

**BULLYING, PHYSICAL AGGRESSIVITY, GENDER ATYPICALITY, AND
SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN MALES**

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ABSTRACT

Bullying is recognized, both in the popular media and the academic literature, as a highly important social issue requiring understanding in order to redress its harms. Research has established that same-sex attracted males in the West are at heightened risk for victimization due to bullying. Although not entirely understood, the connection between male sexual orientation and heightened victimization due to bullying has been linked to homophobia, same-sex attracted males' deviation from gender norms, as well as their lower levels of physical aggression. The studies contained in this thesis examine the connections between physical aggression, childhood gender-atypicality, and sexual orientation in the Pacific Island nation of Samoa, a culture tolerant of same-sex attracted males (known locally as *fa'afafine*, a third gender). Despite being highly gender-atypical in childhood, *fa'afafine* did not report greater victimization due to bullying in childhood than opposite-sex attracted men. This finding is unprecedented compared to Western data.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrell. First, Competition; Secondly, Diffidence; Thirdly, Glory. The first, maketh men invade for Gain; the second, for Safety; and the third, for Reputation.

Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, 1651

Just two paragraphs before Hobbes wrote his iconic and often quoted observations about the nasty, short, brutishness of human life, the philosopher offered up the observation of human conflict (quoted above) that is stunning in its insight, clarity, and brevity. There has been more than a century of empirical research into the origins of human aggression (Tremblay, 2000), but few statements ring as true as that made by Hobbes nearly 400 years ago. Aggression, in all its forms, inevitably touches all our lives. Whether it is news of violence erupting throughout the world, the passive-aggression encountered in the workplace, or the exclusion, insults, and attacks launched against children on a daily basis in the schoolyard. None of us is insulated from its reach.

Beyond simply understanding why aggressors aggress, or for that matter, why bullies bully, we must also understand how and why they choose their targets. Some segments of society seem to disproportionately be on the receiving end of aggressive acts. In ancient times these were often neighboring tribes, cities, or eventually countries (Pinker, 2011). In our modern world, we tend to focus on victims of a different sort: women, children, and those who belong to minority groups. This research primarily focuses on understanding the targeting of one minority group in particular: homosexual males. Why is it that they have faced such discrimination in recent centuries? Why is it

that homosexual males are bullied at such substantially higher rates than their heterosexual counterparts? What can be done to remedy the situation?

I will begin by examining aggression more broadly, its forms and features, before discussing a specific type of aggression – bullying. Finally, I will recount the empirical evidence related to heightened victimization due to bullying of sexual minorities. This trajectory will frame the cross-cultural discussion of bullying and aggression in men and women from Samoa (Chapter 2), as well as data pertaining to the interrelatedness of aggression, bullying, and childhood gender-atypicality in a group of Samoan males, some of whom are ‘heterosexual’, and some of whom are not (Chapter 3).

Defining Aggression

Aggression is defined as “any action undertaken with the apparent intent of causing physical or psychological harm” (Burbank, 1987, p. 72). A few key elements of this definition deserve comment. The first is that the action must be intentional, or at least perceived as intentional, on the part of the actor. A car accident, for example, is not typically thought of as being an aggressive action. The second key element is that “any action” can be deemed aggressive. This speaks to the wide variety of tools at the disposal of an aggressor. They can take the obvious routes of physical, or even verbal attack, but also the more nuanced and subtle spreading of rumours, gossip, slander, or outright Machiavellian social engineering in order to orchestrate the downfall of a target.

The Forms of Aggression

Aggression can take various forms, each with benefits and tradeoffs. The most easily identifiable and costly form is *physical aggression*, which can range from small skirmishes to war (Archer, 2009). Less obvious and costly is *verbal aggression* (Archer

& Huntingford, 1994), which in humans is characterized by being argumentative, threatening, or insulting (Little, Jones, Henrich, & Hawley, 2003). Verbal aggression can lead to physical aggression if aggressive interactions escalate. Alternatively, aggressive interactions that might otherwise escalate into physical aggression can de-escalate through the use of verbal aggression, which signals the potential of higher-level (i.e., physical) aggression and, in doing so, averts it.

Relational aggression occurs when a target's feelings are covertly hurt via social exclusion, or because their reputation is damaged through various types of indirect verbal aggression including rumours, gossip, or slander (Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukiainen, 1992; Little et al., 2003). It is the most sophisticated form of aggressive behaviour (Archer & Coyne, 2005) because it requires significant social acumen to execute successfully (Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 2000). It is for this reason that extremely young children most often display physical aggression long before their social and cognitive development allows them to eventually employ verbal aggression, and later still, relational aggression (Björkqvist, 1994; Kim, Kamphaus, Orpinas, & Kelder, 2010; Holden, 2000; Kaukiainen et al., 1999). While all three forms of aggression tend to be distinct, they also share considerable overlap, both theoretically and in terms of real world behaviour (Archer, 2004; Little et al., 2003).

Categorizing Aggression

The most useful framework for conceptualizing aggression comes from the research synthesis of Little et al. (2003). In this framework, aggression can be categorized as being overt (physical or verbal) or relational, as well as instrumental or reactive (Figure 1). *Reactive aggression* occurs in response to threats or provocations with the

goal of obtaining safety or defense (Little et al., 2003). *Instrumental aggression* is more proactive, planned, and goal-oriented (e.g., take something by force, to enhance reputation, etc.) (Little et al., 2003). Using this framework, two axes can be seen to typify the types and motivations of aggressive responses (Figure 1), producing four distinct types of aggression (reactive-overt, reactive-relational, instrumental-overt, and instrumental-relational). Reactive-overt aggression is the least sophisticated response pattern and instrumental-relational aggression is the most sophisticated.

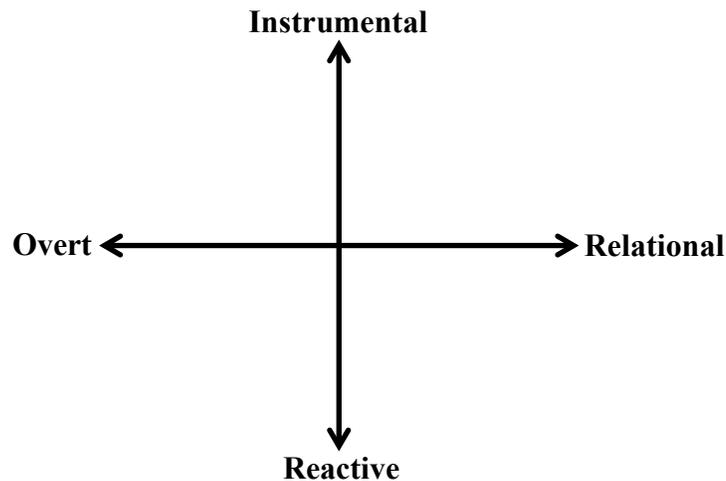


Figure 1. Types and Motivations of Aggressive Behaviour (Little et al., 2003)

Bullying: A Subset Of Aggression

Bullying is a specific subtype of aggressive behaviour, which can be defined as the repeated attempts of a group or individual to gain social advantage by the use of verbal, physical, or relational aggression against a target, especially when there is a perceived or actual power imbalance (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Solberg & Olweus,

2003). Generally then, bullying is a proactive (i.e., instrumental) social strategy. There are clear parallels between bullying and aggression more broadly; bullying is simply recurrent aggression against a target of lower (perceived or actual) power than the aggressor. The prevalence of bullying behaviours seems to be proportional to their risk. Physical bullying is the least common, followed by damage to property, and most common are verbal assaults, social manoeuvring, gossip, exclusion and the like (Wang et al., 2012).

Prevalence

Bullying behaviour is prevalent throughout the world (Craig et al., 2009; Due & Holstien, 2008; Flemming & Jacobsen, 2010), with roughly 30% of adolescents victimized at least monthly, and 8% facing it daily. Its ubiquity has compelled researchers to label it an international public health concern (Flemming & Jacobsen, 2010; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009). Although bullying behaviour tends to be curtailed with age (Craig et al., 2009; Rivers & Smith, 1994), there is mounting evidence that it continues at appreciable rates well into adulthood, simply moving from playground to workplace (McDonald, Brown, & Smith, 2015). There is also an emerging body of research evaluating bullying that occurs among siblings, between romantic partners, in child welfare facilities, prisons, and the military (Monks et al., 2009).

Bullying is especially prevalent when an *actual* power imbalance exists due to the structures of many institutions, companies, or corporations (Monks et al., 2009; Rayner, 1997). It can also be difficult to cleanly parse apart in a social group who exactly are the bullies, victims, and those who are both (termed bully-victims). Just as the social and hierarchy dynamics that bullies attempt to favorably alter are continually changing, so too

is involvement in bullying – which is most appropriately viewed on a continuum rather than being comprised of discrete categories (Espelage & Swearer, 2003).

Generally speaking, males are twice as likely to be perpetrators of bullying, especially when bullying of a physical nature (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2011; Pellegrini, Bartini, & Brooks, 1999; Wolke, Copeland, Angold, & Costello, 2013). This bias, however, may be due in part to the fact that overt forms of bullying are far easier to objectively assess than that of a more subtle, relational nature (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000a). Mirroring the patterns of aggression more broadly (see Archer 2004, 2009), male bullies are much more likely to use physical forms, whereas females employ more verbal and relational tactics (Björkqvist, 1994; Wang, Iannotti, & Luk, 2012).

Assessing Bullying

In the last four decades of bullying research, numerous measurement instruments have been used, ranging from purely observational studies, peer and teacher report, parental and self-report, and combinations of each (Hymel & Swearer, 2015). Most commonly used are self report inventories, which are noted as being especially useful because individuals have knowledge of their own victimization that may be unknown or unnoticed by observational researcher, parents, teachers, or even peers (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000). Despite recalled victimization experiences being highly reliable and stable across time (Rivers, 2001b), self-report measures have been criticized as lacking in specificity and construct validity (Cornell & Bandyopadhyay, 2010; Felix, Sharkey, Green, Furlong, & Tanigawa, 2011). In response to this, a group of Australian researchers (Shaw, Dooley, Cross, Zubrick, & Walters, 2013) constructed and validated a multi-item measure of bullying victimization and perpetration in adolescence, the Forms of Bullying

Scale (FBS), which drew extensively from the work of pioneers in the field (e.g., Olweus, 1996; Rigby, 1998).

What Causes Bullies to Bully?

Bandura (1973) advanced the view that aggressors (or for our purposes, bullies) will have experienced differential reinforcement for their aggressive actions depending on the “status, power, age, sex, and many other attributes” (p.137) of their victims. In light of this, bullies will then be seen to preferentially seek out targets that they dislike, individuals who pose little threat of meaningful retaliation, or those for whom bullying provides some advantage to the perpetrator. When all three of these factors coalesce into one individual or opportunity, savvy bullies will exploit this fact in order to leverage themselves into a position of social dominance, while simultaneously lowering the rank of their target.

Modeling also plays a role in the development of bullying behaviour, as witnessing inter-parental violence, especially that of mothers against fathers, significantly predicts a child bullying their peers (Baldry, 2003; Dauvergn & Johnson, 2001). Being a victim of childhood abuse, both physical and psychological, is likewise associated with heightened levels of bully perpetration (Duncan, 1999), as is general family dysfunction (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2011). In keeping with results pertaining to general aggression, there is no statistically significant association between exposure to violent video games and bullying when controlling for family history, pre-existing aggression, and other childhood stressors (Ferguson, Olson, Kutner, & Warner, 2014).

Twin studies reveal that bullying behaviour, like aggression, is substantially heritable, with 61% of the variance in perpetration due to genetic factors, with the

remaining 39% due to the impact of non-shared environment (Ball et al., 2008). The role that certain personality traits play in making bullying more likely partially explains the heritability of the behaviour. Bullies tend to score much more highly on self-report measures of aggression than their victims (Solberg & Olweus, 2003), and also exhibit both low impulse control and low empathy (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2011; Farrington & Baldry, 2010).

Bullies were once thought of as ‘social oafs’, lacking the graces and cognitive development to engage their peers in more prosocial ways, and having characteristic deficits in ‘social-information processing’ (Crick & Dodge, 1999). This (mis)perception is heavily challenged by emerging evidence that many bullies are not socially incompetent, but rather skilled social manipulators (Peeters, Cillessen, & Scholte; 2010; Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999a,b; Ttofi & Farrington, 2010), showing no deficits in processing social information (Camodeca, Goossens, Schuengel, & Meerum-Terwogt, 2003). In fact, Machiavellianism, in conjunction with low empathy towards victims, is associated with heightened levels of adolescent (Sutton & Keogh, 2000) and adult (Baughman, Dearing, Giammarco, & Vernon, 2012) perpetration. This connection is predictable in light of the fact that Machiavellian individuals tend to strive for social dominance in particularly calloused and ruthless ways (Semenyna & Honey, 2015). Recognition of these associations, however, must be tempered by the fact that there is variation in the social skill of many bullies. Most common are bullies who are high in status and show social shrewdness; less common are perpetrators who show social deficits and are subsequently low in status (Peeters et al., 2010).

Cross-cultural research indicates that rates of bullying are positively correlated with markers of economic inequality (Due et al., 2009; Elgar et al., 2013), which speaks to the fact that bullying is likely used as a form of antisocial dominance striving. When equity is predominant, bullies have little status to gain from their behaviour, but when inequity is the norm, the payoff for their behaviour is much more salient. Bullying is just one class of social conflict that tends to be exacerbated by inequity, which also serves to moderate levels of violent crime and homicide (Daly, Wilson, & Vasdev, 2001; Wilkinson, 2004).

What Do Bullies Gain by Bullying?

As with aggression, bullying appears to serve a dominance function (Hawley & Little, 1999; Sutton et al., 1999a,b). This fact is well illustrated in that bullying tends to intensify during group formation or the addition of new individuals to a group, and attenuate with time as groups stabilize (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000b). Observational studies of toddlers indicate similar patterns of hierarchy formation and maintenance emerge early in childhood social development (Hawley & Little, 1999). While bullies are often disliked, they are nonetheless perceived as being popular (Cillisen & Mayeux, 2004; Prinstein & Cillisen, 2003). There are significant immediate and long-term benefits to being socially dominant (Clutton-Brock & Huchard, 2013; Hawley, 1999), and the acquisition of social dominance provides both a proximate motivation and ultimate function for the perpetration of bullying. For the individual, it affords them status, often at the cost of their rivals. Over the long term, bullying would undergo positive selection because the trait is so often associated with the acquisition of resources. Although bullies occasionally engage in their favoured social tactics to gain other resources, more often it

is to obtain a more sought after social commodity, status. An emergent property of bullying is that it can often forestall more serious or prolonged conflicts once a hierarchy is established.

How and Why Bullies Choose Their Victims

Understanding the motivations of bullies, as well as the benefits they garner through their actions, does not tell us how and why they choose their victims. The significant heritability (.73) of victimization (Ball et al., 2008) speaks to the fact that certain traits make it more likely that an individual will be targeted by a bully. Some victims are chosen because they are meek and passive, whereas others because they are reactive, giving salient feedback to a bully that incitement has been effective (Camodeca et al., 2003; Pellegrini et al., 1999). Longitudinal studies have concluded that children with more problems with emotional regulation and hyperactivity early in life are more likely to be bullied later in adolescence (Barker et al., 2008). Indeed, many of the same internalizing problems that bullying induces – depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem (discussed below) – are also risk factors for being victimized (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). This fact can create a runaway downward spiral, wherein characteristics that invite victimization are made worse by it, only inviting more victimization. Unfortunately, many victims open themselves up to ridicule and derision simply because they are less adept at reading emotions than their tormentors (Woods, Wolke, Nowicki, & Hall, 2009). Additionally, physical bullies rely on cues of low strength to choose victims, and relational bullies are attuned to cues of social (in)competence (Woods et al., 2009). The fact that these risk factors often overlap helps account for the fact that bullies tend to

target their victims using multiple different strategies (Skrzypiec, Slee, Murray-Harvey, & Pereira, 2011).

Another reliable predictor of victimization is childhood gender-atypicality (CGA). Childhood gender-atypicality is characterized in males by a relative aversion to rough-and-tumble play, and a preference for feminine games and playmates. Conversely, in females CGA is typified by a shunning of typically feminine play and instead a preference for rough-and-tumble play, often with male peers (Zucker, Mitchell, Bradley, Tkachuk, Cantor, & Allin, 2006). Gender-atypical boys are twice as likely to be victimized than their gender-typical counterparts (Huebner, Rebchook, & Kegeles, 2004; Young & Sweeting, 2004). This connection has been found in both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, although the heightened risk of victimization is not identically mirrored in females (Roberts, Rosario, Slopen, Calzo, & Austin, 2013). CGA in boys may be perceived as a signal that an individual is less likely to fight back, therefore making him an ‘easy’ target to a bully (Skrzypiec et al., 2011). Alternatively, the heightened victimization associated with CGA may be the result of ‘gender policing’, wherein deviations from prescribed gender roles are met with insults, exclusion, or even being attacked physically (Young & Sweeting, 2004).

It should now be clear that victims tend to display certain markers that reliably predict their victimization. This is not to suggest that they somehow deserve to be targeted, simply that bullies tend to pick up on and exploit cues of passivity, atypicality, vulnerability, or weakness. It should also be noted that much like bullies themselves, victims tend to come from lower SES families (Arseneault, Bowes, & Shakoor, 2010;

Due et al., 2009), bolstering support for the notion that bullying is a social strategy aimed at status competition.

The Effects of Being a Bully

While individuals that are entirely uninvolved in bullying have the best short and long-term outcomes (Wolke et al., 2013), there are negative ramifications of being a bully, being a victim, and being a bully-victim. Data are somewhat inconsistent when it comes to the adverse effects of being a bully. Some researchers have found that being a bully is associated with increased alcohol abuse in adolescence (Nansel, Craig, Overpeck, Saluja, & Ruan, 2004). Others have noted that bullies, especially those employing relational tactics, have greater levels of depression, loneliness, and feelings of isolation (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Unsurprisingly there is a connection between being a bully, adolescent conduct disorders, and adult markers of antisocial personality disorder (Copeland, Wolke, Angold, & Costello, 2013; Prinstein, Boergers, & Vernberg, 2001). Despite substantial research that has attempted to identify negative outcomes for bullies, most of this research has come up short. Negative outcomes for bullies appear to be relatively minor, overall, and may be offset by the increased status and dominance already discussed (for further discussion see Koh & Wong, 2015; Volk, Camilleri, Dane, & Marini, 2012).

The Effect of Being a Victim

The picture is clearer, and much more serious, for the victims of bullying. Large meta-analyses have consistently established the connection between victimization and a host of negative physical and psychological outcomes. The most immediately felt result of being bullied is social isolation and loneliness, which serves to degrade an individual's

self-esteem, as well as increase their tendency towards depression (Solberg & Olweus, 2003). The link between victimization and heightened depression has also been well established by numerous studies employing varied methodologies and across dozens of countries (Arseneault et al., 2010; Due et al., 2005; Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Other immediate impacts of victimization include heightened general and social anxiety (Copeland et al., 2013), as well as psychosomatic symptoms such as abdominal pain, headaches, and bed-wetting (Fekkes, Pijpers, Fredriks, Vogels, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2006; Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, & Karstadt, 2001). The sustained stress associated with being targeted by bullies is likely responsible for blunted cortisol responses of victims, with twin studies revealing that this is not simply due to inborn physiological tendencies (Ouellet-Morin et al., 2011a,b). Additionally, although the causal direction is currently unclear, exposure to *only* verbal victimization in adolescence is uniquely associated with abnormalities in the *corpus callosum*, which is integral in integrating the two hemispheres of the brain (Teicher, Samson, Sheu, Polcari, & McGreenery, 2010).

The effects of all of these immediate outcomes is starkly illustrated by the fact that, even when controlling for confounding factors, bullied children are at drastically elevated risk for engaging in self-injurious behaviour, suicidal ideation, and both attempted and completed suicides (Winsper, Lereya, Zannarina, & Wolke, 2012). Although it is true that bullies target those perceived as weak, and the noted associations may be cause rather than effect of bullying, longitudinal data unequivocally show that the impact of bullying on subsequent health is drastically higher than the impact of poor health on being bullied (Fekkes et al., 2006). That is to say, it is not ill children who are bullied, but bullied children who become ill. Importantly, a supportive friends group can

serve as a buffer between adolescent victimization and maladjustment (Prinstein et al., 2001).

The impacts of victimization are not relegated simply to the time and place in which they occur. Indeed, lasting effects ripple through victim's adult lives. In two large scale longitudinal studies, with samples drawn from the United States and the United Kingdom, victimization due to bullying in childhood was shown to uniquely predict negative mental health outcomes – anxiety, depression, and self-harm/suicidality – in adulthood, over and above that of other forms of maltreatment (Lereya, Copeland, Costello, & Wolke, 2015). These negative effects have been demonstrated to be on par with the maladjustment associated with being placed in government care as a child, with ill-effects lasting well into middle-age (Takizawa, Maughan, & Arseneault, 2014).

Recurrent physiological maladies in adulthood have also been associated with adolescent victimization. An indicator of systemic immune-inflammation – C-reactive protein – has been shown to result from childhood exposure to bullying, compromising broader immunocompetence (Copeland et al., 2014). The sustained physiological stress may help explain why exposure to violence in childhood, including victimization due to bullying, is significantly associated with telomere erosion at the level of cellular division, which has also been shown to have deleterious effects on overall health (Shalev et al., 2013). Beyond these impacts on physical and mental health, and perhaps intimately tied to them, connections have also been drawn between adolescent victimization and poorer adult social functioning, greater romantic failures, and decreased earning potential (Wolke et al., 2013).

Those who are Victims *and* Bullies

Missing from the above discussion is the consideration of a specific type of individual, bully-victims. As the term suggests, bully-victims are those that both engage in bullying behaviour and are bullied themselves. These individuals make up a smaller proportion of adolescents than either pure bullies, or pure victims (Elgar et al., 2013; Solberg & Olweus, 2003). Bully-victims often suffer the negative mental and physical health outcomes associated with both bullying and victimization (Nansel et al., 2004). These effects tending to be cumulative, going beyond that of being a bully or a victim alone (Gini & Pozzoli, 2009; Wolke et al., 2013). The most jarring of these associations is between being a bully-victim and suicidality (Winsper et al., 2012), with some studies indicating that this group of individuals has a risk 18 times greater than their uninvolved peers (Copeland et al., 2013). The reasons that bully-victims show these patterns are twofold. First, unlike pure bullies, bully-victims really *do* show deficits in the processing of social information and emotional regulation (Camodeca et al., 2003; Sutton et al., 1999a,b; Sutton & Keogh, 2000). These deficits serve to make them social outsiders and more susceptible to the attacks of a bully. This victimization is then turned around on others as bully-victims vie to establish themselves socially, being bullied by those above them in the social hierarchy, and targeting individuals they perceive as being lower in status (Ball et al., 2008).

Bullying as an Evolved Social Strategy

Overall, the drastic short- and long-term effects of victimization add credence to the idea that bullying is a social strategy aimed at self-enhancement at a cost to rivals. Bullies gain social status and reputation, showing few adverse effects. On the other hand,

victims display a litany of deficits, both immediately and into adulthood. Although obviously undesirable and worthy of attention and remediation, it is easy to draw the conclusion that, much like aggression more broadly, bullying has served an adaptive function throughout human history (Koh & Wong, 2015; Volk et al., 2012). The import of bullying as a social strategy may have been especially pronounced in smaller groups where new members were rare, and hierarchies established in adolescence would have had major influence throughout an individual's lifetime. With a broad introduction to the factors underpinning bullying and victimization, as well as the associated outcomes, we can now focus on a group that currently receives a disproportionate level of bullying; individuals, especially males, who are same-sex attracted.

‘That’s so Gay!’: The Targeting of Sexual Minorities

The way in which homosexuality manifests is not uniform across cultures, rendering the use of terms such as ‘gay’ and ‘straight’ inaccurate or even entirely meaningless (Murray, 2000). Instead, it is useful to utilize the terms *androphilia* (i.e., sexual attraction and arousal to adult males), and *gynephilia* (i.e., sexual attraction and arousal to adult females). The two terms focus on sexual feelings regardless of the sex under consideration. Most males (>95%) are gynephilic, with a small percentage (2-4%) being androphilic, and an even smaller number reporting attraction to both sexes (>1%). For females, most (~94%) are androphilic, with a portion reporting attraction to both sexes (2-4%) and few reporting exclusive gynephilia (<1%) (Gates, 2011; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994). Although the word *homosexuality* only entered the English vernacular within the last 200 years, same-sex behaviour (and presumably orientation) has existed throughout recorded history (see Boswell, 1980; 1994 for

discussion). Using vast historical evidence, Boswell (1980) argues that the prejudice and moral disdain with which gay and lesbian individuals are viewed in the West is a relatively recent cultural invention, emerging within the last 450 years for reasons more tied to politics and power than religion and morality. Regardless of the time or reason of origin, there is no denying the fact that same-sex attracted individuals in modern times face bigotry, social censure, and elevated levels of verbal and physical assault (D'Augelli, Pilkington, & Hershberger, 2002; Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995).

Several decades of research has established that same-sex attracted individuals, especially androphilic males, are bullied at two to three times the rate of their opposite-sex attracted counterparts (e.g., Berlan, Corliss, Field, Goodman, & Austin, 2010; Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002; O'Shaughnessy, Russell, Heck, Calhoun, & Laub, 2004; Rivers 2001a, 2004; Toomey, Ryan, Diaz, Card, & Russell, 2010; Young & Sweeting, 2004). Unsurprisingly, greater victimization also leads to heightened levels of the adverse physical and mental health outcomes noted above. Specifically, same-sex attracted victims show drastically elevated rates of depression (Rivers, 2001a; Roberts et al., 2013; Russell, Ryan, Toomey, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2011), with subsequent increases in both suicidal ideation and suicide attempts (Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995; Huebner et al., 2004; Russell et al., 2011). The attacks launched at androphilic males in primary and secondary schools are directly connected to the greater propensity these young men have for carrying weapons to defend themselves (Russell, Franz, & Driscoll, 2001). Importantly, adolescent victimization of same-sex attracted individuals was found to completely mediate the relationship between their sexual identity and adult levels of depression (Russell et al., 2011). While self-acceptance of their own sexuality (Rivers,

2004), as well as having supportive and tolerant families can help to mitigate the otherwise negative effects of victimization (Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995), it is nonetheless most desirable to eliminate the bullying in the first place. Needless to say, understanding why same-sex individuals are at heightened risk for victimization will significantly improve our understanding of bullying, as well as guide targeted interventions to reduce the elevated bullying and associated outcomes experienced by sexual minorities.

Numerous studies point to the fact that childhood gender-atypicality (CGA) is a cross-culturally invariant precursor to adult same-sex attraction (Bailey & Zucker, 1995; Bartlett & Vasey, 2006; Cardoso, 2005, 2009; Whitam, 1983). The obvious way in which gender-atypical males stand out from their peers may draw the attention of a bully, especially when such atypicality is ill tolerated by broader society (Bergling, 2001; Huebner et al., 2004; Young & Sweeting, 2004;). Explicit links have been drawn between CGA and heightened victimization due to bullying, with the effects being especially pronounced for males (Roberts et al., 2013). Numerous authors have suggested that CGA may draw the ire of bullies (e.g., Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002; D'Augelli et al., 2002; 2006; Franklin, 2000), with the data supporting this connection, often with greater CGA leading to greater victimization (D'Augelli, Grossman, & Starks, 2006, 2008; Roberts et al., 2013; Toomey et al., 2010).

The exact reason why CGA is associated with victimization is likely predicated on three factors. The first is a general aversion to femininity in males (i.e., sissyphobia or femmiphobia; Bailey, 2003; Bergling, 2001; Fagot, Leinbach, & O'Boyle, 1992; Zucker, Wilson-Smith, Kurita, & Stern, 1995), with bullies engaging in a sort of 'gender-

policing' (Young & Sweeting, 2004). This means that gender-atypical males are bullied for their feminine behaviour, but also fall victim to social pressure to behave in more masculine ways.

The second factor is, homophobia, that is, the aversion to being near homosexual men or women as well as unfounded intolerance or hatred towards them (Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008; Rivers, 2011; Wright, Adams, & Bernat, 1999). Homophobia is intimately tied to sissypobia because gender-atypicality in childhood is a reliable predictor of adult sexual orientation (Green, 1985; Rieger, Linsenmeier, Gygax, & Bailey, 2008). Although many bullies pick on gender-atypical individuals irrespective of sexual preference (Swearer, Turner, Givens, & Pollack, 2008), there is an undeniable amount of evidence suggesting that many individuals are targeted specifically *because* of their identification or perception as a sexual minority (Berlan et al., 2010; Espelage et al., 2008; Gross, Aurant, & Addressa, 1988; Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995; O'Shaughnessy et al., 2004; Waldo, Hesson-McInnis, & D'Augelli, 1998).

The third reason why CGA is associated with heightened victimization due to bullying may be because androphilic males – who are more gender-atypical in childhood – also tend to be less physically aggressive than their gynephilic counterparts (Freund & Blanchard, 1987; Gladue & Bailey, 1995; Sergeant, Dickins, Davies, & Griffiths, 2006). Research conducted in Guam confirms that this male sexual orientation difference in physical aggression occurs outside of Western cultural contexts. Androphilic males in Guam showed lower physical aggression, and heightened victimization due to bullying, compared to their gynephilic counterparts (Pinhey & Brown, 2005). It is possible that,

regardless of cultural context, bullies perceive androphilic males as ‘easy targets’ who are simply less willing to fight back (Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou, 2004).

To summarize, the factors associated with heightened victimization of androphilic males noted above leave three distinct (but overlapping) possibilities as to why this pattern exists. The first is that gender-atypicality broadly speaking is responsible. If this is the case, a punitive cultural bias against femininity in males helps to explain why androphilic males, who tend to display relatively more feminine traits than their gynephilic counterparts, are at heightened risk for victimization. The second possibility is that homophobia is responsible for the elevated rates of victimization, with gender-atypicality simply acting as a reliable signal of male androphilia. In this view it is not gender-atypicality *per se* that is being targeted, but the underlying sexual orientation that is often signaled by gender-atypicality. The final possibility is that androphilic males, because they are gender-atypical, are less physically aggressive than their gynephilic counterparts, and therefore simply more prone to being targeted by bullies because they make “easy” targets who do not retaliate. If so, it is not gender atypicality in general that is responsible for androphilic males’ elevated victimization due to bullying, but rather their specific predisposition for low physical aggressivity.

Tying it all Together with Cross-Cultural Data

With an understanding of aggression, bullying, and the disproportionate victimization of sexual minorities in Western cultures in hand, I can now move on to the empirical chapters of my thesis. Chapter 2 pertains only to men and women sampled from Independent Samoa. This chapter aims to establish an estimate of recalled adolescent victimization due to bullying, as well as the ways in which physical

aggression plays a part in either inviting or preventing being targeted. Chapter 3 is focused exclusively on a sample of Samoan males; half of whom are masculine and gynephilic, and half of whom are more effeminate and androphilic (*fa'afafine*). This chapter will explore the ways in which sexual orientation, physical aggression, and childhood gender-atypicality are linked to reported adolescent victimization due to bullying.

CHAPTER 2

Victimization Due to Bullying and Physical Aggression in Samoan Men and Women¹

Abstract

In recent years, bullying has come into focus as a critically important social issue that demands empirical understanding to inform best practice regarding both intervention and prevention. In Western cultures, low physical aggression in boys, but high physical aggression in girls, predicts elevated victimization due to bullying, and we predicted the same would be true cross-culturally. The present study sought to understand the role that physical aggression plays in victimization in Samoa, provide a prevalence estimate of the rate of bullying in the island nation, as well as validate the *Forms of Bullying Scale* (FBS; Shaw, Dooley, Cross, Zubrick, & Waters, 2013) in a cross-cultural context. In a sample of adult Samoan men and women ($n = 214$), men reported elevated rates of verbal, physical, and overall rates of victimization due to bullying in childhood compared to women, but no sex differences emerged in levels of physical aggression. Additionally, the FBS showed appreciable reliability, as well as a latent factor structure consistent with the findings of the scale's authors. Prevalence of victimization due to bullying in Samoa is comparable to that reported by other authors conducting cross-cultural research on this topic.

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Introduction

Bullying (i.e., repeated attempts by a group or individual to gain social advantage by the use of physical, verbal, or relational aggression against a target; Crick & Dodge, 1999; Espelage & Swearer, 2003) has come to the forefront in recent years as a highly important social issue (Arseneault, Bowes, & Shakoor, 2010; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009; Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Research indicates that bullying has both immediate and long-term negative impacts on physical and mental health (e.g., Copeland, Wolke, Angold, & Costello, 2013; Copeland et al., 2014; Fekkes et al., 2006; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009; Hawker & Boulton, 2000). This has led the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare bullying to be a “major public health problem” (p.403) that necessitates immediate and widespread policy regarding prevention and intervention (Srabstein & Leventhal, 2010).

Most bullying research has been conducted using *WEIRD* samples (i.e., those that are *Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic*; Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010) even though the prevalence and incidence of bullying is known to differ across a variety of cultural contexts (Craig et al., 2009; Due et al., 2009; Due & Holstein, 2008; Flemming & Jacobsen, 2010; UNICEF, 2014). Despite this cross-cultural variation, bullying behaviour seems to be a relatively ubiquitous feature of human development (Due & Holstein, 2008), and some argue a logical manifestation of childhood aggression aimed at hierarchy formation and maintenance (Cillessen & Mayeaux, 2004; Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000b). Further cross-cultural research could help to elucidate the common unifying elements of bullying that are cross-culturally invariant.

Because bullying is often characterized as one subset of aggressive behaviour (e.g., Craig et al., 2009; Crick & Dodge, 1999; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009), it is critical to

understand the relationship that bullying shares with aggression more broadly. Indeed, some definitions of aggression (e.g., “any action undertaken with the apparent intent of causing physical or psychological harm” Burbank, 1987, p. 72) could easily function as operational definitions for bullying as well. In studies conducted on participants ranging from young children to middle-aged adults, it is widely reported that males tend to be more aggressive than females (e.g., Archer 2004; 2009; Hyde 1990; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1980). This finding must, however, be evaluated in light of evidence that men and women tend to differ in the quality of their aggression, but not so much in quantity (Björkqvist, 1994; Archer & Coyne, 2005). While males typically engage in more blatant and direct forms of aggression (Archer, 2009; Craig et al., 2009) women exhibit styles that are more subtle and covert (Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukiainen, 1992; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, & Lagerspetz, 2000). Additionally, some cultural milieus seem to foster more uniform levels and forms of aggressive behaviour in both men and women (Archer, 2004; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1980; Whiting & Edwards, 1973). Indeed, while men tend to be more physically aggressive cross-culturally, sex differences can be variable for verbal aggression, and either nonexistent or reversed when considering relational forms of aggression (see especially Archer, 2004).

Sex differences in styles of aggression are echoed in much of the bullying literature. Boys suffer the ill effects of physical bullying more often, whereas girls tend to be victimized in less obvious, but equally damaging social ways (Craig et al., 2009; Prinstein, Boergers, & Vernberg, 2001; Wang, Iannotti, & Luk, 2012). It has also been demonstrated that boys who are unlikely to use physical aggression tend to be especially likely targets of bullies (Craig, 1998; Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou, 2004;

Young & Sweeting, 2004). The opposite is true of girls, where a tendency to employ physical aggression (among other gender-atypical traits) is associated with elevated victimization (Young & Sweeting, 2004). This may be reflective of the broader social context in which bullies operate, namely that gender-atypical behavioural expressions (i.e., low physical aggression in boys or high physical aggression in girls) provide salient cues, which bullies use to target victims.

Although numerous measurement instruments have been used by bullying researchers, there is little consensus on which one is best, and even less certainty regarding their respective validities and psychometric properties (Cornell & Bandyopadhyay, 2010; Felix, Sharkey, Green, Furlong, & Tanigawa, 2011). In response to this, a group of Australian researchers (Shaw, Dooley, Cross, Zubrick, & Walters, 2013) constructed and validated a multi-item measure of bullying victimization and perpetration in adolescence, the Forms of Bullying Scale (FBS), which drew extensively from the work of pioneers in the field (e.g., Olweus, 1996; Rigby, 1998).

The current study sought to utilize the FBS in a sample of men and women from Samoa in order to assess its cross-cultural validity and provide a prevalence estimate of victimization due to bullying in this country. UNICEF released information regarding the prevalence of bullying throughout the developing world (UNICEF, 2014), including Samoa, where 74% of youth aged 13-15 reported having experienced bullying in the previous 12 months. Although this figure suggests that bullying is a salient social issue in Samoa, the measures employed did not fully capture the types or severity of victimization that researchers gain when using multi-item inventories such as the FBS. Additionally, we sought to understand the connections between physical aggression and bullying in the

Samoaan context. Specifically, we anticipate that men and women will differ in their reported levels of physical aggression, and that low physical aggression in men, but high physical aggression in women, will significantly predict reported victimization due to bullying in childhood.

Method

Participants

Data were collected on Samoa's most populated island, Upolu. Adult participants (104 women, 110 men, $M_{age} = 31.1$ years, age range: 18-61; for further details see Results) were recruited using a network sampling procedure which involves an initial participant recommending other individuals that could be interviewed, who themselves provide further referrals, and so on. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and the University of Lethbridge Human Subjects Research Committee approved all materials and procedures.

Materials and Procedure

All measures were translated and back-translated by two fluent Samoan-English speakers. A Samoan research assistant was present for all interviews in order to clarify questions and assist with data collection. Participants first completed a brief biographic questionnaire. This included questions about participant gender, age, education level, and income. Education level was based on completion of primary (1), secondary (2), or tertiary (3) levels of education. Income was assessed on a ten-point scale by asking about weekly income (1: 0-100 *tala* per week, 5: 400-500 *tala* per week, 10: More than 1000 *tala* per week). The Forms of Bullying Scale-Victimization (FBS-V; Shaw et al., 2013) was utilized in order to assess childhood victimization due to bullying. Participants were

asked to recall their experiences with various forms of bullying while they were children (i.e., less than 12 years old). Ten questions were rated on a five-point scale (1: “This did not happen to me”; 2: “Once or twice”; 3: “Every few weeks”; 4: “About once a week”; and 5: “Several times a week or more”). Reliability of the FBS-V was appreciable in this sample ($\alpha = .79$). Physical aggression was evaluated via the relevant subscale of the Aggression Questionnaire (AQ; Buss & Perry, 1992), which consists of nine questions such as “Once in a while I can't control the urge to strike another person” rated on a 5-point scale (1 = extremely uncharacteristic of me; 5 = extremely characteristic of me). This questionnaire was administered twice, once with specific reference to when the participant was a child (i.e., 12 years old or younger), and again with reference to when they were adults (i.e., over 18 years of age). Reliability of both the Childhood and Adult Aggression Questionnaire was appreciable ($\alpha = .56$, $\alpha = .58$ respectively) but was significantly improved ($\alpha = .69$ for both) by the removal of one reverse coded item, possibly due to the difficulty of translating a double negative (i.e., “I can think of no good reason for ever hitting a person”). This question was thus excluded from subsequent analysis, and only the eight (8) questions with higher reliability were retained.

Results

Biographic variables were compared between men and women using independent sample *t*-tests. Men and women did not differ in their age ($p = .85$), education level ($p = .45$), or income ($p = .22$). Age did not correlate with adult levels of physical aggression in either men or women (both $p > .50$).

Means ($\pm SD$) were calculated separately for men and women for both childhood and adult levels of physical aggression, the five types of bullying recommended by Shaw

et al., (2013), as well as *Overt/Direct* (questions 1, 4, 5, 6, and 8) and *Covert/Indirect* (questions 2, 3, 7, 9, and 10) bullying (see Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Prinstein et al., 2001). These values were then compared using independent sample *t*-tests, which indicated that men did not differ from women in levels of physical aggression, but were more likely to report significantly higher levels of childhood verbal, physical, overt and overall victimization due to bullying than were women (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1
Comparisons of Various Forms of Bullying Between Men and Women

	Men (<i>n</i> = 110)		Women (<i>n</i> = 104)		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Childhood AQ	19.06	6.43	18.49	7.13	0.62	212	.538	–
Adult AQ	19.17	6.26	18.22	7.04	1.05	212	.297	–
Type of Victimization:								
Verbal	3.86	1.93	3.08	1.41	2.62	199.4 ^a	.009*	.46
Threatened	4.12	2.06	3.64	1.84	1.77	212	.078	–
Physical	3.95	1.93	3.30	1.71	2.63	212	.009*	.36
Relational	4.27	2.36	3.92	2.01	1.17	209.7 ^b	.246	–
Social	4.56	2.17	4.35	2.15	0.74	212	.463	–
Overt/Direct	9.74	3.88	8.24	3.51	2.95	212	.004*	.41
Covert/Indirect	10.85	4.57	10.05	4.06	1.36	212	.174	–
Overall Bullying	20.59	7.63	18.29	6.66	2.35	212	.020*	.32

^a *Df* adjusted based on Levene's test for equality of variances: $F = 10.33, p = .002$

^b *Df* adjusted based on Levene's test for equality of variances: $F = 4.81, p = .03$

* $p < .05$

Note: Scale ranges: AQ [8, 40]; for Verbal, Threatened, Physical, Relational, and Social bullying victimization [2, 10]; for Overt/Direct and Covert/Indirect victimization [5, 25], and for Overall [10, 50].

In line with previous research (e.g., Skrzypiec et al., 2011), individuals were parsed into groups of low, medium, and high victimization on the FSB-V (i.e., low victimization = 10-19 points; medium = 20-29 points, high \geq 30 points) in order to calculate a prevalence estimate for childhood victimization due to bullying in Samoa.

Overall, 57.5% (68 women, 55 men) of individuals reported low, 29.9% (24 women, 40 men) medium, and 12.6% (12 women, 15 men) high victimization as children. The distribution of victimization intensity between these groups did not differ significantly by sex ($\chi^2_{(2, n=214)} = 5.54, p = .063$).

Because different types of victimization do not necessarily occur independently, intercorrelations among the various styles of bullying, as well as childhood physical aggression, were calculated. Separate correlations for men and women are displayed in Table 2.2. The high intercorrelation among victimization subtypes indicates that individuals targeted in one way also tended to be victimized in others. Correlations were similar for both men and women indicating that victimization subtypes covaried in both sexes, consistent with the findings of Shaw et al. (2013).

Table 2.2

Intercorrelations Among Childhood Physical Aggression and Styles of Victimization

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Adolescent <i>AQ</i>	.69	.35	.37	.37	.25	.37	.45	.39	.46
Verbal	.23	.33	.41	.38	.50	.41	.81	.54	.73
Threats	.35	.62	.33	.39	.38	.39	.66	.61	.70
Physical	.40	.44	.64	.52	.42	.35	.77	.49	.68
Relational	.33	.38	.48	.40	.56	.49	.54	.85	.78
Social	.45	.37	.37	.17 ^{ns}	.39	.47	.49	.81	.73
Overt	.39	.78	.82	.84	.49	.32	.67	.63	.89
Subtle/Relational	.48	.52	.65	.42	.79	.81	.55	.68	.92
Total Bullying	.50	.73	.83	.70	.74	.66	.86	.90	.79

Note: Correlations for men appear above the diagonal, and women below. All correlations significant at $p < .01$. The diagonal displays reliability estimates (α) of each subdivision of the scale

Factor Analysis was performed in order to elucidate the underlying factor structure of the FBS-V in this sample. Because Shaw et al. (2013) indicated a single

underlying factor in the FBS-V, the same structure was imposed on this data, rather than relying on eigenvalues > 1 , or examination of the scree plot². Maximum likelihood extraction of a single factor solution accounted for 27.8% of item variance (all loadings $> .40$; see Table 2.3). Consistent with Shaw et al. (2013), these results indicate that a single underlying factor, namely, *general victimization due to bullying*, is appropriate for this scale.

Table 2.3

Principal Components Analysis of the Forms of Bullying Scale - Victimization

Item	Factor 1
1 I was teased in nasty ways	.43
2 Secrets were told about me to others to hurt me	.49
3 I was hurt by someone trying to break up a friendship	.50
4 I was made to feel afraid by what someone said he/she would do to me	.53
5 I was deliberately hurt physically by someone and/or by a group ganging up on me	.50
6 I was called names in nasty ways	.60
7 Someone told me he/she wouldn't like me unless I did what he/she said	.52
8 My things were deliberately damaged, destroyed or stolen	.53
9 Others tried to hurt me by leaving me out of a group or not talking to me	.68
10 Lies were told and/or false rumours spread about me by someone, to make my friends or others not like me	.44

Adolescent levels of physical aggression were found to strongly correlate ($r(214) = .62, p < .001$) with adult physical aggression in both men and women, in line with the longitudinal stability for intra-individual aggression described by Olweus (1979). Regression analysis was performed to understand the relative contribution of biographic variables, sex, and level of physical aggression on victimization due to bullying in Samoa. Given the fact that the correlations between physical aggression in childhood and

² Note that when Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was employed, a two-factor solution was produced, with only one questions (Q2) loading on the second factor. As such, imposing a unitary factor structure on these data was deemed appropriate.

overall victimization due to bullying were equivalent across the sexes (see Table 2), regression analysis was performed with both groups combined. All variables were simultaneously entered into the model, which significantly predicted ($F(5, 207) = 15.54$, $p < .001$) *general victimization due to bullying*. Physical aggression, education, and sex were the only significant predictors, and accounted for 25.5% of the variance (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4

Regression Predicting Overall Victimization Due to Bullying

	Regression Coefficients (<i>B</i>)	Standardized Regression Coefficients (β)	Squared Semi-Partial Correlations (sr_i^2)
Childhood AQ	0.49**	.46	.222
Education	-2.39*	-.15	.029
Sex	2.04*	.14	.026
Income	-0.22 ^{ns}	–	–
Age	-0.02 ^{ns}	–	–
Constant	15.76**		

$R = .52^{**}$, adjusted $R^2 = .26$; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Note: Sex is coded as 0 = female, 1 = male.

Discussion

The Forms of Bullying Scale–Victimization (FBS-V: Shaw et al., 2013) was administered to a sample of Samoan men and women to assess its cross-cultural validity. Results indicate that the FBS-V shows appreciable reliability and psychometric characteristics, and has thus received support for its utility in a cross-cultural context. Consistent with numerous other reports (Due et al., 2009; Flemming & Jacobsen, 2010; UNICEF, 2014) men reported more verbal, physical, and overall victimization due to bullying in childhood than did women. Factor analysis of the FBS-V indicated that it loads onto a single latent factor, namely *general victimization due to bullying*. Although the scale aims to measure numerous sub-categories of bullying, it is clear in these data

that numerous forms of victimization occur concurrently. This suggests that conceptualizing victimization due to bullying as a more global phenomenon is appropriate. Additionally, in light of the intercorrelations and reliability estimates, subcategories of *Overt/Direct* and *Subtle/Relational* victimization appear to be more theoretically useful than the 5 divisions offered by Shaw et al. (2013).

Physical aggression, both in childhood and in adulthood, was also assessed alongside victimization due to bullying. Although the measures were cross-sectional and retrospective, the concordance between the two was nearly identical to that found by Olweus (1979) with his longitudinal research. Counter to my predictions, elevated physical aggression in childhood was shown to significantly predict victimization due to bullying in both men and women. It is probable that angry reactive responses to provocation provide conspicuous feedback to bullies that their actions have been ‘successful’; a reinforcement that likely makes continuation of their behaviour more likely (Bandura, 1973). Alternatively, this connection may exist because victims employed aggressive tactics in self-defense or in retaliation after being bullied. Education was a significant negative predictor of being bullied. This suggests that individuals who were targeted by their peers maybe have chosen to forego further education, perhaps because this allowed them to avoid school yard bullying. If so, this would furnish further justification as to why intervention and reduction in bullying are imperative.

Perhaps the most unanticipated result was that men and women did not differ in their self-reported levels of physical aggression in childhood or in adulthood. Despite the fact that sex differences in physical aggression tend to be consistent and robust (Archer 2004, 2009), there are numerous possible reasons for my failure to find any such

difference. Meredith (2015) notes that many traits that tend to be sex-differentiated can be moderated by culture. There is also cross-cultural evidence that a high degree of variability exists in the forms and functions of female aggression (Burbank, 1987). When specifically considering a Samoan cultural context, it appears that my results are consistent with research conducted in American Samoa, which indicated that young boys and young girls did not differ substantially in their rates of physical aggression (Munroe et al., 2000). Indeed, socio-cultural anthropologists have described Samoa as a culture in which aggression is a salient aspect of life (Mageo, 1988). The fact that adult physical aggression does not decline with age suggests that such displays may be less strongly censured in Samoa than in other cultures. Additionally, the physical aggression subscale of the AQ tends to probe more reactive styles of aggression (e.g., “Given enough provocation, I may hit another person”) and may simply tap into the fact that Samoan culture is highly sensitive to matters of honour and reputation (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2005), with aggressive responses being analogous with other ‘cultures of honour’ (Cohen & Nisbett, 1997).

There is reason to believe that, despite equivalent self-reporting of a tendency towards physical aggression, men in Samoan culture truly do have a greater tendency towards such behaviour. Crime statistics from Samoa indicate that adolescent and young adult men are far more often implicated in violent crime (McMurray, 2006). Additionally, data indicate that intimate partner violence is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men against their female partners (Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2006), although men may be disinclined to report victimization by women in light of cultural pressure and many of the same stereotypes faced by victimized men elsewhere (Archer,

2006). The lack of sex differences on paper-and-pencil measures may simply reflect a greater willingness of Samoan women to align themselves with aggressive attitudes and a willingness to defend oneself or loved ones in an overtly aggressive way. These should not be taken to necessarily indicate that Samoan men and women do not differ in physical aggression in real world settings. Only observational data can resolve this point.

Several limitations call for caution when interpreting my results. First, it is possible that the network sampling procedure employed failed to draw a representative sample, and that my prevalence estimate is either over- or under-estimated. Additionally, although most bullying research is conducted on children, and my participants were likely influenced by certain recall biases, there is ample precedent for the use of purely retrospective reporting (Brewin, Andrews, & Gotlib, 1993; Rivers, 2001b; Schäfer et al., 2004). In light of this, future research into bullying in Samoa should seek to collect data from a random sample of participants, as well as include more objective behavioural assessment of physical aggression in order to support or refute our self-report data.

The present study indicates that victimization due to bullying occurs at an appreciable rate in Samoa, and like numerous other countries in the world (e.g., Craig et al., 2009; Due & Holstein, 2008), is not an inconsequential issue. My study demonstrates that Samoan men and women do not differ in their reported rates of physical aggression, in contrast to the situation reported for many other cultures (Archer, 2009). Further, my results indicate that physical aggression puts both sexes at heightened risk of being bullied in childhood. Cross-cultural research on bullying is perhaps our best means of understanding the proximate causes underpinning both bullying victimization and

perpetration. It is this understanding that will inform evidence-based policy regarding our best recourse for both prevention and intervention.

CHAPTER 3

Bullying, Physical Aggression, Gender Atypicality, and Sexual Orientation in Samoan Males

Abstract

Bullying is characterized by the repeated attempts of a group or individual to gain social advantage by the use of relational, verbal, or physical aggression against a target, especially when there is a perceived or actual power imbalance (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). One consistent finding is that gay (i.e., androphilic) males report drastically higher rates of victimization due to bullying in adolescence than their heterosexual (i.e., gynephilic) counterparts. Western data indicate that gender-atypical behaviour, regardless of sexual orientation, is a key predictor of victimization due to bullying. Androphilic males generally display childhood gender-atypicality, including reduced levels of physical aggression, which may cause bullies to perceive them as “easy” targets. In order to test the associations between sexual orientation, childhood gender-atypicality, and recalled victimization due to bullying, a sample of Samoan gynephilic men ($n = 100$) were compared to a group of Samoan transgender androphilic males ($n = 103$), known as *fa’afafine*. Although the *fa’afafine* reported far more childhood gender-atypicality, the two groups did not differ significantly on measures of physical aggression, or their reported rates of victimization due to bullying. Additionally, greater physical aggression, and *not* gender-atypicality, was the only significant predictor of being bullied in both men and *fa’afafine*. These results suggest that there is nothing inherent in sexual orientation or childhood gender-atypicality that would potentiate victimization from bullying. Instead,

the cultural context in which a bully functions influences the extent to which these are “acceptable” reasons to target certain individuals.

Introduction

Imagine that we could create a world in which very feminine boys were not persecuted by other children.

Bailey, 2003, The Man who Would be Queen

Bullying is characterized by the repeated attempts of a group or individual to gain social advantage by the use of verbal, physical, or relational aggression against a target, especially when there is a perceived or actual power imbalance (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Following the pioneering work of Olweus (1977, 1993, 1994) numerous studies have brought attention to the fact that bullying is an important social issue requiring both understanding and intervention (e.g., Arseneault, Bowes, & Shakoor, 2010; Flemming & Jacobsen, 2010; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009; Hawker & Boulton, 2000). It is well established that victimization due to bullying has both immediate and long-term negative effects on physical and mental health (Copeland, Wolke, Angold, & Costello, 2013; Copeland et al., 2014; Duncan, 1999; Fekkes et al., 2006; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Wolke, Copeland, Angold, & Costello, 2013). Youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) are at increased risk of victimization due to bullying (Berlan, Corliss, Field, Goodman, & Austin, 2010; Pilkington & D'Augelli, 1995; Rivers, 2001a; Russell, Ryan, Toomey, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2011), and this greater victimization due to bullying amplifies the associated negative mental and physical health outcomes (D'Augelli et al., 2002; Rivers, 2004). Although such victimization due to bullying has been established in both females and males identifying as non-heterosexual, the effect is especially pronounced among androphilic males (i.e., males who are sexually attracted and aroused to adult males) (D'Augelli, Grossman, & Starks, 2006; Rivers, 2001a; Russell et al., 2011).

Despite consistently finding that androphilic males are more highly victimized in adolescence and adulthood than their gynephilic male counterparts (i.e., males who are sexually attracted and aroused to adult females), the reasons are less clearly understood. It has been suggested that lower physical aggression puts individuals at increased risk (Craig, 1998; Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou, 2004), whereas others have suggested that it is gender-atypical behaviour and presentation more broadly that are the true risk factors (D'Augelli et al., 2006; Huebner, Rebchook, & Kegeles, 2004; Roberts, Rosario, Slopen, Calzo, & Austin, 2013; Young & Sweeting, 2004), and still others contend that a broader sociocultural imperative against homosexual behaviour (i.e., anti-gay bullying) is the key contributor (Franklin, 2000; O'Shaughnessy, Russell, Heck, Calhoun, & Laub, 2004; Rivers, 2011). These possibilities are not exclusive to one another, and could feasibly be interacting or acting in concert.

Research indicates that, in Western cultural contexts, androphilic males are less physically aggressive in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, than their gynephilic counterparts (Blanchard, McConkey, Roper, & Steiner, 1983; Freund & Blanchard, 1987; Gladue & Bailey, 1995; Sergeant, Dickins, Davies, & Griffiths, 2006). There is some evidence to suggest that this male sexual orientation difference exists cross-culturally. On the Micronesian island of Guam, for example, androphilic males report lower physical aggression than their gynephilic counterparts, and report more often feeling unsafe or having been threatened at school (Pinhey & Brown, 2005). Because it is well established that bullies are more aggressive than their victims (Craig, 1998; Farrington & Baldry, 2010; Pellegrini, Bartini, & Brooks, 1999; Solberg & Olweus, 2003), it is possible that lower physical aggression makes individuals less willing to fight back and, as such, they

are seen by bullies as easier targets (Smith et al., 2004). It follows logically that androphilic males may be at heightened risk for victimization due to bullying as a result of their (generally) low physical aggression.

It has been consistently demonstrated, in both Western and non-Western cultures, that androphilic men report more childhood gender-atypical behaviour than their heterosexual counterparts (Bailey & Zucker, 1995; Bartlett & Vasey, 2006; Whitam, 1983; Zucker et al., 2006). In Western cultures, femininity in young boys comes with social stigma from both adults and peers (e.g., Powlishta, 2000; Rivers, 2011). For example, childhood gender-atypicality is a significant risk factor for being bullied irrespective of sexual orientation (Roberts et al., 2013; Young & Sweeting, 2004), but the effect is often exaggerated in gay males (Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002; D'Augelli et al., 2006; Huebner, Rebchook, & Kegeles, 2004). In Western cultures, some bullies explicitly use gender-atypicality to identify non-heterosexual individuals, who are subsequently bullied *because* of their sexual orientation (Russell et al., 2011; Toomey, Ryan, Diaz, Card, & Russell, 2010).

The manner in which male androphilia is publically expressed varies cross-culturally. *Cisgender male androphiles* occupy the gender role typical of their sex, behave in a relatively masculine manner, and identify as “men.” In contrast, *transgender male androphiles* often behave in a highly effeminate manner and identify as neither “men” nor “women.” Instead, they typically identify as members of a third gender. Both cisgender and transgender male androphilia may occur within a given culture, but typically one or the other tends to predominate (Whitam, 1983). For example, the cisgender form tends to be much more common in many Western cultures; in contrast,

the transgender form appears to be more common in many non-Western cultures (Murray, 2000). Despite exhibiting different gender role presentations and gender identities, both cisgender and transgender male androphiles share numerous biodemographic and developmental correlates, indicating that they have a common etiological basis (reviewed in Vasey & VanderLaan, 2014).

In the Polynesian island nation of Samoa, transgender male androphiles predominate, and are recognized as a type of “third” gender, known locally as *fa’afafine*. *Fa’afafine* have a markedly feminine gender presentation (Bartlett & Vasey, 2006), and are almost without exception exclusively attracted to masculine adult males. Relative to the situation in Western cultures, *fa’afafine* enjoy widespread cultural tolerance in Samoa, if not outright acceptance (Vasey & Bartlett, 2007).

In this cross-cultural study, we test the hypothesis that lower physical aggression, heightened gender-atypicality, or both, are factors that potentiate victimization due to bullying. The association between these variables was tested in a group of gynephilic men and androphilic males (*fa’afafine*) in Samoa. Additionally, because the *fa’afafine* enjoy widespread cultural acceptance, we were able to test the implicit hypothesis that minority status in a cultural context unaccepting or intolerant towards that minority is the true risk factor (Rivers, 2011; Swearer, Turner, Givens, & Pollack, 2008). Given their widespread acceptance, if *fa’afafine* report heightened victimization due to bullying it is more likely due to factors other than their minority status as *fa’afafine*.

Method

Participants

Data were collected on Samoa's most populated island, Upolu. Adult participants (100 men, 103 *fa'afafine*, $M_{\text{age}} = 30.7$ years, $SD = 9.40$, age range: 18-61) were recruited using a network sampling procedure which involves an initial participant recommending other individuals that could be interviewed, who themselves provided further referrals, and so on.

Measures and Procedure

Participants first completed a brief biographic questionnaire. This included questions about participant gender (i.e., "man" or "*fa'afafine*"), age, education level, income, and sexual orientation. Education level was based on completion of primary (1), secondary (2), or tertiary (3) levels of education. Income was assessed on a 10-point scale by asking about weekly income (1 = 0-100 Western Samoan Tala (WST) per week to 10 = More than 1000 WST per week). Participants were asked to describe their sexual feelings during the previous year using a Kinsey scale from 0 (sexual feelings only toward females) and 6 (sexual feelings only towards males; Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948).

The Forms of Bullying Scale–Victimization (FBS-V; Shaw, Dooley, Cross, & Zubrick, 2013) was utilized in order to assess childhood victimization due to bullying. Participants were asked to recall their experiences with various forms of bullying while they were children (i.e., less than 12 years old). Ten questions were rated on a five-point scale (1 = "This did not happen to me" to 5 = "Several times a week or more"). The Physical Aggression subscale of Buss and Perry's (1992) Aggression Questionnaire

consists of nine questions such as “Once in a while I can't control the urge to strike another person” rated on a 5-point scale (1= extremely uncharacteristic of me; 5 = extremely characteristic of me). This questionnaire was administered twice, once with specific reference to when the participant was a child (i.e., 12 years old or younger) and again with reference to them as adults (i.e., over 18 years of age). Childhood gender-atypicality was measured with a subscale of the Gender Identity Questionnaire for Children (Johnson et al., 2004) that has been specifically adapted for use in Samoa (Bartlett & Vasey, 2006). This nine-item measure asks how frequently (1 = never; 5 = always/all the time) participants recalled engaging in male-typical (e.g., “play rough-and-tumble sports”) and female-typical (e.g., “Put on girls’ makeup or clothes or accessories”) behaviour before the age of 12. All measures were translated and back-translated by two fluent Samoan–English speakers. A Samoan research assistant was present for all interviews in order to clarify questions and assist with data collection. Reliability of the FBS-V, Childhood and Adult Aggression Questionnaire, as well as both the Childhood female- and male-typical Behaviour scales was appreciable in this sample ($\alpha = .78$, $\alpha = .57$, $\alpha = .58$, $\alpha = .92$, $\alpha = .89$, respectively). Reliabilities for both versions of the Aggression Questionnaire were improved ($\alpha = .69$ for both) by the removal of one reverse coded item, possibly due to the difficulty of translating a double negative (i.e., “I can think of no good reason for ever hitting a person”). This question was thus excluded from subsequent analysis, and only the eight questions with higher reliability were retained.

Results

Kinsey ratings were consistent with self-identified gender, as 85% of men ($n =$

85) identified as exclusively sexually attracted to women (Kinsey 0), with 15 % ($n = 15$) reporting most sexual feelings toward females, but an occasional fantasy about males (Kinsey 1). Among *fa'afafine*, 99% ($n = 102$) reported exclusive sexual attraction to males (Kinsey 6), with only one reporting most sexual feelings towards males, but an occasional fantasy about a woman (Kinsey 5). Independent samples *t*-tests were used in order to compare men and *fa'afafine* on biographic variables. Groups did not differ in their age, but did differ in their levels of education and income, such that *fa'afafine* had higher levels of both (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

Comparison of Men and Fa'afafine on Biographic Variables

	Men ($n = 100$)		Fa'afafine ($n = 103$)		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Age	31.60	10.84	29.88	7.70	1.30	178.3 ^a	ns	.18
Education	2.31	.49	2.51	.50	2.95	201	.004	.40
Income ^c	2.11	1.52	2.98	2.37	3.11	174.8 ^b	.002	.44

^a Degrees of freedom adjusted based on Levene's test for equality of variances, $F = 11.49, p = .001$

^b Degrees of freedom adjusted based on Levene's test for equality of variances, $F = 19.06, p < .001$

^c Average income in Samoa is 178 *tala* (69 USD) per week (UN, 2015).

Although education was negatively correlated with victimization due to bullying in men, $r(100) = -.31, p = .002$, the correlation was not significant for the *fa'afafine*, $r(103) = -.05$. The following results did not differ when education and income were entered as covariates into comparisons, and as such independent samples *t*-tests were employed. Counter to our predictions, men and *fa'afafine* did not differ significantly in their self-reported levels of either childhood or adulthood physical aggression. *Fa'afafine*

and men did, however, significantly differ in their levels of childhood female- and male-typical behaviour, with very large effect sizes (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2

Comparison of Men and Fa'afafine's Aggression and Gender Atypicality

	Men (<i>n</i> = 100)		Fa'afafine (<i>n</i> = 103)		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Childhood Aggression	19.05	6.48	18.12	6.38	1.03	201	ns	0.15
Adult Aggression	19.10	6.39	18.49	6.60	0.67	201	ns	0.09
Female-Typical Behaviour	8.28	3.75	21.18	5.42	19.69	181.8 ^d	<.001	2.77
Male-Typical Behaviour	16.62	4.63	8.80	4.99	11.57	201	<.001	1.62

^d Degrees of freedom adjusted based on Levene's test for equality of variances, $F = 15.38, p < .001$

^e Possible range for aggression measures [8, 40]. For Female-typical behaviour [5, 25], and for male-typical [4, 20]

Means (\pm *SD*) were calculated separately for men and *fa'afafine* for five types of bullying (Shaw et al., 2013), as well as Overt/Direct and Covert/Indirect bullying (see Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Prinstein, Boergers, & Vernberg, 2001). Regardless of whether a subtype, or total victimization due to bullying was evaluated, all results were non-significant, and indicated that men and *fa'afafine* did not differ in their reported victimization due to bullying as children (Table 3.3 on next page).

Because the total percentage of children that qualify as “bullied” is relatively low (average 11% globally; Craig et al., 2009), and this might skew group averages, individuals were parsed into groups of low, medium, and high victimization due to bullying on the FSB-V (i.e., low victimization = 10-19; medium = 20-29; high \geq 30) in line with previous research (e.g., Skrzypiec, Slee, Murray-Harvey, & Pereira, 2011).

Overall, 48.3% of individuals (48 *fa'afafine*, 50 men) reported low, 37.4% (39 *fa'afafine*, 37 men) medium, and 14.3% (16 *fa'afafine*, 13 men) high victimization as children. Results indicated that men and *fa'afafine* did not differ in their distribution into categories of low, medium, or highly bullied, $\chi^2_{(2, n=203)} = < 1$.

Table 3.3

Comparison of Victimization due to Bullying Between Men and Fa'afafine

	Men (<i>n</i> = 100)		Fa'afafine (<i>n</i> = 103)		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Verbal	3.62	1.84	4.13	2.25	1.76	201	.081	.24
Threatened	4.10	2.05	4.11	2.07	0.02	201	ns	.00
Physical	3.90	1.89	3.82	1.80	0.29	201	ns	.04
Relational	4.19	2.36	4.13	1.97	0.21	192.8 ^f	ns	.03
Social	4.45	2.15	4.46	2.05	0.02	201	ns	.00
							ns	
Overt/Direct	9.60	3.67	10.06	4.05	0.84	201	ns	.12
Covert/Indirect	10.66	4.54	10.58	4.21	0.13	201	ns	.02
Total	20.26	7.32	20.64	7.58	0.36	201	ns	.05

^f Degrees of freedom adjusted based on Levene's test for equality of variances, $F = 5.60$, $p = .019$

Note: Scale ranges: Verbal, Threatened, Physical, Relational, Social [2,10]; Overt/Direct and Cover/Indirect [5, 25]; Total [10, 50].

Although the lack of group differences negated the ability to conduct mediation analysis, linear regression was utilized in order to see the relative contribution of variables to overall levels of childhood victimization due to bullying. All relevant variables were entered in a stepwise regression (age, gender, education, childhood aggression, male-typical behaviour, female-typical behaviour, and the interactions

between gender and childhood aggression, as well as gender and childhood female- and male-typical behaviour). Table 3.4 shows the results of the regression, with increased childhood aggression and lower education level being the only significant predictors of greater victimization due to bullying, $F(2, 200) = 15.74, p < .001$, accounting for 12.5% of the variance in total victimization due to bullying scores.

Table 3.4

Stepwise Regression Predicting Total Victimization due to Bullying

	Regression Coefficients (<i>B</i>)	Standardized Regression Coefficients (β)	Squared Semi-Partial Correlations (sr_1^2)
Childhood Aggression	.39**	.328	.11
Education	-1.95*	-.132	.02
Constant	16.47**		

$R = .37$; adjusted $R^2 = .13$; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Discussion

To test the association between male sexual orientation, physical aggression, gender-atypicality, and victimization due to bullying, data were collected from a group of gynephilic men and androphilic males (*fa'afafine*) in Samoa. Results indicated that men and *fa'afafine* did not differ in their reports of childhood experiences of bullying, nor were they significantly different with respect to recalled childhood or adult levels of physical aggression. *Fa'afafine* reported lower levels of male-typical behaviour in childhood, and elevated levels of female-typical behaviour compared to Samoan men. Additionally, it was found that elevated levels of reported childhood physical aggression was a significant predictor of greater childhood victimization due to bullying.

The fact that education was a significant (negative) predictor of being bullied should not be interpreted as lower education predicting higher victimization due to

bullying, but instead that those who were highly victimized did not stay in school as long as their less maligned peers. Such a finding suggests that interventions aimed at reducing bullying in Samoan schools would be especially beneficial to the young males who might otherwise forego secondary education in order to avoid being targeted by their peers. These interventions would have to be carefully implemented so as not to unintentionally teach bullies how to more effectively torment their targets (Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999) but instead to have meaningful impact in reducing the rates of victimization due to bullying (Smith et al., 2004).

Although causality is difficult to assert in a cross-sectional design using recall measures, it is reasonable to conclude that more aggressive individuals were more likely targets for bullies. The reason that heightened physical aggression was associated with greater victimization due to bullying may be tied to the tendency for bullies to pick on individuals with a proclivity for *reactive* aggression (Pellegrini et al., 1999), which is evaluated by Buss and Perry's (1992) physical aggression measure (e.g., "There were people who pushed me so far that we came to blows"). Indeed, reactive aggression is a salient cue to a bully that their actions have been "successful."

Many studies conducted in Western cultural settings indicate that men tend to be more physically aggressive than women (e.g., Hyde, 1990; Kim, Kamphaus, Orpinas, & Kelder, 2010; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1980) and, as such, the aggression of androphilic males is often characterized as being "female shifted" relative to that of gynephilic males (e.g., Sergeant et al., 2006). Consequently, it is surprising that *fa'afafine* do not exhibit lower levels of physical aggression than Samoan men. Although non-significant sexual orientation differences have previously been reported in small Western samples (Gladue,

1991), this result was unexpected given our large sample. In light of our results, it is worth pointing out that the size of male/female aggression differences can be moderated by socialization and culture (Ember, 1973; Meredith, 2015; Whiting & Edwards, 1973). In contrast to research conducted in Western settings (e.g., Archer, 2004; Eagerly & Steffen, 1986; Hyde, 1990), research conducted in American Samoa indicates that young boys and young girls do not differ substantially in their rates of physical aggression (Munroe, Hulefeld, Rodgers, Tomeo, & Yamazaki, 2000). Additionally, men and women in Samoa do not differ in their reported levels of adult physical aggression, nor in their recalled childhood physical aggression (Semenyna & Vasey, 2015 [i.e., Chapter 2]).

Contrary to what one might expect based on research conducted on androphilic males in Western settings (i.e., gay men), *fa'afafine* did not report being bullied more often in childhood than did Samoan gynephilic men. A number of factors might account for the absence of any group difference. Given that Samoans are relatively tolerant and accepting of the gender-atypical behaviour displayed by the *fa'afafine*, one would not anticipate that prejudice against feminine males (i.e., femiphobia/sissyphobia; Bailey, 2003; Bergling, 2001) would be a salient basis for discrimination as it is in Western cultural contexts. As such, one would not expect *fa'afafine* to differ from gynephilic men in terms of recalled bullying in childhood. Furthermore, if physical aggressivity is a key predictor for being bullied, then the fact that men and *fa'afafine* do not differ for this trait may explain why they likewise do not differ on reported victimization due to bullying.

Although the present study offers a snapshot into the relationship between sexual orientation, physical aggression, gender-atypicality, and victimization due to bullying, it is not without limitations. The cross-sectional design did not allow for firm conclusions

to be drawn regarding the long-term impacts of victimization due to bullying in childhood on later adult physical aggression. The reliance on self-report measures of recalled victimization due to bullying is not ideal, but there is both precedent for using such measures, and noted stability and accuracy in these recollections (Rivers, 2001b). Given that Samoan men and *fa'afafine* did not differ in either their physical aggression or reported victimization due to bullying, Samoa may furnish a setting in which to test the purported association between sexual orientation and negative mental health outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation (Rivers, 2001a; Toomey et al., 2010; Young & Sweating, 2004). In conclusion, in seeking to reduce bullying of children and adolescents in general, and LGBT individuals in particular, cross-cultural research such as this indicates that the culture context in which sexuality and gender are embedded can act as a powerful moderator of the associations between victimization due to bullying and atypical gender expression. There is nothing inherent in gender-atypicality, or for that matter sexual orientation and gender-expression, that results in androphilic males drawing the ire of bullies in Samoa. This finding gives us reason to suspect that the heightened victimization due to bullying of androphilic males in a Western context (Berlan et al., 2010; Rivers, 2001a; Russell et al., 2011) does not stem from inherent qualities of the victims, but instead reflects a problem of intolerance within their culture.

CHAPTER 4

Conclusion

In the first chapter of this thesis I built the argument that both aggression, and a subset of aggression more properly labeled bullying, have evolutionary origins and adaptive consequences. With this in mind, I set out to examine bullying in the context of Samoa – first more broadly in a sample of men and women (Chapter 2), and to make specific comparisons among males between masculine men and the feminine same-sex attracted *fa'afafine* (Chapter 3).

Chapter 2 reported the ways in which men and women differ in their recalled experiences of childhood victimization due to bullying. Predictably, men reported more victimization of a physical and verbal nature than did women. In contrast to numerous other documented findings (see Archer 2009; Hyde, 2014), women and men did not differ in their self-reported levels of physical aggression in either childhood (recalled), or adulthood. Furthermore, being *more* physically aggressive in childhood was predictive of heightened victimization due to bullying in both sexes. The first of these three findings was anticipated, but the latter two were unanticipated and deserve further comment.

Explaining the lack of Sex Differences in Physical Aggression

Although the reasons that Samoan men and women do not report differing levels of physical aggression are at present speculative, there are several plausible possibilities. First and foremost is a response bias wherein men and women equally endorse physically aggressive *attitudes* (assessed by the Aggression Questionnaire; Buss & Perry, 1992), but do not show the same similarity in their *behaviour*. That is to say, perhaps the sexes are equivalent in respect to their tolerance for physically aggressive thoughts, but still show

expected sex differences (Archer, 2004) in real-world settings. While the sex disparity in Samoan crime statistics suggests that this may be true (McMurray, 2006), only behavioural observations can give more definitive indication. The existence of sex differences in behaviour and not attitudes, however, only deflects the original question. Why is it that Samoan men and women equally endorse physically aggressive attitudes?

It is all too easy to invoke culture as being a moderating factor in human behaviour (Meredith, 2015), but it is nonetheless important to recognize the ways in which specific aspects of Samoan culture may encourage aggressive attitudes. Ethnographers have noted that aggression is a prominent aspect of Samoan culture (Mageo, 1988), and it is possible that as a result, both men and women endorse aggressive attitudes. Additionally, in cultures that are sensitive to matters of reputation and honour, such as Samoa (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2005), aggressive responses to feeling slighted or disrespected are common (Cohen & Nisbett, 1997).

Researchers have also noted the ways in which both the local and broader cultural context can moderate female aggression (Burbank, 1987; Campbell, 2013), with the availability of resources and mates, protection of offspring, and prevailing attitudes playing key roles. What often serves to constrain women's aggressive responses is a greater tendency towards fearful avoidance of conflict and potential harm than is displayed by men (Archer, 2009; Campbell, 2013). This fearfulness may be the key to understanding the elevated physical aggression of Samoan women. A lack of fearfulness, and subsequently elevated physical aggression, may be the result of a quirk of evolutionary history. Ethnic Samoans are descendants of the first seafaring people to inhabit the Polynesian archipelago, between 6000 and 3500 years ago (Diamond, 1999;

Kayser et al., 2006; Pope & Terrell, 2008). It is entirely plausible that the arduous journey across the open ocean acted as a selective pressure on those who ultimately survived, with only the strong and intrepid completing the journey. Such a pressure would invariably result in a ‘founder-effect’ (Mayr, 1942), wherein traits carried by the initial inhabitants of a region subsequently proliferate through their descendants. The ancestors of Samoans may have faced selection pressures for personality traits that buffered them from fearfulness. As such, this may help explain their absence of sex differences in aggressive attitudes. Although speculative, it is possible that the lack of difference in self-report physical aggression in Samoan men and women is an artifact of such cultural *and* genetic factors.

Childhood Aggression and Heightened Victimization due to Bullying

It is easier to explain the connection between childhood physical aggression and a concurrent heightened victimization due to bullying. There are two equally plausible possibilities. The first is that reactive, physically aggressive individuals give immediate feedback to a bully that their actions are successful, only making further victimization more likely (Bandura, 1973). Alternatively, it is possible that victimized individuals subsequently *became* more reactive and physically aggressive due to being victimized, consistent with reports that this often occurs in individuals targeted by bullies (Arseneault, Bowes, & Shakoor, 2010). One logical extension of both possibilities is that physical aggression and victimization due to bullying feed-back on one another, each making the other more likely in a reciprocally reinforcing relationship. These competing hypotheses cannot be properly evaluated with the current data set due to its cross-sectional nature.

The same connection – between physical aggression and victimization due to bullying – remained true when considering masculine men and the transgender *fa'afafine* (Chapter 3), with the same explanatory possibilities noted above. Once again, counter to my predictions, men and *fa'afafine* did not report differing levels of physical aggression either in childhood or as adults. Despite the fact that androphilic males in Western populations tend to be less physically aggressive than their gynephilic counterparts (Blanchard, McConkey, Roper, & Steiner, 1983; Freund & Blanchard, 1987; Gladue & Bailey, 1995; Sergeant, Dickins, Davies, & Griffiths, 2006), the expected sexual orientation difference did not emerge in Samoa. The same cultural and genetic possibilities reviewed above for why men and women in Samoa do not differ in reported physical aggression, apply equally to the lack of difference between men and *fa'afafine*. Indeed, the consistency with which men, women, and *fa'afafine* report equivalent levels of physical aggression gives credence to Mageo's (1988) assertion that aggression is a pervasive aspect of Samoan life.

Bullying and Childhood Gender-Atypicality in Samoa

The most surprising finding (or lack thereof) in my thesis was the fact that, while *fa'afafine* report drastically elevated levels of childhood gender-atypicality (CGA), no statistical connection exists between this trait and victimization due to bullying. Furthermore, men and *fa'afafine* report no differences in their childhood experiences of being bullied³. Both of these findings are unprecedented in samples drawn from the West, where both CGA and identification as an androphilic male, tend to double or triple the odds that an individual will suffer at the hands (and words) of bullies (e.g., Berlan et al.,

³ The equivalent physical aggression displayed by men and *fa'afafine* could plausibly 'insulate' the *fa'afafine* from victimization. This possibility seems unlikely, however, because physical aggression was related to *more* victimization irrespective of CGA or sexual orientation.

2010; Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002; Rivers, 2001, 2004; Swearer, Turner, Givens, & Pollack, 2008). To understand why connections *don't* exist in Samoa between male androphilia or CGA, and victimization due to bullying, we must first understand why these connections *do* exist in the West. These reasons, however, are necessarily speculative, as no systematic test has been carried out on the proximate and ultimate factors implicated in the connection between male androphilia, CGA, and victimization due to bullying in the West.

As noted previously (see Chapter 1) bullying is a goal directed behaviour wherein the bully chooses from many tools at their disposal in order to target an individual, often with the intention of raising their own social status while simultaneously damaging that of their victim (for reviews see Koh & Wong, 2015; Volk, Camilleri, Dane, & Marini, 2012). This reality begs the question of why male androphilia and its correlates such as CGA (herein alternatively referred to as 'male-femininity') are so maligned by bullies. Although it is all too tempting to assert that male-femininity is seen as a weakness on which bullies prey, the data from Samoa indicate that this is not the case. Instead, bullies in the West seem to be engaging in a form of 'gender-policing' (Young & Sweeting, 2004) that is predicated on the belief in prescriptive gender norms, and an aversion to femininity in males. Such beliefs can hardly be ascribed to bullies themselves, but instead seem to indicate something more broadly about the culture in which bullies operate.

It is no secret that male-femininity, and indeed male androphilia, is often discouraged by parents (e.g., Fagot, Leinbach, & O'Boyle, 1992; Kane, 2006) and viewed with much disdain in numerous cultures (Bailey, 2003; Bergling, 2001; Rivers, 2011); the reasons why this is the case are somewhat puzzling. Legal scholars have noted

the way in which same-sex behaviour is often (disapprovingly) viewed through a moral lens (Finnis, 1994), with an astonishing number of regions of the world endorsing the viewpoint that homosexuality is morally unacceptable (PEW, 2014). These facts, however, are merely proximate cultural explanations for the disproportionate bullying of gender-atypical and androphilic males (although the two are correlated, many gender-atypical males in the West are targeted for being ‘gay’, despite no such same-sex inclinations). An ultimate cultural explanation is necessary.

The first, and most obvious assumption is that male-femininity (including male androphilia) is denigrated in the West due to the historic stance of Christian religious denominations. Although varying in doctrinal viewpoints, with numerous sects, branches, and offshoots, dominant Christian dogma is one that upholds same-sex behaviour between males as being unacceptable (Vines, 2014). This viewpoint has firm textual roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition (e.g., Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11), and has been the dominant view of most denominations for at least the past 450 years (Boswell, 1980). These texts, however, may not have necessarily been interpreted as denouncing same-sex sexuality for a large portion of the early Christian era (Boswell, 1980; Richie, 2010; Vines, 2014), with same-sex unions (i.e., ‘marriages’) being blessed by broader society and the church well into the Middle Ages (Boswell, 1994). Indeed, the historian John Boswell (1980) concludes that the cultural shift towards negative attitudes concerning sexual interactions between males had much more to do with regional politics, and the targeting of persons in power, than the targeting of specific proclivities or sexual practices. With Christian writers formulating hostility to same-sex eroticism in the 12th century, the viewpoint diffused throughout Europe (becoming canonized in

regional laws by the 1550's), and sexual behaviour between males was increasingly the target of censure, prejudice, and eventually legal sanctions and penalties of death (Boswell, 1980; Vines, 2014).

While not rooted in concerns of morality and dogma *per se*, dominant cultural forces in the West were certainly significant enough to perpetuate negative attitudes towards male-femininity and androphilia leading up to the modern era. Indeed, religiosity in the West correlates with opposition to homosexuality (e.g., Lewis, 2009; Whitley Jr., 2009). Homophobia, however, is not purely a Western phenomenon. In their analysis of data from 79 countries, Jäckle and Wenzelburger (2015) report several key predictors of hostile or disapproving attitudes towards homosexuality (i.e., homonegativity/homophobia). Primary in their results were individual level predictors pertaining to the type of religious affiliation (i.e., monotheistic Islamic, Catholic, and Protestant adherents as opposed to Hinduism, Buddhism, and those identifying as atheist), as well as the strength of religious commitment. That is to say, individuals with a high degree of religiosity, and whose religious tradition had textual and liturgical injunctions against homosexuality, were most likely to endorse anti-homosexual attitudes. These results indicate that multiple factors are implicated in negative attitudes towards homosexuality, and that these attitudes can be maintained by various cultural, religious, or ideological influences.

Although the preceding paragraphs amount to a sort of informed speculation, a true test of their direct connection to homophobic bullying has never been undertaken. Data speaking to the level of societal homonegativity, religious affiliation and intensity, education, legal status of homosexuality, and their (possible) connection to levels of

homophobic bullying would inform the factors that predispose gender-atypical males, and androphilic males especially, to elevated rates of victimization due to bullying. Until such data are available, the Samoan data presented in this thesis provide some preliminary insights.

Despite prominent Christian religious affiliation in Samoa (CIA World Fact Book, 2015), as well as the current illegality of sexual activity between same-sex individuals (Consolidated Acts of Samoa, 2014), no connection exists between victimization due to bullying and identification as *fa'afafine*, or reporting of childhood gender-atypical behaviour. Although counter to what would be predicted in light of Jäckle and Wenzelburger's (2015) analyses, this pattern of results is explicable when considering the fact that Samoans readily recognize *fa'afafine* as a third gender, and are more tolerant of their female typical childhood behaviour (Vasey & Bartlett, 2007). Additionally, Samoans do not conceive of sexual interactions between men and *fa'afafine* to be 'homosexual' in nature because they are "hetero-gendered" (Bartlett & Vasey, 2006; Petterson, Dixon, Little, & Vasey, 2015). As a case study, Samoa gives tantalizing evidence that cultural acceptance of male-femininity may override the connections between religious identification/adherence and the denigration of male femininity and same-sex sexuality seen in the West.

Implications for Bullying Reduction

Bullying has become an internationally recognized issue (e.g., Due et al., 2009; Flemming & Jacobsen, 2010), with widespread attempts to curtail perpetration via school-wide and individual interventions (e.g., Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou, 2004; Ttofi & Farrington, 2010). My thesis indicates that neither childhood gender-

atypicality in males, nor identification as an obvious sexual minority, need garner the undue attention of bullies. Samoan's tend to view the femininity and sexual preferences of *fa'afafine* as being inborn (Bartlett & Vasey, 2006; VanderLaan, Vokey, & Vasey, 2013). This fact accords well with research indicating that homophobia is reduced when individuals believe same-sex attraction to be biologically based (Lewis, 2009; Falomir-Pichastor & Mugny, 2009). As school-wide bullying reduction programs have shown some success in reducing both perpetration and victimization (e.g., Smith et al., 2004), these programs may benefit even more by educating students about the biological basis of same-sex attractions, as well as cultivating attitudes of tolerance and acceptance towards diversity in gender and sexual expression.

Conclusions

While data from Chapters 2 and 3 indicate that bullying is a salient social issue in Samoa, with approximately 12% of participants reporting high levels of victimization in childhood, there is no reason to suspect that this victimization is potentiated by childhood gender-atypicality, or identification as a sexual or gender minority (*fa'afafine*). As such, it is most probable that the heightened victimization faced by gay, lesbian, and transgender individuals in other locations in the world is a result of an intolerant culture, rather than resulting from some feature of individuals that inherently invites victimization.

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