ABSTRACT: Anti-gay violence is the second most-reported hate crime. In many cases, bystanders could have chosen to intervene to stop the violence. People who have strong homophobic attitudes are less likely to intervene than people who hold less homophobic attitudes. These attitudes towards gay men may be influenced by underlying personality traits, such as openness.

Openness to experience, part of the five-factor theory of personality, is negatively correlated with aggression and anti-gay attitudes. People who are high in openness are more liberal and tend to seek a variety of experiences. Whereas, people who have lower levels tend to be more conforming and less sensitive. Low openness can influence a bystander’s intervention process if they view the victim negatively. The current study examines the association between openness levels, anti-gay attitudes, and the time to intervene as a bystander.

Male undergraduate students (n = 65) witnessed a staged scene of anti-gay aggression. One confederate expressed hostility towards another, ostensibly homosexual confederate; participants chose whether to intervene. Participants then completed a battery of measures, including the Big Five Personality Inventory, and the Attitudes Toward Lesbian and Gay Men Scale.

Results of a regression analysis indicate that openness and anti-gay attitudes predicted intervention time, \( R^2 = .12, F(1,64) = 4.42, p<.05 \). Participants higher in openness had lower anti-gay attitudes scores, (\( B = -.97, SE = .46, p<.05 \)). Additionally, anti-gay attitudes significantly predicted the time to intervene; for each one point increase in anti-gay attitudes, participants waited an additional 29 seconds to intervene, (\( B = 29.04, SE = 11.11, p<.05 \)). This suggests that men who have lower levels of openness hold more anti-gay attitudes, which then affects the time to intervene in anti-gay aggression (\( B = -0.28.13, SE = 18.18, CI_{95\%} = -74.71, -3.43, 1000 \text{ bootstrapped samples} \).