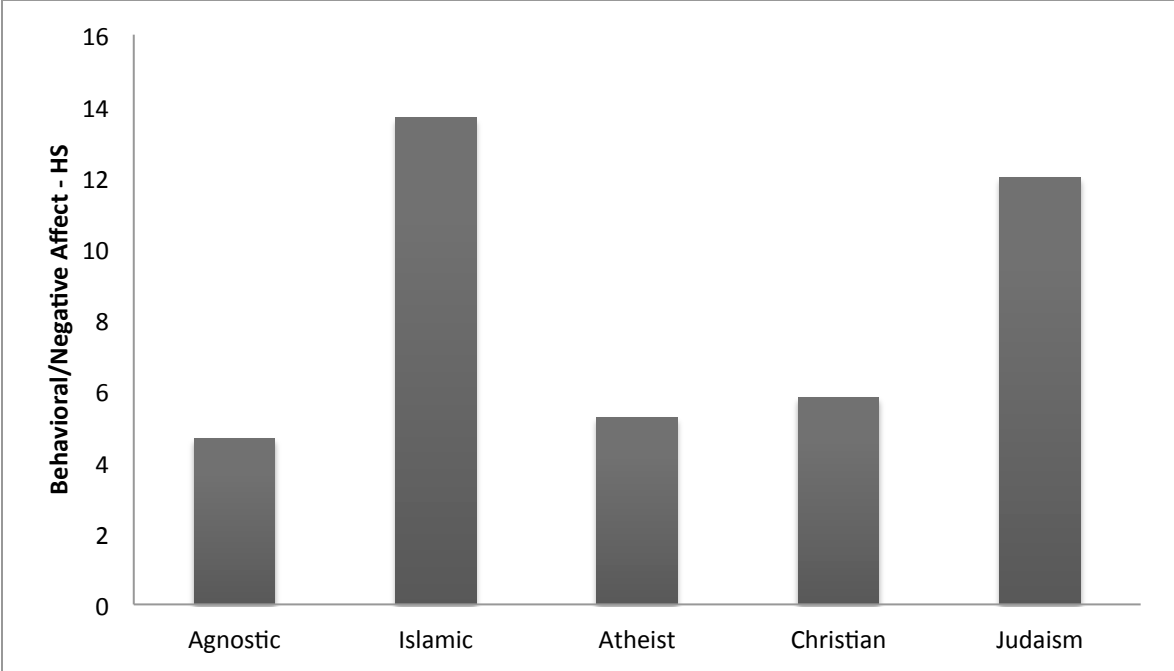


Figure 1. Religious Affiliation and Behavioral/Negative Affect Subscale of Homophobia Scale

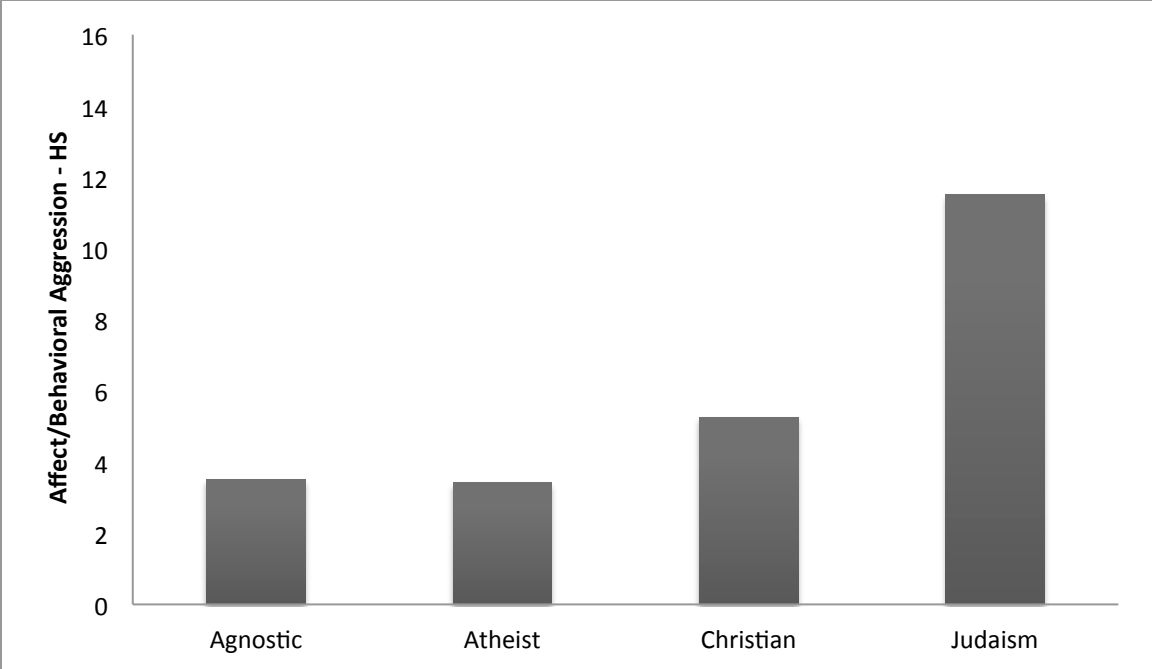


Figure 2. Religious Affiliation and Affect/Behavioral Aggression Subscale of Homophobia Scale

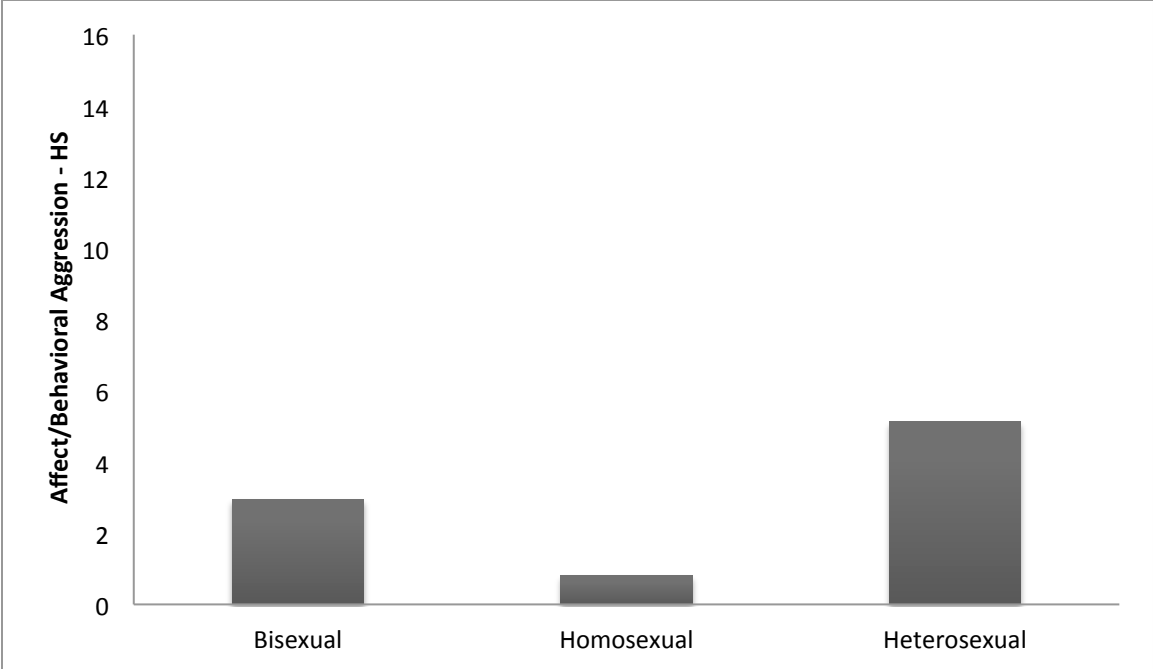


Figure 3. Sexual Orientation and Affect/Behavioral Aggression Subscale of Homophobia Scale

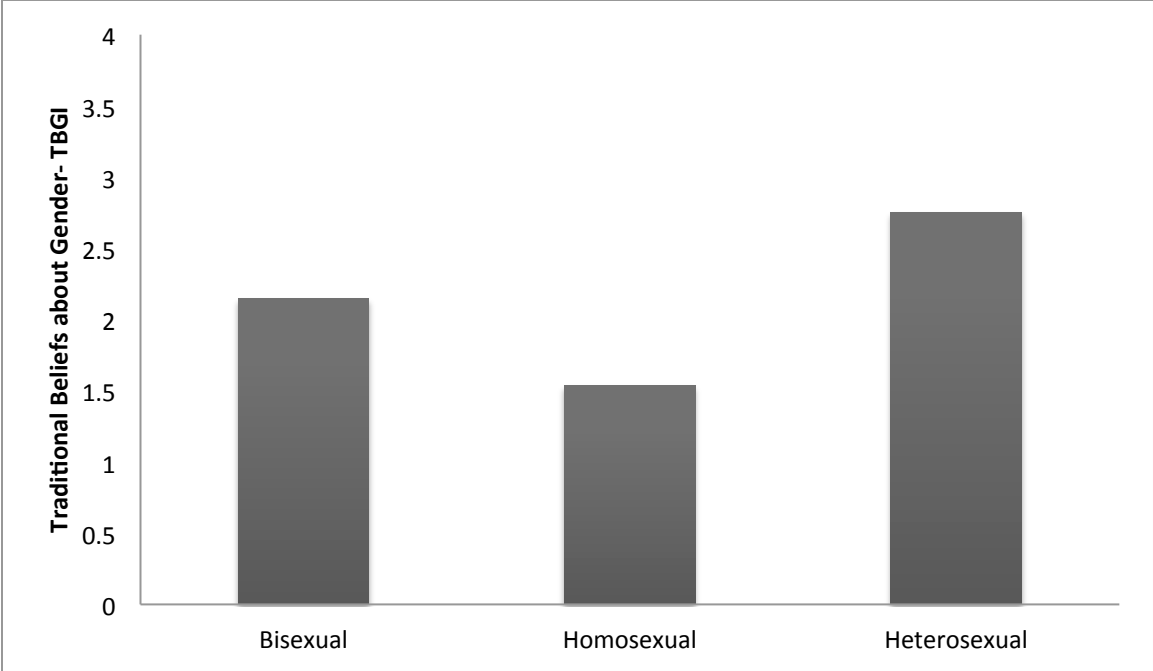


Figure 4. Sexual Orientation and TBG subscale of TBGI

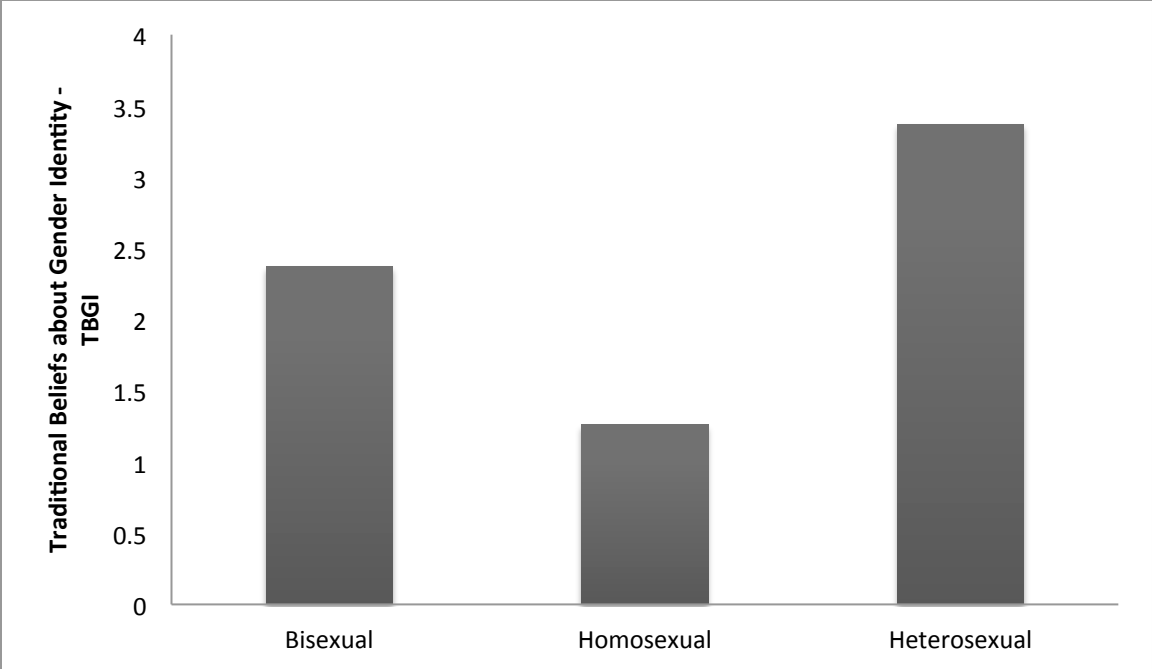


Figure 5. Sexual Orientation and TBI subscale of TBGI

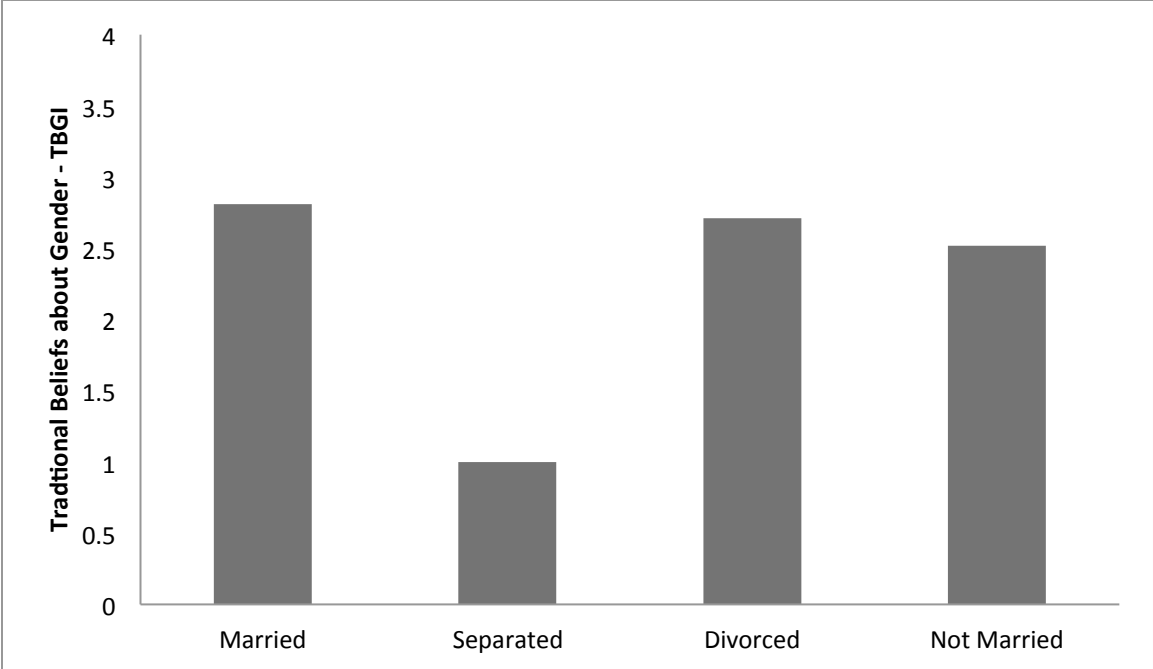


Figure 6. Marital Status and TBG Subscale of the TBGI

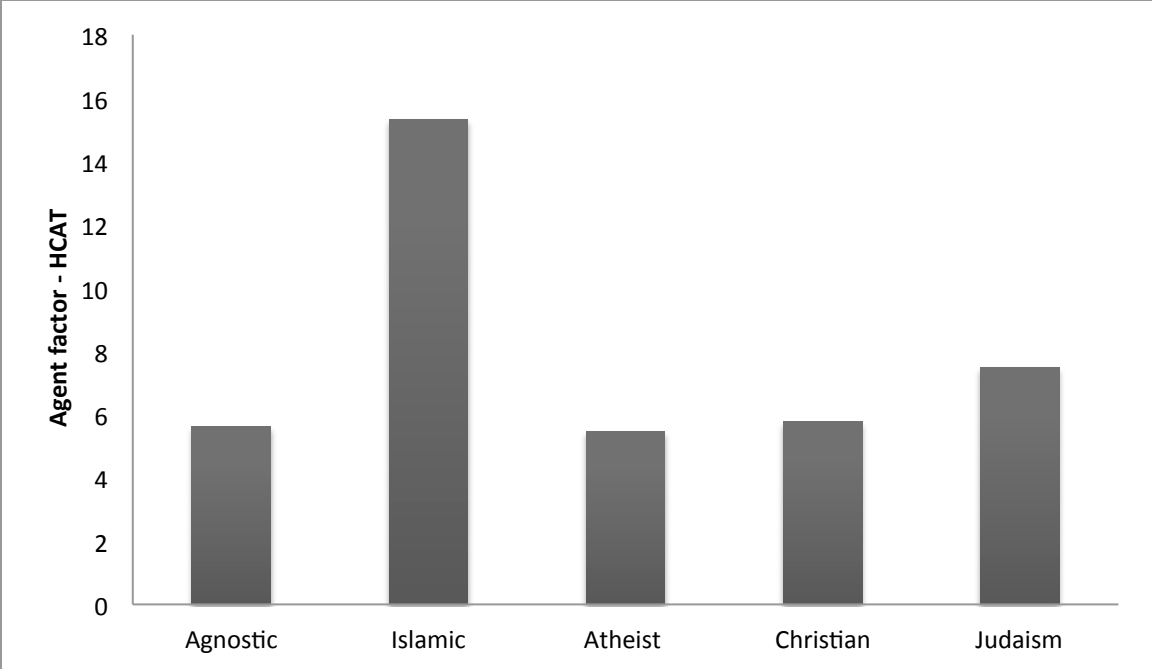


Figure 7. Religious Affiliation and Agent factor of the HCAT

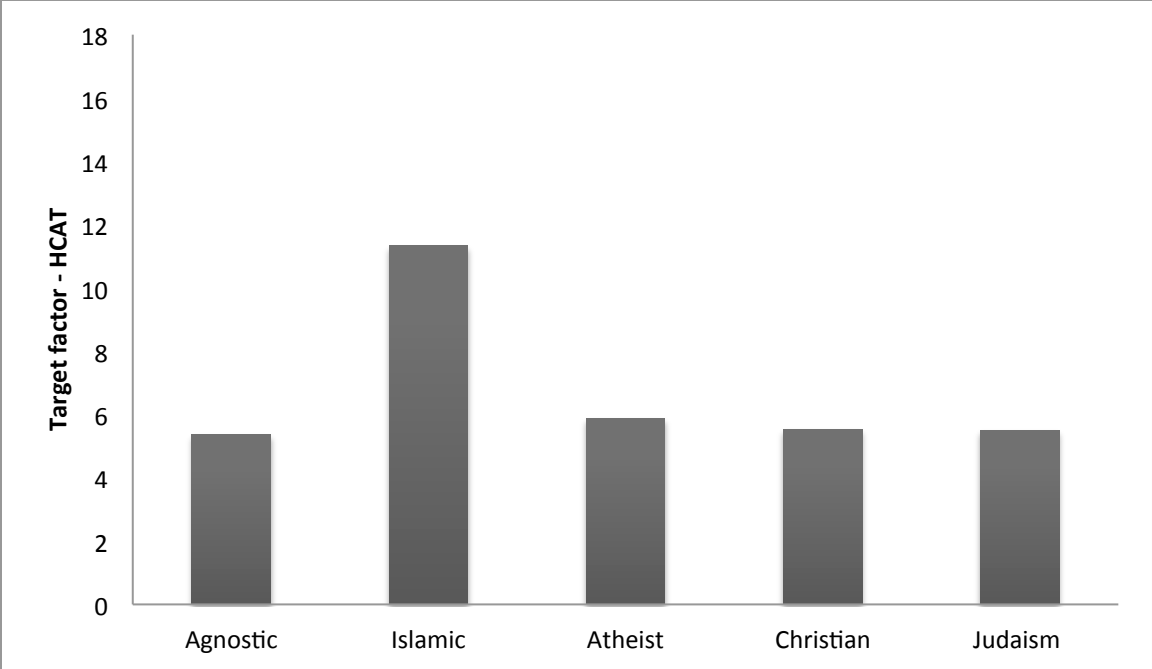


Figure 8. Religious Affiliation and Target factor of the HCAT



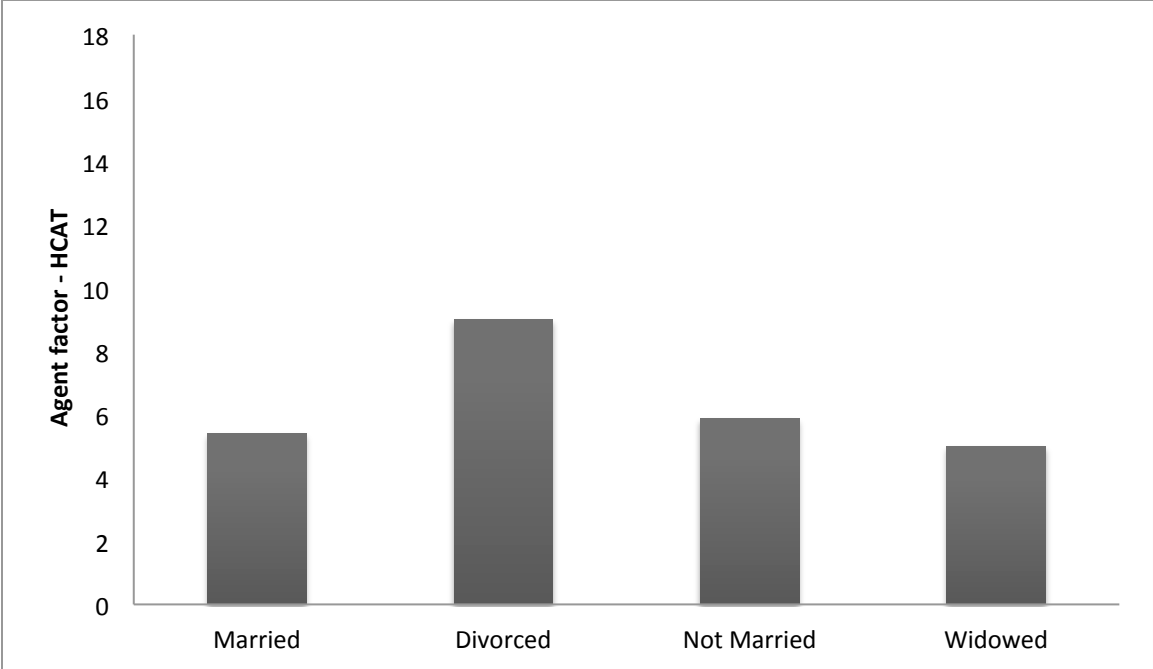


Figure 9. Marital Status and Agent factor of HCAT

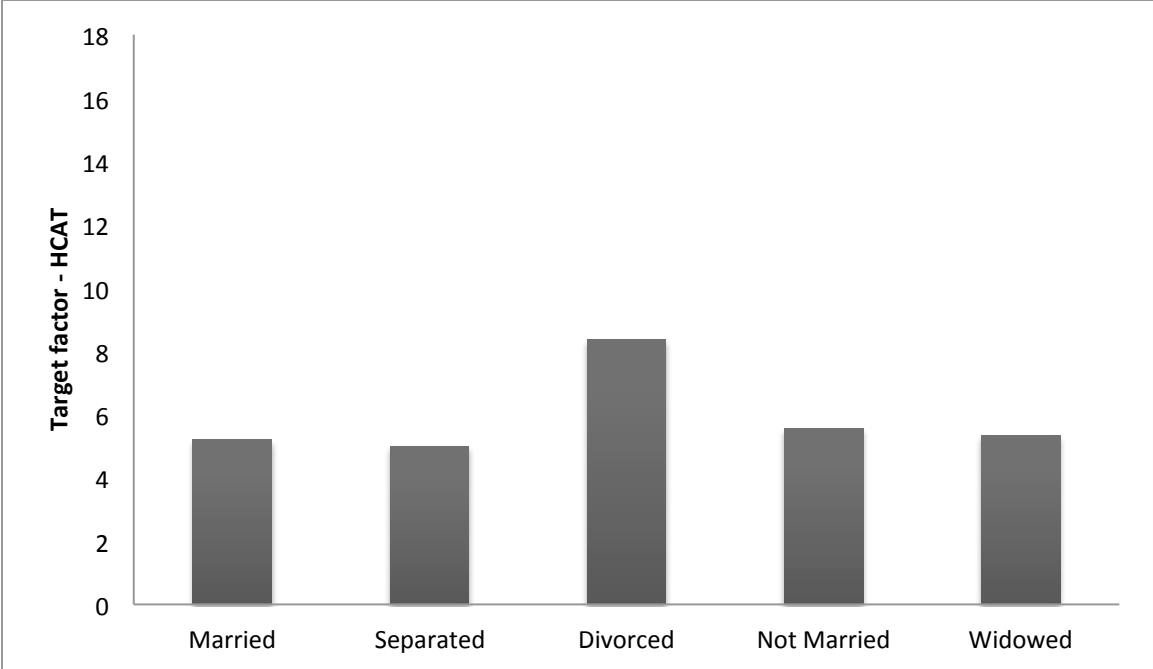


Figure 10. Marital Status and Target factor of HCAT