Value Differentiation and Sexual Orientation

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ABSTRACT

Can individuals create a coherent and unified value system when living in complex social realities, and encountering discordant values across life contexts, or do they experience a cognitive polyphasia? Undergraduate students in Israel ($N = 93$, mean age $M = 24.90$, $SD = 3.05$) reporting a gay or heterosexual sexual orientation were studied. Participants reported the importance of their values of universalism, benevolence, conformity and hedonism in the social roles of a student, a close friend, a romantic partner and a man/woman. As hypothesized, value differentiation, the variability in value importance across contexts, was higher among gay men than among heterosexuals. The difference is attributed to effects of the socially complex environment encountered by gay men, which creates a lack of coherence in their values. However, among gay men, unlike heterosexuals, value differentiation was not related negatively to well-being. The implications for the gay identity and the value system are discussed.

Keywords: Values, value differentiation, cognitive polyphasia, well-being, satisfaction with life

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VALUE DIFFERENTIATION AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Individuals build their social representations on the basis of the concepts, world views and ideas that they learn in their environment. Intricate environments, in which there are varied sources of information, can lead to cognitive polyphasia, i.e. the simultaneous existence within groups and individuals of diverging and even conflicting social representations regarding an issue (Moscovici, 1984; Provencher, 2011). Such cognitive polyphasia was found among adolescents from multiple cultural groups, each reporting a diverse set of value priorities across contexts of their lives (Daniel et al., 2012).We suggest that gay men are particularly prone to experience cognitive polyphasia, as they may be driven to present different identities across contexts of their lives, especially if one of their identities is devalued by some individuals and groups they interact with. As diversity in the identity may have consequences for well-being (Donahue, Robins, Roberts, & John, 1993), the question of young gay men's ability to create an integrated identity is of substantial importance.

In the current study, we investigated the values emphasized by gay and heterosexual young adults across contexts. We compared the extent of cognitive polyphasia in values among gay men to the cognitive polyphasia in values of straight men and women. We also investigated the relationship between cognitive polyphasia and well-being within each group. This approach presents a fresh take on the gay identity, by studying it from a social representation perspective. The social representations theory portrays individuals as embedded within multiple human-made social systems, and construct their identities in interaction with these systems. Thus, the current study can suggest a new language that can describe the process of gay identity formation in interaction with multiple social systems.

Multiple Identities and Gay Identity

Many young men experience same-sex desires and attractions (Savin-Williams, 2011). In western societies, these young men experience a pressure to label their sexuality based on these attractions (Hammack, 2005). Some consider self-labeling as irrelevant to the lives of young adults in contemporary social contexts, as sexual identities are increasingly found to be ever-changing and inconstant (Savin-Williams, 2011; Savin-Williams, 2005). However, studies show that at least in Israel, the gay identity is still a defining part of young gay males' identity (Pizmony-Levy, Shilo, & Pinhasi, 2009).

In parallel to the gay identifications, gay individuals hold a number of other identities. These identities may include group memberships, like ethnic or religious group membership (Chan, 1989; Rahman, 2010; Schnoor, 2006); or role definitions, such as a parent (Dunne, 1999). The identity ascribed in some of these groups or roles may by portrayed as different, or even conflicting, with the gay identity (Levy, 2012; Rahman, 2010).

The individual tendency for self-consistency (Campbell, Assanand, & Paula, 2003; Diehl & Hay, 2011; Donahue, Robins, Roberts, & John, 1993) can generate challenging or disturbing feelings of contradiction between identities. Self-conflicts were found to create uneasiness among gay men (Hammack, 2005). Many theories describe the process of gay identity creation as requiring the resolution of conflicts between the individual's perceptions of the gay and the straight identities. This resolution can take place as the gay individuals acquire a positive perception of their gay identity. As a result of the resolution process, the gay individuals feel free in associating with gays and heterosexuals, and are able to maintain the gay identity when interacting with both, without alternating between the identities across situations (Cass, 1984; Chan, 1989; Johns & Probst, 2004; Savin-Williams, 2011) .

Individuals who do not synthesize their identities can choose a main, leading identity that guides their lifestyle and choices. Making this choice, other identity parts may be considered as secondary. Another option for management of the multiple identities is to compartmentalize the identities, and commute between lifestyles. Individuals who choose this solution conceive of several identities as highly important, identify with all, and use each in different contexts. These options offer alternative solutions to the integration challenge (Brekhus, 2003; Schnoor, 2006).

Social Representation and Cognitive Polyphasia
The gay identity, as well as other social identities held by gay men, is conceptualized here as a social representation. Social representations are systems of knowledge that are constructed collectively by means of communication and interaction (Moscovici, 1984). They are symbols used to make sense of the social world, and provide it with meaning. They also guide actions by informing decisions and practices (Renedo & Jovchelovitch, 2007) .

Identity is an internalization and reinterpretation of the society's representation of individuals' and groups' position within the social fabric (Duveen, 2001; Orr, 2007). For example, the gay identity provides gay individuals with a meaning of what being gay means

to them and to the people around them. Identity also assists them in understanding their relationships with the gay and the heterosexual worlds.

Identities are constructed by means of communication with relevant individuals within social contexts. As a result, identities are rooted within the socio-cultural context in which they were constructed. The social world is often complex and multifaceted, leading to the communication of conflicting ideas and sets of meaning. Such conflicting sets of meaning can therefore coexist within the same individual or group (Renedo & Jovchelovitch, 2007; Wagner, Duveen, Verma, & Themel, 2000; Wagner, 2007) . A multiplicity of ideas within an individual or a group is termed cognitive polyphasia. Cognitive polyphasia is a repertoire of representations, built in the context of a specific time and space, and used to make meaning of this context (Wagner, 2007). Multiplicity in group memberships and roles can lead to multiple identities, and therefore to cognitive polyphasia in identity representations. Specifically, cognitive polyphasia may result from the simultaneous adoption of a hegemonic social representation and a non-hegemonic, polemical representation, created by a subgroup that holds a controversy with the hegemonic representation (Friling, 2012; Moscovici, 1988).

Values and Value Differentiation

Values are central social representations (Moscovici, 1984), because they are one of the principal means by which society directs its members regarding the prioritization of resource allocation. Values are defined as concepts or beliefs, describing the end states that individuals and institutions within the society should aspire for. As such, values can serve as guiding principles in people's lives, guiding evaluations, attitudes and behaviors (Schwartz, 1992).

Schwartz (1992) identified ten specific values that express distinct motivations, a distinction that has been empirically replicated in hundreds of samples (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz & Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009; Steinmetz, Isidor, & Baeuerle, 2012). Some of these values are especially important in the gay context, as it is construed in contemporary Israel (Pizmony-Levy, Shilo, & Pinhasi, 2009) . Universalism values emphasize understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection of the welfare of all people and of nature. They are relevant to the gay struggle for equal rights (Kranz & Cusick, 2005); Benevolence values emphasize caring for the welfare of others who are closely related to oneself. They are relevant to the gay identity as they motivate the initiation and maintenance of relationship with romantic partners, and with close others who may or may not accept one's way of life; Conformity

values emphasize limiting actions and urges that may violate social expectations and norms. Conformity values are relevant to the gay identity as this identity may require the violation of social expectations and the social order to be fulfilled (Waites, 2009); Hedonism values emphasize pleasure and sensual satisfaction of the self. Hedonism values are especially relevant to the romantic partner context. However, no hypotheses were set regarding the relations between the gay identity and hedonism values.

Individuals, institutions and cultures differ in the values they stress and promote (Chatman, 1991; Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz, 2008). Therefore, cognitive polyphasia may be a frequent phenomenon, as individuals form different value priorities when interacting in different contexts of their lives. In line with this idea, values were found to differ in importance across life contexts (Seligman & Katz, 1996) . For example, benevolence values were found to be especially important in the context of being a friend (Daniel & Knafo, 2013).

We hypothesized that differences in value priorities across life contexts that were found in the general population would also be found among gay men. These men prioritize their values differently across contexts as a result of the different value systems they acquire when interacting in different contexts. We also hypothesized that gay men would show more diversity in their value priorities across contexts than heterosexual men and women, as the gay identity may pose an additional source of value influence that is not present in the heterosexual society, leading to an added challenge to value synthesis. Specifically, the gay identity, which is often formed in a process of negotiation with the hegemonic heterosexual identity, may be shaped as a polemical representation, and increase the chance of cognitive polyphasia and value differentiation.

Differentiation and Well-being: Level of Required Confidence.

A state of cognitive polyphasia, in which one believes in contrasting ideas, can be maintained as long as each idea is used in an appropriate context, and no comparison between the ideas is made (Wagner, 2007). However, contradictions in world views that become salient, and especially contradictions between different views of the self, can be a source of discomfort to the individual. Contradictions between self attributes were previously found to be related to negative emotions, lower well-being and self-esteem (Campbell, Assanand, & Paula, 2003;

Constantino, Wilson, Horowitz, & Pinel, 2006; Diehl & Hay, 2011; Donahue, Robins, Roberts, & John, 1993; Fukushima & Hosoe, 2011; Higgins, 1987) .

A previous study examined the relations between incoherent value priorities across contexts and self-esteem. Value differentiation was found to be negatively related to self-esteem among adolescents from three cultural groups in Israel, including majority Israelis, immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Arab citizens of Israel. Differences were found between age groups in the magnitude of the relation between well-being and self-esteem. Younger adolescents showed stronger associations between the variables than late adolescents, and immigrants from the former Soviet Union showed stronger associations than majority members and Arabs (Daniel, Boehnke, & Knafo, 2013) .

In the study described above, the magnitude of association between value differentiation and self-esteem varied as a function of the social conditions (immigration) and individual characteristics (age) in the sample. It was suggested that these variations are moderated by the level of confidence desired by the individual (Provencher, 2011). The more confidence and clarity in self-perceptions the individual wants to achieve, the more uneasiness will be created by value differentiation. Alternately, if an individual sees incoherence as adaptive and legitimate, no uneasiness will be created. A number of factors can promote a positive, non-conflictual resolution of cognitive polyphasia. For example, individuals who are open to the possibility of believing in more than one important value simultaneously (Arthi, 2012) are likely to accept cognitive polyphasia in their values with no harm to their self-esteem.

The desired level of confidence is hypothesized to be associated with situational variables (Provencher, 2011). Situational variables may place limits on the resources available for cognitive processing, or the level of processing required for reaching a high degree of confidence. Individuals who acknowledge this effect, can decide to settle for a lower level of desired confidence, thus increasing the cognitive polyphasia, and possibly reducing the effect of the cognitive polyphasia on their well-being.

No previous data is available to suggest the level of confidence desired by young gay men. On the one hand, identity synthesis, in which the gay identity is integrated into the self, is considered to be associated with higher levels of well-being (Halpin & Allen, 2004) . Moreover, identity disclosure, or 'coming out' in specific contexts, is positively related with well-being in these contexts (Beals, Peplau, & Gable, 2009; Cole, Kemeny, Taylor, Visscher,

& Fahey, 1996). Thus, the ability to display the same self across contexts, and not compartmentalize identities, has positive implications for psychological adjustment.

At the same time, changes in the social and legal atmosphere toward the gay sexual identity may reduce the pressure to make the gay identity a core identity that takes precedence over all other aspects of the self. Sexual orientation is becoming more likely to be one of several threads in one's identity, among other threads. Furthermore, gay men have increasing opportunities to live similar lives to mainstream straight men (Brekhus, 2003; Seidman, 2002). We hypothesize that this situation can reduce the level of confidence required by gay men in their identity, allowing them to hold their gay identity alongside other identities with fewer implications for their well-being.

METHOD

Participants

The sample included $N = 100$ Israeli students. Non-gay participants were recruited by snowball methods. Gay participants were recruited both by snowball methods and with the help of a student LGBT organization working in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Most participants studied in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (56%) and additional students from other academic institutions across Israel were recruited. The age of the participants was $M = 24.9$, $SD = 3.05$. The participants included $n = 29$ gay men, $n = 31$ heterosexual men, and $n = 33$ heterosexual women. Of the participants, only three were lesbians, and four did not indicate their sexual orientation. These participants were not included in further analyses.

Procedure

Questionnaires were distributed via email and by hand at meetings of a LGBT student organization. They were returned to the second author in sealed envelopes to ensure anonymity. Study participation was voluntary, and participants were asked to read and sign an informed consent form before participation, which was collected and saved separately. The study was approved by the ethics review board of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Measures

Values in contexts.

We measured the importance of values in different life contexts using the Values in Context Questionnaire (Daniel et al., 2012), an adaptation to life contexts of the Schwartz Values Survey (Schwartz, 1992), which was adapted in order to measure the participants' values in difference life contexts. Participants rated the importance of their values in a number of contexts: as a romantic partner, as a student, as a friend, as a man or woman and, for gay participants only, as gay men.

Following pretests, we decided to reduce questionnaire demands, by focusing on four of the ten Schwartz (1992) value types (Universalism, Benevolence, Conformity and Hedonism). Each value was measured using three value items. The values chosen were those hypothesized to be most relevant to the challenges faced by young gay men, as described earlier in this paper.

Each of the resulting 12 value items (three items testing each of the four values) was addressed repeatedly in each different context. For example, the importance of the conformity item of self-discipline was assessed in the different contexts with the following items: "As a student, self-discipline is important to me"; "as a friend, self- discipline is important to me", "as a gay man, self-discipline is important to me", and so on, in all contexts. All value items relating to a single context were presented consecutively, and the different contexts were presented separately, in order to minimize comparison of answers to the same value items across contexts. The gay identity context appeared last of all the contexts, in order to prevent early activation of gay identity while answering questions about the other four contexts.

Value items were rated using a 6-point scale, ranging between 1 '*not important to me at all'* and 6 '*very important to me'*. Value scores were computed by averaging the importance assigned to the three items measuring each value in one context. The results were controlled for scale use by centering around the individual's mean answer in the context, as recommended by Schwartz (1992). Value disparity scores were computed independently for each value as the standard deviation of the value rating scores across contexts. Value differentiation score was the average of four value disparity scores, Cronbach's α =.69.

Satisfaction with life (STL).

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) focused on general life satisfaction, a cognitive aspect of well-being. Its five items (Cronbach's α =.79), such as "I am satisfied with my life" were rated using a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 *'highly disagree'* to 7 *'highly agree'*.

RESULTS

Contextualized Values

In a preliminary analysis, the importance of contextualized values, as reported by the gay and heterosexual participants, was examined using a three-factor (5 contexts X 4 values X sexual orientation) repeated measures ANOVA. Sexual orientation did not predict value priorities, nor did it interact with any of the other variables to predict value priorities (Lower bound measures: context*orientation $F(1, 89)= 1.16$, $p = .33$; value*orientation $F(1, 89) = .20$, $p = .66$; context*value*orientation $F(1, 89) = 2.40$, $p = .13$). The results indicated that value priorities differed across contexts similarly for heterosexual and gay participants. The gay individuals did not differ from heterosexual individuals in their values across the common contexts (romantic partner, student, friend, man or woman). However, the gay individuals reported one unique context, as gay men. To provide a full account of the common and unique values, the following results will be reported for gay participants only.

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations of the importance of values across contexts for gay men. The importance of contextualized values, as reported by the gay participants, was examined using a two-factor (5 contexts X 4 values) repeated measures ANOVA. The overall importance assigned to the various values did not vary significantly across contexts, $F(4, 100) = 1.00$, $p =.41$, while significant differences were found between values $F(3, 75) = 12.68$, $p =.01$. Conformity values were rated least important and universalism values were rated most important, congruent with past research (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001).

Table 1.

Means and Standard Deviations of Gay Men's Values across Contexts

Context	Benevolence		Conformity		Hedonism		Universalism	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Student	-0.17	0.52	-0.33	0.73	-0.32	0.78	0.85	0.87
Friend	0.43	0.51	-0.88	0.78	0.17	0.63	0.29	0.80
Partner	0.37	0.71	-0.55	0.75	0.28	0.68	-0.09	0.69
Male	-0.11	0.49	-0.44	0.67	0.12	0.85	0.43	1.07
Gay	-0.02	0.59	-0.74	0.79	-0.19	0.87	0.94	0.74

The main hypothesis was supported by the interaction between values and contexts, $F(12, 300) = 7.94$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .24$, indicating that the importance of specific values varied across contexts. The interaction was explored with a separate ANOVA of simple effects for each value. Context differences in value importance were found for all values: Universalism values were most strongly emphasized in the gay context, followed by the student context, $F(4, 100) = 12.54$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .33$; Conformity values were most strongly emphasized in the student context, and least strongly emphasized in the friend and gay contexts, $F(4, 100) = 5.15$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .17$; Hedonism values were most strongly emphasized in the partner context, and least strongly emphasized in the student context, $F(4, 100) = 4.63$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .16$; Benevolence values were most strongly emphasized in the partner and friend contexts, and least strongly emphasized in the student context, $F(4, 100) = 8.83$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .26$.

Value Differentiation and Sexual Orientation

The differences between groups in value differentiation were investigated using a one way ANOVA. The groups did not differ significantly in the level of value differentiation showed by their members $M_{het\ men} = .90$, $SD = .31$; $M_{het\ women} = .90$, $SD = .26$; $M_{gay\ men} = 1.03$, $SD = .29$; $F(2,90) = 2.10$, $p = .13$. However, planned contrasts revealed that while the groups of heterosexual men and women did not differ significantly in their value differentiation, $t(90) = .02$, $p = .99$, both heterosexual groups differed from the gay men group significantly, $t(90) = 2.05$, $p = .04$. Thus, sexual orientation, and not gender, distinguished between levels of value differentiation.

Value Differentiation and Satisfaction with Life

The relations between value differentiation and STL were examined using hierarchical linear regression. In the first step, value differentiation and group affiliation (dummy coded, contrasting heterosexual women and gay men with heterosexual men) were used to predict STL. In the second step, the interaction terms between value differentiation and the dummy coded group variables were entered into the model. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Hierarchical Linear Regression Predicting Satisfaction with Life by Value Differentiation and Group.

Variable	Model 1		Model 2	
	β	SE	β	SE
Value differentiation	-.13	.43	-.34*	.67
Heterosexual women (vs. men)	.15	.29	.16	.29
Gay men (vs. heterosexual men)	.01	.31	-.03	.30
Heterosexual women*value differentiation			.04	1.02
Gay men*Value differentiation			.34*	.99
R^2		.04		.11
R^2 Change				.07*

*Note. * = p <.05.*

Value differentiation was negatively related to STL, β = -.34, p =.05. Group affiliation did not predict STL directly, $\beta_{het\ women}$ =.16, p =.19, $\beta_{gay\ men}$ = -.03, p =.79. The interaction between value differentiation and heterosexual women group membership did not predict STL, $\beta_{het\ women*differentiation}$ =.04, p =.77. However, the interaction between value differentiation and gay men group membership did predict STL significantly $\beta_{gay\ men*differentiation}$ =.34, p =.02.

Unstandardized beta weights were used to plot STL levels at high and low levels of value differentiation between heterosexual and gay men, as shown in Figure 1. The slope for each line was calculated and tested for significance (Aiken & West, 1991; Holmbeck, 2002) . Value differentiation was significantly and negatively related to STL among heterosexual men, β = -.31, p =.02, and non-significantly related to STL among gay men, β =.26, p =.16. Thus, the relations between value differentiation and STL were apparent only among heterosexual men and women, but not among gay men.
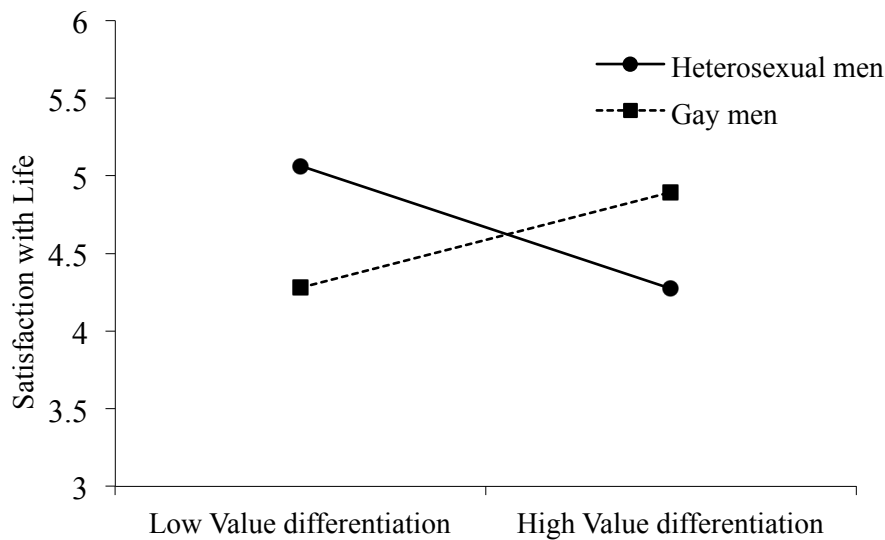
Figure 1. T*he interaction between value differentiation and sexual orientation in the prediction of satisfaction with life.*

DISCUSSION

Values across Contexts

As hypothesized, participants, and specifically gay men, reported different value priorities across different contexts of their lives, in all four values studied. Holding different value priorities across contexts is conceptualized in the current study as cognitive polyphasia of social representations. It is hypothesized to be created by means of communication with the respective social and cultural groups. Thus, the individual's value priorities in a specific context are means to learning about the social representations prevalent in the respective social or cultural groups.

The gay context, for example, was characterized by high emphasis on universalism values, intermediate emphasis on benevolence values, and low emphasis on hedonism and conformity values. It can be inferred that for the participants, their gay identity was related to the discourse over human rights, equality and acceptance of differences. As can be expected in a polemical identity (Moscovici, 1988), it was also related to a dismissal of the status quo when it is

perceived as unjust. Moreover, the participants did not perceive their gay identity as stressing hedonism.

Other contexts were characterized by value priorities similar to the ones reported in past studies. Moreover, the values reported by the gay participants were similar to those reported by the heterosexual participants. The values reported in the student context were characterized by low importance assigned to benevolence and hedonism values, and high importance assigned to conformity and universalism values. From these value priorities we can infer that the student context highlights the social representation of ambition, in which one invests in individual success on the expense of care for others. It also holds the representation of low personal pleasure, a strong requirement to adhere to the rules and regulations of society. Last, the student context is an arena for fostering broadmindedness and understanding of diversity, through either formal studies or student activities.

Not surprisingly, the friend context is characterized by the care for close others (high benevolence values), and not for all human kind, including unknown people (low universalism values). It is also characterized by high levels of hedonism and low levels of the opposing conformity values. Among their friends, the participants emphasized their personal enjoyment (having fun), even at the expense of the conflicting value of maintaining social norms (behaving as expected).

The partner context was very similar to the friend context, as they are both interpersonal contexts relating to intimate relations. The partner context however, was related to relatively moderate levels of values across all contexts. A possible explanation for this is the participants' age. The participants in the study were young, and may not yet have built strong and stable romantic relations. For this reason, the friend context may have been more relevant to their lives than the partner context. Future studies may look into the values in the partner context among individual in stable, long term relationships.

Value Differentiation and Sexual Orientation

Value differentiation, the diversity of value priorities across contexts, was found to be more prevalent among young gay men than among young heterosexual men and women. The complexity of the social world encountered by gay men, providing them with different sets of

value priorities, may add an extra challenge to the identity synthesis task. In addition to the hegemonic set of representations, they encounter the polemical representations of a gay identity (Friling, 2012). The very fact that their gay identity, values, and lifestyle may be accepted to a different degree across the various contexts in which they live, may lead to a conflict between the identities, and consequently to their compartmentalization (Brekhus, 2003).

The difference in value differentiation levels between the studied groups is especially notable, considering that the identities compared were identical across the groups. In all groups, we compared the values in the student, friend, partner, and gender identity. We did not include the gay identity in the general value differentiation score. As a result, it can be learned that gay individuals, more than heterosexuals, monitor their values across contexts (student, friend, partner, gender), and thus adapt them to the prevalent values in the particular context. This can be a result of a gradual process of coming out, in which they can synthesize their gay identity only with parts of their life contexts at each point in time.

Value Differentiation and Well-Being

Value differentiation was found to relate negatively to well-being among heterosexual men and women. These results are in line with past studies that found negative relationships between value differentiation and self-differentiation with psychological adjustment in multiple age and cultural groups (Constantino, Wilson, Horowitz, & Pinel, 2006; Daniel et al., 2012; Diehl & Hay, 2011).

These results, which are congruent with past studies, suggest that in the case of self-attributes, cognitive polyphasia is not neutral but negative. Individuals and societies can hold diverging pieces of knowledge regarding various phenomena without comparing them or feeling confused (Wagner, Duveen, Verma, & Themel, 2000). At the same time, when the self is in question, cognitive polyphasia may be more easily detected, and be related to feelings of fragmentation and confusion. The representation of self-consistency, or the need to view the self as a coherent entity, across time, space and situations, may lead to this sensitivity to conflicts.

In contrast to heterosexual men and women, and to results found in past studies (Daniel, Boehnke, & Knafo, 2013), gay men did not show a negative relationship between value differentiation and well-being. The difference between previous results and the current report

may be due to a difference in the populations studied. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study that investigated the associations between value differentiation and well-being among gay individuals. The gay situation, that may require high levels of differentiation due to the circumstances described above, may reduce the desired level of confidence among participants. Among gay men, the ability to hold different identities as threads in the self, while not choosing any of them as a core defining identity (Seidman, 2002), may be adaptive, as it allows one to maintain connections to contexts in which parts of the identity are accepted to different degrees.

If indeed value differentiation can have no negative consequences to well-being in certain situations, future studies should look into the criteria that define these situations. These may be life contexts that create, and legitimize strong conflict between identities. A possible example for investigation may be members of modern-religious communities, who feel a conflict between their obligation to religious norms and beliefs, and their modern day ideologies and lifestyles (Guterman, 2006).

Alternately, the lack of significant associations between value differentiation and well-being among gay men found in this study can result from a lack of statistical power. The modest size of the sample limits the confidence in the results and their generalizability. The recruitment of a large sample of gay men is challenging, as gay individuals are scattered across the population, and may avoid widespread declaration of their gay identity. However, a replication of the current results, preferably with a larger sample, may be beneficial.

Another limitation of the study is the limited number of values chosen for the current analysis. These values were especially relevant and meaningful in the contexts and the populations studied. Nonetheless, a similar study with additional values will be able to add more information to the current findings. Last, the study utilized self-report measures of both values and well-being. Both constructs are subjective, and do not lend themselves easily to observational measures. However, the use of other-report measures may add to the understanding of the effects found.

CONCLUSIONS

Creating an integrated identity, that holds together the social representations learned by interaction with different groups and roles, is a complex process. In this process, cognitive polyphasia is likely to occur, with different values taking the lead across contexts. Gay men were found to emphasize different values across contexts of their life. They were also found more likely to do so than heterosexual men and women. At the same time, among gay men, this differentiation was not negatively related to self-esteem. We thus further our understanding of the complexities of gay men's identity, which live in between different representation systems. We also learn of their impressive resilience, in juggling different social roles.

These findings may be integrated into the education and therapy of adolescents and young adults who undergo the process of gay identity formation. It can support professionals in legitimizing the cognitive polyphasia that may be encountered by young gay men, thus reducing its effect on well-being.

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