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The Moderating Roles of Gender and Anti-Gay Prejudice in Explaining Stigma by Association in Male Dyads

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Abstract

Using a convenience sample of 157 undergraduates, this study explored the likeability ratings of target characters from selected film clips who were described as gay or heterosexual as they associated with a gay-described foil character (i.e., a character against which the target is compared). As predicted, male respondents who strongly endorsed anti-gay prejudice viewed gay-described targets more favorably than heterosexual-described targets when each target was paired with a gay foil. Further, this pattern of biased ratings by high-prejudice male participants against our heterosexual target differentiated these participants from both low-prejudice male and high-prejudice female respondents. In contrast, but as hypothesized, high-prejudice female respondents compared to high-prejudice males rated heterosexual-described targets more favorably than they rated gay-described targets.

KEYWORDS

stigma by association, gay prejudice, homonegativity, courtesy stigma, homophobia, gender differences, likeability

Despite experiencing more visibility in the media during the last decade, gay men and lesbian women are perceived negatively by a significant portion of the U.S. population (Herek, 2002; Yang, 1997). In explaining these attitudes, researchers have pointed to factors like religious motivations (Altemeyer, 2003; Hunsberger, 1996), conformity to rigid gender scripts (Kilianski, 2003; McCreary, 1994; Whitley, 2001; Wong, McCreary, Carpenter, Engle, & Korchymsky, 1999), beliefs about the controllability of homosexuality (Sakalli, 2002; Sheldon, Pfeffer, Jayaratne, Feldbaum, & Petty, 2007), authoritarianism (Whitley & Ægisdóttir, 2000; Wilkinson, 2004), and other theories (see Herek, 2000, for review). Whatever the causes, such attitudes tend to contribute to the stigmatization of these populations, increasing their risk for experiencing discrimination.

As Goffman (1963) states, the possession of a stigma signifies a *spoiled identity*. For example, in a society where heterosexuality is considered the norm, any deviation from this pattern would likely be stigmatized. Research indicates that this is the case for gay and lesbian individuals (Herek, 2004). Conformity to gender stereotypes for gay and lesbian individuals (as well as heterosexuals) appears to be associated with more positive evaluations than nonconformity to these stereotypes (Storms, 1978). However, it must be noted that this is not a simple linear relationship; rather, various moderators seem to play a role. For example, Corley and Pollack (1996) found that men who strongly endorsed traditional

gender roles gave more positive evaluations of lesbian women after being primed with a description of a lesbian couple whose partners were both stereotypically feminine than they did when primed with descriptions of lesbian couples where one or both partners were more stereotypically masculine. Interestingly, men who endorsed more nontraditional gender beliefs did not show this evaluative bias. Also, women in this study similarly rated stereotypically feminine couples more favorably than couples who were described as more masculine; however, unlike male participants, this trend was not moderated by how strongly these women endorsed traditional gender role beliefs.

Negative evaluations based on stereotype nonconformity occur when a person is deemed to have individually behaved in a gender discordant fashion, and also result from merely associating with someone who violates these scripts. This “courtesy stigma” (Sigelman, Howell, Crornell, Cutright, & Dewey, 1991, p. 45) or “stigma by association” (Neuberg, Smith, Hoffman, & Russell, 1994, p. 196) appears to sully the identity of previously non-stigmatized individuals. This is particularly true in the case of platonic relationships between gay and heterosexual men in dyads. Neuberg et al. (1994) found that the evaluation of a heterosexual man was influenced both by his social status (i.e., high or medium)¹ and the sexual orientation of the individual with whom he was paired (i.e., gay or heterosexual). Although the authors predicted that a gay man's association with a heterosexual man would result in de-stigmatization of the gay individual, they instead found two unexpected outcomes. First, respondents judged the heterosexual male as less likeable when he was paired with a gay rather than a heterosexual partner. Second, respondents viewed gay partners more negatively (i.e., less civil, less trustworthy, and less honest), particularly when this individual was paired with a high-status heterosexual.

Another study of gay/straight dyads by Sigelman et al. (1991) found that as the target character was perceived as more likely to be gay or gay friendly, liking for this individual decreased significantly. However, this finding seemed to be moderated by the evaluators' level of anti-gay prejudice. Thus, as the target was perceived as increasingly gay or gay friendly, respondents who strongly endorsed anti-gay prejudice evaluated him more negatively. However, this perceptual bias did not evince itself for individuals low in this prejudice, who rated these targets as equally likeable.

Although both of these studies offer interesting insights into our understanding of the phenomenon of stigma by association, they each have important limitations. Neuberg et al. (1994) neglected to account for the role of respondents' anti-gay attitudes in explaining their findings; and neither they nor Sigelman et al. (1991) looked at how the gender of respondents might influence stigma ratings (i.e., all respondents in both studies were male). The present study was designed to address these issues.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ANTI-GAY PREJUDICE

Much research has focused on how men and women differ in their evaluations of gay men. While initial meta-analysis of this issue suggested that no differences existed (Oliver & Hyde, 1993), subsequent analysis using a larger sampling of studies appears to confirm that men and women generally perceive gay men differently (Whitley & Kite, 1995). These findings seem to suggest that at least when college-aged adults are surveyed, women, in contrast to men, express more positive attitudes about gay men. We expected to uncover similar differences between men and women in the present study.

Why do male respondents seem to express more anti-gay prejudice than female evaluators? Herek (2000) argues that “... sexual prejudice functions mainly to demonstrate (to others or to oneself) a

person's membership in the group *heterosexuals*, [and] the goal is to disprove conclusively that one is a homosexual. Consequently, the most vociferous expressions of sexual prejudice are directed at [...] gay people of one's same sex" (p. 254). His survey data revealed that men in his sample rated gay men lower than they rated lesbian women, and lower than women rated both gay and lesbian individuals. Thus, at least where gay men are concerned, anti-gay prejudice is most likely to be strongest from men rather than women.

To further clarify this issue, many theorists assert that an essential tenet of our present conceptualization of masculinity is an implicit denial of things both feminine and gay, with the latter items often being both polarized (e.g., male vs. female or gay/lesbian vs. heterosexual; Bem, 1993) and conflated (e.g., a feminine man is often seen as gay; Herek, 1986; McCreary, 1994). Kilianski (2003) proposed a theory of exclusively masculine identity to explain how masculinity is thought to foment gay prejudice. He argues that heterosexual men experience significant social pressure to maintain a pristine masculinity, unsullied by gender script violations. Thus, not only is being a gay man a violation of this script, being a heterosexual man who merely associates with gay men also defies this role; and both behaviors may result in social sanctioning. The motivation for this reaction may come as a consequence of the backlash that often occurs against those who enjoy a privileged status in society (e.g., heterosexuals, European Americans, men, etc.), but who also work to dismantle this privilege ([Feinberg, 1981](#)). Conversely, this reaction may stem from the negative evaluation that individuals experience when they fail to enact the social scripts ascribed their group ([Gowan & Britt, 2006](#))—for example, when men are perceived as not properly fulfilling a masculine ideal. Such behavior is often seen as a challenge to the social order and is, consequently, viewed negatively ([Feldman, 2003](#)). In this context, a gay man who associates with another gay man may be disliked, but at least is “staying in his place.” The situation changes when a heterosexual man associates with a gay man and may be seen as even more egregious because the heterosexual man in this context should “know better,” but he still chooses despite this to willfully engage in a behavior that calls into question his masculinity and sexual orientation. Thus, we hypothesized that among male participants in this study, the following two relationships would be uncovered. First, gay-described targets would be perceived as more likeable than heterosexual-described targets, particularly among men who strongly endorse anti-gay prejudice. Second, men who were high in anti-gay prejudice were expected to rate our heterosexual target as lower in likeability than the ratings of men low in such prejudice.

The situation for women appears to be somewhat different (Louderback & Whitley, 1997). Although few studies have examined gay or lesbian prejudice exclusively in women, a study by Basow and Johnson (2000) attempted to identify key predictors of homonegativity (i.e., anti-gay prejudice) in this population. They concluded that “while the [anti-lesbian/gay] attitudes of both females and males are strongly predicted by adherence to right-wing authoritarian beliefs, only males seem to endorse anti-gay statements as a defensive strategy against threats to their gender identity” (p. 403). If this view is valid, it seems reasonable to speculate that when women are asked to evaluate a heterosexual man who associates with gay men, they will be less likely to view him as negatively as male evaluators because a woman's gender identity and sexual orientation are not called into question by his actions—that is, femininity is not based on the repudiation of homosexuality in the same way masculinity is thought to be. We speculate that context variables (i.e., the gay/heterosexual dyad) may play a limited role in how women evaluate this heterosexual target. While men were expected to penalize the heterosexual target due to his association with a gay other, women were expected to evaluate him more objectively and, by

contrast, more favorably. Therefore, when we compare the likeability ratings of women to those of men when both groups evaluate the heterosexual target, we expected to find that, in comparison to men, women would rate this target as higher in likeability, particularly when both groups were found to be high in anti-gay prejudice. Further, as a corollary of this proposition, we hypothesized that among participants who are high in gay prejudice, men would rate our gay target as higher in likeability than women would rate him.

METHOD

One hundred fifty-seven participants were recruited for this study (102 women, 55 men). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 23, with an average age of 19 years ($SD = .98$). Grade point averages for this sample ranged from 1.53 to 4.00 (on a 4.00 scale) with an average score of 3.37 ($SD = .48$). With regard to contact with gay men, 38.2% of this sample reported that they had no gay friends, 20.4% stated that they had one gay friend, and 30% reported that they had two or three, and 10.2% stated that they had four or more. Median parental income for participants was as follows: mothers, \$40,180; fathers, \$128,017; and combined \$137,860. Approximately 2% of the sample identified as African American, 5% identified as Latino, 11% identified as Asian, and 82% identified as White (roughly 1% identified as other).

Participants in our study attended a single one-hour administration session. Upon arrival, participants completed a simple consent/assent form in compliance with the university's institutional review board requirements. Additionally, participants also responded to a series of questionnaires on various social topics related to gender, sexual orientation, and social hierarchies. As this study is part of a larger project, we shall only focus on the questionnaires relevant for the hypotheses outlined in our literature review. These measures included a brief demographic questionnaire and the Attitudes Toward Gay Men Scale (ATG; Herek, 1994).

For this study, we utilized the 5-item short version of the ATG (Herek, 1994). Respondents rated from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) how much they believed homosexuality is a perversion, disgusting, worthy of condemnation, wrong, or a natural part of human sexuality. After reverse scoring all gay-positive items, all five ratings were summed to yield a total ATG score (higher scores indicating less tolerance of gay men). Herek reports that the alpha coefficient for the ATG is .92.

Subsequent to the completion of these questionnaires, participants viewed a series of three video clips from three films widely available through global distributors (i.e., Lions Gate Films, MGM Home Entertainment, and Culture Q Connection). To clarify, one video clip was taken from each of these three films and all participants watched all three clips. Due to a flaw in our design, we omitted one of our clips from our analyses.² These clips averaged about six minutes in length. Before viewing each clip, participants heard the experimenter read an introductory vignette appropriate for each clip. The following is an example (the words in parentheses were used for the alternate form of this questionnaire):

Now you will watch a brief film clip. You will watch the clip twice, and afterwards you will be asked your opinion about it. The clip is from a film called *All Over the Guy*. Tom, who is heterosexual (gay), lost a bet with a friend and he now has to go on a blind date with Eli, who is (also) gay. Please watch the clip now. Remember, you will see this clip twice.

Pilot research suggested that target characters in each clip were believable as either “gay” or “heterosexual.” Because our introductory vignettes were created especially for this study and did not reflect the actual circumstances of the films from which they were derived, data from respondents who had previously seen any of these films were excluded from our analyses. To control for order effects, the sequence of clips was varied across administration sessions. Further, for each clip, target descriptions (i.e., “gay” or “heterosexual”) also varied across groups per clip. While one group was told that our target character was gay, the other group was told that he was heterosexual. This was done for each clip. Subsequent to viewing the film clips, participants rated both the target and the foil character (i.e., the non-target character who was always described as gay).

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics for the ATG were calculated for the overall sample ($M = 20.01$, $SD = 11.37$; $Mdn = 21$; $Skew = .33$, $SD = .20$; $kurtosis = -.96$, $SD = .39$). The kurtosis appeared to be slightly elevated, which seemed to be due to the fact that 12.5% of the sample endorsed the lowest value on this instrument (i.e., $Mode = 5$). To assess if the kurtosis of ATG for this sample violated the assumptions of a normal distribution, we utilized a method suggested by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) and converted the kurtosis statistic to a z score ($.96/.39 = 2.46$) that we then assessed using a two-tailed alpha of .01. This test indicated that the kurtosis did not differ significantly from normality. With regard to internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was .92 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .90 to .94 (Barnette, 2005).

Utilizing an independent samples *t* test, we tested the hypothesis that male participants would endorse higher anti-gay bias as measured by the ATG than female participants. We found that women ($M = 18.58$; $SD = 11.48$) in our sample less strongly endorsed anti-gay sentiments compared to men [$M = 22.68$; $SD = 10.78$; $t(150) = -2.15$, $p = .03$], supporting our hypothesis. However, it should be noted that this effect, although significant, is relatively small ($d = .36$).

To test our remaining hypotheses, we utilized a 2 (Gender) \times 2 (Gay- vs. Heterosexual-Described Target) \times 2 (High vs. Low Gay Prejudice) between subjects ANOVA. High versus low gay prejudice groups were determined by utilizing a median-split for ATG scores ($Mdn = 21$). Specifically, scores of 21 or lower (54% of the sample) were designated as low in anti-gay prejudice, while scores of 22 or higher were designated as high prejudice. Although this approach has the potential to reduce the power of our analyses (MacCallum, Zhang, Preacher, & Rucker, 2002), we adopted this strategy because other researchers who have studied “courtesy stigma” have also dichotomized their anti-gay prejudice variable and have still uncovered significant results (Sigelman et al., 1991); consequently, we maintained this convention. A one-item target “likeability” rating score served as our dependent variable (1 = *lowest likeability*; 7 = *highest likeability*). Although we utilized common criteria in the selection of our film clips, these clips were deemed to be different enough that this analysis was performed separately for each clip.

Findings for Clip 1 (*All Over the Guy*) offered only partial support for our hypotheses. No main effects were uncovered for participant's gender, target description, or level of gay prejudice as these relate to participants' ratings of target likeability (see Table 1). However, a significant interaction was uncovered between gender and our target description variables (i.e., gay-described or heterosexual-described; see Table 1). Using a modified Bonferroni correction to assess the four post-hoc tests of interest in the present analyses, we set our alphas at .013, .017, .025, and .05, respectively (see Jaccard & Wan, 1996,

for a full description of this procedure). Our follow-up analyses revealed that although no significant difference was found between how men ($M = 3.91$; $SD = 1.36$) and women ($M = 4.13$; $SD = 1.36$) in the sample rated the likeability of the heterosexual-described target [$F(1, 79) = .51, p = .48$], these groups did differ in how they rated the gay-described target. As predicted, male respondents rated this target as more likeable ($M = 4.36$; $SD = 1.32$) than female respondents [$M = 3.52$; $SD = 1.28$; $t(74) = -2.63, p = .01$]; however, counter to our expectations, this relationship was not moderated by participants' level of gay prejudice. Also counter to our expectations, for the all-male subgroup, no significant difference was uncovered between how male participants rated the likeability of the heterosexual-described target ($M = 3.90$; $SD = 1.31$) versus the gay-described target [$M = 4.360$; $SD = 1.32$; $t(53) = -1.25, p = .22$]. Finally, as predicted, the subgroup of women in this sample rated the heterosexual-described target as more likeable ($M = 4.13$; $SD = 1.36$) than the gay-described target [$M = 3.52$; $SD = 1.28$; $t(53) = 2.35, p = .02$].

TABLE 1 Three-Way ANOVA (Gender × Gay/Hetero Target × Hi/Lo Homonegativity) Clip 1

Table 1 of 2 TABLE 1 Three-Way ANOVA (Gender × Gay/Hetero Target × Hi/Lo Homonegativity) Clip 1				
Variables	df	MS	F	Partial η^2
Gender	1	4.61	2.54	.017
Target (gay vs. heterosexual)	1	1.79 × 10 ⁵	.00	.000
Homonegativity (high vs. low)	1	3.07	1.69	.012
Gender × Target	1	11.02	6.08*	.040
Gender × Homonegativity	1	.25	.14	.001
Homonegativity × Target	1	.62	.45	.003
Gender × Target × Homonegativity	1	.77	.42	.003
Error	144	1.83		

* $p < .05$.

Using the same analysis described previously, Clip 2 (*Hit and Runway*) provided mixed support for our hypotheses. As predicted, our analysis of this clip yielded the expected 2 (Gender) × 2 (Gay- vs. Heterosexual-Described Target) × 2 (High vs. Low Homophobia) significant three-way interaction (see Table 2). Thus, although there were two significant main effects and one significant two-way interaction (see Table 2), we will focus our analyses on the three-way interaction. We again used the modified Bonferroni correction to control for the familywise error rate with the same alphas as the preceding analyses. By selecting the relevant subgroups in our sample (e.g., gay target's rating of likeability from men who were high in gay prejudice vs. men who were low in same, etc.), we conducted four simple effects analyses that yielded four significant findings related to participants' espoused level of gay prejudice. ³First, consistent with expectations, males who were high in their endorsement of anti-gay prejudice rated the gay-described target as more likeable ($M = 5.08, SD = .94$) than the heterosexual-described target [$M = 3.80, SD = .95$; $t(26) = 3.62, p = .001$]. Second, when our target was described as heterosexual, men who were high in anti-gay prejudice gave this target lower ratings of likeability ($M = 3.80, SD = .94$) compared to the ratings of men who were low in this prejudice [$M = 4.87, SD = .99$; $t(28) = 3.06, p = .005$]. Third, among men and women who were high in gay prejudice, when our target was described as heterosexual, female participants ($M = 4.59, SD = .80$) rated the target higher in likeability than did male participants [$M = 3.80, SD = .94$; $t(30) = 2.46, p = .02$]. Finally, among this high prejudice group, the likeability ratings of our gay target by male participants ($M = 5.08, SD = .95$) was higher than that of female respondents [$M = 4.39, SD = .94$; $t(34) = 2.09, p = .04$].

TABLE 2 Three-Way ANOVA (Gender × Gay/Hetero Target × Hi/Lo Homonegativity): Clip 2

Table 2 of 2 TABLE 2 Three-Way ANOVA (Gender × Gay/Hetero Target × Hi/Lo Homonegativity): Clip 2				
Variables	df	MS	F	Partial η ²
Gender	1	.50	.56	.004
Target (gay vs. heterosexual)	1	4.24	4.75 ⁺	.032
Homonegativity (high vs. low)	1	4.60	5.12 ⁺	.035
Gender × Target	1	5.19	5.81 ⁺	.039
Gender × Homonegativity	1	1.00	1.12	.008
Homonegativity × Target	1	1.04	1.16	.008
Gender × Target × Homonegativity	1	3.70	4.14 ⁺	.028
Error	143	1.83		

*p < .05.

DISCUSSION

Like previous authors, we examined the relationship between gay prejudice and courtesy stigma (Neuberg et al, 1994; Sigelman et al., 1991); however, unlike previous studies, we explored how both gender and gay prejudice interact to influence perceptions of gay and heterosexual male targets in dyads. With regard to male respondents who strongly endorsed gay prejudice, the results from one of our clips reaffirmed earlier findings indicating that gay targets are viewed more favorably than heterosexual targets when each target is paired with a gay foil. Further, this bias against our heterosexual target seemed to differentiate high prejudice men from low prejudice men, and high prejudice men from high prejudice women—that is, the former group compared to the latter groups rated the heterosexual target as less likeable.

These findings are consistent with our hypotheses and suggest that heterosexual men who associate with gay men may risk negative evaluation from men who disdain gay men. This aversion seems to be a predominantly male bias and, like other researchers, we speculate that its origins lie in the very construct of masculinity (Thompson & Pleck, 1986). This bias seems to be especially salient for men high in homonegativity. What might explain this finding? We speculate that this occurs because being gay is anathema to what it means to fulfill a traditional masculine role, and in the minds of these individuals, this threatens the established social order. Despite this, when two gay men socialize, they may be seen as less threatening to the established masculine script because their association only epitomizes their outsider status. Perhaps there is something comforting about seeing outgroup members who seem to “know their place” and are observed in ostensibly segregated groups. Ironically, in this context, men who dislike gay men may see dyads of such men as more likeable, even as their anti-gay prejudice remains undiminished. In contrast to this, the heterosexual man who associates with a gay man may be seen as more of a threat than his gay analog because as a member of a dominant social group, he may have a greater potential to harm in-group solidarity than someone not from the group. Feldman (2003) argues that as the perceived threat to social cohesion increases, so too does the prejudiced response on the part of those who strongly endorse social conformity. Thus, behaviors that defy group expectations performed by ingroup members are likely to be seen as more threatening and evoke even more severe censure than when outgroup members engage in the same acts. The findings for Clip 2 seemed to support this thesis.

Unlike men in this sample, women who strongly endorsed anti-gay attitudes did not appear to penalize heterosexual men for associating with gay foils. In fact, as expected, the likeability ratings of this group, when compared to those of male respondents who were also high in gay prejudice, demonstrated a more favorable evaluation of this heterosexual-described target for our second clip. As a corollary of this, it also appears that when men and women evaluated our gay target, men seemed to like him more than women in both clips; however, this relationship was moderated by anti-gay prejudice only in our second clip. These findings are consistent with our hypotheses. From a cursory examination of the means for these relationships, it does not appear that we can explain the latter findings as demonstrating that women responded to our targets in a manner precisely inverse to that of men (i.e., they did not rate the gay target as less likeable than the heterosexual target in the all-female subgroup); rather, it seems that while women appear to rate gay and heterosexual targets roughly equivalently when compared to men, the ratings of men are more disparate compared to those of women for both the gay and straight targets. How women evaluated our targets may have been influenced by the concomitance of two key factors. First, since women were found to less strongly endorse anti-gay prejudice than men, their evaluation of the gay target may have been less biased. Second, as previously stated, because a woman's femininity is not tarnished by a man's failure to fulfill his masculine script, women in this sample may have felt no pressure to negatively evaluate a man who transgresses gender roles. In fact, they may esteem him more because some research suggests that college-aged women tend to view androgynous and feminine seeming men as more attractive than stereotypically masculine men (Desrochers, 1995; Ernulf & Innala, 1998; Hill, 2006). Again, these findings were only significant for one of our clips.

Why did we find support for our main hypotheses with only one of the clips? Upon reflection, we realized that the introductory vignettes we created to explain the clips may have differed on one unexamined but important variable: volition. Previous research suggests that heterosexual men who associate with gay men are viewed most negatively when they choose to engage in this behavior; however, when they are coerced by circumstances ostensibly out of their control, then their censure is less extreme (Sigelman et al., 1991). In the first clip discussed in this study, there may have been an element of coercion not found in Clip 2. For Clip 1, participants were told that our target went on a date because he lost a bet. His behavior was not something he wanted to do, but something he was forced to do to keep his honor. This is different than the situation in the second clip, where we simply said that our target was collaborating with a gay colleague to complete a screenplay. In this situation, it seems that there is an implicit choice in the interaction that is lacking in Clip 1.

The generalizability of the findings for this study are limited by the fact that we utilized a convenience sample of undergraduate students who were predominantly White and who reported annual median parental incomes over twice that of the national average (i.e., the national average is \$48,000; U. S. Census Bureau, 2006). Further, the kurtosis statistic for the ATG scale in this study suggests that future researchers may need to be wary of possible floor effects with this measure (i.e., 12.5% of the sample endorsed the lowest score possible on this measure). Despite these limitations, our findings are consistent with those of other researchers who have examined similar issues related to anti-gay prejudice and stigma by association (Neuberg et al, 1994; Sigelman et al., 1991). Further, these findings suggest previously unexplored avenues of future inquiry into the phenomenon of stigma by association.

For example, for those attempting to reduce gay prejudice in college populations, these findings support the notion that interventions may need to differ as a function of the gender of the audience. Specifically,

the men who are most likely to be the focus for such interventions (i.e., those endorsing the strongest anti-gay sentiments) may react negatively if mixed dyads of gay and heterosexual men are used as discussants or facilitators, particularly if this interaction is voluntary. This negative reaction may occur despite the persuasion literature that has demonstrated that individuals are better able to sway audience opinions when they advocate a position counter to their own interests (Cesario & Crawford, 2002; Eagly, Wood, & Chaiken, 1978). Our findings suggest that sympathetic outgroup members who associate with members of a stigmatized group incur the stigma borne by the latter group, at least in the minds of those predisposed to dislike this group.

Thus, heterosexual men who participate in such campus activities as “gay-straight alliances” or other pro-gay advocacy groups may not be the most persuasive proponents if they are speaking to men high in gay prejudice. Our findings suggest that gay men might actually be more persuasive facilitators for such audiences because they may be perceived more favorably than their heterosexual counterparts. However, heterosexual male advocates may potentially serve as effective spokespersons when heterosexual women are the targeted audience because women appear to be more accepting of men who transgress gender roles and may respond equally well to gay or heterosexual male presenters. Further research is needed to corroborate these speculations.

In summary, this study offers new insight into the differences between how men and women react to gay- and heterosexual-described men who associate with a gay foil. It also highlights potential limitations of not considering the independent effect of gender in studies related to attitudes about sexual orientation. Finally, this study advances the momentum of inquiry directed at examining how previously non-stigmatized individuals may experience stigmatization as a consequence of associating with a socially marginalized other.

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Notes

1. High status in this study was defined by describing the target as both possessing a high college grade point average (3.85 GPA) and being involved in socially laudable activities (i.e., he was described as participating in the American Cancer Society, as an Olympic caliber athlete, studying to be a lawyer, and gregarious). Medium social status consisted of a reduction in these qualities (i.e., 2.8 GPA and less prestigious avocations and career aspirations).
2. Essentially, while two of our clips had characters of relatively equal social status interacting in ostensibly nonhierarchical contexts (i.e., a date and collaborating on a writing project, respectively), the omitted clip described a situation wherein the gay foil acted as a superior to the gay/heterosexual target (i.e., the gay foil was interviewing the target for a job). Because we believed that this distinction would serve as a confound in this study, we did not include the latter clip in our final analyses. Thus, the results described herein are based on the remaining two film clips (i.e., one clip each from two separate movies).

3. We did not make any hypotheses concerning comparisons of groups of participants who were all low on anti-gay bias for two reasons. First, the literature does not suggest that there should be differences between such groups. Second, our sample size really did not provide sufficient statistical power to perform these analyses in addition to the ones already tested in this article.

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