

**OVERACHIEVING AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

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## ABSTRACT

*The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis holds that homosexual males are overachievers because they seek to deflect attention away from their stigmatized sexual orientations and over-compensate for feelings of inferiority and shame. Implicit in this reasoning is the assumption that homosexual males experience apprehension during social situations in which their self-worth is under evaluation and, as such, they overachieve in an attempt to obtain validation from others. However, results here suggest that homosexual males do not differ from their heterosexual male counterparts on psychological tendencies thought to underpin overachieving. These psychological tendencies include *validation seeking*, *insecure striving*, and *fear of negative evaluation*. Further, there is no evidence that male sexual orientation differences exist for measures of *growth seeking* behavior. Finally, homosexual females do not differ from their heterosexual female counterparts for these same measures, which limits the generalizability of the hypothesis to other groups with minority sexual orientation.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page .....	i
Signature Page .....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
Acknowledgments .....	iv
Table of Contents .....	v
List of Tables .....	vii

### CHAPTER ONE

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Sexual Orientation, Gendered Behavior, Acceptance, and Overachieving.....	7

### CHAPTER TWO

<b>Not All Homosexual Males Were the Best Little Boys in the World: Validation Seeking, Feelings of Inferiority, and Fear of Negative Evaluation in Relation to Male Sexual Orientation .....</b>	<b>16</b>
Abstract .....	16
Introduction .....	18
Method .....	21
Participants .....	21
Procedures and Measures .....	21
Results .....	24
General Sexual Orientation Hypothesis .....	24
Gender Typical Hypothesis .....	25
Childhood Measure of Masculinity .....	26
Adult Measure of Masculinity .....	27
Gender Atypical Hypothesis .....	28
Childhood Measure of Femininity .....	29
Adult Measure of Femininity .....	29
Parental Acceptance Hypothesis .....	30
Discussion .....	32
Tables .....	39

### CHAPTER THREE

<b>Male Sexual Orientation and Growth Seeking.....</b>	<b>51</b>
Abstract .....	51
Introduction .....	52
Method.....	57
Participants .....	57
Procedures and Measures .....	57
Results .....	58
Discussion .....	59
Tables .....	62

### CHAPTER FOUR

<b>Validation Seeking, Feelings of Inferiority, and Fear of Negative Evaluation in Relation to Female Sexual Orientation .....</b>	<b>63</b>
Abstract .....	63
Introduction .....	64
Method.....	65
Participants .....	66
Procedures and Measures .....	66
Results .....	68
Discussion .....	70
Tables .....	74
 <b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>	
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>76</b>
 <b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>91</b>
 <b>APPENDIX</b>	
<b>Facebook Advertisement .....</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Survey.....</b>	<b>101</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

### CHAPTER TWO

Table 2.1 Descriptive Statistics for Biographical Variables by Group (General Sexual Orientation Hypothesis)

Table 2.2 Subscale Scores and Standardized Internal Consistency Reliabilities (alphas) by Group (General Sexual Orientation Hypothesis)

Table 2.3 Descriptive Statistics for Biographical Variables by Group (Gender Typical Hypothesis – Childhood Masculinity)

Table 2.4 Subscale Scores and Standardized Internal Consistency Reliabilities (alphas) by Group (Gender Typical Hypothesis – Childhood Masculinity)

Table 2.5 Descriptive Statistics for Biographical Variables by Group (Gender Typical Hypothesis – Adulthood Masculinity)

Table 2.6 Subscale Scores and Standardized Internal Consistency Reliabilities (alphas) by Group (Gender Typical Hypothesis – Adulthood Masculinity)

Table 2.7 Descriptive Statistics for Biographical Variables by Group (Gender Atypical Hypothesis – Childhood Femininity)

Table 2.8 Subscale Scores and Standardized Internal Consistency Reliabilities (alphas) by Group (Gender Atypical Hypothesis – Childhood Femininity)

Table 2.9 Descriptive Statistics for Biographical Variables by Group (Gender Atypical Hypothesis – Adulthood Femininity)

Table 2.10 Subscale Scores and Standardized Internal Consistency Reliabilities (alphas) by Group (Gender Atypical Hypothesis – Adulthood Femininity)

Table 2.11 Descriptive Statistics for Biographical Variables by Group (Acceptance Hypothesis)

Table 2.12 Subscale Scores and Standardized Internal Consistency Reliabilities (alphas) by Group (Gender Typical Hypothesis – Childhood Masculinity)

### CHAPTER THREE

Table 3.2 Subscale Scores and Standardized Internal Consistency Reliabilities (alphas) by Group (Growth Seeking Hypothesis)

### CHAPTER FOUR

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics for Biographical Variables by Group (Female Sexual Orientation Hypothesis)

Table 4.2 Subscale Scores and Standardized Internal Consistency Reliabilities (alphas) by Group (Female Sexual Orientation Hypothesis)

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

When . . . I walk along the edge of a field but ‘outside it’, the field shows itself as belonging to such and such a person, and decently kept up by him; the book I have used was bought at so-and-so’s shop and given by such and such a person, and so forth.

Ree, 2000, The Great Philosophers: From Socrates to Turing

The German philosopher Heidegger (Ree, 2000, p. 316) suggests that everything is social; therefore, in the above quote, the field is not just a field, but a field linked with ‘others.’ As such, Cartesian understanding of the self as solely unique to the individual is never possible, because the self is always linked with ‘others.’ Given this, Heidegger suggests the ‘self’ is preoccupied in comparing with, and differentiating itself from, ‘others’ and results in the ‘self’ contemplating it is smarter, prettier, funnier, etc., in comparison to others.

A substantial body of psychological research has furnished empirical evidence in support of Heidegger’s suggestion that individuals routinely compare and evaluate themselves in relation to others (Ree, 2000). Further, individuals recognize that others engage in the same process. For example, research indicates that some individuals are more anxious than others in social-evaluative situations (Diggory, 1966). Such individuals experience distress and discomfort and even fear in such situations (Watson & Friend, 1969).

Social-evaluative anxiety can manifest in different ways. For example, some individuals avoid social-evaluation interactions, which they find distressing; other individuals do not avoid social-evaluation interactions, but experience a *fear of negative*

*evaluation* when they engage in such situations (Watson & Friend, 1969). Individuals who experience fear of negative evaluation from others exhibit nervousness in evaluative situations and work hard to either avoid disapproval or, alternatively, to gain approval (Watson & Friend, 1969).

In line with the work of Watson & Friends (1969), Dweck & Leggett (1988) suggest that some individuals are disproportionately concerned with gaining favorable judgment of their competence. Dweck and Leggett present a social-cognitive model for motivation, goals, and goal orientation and suggest that individual differences in motivation, goals, and goal orientation are the result of individual differences in beliefs and values. Dweck & Leggett suggest that some individuals are disproportionately concerned with gaining favorable extrinsic judgment of their competence. Such individuals are said to exhibit *performance goals* (i.e., goals motivated by concerns about judgments of competency). When faced with challenging tasks that run the risk of failure, performance goal oriented individuals routinely exhibit “helpless” behavioral patterns. Dweck and Leggett’s research demonstrates that helpless responses to challenging tasks or failure are maladaptive and can result in avoidance of challenge and deterioration of performance in the face of obstacles.

Dweck and Leggett’s (1988) tested children in a laboratory setting where the children were presented with a test that initially resulted in success, but eventually resulted in failure. In response to failure, performance goal oriented children exhibited a helpless response and attributed their failures to personal inadequacy by spontaneously citing deficient intelligence, memory, or problem solving ability as the reasons for their failure. Further, these helpless children began to express an aversion to the task,

boredom, or anxiety over their performance. Following failure, the majority of these children engaged in task irrelevant verbalizations, usually of diversionary or self-aggrandizing nature. For example, some spoke about how talented they were in other domains and some boasted about wealth and possessions, presumably in an attempt to direct attention away from their failure and to focus attention on their achievements in other domains. Some also attempted to alter the rules of the task, presumably in an attempt to increase their task-related success. Thus, the focus was not on mastering the task, but rather on directing attention away from the original task and subsequent failure. Overall, this subset of children were motivated to avoid risks and potential failure in favor of maintaining their perceived reputation as competent in front of the researcher (Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

Interestingly, the research by Dweck & Leggett (1988) identified a second subset of children who seemed unconcerned with gaining favorable judgment of their competence. Instead, this second group of children was motivated to take risks in hopes of learning and growing even if faced with failure. For example, one boy who participated in this research upon confronting failure stated to the experimenter “You know, I was *hoping* this would be informative” (Dweck & Leggett, 1988, p. 258). These children were said to exhibit *learning goals* (i.e., goals in which individuals are concerned with increasing their competence). They viewed unsolved problems as challenges to be mastered through effort. Consequently, these goals motivated such children to engaged in extensive self-instruction, self-monitoring, and to be solution oriented. To solve these problems they exerted effort to concentrate and then monitored their level of effort or attention. This, in turn, resulted in them teaching themselves new,

more sophisticated hypothesis-testing strategies over the failure trials. Through their problem-solving attempts, they maintained an unflinching optimism that their efforts would eventually be fruitful.

The reason why children would approach the same situation in strikingly different ways is thought to be the result of individual conceptualizations or “theories” of intelligence (see Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Dweck, 1999). Individuals that believe intelligence to be unchangeable are said to conceive of intelligence as a fixed entity and thus adhere to what is called the entity theory of intelligence (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007). Individuals who perceive their personality traits and intelligence as “fixed” appear to be more concerned with gaining favorable judgment of their competence and, as such, more likely to adopt performance goals when faced with challenging tasks and the risk of failure. Conversely, other individuals think of intelligence as malleable and thus adhere to what is called the incremental theory of intelligence (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007). Individuals who perceive their personality traits and intelligence as malleable appear to be more concerned with personal growth and learning and, as such, more likely to adopt learning goals when faced with challenging tasks or risk of failure. Thus, self-concepts about the fixed or mutable nature of the self seem to result in individuals adopting certain goals that then motivate individuals to enact certain behavioral strategies aimed at achieving those goals.

Dykman (1998) advanced the work done by Dweck and Leggett (1988) by determining whether adults approached situations in similar ways to children. Dykman (1998) found that adults showed a similar dichotomy in approach and behavior, but he articulated the group difference more globally as indicative of *validation seeking* versus

*growth seeking* behavior. He suggested that such behaviors were pervasive in all domains of an individual's life, not just those that involve problem solving in relation to a particular ability or when faced with failure. Dykman suggests then that validation seeking individuals measure themselves based on core dimensions of worth, competence and likability; therefore, the goal of validation seeking individuals is to prove or establish credibility in these core dimensions and the consequence is high motivation to seek validation. In general, individuals who are primarily validation seeking will show heightened anticipatory anxiety and fear of failure in the context of social evaluation. Consequently, validation seeking individuals are more likely to disengage from situations where their core dimensions of basic self worth, competence and likability are not validated, and more likely to engage in situations where they are validated on these same core dimensions (Dykman, 1998).

Dykman (1998) proposes a developmental model to account for validation seeking in individuals. He suggests that depression-prone individuals who were raised by parents that were excessively critical, conditionally approving and perfectionistic are more likely to lack a solid sense of self-worth and, as such, engage in validation seeking to symbolically bid to gain parental approval. As such, he suggests that validation for these individuals is likely to be sought through striving for external symbols of achievement and acceptance by peers, romantic partners, teachers, employers, and parents.

In contrast to validation seeking individuals, Dykman (1998) suggests that growth seeking individuals were more likely to have experienced "secure attachment" in childhood and to have had parents that were available, responsive, and helpful when the

children encountered fearful or adverse situations. As such, he suggests that growth seeking individuals exhibit striving that centers on learning, growth, self-improvement and reaching their fullest potential. Growth seeking individuals appraise challenges as opportunities to learn, grow and improve and are more willing to engage in various challenges regardless of potential outcome (Dykman, 1998). In support of this conclusion, Dykman notes that securely attached children are more persistent on problem-solving tasks and more likely to take on psychological challenges than insecurely attached children.

Gilbert et al. (2007) extended the work done by Dykman (1998) to determine whether different behavioral approaches of individuals were specifically the result of a feeling of inferiority and a subsequent striving to compensate. It has been suggested that being “looked down on” and being negatively judged or compared negatively to others is a strong stimulator of stress in humans (Dickerson & Kemeny, 2004) and consequently some individuals will consider themselves as being perceived as inferior by others and themselves. Gilbert et al. (2007) characterized individuals who are afraid of losing out, being overlooked, and being actively rejected as *insecure strivers* and feelings of inferiority can motivate insecure strivers to seek validation in an attempt to prove their self-worth to others and to themselves. Insecure strivers tend to be hyper-competitive, feel inferior to others, and experience stress and anxiety in social situations (Gilbert et al. 2007). Conversely, Gilbert et al. (2007) also identified another group of individuals whom they described as *secure non-strivers*. Secure non-striver are individuals that have positive feeling of acceptance from others whether they succeed or fail and are thus not motivated to prove themselves to others (Gilbert et al., 2007). In contrast to insecure

strivers, secure non-strivers are not motivated to seek validation because they do not feel that they have to prove their self-worth to others. Gilbert's distinction between insecure strivers versus secure non-strivers is conceptually similar to the dichotomy Dykman (1998) articulated between validation seeking versus growth seeking individuals.

Research by Dweck and Leggett (1988), Dykman (1998) and Gilbert et al. (2007) suggest that individuals experience and interpret social evaluation situations differently and, as such, employ different goals and approaches when dealing with social comparisons. Some individuals adopt more positive goals and approaches (i.e., learning, growth seeking, secure non-striving), while other individuals adopt more negative and maladaptive goals and approaches (i.e., performance seeking, validation seeking, insecure striving to avoid feelings of inferiority). Individuals that adopt the latter are said to exhibit higher social-evaluative anxiety or *fear of negative evaluation* (Watson & Friend, 1969). Individuals that fear negative evaluation, exhibit insecure striving as a means to avoid feelings of inferiority, and seek validation are at a greater risk of a broad range of psychopathologies, including anxiety, depression and eating disorders (Bellew, Gilbert, Mills, McEwan & Gale, 2006; Dykman, 1998; Gilbert et al., 2007; Gilbert, McEwan, Bellew, Mills, & Gale, 2009; Goss & Allan, 2009; Watson & Friend, 1969).

### **Sexual Orientation, Gendered Behavior, Acceptance, and Overachieving**

Highly motivated; a “self-starter,” the teachers would write on my character reports. Hell, yes, I was motivated! No one could expect me to be out dating on Saturday nights if the school paper was going to be on the stands on Tuesday. No one could expect me to be partying over Christmas vacation when I had a list of seventeen urgent projects to complete – I would be lucky to find time to open my presents, let alone go to parties or date, for crying out loud.

Tobias, 1973, *The Best Little Boy in the World*

Overachieving can be defined as the tendency to perform better than would be expected based on one's age or talents (Collins English Dictionary, 2003). In his book, *The Best Little Boy in the World*, Tobias (1973) details his all-consuming motivation to overachieve in a bid to obtain validation from his parents, peers and employers. He points to feelings of inferiority stemming from the stigma and shame he felt in relation to his same-sex sexual orientation as motivating his desire to overachieve and, in doing so, prove his worth to others. Other popular books by gay men echo this sentiment (Downs, 2005; Monette, 1992; Sullivan, 1998; Yoshino, 2006). As Down (2005) recounts: "I survived by learning to conform to the expectations of others... What would you like me to be? A great student?... The first-chair violinist?... How would I love ourselves when everything around us told us I were unlovable?" (pp. 15-16). Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler (2013) formalized these ideas as *The Best Little Boy in the World hypothesis*, which holds that homosexual males are overachievers because they seek to deflect attention away from their stigmatized sexual orientations and over-compensate for feelings of inferiority and shame. An implicit aspect of this reasoning is the assumption that homosexual males experience apprehension during social situations in which their self-worth is under evaluation and, as such, they overachieve in an attempt to obtain validation from others.

LeVay, Baldwin, and Baldwin (2009) presented a refined version of *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis. They suggested that gender *typical* sexual orientation minority youth may be particularly prone toward overachieving because, in essence, they can more effectively mask their stigmatized sexual orientations by engaging in socially valued, gender-normative behaviors. As a result, possessing a concealable stigma can

lead to heightened reliance on others' opinions to guide disclosure decisions (Frable, Blackstone, & Scherbaum 1990; Smart & Wegner, 1999). Tobias (1973) further supports this by stating some homosexual males will "...overcompensate for being gay by dressing and acting super masculine" (p. 131), which includes excelling at sport and school as a means of deflecting attention. In contrast, gender *atypical* youth have more difficulty 'passing' as heterosexual and, as such, may be less motivated to fit in with the heterosexual majority if for no other reason than they are less successful at masking their stigmatized sexual orientations.

Prospective and retrospective research indicates that homosexual males and homosexual females are more gender atypical in childhood (Bailey & Zucker, 1995) and in adulthood (Bailey, 2003, Lippa, 2005; Whitam, 1983). Because of their gender atypical behavior, homosexual males and homosexual females often face ridicule and ostracism from their peers (Rieger & Savin-Williams, 2011). It is noteworthy that gender atypical homosexual males face ostracism and ridicule, not only from outside the homosexual community, but from inside the homosexual community as well (Bailey, 2003; Bergling, 2001; Rieger & Savin-Williams, 2011). Consequently, it has been suggested gender atypical homosexual males have lower overall self-esteem, higher rates of anxiety and depression, higher risk of eating disorders and body dissatisfaction, and general lower psychological well-being (Rieger & Savin-Williams, 2011). Indeed, a meta-analysis by King et al. (2008) indicates that homosexual males and homosexual females are at a higher risk of anxiety and depression, as well as, substance misuse, suicide ideation, and suicide. Further, studies looking at the independent effects of sexual orientation and gender atypicality demonstrated that gender atypicality and *not* sexual

orientation was a better indicator of decreased well-being in both male and female same-sex attracted individuals (Rieger & Savin-Williams, 2011). Taken together this research suggests that members of the homosexual community, especially feminine homosexual males and possibly masculine homosexual females, may be particularly subject to comparisons between themselves and others and may, as a result adopt maladaptive goals (e.g., fear of negative evaluation, performance goal orientation, and insecure striving) in order to deal with such comparisons.

Interestingly, Williams (1992) suggests that “third gender” males from non-Western cultures (i.e., males who are typically very feminine and exclusively same-sex attracted) over-excel at various labor practices as a way of striving for prestige within their families and communities. Historical reports from various indigenous North American cultures, such as the Winnebagos, Hopi, Lakota, Mohave, Assiniboine, and Crow, indicate that transgendered same-sex attracted males often considered themselves better than females when performing feminine tasks (Williams, 1992). This is also true of Samoan transgendered males, known locally as *fa’afafine*. As one *fa’afafine* from the island of Upolu states, “If you cook with a *fa’afafine*, I think a *fa’afafine* will be better than you. If you’re cleaning or doing all those kind of stuff that woman should do, a *fa’afafine* is better than a woman for doing that” (Poe, 2004).

Given that gender atypicality seems to invoke more peer ridicule and ostracism, then same-sex sexual orientation, it is possible that such individuals may be more at risk for developing maladaptive goals in response to pervasive social comparisons (see Rieger & Savin-Williams, 2011). The strategies gender *atypical* same-sex attracted youth employ to cope with pervasive social comparisons probably do not rely on the enactment

of gender typical behavior, as covering up such behavior might be too difficult or nearly impossible. Instead, gender-atypical youth may compensate by other behavioral means, such as overachieving in domains where success is more likely to be guaranteed. In sum, it seems reasonable then that both gender typical and gender atypical same-sex attracted youth might have the goal of “fitting in” and subsequently be highly motivated to do so. The former group because of their same-sex sexual orientation (LeVay, 2009), and the latter group because of their same-sex sexual orientation *and* their gender atypicality (Rieger & Savin-Williams, 2011).

The construction of a Western *homosexual* sexual orientation identity is complex and much research has focused on definable stages in this process (Cass, 1979; Cass, 1984; Mondimore, 1996; Troiden, 1989). One of the most important stages in sexual orientation identity formation is when individuals come out to parents, friends, and family (D’Augelli et al., 1998; Cass, 1979). Cass states that at a certain point in homosexual sexual orientation identity formation many individuals only value the opinion and relationships of other homosexuals, as heterosexuals are considered “other” and too distant from self to be respected. This categorization can be the result of homosexuals expecting heterosexuals to be less than tolerant of their atypical sexual orientation and can include friends and family as well as the general public. Cass argues that if homosexuals are validated in their expectations that heterosexuals will respond negatively to their sexual orientation, they will not progress further in homosexual identity formation and will consider only other homosexuals as being of value and heterosexuals will remain the estranged other. This fear of negative responses can also

prevent individuals from disclosing their sexual orientation at all, especially to parents (D'Augelli et al., 1998).

Being accepted or not accepted can have a profound influence on the behavior of individuals, with many homosexual individuals not “coming out” because of such fears (D'Augelli et al., 1998). Dykman (1998) suggests that lack of parental acceptance or perceived lack of acceptance can motivate individuals to prove themselves, seek validation, and strive for external measures of achievement. Tobias (1973) suggests that making his parents proud largely motivated him to be successful in school and work and that he “*wanted* to be accepted, no question about that” (p. 25). A perceived lack of parental acceptance might reinforce an individual’s feelings of inferiority and motivate them to overachieve as a way of compensating for such feelings (Gilbert et al, 2007). According to Dykman and Gilbert et al. (2007) individuals who feel unaccepted might attempt to compensate either by validation seeking or insecure striving. Consequently, it is plausible that homosexual individuals who are unaccepted by their parents might overachieve relative to homosexual individuals who are accepted.

Previous research by Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler (2013) on *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis has found support that homosexual males base more of their self-worth on competitiveness, maintaining appearances, and academic competence, when compared to their heterosexual male counterparts. Further, Pachankis and Goldfried (2006) found that homosexual males feared negative evaluation more than their heterosexual male counterparts. Watson and Friend (1969) suggested such a fear might lead to attempts to gain social approval. This might result in validation seeking behavior or insecure striving that could be characterized as overachieving. As Dykman (1998)

notes, validation seeking could, in some instances, lead to “superhuman” strivings as a defense or compensatory strategy to resolve feelings of self-concept uncertainty.

Pachankis and colleagues’ (Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler, 2013; Pachankis & Goldfried, 2006) samples only contained homosexual males that were in university and involved in LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans) community groups. Therefore, it is unclear the degree to which their findings are representative of the general homosexual male population. Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan (2010) warn of such sampling biases, especially within a university setting, as often wealthy, Western undergraduate students are not a representative group. As such, overachieving behavior found by Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler (2013) might simply be the extension of some homosexual males “having become quite used to being one of the best in...class” (Tobias, 1973, p. 24). Conversely, Tobias (1973) suggests that other homosexual males might “...desperately wish they were different, [and] they may lose their self-respect and with it their ‘manly’ self-confidence. As a result, many fail to fulfill their potential by failing to pursue any sort of career” (p. 130-132). Interestingly then, it’s possible that only specific sub-groups of homosexual males are overachievers. Further, Pachankis and colleagues’ samples were only limited to male participants and, as such, the generalizability of *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis to other groups with minority sexual orientations is unknown.

In Chapter Two of this thesis, I examined four hypotheses testing whether there are group differences in fear of negative evaluation (Leary, 1983; Watson & Friend, 1969), striving to avoid inferiority through insecure striving (Gilbert et al., 2007), and validation seeking (Dykman, 1998).

The first hypothesis suggests homosexual males will score higher on measures of fear of negative evaluation, striving to avoid inferiority through insecure striving, and validation-seeking behavior, when compared to heterosexual males. This will be called the *general sexual orientation hypothesis*.

The second hypothesis suggests gender typical homosexual males will score higher on measures of fear of negative evaluation, striving to avoid inferiority through insecure striving, and validation seeking behavior, when compared to gender atypical homosexual males and heterosexual males. This will be called the *gender typical hypothesis*.

The third hypothesis suggests gender atypical homosexual males will score higher on measures of fear of negative evaluation, striving to avoid inferiority through insecure striving, and validation-seeking behavior, when compared to gender typical homosexual males and heterosexual males. This will be called the *gender atypical hypothesis*.

The fourth hypothesis suggests homosexual males with unaccepting parents will score higher on measures of fear of negative evaluation, striving to avoid inferiority through insecure striving, and validation-seeking behavior, when compared to homosexual males with accepting parents. This will be called the *parental acceptance hypothesis*.

In Chapter Three of this thesis, I examined whether homosexual males will score higher on measures of growth seeking, when compared to homosexual males. This will be called the *growth seeking hypothesis*. The participant sample employed in this chapter is identical to the one employed in Chapter Two.

In Chapter Four of this thesis, I examined whether homosexual females will score higher on measures of fear of negative evaluation, striving to avoid inferiority, and validation-seeking and growth-seeking behavior, when compared to heterosexual females. This will be called the *female sexual orientation hypothesis*.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Not All Homosexual Males Were the Best Little Boys in the World: Validation Seeking, Feelings of Inferiority, and Fear of Negative Evaluation in Relation to Male Sexual Orientation**

#### **Abstract**

*The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis holds that homosexual males are overachievers because they seek to deflect attention away from their stigmatized sexual orientations and over-compensate for feelings of inferiority and shame. An implicit aspect of this reasoning is the assumption that homosexual males experience apprehension during social situations in which their self-worth is under evaluation and, as such, they overachieve in an attempt to obtain validation from others. In line with this hypothesis, I examined whether male sexual orientation differences existed for *validation seeking, striving to avoid inferiority* through *insecure striving* and *fear of negative evaluation*. More specifically, I tested four different versions of *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis. First, I tested whether homosexual males, in general, scored higher than heterosexual males for measures of validation seeking, striving to avoid inferiority through insecure striving, and fear of negative evaluation. Second, I tested whether more masculine homosexual males scored higher for these measures compared to less masculine homosexual males. Third, I tested whether feminine homosexual males scored higher on these measures compared to less feminine homosexual males. Fourth, I tested whether homosexual males who were less accepted by their parents scored higher on these measures compared to homosexual males who were accepted by their parents. In contrast to what one would predict based on *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis,

the relevant groups did not differ for measures of validation seeking, insecure striving, and fear of negative evaluation.

## Introduction

In 1973, Andrew Tobias (aka John Reid) published a memoir entitled *The Best Little Boy in the World*, in which he described his obsessive drive to overachieve relative to others. Tobias attributed his motivation to overachieve as stemming from a need to overcompensate for feelings of inferiority and shame associated with his same-sex sexual orientation. Further, he stressed that this all-consuming focus on overachieving was a strategy to divert attention away from his minority sexual orientation status. *The Best Little Boy in the World* was a best seller and has been continuously in print since 1973. It is described as a “classic” in the canon of homosexual non-fiction literature. The success of *The Best Little Boy in the World* may have helped to cement as “folk wisdom” the notion that homosexual males are overachievers because they seek to deflect attention away from their stigmatized sexual orientations and over-compensate for feelings of inferiority and shame. An implicit aspect of this reasoning is the assumption that homosexual males experience apprehension during social situations in which their self-worth is under evaluation and, as such, they overachieve in an attempt to obtain validation from others. This reasoning has been labeled *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis (Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler, 2013).

Tobias’ (1973) memoir was followed by other autobiographies that echoed its message that homosexual males overachieved as a way of masking their sexual orientations and assuaging feelings of low self-worth (Downs, 2005; Monette, 1992; Sullivan, 1998; Yoshino, 2006). For example, Yoshino (2006) states: “I knew only I was asked not to be myself... On Saturday nights, I would sit in my cement-block dorm room with my face lit green by my IBM’s glow, agonizing not over women, or men, but line

breaks” (p. 5). Not surprisingly, this pervasive characterization of homosexual males was, in turn, echoed in the academic literature (e.g., LeVay, Baldwin, & Baldwin, 2009).

Although the stereotype of homosexual males as being the best little boys in the world is widespread, there exists surprisingly little empirical evidence in support of this idea. In this study, I examined the *motivational* components of *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis using a broad sample of participants recruited from an Internet social networking site (Facebook). In line with the predictions of the hypothesis, I investigated whether male sexual orientation differences existed for *validation seeking* (Dykman, 1998), *striving to avoid inferiority* through *insecure striving* (Gilbert et al., 2007), and *fear of negative evaluation* (Watson & Friend, 1969; Leary, 1983). As such, I did not examine overachieving *per se*, but rather, the psychological tendencies that *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis implies are causal psychological factors leading to overachieving in homosexual males. More specifically, I tested four different versions of *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis. First, I tested a *general sexual orientation hypothesis* by examining whether homosexual males, as a group, scored higher than heterosexual males for measures of validation seeking, striving to avoid inferiority through insecure striving, and fear of negative evaluation, compared to less masculine homosexual males.

Second, LeVay et al. (2009) argue: “Homosexual adolescents who are more conventional in their gender characteristics have the option of passing as straight, and many do. Quite commonly, such teens go into an ‘overachiever’ mode, in which excellence in academic or other fields serves to mask their problematic sexuality” (p.386). Consequently, I tested LeVay et al.’s (2009) *gender typical hypothesis* by

examining whether more masculine homosexual males scored higher for measures of validation seeking, striving to avoid inferiority through insecure striving, and fear of negative evaluation, compared to less masculine homosexual males and heterosexual males.

Third, evidence suggests that, compared to conventionally gendered homosexual males, gender atypical homosexual males have lower psychological well-being, including self-esteem (Rieger & Savin-Williams, 2011). It is noteworthy that gender atypical homosexual males face ostracism and ridicule, not only from outside the homosexual community, but from inside the homosexual community as well (Bailey, 2003; Bergling, 2001; Rieger & Savin-Williams, 2011). Interestingly, Williams (1992) states that highly feminine, same-sex attracted males from native North American cultures may strive to overachieve at domestic tasks as a means of gaining status within their communities. In light of this literature, I tested the *gender atypical hypothesis* to examine whether feminine homosexual males scored higher on measures of validation seeking, striving to avoid inferiority, and fear of negative evaluation, compared to less feminine homosexual males and heterosexual males.

Fourth, Dykman (1998) suggest that a lack of parental acceptance or a perceived lack of acceptance can motivate individuals to prove themselves, seek validation, and strive for external measures of achievement. Indeed, Tobias (1973) suggests that making his parents proud largely motivated him to be successful in school and work.

Consequently, I tested the *parental acceptance hypothesis* by examining whether homosexual males who were less accepted by their parents scored higher on measures of

validation seeking, striving to avoid inferiority, and fear of negative evaluation, compared to homosexual males who were accepted by their parents.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

All participants ( $N = 240$ ) were Canadians aged 18 years of age or older and were recruited through the popular social networking site, Facebook.

Kinsey ratings (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948) of sexual feelings over the past year were obtained for all participants. A total of 116 males were categorized as heterosexual. Of these, 96 were exclusively heterosexual (*Kinsey 0*) and 20 reported most sexual feelings toward females, but occasionally about males (*Kinsey 1*). A total of 124 males were categorized as homosexual. Of these, 101 were exclusively homosexual (*Kinsey 6*) and 23 reported most sexual feelings toward males, but occasionally about females (*Kinsey 5*).

### **Procedures and Measures**

All data were collected via an online questionnaire. The questionnaires included: (1) a biographic questionnaire pertaining to sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, religiosity in childhood, and highest level of education, (2) the Validation-Seeking subscale of the Goal Orientation Inventory (Dykman, 1998), (3) the Insecure Striving subscale of the Striving to Avoid Inferiority scale (Gilbert et al., 2007), (4) the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale (Leary, 1994), (5) the Childhood Gender Identity subscale (Barlett & Vasey, 2006), (6) the Gender Diagnosticity Measure (Lippa, 2005), and (7) one question pertaining to level of parental acceptance.

The Validation Seeking subscale is an 18-item subscale that measures an individual's propensity to strive to prove their worth, competence, and likability (Dykman, 1998). This subscale is generalizable to all individuals, not simply those that are in social situations where overachieving behavior is valued and promoted (Dykman, 1998). Some of the items that comprise this subscale include: (a) instead of just enjoying activities and social interactions, most situations to me feel like a major test of my basic worth, competence, and likeability; (b) I feel like I'm constantly trying to prove that I'm as competent as people around me; and (c) I tend to view difficult or stressful situations as all-or-none tests of my basic worth as a person. Responses were scored using a 7-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

The Insecure Striving subscale (Gilbert et al., 2007) is a 19-item subscale used to measure individual's beliefs that they have to strive to avoid inferiority. Some of the items that comprise this subscale include: (a) to be valued by others I have to strive to succeed; (b) to get on with others, you have to compete in the world; and (c) if I don't strive to achieve, I will be seen as inferior to other people. Responses were scored using a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*).

The Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale (Leary, 1994) is a 12-item scale that measures the degree to which individuals experience apprehension at the prospect of being evaluated negatively. Some items that comprised this Scale included: (a) I worry about what other people think of me even when I know it doesn't make a difference; (b) I am frequently afraid of other people noticing my shortcomings; and (c) I often worry I will say or do the wrong things. Responses were scored using a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (*not at all characteristic of me*) to 5 (*extremely characteristic of me*).

The Childhood Gender Identity scale was used to measure childhood gendered-behavior (CGIS; Bartlett & Vasey, 2006). This scale consists of Male-Typical Behavior subscale and a Female-Typical Behavior subscales. For both subscales, participants were asked to rate the frequency with which they engaged in various childhood activities when they were less than 12 years of age. The Male Typical-Behavior subscale consisted of 5 items including: (a) play with boys, (b) play with boys' toys and boys' games, (c) take the boys' role in pretend play, (d) play rough games and sports, and (e) do boys chores. Responses were scored using a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always/everyday*). The Female-Typical Behavior subscale consisted of 6 items including: (a) play with girls, (b) play with girls' toys and girls' games, (c) take the girls' role in pretend play, (d) put on girls' makeup, clothes, or accessories, (e) talk and act like a girl, and (f) do girls' chores. Responses were scored using a 5-point Likert-type scale that scale that ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always/everyday*).

The Gender Diagnosticity Measure (Lippa, 2005) was used to measure adult gendered-behavior. This scale consists of Male-Typical subscale and a Female-Typical subscales. For the Male-Typical subscale, participants were asked to rate their interest in the following male typical adult hobbies: (a) home electronics; computers, (b) video games, (c) fishing, (d) playing poker, (e) playing team sports, (f) watching sports on TV, (g) weight lifting, and (h) working on cars. For the Female-Typical subscale, participants were asked to rate their interest in the following female typical adult hobbies: (a) dancing, (b) sewing and knitting, (c) gardening, (d) singing, (e) clothes shopping, (f) watching romance movies, (g) taking and collecting photos of family and friends, (h)

reading romance novels, and (i) cooking. Responses were scored using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranged from 1 (*Strongly dislike*) to 5 (*Strongly like*).

Participants were asked a single question to ascertain the degree to which their parent's accepted their sexual orientation. Participants were asked, "When you came out, how accepting were your parents of your sexual orientation?" Responses were scored using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Very accepting*) to 8 (*Very unaccepted*).

## **Results**

A 2-tailed Pearson  $r$  correlation indicate that the Validation Seeking subscale, the Insecure Striving subscale, and the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale, were all significantly correlated with each other (Validation Seeking subscale/Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale:  $r = .771, p < .001$ ; Validation Seeking subscale/Insecure Striving subscale:  $r = .731, p < .001$ ; Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale/Insecure Striving subscale:  $r = .689, p < .001$ ).

### **General Sexual Orientation Hypothesis**

Descriptive statistics for all biographic variables were calculated and are presented in Table 2.1 according to group. Subscale scores and standardized internal consistency reliabilities (alphas) are presented in Table 2.2 according to group. There was a significant difference between groups for age (heterosexual males:  $M = 43.19$ ;  $SD = 16.63$ ; homosexual males:  $M = 38.65$ ;  $SD = 14.56$ ;  $t [238] = 2.252, p = .025$ ). Age was therefore controlled for in subsequent statistical analyses. There was no significant difference between groups for religiosity in childhood (heterosexual males:  $M = 3.05$ ;  $SD = 1.34$ ; homosexual males:  $M = 3.08$ ;  $SD = 1.40$ ;  $t [238] = -.163, p = .871$ ). Chi-square tests of independence demonstrated there were no significant differences between groups

for education ( $\chi^2 [5, N = 240] = 9.242, p < .100$ ) or socioeconomic status ( $\chi^2 [4, N = 240] = 1.274, p = .866$ ).

Because the (sub)scales employed here were all highly positively correlated, use of a Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) is inherently weak, and, as such, I followed the recommendations of Cole et al. (1994) and Ramsey (1982) by employing three separate two-way Analyses of Covariance (ANCOVA) to assess whether there were differences in (1) validation seeking, (2) insecure striving, and (3) fear of negative evaluation, where group (heterosexual male and homosexual male) was the between-subjects factor, subscale score was the within-subjects factor, and participants' age was the covariate. First, a two-way ANCOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group difference in validation seeking ( $F [1, 237] = .769, p = .381, \eta^2 = .003$ ). Second, a two-way ANCOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group differences in insecure striving ( $F [1, 237] = .375, p = .541, \eta^2 = .002$ ). Third, a two-way ANCOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group differences in fear of negative evaluation ( $F [1, 237] = 2.73, p = .100, \eta^2 = .011$ ).

### **Gender Typical Hypothesis**

To test this hypothesis, three groups were compared including heterosexual males, masculine homosexual males and less masculine homosexual males. Homosexual males were divided into masculine and less masculine groups using the mean scores for the Male-Typical subscale of the CGIS. Those below the mean score for homosexual males were classified as *less masculine*, whereas those above were classified *masculine*. Subsequently, there was a significant difference between the homosexual groups for masculinity in childhood (less masculine:  $M = 3.25; SD = .57$ ; masculine:  $M = 4.45; SD =$

.37;  $t$  [122] = -13.63,  $p < .001$ ). The same procedure was employed using mean scores derived from the Male-Typical subscale Gender Diagnosticity Measure. Subsequently, there was a significant difference between the homosexual groups for masculinity in adulthood (less masculine: 2.39;  $SD = .37$ ; masculine:  $M = 3.22$ ;  $SD = .29$ ;  $t$  [122] = -14.04,  $p < .001$ ). Analyses for the childhood measure of masculinity (i.e., Male-Typical subscale of the CGIS) and the adult measure of masculinity (i.e., Male-Typical subscale of the Gender Diagnosticity Measure) were conducted separately.

**Childhood measure of masculinity.** Descriptive statistics for all biographic variables were calculated and are presented in Table 2.3 according to group. Subscale scores and standardized internal consistency reliabilities (alphas) are presented in Table 2.4 according to group. One-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) indicated a significant difference between groups for age ( $F$  [2, 239] = 4.047,  $p = .019$ ), but no significant difference between groups for religiosity in childhood ( $F$  [2, 239] = .035,  $p = .966$ ). Age was therefore controlled for in all subsequent statistical analyses. Chi-square tests of independence indicated no significant differences between groups for socioeconomic status ( $\chi^2$  [4,  $N = 240$ ] = .980,  $p = .913$ ), but there was a significant difference between groups for level of education ( $\chi^2$  [8,  $N = 240$ ] = 17.647,  $p = .024$ , Cramer's  $V = .192$ ). Level of education was therefore controlled for in subsequent analyses.

Because the (sub)scales employed here were all highly positively correlated, use of a MANCOVA is inherently weak, and, as such, I followed the recommendations of Cole et al. (1994) and Ramsey (1982) by employing three separate two-way Analyses of Covariance (ANCOVA) to assess whether there were differences in (1) validation seeking, (2) insecure striving, and (3) fear of negative evaluation, where group

(masculine in childhood homosexual male, less masculine in childhood homosexual male, and heterosexual male) was the between-subject factor, subscale score was the within-subject factor, and age and level of education as covariates. First, a two-way ANCOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group difference in validation seeking ( $F [2, 235] = .886, p = .414, \eta^2 = .007$ ). Second, a two-way ANCOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group differences in insecure striving ( $F [2, 235] = .417, p = .659, \eta^2 = .004$ ). Third, a two-way ANCOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group differences in fear of negative evaluation ( $F [2, 235] = 2.245, p = .108, \eta^2 = .019$ ).

**Adult measure of masculinity.** Descriptive statistics for all biographic variables were calculated and are presented in Table 2.5 according to group. Subscale scores and standardized internal consistency reliabilities (alphas) are presented in Table 2.6 according to group. One-way ANOVAS indicated a significant difference between groups for age ( $F [2, 239] = 3.126, p = .046$ ), but no significant difference between groups for religiosity in childhood ( $F [2, 239] = .238, p = .789$ ). Age was therefore controlled for in all subsequent statistical analyses. Chi-square tests of independence indicated no significant differences between groups for socioeconomic status ( $\chi^2 [4, N = 240] = .589, p = .964$ ) or education ( $\chi^2 [8, N = 240] = 13.886, p = .085$ ).

Because the (sub)scales employed here were all highly positively correlated, use of a MANCOVA is inherently weak, and, as such, I followed the recommendations of Cole et al. (1994) and Ramsey (1982) by employing three separate two-way Analyses of Covariance (ANCOVA) to assess whether there were differences in (1) validation seeking, (2) insecure striving, and (3) fear of negative evaluation, where group

(masculine in adulthood homosexual male, less masculine in adulthood homosexual male, and heterosexual male) was the between-subject factor, subscale score was the within-subject factor, and participants' age as a covariate. First, a two-way ANCOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group difference in validation seeking ( $F [2, 236] = .383, p = .682, \eta^2 = .003$ ). Second, a two-way ANCOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group differences in insecure striving ( $F [2, 236] = .191, p = .826, \eta^2 = .002$ ). Third, a two-way ANCOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group differences in fear of negative evaluation ( $F [2, 236] = 1.415, p = .245, \eta^2 = .012$ ).

### **Gender Atypical Hypothesis**

To test this hypothesis, three groups were compared including heterosexual males, feminine homosexual males and less feminine homosexual males. Homosexual males were divided into feminine and less feminine groups using the mean scores for the Female-Typical subscale of the CGIS. Those below the mean score for homosexual males were classified as *less feminine*, whereas those above were classified *feminine*. Subsequently, there was a significant difference between homosexual groups for femininity in childhood (less feminine:  $M = 1.79; SD = .37$ ; feminine:  $M = 3.13; SD = .59$ ;  $t [122] = -15.13, p < .001$ ). The same procedure was employed using mean scores derived from the Female-Typical subscale of the Gender Diagnosticity Measure. Subsequently, there was a significant difference between homosexual groups for femininity in adulthood (less feminine:  $M = 2.61; SD = .36$ ; feminine:  $M = 3.50; SD = .30$ ;  $t [122] = -15.00, p < .001$ ). Analyses for the childhood measure of femininity (i.e., Female-Typical subscale of the CGIS) and the adult measure of femininity (i.e., Female-Typical subscale of the Gender Diagnosticity Measure) were conducted separately.

**Childhood measure of femininity.** Descriptive statistics for all biographic variables were calculated and are presented in Table 2.7 according to group. Subscale scores and standardized internal consistency reliabilities (alphas) are presented in Table 2.8 according to group. A one-way ANOVA indicated no significant difference between groups for age ( $F [2, 239] = 2.580, p = .078$ ) or religiosity in childhood ( $F [2, 239] = .707, p = .494$ ). Chi-square tests of independence indicated no significant differences between groups for socioeconomic status ( $\chi^2 [4, N = 240] = 6.643, p < .156$ ) or education ( $\chi^2 [8, 240] = 9.986, p = .266$ ).

Because the (sub)scales employed here were all highly positively correlated, use of a MANCOVA is inherently weak, and, as such, I followed the recommendations of Cole et al. (1994) and Ramsey (1982) by employing three separate two-way Analyses of Covariance (ANCOVA) to assess whether there were differences in (1) validation seeking, (2) insecure striving, and (3) fear of negative evaluation, where group (feminine in childhood homosexual male, less feminine in childhood homosexual male, and heterosexual male) was the between-subject factor, subscale score was the within-subject factor. First, a two-way ANOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group difference in validation seeking ( $F [2, 237] = .114, p = .892, \eta^2 = .001$ ). Second, a two-way ANOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group differences in insecure striving ( $F [2, 237] = .746, p = .475, \eta^2 = .006$ ). Third, a two-way ANOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group differences in fear of negative evaluation ( $F [2, 237] = 2.595, p = .077, \eta^2 = .021$ ).

**Adult measure of femininity.** Descriptive statistics for all biographic variables were calculated and are presented in Table 2.9 according to group. Subscale scores and

standardized internal consistency reliabilities (alphas) are presented in Table 2.10 according to group. A one-way ANOVA indicated no significant difference between groups for age ( $F [2, 212.69] = 2.814, p = .062$ ), but there was a significant difference between groups for religiosity in childhood ( $F [2, 239] = 4.933, p = .008$ ). Religiosity in childhood was therefore controlled for in all subsequent statistical analyses. Chi-square tests of independence indicated no significant differences between groups for socioeconomic status ( $\chi^2 [4, N = 240] = .309, p = .989$ ) or level of education ( $\chi^2 [8, N = 240] = 11.865, p = .157$ ).

Because the (sub)scales employed here were all highly positively correlated, use of a MANCOVA is inherently weak, and, as such, I followed the recommendations of Cole et al. (1994) and Ramsey (1982) by employing three separate two-way Analyses of Covariance (ANCOVA) to assess whether there were differences in (1) validation seeking, (2) insecure striving, and (3) fear of negative evaluation, where group (feminine in adulthood homosexual male, less feminine in adulthood homosexual male, and heterosexual male) was the between-subject factor, subscale score was the within-subject factor, and participants' religiosity in childhood was a covariate. First, a two-way ANCOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group difference in validation seeking ( $F [2, 236] = .837, p = .434, \eta^2 = .007$ ). Second, a two-way ANCOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group differences in insecure striving ( $F [2, 236] = 1.235, p = .293, \eta^2 = .010$ ). Third, a two-way ANCOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group differences in fear of negative evaluation ( $F [2, 236] = 2.740, p = .067, \eta^2 = .023$ ).

### **Parental Acceptance Hypothesis**

To test this hypothesis, two groups were compared including homosexual males whose parents were accepting of their sexual orientation when they came out and homosexual males whose parents were not accepting when they came out. Homosexual males were divided into accepted and not accepted groups using the mean scores for the Acceptance Question. Those below the mean score for homosexual males were classified as *not accepted*, whereas those above were classified *accepted*. Subsequently, there was a significant difference between groups for degree of acceptance by parents (not accepted:  $M = 1.92$ ;  $SD = 1.06$ ; accepted:  $M = 6.45$ ;  $SD = .65$ ;  $t [151.04] = -34.48$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Descriptive statistics for all biographic variables were calculated and are presented in Table 2.11 according to group. Subscale scores and standardized internal consistency reliabilities (alphas) are presented in Table 2.12 according to group. There was no significant difference between groups for age (accepted:  $M = 35.83$ ;  $SD = 13.63$ ; not accepted:  $M = 36.97$ ;  $SD = 15.21$ ;  $t [172] = .062$ ,  $p = .951$ ). There was a significant difference between groups for religiosity in childhood (accepted:  $M = 2.88$ ;  $SD = 1.41$ ; not accepted:  $M = 3.33$ ;  $SD = 1.43$ ;  $t [172] = 2.088$ ,  $p = .038$ ). Religiosity in childhood was therefore controlled for in all subsequent statistical analyses. Chi-square tests of independence indicated no significant differences between groups for socioeconomic status ( $\chi^2 [2, N = 174] = .420$ ,  $p = .811$ ) or level of education ( $\chi^2 [4, N = 174] = .429$ ,  $p = .980$ ).

Because the (sub)scales employed here were all highly positively correlated, use of a MANCOVA is inherently weak, and, as such, I followed the recommendations of Cole et al. (1994) and Ramsey (1982) by employing three separate two-way Analyses of Covariance (ANCOVA) to assess whether there were differences in (1) validation

seeking, (2) insecure striving, and (3) fear of negative evaluation, where group (accepted homosexual males and less accepted homosexual males) was the between-subject factor, (sub)scale score was the within-subject factor, and participants' religiosity in childhood was a covariate. First, a two-way ANCOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group difference in validation seeking ( $F [1, 171] = .924, p = .338, \eta^2 = .005$ ). Second, a two-way ANCOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group differences in insecure striving ( $F [1, 171] = 2.924, p = .089, \eta^2 = .017$ ). Third, a two-way ANCOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group differences in fear of negative evaluation ( $F [1, 171] = .652, p = .420, \eta^2 = .004$ ).

### **Discussion**

In this study I investigated four versions of *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis, which holds that homosexual males are overachievers because they seek to deflect attention away from their stigmatized sexual orientations and over-compensate for feelings of inferiority and shame. Implicit in this reason is the assumption that homosexual males are particularly insecure, or even fearful, of social situations in which their self-worth is under evaluation and, as such, they overachieve in an attempt to obtain validation from others. I examined the motivational aspects of this hypothesis by comparing groups for measures of validation seeking, striving to avoid inferiority through insecure striving, and fear of negative evaluation. More specifically I examined whether these measures differed between: (1) homosexual males versus heterosexual males in general, (2) masculine homosexual males versus less masculine homosexual males and heterosexual males, (3) feminine homosexual males versus less feminine homosexual males and heterosexual males, and (4) homosexual males whose parents accept them

versus those whose parents do not. In contrast to what one would predict based on *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis, the relevant groups did not differ for measures of validation seeking, insecure striving, and fear of negative evaluation. As such, the results of this study indicate that not all homosexual males were “the best little boys in the world.” The homosexual males in my sample may have been overachievers, but if so, they were not overachieving for the reasons implied by the hypothesis.

Pachankis and Goldfried (2006) demonstrated that homosexual males reported greater fear of negative evaluation compared to their heterosexual counterparts. Homosexual males who were less open about their sexual orientations and those who are less comfortable with being homosexual were more likely to experience anxiety in social interactions, even in relatively innocuous ones, because they feared being negatively evaluated by others. Pachankis and Goldfried (2006) utilized the Fear of Negative Evaluation scale (Watson & Friend, 1969), which employs a dichotomous response scale. This measure has been criticized as inferior to the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale (Leary, 1983), which I employed in this study. As Rodebaugh et al. (2004) state, because the Fear of Negative Evaluation scale (Watson & Friend, 1969) utilizes a dichotomous response scale it may disproportionately force individuals into extreme groups. In contrast, the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale’s (Leary, 1983) use of a Likert-type scale circumvents this problem by increasing the dimensionality of participants’ potential responses. The use of a dichotomous response scale, combined with the use of parametric statistical tests on nominal, dichotomous and non-normally distributed data from potentially unrepresentative undergraduate populations, may have contributed to the significant group differences observed by Pachankis and Goldfried for fear of negative

evaluation. For these reasons, I believe that my results pertaining to Fear of Negative Evaluation may be more representative of the homosexual male population than those of Pachankis and Goldfried.

Previous research by Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler (2013) demonstrated that, compared to their heterosexual counterparts, sexual minority males reported that their self-worth was more contingent on academic competence, appearance, and competition (i.e., “knowing I am better on a task than others raises my self-esteem”). The length of sexual orientation concealment (i.e., time “in the closet”) also predicted investment in these domains. Further, social stigma predicted the degree to which sexual minority males sought self-worth through competition. Taken together, the Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler (2013) study is consistent with *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis.

An important limitation of the Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler (2013) study is that their sample of sexual minority males was recruited entirely from homosexual student groups at universities. This recruitment strategy may have biased their sample of sexual minority males toward individuals who were already predisposed to overachieve and compete in academic domains, as well as more generally in non-academic domains (e.g., appearance enhancement). As Dykman (1998) suggests individuals who strive for validation in an attempt to prove their competence and self-worth generally tend to do so in all domains of their lives. Downs (2005) memoir, *The Velvet Rage*, underscores this tendency as he states, “I survived by learning to conform to the expectations of others... What would you like me to be? A great student? A first-chair violinist? How would we love ourselves when everything around us told us that we were unlovable? (p.

15-16). In addition, Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler (2013) sample may have been further biased because sexual minority males who join homosexual student university groups may be disproportionately more likely to be seeking validation from other homosexual males because they experience a heightened sense of social stigma, compared to sexual minority males who do not seek membership in such groups (Cass, 1979, 1984).

In this study, I examined *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis using a broader sample of participants recruited from an Internet social networking site (Facebook), whose overall membership is not based around minority sexual orientation status. As such, my sample was drawn from a more general population and, as such, may have been less prone to bias compared to the university sample in Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler's (2013) study. Indeed, Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan (2010) demonstrate how unrepresentative Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) undergraduate student populations can be in terms of behavioral and psychological research. As such, caution must be exercised in utilizing university undergraduates to generalize about behavioral and psychological characteristics of populations as a whole. For these reasons, I believe that my sample may be more representative of the homosexual male population, in general, than the undergraduate population recruited by Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler.

In this study, I did not measure overachieving *per se*, rather I measured psychological tendencies that *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis implies are causal psychological factors leading to overachieving in homosexual males. Consistent with previous research (Bremser & Gallup, 2012; Dykman, 1998; Gilbert et al., 2007; Pachankis & Goldfried, 2006; Watson & Friend, 1969), the measures I employed in this

study, namely, the Validation Seeking subscale, the Insecure Striving subscale, and the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale, are all highly correlated with each other, as well as other psychological factors leading to overachieving, such as *performance goals*. When individuals are concerned with gaining validation of their competence they are said to exhibit performance goals (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). As such, performance goals are closely linked to validation seeking, insecure striving and fear of negative evaluation. The work by Grant and Dweck (2003) demonstrates a link between performance goals and actual achievement in the real world.

Grant and Dweck (2003) suggest that individuals with performance goals will be strategic in where they exert effort so that success and, in turn, validation is more assured. That is, they will exert significant effort in situations where they are validated, but will withdraw and redirect effort in situations where they are not validated. As Tobias (1973) notes, he excelled in school and his chosen profession, but, when playing baseball, he “couldn’t bear the embarrassment of standing out there in right field, left out, frightened to death that someone, some stupid lefty crackerjack batter, just *might* slam one out right field” (p. 24) where he would then have to catch it or risk failing to catch it.

Many studies demonstrate that homosexual males are female typical in certain aspects of their behavior and psychology (Bailey, 2003; Lippa, 2005). In particular, homosexual males tend to be female typical with regard to their occupational and hobby interests compared to heterosexual males. Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, and Bouvrette (2003) demonstrate that females are particularly likely to derive self-worth from academic achievement. It is perhaps not surprising then that Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler’s (2013) homosexual male participants strategically focused their efforts

to overachieve in female-typical domains such as academics (Croker et al., 2003) and appearance enhancement (Buss, 1988). Underscoring the link between male homosexuality and the strategic focus on achievement-related efforts within female-typical domains, Tobias (1973) asserts, “Surely you wouldn’t question the relationship between grades and personal worth?” (p. 135).

Empirical evidence suggests that in certain female dominated careers, such as nursing, males earn more, and are promoted faster, when compared to their female colleagues (Budig, 2002). It stands to reason that homosexual males would be more prevalent in such occupations given their female-typical occupational interests (Lippa, 2005). Consequently, homosexual males who have female typical employment may be more successful than their female colleagues. This situation may have contributed to the perception that homosexual males are overachievers.

Dweck & Leggett (1988) identified a subset of individuals who seemed unconcerned with gaining favorable judgment of their competence. Instead, these individuals were motivated to take risks in hopes of learning and growing even if faced with failure. Dweck and Leggett (1988) argue that individuals with *learning goals* are more persistent and sophisticated in their problem solving skills, which results in greater learning and eventual success. Individuals with learning goals are intrinsically motivated to increasing their competence. Such individuals differ from performance goal oriented individuals who are extrinsically motivated to engage in achievement-related activities in order to prove their self-worth to others. Grant and Dweck (2003) demonstrate that students who exhibit learning goals have better academic success, than individuals with performance goals. It would be interesting if future research could examine whether some

homosexual males overachieve because they are more learning goal oriented than their heterosexual counterparts.

Table 2.1 – General Sexual Orientation Hypothesis

*Descriptive Statistics for Biographic Variables by Group.*

	Heterosexual Males	Homosexual Males
Biographic Variable	( <i>n</i> = 116)	( <i>n</i> = 124)
Age (in years) <i>M</i> (SD)	43.19 (16.63)	38.65 (14.56)
Religiosity <i>M</i> (SD)	3.05 (1.34)	3.08 (1.40)
Socioeconomic Status		
Lower (%)	8.62	6.45
Lower Middle (%)	22.41	13.71
Middle (%)	50.86	51.61
Upper Middle (%)	17.24	17.74
Upper (%)	.86	2.42
Education		
Completed Primary (%)	.86	0
Some High School (%)	10.34	3.23
Completed High School (%)	18.10	11.29
Some Post Secondary (%)	20.69	25.81
Completed Post Secondary (%)	31.90	38.71
Graduate School (%)	18.10	20.97

Table 2.2 – General Sexual Orientation Hypothesis

*Subscale Scores and Standardized Internal Consistency Reliabilities (alphas) by Group.*

	Heterosexual	Homosexual
	Males	Males
Scale	( <i>n</i> = 116)	( <i>n</i> = 124)
Validation Seeking subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	3.68 (1.54)	3.59 (1.68)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.97	.98
Insecure Striving subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	2.58 (.92)	2.70 (.93)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.96	.96
Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale: <i>M</i> (SD)	2.64 (.90)	2.90 (.94)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.93	.92
Gender Diagnosticity Measure – Female Typical		
subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	2.90 (.67)	3.11 (.55)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.77	.57
Gender Diagnosticity Measure – Male Typical		
subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	3.33 (.59)	2.89 (.52)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.59	.50
CGIS – Female Typical subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	1.88 (.59)	2.46 (.83)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.77	.81
CGIS – Male Typical subscale <i>M</i> (SD)	4.23 (.80)	3.80 (.77)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.83	.74

Table 2.3 – Gender Typical Hypothesis (Childhood Masculinity)

*Descriptive Statistics for Biographic Variables by Group*

	Heterosexual	Masculine in Childhood Homosexual	Less Masculine in Childhood Homosexual
Biographic Variable	Males ( $n = 116$ )	Males ( $n = 57$ )	Males ( $n = 67$ )
Age (in years) $M$ (SD)	43.19 (16.63)	41.62 (14.57)	36.43 (14.29)
Religiosity $M$ (SD)	3.05 (1.34)	3.05 (1.37)	3.10 (1.44)
Socioeconomic Status			
Lower (%)	31.03	24.56	31.34
Middle (%)	50.86	54.39	49.25
Upper (%)	18.10	21.05	19.40
Education			
Some High School (%)	11.2	7.02	0.00
Completed High School (%)	18.10	8.77	13.43
Some Post Secondary (%)	20.69	35.09	17.91
Completed Post Secondary (%)	31.90	31.58	44.78
Graduate School (%)	18.10	17.54	23.88

Table 2.4 – Gender Typical Hypothesis (Childhood Masculinity)

*Subscale Scores and Standardized Internal Consistency Reliabilities (alphas) by Group.*

		Masculine in Childhood	Less Masculine in Childhood
	Heterosexual Males ( <i>n</i> = 116)	Homosexual Males ( <i>n</i> = 57)	Homosexual Males ( <i>n</i> = 67)
<hr/>			
Validation Seeking			
subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	3.68 (1.54)	3.38 (1.76)	3.76 (1.60)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.97	.98	.97
Insecure Striving			
subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	2.58 (.92)	2.60 (.93)	2.80 (.92)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.96	.96	.96
Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation			
scale: <i>M</i> (SD)	2.64 (.90)	2.77 (.1.00)	3.02 (.88)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.93	.93	.90

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Table 2.5 – Gender Typical Hypothesis (Adulthood Masculinity)

*Descriptive Statistics for Biographic Variables by Group*

		Masculine in Adulthood	Less Masculine in Adulthood
	Heterosexual	Homosexual	Homosexual
Biographic Variable	Males ( <i>n</i> = 116)	Males ( <i>n</i> = 74)	Males ( <i>n</i> = 50)
Age (in years) <i>M</i> (SD)	43.19 (16.63)	37.41 (14.29)	40.50 (14.90)
Religiosity <i>M</i> (SD)	3.05 (1.34)	3.15 (1.37)	2.98 (1.45)
Socioeconomic Status			
Lower (%)	31.03	29.73	26.00
Middle (%)	50.86	51.35	52.00
Upper (%)	18.10	18.92	22.00
Education			
Some High School (%)	11.20	4.05	2.00
Completed High School (%)	18.10	10.81	12.00
Some Post Secondary (%)	20.69	27.03	24.00
Completed Post Secondary (%)	31.90	43.24	32.00
Graduate School (%)	18.10	14.86	30.00

Table 2.6 – Gender Typical Hypothesis (Adulthood Masculinity)

*Subscale Scores and Standardized Internal Consistency Reliabilities (alphas) by Group.*

		Masculine in Adulthood	Less Masculine in Adulthood
	Heterosexual Males ( <i>n</i> = 116)	Homosexual Males ( <i>n</i> = 74)	Homosexual Males ( <i>n</i> = 50)
<hr/>			
Validation Seeking			
subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	3.68 (1.54)	3.60 (1.73)	3.50 (1.60)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.97	.98	.97
Insecure Striving			
subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	2.58 (.92)	2.71 (.95)	2.69 (.91)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.96	.96	.95
Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation			
scale: <i>M</i> (SD)	2.64 (.90)	2.95 (.95)	2.84 (.94)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.93	.92	.90

Table 2.7 – Gender Atypical Hypothesis (Childhood Femininity)

*Descriptive Statistics for Biographic Variables by Group*

		Feminine in Childhood	Less Feminine in Childhood
	Heterosexual	Homosexual	Homosexual
Biographic Variable	Males ( <i>n</i> = 116)	Males ( <i>n</i> = 62)	Males ( <i>n</i> = 62)
Age (in years) <i>M</i> (SD)	43.19 (16.63)	38.19 (15.64)	39.11 (13.51)
Religiosity <i>M</i> (SD)	3.05 (1.34)	3.23 (1.40)	2.94 (1.40)
Socioeconomic Status			
Lower (%)	31.03	35.48	20.97
Middle (%)	50.86	40.32	62.90
Upper (%)	18.10	24.19	16.13
Education			
Some High School (%)	11.2	5.84	1.61
Completed High School (%)	18.10	9.68	12.90
Some Post Secondary (%)	20.69	27.42	24.19
Completed Post Secondary (%)	31.90	38.71	38.71
Graduate School (%)	18.10	19.35	22.58

Table 2.8 – Gender Atypical Hypothesis (Childhood Femininity)

*Subscale Scores and Standardized Internal Consistency Reliabilities (alphas) by Group.*

		Feminine in Childhood	Less Feminine in Childhood
	Heterosexual Males ( <i>n</i> = 116)	Homosexual Males ( <i>n</i> = 62)	Homosexual Males ( <i>n</i> = 62)
Scale			
<hr/>			
Validation Seeking			
subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	3.68 (1.54)	3.51 (1.59)	3.57 (1.77)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.97	.97	.98
Insecure Striving			
subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	2.58 (.92)	2.76 (.90)	2.65 (.96)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.96	.96	.96
Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation			
scale: <i>M</i> (SD)	2.64 (.90)	2.95 (.90)	2.85 (.98)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.93	.91	.92

Table 2.9 – Gender Atypical Hypothesis (Adulthood Femininity)

*Descriptive Statistics for Biographic Variables by Group*

	Heterosexual	Homosexual	Homosexual
	Males ( <i>n</i> = 116)	Males ( <i>n</i> = 70)	Males ( <i>n</i> = 54)
Age (in years) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	43.19 (16.63)	39.13 (15.53)	38.04 (13.32)
Religiosity <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	3.05 (1.34)	3.41 (1.29)	2.65 (1.43)
Socioeconomic Status			
Lower (%)	31.03	28.57	27.78
Middle (%)	50.86	51.43	51.85
Upper (%)	18.10	20.00	20.37
Education			
Some High School (%)	11.2	2.86	3.70
Completed High School (%)	18.10	14.29	7.41
Some Post Secondary (%)	20.69	28.57	22.22
Completed Post Secondary (%)	31.90	37.14	40.74
Graduate School (%)	18.10	17.14	25.93

Table 2.10 – Gender Atypical Hypothesis (Adulthood Femininity)

*Subscale Scores and Standardized Internal Consistency Reliabilities (alphas) by Group.*

		Feminine in Adulthood	Less Feminine in Adulthood
	Heterosexual Males ( <i>n</i> = 116)	Homosexual Males ( <i>n</i> = 70)	Homosexual Males ( <i>n</i> = 54)
Scale			
<hr/>			
Validation Seeking			
subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	3.68 (1.54)	3.43 (1.68)	3.79 (1.66)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.97	.97	.98
Insecure Striving			
subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	2.58 (.92)	2.62 (.88)	2.81 (.99)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.96	.95	.96
Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation			
scale: <i>M</i> (SD)	2.64 (.90)	2.89 (.89)	2.96 (1.00)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.93	.91	.92

Table 2.11 – Acceptance Hypothesis

*Descriptive Statistics for Biographic Variables by Group*

	Accepted Homosexual	Not Accepted Homosexual
Biographic Variable	Males ( $n = 84$ )	Males ( $n = 91$ )
Age (in years) $M$ (SD)	36.83 (13.63)	36.97 (15.21)
Religiosity $M$ (SD)	2.88 (1.41)	3.33 (1.43)
Socioeconomic Status		
Lower (%)	25.30	29.67
Middle (%)	51.81	48.35
Upper (%)	22.89	21.98
Education		
Some High School (%)	4.82	5.49
Completed High School (%)	12.05	14.29
Some Post Secondary (%)	28.92	25.27
Completed Post Secondary (%)	37.35	37.36
Graduate School (%)	16.87	17.58

Table 2.12 – Acceptance Hypothesis

*Subscale Scores and Standardized Internal Consistency Reliabilities (alphas) by Group.*

	Accepted	Not Accepted
	Homosexual	Homosexual
	Males	Males
Scale	( <i>n</i> = 84)	( <i>n</i> = 91)
Validation Seeking subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	3.70 (1.47)	3.93 (1.70)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.97	.98
Insecure Striving subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	2.65 (.80)	2.87 (.90)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.95	.96
Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale: <i>M</i> (SD)	2.90 (.86)	3.01 (.91)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.91	.93

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Male Sexual Orientation and Growth Seeking**

#### **Abstract**

The notion that homosexual males are overachievers is pervasive theme in the biographies of many homosexual males. Growth seeking refers to an individual's propensity to strive for learning, growth, self-improvement, and reaching their fullest potential. In this study, I examined whether homosexual males are more likely to exhibit growth seeking tendencies compared to their heterosexual counterparts. If so, this would furnish support of the widespread belief that homosexual males are overachievers; however, in contrast to accepted dogma, the underlying motivation for such overachieving would not be attributable to a need for validation from others due to feelings of inferiority and fears of negative evaluation. Rather, overachieving in homosexual males, should it exist, would more likely be attributable to greater growth seeking behavior compared to that of heterosexual males. I found no male sexual orientation differences in growth seeking. Therefore, if homosexual males are indeed overachievers compared to their heterosexual counterparts, it is unlikely that this would be due to male sexual orientation differences in growth seeking.

## Introduction

In 1973, Andrew Tobias (aka John Reid) published a memoir entitled *The Best Little Boy in the World*, in which he described his obsessive drive to overachieve relative to others. Tobias attributed his motivation to overachieve as stemming from a need to overcompensate for feelings of inferiority and shame associated with his same-sex sexual orientation. Further, he stressed that this all-consuming focus on overachieving was a strategy to divert attention away from his minority sexual orientation status. *The Best Little Boy in the World* was a best-seller and has been continuously in print since 1973. It is described as a “classic” in the canon of homosexual non-fiction literature. The success of *The Best Little Boy in the World* may have helped to cement as “folk wisdom” the notion that homosexual males are overachievers because they seek to deflect attention away from their stigmatized sexual orientations and over-compensate for feelings of inferiority and shame. An implicit aspect of this reasoning is the assumption that homosexual males experience apprehension during social situations in which their self-worth is under evaluation and, as such, they overachieve in an attempt to obtain validation from others. This reasoning has been labeled *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis (Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler, 2013).

Evidence in support of *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis has been mixed. Consistent with the hypothesis, Pachankis and Goldfried (2006) demonstrated that homosexual males reported greater fear of negative evaluation compared to their heterosexual counterparts. Homosexual males who were less open about their sexual orientations and those who are less comfortable with being homosexual were more likely to experience anxiety in social interactions, even in relatively innocuous ones, because

they feared being negatively evaluated by others. Additionally, Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler (2013) demonstrated that, compared to their heterosexual counterparts, sexual minority males reported that their self-worth was more contingent on academic competence, appearance, and competition (i.e., “knowing I am better on a task than others raises my self-esteem”). The length of sexual orientation concealment (i.e., time “in the closet”) also predicted investment in these domains. Further, social stigma predicted the degree to which sexual minority males sought self-worth through competition.

In contrast to the work by Pachankis and colleagues (Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler, 2013; Pachankis & Goldfried, 2006), Mallard and Vasey (under review), found no evidence that male sexual orientation differences exist for measures of validation seeking, striving to avoid inferiority through insecure striving, and fear of negative evaluation. On the basis of their work, they concluded that not all homosexual males were “the best little boys in the world.” Differences in methodology and participant recruitment strategy may help to explain the divergent findings of Pachankis and colleagues versus those of Mallard and Vasey

Pachankis and Goldfried (2006) utilized the Fear of Negative evaluation scale (Watson & Friend, 1969), which employs a dichotomous response scale. This measure has been criticized as inferior to the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale (Leary, 1983), which Mallard and Vasey (under review) employed. As Rodebaugh et al. (2004) state, because the Fear of Negative Evaluation scale (Watson & Friend, 1969) utilizes a dichotomous response scale it may disproportionately force individuals into extreme groups. In contrast, the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale’s (Leary, 1983) use of a

Likert-type scale circumvents this problem by increasing the dimensionality of participants' potential responses. The use of a dichotomous response scale, combined with the use of parametric statistic tests on nominal, dichotomous, and non-normally distributed data from potentially unrepresentative undergraduate populations, may have contributed to the significant group differences observed by Pachankis and Goldfried (2006) for fear of negative evaluation. For these reasons, Mallard & Vasey's (under review) results pertaining to fear of negative evaluation may be more representative of the homosexual male population, than those of Pachankis and Goldfried (2006).

An important limitation of the Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler (2013) study is that their sample of sexual minority males was recruited entirely from LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans) student groups at universities. This recruitment strategy may have biased their sample of sexual minority males toward individuals who were already predisposed to overachieve and compete in academic domains, as well as more generally in non-academic domains (e.g., appearance enhancement). As Dykman (1998) suggests individuals who strive for validation in an attempt to prove their competence and self-worth generally tend to do so in all domains of their lives. Downs (2005) memoir, *The Velvet Rage*, underscores this tendency as he states, "I survived by learning to conform to the expectations of others...What would you like me to be? A great student? A first-chair violinist? How would we love ourselves when everything around us told us that we were unlovable?" (p. 15-16). In addition, Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler (2013) sample may have been further biased because sexual minority males who join homosexual student university groups may be disproportionately more likely to be seeking validation from other homosexual males because they experience a heightened sense of social stigma,

compared to sexual minority males who do not seek membership in such groups (Cass, 1979, 1984).

Despite the mixed evidence in support of *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis, the notion that homosexual males overachieve is pervasive in the popular literature (Brudnoy, 1973; Chandler, 2013; Downs, 2005; Monette, 1992; Sullivan, 1998; Yoshino, 2006). Not surprisingly, this pervasive characterization of homosexual males was, in turn, echoed in the academic literature (e.g., LeVay, Baldwin, & Baldwin, 2009). As such, it is possible that homosexual males (or a subset of homosexual males) do, indeed, tend to overachieve more often than their heterosexual counterparts, but not because they strive to be validated due to feelings of inferiority and fear that they might be negatively evaluated by others.

Work by Dweck and Leggett (1988) identified two different approaches that distinct groups of children employ when striving to achieve a goal. One group was disproportionately concerned with gaining favorable extrinsic judgment of their competence. Such individuals were said to exhibit *performance goals* (i.e., goals motivated by concerns about others' judgments of competency). *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis seems to aptly describe performance goal-oriented homosexual males.

Dweck & Leggett (1988) identified a second subset of children who seemed unconcerned with gaining favorable judgment of their competence. Instead, this second group of children was motivated to take risks in hopes of learning and growing even if faced with failure. For example, one boy who participated in this research, upon confronting failure, stated to the experimenter, "You know, I was *hoping* this would be

informative” (Dweck & Leggett, 1988, p. 258). These children were said to exhibit *learning goals* (i.e., goals in which individuals are concerned with increasing their competence). They viewed unsolved problems as challenges to be mastered through effort. Consequently, these goals motivated such children to engaged in extensive self-instruction, self-monitoring, and to be solution oriented. To solve these problems they exerted effort to concentrate and they then monitor their level of effort or attention. This, in turn, resulted in them teaching themselves new, more sophisticated hypothesis-testing strategies over the failure trials. Through their problem-solving attempts, they maintained an unflagging optimism that their efforts would eventually be fruitful.

Dykman (1998) advanced the work done by Dweck and Leggett (1988) by determining whether adults were motivated to deal with situations in similar ways to children. Dykman (1998) found that adults show a similar dichotomy in approach and behavior, but he articulated the group difference more globally as indicative of *validation seeking* versus *growth seeking* behavior. Validation seeking individuals are concerned with gaining approval and validation of their ability from others. Conversely, growth seeking individuals exhibit striving that centers on learning, growth, self-improvement, and reaching their fullest potential. These individuals appraise challenges as opportunities to learn, grow and improve and are more willing to engage in various challenges regardless of potential outcome (Dykman, 1998).

Work by Grant and Dweck (2003) provide evidence for the beneficial affect learning goals (or growth seeking) can have for individuals, especially in academic settings. Individuals with learning goals maintained higher intrinsic motivation throughout a particularly challenging college class (Grant & Dweck, 2003). Further, these

individuals processed course material better, showed greater improvement over time, and had higher overall course grades when compared to individuals with performance goals.

Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler (2013) demonstrate that homosexual males base more self-worth on academic competence, appearance, and competitiveness, than do their heterosexual counterparts. They argued that these findings support *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis. However, Grant and Dweck (2003) demonstrate that individuals with learning goals (i.e. growth seeking) have consistent and superior academic performance and achievement. Consequently, in this paper, I examined whether homosexual males are more likely to exhibit growth seeking behavior compared to their heterosexual counterparts. If so, this would furnish support of the widespread belief that homosexual males are overachievers; however, in contrast to accepted dogma, the underlying motivation for such overachieving would not be attributable to a need for validation from others due to feelings of inferiority and fears of negative evaluation. Rather, overachieving in homosexual males, should it exist, would more likely be attributable to greater growth seeking behavior compared to that of heterosexual males.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were identical to those described in the Participant section of Chapter 2.

### **Procedures and Measures**

All data were collected via an online questionnaire. The questionnaires included: (1) a biographic questionnaire pertaining to sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age,

socioeconomic status, religiosity in childhood, and highest level of education, and (2) the Growth Seeking subscale of the Goal Orientation Inventory (Dykman, 1998).

The Growth Seeking subscale is an 18-item subscale that measures an individual's propensity to strive for learning, growth, self-improvement, and reaching their fullest potential (Dykman, 1998). Some of the items that comprise this subscale include: (a) I look upon potential problems in life as opportunities for growth rather than threats to my self-esteem; and (c) when I approach new or difficult situations, I'm less concerned with the possibility of failure than with how I can grow from the experiences. Responses were scored using a 7-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

## Results

Descriptive statistics for all biographic variables were calculated and are presented in Table 2.1 according to group. Subscale scores and standardized internal consistency reliabilities (alphas) are presented in Table 3.2 according to group. There was a significant difference between groups for age (heterosexual males:  $M = 43.19$ ;  $SD = 16.63$ ; homosexual males:  $M = 38.65$ ;  $SD = 14.56$ ;  $t [238] = 2.252$ ,  $p = .025$ ). Age was therefore controlled for in subsequent statistical analyses. There was no significant difference between groups for religiosity in childhood (heterosexual males:  $M = 3.05$ ;  $SD = 1.34$ ; homosexual males:  $M = 3.08$ ;  $SD = 1.40$ ;  $t [238] = -.163$ ,  $p = .871$ ). Chi-square tests of independence demonstrated there were no significant differences between groups for education ( $\chi^2 [5, N = 240] = 9.242$ ,  $p < .100$ ) or socioeconomic status ( $\chi^2 [4, N = 240] = 1.274$ ,  $p = .866$ ).

A two-way Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to assess whether group differences exist in growth seeking, where group (heterosexual male and homosexual male) was the between-subjects factor, subscale score was the within-subjects factor, and participants' age was the covariate. There was no significant main between-subjects effect for group ( $F [1, 237] = .049, p = .825, \text{partial } \eta^2 < .001$ ).

### **Discussion**

There is a pervasive notion in popular culture that homosexual males are overachievers (Brudnoy, 1973; Chandler, 2013; Downs, 2005; Monette, 1992; Sullivan, 1998; Tobias, 1973; Yoshino, 2006). Researchers have speculated that overachieving in homosexual males is motivated by attempts to overcompensate for feelings of inferiority and shame associated with stigmatized same-sex sexual orientation, but evidence in support of such motivation has been equivocal (cf. Pachankis and Goldfried, 2006; Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler, 2013; Mallard & Vasey, under review).

In this study, I examined whether homosexual males are more likely to exhibit growth seeking behavior compared to their heterosexual counterparts. If so, then this might account for the pervasive stereotype of homosexual males as overachievers. I found no evidence for male sexual orientation differences in growth seeking.

Research indicates that homosexual males are, on average, more feminine than heterosexual males (Bailey, 2003; Lippa, 2005). For example, homosexual males are more likely to state that they prefer female-typical hobbies and occupations compared to heterosexual males (Lippa, 2005). It would be interesting if future research examined whether heterosexual and homosexual males focus their achievement-related efforts in different gendered-domains. Crocker et al. (2003) demonstrate that females are

particularly likely to derive self-worth from academic achievement and appearance. Perhaps then, it is not surprising that Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler (2013) found that homosexual males derive more self-worth from academic competence, than heterosexual males.

It would also be interesting to examine whether sub-groups of homosexual males, such as Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler's (2013) sample of homosexual male university students that were involved in LGBT groups score higher on measures of growth seeking. Membership in LGBT university students groups increases one's visibility as a sexual minority. Consequently, such individuals may make conscious choices to come out publically via such group membership and, as such, they may be less concerned with social evaluation. If so, then such individuals may be less prone to seek validation, less afraid that they will be negatively evaluated, and more secure in their striving. It is possible that such sub-groups of homosexual males might be motivated to overachieve because they value learning and a pathway toward growth, self-improvement and reaching their fullest potential.

Additional tests of *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis could employ the Secure Non-Striving subscale (Gilbert et al., 2007). This subscale measures feelings of security with one's social position, feelings of acceptance from others, and not feeling pressure to strive to compete. If *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis is correct, one would predict that homosexual males would score lower for secure non-striving compared to heterosexual males. Past research indicates that the Secure Non-Striving subscale is correlated with the Growth Seeking subscale (Gilbert et al., 2007). As such, I

would predict, on the basis of the results presented here, that homosexual males would not differ from heterosexual males for secure non-striving.

Table 3.2 – Growth Seeking Hypothesis

*Subscale Scores and Standardized Internal Consistency Reliabilities (alphas) by Group.*

	Heterosexual	Homosexual
	Males	Males
Scale	( <i>n</i> = 116)	( <i>n</i> = 124)
Growth Seeking subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	4.92 (1.27)	4.97 (1.26)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.97	.96

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Validation Seeking, Feelings of Inferiority and Fear of Negative Evaluation in Relation to Female Sexual Orientation**

#### **Abstract**

*The Best Little Boy in the World hypothesis* holds that homosexual males are overachievers because they seek to deflect attention away from their stigmatized sexual orientations and over-compensate for feelings of inferiority and shame. An implicit aspect of this reasoning is the assumption that homosexual males experience apprehension during social situations in which their self-worth is under evaluation and, as such, they overachieve in an attempt to obtain validation from others. In this study, I examined whether *The Best Little Boy in the World hypothesis* applies more broadly to other groups who have a minority sexual orientation status. More specifically, I investigated whether homosexual females strive to be *The Best Little Girls in the World*, compared to their heterosexual counterparts. In line with this hypothesis, I examined whether female sexual orientation differences existed for *validation seeking, striving to avoid inferiority* through *insecure striving* and *fear of negative evaluation*. No such differences were found. Moreover, participants' scores on the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale were negatively correlated with measures of childhood or adulthood femininity. These results do not support the "extreme female brain hypothesis" which holds that fear of negative evaluation is a female-typical trait.

## Introduction

In 1973, Andrew Tobias (aka John Reid) published a memoir entitled *The Best Little Boy in the World*, in which he described his obsessive drive to overachieve relative to others. Tobias attributed his motivation to overachieve as stemming from a need to overcompensate for feelings of inferiority and shame associated with his same-sex sexual orientation. Further, he stressed that this all-consuming focus on overachieving was a strategy to divert attention away from his minority sexual orientation status. *The Best Little Boy in the World* was a best-seller and has been continuously in print since 1973. It is described as a “classic” in the canon of homosexual male non-fiction literature. The success of *The Best Little Boy in the World* may have helped to cement as “folk wisdom” the notion that homosexual males are overachievers because they seek to deflect attention away from their stigmatized sexual orientations and over-compensate for feelings of inferiority and shame. An implicit aspect of this reasoning is the assumption that homosexual males experience apprehension during social situations in which their self-worth is under evaluation and, as such, they overachieve in an attempt to obtain validation from others. This reasoning has been labeled *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis (Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler, 2013).

Consistent with the hypothesis, Pachankis and Goldfried (2006) demonstrated that homosexual males reported greater fear of negative evaluation compared to their heterosexual counterparts. Homosexual males who were less open about their sexual orientations and those who are less comfortable with being homosexual were more likely to experience anxiety in social interactions, even in relatively innocuous ones, because they feared being negatively evaluated by others. Additionally, Pachankis and

Hatzenbuehler (2013) demonstrated that, compared to their heterosexual counterparts, sexual minority males reported that their self-worth was more contingent on academic competence, appearance, and competition (i.e., “knowing I am better on a task than others raises my self-esteem”). The length of sexual orientation concealment (i.e., time “in the closet”) also predicted investment in these domains. Further, social stigma predicted the degree to which sexual minority males sought self-worth through competition.

In this study, I examined whether *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis applies more broadly to other groups who have a minority sexual orientation status. More specifically, I investigated whether homosexual females strive to be *The Best Little Girls in the World*, compared to their heterosexual counterparts. To do so, I utilized a broad sample of female participants recruited from an Internet social networking site (Facebook). I did not examine overachieving *per se*, but rather, the psychological tendencies that hypothesis in question implies are causal psychological factors leading to overachieving. As such, in line with the predictions of *The Best Little Girls in the World* hypothesis, I examined whether female sexual orientation differences existed for *validation seeking* (Dykman, 1998), *striving to avoid inferiority* through *insecure striving* (Gilbert et al., 2007), and *fear of negative evaluation* (Watson & Friend, 1969; Leary, 1983). Further, Bremser & Gallup (2012) have suggested that fear of negative evaluation is indicative of an extreme female brain. I tested this idea by examining whether Fear of Negative Evaluation (Watson & Friend, 1969; Leary, 1983) is correlated with measures of childhood and adult femininity.

## **Method**

## **Participants**

All participants ( $N = 174$ ) were Canadians aged 18 years of age or older. All participants were recruited through the popular social networking site, Facebook.

Kinsey ratings (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948) of sexual feelings over the past year were obtained for all participants. A total of 108 females were categorized as heterosexual. Of these, 69 were exclusively heterosexual (*Kinsey 0*) and 39 reported most sexual feelings toward males, but occasionally about females (*Kinsey 1*). A total of 66 females were categorized as homosexual. Of these, 42 were exclusively homosexual (*Kinsey 6*) and 24 reported most sexual feelings toward females, but occasionally about males (*Kinsey 5*).

## **Procedures and Measures**

All data were collected via an online questionnaire. The questionnaires included: (1) a biographic questionnaire pertaining to sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, religiosity in childhood, and highest level of education, (2) the Validation Seeking subscale of the Goal Orientation Inventory (Dykman, 1998), (3) the Insecure Striving subscale of the Striving to Avoid Inferiority scale (Gilbert et al., 2007), (4) the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale (Leary, 1994), (5) the Childhood Gender Identity subscale (Barlett & Vasey, 2006), and (6) the Gender Diagnosticity Measure (Lippa, 2005).

The Validation Seeking subscale is an 18-item subscale that measures an individual's propensity to strive to prove their worth, competence, and likability (Dykman, 1998). This subscale is generalizable to all individuals, not simply those that are in social situations where overachieving behavior is valued and promoted (Dykman,

1998). Some of the items that comprise this subscale include: (a) instead of just enjoying activities and social interactions, most situations to me feel like a major test of my basic worth, competence, and likeability; (b) I feel like I'm constantly trying to prove that I'm as competent as people around me; and (c) I tend to view difficult or stressful situations as all-or-none tests of my basic worth as a person. Responses were scored using a 7-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

The Insecure Striving subscale (Gilbert et al., 2007) is a 19-item subscale used to measure individual's beliefs that they have to strive to avoid inferiority. Some of the items that comprise this subscale include: (a) to be valued by others I have to strive to succeed; (b) to get on with others, you have to compete in the world; and (c) if I don't strive to achieve, I will be seen as inferior to other people. Responses were scored using a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*).

The Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale (Leary, 1994) is a 12-item scale that measures the degree to which individuals experience apprehension at the prospect of being evaluated negatively. Some items that comprised this Scale included: (a) I worry about what other people think of me even when I know it doesn't make a difference; (b) I am frequently afraid of other people noticing my shortcomings; and (c) I often worry I will say or do the wrong things. Responses were scored using a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (*not at all characteristic of me*) to 5 (*extremely characteristic of me*).

The Childhood Gender Identity scale was used to measure childhood gendered-behavior (CGIS; Bartlett & Vasey, 2006). This scale consists of Male Typical Behavior subscale and a Female Typical Behavior subscales. For both subscales, participants were asked to rate the frequency with which they engaged in various childhood activities when

they were less than 12 years of age. The Male Typical-Behavior subscale consisted of 5 items including: (a) play with boys, (b) play with boys' toys and boys' games, (c) take the boys' role in pretend play, (d) play rough games and sports, and (e) do boys chores. Responses were scored using a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always/everyday*). The Female Typical Behavior subscale consisted of 6 items including: (a) play with girls, (b) play with girls' toys and girls' games, (c) take the girls' role in pretend play, (d) put on girls' makeup, clothes, or accessories, (e) talk and act like a girl, and (f) do girls' chores. Responses were scored using a 5-point Likert-type scale that scale that ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always/everyday*).

The Gender Diagnosticity Measure (Lippa, 2005) was used to measure adult gendered-behavior. This scale consists of Male Typical subscale and a Female Typical subscales. For the Male Typical subscale, participants were asked to rate their interest in the following male typical adult hobbies: (a) home electronics; computers, (b) video games, (c) fishing, (d) playing poker, (e) playing team sports, (f) watching sports on TV, (g) weight lifting, and (h) working on cars. For the Female Typical subscale, participants were asked to rate their interest in the following female typical adult hobbies: (a) dancing, (b) sewing and knitting, (c) gardening, (d) singing, (e) clothes shopping, (f) watching romance movies, (g) taking and collecting photos of family and friends, (h) reading romance novels, and (i) cooking. Responses were scored using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranged from 1 (*Strongly dislike*) to 5 (*Strongly like*).

## **Results**

Descriptive statistics for all biographic variables were calculated and are presented in Table 4.1 according to group. Subscale scores and standardized internal

consistency reliabilities (alphas) are presented in Table 4.2 according to group. There was a significant difference between groups for age (heterosexual females:  $M = 40.31$ ;  $SD = 15.83$ ; homosexual females:  $M = 34.45$ ;  $SD = 15.34$ ;  $t [172] = 2.397$ ,  $p = .018$ ). Age was therefore controlled for in subsequent statistical analyses. There was no significant difference between groups for religiosity (heterosexual females:  $M = 3.19$ ;  $SD = 1.31$ ; homosexual females:  $M = 2.91$ ;  $SD = 1.50$ ;  $t [124.05] = 1.277$ ,  $p = .204$ ). Chi-square tests of independence indicated a significant difference between groups for education ( $\chi^2 [4, N = 174] = 27.492$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = .397$ ), but no significant difference between groups for socioeconomic status ( $\chi^2 [2, N = 174] = 2.469$ ,  $p = .291$ ). Education was therefore controlled for in subsequent statistical analyses.

Because the (sub)scales employed here were all highly positively correlated, use of a MANCOVA is inherently weak, and, as such, I followed the recommendations of Cole, Maxwell, Arvey, and Salas (1994) and Ramsey (1982) by employing three separate two-way Analyses of Covariance (ANCOVA) to assess whether there were differences in (1) validation seeking, (2) insecure striving, and (3) fear of negative evaluation, where group (heterosexual female and homosexual female) was the between-subjects factor, subscale score was the within-subjects factor, and participants' age was the covariate. First, a two-way ANCOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group difference in validation seeking ( $F [1, 170] = .040$ ,  $p = .841$ ,  $\eta^2 < .001$ ). Second, a two-way ANCOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group differences in insecure striving ( $F [1, 170] = .241$ ,  $p = .624$ ,  $\eta^2 = .001$ ). Third, a two-way ANCOVA did not obtain a significant main effect for group differences in fear of negative evaluation ( $F [1, 170] = .157$ ,  $p = .693$ ,  $\eta^2 = .001$ ).

There was a significant difference between groups for masculinity in childhood (heterosexual females:  $M = 3.19$ ;  $SD = .92$ ; homosexual females:  $M = 3.80$ ;  $SD = .96$ ;  $t [172] = -4.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ), masculinity in adulthood (heterosexual females:  $M = 2.78$ ;  $SD = .58$ ; homosexual females:  $M = 3.15$ ;  $SD = .73$ ;  $t [115.29] = -3.55$ ,  $p = .001$ ), femininity in childhood (heterosexual females:  $M = 4.28$ ;  $SD = .86$ ; homosexual females:  $M = 3.33$ ;  $t [113.74] = 6.07$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and femininity in adulthood (heterosexual females:  $M = 3.60$ ;  $SD = .64$ ; homosexual females:  $M = 3.37$ ;  $SD = .54$ ;  $t [172] = 2.49$ ,  $p = .014$ ).

A 2-tailed Pearson  $r$  correlation indicates that the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale was significantly negatively correlated with measures of femininity (Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale/CGIS – Female Typical subscale:  $r = -.161$ ,  $p = .033$ ; Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale/Gender Diagnosticity Measure – Female Typical subscale:  $r = -.160$ ,  $p = .035$ ). There were no significant correlations between the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale and measures of masculinity (Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale/CGIS – Female Typical subscale:  $r = -.022$ ,  $p = .771$ ; Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale/Gender Diagnosticity Measure – Male Typical subscale:  $r = -.039$ ,  $p = .611$ ).

## Discussion

*The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis holds that homosexual males are overachievers because they seek to deflect attention away from their stigmatized sexual orientations and over-compensate for feelings of inferiority and shame. An implicit aspect of this reasoning is the assumption that homosexual males experience apprehension during social situations in which their self-worth is under evaluation and, as such, they overachieve in an attempt to obtain validation from others.

In this study, I investigated whether *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis was generalizable to other groups with minority sexual orientations. More specifically, I tested a *Best Little Girl in the World* hypothesis for homosexual females. I did not measure overachieving per se; rather, I measured psychological tendencies that this hypothesis implies are causal psychological factors leading to overachieving. Consistent with previous research (Bremser & Gallup, 2012; Dykman, 1998; Gilbert et al., 2007; Mallard & Vasey, under review; Pachankis & Goldfried, 2006; Watson & Friend, 1969), the measures I employed in this study, namely, the Validation Seeking subscale, the Insecure Striving subscale, and the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale, are all highly correlated with each other, as well as other psychological factors leading to overachieving such as *performance goals*. When individuals are concerned with gaining validation of their competence they are said to exhibit performance goals (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). As such, performance goals are closely linked to validation seeking, insecure striving and fear of negative evaluation. The work by Grant and Dweck (2003) demonstrates a link between performance goals and actual achievement in the real world.

I found no female sexual orientation differences for measures of validation seeking (Dykman, 1998), striving to avoid inferiority through insecure striving (Gilbert et al., 2007), and fear of negative evaluation (Watson & Friend, 1969; Leary, 1983). As such, this study suggests that even if it is correct (cf. Mallard & Vasey, under review; Pachankis and Goldfried, 2006; Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler, 2013), *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis may not be generalizable to other groups with minority sexual orientations beyond homosexual males.

A number of authors have suggested that fear of negative evaluation is indicative of an extreme female brain (Bremser & Gallup, 2012). This theory predicts that group differences will exist between individuals with more feminine brains versus those with more masculine ones. The results presented here are not consistent with this conclusion. Recall that the homosexual females in my sample are more masculine than heterosexual females. Despite this fact, no group differences in fear of negative evaluation were observed. Heterosexual and homosexual females may differ in the degree to which they are feminized, but, judging from my sample, fear of negative evaluation does not distinguish feminized (i.e., heterosexual females) and masculinized (i.e., homosexual females) groups. Further, fear of negative evaluation is negatively correlated with measures of childhood and adulthood femininity. These results are in direct contrast to what one would predict on the basis of the Extreme Female Brain hypothesis (Bremster & Gallup, 2012).

Future research might examine whether sub-groups of homosexual females differ for measures of validation seeking (Dykman, 1998), striving to avoid inferiority through insecure striving (Gilbert et al., 2007), and fear of negative evaluation (Watson & Friend, 1969; Leary, 1983). For example, LeVay, Baldwin, and Baldwin (2009) argue that “Homosexual adolescents who are more conventional in their gender characteristics have the option of passing as straight, and many do. Quite commonly, such teens go into an ‘overachiever’ mode, in which excellence in academic or other fields serves to mask their problematic sexuality” (p.386). As such, it would be interesting to test this *Gender Typical* hypothesis and examine whether more feminine homosexual females (femme lesbians) score higher for measures of validation seeking, striving to avoid inferiority,

and fear of negative evaluation, compared to more masculine homosexual females (butch lesbians). My sample of homosexual females was not large enough to run such analyses.

Furthermore, there is a body of literature that suggests that gender atypical individuals with minority sexual orientations experience lower psychological well-being, including self-esteem (Rieger & Savin-Williams, 2011). It would be interesting to test this *Gender Atypical* hypothesis by examining whether more masculine homosexual females (butch lesbians) score higher for measures of validation seeking, striving to avoid inferiority through insecure striving, and fear of negative evaluation compared to more feminine homosexual females (femme lesbians). Once again, my sample of homosexual females was not large enough to run such analyses.

Finally, Dykman (1998) suggest that a lack of parental acceptance or a perceived lack of acceptance can motivate individuals to prove themselves, seek validation, and strive for external measures of achievement. Indeed, D'Augelli, Hershberger, and Pilkington (1998) suggest that homosexual females are even less supported by their families than homosexual males. It would be interesting to test whether homosexual females that are less accepted by their parents score higher for measures of validation seeking, striving to avoid inferiority through insecure striving, and fear of negative evaluation compared to homosexual females that are supported by their parents.

Table 4.1 – Female Sexual Orientation Hypothesis

Descriptive Statistics for Biographic Variables by Group.

Biographic Variable	Heterosexual Females ( <i>n</i> = 108)	Homosexual Females ( <i>n</i> = 66)
Age (in years) <i>M</i> (SD)	40.31 (15.83)	34.45 (15.334)
Religiosity <i>M</i> (SD)	3.19 (1.31)	2.91 (1.50)
Socioeconomic Status		
Lower (%)	4.63	12.12
Lower Middle (%)	28.70	31.82
Middle (%)	42.59	31.82
Upper Middle (%)	23.15	22.73
Upper (%)	.93	1.52
Education		
Completed Primary (%)	0	0
Some High School (%)	2.78	3.03
Completed High School (%)	6.48	24.24
Some Post Secondary (%)	24.07	39.39
Completed Post Secondary (%)	38.89	30.30
Graduate School (%)	27.78	3.03

Table 4.2 – Female Sexual Orientation Hypothesis

*Subscale Scores and Standardized Internal Consistency Reliabilities (alphas) by Group.*

	Heterosexual	Homosexual
	Females	Females
Scale	( <i>n</i> = 116)	( <i>n</i> = 124)
Validation Seeking subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	3.49 (1.65)	3.63 (1.85)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.98	.98
Insecure Striving subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	2.56 (.85)	2.76 (.99)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.96	.96
Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale: <i>M</i> (SD)	2.84 (.99)	2.92 (1.05)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.94	.93
Gender Diagnosticity Measure – Female Typical		
subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	3.60 (.64)	3.37 (.54)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.70	.53
Gender Diagnosticity Measure – Male Typical		
subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	2.78 (.58)	3.15 (.73)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.60	.69
CGIS – Female Typical subscale: <i>M</i> (SD)	4.28 (.86)	3.33 (1.09)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.90	.85
CGIS – Male Typical subscale <i>M</i> (SD)	3.19 (.92)	3.80 (.96)
Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	.81	.79

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion

By human kinds I mean kinds about which I would like to have systematic, general, and accurate knowledge; classifications that could be used to formulate general truths about people; generalizations sufficiently strong that they seem like laws about people, their actions, or their sentiments.

Hacking, 1995, The Looping Effects of Human Kinds

According to the philosopher, Ian Hacking (1995), human kinds are kinds of people (e.g., homosexuals, asexuals, heterosexuals) and all that comprises them, such as behavior, temperament, tendencies, etc., whereas natural kinds are kinds found in nature, such as plant and animal species. Hacking (1995) quibbles with the distinction between natural and human kinds, but suggests that natural kinds are perhaps more fundamental and quantifiable than human kinds. Though not saying humans are not natural, he suggests that human kinds are peculiar because they are susceptible to social settings and community both of which greatly influence actions and behavior. As such, when “animals, perhaps, inhabit a world of properties. I [humans] dwell in a universe of kinds” (Hacking, 1991, p.114). Consequently, humanists and social scientists have shown great interest in documenting the existence of these human kinds and dissecting the social processes by which they come into existence (Hacking, 1995).

There are many “essentialist” research programs that focus on what “natural” characteristics comprise a homosexual and these span aspects of identity (Cass, 1979; Cass, 1984; Mondimore, 1996; Troiden, 1989), behavior, psychology (e.g., Bailey, 2003; Lippa, 2005), and biology (e.g., LeVay, 2010). Despite these efforts and although same-sex sexual behavior and desire has been documented cross-culturally and historically, many scholars who come from a social constructionist perspective have argued that “the

homosexual,” as a human kind (i.e., a socially constructed category), not a natural one, whose existence is cross-culturally and historically circumscribe (Hacking, 1995; for alternative views concerning this claim, see Boswell, 1982; Cardoso, 2005, 2009; Norton, 1997; Vanita & Kidwai, 2008; Patterson, Wrightson & Vasey, under review; Vasey & Bartlett, 2006; VanderLaan, Gothreau, Bartlett, & Vasey, 2011; Whitam, 1983). For this reason, many social constructionists believe that this biological research is fatally flawed and misrepresentative.

Overachieving to overcome feelings of inferiority and being *The Best Little Boy in the World* are widely perceived to be “natural” characteristics of Western homosexual males, in part because of the pervasive anecdotal evidence suggesting that homosexual males overachieve when compared to their heterosexual male counterparts (Brudnoy, 1973; Chandler, 2013; Downs, 2005; Monette, 1992; Sullivan, 1998; Tobias, 1973; Yoshino, 2006). The conceptualization of homosexual males as *The Best Little Boys in the World* is still prevalent today, as a recent *New York Times* opinion piece makes clear by its title: *The Best Little Boy in the World – That’s Me* (Chandler, 2013). Recently, the notion that homosexual males overachieve to assuage feelings of inferiority associate with the minority sexual orientation has garnered some support from quantitative studies (Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler, 2013; Pachankis & Goldfried, 2006). The work presented in this thesis aimed to provide further refined and expanded tests of this hypothesis.

In Chapter 2, I tested four versions of *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis, which holds that homosexual males are overachievers because they seek to deflect attention away from their stigmatize sexual orientations and over-compensate for feelings of inferiority and shame. Implicit in this reasoning is the assumption that homosexual

males are particularly insecure, or even fearful, of social situations in which their self-worth is under evaluation and, as such, they overachieve in an attempt to obtain validation from others. I examined whether this reasoning distinguished: (1) homosexual males from heterosexual males in general, (2) masculine homosexual males from less masculine homosexual males and heterosexual males, (3) feminine homosexual males from less feminine homosexual males and heterosexual males, and (4) homosexual males whose parents accept them versus those whose parents do not. In contrast to what one would predict based on *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis, the relevant groups did not differ for measures of validation seeking, insecure striving, and fear of negative evaluation. As such, the results of this study indicate that not all homosexual males were “the best little boys in the world,” for the psychological reasons the hypothesis implies. Recall that I did not measure overachieving directly, but rather, I measured the psychological tendencies that *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis implies are motivational factors underlying overachieving. The homosexual males in my sample may have been overachievers, but if so, they were not overachieving for the reasons implied by the hypothesis.

In Chapter 3 of this thesis, I examined whether homosexual males differed from their heterosexual counterparts in terms of growth seeking. Growth seeking individuals exhibit striving that centers on learning, growth, self-improvement and reaching their fullest potential. These individuals appraise challenges as opportunities to learn, grow, and improve and are more willing to engage in various challenges regardless of potential outcome (Dykman, 1998). I reasoned that if homosexual males exhibited elevated growth seeking compared to heterosexual males, then this would furnish support of the

widespread belief that homosexual males are overachievers; however, in contrast to accepted dogma, the underlying motivation for such overachieving would not be attributable to a need for validation from others due to feelings of inferiority and fears of negative evaluation. Rather, overachieving in homosexual males, should it exist, would more likely be attributable to greater growth seeking behavior compared to that of heterosexual males. No male sexual orientation differences were found for growth seeking. Therefore, once again, if homosexual males are indeed overachievers as popular folk wisdom seems to suggest, then it is not because homosexual males exhibit greater growth seeking tendencies compared to their heterosexual counterparts.

In Chapter 4 of this thesis, I examined whether *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis could be applied more broadly to other sexual minority groups, namely, homosexual females. Thus, I test a *Best Little Girl in the World* hypothesis. Contrary to the predictions of the hypothesis, I found no evidence that heterosexual and homosexual females differed for measures of validation seeking, striving to avoid inferior though insecure striving, or fear of negative evaluation. As such, homosexual females did not exhibit the psychological characteristics that the hypothesis implies are important causal agents in the manifestation of overachieving. This study suggests that even if *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis is correct, it may not be generalizable to other sexual orientation minorities. Further, in Chapter 4, I presented evidence that fear of negative evaluation is a questionable indicator of an “extreme female brain” (Bremser & Gallup, 2012) because, in my sample, femininity was negative correlated with fear of negative evaluation.

In contrast to the research presented in this thesis, studies by Pachankis and colleagues are consistent with the conclusion that a *sub-set* of homosexual males are indeed the best little boys in the world (Pachankis & Goldfried, 2006; Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler, 2013). For example, quantitative research by Pachankis and Goldfried (2006) demonstrated that homosexual males reported greater fear of negative evaluation compared to their heterosexual counterparts. Homosexual males who were less open about their sexual orientations and those who are less comfortable with being homosexual were more likely to experience anxiety in social interactions, even in relatively innocuous ones, because they feared being negatively evaluated by others. Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler (2013) also demonstrated that, compared to their heterosexual counterparts, sexual minority males reported that their self-worth was more contingent on academic competence, appearance, and competition (i.e., “knowing I am better on a task than others raises my self-esteem”). The length of sexual orientation concealment (i.e., time “in the closet”) also predicted investment in these domains. Further, social stigma predicted the degree to which sexual minority males sought self-worth through competition. Taken together, these studies are consistent with *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis.

Despite the findings of Pachankis and colleagues (Pachankis & Goldfried, 2006; Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler, 2013), the results presented in this thesis underscore that not all homosexual males adhere to this stereotype. Further, the studies by Pachankis and colleagues have several methodological limitations. For example, consistent with *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis, Pachankis and Goldfried (2006) demonstrated that homosexual males reported greater fear of negative evaluation compared to their

heterosexual counterparts. Homosexual males who were less open about their sexual orientations and those who are less comfortable with being homosexual were more likely to experience anxiety in social interactions, even in relatively innocuous ones, because they feared being negatively evaluated by others. To come to this conclusion, Pachankis and Goldfried (2006) utilized the Fear of Negative Evaluation scale (Watson & Friend, 1969), which employs a dichotomous response scale. This measure has been criticized as inferior to the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale (Leary, 1983), which I employed in this study. As Rodebaugh et al. (2004) state, because the Fear of Negative Evaluation scale (Watson & Friend, 1969) utilizes a dichotomous response scale it may disproportionately force individuals into extreme groups. In contrast, the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale's (Leary, 1983) use of a Likert-type scale circumvents this problem by increasing the dimensionality of participants' potential responses. Further, the use of a dichotomous response scale, combined with the use of parametric statistical tests on nominal, dichotomous and non-normally distributed data from potentially unrepresentative undergraduate populations, may have contributed to the significant group differences observed by Pachankis and Goldfried for fear of negative evaluation. For these reasons, I believe that my results pertaining to Fear of Negative Evaluation may be more representative of the homosexual male population than those of Pachankis and Goldfried.

Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler (2013) recruited sexual minority males entirely from LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans) student groups at universities. This recruitment strategy may have biased their sample of sexual orientation minority males toward individuals who were already predisposed to overachieve and compete in academic

domains, as well as more generally in non-academic domains (e.g., appearance enhancement). As Dykman (1998) suggests individuals who strive for validation in an attempt to prove their competence and self-worth generally tend to do so in all domains of their lives. In addition, Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler's (2013) sample may have been further biased because sexual orientation minority males who join LGBT university student groups may be disproportionately more likely to be seeking validation from other homosexual males because they experience a heightened sense of social stigma, compared to sexual minority males who do not seek membership in such groups (Cass, 1979, 1984).

My sample was comprised of a broader range of participants recruited from an Internet social networking site (Facebook), whose overall membership is not based around minority sexuality status. As such, my sample was drawn from a more general population and may have been less prone to bias compared to the university sample in Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler's (2013) study. In this regard, it is noteworthy that Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan (2010) demonstrate how unrepresentative Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) undergraduate student populations can be in terms of behavioral and psychological research. As such, caution must be exercised in utilizing university undergraduates to generalize about behavioral and psychological characteristics of populations as a whole. For these reasons, I believe that my sample may be more representative of the homosexual male population in general, than the undergraduate population recruited by Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler.

Because my data are inconsistent with *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis, or any of the five variants of this hypothesis that I tested, the question arises

as to why the stereotype of homosexual males, in general, as being overachievers is so pervasive in popular culture. Indeed, a recent opinion piece entitled *The Best Little Boy in the World – That’s Me* in the *New York Times* demonstrates that this stereotype is alive and well. Chandler (2013), when speaking of Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler’s (2013) substantiation of *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis, states that, “Biographies do not commonly lurk in stuffy academic journals, but there was mine in the latest issue of *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*” (para. 7).

The reasons as to why the stereotype of the overachieving homosexual is so widespread might be explained, at least in part, by what Hacking (1995) calls the looping effects of human kinds and which he articulates as follows:

If H is a human kind and A is a person, then calling A H may make us treat A differently... But it also makes a difference to A to know that A is an H... Perhaps A...[wants] to be H! Thinking of me as an H changes how I think of me. Well, perhaps I could do things a little differently from now on. Not just to escape opprobrium...but because I...[want] to be that kind of person. Even if it does not make a difference to A it makes a difference to how people feel about A,--how they relate to A--So that A’s social ambience changes. (pp. 368)

Tobias’ (1973) best selling book, *The Best Little Boy in the World*, could have sparked such looping effects in Western homosexual male populations. For example, because Tobias and other homosexual male biographers (Downs, 2005; Monette, 1992; Sullivan, 1998; Yoshino, 2006) persuasively characterize homosexual males as overachievers and, in doing so, communicate the message that what it *means* to be a homosexual male is to be an overachiever. Many homosexual males may not in actuality be overachievers, but may nonetheless have incorporated this notion into their identity. Even the preeminent proponent of *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis, Tobias (1973) himself, suggests that some homosexual males might “...fail to fulfill their

potential by failing to pursue any sort of career” (p. 132). In other words, not all homosexual males conform to *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis. Nevertheless, once a looping effect occurs, individuals begin to modify their sense of who they are, even when their own real-world behavior or the real-world behavior of those around them, does not necessarily match the ideals they hold to be true.

Elder (1998) suggests that adversity and risk can lead to a more positive interpretation of an individual’s own life course despite their negative life circumstances. With Tobias’ (1973) memoir, homosexual males were able to identify with a positive by-product of their minority sexual orientation (i.e., overachieving and success in various life domains) and were able to distinguish themselves as better than others despite the adversity they experience in relation to their sexual orientation (i.e., stigma, shame). The eagerness for homosexual males to identify with *The Best Little Boy in the World* is evident by the reviews written about the book. For example, one reviewer confesses: “One reads this utterly honest account with the shock of recognition” (Brudnoy, 1973, p. 18).

Life course theory posits that individuals are influenced and constrained by the historical times and places in which they live (see Hammack, 2005) and that “individuals construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstances” (Elder, 1998, p. 3). Recall that the identity category “homosexual” is a recent historical phenomenon. What it *means* to be a homosexual (or a sexual-minority male) changes over time and such change is in part due to societal dynamics at large, but also in part due to homosexuals individuals themselves (Faderman, 1993; Hacking, 1995). Hammack (2005) suggests that

sexual orientation minorities develop a complex narrative that is significantly influenced by their same-sex sexual desire and alignment to a particular identity category within a specific culture and historical time. The process of an individual taking information they deem relevant to themselves and then incorporating this information into their personal narrative is what Hammack (2005) calls building a *coherent self*. When building a coherent self, an individual will often attempt to incorporate more positive and self-aggrandizing information into their personal narrative in order to raise their self-esteem. As such, the positive incorporation of information into an individual's self-narrative might lead to an individual's coherent self being more fiction than fact. The pervasive stereotype of homosexual males being overachievers could potentially be the product, at least initially, of Tobias' biography, which furnishes a narrative in which overachieving is linked to minority sexual orientation. This narrative may have resonated with other homosexual biographers who echoed its message (Downs, 2005; Monette, 1992; Sullivan, 1998; Yoshino, 2006), thereby reiterating and reinforcing the notion that what it means to be a homosexual male is to be an overachiever. Because some of these narratives have become popular in the mainstreams and have reached a broad audience, overachieving behavior has come to be a defining characteristic of male homosexuality as more and more homosexual males identify with the pervasive stereotype even though many of these males may not actually be overachievers by any objective measure. The lack of generalizability of *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis to other minority sexual orientation minorities suggests that the pervasive stereotype of homosexual males as overachievers may be a looping effect of human kinds as opposed to a natural characteristic of sexual minorities in general, or even homosexual males specifically.

This looping effect, as articulated by Hacking (1995), continually strengthens the stereotype to the point that it has become the focus of scientific investigation, which, indeed, has become the case (e.g., Mallard & Vasey, under review; Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler, 2013).

The results here do not support *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis in a broader sample of homosexual males. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler's (2013) unique sub-group of homosexual males did support the hypothesis. Future research should determine why there are conflicting results between these studies.

Many studies demonstrate that homosexual males are female typical in certain aspects of their behavior and psychology (Bailey, 2003; Lippa, 2005). In particular, homosexual males tend to be female typical with regard to their occupational and hobby interests compared to heterosexual males. Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, and Bouvrette (2003) demonstrate that females are particularly likely to derive self-worth from academic achievement and appearance. It is perhaps not surprising then that Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler's (2013) homosexual male participants strategically focused their efforts to overachieve in female-typical domains such as academics (Crocker et al., 2003) and appearance enhancement (Buss, 1988). Tobias (1973) suggest that he too was strategic in where he exerted effort and notes that he excelled in school and his chosen profession, but, when playing baseball, he "couldn't bear the embarrassment of standing out there in right field, left out, frightened to death that someone, some stupid lefty crackerjack batter, just *might* slam one out right field" (p. 24) where he would then have to catch it or risk failing to catch it. It would be interesting if future research examined whether

homosexual males strategically focus their achievement related activities in more female-typical domains when compared to heterosexual males. It would also be interesting to examine whether homosexual males are more distressed when faced with failure in male typical as opposed to female typical domains due to their greater interest and presumably aptitude in the later as opposed to the former.

All empirical testing of *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis have been conducted by providing self-report surveys to participants (Mallard & Vasey, under review; Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler, 2013). Future research could test the hypothesis using different research methodology. Dweck and Leggett's (1988) work on performance goals and learning goals in children was conducted in a laboratory setting and was contingent on experimental manipulations such that participants were faced with trials that resulted in both failure and success. Because of this methodology, the researchers were able to directly observe the differing behavior and statements made by participants with performance goals versus learning goals. Future research on *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis could employ a similar observational/experimental methodology.

An experimental research design might further benefit the testing of *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis because in this study, I did not measure overachieving *per se*, rather I measured psychological tendencies that *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis implies are causal psychological factors leading to overachieving in homosexual males. Pachankis and Hatzenbuehler (2013) made similar methodological choices. Though work by Grant and Dweck (2003) demonstrates a link between some of the measures employed here, specifically validation seeking and growth seeking, and

actual achievement in the real world, the relationship is correlational. Future research could employ more direct measures of overachieving.

Causal reasons for why some sub-groups of homosexual males might overachieve or strive to be the best little boys in the world should also be further explored. The minority stress hypothesis posits minority status will result in pervasive psychosocial stress for the individual (Brook, 1981). Meyer (1995) suggests that for homosexual males minority stressors include internalized homophobia, stigma, and experience of discrimination and violence. The consequences of such psychosocial stress can be profound, as one gay youth wrote before killing himself:

I can't let anyone find out that I'm not straight. It would be humiliating. My friends would hate me, I just know it. They might even want to beat me up...I guess I'm no good to anyone...not even God. Life is so cruel, and unfair. Sometimes I feel like disappearing from the face of the earth (Miller, 1992, pp. 88-89).

The language above is similar to that used by Tobias (1973) in his memoir. Although Tobias did not commit suicide, he too explicitly stated that his overachieving behavior was a way of compensating for, or coping with, his problematic sexual orientation. Examining *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis through the minority stress framework may provide insight into why some sub-groups of homosexual males (i.e, those that feel more stigmatized) overachieve when compared to others, perhaps as a coping mechanism employed by some but not all. In this regard, one might expect regional differences related to homophobia to exist in terms of samples that conform to, or fail to conform to, *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis. If the minority stress hypothesis is correct, then it may only apply to certain sexual orientation minority group such as homosexual males, because as I demonstrated in Chapter 4, there was no

evidence that homosexual females overachieve compared to heterosexual females, nor is there any anecdotal accounts to support such a female sexual orientation difference.

Williams (1992) suggests that “third gender” males from non-Western cultures (i.e., males who are typically very feminine and exclusively same-sex attracted) over-excel at various labor practices as a way of striving for prestige within their families and communities. Historical reports from various indigenous North American cultures, such as the Winnebagos, Hopi, Lakota, Mohave, Assiniboine and Crow, indicate that transgendered same-sex attracted males often considered themselves better than women when performing feminine tasks (Williams, 1992). This is also true of Samoan transgendered males, known locally as *fa'afafine*. As one *fa'afafine* from the island of Upolu states, “If you cook with a *fa'afafine*, I think a *fa'afafine* will be better than you. If you're cleaning or doing all those kind of stuff that woman should do, a *fa'afafine* is better than a woman for doing that” (Poe, 2004). Work by Vasey and VanderLaan (Vasey, Pocock, & VanderLaan, 2007; Vasey & VanderLaan, 2009, 2010a, b, c; VanderLaan & Vasey, 2012) has repeatedly demonstrated that *fa'afafine* exhibited elevated avuncular tendencies and behavior compared to Samoan women and opposite-sex attracted males. This elevated avuncularity may be a strategic pattern on the part of *fa'afafine* to overachieve in certain domains, particularly female typical ones. It would be interesting if future cross-cultural research examined whether third-gender males from these cultures overachieve compared to their opposite-sex attracted counterparts and if so, what the motivational factors are underlying such overachieving-related behavior.

In conclusion, more research should be conducted on *The Best Little Boy in the World* hypothesis, as it is unclear as to which sub-populations of homosexual males

might overachieve and why this might be the case. Regardless, on the basis of this thesis, it is clear that not all homosexual males are “The Best Little Boys in the World” for the motivational reasons implied by the hypothesis.

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## APPENDIX

### Facebook Advertisement

The Facebook advertisement used for participant recruitment was advertised to English speaking males and females in Canada that were over the age of 18 and sexually interested in either males, females, or both. An example of how the advertisement would appear on a potential participant's Facebook page is below. The advertisement appeared on potential participants' Facebook pages according to a predetermined algorithm that was set by Facebook. Facebook was paid 70¢ every time a potential participant clicked on the study link, regardless of whether that individual participated in the study or not. To test the general sexual orientation hypothesis, the gender typical hypothesis, and the gender atypical hypothesis, potential participants were asked to complete a survey on "Sexuality and Personality." Potential participants were shown, "Are you interested in participating in research on sexuality and personality? Please take our 15 minute survey!" In order to increase participant numbers for our test of the acceptance hypothesis, potential participants were shown an advertisement that read: "Sexuality and Acceptance: Not accepted by you parents because of your sexual orientation? Not out? Take our survey!"

Offers

Previous · Next

posted an offer.

---

**Facebook Only: Get 50% off one cup of coffee to celebrate our 5th birthday!**

 [Get Offer](#) · 3,210 claimed this.

---

Share · 20 minutes ago · 

Sponsored

See All

Sexuality and Acceptance  
surveymethods.com



Not accepted by your parents because of your sexual orientation? Not Out? Take our survey!

# Survey

## Consent Form

### Status Striving Canada (Ryan)

Dear Participant,  
This is a study being conducted by faculty and students from the University of Lethbridge in Alberta.

**DESCRIPTION:** You are invited to participate in this research study on self-perceptions of ambition and achievement. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a series of short questionnaires. The first is a demographic questionnaire. The other questionnaires will pose questions pertaining to personality characteristics.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:** We do not expect that participating in this study will entail any specific risk to you, but there may be some risk that you find some of the questions too personal or difficult. You should feel free to skip questions that you are not comfortable answering. We cannot promise that you will receive any benefits from participating in this study; however, the information that participants provide in this study will help us to develop a better understanding on self-perceptions of ambition and achievement.

**TIME INVOLVEMENT:** The questionnaires will take approximately 10 - 15 minutes to complete.

**PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS:** If you have read this form and decide to participate, please understand that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and that you have the right to discontinue your participation and withdraw from the study at any point, without consequence. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published or written data resulting from the study. All data collected will be anonymous and will be kept completely confidential. There is no way for the researchers to "match" your identity with your information.

**\*\* Please note that by clicking "I CONSENT" below and by completing and submitting the following questionnaires you will be giving your consent to participate in this study. \*\***

If you would like to discuss this research further and/or have any questions or concerns regarding the study, you may contact Dr. Paul Vasey by email at paul.vasey@uleth.ca, or his students Ryan Mallard at ryan.mallard@uleth.ca or Deanna Forrester at deanna.forrester@uleth.ca.

Alternatively, if you have any questions about the conduct of the study that you would like answered from someone not directly involved, you may contact Office of Research Services at University of Lethbridge (Phone: 403-329-2747 or email: research.services@uleth.ca).

Thank you for your cooperation,

---

\* 1. I have thoroughly read the consent form.

By selecting "I consent" you are providing informed consent to participate in this study  
By selecting "I DO NOT consent" you are declining to participate in this study.

- I consent  
 I DO NOT consent

## Biographic Data

Page 2 - Bio/Kinsey

\* 2. **Are you biologically male or female?**

- Male
  - Female
  - If other, please specify
- 

3. **How do you identify?**

- Man
  - Woman
  - If other, please specify
-

## Kinsey Scale - Males

Page 3 - KinM

\* 4. In the past year, which statement would best describe your sexual feelings/fantasies/attractions?

- Sexual feelings/fantasies/attractions only about females
  - Most sexual feelings/fantasies/attractions about females, but occasionally about males
  - Most sexual feelings/fantasies/attractions about females, but some definite feelings/fantasies/attractions about males
  - Sexual feelings/fantasies/attractions equally divided between males and females
  - Most sexual feelings/fantasies/attractions about males, but some definite feelings/fantasies/attractions about females
  - Most sexual feelings/fantasies/attractions about males, but occasionally about females
  - Sexual feelings/fantasies/attractions only about males
  - No sexual feelings/fantasies/attractions
-

## Kinsey Scale - Females

Page 4 - KinF

\* 5. In the past year, which statement would best describe your sexual feelings/fantasies/attractions?

- Sexual feelings/fantasies/attractions only about females
  - Most sexual feelings/fantasies/attractions about females, but occasionally about males
  - Most sexual feelings/fantasies/attractions about females, but some definite feelings/fantasies/attractions about males
  - Sexual feelings/fantasies/attractions equally divided between males and females
  - Most sexual feelings/fantasies/attractions about males, but some definite feelings/fantasies/attractions about females
  - Most sexual feelings/fantasies/attractions about males, but occasionally about females
  - Sexual feelings/fantasies/attractions only about males
  - No sexual feelings/fantasies/attractions
-

## Acceptance Questions

Page 5 - Acceptance

6. When you came out, how accepting were your parents of your sexual orientation?

- |                       |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Very unaccepting      | Moderately unaccepting | Slightly unaccepting  | Indifferent           | Slightly accepting    | Moderately accepting  | Very accepting        | I haven't come out    |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

7. Currently, how accepting are your parents of your sexual orientation?

- |                       |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Very unaccepting      | Moderately unaccepting | Slightly unaccepting  | Indifferent           | Slightly accepting    | Moderately accepting  | Very accepting        | I haven't come out    |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

# Biographic Data

\* 8. How old are you? (in years)

---

---

\* 9. Where do you currently live? (Choose one)

[--Please Select--]

\* 10. What answer best describes your socio-economic-status in childhood?

- Lower Class    Lower Middle Class    Middle Class    Upper Middle Class    Upper Class
- 

\* 11. How religious was the home in which you grew up?

- Not at all Religious    Somewhat not Religious    Neutral    Somewhat Religious    Extremely Religious
- 

\* 12. What is your highest level of education? (Choose one)

[--Please Select--]

13. How did you hear about this study? (Choose one)

- Facebook  
 Email  
 Friend or family member  
 University  
 Other

14. Are you primarily left or right handed?

- Left  
 Right  
 Ambidextrous (equally both left and right handed)

15. Was your biological mother born in Canada?

- Yes  
 No

16. Was your biological father born in Canada?

- Yes  
 No

17. How many of your biological grandparents were born in Canada? (For example, if you don't know the birthplace of your maternal grandmother, you only consider your other grandparents when responding.)

- 4  
 3  
 2  
 1  
 0

## Biographic Data - Continued

18. How many older biological sisters do you have?

---

19. How many younger biological sisters do you have?

---

20. How many older biological brothers do you have?

---

21. How many younger biological brothers do you have?

---

## Gender Diagnosticity Measure

\* 22. A number of hobbies are listed below. Show how much you like or dislike each hobby using the following 5-point scale.

	Strongly dislike	Slightly dislike	Neutral or indifferent	Slightly like	Strongly like
Home electronics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dancing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Computers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Video games	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sewing and knitting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gardening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Singing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fishing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clothes shopping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Playing poker	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Watching romance movies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Playing team sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Watching sports on TV	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking and collecting photos of family and friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weight lifting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading romance novels	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working on cars	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cooking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# Childhood Gender Identity Scale

\* 23. As a child (before the age of 12), how often did you:

	Never	Sometimes, but less than once a month	At least once a month	At least once a week	Always/every day
Play with girls?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Play with girls' toys and girls' games?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Take the girls' role in pretend play, such as when playing "house" or imitating a female character?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Put on girls' makeup or clothes or accessories?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talk and act like a girl?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do girls chores?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Play with boys?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Play with boys' toys and boys' games?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Take the boys' role in pretend play, such as when playing "house" or imitating a male character?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Play rough games and sports?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do boys' chores?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# Goal Orientation Inventory

Please consider the following statements and answer using the scale provided. Think generally, your day-to-day life, and please choose the answer that is most right for you.

24. **Instead of just enjoying activities and social interactions , most situations to me feel like a major test of my basic worth, competence, or likeability.**
- |                       |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree     | Moderately disagree   | Slightly disagree     | Equally agree and disagree | Slightly agree        | Moderately agree      | Strongly agree        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 
25. **I look upon potential problems in life as opportunities for growth rather than as threats to my self-esteem.**
- |                       |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree     | Moderately disagree   | Slightly disagree     | Equally agree and disagree | Slightly agree        | Moderately agree      | Strongly agree        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 
26. **I have a knack for viewing difficult or stressful situations as opportunities to learn and grow.**
- |                       |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree     | Moderately disagree   | Slightly disagree     | Equally agree and disagree | Slightly agree        | Moderately agree      | Strongly agree        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 
27. **Relative to other people, I tend to approach stressful situations as if my basic self-worth, competence, or likeability was "at stake"**
- |                       |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree     | Moderately disagree   | Slightly disagree     | Equally agree and disagree | Slightly agree        | Moderately agree      | Strongly agree        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 
28. **Personal growth is more important to me than protecting myself from my fears.**
- |                       |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree     | Moderately disagree   | Slightly disagree     | Equally agree and disagree | Slightly agree        | Moderately agree      | Strongly agree        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 
29. **Whether it be in sports, social interactions, or job/school activities, I feel like I'm still trying to prove that I'm a worthwhile competent or likeable person.**
- |                       |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree     | Moderately disagree   | Slightly disagree     | Equally agree and disagree | Slightly agree        | Moderately agree      | Strongly agree        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 
30. **My interactions with people often feel like a test of whether or not I am a likeable person.**
- |                       |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree     | Moderately disagree   | Slightly disagree     | Equally agree and disagree | Slightly agree        | Moderately agree      | Strongly agree        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 
31. **When I'm faced with a difficult or stressful life situation, I'm likely to view it as an opportunity to learn and grow.**
- |                       |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree     | Moderately disagree   | Slightly disagree     | Equally agree and disagree | Slightly agree        | Moderately agree      | Strongly agree        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 
32. **I feel like I'm constantly trying to prove that I'm as competent as the people around me.**
- |                       |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree     | Moderately disagree   | Slightly disagree     | Equally agree and disagree | Slightly agree        | Moderately agree      | Strongly agree        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

## Goal Orientation Inventory - Continued

33. **When I approach new or difficult situations, I'm less concerned with the possibility of failure than with how I can grow from the experience.**

Strongly disagree

Moderately disagree

Slightly disagree

Equally agree and disagree

Slightly agree

Moderately agree

Strongly agree

---

# Goal Orientation Inventory - Continued

Please consider the following statements and answer using the scale provided. Think generally, your day-to-day life, and please choose the answer that is most right for you.

34. I look upon possible setbacks and rejection as part of life since I know that such experiences will help me grow as a person in the long run.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

35. My approach to situations is one of always needing to prove my basic worth, competence, liveability.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

36. I'm the type who is willing to risk the possibility of failure or rejection in order to reach my fullest potential as a person.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

37. My attitude toward possible failure or rejection is that such experiences will turn out to be opportunities for growth and self-improvement.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

38. One of the main things that I know that I'm striving for is to prove that I'm really "good enough".

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

39. How well I perform in social and achievement situations is a direct measure of my basic self-worth, competence, or likeability as a person.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

40. In situations that could end in failure or rejection, it's natural for me to focus on how I can grow or what I can experience.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

41. I feel as though my basic worth, competence, and likeability are "on the line" in many situations I find myself in.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

42. The attitude I take toward possible setbacks and disappointments is that they'll end up being good learning experiences.

## Goal Orientation Inventory - Continued

Strongly disagree      Moderately disagree      Slightly disagree      Equally agree and disagree      Slightly agree      Moderately agree      Strongly agree

                                                                                                                                  

43. **As I see it, the rewards of personal growth and learning something new outweigh the disappointment of failure or rejection.**

Strongly disagree      Moderately disagree      Slightly disagree      Equally agree and disagree      Slightly agree      Moderately agree      Strongly agree

# Goal Orientation Inventory - Continued

Please consider the following statements and answer using the scale provided. Think generally, your day-to-day life, and please choose the answer that is most right for you.

44. **It seems like I'm constantly trying to prove that I'm "okay" as a person.**
- |                       |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree     | Moderately disagree   | Slightly disagree     | Equally agree and disagree | Slightly agree        | Moderately agree      | Strongly agree        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 
45. **So much of what I do feels to me like a major test of my basic worth, competence, and likeability as a person.**
- |                       |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree     | Moderately disagree   | Slightly disagree     | Equally agree and disagree | Slightly agree        | Moderately agree      | Strongly agree        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 
46. **My natural tendency is to view problem situations as providing opportunities for growth and self-improvement.**
- |                       |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree     | Moderately disagree   | Slightly disagree     | Equally agree and disagree | Slightly agree        | Moderately agree      | Strongly agree        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 
47. **I feel like my worth, competence, and likeability are things I'm constantly trying to prove to myself and others.**
- |                       |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree     | Moderately disagree   | Slightly disagree     | Equally agree and disagree | Slightly agree        | Moderately agree      | Strongly agree        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 
48. **I approach difficult life situations welcoming the opportunity to learn from my mistakes.**
- |                       |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree     | Moderately disagree   | Slightly disagree     | Equally agree and disagree | Slightly agree        | Moderately agree      | Strongly agree        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 
49. **Relative to other people, there are a lot of things I do just to prove my basic adequacy as a person.**
- |                       |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree     | Moderately disagree   | Slightly disagree     | Equally agree and disagree | Slightly agree        | Moderately agree      | Strongly agree        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 
50. **My approach to challenging life situations is that I'd rather make a mistake and learn from the experience than sit back and never try.**
- |                       |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree     | Moderately disagree   | Slightly disagree     | Equally agree and disagree | Slightly agree        | Moderately agree      | Strongly agree        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 
51. **I approach stressful situations knowing that the important thing is for me to learn and grow from these experiences.**
- |                       |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree     | Moderately disagree   | Slightly disagree     | Equally agree and disagree | Slightly agree        | Moderately agree      | Strongly agree        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 
52. **Whereas other people see themselves as competent in the things they do, that's something I'm still trying to prove to myself and others.**
- |                       |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree     | Moderately disagree   | Slightly disagree     | Equally agree and disagree | Slightly agree        | Moderately agree      | Strongly agree        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

## Goal Orientation Inventory - Continued

53. I feel like I'm always testing out whether or not I really "measure up".

Strongly  
disagree

Moderately  
disagree

Slightly disagree

Equally agree  
and disagree

Slightly agree

Moderately  
agree

Strongly agree

---

## Goal Orientation Inventory - Continued

Page 12 - VS - GS

Please consider the following statements and answer using the scale provided. Think generally, your day-to-day life, and please choose the answer that is most right for you.

54. I look upon potential disappointments in life as opportunities to improve and grow as a person.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

55. In many things that I do, I'm trying to find out whether or not I'm a competent, worthy, or likeable person

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

56. I approach difficult life situations knowing that I can accept failure or rejection as long as I learn and grow from the experience.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

57. I tend to view difficult or stressful situations as all-or-nothing tests of my basic worth as a person.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

58. Realizing my fullest potential in life is more important to me than protecting myself from the possibility of failure.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

59. My main motive for doing many of the things that I do is to prove my basic self-worth, competence, or likeability.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Insecure Striving Subscale

Sometimes people can see life as something of a competition. For example, we often call it the 'Rat Race'. People can vary in how pressured they feel to strive and compete for things that are important to them. Below are a series of statements, which describe how people may think and feel about the need to strive and compete in life.

For each statement, please choose an answer which best describes the degree to which that statement is true for you.

---

60. **If I don't strive to achieve, I'll be seen as inferior to other people.**

Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Often      Always  
                       

---

61. **I struggle to achieve things so that other people will not look down on me.**

Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Often      Always  
                       

---

62. **I worry about failure because it means you can't keep up and compete with other people in your life.**

Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Often      Always  
                       

---

63. **Unless you can compete and keep up, you get left behind.**

Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Often      Always  
                       

---

64. **If I don't strive to succeed, I'll be left behind everyone else.**

Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Often      Always  
                       

---

65. **I need to match what other people achieve.**

Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Often      Always  
                       

---

66. **To get on in the world, you have to compete with others.**

Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Often      Always  
                       

---

67. **People compare me to others to see if I match up.**

Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Often      Always  
                       

---

68. **If you don't keep up in looks or achievements others won't bother with you.**

Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Often      Always  
                       

---

69. **To be valued by others I have to strive to succeed.**

Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Often      Always

## Insecure Striving Subscale

**Sometimes people can see life as something of a competition. For example, we often call it the 'Rat Race'. People can vary in how pressured they feel to strive and compete for things that are important to them. Below are a series of statements, which describe how people may think and feel about the need to strive and compete in life.**

**For each statement, please choose an answer which best describes the degree to which that statement is true for you.**

70. **Acceptance is something you have to earn and compete with others for.**

Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Often      Always  
                       

---

71. **I never feel my place in society is secure but have to strive to prove myself worthy of it.**

Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Often      Always  
                       

---

72. **Even if I do succeed, others will not believe that it is enough.**

Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Often      Always  
                       

---

73. **You earn respect by out performing others.**

Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Often      Always  
                       

---

74. **People who can't compete are seen as weak.**

Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Often      Always  
                       

---

75. **People judge you by how well you perform in comparison to others.**

Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Often      Always  
                       

---

76. **Life is a competition.**

Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Often      Always  
                       

---

77. **Being competitive gives me a right to life.**

Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Often      Always  
                       

---

78. **Others have to see me succeed otherwise it's worthless.**

Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Often      Always  
                       

---

# Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale

Read each of the following statements carefully and indicate how characteristic it is of you according to the scale provided.

79. **I worry about what other people will think of me even when I know it doesn't make any difference.**  
 Not at all characteristic of me    Slightly characteristic of me    Moderately characteristic of me    Very characteristic of me    Extremely characteristic of me
80. **I am unconcerned even if I know that people are forming an unfavourable impression of me.**  
 Not at all characteristic of me    Slightly characteristic of me    Moderately characteristic of me    Very characteristic of me    Extremely characteristic of me
81. **I am frequently afraid of other people noticing my shortcomings.**  
 Not at all characteristic of me    Slightly characteristic of me    Moderately characteristic of me    Very characteristic of me    Extremely characteristic of me
82. **I rarely worry about what kind of impression I am making on someone.**  
 Not at all characteristic of me    Slightly characteristic of me    Moderately characteristic of me    Very characteristic of me    Extremely characteristic of me
83. **I am afraid that others will not approve of me.**  
 Not at all characteristic of me    Slightly characteristic of me    Moderately characteristic of me    Very characteristic of me    Extremely characteristic of me
84. **I am afraid that people will find fault with me.**  
 Not at all characteristic of me    Slightly characteristic of me    Moderately characteristic of me    Very characteristic of me    Extremely characteristic of me
85. **Other people's opinions of me do not bother me.**  
 Not at all characteristic of me    Slightly characteristic of me    Moderately characteristic of me    Very characteristic of me    Extremely characteristic of me
86. **When I am talking to someone, I worry about what they may be thinking of me.**  
 Not at all characteristic of me    Slightly characteristic of me    Moderately characteristic of me    Very characteristic of me    Extremely characteristic of me
87. **I am usually worried about what kind of impression I make.**  
 Not at all characteristic of me    Slightly characteristic of me    Moderately characteristic of me    Very characteristic of me    Extremely characteristic of me
88. **If I know someone is judging me, it has little effect on me.**  
 Not at all characteristic    Slightly characteristic of    Moderately    Very characteristic of    Extremely

## Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale

of me                      me                      characteristic of me                      me                      characteristic of me  
                                                                                       

89. **Sometimes I think I am too concerned with what other people think of me.**

Not at all characteristic of me      Slightly characteristic of me      Moderately characteristic of me      Very characteristic of me      Extremely characteristic of me  
                                                                                       

90. **I often worry that I will say or do the wrong things.**

Not at all characteristic of me      Slightly characteristic of me      Moderately characteristic of me      Very characteristic of me      Extremely characteristic of me  
                                                                                       

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## Concluding Remarks and Contact Information

Page 16 - Information

**Thank you for your participation in this study. Your responses, in combination with the responses of other participants, will allow us to examine hypotheses about the status striving of males and females in Canada. All of your responses are confidential and will not be tied to any personal information about you.**

**If you are interested in the results of this study, or if you have any questions related to this study, please contact Ryan or Deanna using the contact information at the bottom of the sheet.**

**We thank you for your participation in this study.**

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