

Psychologist Analyzes Teenagers' Talk About Homosexuality

Clark University Professor Neill Korobov analyzes the hidden anti-homosexual and sexist attitudes of teenage boys in a study published in *Psychology of Men & Masculinity* (Vol. 5, No. 2, 178-189, 2004).

He theorizes that boys use humor, displays of indifference, and disclaimers to position themselves as "tolerant" about homosexuality, while still maintaining their social status as masculine heterosexuals.

Writing in "Inoculating Against Prejudice: A Discursive Approach To Homophobia And Sexism In Adolescent Male Talk," Korobov studied the content of conversations of boys ranging in age from 10 to 15 years of age who attended a New England school.

Korobov conducted this longitudinal and cross-sectional study by recording more than 300 hours of audio and video talk from 54 boys. The boys were involved in guided and non-guided interview sessions.

During these talks, the boys were encouraged to freely dis-

cuss homosexuality, heterosexuality, as well as their attitudes toward girls. Korobov discovered that these boys typically masked their anti-homosexuality and sexist attitudes through the use of humor, nonchalant behavior, and by feigning liberal or egalitarian feelings to hide their real attitudes.

These teens used verbal techniques to protect their positions as heterosexual males while sounding tolerant of homosexuality or friends who may have come out to them as homosexuals.

According to Korobov, "In the data examined, the boys used a range of positioning strategies, such as requests for clarification, suppression, the use of softeners and extreme case formulations, differentiation, displays of indifference, disclaimers, and conditionals, to name a few."

These devices, says Korobov, are used for "constructing non-prejudiced forms of normative masculinity," and are examples of the complex ways that males mask their actual prejudices.