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Perception of sexual orientation as a function of amount and type of stereotype

Cecil F, Jr Abrams
San Jose State University

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PERCEPTION OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION AS A FUNCTION OF
AMOUNT AND TYPE OF STEREOTYPE

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Psychology

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Cecil F. Abrams Jr.

May 2008

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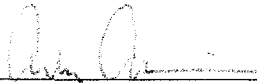
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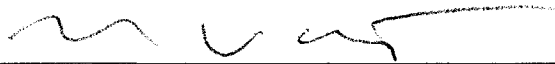
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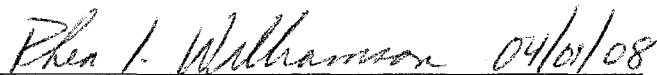


Dr. Nancy Eldred, Faculty



Dr. Mark Van Selst, Faculty

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ABSTRACT

PERCEPTION OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION AS A FUNCTION OF AMOUNT AND TYPE OF STEREOTYPE

by Cecil F. Abrams Jr.

This study was designed to investigate the effects of amount and type of male stereotypes on perception of male sexual orientation. Six behavioral packets containing various combinations of gay, straight, and neutral male behavioral sentences, with regard to a fictitious person named Tim, were developed, standardized, and administered to 90 undergraduates. Participants were asked to read each behavioral sentence, and to form as clear an impression of Tim as possible. They were then asked to rate the likelihood that Tim is gay, as well as the likelihood that he is straight. Results confirmed the assumption that the type of male stereotypes known about a male target directly influences perceptions of the male target's sexual orientation.

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INTRODUCTION

Is it possible to tell the sexual orientation of another person without knowing anything about the person? The term “Gaydar” (over the past decade or so) has been making its way into the American lexicon. Generally defined, Gaydar is simply the notion that some people, gays and lesbians in particular, have an innate ability to identify other gays and lesbians without having prior knowledge of an individual’s sexual preference.

Shelp (2002) provides what he calls an adaptive definition of Gaydar. He argues that rather than being a special intuitive force, Gaydar develops in response to motivational factors. Shelp maintains that at the age of awareness, gays and lesbians begin to recognize that they are different, and that their sexual orientation deviates from the norm, creating a sense of loneliness, and a life void of the “normal” social and romantic bonds expected to develop in a straight world.

In response, gays and lesbians are motivated to seek out other gays and lesbians through learning and displaying the subtle cues of the gay and lesbian subculture. Moreover, Shelp explains that gays and lesbians develop self-protecting mechanisms, what he calls a “Gay Early Warning System”, to help protect themselves from the hostile, anti-gay behaviors and actions of others.

In providing a social-cognitive analysis of the phenomenon, Woolery (2007) likens Gaydar to cognitive apprenticeship, where category-based impression formation and decision-making skills are developed in response to the motivational and self-preservation needs Shelp articulated in 2002. Woolery notes that physical cues identified

in others are viewed against a “gay” schematic criterion and assessed for “goodness of fit” and relevance, and that informal apprenticeship training and practice leads to the development of skills that discriminate and highlight subtle cues between gay and straight people. As a result, highly developed skills lead to the development of a strong and accurate gay schematic that in turn produces greater accuracy in detecting who is and is not gay or lesbian.

Woolery further argues that the rapid and automatic processing of information that feeds the decision-making processes that form our impressions of others mirrors Gaydar, and is often mistaken as an innate ability rather than an intuitive skill formed through prolonged informal social training and practice.

The author further explains that it is cognitive intuition and not magical intuition that explains Gaydar. Cognitive intuition is defined as a skill that develops through a type of cognitive apprenticeship where the acquisition of expert knowledge produces highly developed skills for identifying the subtle social and cultural cues gays and lesbians both illuminate and detect in others. Moreover, she notes that cognitive apprenticeship explains the variability in person accuracy in identifying the sexual orientations of others, as well as the development of the implicit skills gays and lesbians develop in response to an oppressive culture, where development of such skills facilitates the recognition of and connection to other gays and lesbians.

Supporting the viewpoints of both Shelp (2002) and Woolery (2007) is a growing body of research investigating the social and cultural cues behind our perceptions of the sexual orientation of others: AKA Gaydar.

To investigate the extent to which people can perceive the sexual orientation of others, Berger, Hank, Rauzi, and Simkins (1987), in a landmark experiment, used both auditory and visual cues to investigate the degree to which straight men, straight women, gay men, and lesbian women could accurately identify the sexual orientation of strangers. To accomplish this, 24 short videotaped interviews of straight and gay male and female confederates were produced.

The participants (37 straight men, 24 gay men, 55 straight women, and 27 lesbian women) viewed each interview, and completed a questionnaire in which they rated each of the target persons as either gay or straight. An analysis was conducted to determine the number of correct identifications of the sexual orientation for each target person. Overall, these data indicated that about 20% of participants were able to detect, beyond chance levels, the sexual orientation of each target person, with women performing better than men in most cases.

Moreover, Berger and associates were interested in assessing the patterns of behavioral cues related to the correct identification of sexual orientation. To identify such behavioral cues, participants were asked to briefly list reasons for their ratings of the target person's sexual orientation. Responses were placed into nine categories. Of these nine categories, an analysis of behavioral cues indicated that "Masculine Traits" and "Gestures and Posture" were the only categories significantly related to the correct identification of the target person's sexual orientation.

Building on the work of Berger and his colleagues, Ambady, Hallahan, and Connor (1999) manipulated brief observations of nonverbal behavior to examine the accuracy of

perceptions of sexual orientation. In their experiment, 24 straight women, 24 lesbian women, 24 straight men, and 24 gay men were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions (10 s silent video, 1 s silent video, or 8 still photos). Stimuli were created using 25 (5 straight women, 5 lesbian women, 7 straight men, and 8 gay men) graduate students. Each graduate student was videotaped while responding freely for one minute to the following prompt: "Please discuss how you balance your extracurricular and academic activities." After videotaping each student, 10 s clips, 1 s clips, and 8 still photographs were extracted from each of the video recordings to create the three sets of visual stimuli used in the study. The results indicated that gay men and lesbian women recognized sexual orientation more accurately than straight men and women in the silent 1 s video clip condition and in the 8 still photographs condition. However, straight men and women were better judges of sexual orientation than their gay and lesbian counterparts in the silent 10 s clip condition.

One possible reason why people are able to perceive the sexual orientation of others may be explained by gender stereotypes. That is, traditional gender stereotypes, along with non-conformity to said stereotypes, are linked to perceptions of sexual orientation (Wong, McCreary, Carpenter, Engle & Korchynsky, 1999). The inversion theory makes this point clear. According to this theory, people believe that gay men and lesbian women exhibit cross-sex traits, behaviors, and characteristics (Ellis, 1915). To illustrate this concept, Kite and Deaux (1987) investigated the magnitude by which traditional sex-role stereotypes influence our perceptions of homosexuality. The researchers randomly assigned 206 (102 males and 104 female) undergraduate students to one of four

conditions (straight male, straight female, gay male, and lesbian female). The participants were asked to list the traits, behaviors, and characteristics they believed were stereotypical of the group to which they had been assigned. Their results supported the premise that gay men and lesbian women are stereotyped and perceived as possessing cross-sex traits, behaviors, and characteristics. That is, gay men tend to be seen as having traits and behaviors similar to those of straight women; while lesbian women are likely to be described as possessing characteristics and behaviors similar to those of straight men. As specific examples, gay men were described as feminine in their mannerisms (speech and walk), wore feminine clothing and are friendly; whereas lesbian women were described as masculine in appearance (they wear men's clothing and have short hair, for example), were strong, unattractive, and athletic.

In a more recent attempt to validate the Inversion Theory, Dunkle and Francis (1990) examined the extent to which the masculine and feminine facial characteristics influence perceptions of homosexuality. To create the stimuli, 32 males and 19 females rated 8 male and 12 female faces based on masculine and feminine facial features. Ratings resulted in the selection of 12 faces that were used in the study. An additional 68 people (34 males and 34 females) were given 30-seconds to view each face. After viewing these faces, participants were asked to rate the likelihood that the target faces belong to each of the following categories: a minister, a drug dealer, a teacher, a homosexual, an Italian, a business executive, a college student, an alcoholic, a musician, and a mental patient. Their results indicated that the feminine male faces were assigned higher gay ratings than

more masculine male faces, and that the masculine female faces were assigned higher gay ratings than more feminine female faces.

Collectively, these studies provide some evidence that traditional sex-role stereotypes are linked to perceptions of sexual orientation. More specifically, they suggest that non-conformity to the traits, behaviors, and characteristics associated with traditional gender-role stereotypes influence perceptions of homosexuality. However, what is not clear in the literature is the extent to which perceptions of sexual orientation are linked to the absence or presence of traditional sex-role characteristics exhibited by an individual. That is, it is not clear as to how much conformity or non-conformity to traditional sex-role stereotypes influences our perceptions of the sexual orientation of other people. For example, Ambady, Hallahan, and Rosenthal (1995) recently reported that people accurately perceive sexual orientation from the brief observation of nonverbal behavior. In discussing the results of their study, these researchers noted that gays and lesbians can effectively hide their sexual orientation, and that the degree to which gay and lesbians conceal or reveal their sexual orientation may influence how accurate people are in perceiving a person's sexual orientation. Since it is well documented that gay men and women who display gender-incongruent characteristics, traits, and behaviors are the victims of prejudice and hatred, with gay men viewed more negatively than lesbians (see McCreary, 1994; Storm, 1978), it is not surprising that many gays and lesbians hide their sexual orientation. Given the vulnerability that gay men and lesbians face, the development of perceptual accuracy in identifying other gays and lesbians is a critical skill in safeguarding themselves in anti-gay and lesbian environments.

To better understand the perceptual accuracy of a person sexual orientation, Carrol and Gilroy (2002) designed a study to investigate the role appearance and nonverbal behaviors play in the perception of sexual orientation. Working with the notion that an appearance and behavior code operates within the gay and lesbian community, these researchers investigated the influence of eye contact, gestures, hair style, and body language as critical visual cues gays and lesbians focus on when identifying one another in non-gay environments without engaging in verbal exchange.

To accomplish this, Carrol and Gilroy asked a predominately White group of gay and lesbians to complete a series of two questionnaires. The first questionnaire asked the participants to self-report their ability to identify other gay men and lesbians, while the second questionnaire measured the frequency with which they perceived the sexual orientation of strangers. Results were used to separate the respondents into high, low, and moderate perceivers.

Next, a focus group of gays and lesbians was assembled and given the task of developing a list of appearance and behavior characteristics the group believed were associated with perceptual accuracy in identifying other gays and lesbians. Participants in the actual study were given the list of characteristics and asked to rate the helpfulness of each characteristic in terms of identifying other persons of gay or lesbian orientation.

Participant responses were examined using a 2 (gay male, lesbian) x 3 (high, moderate, and low perceiver) multivariate analysis of variance. The strongest results from the analysis indicated support for the importance of eye contact in identifying a person's sexual orientation. Moreover, both duration and intensity of eye contact were

significantly more useful to lesbians than gay men in recognizing other lesbians, but that both gay and lesbian high perceivers identify eye contact as being significantly more helpful in identifying gay men than that reported by gay and lesbian low and moderate perceivers.

Although Carrol and Gilroy's findings collaborate pre-existing notions of the importance of eye contact in interpersonal attraction, their findings help expand our understanding of the important role eye contact plays in the daily lives of gays and lesbians in developing perceptual accuracy in response to a presumably hostile and threatening world.

Adding to the current body of evidence connecting characteristics of individuals to perceptions of sexual orientation is the work of Smyth, Jacobs, and Rogers (2003), where variations in the characteristics of male voices were examined in the context of perceptions of sexual orientation.

In a review of the literature, Smyth et al. noted that past research has demonstrated acoustic, pitch, range, and vowel length differences between men and women, in that most people are able to judge whether a voice is male or female with almost perfect accuracy, and that this ability is strongly related to male-female differences in anatomy and physiology. They further note that while popular belief suggests that gay men speak with the same high-pitched voice and variable intonations as women, they reject the idea that gay and straight men have different voices, and promote the idea that specific acoustic properties of a man's voice influences listeners to perceive a man as either gay or straight regardless of his actual sexual identity.

To test their ideas, voice samples from self-identified gay and straight men were collected. Tape recorded samples were collected from each participant as they read aloud from the text of two independent paragraphs, one scientific and the other dramatic. Additional samples were collected as the participants responded to an open-ended question about a true incident that happened to them. The samples represented a range of voice samples across the three discourse types.

Results for the experiment indicated that straight speakers were rated as more gay-sounding when they read the scientific passage as opposed to the dramatic and spontaneous conditions. Results further suggested that gay male listeners were more likely to rate a voice as “gay sounding” than other male listeners, and, despite poor accuracy performance levels for both gay and straight men, in contrast to the threat hypothesis of greater sensitivity of gay men, straight men were significantly more accurate in identifying the sexual orientation of the speaker than gay men.

Smyth, Jacobs, and Rogers contribute their findings to a known “menu” of acoustic cues from which different selections or combination of selections are made across different discourse settings regardless of a speaker’s gender or sexual orientation. They further argue that the phenomenon often referred to as the “gay voice,” is largely contributed to a male culture that values masculine sounding voice, where any deviation from the use of masculine vocal features elicits the impression that the speaker is gay.

As a final piece of support for the present study, Duran, Renfro, Waller, and Trafimow (2007) studied the relationship between behavior, traits, and group membership (gay or straight). As noted by these researchers, human behavior influences

our perceptions of an individual's group membership, where multiple observation of stereotypically-congruent behavior indicate membership in a particular group, while fewer observations of stereotypically-incongruent behavior is enough to exclude the same individual from one group or another. To demonstrate this, Duran et al. point to the example that straight men are expected to behave in very stereotypically masculine ways, and that a few deviations from the expected behavior is enough to sway an individual to form the impression that a man is gay, while a feminine (straight) man would have to demonstrate a large number of stereotypically masculine behaviors before being considered straight. They further argue that behaviors cause traits to be inferred.

In extending this line of thought, these authors explain that perceptions of human traits can be applied to our understanding of stereotypes. They contend that in American society, sexual orientation is a moral characteristic of humanity, where the prevailing assumption is that to be straight is to be moral, and to be gay is to be immoral. If so, they argue, then expectations of group membership (straight or gay) should shadow expectations of moral traits, where a single immoral act would be enough to form the impression that a person is immoral, while many demonstrated moral act would not be enough to alter the impression that the same individual is a moral person. Likewise, a single gay act would be enough to form an impression that a person is gay, while many straight acts would not be sufficient to change that impression of the person to straight.

As such, these researchers designed an experiment to determine if sexual orientation would behave as an "asymmetrical" trait. They proposed that sexual orientation is a hierarchically restrictive trait, in that it would only take very few instances of gay

behaviors to change the impression that a person is straight to the impression that the person is gay, but that it would take many instances of straight behaviors to change the impression that a person is gay to an impression that the person is straight.

Results from the experiment identified sexual orientation as a Hierarchically Restrictive (HR) trait; traits that are resistant to change. When told that a target individual in the experiment was straight, and asked to indicate the number of inconsistent behaviors it would take to change their impression of the target to being gay, a significant number of the participants indicated between 1-3 acts, where the response range for all the participants was 1-10 acts. However when informed that the target was gay, and then asked to indicate the number of inconsistent act it would take to change their view of the target to straight, only half of the respondents indicate between 1-3 acts, but within a much larger range of responses (1-1 million).

Duran and colleagues argue that their results indicate that perceptions, and changes in perceptions of a person sexual orientations are governed by the principles of HR traits, such that it only takes a few examples of gay behavior to change an initial impression that a person is straight to an impression that the person is gay, but that the opposite is true when going from the impression that a person is gay to the impression that the person is straight, where many demonstrations of straight behaviors are required.

The objective of the current study, therefore, extends the findings of previous research investigating perception of sexual orientation by attempting to understand how the amount and type of male stereotypes, endorsed by society, influence our perceptions

of a man's sexual orientation, extending our knowledge on how information about male sexual orientation is transferred to observers.

Like Carol and Gilroy (2002), the current experiment test the extent to which appearance and behavior characteristics observed in others is associated with perceptions of gay and straight group membership. Moreover, the current study follows the work of Smyth, Jacob, and Rogers (2003), in that any deviation from expected male behavior defined by a predominately straight world influence impressions of a man's sexual orientation. And similar to Duran, Renfro, Waller, and Trafimow (2007), the current work tests the influence of the number and type of observed male behaviors in perceiving a man as being either gay or straight.

Thus, it is hypothesized that the amount and type of male stereotypes will directly influence perceptions of male sexual orientation. More specific, it is hypothesized that as the amount of stereotypically gay behavioral information increases, the likelihood that a target individual will be perceived as gay will equally increase. Likewise, as the amount of stereotypically straight behavioral information increases, the likelihood that a target individual will be perceived as straight will also increase.

Method

Overview

To test these predictions, a group of introductory psychology students participated in an experiment on impression formation. However, prior to the actual experiment two independent samples of psychology students were used to 1) generate and 2) validate a list of statements describing typical male gay and male straight behaviors, traits, and characteristics. The behaviors, traits, and characteristics were then grouped into 1 of 3 categories, gay, straight, or neutral. From these 3 categories, 6 informational packets, each containing 10 behavioral sentences regarding a fictitious person named Tim, were created and used in the experiment. Each packet represented 1 of 6 different combinations of either typical male gay and male neutral behaviors, or typical male straight and male neutral behaviors. Participants were asked to form an impression of Tim as they read each sentence appearing in the packet, and then to indicate the likelihood that Tim is gay, as well as the likelihood that Tim is straight. They were further asked to indicate their level of confidence of their sexual orientation ratings.

Research Design and Participants

The experiment took the form of a 2 X 3 between-subjects factorial design. The factors were type of male stereotype (gay or straight) and amount of male stereotype (low, medium, and high), resulting in six experimental condition (gay/low, gay/medium, gay/high, straight/low, straight/medium, or straight/high).

Participants were 90 (32 male and 58 female) university students enrolled in an introductory psychology course, where course credit was earned for their participation in

the experiment. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the six conditions.

Stimulus Material Development

One half of an independent sample of 60 (30 male and 30 female) psychology students were asked to generate a list of statements describing typical gay male behaviors, traits, and characteristics, while the other half generated a list of statements describing typical straight male behaviors, traits, and characteristics. The results were combined into a list of 115 statements (see Appendix A).

A second independent group of 68 (34 male and 34 female) psychology students were asked to rate each of the 115 statements, with half of the group rating the extent to which each statement described typical gay behaviors, traits, or characteristics, and the other half rating the extent to which each statement described typical straight male behaviors, traits, or characteristics. All ratings were made on a 9-point likert-type scale, where 1 = highly likely. Independent t-tests were performed to statistically separate the 115 statements into three lists of male stereotypes.

Statements that were statistically significantly more likely of gay men than straight men were used to create a list of gay male stereotypes (see Appendix B). Statements that were statistically significantly more likely of straight men than gay men were used to create a list of straight male stereotypes (see Appendix C), and statements not statistically significantly more likely of one orientation or the other (i.e., behaviors, traits, and characteristics that are neutral or have no implications about male sexual orientation) were used to create a list of male neutral stereotypes (see Appendix D). Of the 115 stereotypes, 27 tested gay, 41 straight, and 47 neutral.

Paired-sample correlations were used to measure the association between statements in each list of stereotypes. The seven stereotypes indicating the strongest significant relationships in each list were initially selected to create three independent sets of 7 gay, 7 straight, and 7 neutral male stereotypes. Paired-sample *t*-tests were conducted on each set of seven stereotypes to measure the mean difference between the stereotypes.

Alternate stereotypes from the original lists were used in exchange for one or more stereotypes until a combination of seven stereotypes in each set produced a non-significant result, indicating that the seven stereotypes were of equal mean strength.

Likewise, a one-way ANOVA was conducted between the three sets of seven stereotypes. Again, alternate stereotypes from the original lists were used in exchange for one or more stereotypes until a combination of stereotypes produced a non-significant result both within and between the three sets of male stereotypes, indicating that the sets were of equal mean strength. See Appendix E for the seven stereotypes in each set used in the actual experiment.

The seven stereotypes in each of the three sets were translated into behavioral sentences describing a male target (Tim). See Appendix F for the translation into behavioral sentences. In the final step, combinations of stereotypes selected from each set of male stereotypes were used to create six independent groups of 10 stereotypes each. The six groups included one of the following combinations of male behavior: 3 Gay and 7 Neutral, 5 Gay and 5 Neutral, 7 Gay and 3 Neutral, 3 Straight and 7 Neutral, 5 Straight and 5 Neutral, or 7 Straight and 3 Neutral. A one-way ANOVA was used to compare the mean strength between the six groups. Stereotypes were recombined across

the six groups until a combination of stereotypes produced a non-significant result, indicating that the groups were of equal mean strength. See Appendix G for the final combination of behavioral sentences for each group used in the actual experiment.

The ten behavioral sentences in each of the six groups represented the six informational packets used in the experiment. The sentences randomly appeared in the packets with the constraint that the first sentence illuminated either a gay or straight stereotype. Each sentence was typed, centered on a sheet of paper, and equal in length to the other sentences.

Procedures

The experiment was conducted using groups of no more than six participants at a time. The participants were told that they would be participating in a study aimed at learning more about how people form impressions of other individuals, and that their task would be to form an impression of a person named Tim. They were informed that they would be reading a series of 10 sentences describing various behaviors Tim performs. Each of the participants were then presented with one of the six behavioral packets, given 5 s to read each sentence, and asked to form a clear, coherent impression of Tim. Each group of participants was paced through the behavioral packet at intervals of 5 s until all 10 statements had been read. Participants were debriefed at the conclusion of the experiment.

Dependent Measures

When the participants finished reading the behavioral sentences, they were asked to complete a multi-item questionnaire. The questionnaire included main dependent

measures and distracter measures. The main dependent measures required the participants to indicate the likelihood that Tim is gay, as well as the likelihood that he is straight.

All ratings were made on a 9-point likert-type scale, where 1 = highly unlikely.

In addition to the two main dependent measures, the participants were asked to rate how confident they were in their ratings of Tim's sexual orientation. Ratings were made on a 9-point likert-type scale, where 1 = not very confident. On a separate questionnaire, the participants indicated their age, ethnicity, gender, place of birth, sexual orientation, and whether or not they knew any gay men.

Results

Demographics

The average age of the sample was 20. The majority of participants were of Asian ancestry (48%), followed by Caucasians (29%), Latino/a Americans (18%), and African Americans (4%). Women (64%) were more represented than men (36%). The majority of the participants (69%) were born in the United States, most (78%) acknowledged knowing at least one gay man, and nearly all the respondents (92%) identified their sexual orientation as straight. Analyses of the data indicated no significant differences between participant gender, ethnicity, age, place of birth, familiarity with gay men, or sexual orientation on the likelihood that Tim is gay or straight.

Dependent Measures

To test the over all differences between the six experimental groups, a 2 (type) by 3 (amount) Multivariate Analysis of Variance was conducted on the likelihood that Tim is gay, as well as the likelihood that he is straight. Results of the analysis indicated a significant main effect of type of stereotype (gay or straight) on the likelihood that Tim is gay, $F(1, 89) = 74.31, p < .001$, as well as the likelihood that Tim is straight, $F(1, 89) = 7.57, p < .05$. As seen in Figure 1, when information regarding Tim was stereotypically gay, the participants were significantly more likely to perceived Tim as gay ($M = 6.44$) than straight ($M=3.08$), and when information regarding Tim was stereotypically straight, they were significantly more likely to perceived Tim as straight ($M = 6.82$) than gay ($M = 5.78$).

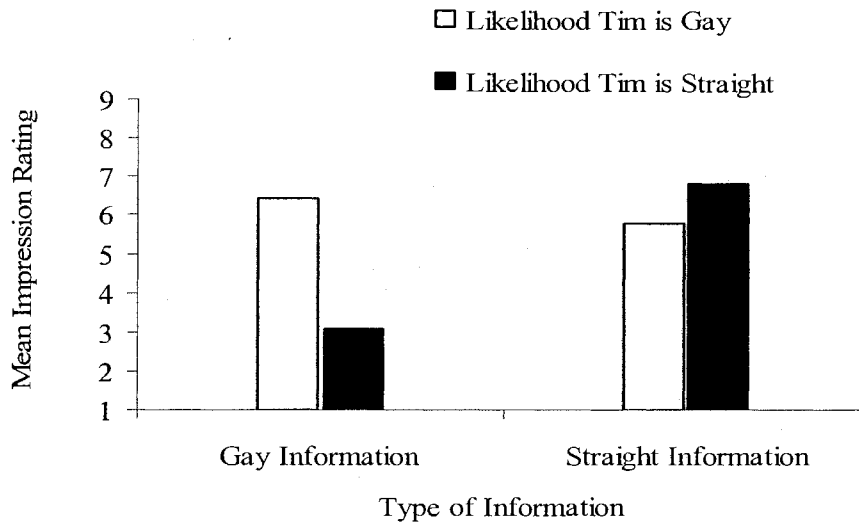


Figure 1. Mean impression ratings as a function of the Type of Stereotype.

A significant main effect of amount of stereotype (low, medium, or high) was not detected. However, a significant interaction between type and amount of information was found, but only on the likelihood that Tim is gay, $F(2, 88) = 7.96, p < .01$. To better understand this result, post-hoc comparisons were conducted between the six experimental groups. Results of the comparisons indicated a significant difference between low and high amounts of gay information $t(28) = -2.88, p < .01$, and moderate and high amounts of gay information $t(28) = -2.33, p < .05$ on the likelihood that Tim is gay. Likewise, results indicated a significant difference between low and moderate amounts of straight information $t(28) = 3.47, p < .01$, and low and high amounts of straight information $t(28) = 3.71, p < .01$ on the likelihood that Tim is gay.

As illustrated in Figure 2, participants were less likely to perceive Tim as gay when low ($M = 5.80$) or moderate ($M = 5.87$) amounts of gay information were present than they were when a high amount ($M = 7.67$) of gay information was known. Moreover, the participants were more likely to perceive Tim as gay when a low amount ($M = 4.40$) of straight information was present than they were when moderate ($M = 2.40$) or high ($M = 2.47$) amounts of straight information were known.

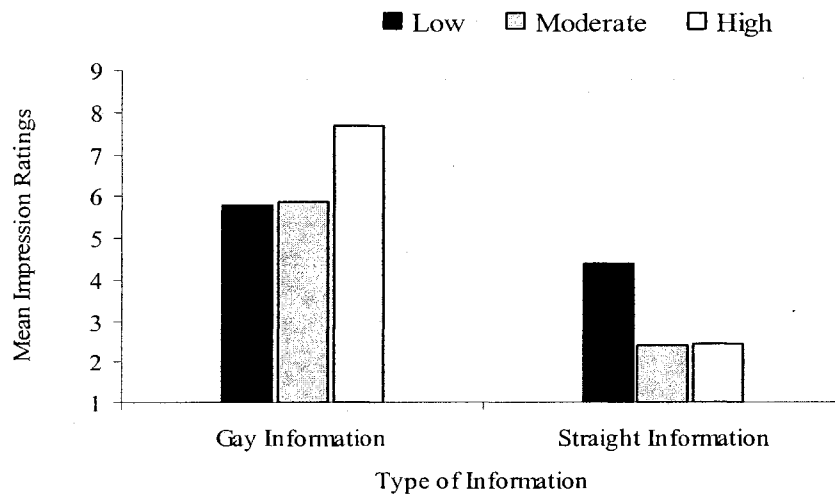


Figure 2. Mean impression ratings as a function of the Type and Amount of Stereotype on the likelihood that Tim is gay.

Confidence Measures

To test the over-all differences in levels of confidence between the groups, a 2 (type) by 3 (amount) Multivariate Analysis of Variance was computed on participants' confidence in their ratings of the likelihood that Tim is gay, as well as the likelihood that he is straight. Results of the analysis indicated a significant main effect on amount of

information, but only on participants' ratings of their confidence that Tim is gay

$F(2, 88) = 6.22, p < .05$.

As the amount of information increased, participants became significantly more confident in their rating of Tim's sexuality. To better understand this result, post-hoc comparisons were conducted between the three amounts of stereotypic information. Results of the comparisons indicated a statistically significant difference between low and moderate amounts of information, $t(58) = -3.53, p < .01$, as well as between low and high amounts of information, $t(58) = -2.46, p < .05$. As seen in Figure 3, participants were significantly less confident in their ratings of Tim as gay when low amounts ($M = 5.50$) of information were present than they were when either moderate ($M = 7.17$) or high amounts ($M = 6.80$) of information were present.

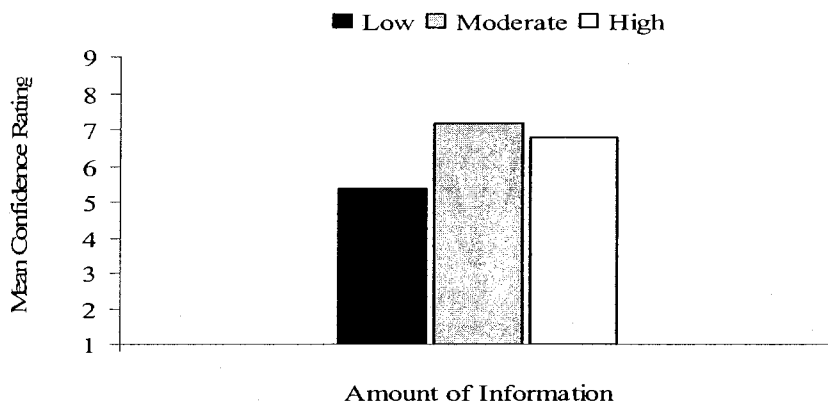


Figure 3. Mean confidence ratings as a function of the Amount of Stereotype on the likelihood that Tim is gay.

A statistically significant main effect of type of information, and a statistically significant interaction between type and amount of information on participant levels of confidence were not found, indicating strong consensus among the participants regarding their respective perceptions about Tim's sexual orientation.

Discussion

Results from the experiment provide limited support for the notion that perceptions of a man's sexual orientation are formed using stereotypes, in that the type of male behavior presented in the experiment influenced college student perceptions of Tim's sexual orientation. When presented with information about Tim that was congruent with typically gay male behavior, students confidently formed the perception that Tim is gay. Likewise, when presented with information about Tim that was congruent with typically straight male behavior they confidently formed the perception that he is straight. Although no support was found to suggest that the amount of stereotypical information alone influenced how these students perceived Tim, support was found to suggest that the relationship between the type of information and the amount of information influenced student perceptions, but only to the point of forming the perception that Tim is gay. When students were presented with high amounts of gay or low amounts of straight information they were more inclined to perceive Tim as gay than when low and moderate amounts of gay or moderate and high amounts of straight information was known.

These findings contribute to a body of related work investigating the extent to which people can perceive the sexual orientation of others. Extending the work of Berge et al (1987) and Ambady et al (1999), this study helps to illuminate the operative role that brief observation of stereotypical behaviors play when tasked with forming an impression of a stranger's sexual orientation. Along with past research, findings from this study align well with the theory of inversion (Ellis, 1915), demonstrating how people believe that homosexuals exhibit cross-sex traits, behaviors, and characteristics. The

implications of these findings touch both straight and gay men alike. Straight men perceived as behaving in a typically gay way run the risk of being perceived as being gay, while gay men perceived as acting in a typically straight way run the risk of being perceived as being straight. The consequences of these misperceptions by others may have a profound impact on the personal, social, and professional lives of both gay and straight men.

It is surprising, however, that the amount of stereotypic information known had a limited effect on how students perceived Tim. It is plausible that the study lacked enough power to produce the predicted outcome. Likewise, it is plausible that the amount of stereotypes used across the six experimental conditions was not enough to influence perceptions of male sexual orientation beyond the limited interaction observed in the data. And, it is highly plausible that before entering a judgment about the sexual orientation of a man, particularly when asked to consider the likelihood that a man is gay, the less socially accepted of the two orientations, the participants in this study wanted to have strong support for, and confidence in, their decision before indicating one way or the other.

Moreover, these findings may have measurable implication for the national, state, and local resources spent on efforts to discourage the use of social stereotypes, particularly those efforts rooted in public schools. It is clear from this study that young men and women entering college soon after high school obediently and unquestioningly relied upon their stereotypes of gay and straight male behaviors in forming their perceptions of a complete stranger's sexual identity. It will be up to future research in

this area to discover if the experiences of a college education exacerbate or mitigate these findings.

The design of future research investigating the effects of both type and amount of stereotypic information on perceptions of sexual orientation should consider participant gender and sexual orientation in the equal distribution and random assignment of participant to the various experimental groups. An understanding of the role that social context and social acquaintances play in the formation of our perceptions of the sexual orientation of others should likewise be considered as variables of interest for future research. Moreover, to understand the impact of person memory on how impressions of an individual's sexual orientation are formed, future studies should consider the collection and analysis of participant recall data (see Asch, 1946; Asuncion & Lam, 1995; Carlton & Skowronski, 1986; and Sherman & Klein, 1994 for a review). That is, when forming the impression of a person's sexual orientation, what pieces of information do people recall? How many pieces of information do they recall? Do people differ in the amount of information recalled, and do they recall the same information or combination of information?

Finally, it is interesting to note that while most (92%) of the participants in the present study identified as straight in their sexual orientation, they were keenly aware of the stereotypes of gay and straight men, and did not hesitate to use that awareness to make judgments about Tim's sexual orientation. This is surprising in that Shelp (2002) and Woolery (2007) argue that it is gay and lesbian, and not straight men and women that are motivated by and "schooled" in the task of building the skills needed to identify and

interpret the social and cultural cue of the gay and lesbian subculture. Results from this investigation suggest otherwise.

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Appendix A

List of 115 Male Stereotypes

1. Act very macho
2. Are aggressive by nature
3. Are always eating
4. Are anxious
5. Are arrogant
6. Are clean-cut looking
7. Are competitive
8. Are conservative
9. Are deceptive
10. Are detailed oriented
11. Are dishonest
12. Are emotional
13. Are honest
14. Are interested in nature
15. Are manipulative
16. Are materialistic
17. Are obsessive about their looks
18. Are opinionated
19. Are overweight
20. Are physically fit
21. Are politically active
22. Are promiscuous
23. Are rude
24. Are sensitive
25. Are shy
26. Are skinny
27. Are sloppy
28. Are talkative
29. Are trustworthy
30. Are understanding

Appendix A (continued)

List of 115 Male Stereotypes

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 31. Are unfriendly | 46. Have beer bellies |
| 32. Are very artistic | 47. Have good skin tone |
| 33. Are very confident | 48. Have negative attitudes |
| 34. Are very helpful | 49. Highlight their hair |
| 35. Are very vocal | 50. Like attending family oriented places |
| 36. Attend monster truck shows | 51. Like construction work |
| 37. Attend tractor pulls | 52. Like contact sports |
| 38. Best friend is another guy | 53. Like fixing things |
| 39. Color their hair | 54. Like interior decorating |
| 40. Drink fruity alcoholic drinks | 55. Like lots of electronic toys |
| 41. Drive old beat-up trucks | 56. Like rough sports |
| 42. Easily pleased | 57. Like sports a lot |
| 43. Express their feelings | 58. Like team sports |
| 44. Hangout with buddies | 59. Like to accessorize |
| 45. Hate shopping | 60. Like to attend museums |

Appendix A (continued)

List of 115 Male Stereotypes

- | | |
|--|---|
| 61. Like to do house work | 76. Like to play golf |
| 62. Like to do yard work | 77. Like to play tennis |
| 63. Like to draw attention to themselves | 78. Like to play video games |
| 64. Like to dress well | 79. Like to raise hell with their friends |
| 65. Like to drink cheap beer | 80. Like to ride dirt bikes |
| 66. Like to drink fine wine | 81. Like to show-off |
| 67. Like to get their hands dirty | 82. Like to tell jokes |
| 68. Like to get to the point | 83. Like to watch action movies |
| 69. Like to give advice | 84. Like to watch musicals |
| 70. Like to go dancing | 85. Like to wear designer clothes |
| 71. Like to go on-line | 86. Like to wear sports apparel |
| 72. Like to go shopping | 87. Like to work on cars |
| 73. Like to go surfing | 88. Like to work outside |
| 74. Like to go to the opera | 89. Like to workout |
| 75. Like to gossip | 90. Like watching wrestling |

Appendix A (continued)

List of 115 Male Stereotypes

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 91. Listen to music | 104. Wear expensive clothing |
| 92. Look like outlaws | 105. Wear facial hair |
| 93. Shop at arts and crafts store | 106. Wear jeans and t-shirts |
| 94. Shop out of necessity | 107. Wear make-up |
| 95. Talk to more girls than guys | 108. Wear matching clothes |
| 96. Talk with a lilt | 109. Wear multiple earrings |
| 97. Travel to exotic places | 110. Wear real short hair |
| 98. Very emotional | 111. Wear shiny shirts |
| 99. Watch lots of T.V. | 112. Wear stylish hair styles |
| 100. Watch romantic movies | 113. Wear thong swim suit to the beach |
| 101. Watch war movies | 114. Wear trendy clothing |
| 102. Wear baggy clothes | 115. Willing to share feelings |
| 103. Wear baseball caps | |

Appendix B

List of 27 Gay Male Stereotypes

<u>Stereotype</u>	<u>M1*</u>	<u>M2**</u>
1. Are obsessive about their looks	4.32	5.59
2. Are sensitive	4.00	5.38
3. Are skinny	4.56	5.53
4. Are emotional	4.18	6.00
5. Color their hair	4.32	6.03
6. Drink fruity alcoholic drinks	4.47	6.03
7. Express their feelings	4.29	5.97
8. Highlight their hair	4.32	6.29
9. Like interior decorating	4.24	7.06
10. Like to accessorize	4.21	6.24
11. Like to attend museums	4.56	6.24
12. Like to do house work	4.68	6.24
13. Like to go shopping	4.35	6.06
14. Like to go to the opera	4.71	6.44

* Gay condition

** Straight condition

Appendix B (continued)

List of 27 Gay Male Stereotypes

	<u>Stereotype</u>	<u>M1*</u>	<u>M2**</u>
15.	Like to gossip	4.56	6.18
16.	Like to watch musicals	4.26	6.88
17.	Listen to music	4.47	6.03
18.	Shop at arts and crafts store	4.59	6.53
19.	Talk with a lilt	3.85	5.65
20.	Very emotional	4.09	6.12
21.	Watch romantic movies	4.44	6.15
22.	Wear make-up	4.35	7.29
23.	Wear multiple earrings	4.41	6.53
24.	Wear shinny shirts	4.03	6.85
25.	Wear stylish hair styles	4.38	5.79
26.	Wear thong swim suit to the beach	4.21	7.35
27.	Willing to share feelings	4.29	6.03

* Gay condition

** Straight condition

Appendix C

List of 41 Straight Male Stereotypes

<u>Stereotype</u>	<u>M1*</u>	<u>M2**</u>
1. Act very macho	5.91	3.74
2. Are aggressive by nature	5.00	2.91
3. Are always eating	5.65	4.06
4. Are arrogant	5.21	4.24
5. Are competitive	5.68	3.41
6. Are overweight	5.76	4.24
7. Are sloppy	5.41	4.03
8. Attend monster truck shows	6.32	3.88
9. Drive old beat-up trucks	5.82	4.53
10. Hangout with buddies	5.09	3.47
11. Hate shopping	6.09	3.18
12. Have beer bellies	5.71	4.12
13. Like construction work	5.85	3.53

* Gay condition

** Straight condition

Appendix C (continued)

List of 41 Straight Male Stereotypes

	<u>Stereotype</u>	<u>M1*</u>	<u>M2**</u>
14.	Like contact sports	6.29	3.32
15.	Like fixing things	5.38	2.82
16.	Like lots of electronic toys	5.15	4.03
17.	Like rough sports	6.38	3.76
18.	Like sports a lot	5.79	2.56
19.	Like team sports	5.50	2.82
20.	Like to do yard work	5.21	3.85
21.	Like to drink cheap beer	5.53	3.76
22.	Like to get their hands dirty	5.59	3.21
23.	Like to go surfing	6.32	4.38
24.	Like to play video games	5.09	3.71
25.	Like to raise hell with their friends	5.74	3.65
26.	Like to ride dirtbikes	6.09	4.65
27.	Like to show-off	5.32	3.76

* Gay condition

** Straight condition

Appendix C (continued)

List of 41 Straight Male Stereotypes

	<u>Stereotype</u>	<u>M1*</u>	<u>M2**</u>
28.	Like to tell jokes	4.82	3.65
29.	Like to watch action movies	5.56	2.68
30.	Like to wear sports apparel	5.32	3.38
31.	Like to work on cars	6.03	3.21
32.	Like to work outside	5.06	3.50
33.	Like to workout	5.32	3.88
34.	Like watching wrestling	6.00	3.41
35.	Look like outlaws	6.26	4.56
36.	Watch lots of T.V.	5.18	3.18
37.	Watch war movies	6.35	3.62
38.	Wear baggy clothes	5.35	3.88
39.	Wear baseball caps	5.24	2.94
40.	Wear jeans and t-shirts	4.97	3.12
41.	Wear real short hair	4.76	3.62

* Gay condition

** Straight condition

Appendix D

List of 47 Neutral Male Stereotypes

	<u>Stereotype</u>	<u>M1*</u>	<u>M2**</u>
1.	Are anxious	5.12	4.88
2.	Are clean-cut looking	4.85	4.85
3.	Are conservative	5.47	5.32
4.	Are deceptive	5.59	5.26
5.	Are detailed oriented	4.62	5.06
6.	Are dishonest	5.71	4.79
7.	Are every artistic	4.74	5.35
8.	Are every confident	4.65	4.29
9.	Are honest	5.18	5.26
10.	Are interested in nature	4.62	5.26
11.	Are manipulative	4.68	4.24
12.	Are materialistic	4.85	5.09

* Gay condition

** Straight condition

Appendix D (continued)

List of 47 Neutral Male Stereotypes

	<u>Stereotype</u>	<u>M1*</u>	<u>M2**</u>
13.	Are opinionated	4.68	4.44
14.	Are physically fit	5.24	4.53
15.	Are politically active	5.24	4.53
16.	Are promiscuous	4.85	4.44
17.	Are rude	5.44	4.53
18.	Are shy	5.00	5.68
19.	Are talkative	4.15	4.74
20.	Are trustworthy	4.76	4.65
21.	Are understanding	4.29	5.09
22.	Are unfriendly	5.38	4.82
23.	Are very helpful	4.97	4.44
24.	Are very vocal	4.62	4.50

* Gay condition

** Straight condition

Appendix D (continued)

List of 47 Neutral Male Stereotypes

<u>Stereotype</u>	<u>M1*</u>	<u>M2**</u>
25. Attend tractor pulls	5.79	5.03
26. Best friend is another guy	4.76	4.03
27. Easily pleased	5.00	5.44
28. Have good skin tone	4.91	5.26
29. Have negative attitudes	5.09	4.18
30. Like attending family oriented places	5.15	5.03
31. Like to draw attention to themselves	4.44	4.03
32. Like to dress well	4.24	5.12
33. Like to drink fine wine	4.29	5.15
34. Like to get to the point	4.12	3.62
35. Like to give advice	4.76	5.21
36. Like to go dancing	4.38	5.35

* Gay condition

** Straight condition

Appendix D (continued)

List of 47 Neutral Male Stereotypes

<u>Stereotype</u>	<u>M1*</u>	<u>M2**</u>
37. Like to go on-line	4.12	4.00
38. Like to play golf	5.41	4.74
39. Like to play tennis	5.03	5.18
40. Like to wear designer clothes	4.44	5.09
41. Shop out of necessity	5.24	4.18
42. Talk to more girls than guys	4.79	4.24
43. Travel to exotic places	4.85	5.00
44. Wear expensive clothing	4.38	4.94
45. Wear facial hair	4.94	4.12
46. Wear matching clothes	4.56	5.29
47. Wear trendy clothing	4.65	5.00

* Gay condition

** Straight condition

Appendix E

Three Sets of Seven Male Stereotypes

<u>Set 1: Gay Stereotype</u>	<u>M</u>
1. Are sensitive	4.69
2. Talk with a lilt	4.75
3. Like to go shopping	5.21
4. Watch romantic movies	5.29
5. Shop at arts and crafts stores	5.56
6. Wear thong swimsuits to the beach	5.78
7. Wear make-up	5.82
Mean of Means	5.30

Appendix E (continued)

Three Sets of Seven Male Stereotypes

<u>Set 2: Straight Stereotype</u>	<u>M</u>
1. Have beer bellies	4.91
2. Watch war movies	4.99
3. Like rough sports	5.07
4. Attend monster truck shows	5.10
5. Drive beat-up old trucks	5.18
6. Like to go surfing	5.35
7. like to ride dirt bikes	5.37
Mean of Means	5.14

Appendix E (continued)

Three Sets of Seven Male Stereotypes

<u>Set 3: Neutral Stereotype</u>	<u>M</u>
1. Are clean-cut looking	4.90
2. Are politically active	4.90
3. Travel to exotic places	4.90
4. Are interested in nature	4.90
5. Like attending family oriented places	5.10
6. Are easily pleased	5.20
7. Are shy	5.30
Mean of Means	5.03

Appendix F

Translation of Stereotypes into Behaviors

Gay Male Stereotypes

1. Are sensitive
2. Talk with a lilt
3. Like to go shopping
4. Watch romantic movies
5. Shop at arts and craft stores
6. Wear thong swimsuits to the beach
7. Wear make-up

Gay Male Behaviors

1. Tim is a very sensitive person, whose feelings are easily hurt.
2. Tim talks with a lilt, and his favorite saying is "You go girl!".
3. Tim spends a lot of time shopping at a local clothing store.
4. Tim spends his weeknights watching old romantic movies.
5. Tim spends most Sundays shopping at arts and crafts stores.
6. Tim enjoys wearing colorful thong swimsuits to the beach.
7. Tim likes to wear make-up when he goes out clubbing.

Appendix F (continued)

Translation of Stereotypes into Behaviors

Straight Male Stereotypes

1. Have beer bellies
2. Watch romantic movies
3. Like rough sports
4. Attend monster truck shows
5. Drive beat-up old trucks
6. Like to go surfing
7. Like to ride dirt bikes

Straight Male Behaviors

1. Tim has acquired a beer belly from drinking a lot of beer.
2. Tim likes spending his weeknights watching war movies.
3. Tim spends Sundays playing tackle football with friends.
4. Tim likes to attend monster truck shows with his friends.
5. Tim likes to drive his old beat-up truck to work every day.
6. Tim likes to go to the beach to surf every chance he gets.
7. Tim has a favorite dirt bike he likes to ride on weekends.

Appendix F (continued)

Translation of Stereotypes into Behaviors

Neutral Male Stereotypes

1. Are clean-cut looking
2. Are politically active
3. Travel to exotic places
4. Are interested in nature
5. Attend family oriented places
6. Are easily pleased
7. Are shy

Neutral Male Behaviors

1. Tim shaves everyday, and gets a haircut at least twice a month.
2. Tim is actively involved in local, state, and national politics.
3. Tim travels every year to exotic places like Hawaii and Tahiti.
4. Tim enjoys subscribing to several wildlife and nature magazine.
5. Tim vacations at places like Disneyland and the Grand Canyon.
6. Tim is the type of person who is easily pleased and satisfied.
7. Tim is timid and shy, and finds it hard to make new friends.

Appendix G

Six Experimental Conditions

<u>Low Gay (Condition 1)</u>	<u>ST*</u>	<u>M</u>
1. Tim spends a lot of time shopping at a local clothing store.	G	5.21
2. Tim travels every year to exotic places like Hawaii and Tahiti.	N	4.90
3. Tim is timid and shy, and finds it hard to make new friends.	N	5.30
4. Tim talks with a lilt, and his favorite saying is "You go girl!".	G	4.75
5. Tim is actively involved in local, state, and national politics.	N	4.90
6. Tim spends his weeknights watching old romantic movies.	G	5.29
7. Tim vacations at places like Disneyland and the Grand Canyon.	N	5.10
8. Tim is the type of person who is easily pleased and satisfied.	N	5.20
9. Tim enjoys subscribing to several wildlife and nature magazine.	N	4.90
10. Tim shaves everyday, and gets a haircut at least twice a month.	N	4.90
Mean of Means		4.99

* Stereotype: G = Gay, S = Straight, and N = Neutral

Appendix G (continued)

Six Experimental Conditions

<u>Moderate Gay (Condition 2)</u>	<u>ST*</u>	<u>M</u>
1. Tim is a very sensitive person, whose feelings are easily hurt.	G	4.69
2. Tim shaves everyday, and gets a haircut at least twice a month.	N	4.90
3. Tim is timid and shy, and finds it hard to make new friends.	N	5.30
4. Tim spends a lot of time shopping at a local clothing store.	G	5.21
5. Tim enjoys subscribing to several wildlife and nature magazine.	N	4.90
6. Tim talks with a lilt, and his favorite saying is "You go girl!".	G	4.75
7. Tim spends his weeknights watching old romantic movies.	G	5.29
8. Tim travels every year to exotic places like Hawaii and Tahiti	N	4.90
9. Tim is actively involved in local, state, and national politics.	N	4.90
10. Tim spends most Sundays shopping at arts and crafts stores.	G	5.56
Mean of Means		5.04

* Stereotype: G = Gay, S = Straight, and N = Neutral

Appendix G (continued)

Six Experimental Conditions

<u>High Gay (Condition3)</u>	<u>ST*</u>	<u>M</u>
1. Tim spends most Sundays shopping at arts and crafts stores.	G	5.56
2. Tim is timid and shy, and finds it hard to make new friends.	N	5.30
3. Tim enjoys wearing colorful thong swimsuits to the beach.	G	5.78
4. Tim likes to wear make-up when he goes out clubbing.	G	5.82
5. Tim is a very sensitive person, whose feelings are easily hurt.	G	4.69
6. Tim talks with a lilt, and his favorite saying is "You go girl!".	G	4.75
7. Tim spends a lot of time shopping at a local clothing store.	G	5.21
8. Tim spends his weeknights watching old romantic movies.	G	5.29
9. Tim travels every year to exotic places like Hawaii and Tahiti	N	4.90
10. Tim is actively involved in local, state, and national politics.	N	4.90
Mean of Means		5.22

* Stereotype: G = Gay, S = Straight, and N = Neutral

Appendix G (continued)

Six Experimental Conditions

<u>Low Straight (Condition 4)</u>	<u>ST*</u>	<u>M</u>
1. Tim likes to attend monster truck shows with his friends.	S	5.10
2. Tim shaves everyday, and gets a haircut at least twice a month.	N	4.90
3. Tim is actively involved in local, state, and national politics.	N	4.90
4. Tim spends Sundays playing tackle football with friends.	S	5.07
5. Tim likes spending his weeknights watching war movies.	S	4.99
6. Tim is the type of person who is easily pleased and satisfied.	N	5.20
7. Tim travels every year to exotic places like Hawaii and Tahiti.	N	4.90
8. Tim is timid and shy, and finds it hard to make new friends.	N	5.30
9. Tim vacations at places like Disneyland and the Grand Canyon.	N	5.10
10. Tim enjoys subscribing to several wildlife and nature magazine.	N	4.90
Mean of Means		5.02

* Stereotype: G = Gay, S = Straight, and N = Neutral

Appendix G (continued)

Six Experimental Conditions

<u>Moderate Straight (Condition 5)</u>	<u>ST*</u>	<u>M</u>
1. Tim likes to attend monster truck shows with his friends.	S	5.10
2. Tim is actively involved in local, state, and national politics.	N	4.90
3. Tim spends Sundays playing tackle football with friends.	S	5.07
4. Tim has acquired a beer belly from drinking a lot of beer.	S	4.91
5. Tim has a favorite dirt bike he likes to ride on weekends.	S	5.37
6. Tim enjoys subscribing to several wildlife and nature magazine.	N	4.90
7. Tim vacations at places like Disneyland and the Grand Canyon	N	5.10
8. Tim likes spending his weeknights watching war movies.	S	4.99
9. Tim shaves everyday, and gets a haircut at least twice a month.	N	4.90
10. Tim is the type of person who is easily pleased and satisfied.	N	5.20
Mean of Means		5.03

* Stereotype: G = Gay, S = Straight, and N = Neutral

Appendix G (continued)

Six Experimental Conditions

<u>High Straight (Condition 6)</u>	<u>ST*</u>	<u>M</u>
1. Tim likes spending his weeknights watching war movies.	S	4.99
2. Tim vacations at places like Disneyland and the Grand Canyon.	N	5.10
3. Tim likes to attend monster truck shows with his friends.	S	5.10
4. Tim enjoys subscribing to several wildlife and nature magazine.	N	4.90
5. Tim spends Sundays playing tackle football with friends.	S	5.07
6. Tim shaves everyday, and gets a haircut at least twice a month.	N	4.90
7. Tim likes to drive his old beat-up truck to work everyday.	S	5.18
8. Tim has acquired a beer belly from drinking a lot of beer.	S	4.91
9. Tim has a favorite dirt bike he likes to ride on weekends.	S	5.37
10. Tim likes to go to the beach to surf every chance he gets.	S	5.35
Mean of Means		5.09

* Stereotype: G = Gay, S = Straight, and N = Neutral