

**REVISING THE DOUBLE STANDARD: PERCEPTIONS OF COMPETENCE
AND PROMISCUITY IN HETEROSEXUALS AND HOMOSEXUALS**

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Abstract

A [hetero] sexual double standard has existed in which men are allowed more sexual freedom than women. Additionally, women may also be perceived as less competent than men. Based on these facets of sexism and the significant correlations between sexism and homophobia, I had two hypotheses: that homosexuals would be perceived as more promiscuous than heterosexuals and homosexuals would be perceived as less competent than heterosexuals. Participants were asked to watch a video in which a straight or gay man or woman described a one-night-stand. Participants completed perceived promiscuity and competence scales, and individual difference measures. The results showed that homosexuals were perceived as more promiscuous than heterosexuals. The results contradicted the second hypothesis, and indicated that the strongest predictor of perceived competence was attitudes toward sexuality. Additionally, gay men were perceived as significantly more competent than straight men. Limitations and future research are discussed.

Revising the Sexual Double Standard: Perceptions of Competency and Promiscuity in Heterosexuals and Homosexuals

The United States has a long history of discrimination. A great body of research details the ways in which people are judged based on their race, gender, sexual orientation, and ability (Abel & Meltzer, 2007; Biernat & Kobrynowicz, 1997; Louvet, 2007; Sczesny, Spreemann, & Stahlberg, 2006). Though women have been discriminated against or viewed as less competent based on their gender (Conn, Hanges, Sipe, & Salavaggio, 1999; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Swim & Cohen, 1997), women have also faced harsher judgment about their sexual activity through the sexual double standard. The sexual double standard is the view that men and women are held to different expectations for their sexual activity, and men are socially elevated for sexual behavior, whereas women are socially derogated (Marks & Fraley, 2005).

Throughout American history, the regulation of sexual preferences and sexual intimacy has always been a tool of social control. Based on the risks of childbirth, social consequences, and frequency of punishment, a sexual double standard formed in which sexual behavior was more acceptable for men than for women (D'Emilio & Freedman, 1997). Additionally, the medical community deemed violations of heterosexuality, such as homosexuality or sodomy, to be pathological, and doctors used their authority to retain the strict association between "normal" sexuality and marriage (D'Emilio & Freedman, 1997).

Because men's sexual behavior was more tolerated than women's, men could speak about their sexual encounters both publicly and privately, and the ever-present discourse on male sexual behavior contributed to its social acceptance (Foucault, 1978).

The continual exposure to white male heterosexuality granted men power within society, whereas women were expected to submit to men and faced discrimination and social rejection. The unequal sexual expectations for men and women contributed to the modern conceptions of sexism, in which women are treated unequally based on their gender (Swim & Cohen, 1997).

In addition to the power differential between genders, Dankoski, Payer, and Steinberg (1996) suggested that a lack of male accountability contributes to the sexual double standard for heterosexual men and women. In comparison to women, men are not required to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions. This lack of obligation creates an environment in which men are allowed greater deviation from societal expectations. In particular, men are granted greater sexual freedom than women.

Although many people believed that the sexual revolution of the 1960s would lead to downfall of the sexual double standard (D'Emilio & Freedman, 1997), the culture of sexual permissiveness did not grant equality to women. As late as the 1990s, researchers documented the existence of the sexual double standard via participants' perceptions of number of sexual partners men and women have, acceptability of sexual behavior, and differing expectations for men and women (Dankoski, Payer, & Steinberg, 1996; Sheeran, Spears, Abraham, & Abrams, 1996; Sprecher, McKinney, & Orbuch, 1987).

As indicated by several research studies (Dankoski, Payer, & Steinberg, 1996; Mark & Miller, 1986; Sprecher, McKinney, & Orbuch, 1987), men may use the double standard to enforce a power dynamic in which women are relegated to a subservient position. When asked to estimate the number of sexual partners a 20-year-old man and

woman have, both men and women guessed that the average man has significantly more partners than the average woman (Sheeran, Spears, Abraham, & Abrams, 1996). Other studies have shown that when researchers described male and female targets with the same amount of sexual experience, participants perceived the woman to be more dominant and more promiscuous. Similarly, participants considered sexually active women to be less socially desirable and more irresponsible than sexually active men, indicating the existence of a sexual double standard for heterosexual men and women (Mark & Miller, 1986; Sprecher, McKinney, & Orbuch, 1987).

In particular, women may be perceived as more sexual, even when they have the same amount and type of sexual experience as men (i.e. sex casually or within a relationship). When participants read a transcript of a fictitious interview, in which the interview subject provided information about his or her sexual behavior among other things, judgments about the men and women being interviewed varied greatly (Mark & Miller, 1986). Interview subjects were described as being virgins, as only having sex within a relationship, or as having sex casually. Male participants generally ascribed a greater amount of sexual activity and behavior to women as compared to men in the casual-sex condition. In addition, male participants ascribed more sexuality to women than men in the control group. Conversely, female participants' ratings for the control group and casual sex group did not change based on the gender of the person they were judging. Therefore, because men's perceptions of sexuality changed based on gender while women's perceptions did not, men may be responsible for the continued existence of the sexual double standard.

Additionally, when participants were provided with a questionnaire containing information about the conditions surrounding a person's first sexual intercourse, the participants had very different perceptions of men and women (Sprecher, McKinney, & Orbuch, 1987). The male and female targets varied by age of first sexual intercourse (16 or 21) and whether the sexual intercourse took place within a casual or steady relationship. Analysis of the data indicated that both women and younger targets (i.e. those who had their first sexual intercourse at 16) were perceived to be more sexually liberal than men and older targets (Sprecher et al., 1987).

Levels of sexual activity also affect participants' inferences about personality. Women who lost their virginity at a young age were judged to be less mature and less intelligent than women who lost their virginity at a later age, and participants perceived their personalities negatively. Participants also rated young women engaging in sexual activity as more dominant than sexually active men, implying that participants perceive this kind of sexual behavior to be masculine (Sprecher et al., 1987). Additionally, sexually active men were rated as more popular than sexually active women, whereas sexually active women were rated as more irresponsible and less self-respecting than sexually active men (Sheeran et al., 1996). Women and men are expected to operate under different codes of behavior, and when women stray from societal expectations, they are viewed negatively.

However, research also indicates that men, in addition to women, are judged based on their sexual activity and behavior (Sprecher et al. 1987). When the targets to be judged were men, participants' ratings of their personalities did not decline, but intelligence and maturity ratings declined slightly if the man's first sexual intercourse

occurred at the younger age (i.e., 16 rather than 21; Sprecher et al., 1987). Because men were also perceived negatively if their first sexual intercourse occurred at the younger age, this finding suggests that societal judgments of sexual activity do not just affect expectations for men and women's sexuality. Instead, a person's sexual experiences may also affect judgments of personality and competence.

In more current research, the impact of the sexual double standard on explicit judgments of men and women's sexual behavior appears to be decreasing. Gentry (1998) investigated the existence of the sexual double standard within a population of college students. Participants read an interview excerpt dealing with sexual behavior, and then rated the targets in the excerpt. In concordance with Sheeran et al. (1996), Gentry (1998) found that there were no significant differences for men's versus women's ratings of the target. Research by Gentry (1998) also supported past findings (Sheeran et al. 1996) that both men and women were judged equally based on their level of sexual activity. Participants perceived above average levels of sexual activity less positively than average or below average levels of sexual activity, and there were no significant effects based on the gender of the person in the excerpt of conversation. These results did not support the continued existence of a traditional sexual double standard for heterosexual men and women.

However, results did indicate the influence of a sexual double standard on judgments *indirectly* connected to sexual behavior. When asked to rate targets on the basis of physical and social appeal, men found men and women in the interview excerpts with average or above average amounts of sexual activity to be significantly more appealing than men and women with below average sexual activity (Gentry, 1998;

Sheeran et al., 1996). Additionally, research indicates that when women had high levels of sexual activity, they were deemed by participants to be more aggressive and more liberal, characteristics that contradict traditional conceptions of femininity (Gentry, 1998; Polimeni, Hardie, & Buzwell, 2000; Sprecher et al., 1987). In contrast, women found the most appealing target group to be women with below average levels of sexual activity. The endorsement of high levels of sexual activity by men and low levels of sexual activity by women indicates that although men and women may not judge others based on the sexual double standard, the sexual double standard still has an impact on their perceptions of other people. Instead of outwardly supporting a sexual double standard, men and women may have internalized societal expectations.

Additionally, Milhausen and Herold (1999) found that although participants did not personally support or endorse the sexual double standard, the existence of the double standard still influences people's opinions of others. Milhausen and Herold (1999) compared women's personal endorsement of the sexual double standard to their perceptions of the sexual double standard within society. Similar to Gentry's (1998) findings, results indicated that women did not personally support the sexual double standard. The majority of women believed that women's sexual behaviors are generally judged more severely than men's, even though they themselves did not support these restrictions. Similarly, other research has shown that women believe that in a sexual encounter, a man would feel negatively about a woman if she were to provide a condom (Hynie & Lydon, 1995; Kelly & Bazzini, (2001)). However, Milhausen and Herold (1999) found that women are more accepting of target women (i.e. the women they rated in the experiment) with high levels of sexual experience than target men with high levels

of sexual experience. Additionally, female participants with more sexual partners were less likely to judge highly experienced men harshly than were female participants with fewer sexual partners (Milhausen & Herold, 1999). Kelly and Bazzini (2001) also found that participants with more sexual experience rated the target's sexual behavior as more appropriate.

Based on the recent contradictory views of individual rejection of the sexual double standard as compared to its continuing existence within both individual and societal views, (Kelly & Bazzini, 2001; Milhausen & Herold, 1999), Marks and Fraley (2005) conducted an experiment to determine whether the sexual double standard still existed for heterosexual men and women. The experiment was conducted both via an Internet website and on a college campus. The participants read an interview in which a target person responded to several questions about interests and hobbies. To the question, "What is something not many people know about you?" (Marks & Fraley, 2005, 179) the target responded with a statement about the number of men or women with whom he or she had had sex. All targets were heterosexual and the number of sexual partners ranged from 0 to 19. After reading the interview, participants were asked to rate the target on a series of statements about values, popularity with peers, power or success in life, and intelligence.

Analysis of the data revealed essentially no existence of a traditional sexual double standard. Although popularity correlated positively with number of sexual partners in the Internet sample and negatively with number of partners in the student sample, there were no significant effects for gender. Additionally, the contradictory correlations suggest that the double standard is weak, if it even exists. As the number of

sexual partners increased, both men and women were judged to be less intelligent and to have fewer (or weaker) values. However, within the Internet sample, women were judged to be slightly less intelligent than men as the number of sexual partners increased, whereas in the student sample interview targets with more sexual partners were judged more negatively, although gender of the interview subject did not have an effect. In addition, within the Internet sample, although there were no main effects for the gender or number of sexual partners of the interview subjects, men's power/success ratings increased slightly with number of sexual partners, whereas women's power/success decreased. However, in the student sample there were no differences (Marks & Fraley, 2005).

The contradictory results of the student and Internet samples suggest that, consistent with research by Gentry (1998), a traditional or explicit double standard no longer exists. Additionally, when results were different within the two populations, the sexual double standard only could account for less than 1% of the variance in participants' evaluations of the interview targets. Therefore, the sexual double standard may still shape people's judgments of one another within specific domains or contexts, but where it does exist, it is very weak. Although the sexual double standard for heterosexual men and women has not been completely extinguished, there has been substantial progress within the past decade.

Correlations Between Discriminatory Attitudes

Similar to the ways in which female sexuality has been regulated through societal constraints and expectations over the centuries, homosexuality has also been restrained by cultural mores. Homophobia is the disgust and fear of homosexuality (Madureira,

2007), and analogous to the sexual double standard, it leads to the control of the sexual behavior of a powerless group (i.e. gays and lesbians as compared to women) (Foucault, 1978). Homophobia and sexism are both based on societal expectations of behavior and contribute to unequal power dynamics (Madureira, 2007). Additionally, both homophobia and sexism are considered prejudices, or negative assumptions about a specific group of people, and these prejudices then act as motivators for discriminatory practices (Madureira, 2007).

Studies of prejudice show that there are significant positive correlations among homophobia, sexism, and racism (Agnew, Thompson, Smith, Gramzow, & Currey, 1993; Aosved & Long, 2006; Campbell, Schellenberg, & Senn, 1997; Pettijohn & Walzer, 2008). In one study (Pettijohn & Walzer, 2008), students enrolled in a Psychology of Prejudice course were exposed to information about the development of prejudice, discrimination, and stereotypes. The course fostered a heightened understanding of human differences and the factors that shape human behaviors and beliefs. After exposure to this information, students' personal endorsement of negative homophobic, sexist, and racist attitudes was reduced (Pettijohn & Walzer, 2008). In particular, reduction of homophobic and sexist attitudes occurred together. Amongst the multiple forms of discrimination (i.e. sexism, racism, homophobia, ageism, classism, and religious intolerance), homophobia and sexism had the highest significant correlation (Aosved & Long, 2006). The existence of these discriminatory practices in American society leads to an environment that supports power relationships and oppression.

The presence of homophobia in male dominated spheres of society also tends to exacerbate sexist attitudes toward women. In order to establish masculinity, men must

demonstrate heterosexual attitudes and beliefs, and debase characteristics that are typically associated with women (Thompson, Grisanti, & Pleck, 1985). Men who espoused strong traditional masculine roles scored higher on measures of homophobia than men who did not adhere as strongly to traditional gender-roles (Thompson, Grisanti, & Pleck, 1985). Additionally, in one study, men who exhibited positive characteristics associated with femininity, such as loyalty, sensitivity, and emotionality, had significantly lower levels of homophobia than men who did not exhibit these traits (Polimeni, Hardie, & Buzwell, 2000). Men and women who rate high on sexism and homophobia scales also show support for an unequal distribution of decision making power in intimate relationships (i.e. men do more decision making than women) (Campbell et al., 1997; Thompson et al., 1985). Therefore, since homosexuality is associated with sexism and gender inequalities, it is subjected to the same treatment and social derogation that female sexuality has received for centuries.

Discrimination and Perceived Competence of Marginalized Groups

Just as the sexual double standard has become more covert within the last several decades, other methods of discrimination have followed the same path. In an increasingly politically correct and egalitarian society, many forms of stereotyping and discrimination are no longer considered acceptable (Campbell, Schellenberg, & Senn, 1997). Even so, people still harbor feelings of prejudice toward non-normative groups in society. The trend toward more implicit feelings of prejudice is evidenced by the fact that many measures of prejudice and discrimination now assess fewer hostile or traditional viewpoints. In particular, both racism and sexism scales have changed drastically in the last several decades (Conn, Hanges, Sipe, & Salavaggio, 1999; David &

Sears, 2002; Glick & Fiske, 1996; McConahay, 1986; Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995).

Originally, the term Symbolic Racism (McConahay & Hough, 1976) was used to characterize the abstract negative feelings and behaviors toward blacks espoused by middle or upper class whites that were based on learned values instead of actual experiences. In 1976, statements such as, “Do you think that Negroes who receive welfare could get along without it if they tried or do they really need this help? (could get along without it shows racist attitude),” (McConahay & Hough, 1976, p. 24) are generally used to measure symbolic racism. In comparison, a comparable item in David and Sears’ (2002) Symbolic Racism Scale is, “Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class,” (David & Sears, 2002, p. 261). Items on David and Sears’ (2002) Symbolic Racism Scale are not demonstrative of explicit racism in the way that statements on the 1976 scale were (McConahay & Hough, 1976) and target less hostile attitudes.

Similarly, the items on McConahay’s (1986) Racism Scale describe both overt and covert measures of racism. Swim, Aikin, Hall, and Hunter (1995) divided the items on the Racism Scale into old-fashioned and modern racism, and found that statements in these two categories varied greatly. Old-fashioned racism is made up of statements such as, “Black people are generally not as smart as whites,” whereas modern racism is characterized by statements such as “Over the past few years, the government and news media have shown more respect to blacks than they deserve,” (Swim et al., 1995, p. 211). The old-fashioned racism statements are reflective of open and explicit racial discrimination and stereotyping. In contrast, the modern racism items display more

subtle or subconscious racist attitudes. The old-fashioned racism statements would not be deemed acceptable in today's society, and therefore would not accurately uncover test-takers' attitudes.

Modeled on the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1986), the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995) is much more subtle than earlier versions of sexism scales. "Old-fashioned sexism" (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995) is characterized by statements such as, "I would be equally comfortable having a woman as a boss as a man," whereas Modern Sexism is characterized by statements such as "It is easy to understand why women's groups are still concerned about societal limitations of women's opportunities," (Swim et al., 1995, p. 212). Additionally, changing responses toward similar measures of sexism (Attitudes Toward Women Scale; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973; from Swim & Cohen, 1997) over the last 30 years indicate an abatement of endorsement of overtly sexist beliefs (Swim & Cohen, 1997).

Concurrent with social attitudes toward racism, people feel pressured to inhibit outdated stereotypical and prejudicial beliefs about women. Like the old-fashioned racism items, statements depicting old-fashioned sexism do not adequately capture attitudes toward women. Current research on other measures of sexism also illustrates the trend toward measuring discriminatory attitudes in more covert ways (Conn, Hanges, Sipe, & Salavaggio, 1999; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Swim & Cohen, 1997). Similar to the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995), the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996) measures hostile attitudes toward women (e.g., "Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for 'equality'") as well as overly benevolent attitudes toward women (e.g.,

“Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste”). Although benevolent attitudes are positive, they are nevertheless sexist because they still involve prejudices toward and stereotyping of women.

Although the decline in explicitly sexist and racist beliefs appears to indicate that American society is moving toward a place of greater acceptance of groups previously faced with discrimination, not all minority groups are receiving the same treatment. Scales measuring explicit discrimination can still be found within the research community (Agnew, Thompson, Smith, Gramzow, & Currey, 1993; Lambert, Ventura, Hall, and Cluse-Tolar, 2005). In particular, the gay and lesbian communities still face high levels of overt discrimination.

Concurrent with the acceptability of explicit racist and sexist attitudes several decades ago, Hudson and Ricketts' (1980) homophobia scale assesses discriminatory attitudes using overtly prejudice items. The scale was designed in order to clearly define the concept of homophobia and its foundations in feelings of fear and disgust and consists of 25 items reflecting positive or negative views about social interactions with homosexuals. Items deal with the gay community (e.g., “I would feel uncomfortable being seen in a gay bar”), interactions between gays/lesbians and children (e.g., “I would feel comfortable if I learned that my daughter’s teacher was a lesbian” – reverse scored), and close relationships with homosexuals (e.g., “I would feel comfortable if I learned that my best friend of my sex was homosexual” – reverse scored).

In comparison to the increasingly covert items on measures of racism and sexism, current indices of homophobia have not been altered. A scale created by Lambert, Ventura, Hall, and Cluse-Tolar (2005) measures very similar attitudes to the scale used

by Hudson and Ricketts in 1980. The scale was created to measure college students' acceptance of homosexuality and items deal with comfort interacting closely with gays/lesbians (e.g., "I would be comfortable with having a gay or lesbian person as a close friend") and interactions between gays/lesbians and children (e.g., "Gay men should be allowed to be Boy Scout troop leaders"). Additionally, Lambert et al.'s (2005) scale contains items about feeling disgusted by homosexuality, which was an influential part of the development of Hudson and Ricketts' (1980) scale.

Although these two scales are separated by 25 years, they have very similar questions, and neither tries to hide discrimination or prejudice. In contrast to the social pressure to hide discriminatory attitudes toward women and African Americans, the lack of variation between Hudson and Ricketts' (1980) scale and Lambert et al.'s (2005) scale indicate that explicit discrimination of homosexuality is not condemned in American society.

The continuing discrimination evident from these scales also resounds with the treatment of homosexuals in American society. Although the number of Americans who disapprove of homosexuality is declining, 57% still believe that "sexual relations between two adults of the same sex" are "always wrong or almost always wrong" (Lance, 2008, p. 2). Even though disapproval rates are declining slowly and changes are being made, the majority of Americans still believe in the superiority of heterosexuality.

Competence Ratings as a Method of Discrimination

Based on social pressures to appear politically correct or unaffected by social groupings such as race and gender, it is increasingly difficult for researchers to assess discriminatory attitudes (Campbell, Schellenberg, & Senn, 1997). Instead of using direct

questionnaires, many researchers have used competence assessments to investigate perceptions of minority or marginalized groups, (Abel & Meltzer, 2007; Biernat & Kobrynowicz, 1997; Louvet, 2007; Sczesny, Spreemann, & Stahlberg, 2006). These competence assessments are based on the idea that double standards, whether sexual or not, are used to marginalize many different groups. Standards are social norms that determine what level of performance a person must display to be considered competent or what kind of behavior is necessary for a person to be moral (Foschi, 2000). When a double standard – or multiple standards – is enacted, a person must display a variety of characteristics before competence or morality may be inferred. The core aspect of double standards is to put individuals into two categories, one of which has more social value than the other (Foschi, 2000).

To place a person on one side of a double standard or the other, status characteristics and performance expectations must be considered. Status characteristics are attributes that indicate competence, and performance expectations reflect the assumed level of competence. However, when inferences are made about the possession of abilities, people with lower status are held to stricter standards than those with higher status. Group members may use status differences in the formation of double standards that hinder people in the subordinate category. Double standards are enacted in order to preserve hierarchies in society, and therefore make it more difficult for lower status individuals to demonstrate their abilities (Foschi, 2000).

This relationship between status and assigned ability is evident in current research on marginalized or minority groups (Abel & Meltzer, 2007; Biernat & Kobrynowicz, 1997; Louvet, 2007; Sczesny, Spreemann, & Stahlberg, 2006). Individuals of minority

status are judged in relation to their stereotyped group and must demonstrate stronger abilities than high status individuals to be considered equally competent (Biernat & Kobrynowicz, 1997).

In an experimental situation, participants expected less from female job applicants than male job applicants, and less from Black job applicants than white job applicants (Biernat & Kobrynowicz, 1997). The use of a minimum standard for women and Black people (e.g. she's good for a woman) indicates that these groups are assumed to be less competent than men or white people (Biernat & Kobrynowicz, 1997). Similarly, results by both Abel and Meltzer (2007) and Szcesny et al. (2006) indicated that participants' perceptions of competence were strongly influenced by the gender of the person being rated. Abel and Meltzer (2007) found that when presented with a lecture written by a professor with either the name of a man or woman at the top, participants found the lecture by the male professor to be more accurate, and rated it higher overall than a lecture by the female professor. Szcesny et al. (2006) found that participants perceived men as having a higher degree of leadership ability than women. In both of these studies, participants judged women to be less competent than men even though participants were not actually presented with information on the abilities of the targets they assessed.

Flaws in Past Studies Investigating the Sexual Double Standard

Although there is a long history of research on the sexual double standard for heterosexual men and women, many of the research designs for investigations of the sexual double standard lead participants to develop preconceived notions about the target they are evaluating. In Gentry's (1998) study on the sexual double standard, participants were given an excerpt of a conversation concerning heterosexual relationships and

sexuality. The excerpt contained information about the subject's gender, level of sexual activity (described as below average, average, or above average), and whether they were in a monogamous relationship or had multiple partners. By describing the target's level of sexual activity as above or below average, Gentry (2008) provided participants with biased views about the target upon entering the experiment. Therefore, instead of attaining participants' opinions on the sexual double standard, Gentry's (1998) data may be representative of the degree to which participants' opinions were affected by previously stated information.

Additionally, researchers who use a specific number of partners to describe a target's sexual past (Marks & Fraley, 2005; Sprecher, McKinney, & Orbach, 1987) may encourage participants to respond in a socially desirable manner. As depicted by the changes in scales designed to assess attitudes toward sexism (Conn, Hanges, Sipe, & Salavaggio, 1999; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995; Swim & Cohen, 1997), explicit discrimination against women is no longer socially acceptable. If participants are informed about the number of sexual partners of the target they are judging, they may try to respond in a way they consider to be gender neutral. Instead of reporting attitudes toward the sexual double standard, data may in fact be indicative of social pressures to appear accepting and politically correct. Additionally, by providing an explicit number of sexual partners without a social background, researchers take sexual behavior out of its natural context and place the behavior within an experimental situation. Therefore, instead of answering questions and making decisions based on personal beliefs, participants may answer in a manner they consider to be socially

desirable. The use of a number of partners to describe sexual behavior may hinder the influence of culturally learned prejudices, and therefore make results biased.

Current Study

In order to avoid these problems and leave participants' subconscious beliefs and stereotypes intact, I investigated my hypotheses using different methodology than past researchers. To prime subconscious feelings about heterosexual and homosexual promiscuity and sexual activity, I showed participants (in the context of an online survey) a video clip of a monologue in which a video target discussed a one-night-stand. By showing a video instead of presenting participants with a narrative or interview script, I presented the participants with a more realistic situation and was able to prime their subconscious feelings by appealing to multiple forms of information comprehension. Participants did not just read about an event; they received the information by seeing and hearing an actual person. Additionally, by focusing on an individual subject and event, I avoided the problem of participants making generalizations about men and women. Instead, I forced participants to use their preconceived notions about sexuality to make judgments about the video target. The target varied by both sexual orientation and gender. Following this video, participants were asked about their perceptions of the video subject, as well as their own attitudes toward sexuality, homosexuality, and women.

Hypothesis 1

Although much research has been done on the sexual double standard between heterosexual men and women (Dankoski, Payer, & Steinberg, 1996; Gentry, 1998; Marks & Fraley, 2005; Sheeran, Spears, Abraham, & Abrams, 1996; Sprecher, 1987), societal

expectations for the sexual behavior of heterosexual and homosexual individuals have not yet been compared. Women are faced with discrimination in society and have been discriminated against via the sexual double standard, and, as shown in past research, discrimination based on gender and discrimination based on sexual orientation are very similar (Agnew, Thompson, Smith, Gramzow, & Currey, 1993; Aosved & Long, 2006; Campbell, Schellenberg, & Senn, 1997; Pettijohn & Walzer, 2008). Therefore, I hypothesized that gay and lesbian individuals would be faced with sexual discrimination very similar to the gender double standard. In particular, I hypothesized that gays and lesbians would be granted less sexual freedom than straight individuals, and would be considered more promiscuous than straight individuals when engaging in the same behavior.

Hypothesis 2

Marginalized groups such as women, African Americans, and physically disabled people are perceived to be less competent than whites or men (Abel & Meltzer, 2007; Biernat & Kobrynowicz, 1997; Louvet, 2007; Sczesny, Spreemann, & Stahlberg, 2006), yet research has not been done on competence expectations for gays and lesbians. Because gays and lesbians share minority group status with other targets of discrimination, I believed they would fall victim to similar stereotypes. In particular, I hypothesized that participants would perceive gays and lesbians to be less competent than heterosexuals after being exposed to information about their sexual preferences or sexual behavior.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited in several different ways. A web-link to the current study was provided on several study share websites. The link was also published on survey sites for Bucknell University and Hamilton College, and through an LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered) list serve. In addition, participants were recruited via snowball sampling on a popular social networking site.

Participants ranged in age from 17 to 78 years old ($M = 23.4$; $SD = 8.81$). Sixty-one participants (37.7%) were men, 97 (59.9%) were women, 1 was transgendered (.6%), and 3 (1.9%) listed themselves as other. The majority of the participants were Caucasian (89.5%), and most had at least 1-2 years of college education (94.5%). Additionally, 123 (75.9%) participants listed themselves as heterosexual and the remaining 39 (24.1%) were listed as bisexual, homosexual, or other. The mean number of sexual partners for participants was 6.62 ($SD = 9.97$).

Procedure

Upon beginning the current online experiment, the participants first completed an online consent form. They were told that they would view a video showing a snippet of a conversation, and would then be asked several questions. They were asked to make sure that they were in a quiet area by themselves, because there was a sexual component to the videos and the presence of others could bias the results.

The participants were randomly assigned to watch one of four videos. In each video, a man or woman spoke about a homo- or heterosexual one-night stand as if he or she were having a conversation with a friend. To describe the sexual activity, actors used

the phrase “we went down on each other” because it is not specific to heterosexuals. Each of the conversation excerpts was approximately 2 minutes long. For the complete script, see Appendix A.

Following the video, the participants rated the perceived competence and promiscuity of the video subject, as well as completed several attitude measures (*Modern Sexism Scale, Attitudes Toward Sexuality Scale, and Attitudes Toward Homosexuals Scale*). The order of the latter three scales was counterbalanced across participants. Participants also provided demographic and personal information, including their age, race, gender, sexual orientation, years of education, and the number of sexual partners they have had over the course of their lifetime. Last, participants were asked if they knew what the phrase “we went down on each other” meant. If they did not understand it, they would not have understood that the video described a form of sexual activity, and their data would not be valid. Finally, participants read a debriefing statement describing the purpose of the experiment and the hypotheses.

Videos

Actors were told to read the script as if they were telling a friend about their weekend over a Sunday morning brunch. The script for each of the videos was exactly the same, with the exception of the gender specific pronouns (e.g., he/she, him/her, his/hers). The actor and actress in the videos were both Caucasian, brown-haired senior undergraduate theater majors. In addition, they both wore white crew neck t-shirts so that the viewer would not be distracted or make judgments based on the actor’s clothing. The filming took place in a dormitory room to enhance the realism of the conversation.

Measures

Perceived Competence Scale (Marks & Fraley, 2005). The *Perceived Competence Scale* used to assess video actors is a 22-item scale divided into the subsections of values (e.g., “This person is trustworthy”), popularity with peers (e.g., “People like this person”), power/success (e.g., “This person will make a lot of money”), and intelligence (e.g., “This person did well in school”). Participants rated their agreement with each item on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), with higher numbers indicating higher ratings of competence. Four of Marks and Fraley’s original 26 items were removed because the statements reflected behaviors and interactions that were explicitly discussed within the videos. The videos describe an interaction that began at a party, so statements such as “This person is fun at parties” (Marks & Fraley, 2005, p. 185) may reflect the participants’ ideas about what constitutes fun and not the competence of the video subject. For a complete list of items, see Appendix B.

Promiscuity Scale (Conley, Collins, & Garcia, 2000). The *Promiscuity Scale* used to assess video actors is a 9-item scale developed based on the promiscuity subsection of a scale used by Conley, Collins, and Garcia (2000). The subsection consisted of four dimensions: “Has many sexual partners – has few sexual partners,” “Dates one person at a time – dates several people at a time,” “Frequently has one-night stands – never has one-night stands,” and “Sleeps around – monogamous.” In addition to statements created based on Conley et al. (2000), 5 statements were added about the use of protection (e.g., “This person is likely to use birth control”) and social relationships (e.g., “This person has a bad reputation”). The statements were rated on a 6-point scale

from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 6 (extremely likely), with high scores indicating that the participant judged the video subject as sexually promiscuous. For a complete list of items, see Appendix C.

Modern Sexism Scale (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995). The *Modern Sexism Scale*, based on the previously constructed Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1986) is an 8-item questionnaire designed to assess covert sexist attitudes. It has high internal reliability ($\alpha = .84$) and goodness of fit indices indicate that a two-factor solution (old-fashioned as one factor and modern sexism as the other) is a better fit than a one-factor solution (Swim et al., 1995). The statements are rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), with high scores indicating high levels of sexism. Scale items assess the denial of the existence of discrimination (e.g., “Women often miss out on good jobs due to continued discrimination”—reverse scored), anger about women’s demands (e.g., “It is easy to understand why women’s groups are still concerned about societal limitations of women’s opportunities”—reverse scored), and the belief that women should not receive special favors (e.g., “Over the past few years, the government and news media have been showing more concern about the treatment of women than is warranted by women’s actual experiences”). For a complete list of items, see Appendix D.

Attitudes Toward Sexuality Scale (Fisher & Hall, 1988; Hudson, Murphy, & Nurius, 1983). The *Attitudes Toward Sexuality Scale* is a 9-item scale adapted from Hudson, Murphy, and Nurius (1983; 5 items) and Fisher and Hall (1988; 4 items). Statements concern sexuality in the media (e.g., “Pornography should be banned from bookstores”), forms of sexuality (e.g., “Oral sex is an acceptable form of sexual

activity”), and sexual activity in relation to marriage (e.g., “It is acceptable for young unmarried people to have sex without affection if they both agree”). The statements are rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). High scores indicate that the participant is sexually liberal. For a complete list of items, see Appendix E.

Attitudes Toward Homosexuality Scale. The *Attitudes Toward Homosexuality* questionnaire is a 22-item measure. Seventeen items were taken from a scale created by Lambert, Ventura, Hall, and Cluse-Tolar (2006), and 5 items were added based on a scale created by Hudson (1980). The scale is scored on a 6-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A high score on this measure indicates high homophobia or homonegativity.

Lambert et al. (2006) developed the 19-item questionnaire from several other sources designed to assess attitudes toward homosexuals, but altered the questions in order to reflect more modern issues. The wording in the statements from Hudson (1980) and Lambert et al. (2006) was altered slightly so that grammar and syntax of the statements were consistent throughout the scale. Statements are designed to assess participants’ views of gays/lesbians in society, such as “Gays/lesbians should be allowed to adopt children,” and personal comfort with gays/lesbians, such as “I would be comfortable having a gay or lesbian person as a close friend.” For a complete list of items, see Appendix F.

Results

Initial Analyses

To ensure that respondents understood the sexual interaction that was described in each of the videos, I analyzed participants' answers to the question, "In your own words, what does the phrase 'we went down on each other' mean?" Participants who did not mention oral sex were excluded from all analyses.

I then tested for inter-item agreement on all of the measures. For the Promiscuity Scale, all items correlated well with the exception of the reverse scored item, "This person uses birth control (e.g. condoms, birth control pill, female condom, diaphragm)." This item was removed from all analyses, and the final scale had high internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$). The Perceived Competence Scale had high internal reliability, (Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$), as did the values subscale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$), popularity subscale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .72$), power and success subscale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$) and intelligence subscale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$). The Attitudes Toward Sexuality Scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$), Attitudes Toward Homosexuals Scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$), and Modern Sexism Scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$) also had high internal reliability. For mean scores on the individual difference measures, see Table 1.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Individual Difference Measures

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Attitudes Toward Sexuality	4.95	.68
Attitudes Toward Homosexuals	1.91	.83
Modern Sexism Scale	2.49	.95

Overview of Regression Analyses

The scores for the Attitudes Toward Sexuality, Attitudes Toward Homosexuals, and Modern Sexism Scales were centered around their respective means prior to being entered into any regression equations. Sexual orientation of the video subject was coded as 1 for heterosexual and 0 for homosexual. Gender of the video subject was coded as 1 for male and 0 for female. I then created interactions with both the video subject sexual orientation and gender for each of these measures.

I performed several hierarchical linear regressions using perceived promiscuity of the video subject, the perceived number of sexual partners of the video subject, and perceived competence of the video subject as dependent measures. Predictors included (in addition to gender and sexual orientation of the video subject) participants' scores on the Attitudes Toward Sexuality Scale, Attitudes Toward Homosexuals Scale, and Modern Sexism Scale.

Predictors of Perceived Promiscuity of the Video Subject

The overall model predicting perceived promiscuity of the video subject as a function of participants' attitudes toward homosexuals, sexual orientation of the video subject, and their interaction was significant, $F(4, 157) = 6.49, p < .001$. As predicted, Attitudes Toward Sexuality was significantly negatively related to promiscuity ratings, $t(157) = -2.63, p < .01$ ($\beta = -.25$), indicating that participants who were more sexually conservative rated video subjects as more promiscuous. Attitudes Toward Homosexuals was significantly positively related to promiscuity ratings, $t(157) = 2.60, p < .02$ ($\beta = .34$), indicating that participants who were higher in homophobia rated video subjects as more promiscuous. The sexual orientation of the video subject was not related to promiscuity ratings, $t(157) = .71, n.s.$ ($\beta = .05$). As predicted, the interaction between Attitudes Toward Sexuality and the sexual orientation of the video subject was significantly negatively related to promiscuity ratings, $t(157) = -2.78, p < .007$ ($\beta = -.33$). As shown in Figure 1, whereas Attitudes Toward Homosexuals was significantly positively related to perceived promiscuity of the homosexual video subjects, $r(71) = .44, p < .001$, it was unrelated to the perceived promiscuity of the heterosexual video subjects, $r(87) = .07, n.s.$

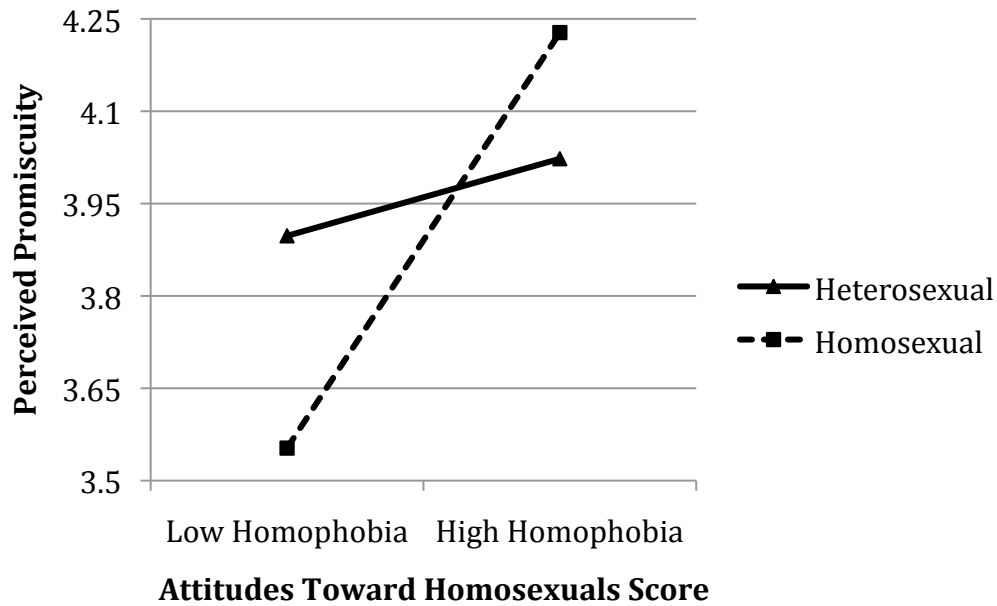


Figure 1. Perceived promiscuity of video subject as a function of participants' attitudes toward homosexuals and the sexual orientation of the video subject.

Predictors of Perceived Number of Sexual Partners of the Video Subject

The overall model predicting the perceived number of sexual partners of the video subject as a function of participants' attitudes toward homosexuals, sexual orientation of the video subject, and their interaction was significant, $F(4, 152) = 5.45, p < .001$.

Attitudes Toward Sexuality was not significantly related to the perceived number of sexual partners of the video subject, $t(152) = -.80, n.s. (\beta = -.08)$. Attitudes Toward Homosexuals was significantly positively related to the perceived number of sexual partners of the video subject, $t(152) = 3.70, p < .001 (\beta = .51)$, indicating that participants who were higher in homophobia rated the video subjects as having a greater number of sexual partners. The sexual orientation of the video subject was not significantly related to the perceived number of sexual partners of the video subject, t

(152) = .38, n.s. ($\beta = .03$). As predicted, the interaction between Attitudes Toward Homosexuals and the sexual orientation of the video subject was significantly negatively related to the perceived number of sexual partners of the video subject, $t(152) = -3.85$, $p < .001$ ($\beta = -.47$). As illustrated in Figure 2, whereas Attitudes Toward Homosexuals was significantly positively related to the perceived number of sexual partners for homosexual video subjects, $r(68) = .47$, $p < .001$, it was unrelated for the heterosexual video subjects, $r(85) = .06$, n.s.

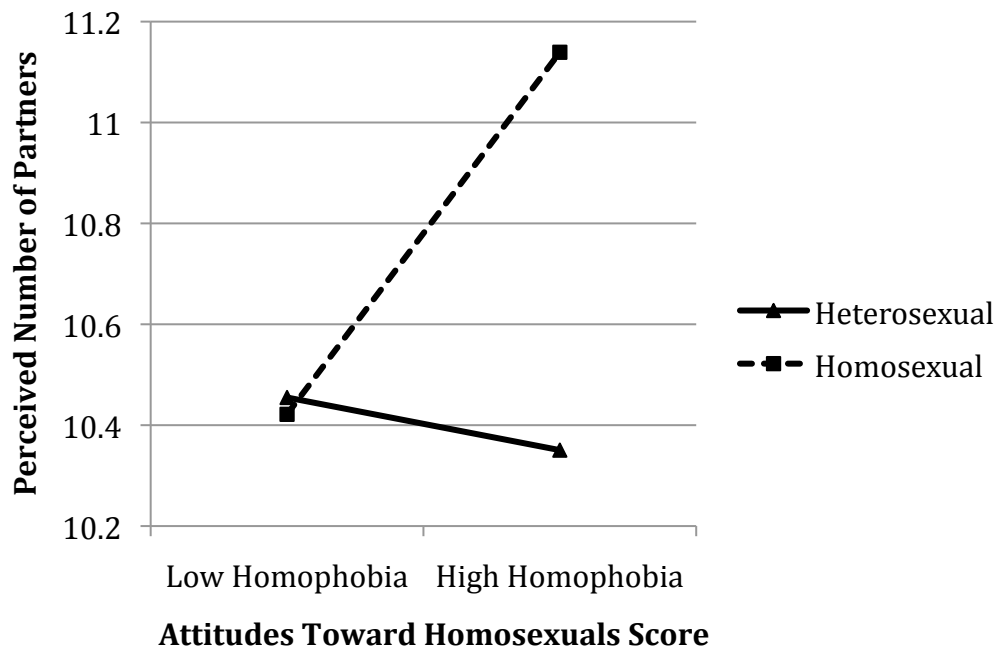


Figure 2. Perceived number of sexual partners of the video subject as a function of participants' attitudes toward homosexuals and the sexual orientation of the video subject.

Predictors of Perceived Competence: General

The overall model for the perceived general competence of the video subject as a function of participants' attitudes toward homosexuals, sexual orientation of the video subject, and their interaction was significant, $F(4, 157) = 15.97, p < .001$. Attitudes Toward Sexuality was significantly positively related to perceived general competence, $t(157) = 3.93, p < .001$ ($\beta = .33$), indicating that participants who were more sexually liberal rated the video subjects as higher in general competence. Attitudes Toward Homosexuals was near significantly negatively related to perceived general competence, $t(157) = -1.76, p < .085$ ($\beta = -.21$), indicating that participants who were higher in homophobia may have rated the video subjects as having lower general competence. Contrary to my hypothesis, the sexual orientation of the video subject was significantly negatively related to the perceived general competence, $t(157) = -3.17, p < .003$ ($\beta = -.22$), indicating that participants rated homosexual video subjects as more competent than heterosexual video subjects. The interaction between Attitudes Toward Homosexuals and the sexual orientation of the video subject was not significant, $t(157) = .28, n.s.$ ($\beta = .03$).

I then conducted several Pearson Correlations, in which I found a significant negative correlation between for Attitudes Toward Homosexuals and perceived competence of the video subject, $r(160) = -.41, p < .001$, indicating that participants who were higher in homophobia rated both heterosexual and homosexual video subjects as having lower general competence. I found a significant positive correlation between Attitudes Toward Sexuality and perceived competence of the video subject, $r(160) = .47, p < .001$, indicating that participants who were more sexually liberal rated both

heterosexual and homosexual video subjects as having higher general competence. Additionally, video subject sexual orientation was significantly negatively related to perceived general competence for male video subjects, $r(83) = -.38, p < .001$, but not for female video subjects, $r(75) = -.14, n.s.$ As illustrated in Figure 3, these correlations indicate that gay men were perceived as significantly more competent than straight men, yet no significant difference exists between lesbians and gay women.

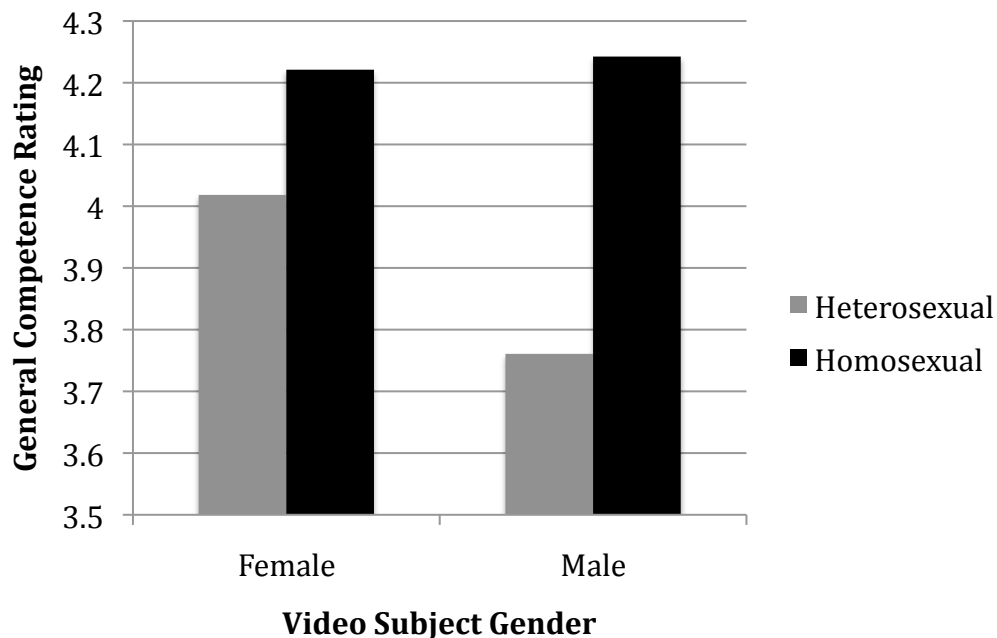


Figure 3. Perceived competence of video subjects as a function of video subject gender and sexual orientation.

Predictors of Perceived Competence: Values Subscale

The overall model predicting perceived values of the video subject as a function of participants' attitudes toward homosexuals, sexual orientation of the video subject, and their interaction was significant, $F(4, 157) = 12.72, p < .001$. Attitudes Toward

Sexuality was significantly positively related to perceived values, $t(157) = 4.43, p < .001$ ($\beta = .39$), indicating that participants who were more sexually liberal rated video subjects higher on the values subscale. Attitudes Toward Homosexuals was not significantly related to perceived values, $t(157) = -.84, n.s.$ ($\beta = -.10$). The sexual orientation of the video subject was significantly negatively related to perceived values, $t(157) = -2.13, p < .04$ ($\beta = -.15$), indicating that participants rated the homosexual video subjects higher than heterosexual video subjects on the values subscale. The interaction between Attitudes Toward Homosexuals and the sexual orientation of the video subject was not significant, $t(157) = .01, n.s.$ ($\beta = .001$).

Predictors of Perceived Competence: Popularity Subscale

The overall model predicting perceived popularity of the video subject as a function of participants' attitudes toward homosexuals, sexual orientation of the video subject, and their interaction was significant, $F(4, 157) = 11.12, p < .001$. Attitudes Toward Sexuality was marginally significantly positively related to perceived popularity, $t(157) = 1.89, p < .07$ ($\beta = .17$), indicating that participants who are more sexually liberal may have rated video subjects higher on the popularity subscale. Attitudes Toward Homosexuals was significantly negatively related to perceived popularity, $t(157) = -2.56, p < .02$ ($\beta = -.32$), indicating that participants who were higher in homophobia rated video subjects lower on the popularity subscale. The sexual orientation of the video subject was significantly negatively related to perceived popularity, $t(157) = -2.60, p < .02$ ($\beta = -.18$), indicating that participants rated the homosexual video subjects higher than heterosexual video subjects on the popularity subscale. The interaction between

Attitudes Toward Homosexuals and the sexual orientation of the video subject was not significant, $t(157) = .38$, n.s. ($\beta = .04$).

Predictors of Perceived Competence: Power and Success Subscale

The overall model predicting perceived power and success of the video subject as a function of participants' attitudes toward homosexuals, sexual orientation of the video subject, and their interaction was significant, $F(4, 157) = 4.51$, $p < .003$. Attitudes Toward Sexuality was not significantly related to perceived power and success, $t(157) = .94$, n.s. ($\beta = .09$). Attitudes Toward Homosexuals was marginally significantly negatively related to perceived power and success, $t(157) = -1.67$, $p < .10$ ($\beta = -.23$), indicating that participants who were higher in homophobia may have rated video subjects lower on the power and success subscale. The sexual orientation of the video subject was marginally significantly negatively related to perceived power and success, $t(157) = -1.77$, $p < .08$ ($\beta = -.14$), indicating that participants may have rated homosexual video subjects higher than heterosexual video subjects on the power and success subscale. The interaction between Attitudes Toward Homosexuals and the sexual orientation of the video subject was not significant, $t(157) = .13$, n.s. ($\beta = .02$).

Predictors of Perceived Competence: Intelligence Subscale

The overall model predicting perceived intelligence of the video subject as a function of participants' attitudes toward homosexuals, sexual orientation of the video subject, and their interaction was significant, $F(4, 157) = 17.00$, $p < .001$. Attitudes Toward Sexuality was significantly positively related to perceived intelligence, $t(157) = 4.56$, $p < .001$ ($\beta = .38$), indicating that participants who were more sexually liberal rated the video subjects higher on the intelligence subscale. Attitudes Toward Homosexuals

was not significantly related to perceived intelligence, $t(157) = -1.22$, n.s. ($\beta = -.15$). The sexual orientation of the video subject was significantly negatively related to perceived intelligence, $t(157) = -4.04$, $p < .001$ ($\beta = -.27$), indicating that participants rated homosexual video subjects higher than heterosexual video subjects on the intelligence subscale. The interaction between Attitudes Toward Homosexuals and the sexual orientation of the video subject was not significant, $t(157) = .55$, n.s. ($\beta = .06$).

Support of Past Research: Perceived Promiscuity

Past research on the sexual double standard has focused on differences between heterosexual men and women. However, none of the past research studies have used video to convey information about sexual behavior. Therefore, in order to investigate whether or not the use of video supports or contradicts recent findings, I performed a hierarchical regression to test whether perceived promiscuity of the video subject would be a function of both participant sexism levels, gender of the video subject, and their interaction. If the interaction between the gender of the video subject and the Modern Sexism Scale was significant, it would indicate that more sexist participants perceive men and women as having different levels of promiscuity, thereby contradicting past research. If the interaction is not significant, it would indicate that there is no difference in perceptions of promiscuity of men and women, and therefore support past research.

The overall model was significant, $F(4, 157) = 5.07$, $p < .002$. Attitudes Toward Sexuality was significantly positively related to perceived promiscuity, $t(157) = -3.79$, $p < .001$ ($\beta = -.29$), indicating that participants who were more sexually conservative rated video subjects as more promiscuous. Modern Sexism was not significantly related to perceived promiscuity, $t(157) = -1.21$, n.s. ($\beta = -.13$), nor was the gender of the video

subject, $t(157) = 1.53$, n.s. ($\beta = .12$). Finally, contrary to previous research, the interaction between Modern Sexism and the gender of the video subject was not significant, $t(157) = 1.25$, n.s. ($\beta = .14$). A similar regression was tested using the perceived number of sexual partners of the video subject as the dependent variable; this model was not significant, $F(4, 152) = 1.49$, n.s.

Support of Past Research: Perceived Competence: General

I performed a hierarchical regression to test whether perceived general competence of the video subject would be a function of both participant sexism levels, gender of the video subject, and their interaction. If the interaction between the gender of the video subject and the Modern Sexism Scale was significant, it would indicate that more sexist participants perceive men and women as having different levels of competence, thereby supporting past research. If the interaction was not significant, it would indicate that there is no difference in perceptions of promiscuity of men and women, and therefore would contradict past research. The overall model was significant, $F(4, 157) = 11.85$, $p < .001$. Attitudes Toward Sexuality was significantly positively related to perceived general competence, $t(157) = 6.65$, $p < .001$ ($\beta = .47$), indicating that participants who were more sexually liberal rated video subjects higher in general competence. Modern sexism was not significantly related to perceived general competence, $t(157) = -1.24$, n.s. ($\beta = -.12$). The gender of the video subject was not significantly related to perceived general competence, $t(157) = -1.16$, n.s. ($\beta = -.08$). The interaction between Modern Sexism and the gender of the video subject was not significantly related to perceived general competence, $t(157) = .96$, n.s. ($\beta = .10$).

Discussion

The results of the study supported the hypothesis that gay and lesbian video subjects would be perceived as more promiscuous than straight video subjects. Participants' attitudes toward homosexuals were a significant predictor of perceived promiscuity of the homosexual video subject. Those participants high in homophobia rated the homosexual video subjects as significantly more promiscuous than did participants who were low in homophobia. A similar finding emerged for participants' estimates of the video subjects' numbers of sexual partners. For participants who saw the heterosexual video, their level of homophobia (i.e., high or low) was unrelated to the perceived number of sexual partners. However, participants who were high in homophobia, relative to those low in homophobia, rated homosexual video subjects as having a much greater number of sexual partners.

Because the information conveyed about the video subjects' sexual behaviors was the same across all four videos, the changes in perceived promiscuity among the different video subjects may be attributed to the video subjects' sexual orientations. The two separate relationships between the video subjects' sexual orientation (i.e., heterosexual or homosexual) and perceived promiscuity indicates that more homophobic participants perceived lesbians and gays as more promiscuous with greater numbers of sexual partners, purely because of their status as homosexuals.

The existence of this sexual orientation double standard mirrors the past literature on what was called the [hetero] sexual double standard (Marks & Fraley, 2005; Sprecher, McKinney, & Orbuch, 1987). In the same way that women were expected to follow different scripts than men for their sexual behaviors, the results of this study indicate that

lesbians and gays are expected to follow different expectations for sexual behaviors than heterosexual men and women. When heterosexuals and homosexuals engage in the same behaviors, the behavior is interpreted differently and homosexuals suffer more through their sexual reputations.

Additionally, results indicated that gender of the video subject did not have a significant effect on perceived promiscuity, even when participants' sexism level was high. This finding supports recent research on the lack of a sexual double standard for heterosexual men and women (Gentry, 1998; Marks & Fraley, 2005). Even with a different method of presenting target information from past studies (i.e., the use of video instead of written scripts), women were not rated as significantly more promiscuous than men or as having a greater number of sexual partners. My research contributes to recent literature pointing to the demise of the sexual double standard for heterosexual men and women.

The results of this study did not support the hypothesis that gay and lesbian video subjects would be perceived as less competent than straight video subjects. Instead, I found that participants with more conservative attitudes toward sexuality and more homophobic attitudes perceived all video subjects as less competent. These main effects correspond with research by both Gentry (1998) and Sheeran, Spears, Abraham, and Abrams (1996), who found that men and women were both perceived more negatively when they had high levels of sexual activity. The current study supports these findings, and furthers them to include homosexuals. More sexually conservative participants may have perceived the sexual encounter in the video as being representative of higher levels of sexuality, and therefore rated the video subject more negatively. Competence ratings

were most closely related to Attitudes Toward Sexuality, indicating that when sexual behaviors are frequent or high, gender and sexual orientation are not the most influential factors in perceptions.

However, the current results also indicated that participants perceived gay men to be more competent than straight men. Although participants could have been attempting to appear politically correct or to overcompensate for their stereotypes, I believe this is not the case. The nature of the experiment (i.e., between subjects) prevented participants from comparing straight and gay video subjects. Additionally, participants high in homophobia rated both straight and gay video subjects lower on the competence scale. This relationship may therefore be reflective of conservative attitudes and not a desire to appear politically correct. Additionally, if participants were overcompensating for homophobic attitudes, an interaction between the Attitudes Toward Homosexuals Scale and the sexual orientation of the video subject would have been significant.

Instead, I suggest that the conditions of this experiment allow for the influence and visibility of a newly forming stereotype. Primarily, the video hook-up script was designed so that the video subject did not appear to be stereotypically male or female. It included markers of both stereotypically feminine language, such as hedges (i.e., *kinda*) and the use of the intensive “so” (“there were *so* many hot guys/girls”) (Lakoff, 2004), and masculine language patterns, such as the indexing of the video subjects’ status (i.e., interest from a “hot” guy/girl) (Kiesling, 2001). Additionally, the script was designed so that both partners involved in the hook-up were equally aggressive and dominant in fostering the sexual interaction. The script design, in combination with the historical

stereotype of casual sex as a more masculine behavior (D'Emilio & Freedman, 1997), creates a gay man who does not appear overtly feminine.

Because the gay video subject in this study is not femininized, he does not embody the “typical gay man,” (Fingerhut & Peplau, 2006). Instead, he may be perceived as masculine and similar to straight men. Clausell and Fiske (2005) found that gay men who were “straight-acting” or “hyper-masculine” were perceived as more competent than other subcategories of gay men. Therefore, the gay male video subject in this study may be exempt from typical attitudes toward gay men (Hart, 2004; Lance, 2008).

I believe that in the absence of this negative stereotype of the gay man, a more positive perception may be visible. Starting with the premiere of “Queer Eye for the Straight Guy,” in 2003 (Hart, 2004), Americans have been exposed to positive media representations of gay men. The premise of “Queer Eye for the Straight Guy” is that heterosexual men are struggling with their social competence (cultural knowledge, self-grooming, cooking, etc.) at an important time in their lives, and they need the help of gay men. The subconscious message then reads: gay men are superior to straight men. These media representations support my results, in that because gay men are portrayed as superior to than straight men, people begin to believe that they are generally more competent than straight men as well. Therefore, when gay men do not threaten conventional gender roles and maintain their masculinity, they are actually perceived as more competent than straight men.

Limitations and Future Research

The current study had several limitations. First, the use of snowball sampling to gather some of the participants may have created a sample that was not entirely representative of the general population. In addition, the sampling method may have led to a small number of non-heterosexual participants (i.e., those who consider themselves homosexual, bisexual, or other). The large ratio of heterosexual to non-heterosexual participants did not allow me to make comparisons between heterosexual and homosexual participants' perceptions. If I had more non-heterosexual participants, I would have liked to analyze perceptions of the video subjects comparing participants whose sexual orientation matched or was different from the sexual orientation of the video subject.

I would also like to re-investigate the relationship between sexual orientation and perceived promiscuity. Although the current study points to an important link between levels or forms of sexual behavior and perceived promiscuity, the sexualized video script and cultural associations with a one-night-stand may overshadow occurring trends in differing perceptions of promiscuity among the four video subjects. In the future, I believe it would be worthwhile to conduct a similar study in which the sexual activity does not occur within a casual sex context. Videos could again vary by gender and sexual orientation of the video subject, and mention the phrase "we went down on each other," but the context of the sexual activity could change. Instead of a casual sexual encounter, the video subject could describe an evening with his or her significant other, starting with dinner and a movie and ending with sex. This change in the script would allow me to understand whether the judgments of promiscuity were based purely on the

fact that the video subjects were engaging in casual sex or if they were directly related to the sexual orientation of the video subjects. Additionally, the change would allow me to better understand how extensive the sexual orientation double standard is.

Additionally, I believe that another study should be performed to assess perceptions of competence without the mention of the video subjects' sexual activity. It would be interesting to see whether competence ratings differed for straight and gay video subjects if the subject matter was not sexual and was more closely related to the items on the Perceived Competence Scale. For example, participants could view a video of a fictional interview in which the video subject discusses the ways in which he or she is involved in school. The videos could again vary by gender and sexual orientation of the video subject, and all subjects could mention the same sports/club/class participation. However, the homosexual video subjects could name Rainbow Alliance or Gay Straight Alliance as one of the clubs to which they belong, whereas heterosexual video subjects could name a similar club that is not associated with intelligence or a certain skill set. If this study were performed, I believe that providing the gay man was depicted as masculine, he would be perceived as more competent than the straight man.

Implications

Although the current study had several limitations, the results are still applicable to societal interactions between heterosexuals and homosexuals. These results provide insight into patterns of discrimination against homosexuals and bolster the claim that heterosexuals and homosexuals are treated differently in American society. The findings could be applied to anything from court cases involving homosexuals, to simple bullying instances at school. The underlying theme in this study is that heterosexuals and

homosexuals are perceived differently, and these stereotypes can be both harmful and helpful to a person's reputation within society.

Concluding Remarks

Overall, the current study points to two new double standards. Primarily, a sexual orientation double standard exists in which homosexuals are perceived as more promiscuous than heterosexuals. However, in the case that a gay man retains his masculine identity, he may be perceived as more competent than a straight man. Additionally, this research points to the effectiveness of the use of video to convey information about a target, regardless of if the videos discuss sexuality or other details about the video subjects' lives. Although there were limitations to this study, the results open up a new field for comparisons between homosexuals and heterosexuals and expand upon the literature about the determinants of perceptions of others.

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Appendix A

Video “Hook-up” Script

Okay, so I was visiting a friend who goes to another school, and I really didn't know anyone else there. A bunch of people came over, and we're hanging out and playing some drinking games, then eventually we all leave the apartment to go to a bar. When we get to the bar, there are like so many hot (**guys/girls**) there. Pretty soon after we get there, we all get a drink and my friend introduces me to a really hot (**guy/girl**), so we start talking and flirting, and (**he/she**) seems pretty interested. And it's crowded in there so we keep being like pressed into each other. Eventually we start making out, and its dark, so no one really notices. So (**he/she**) asks if I want to go outside and get some air, and I do, so I take (**his/her**) hand and leads (**him/her**) outside to the back of the bar. And there's no one else out there, so we start making out again, and I'm kinda pulling at (**his/her**) belt, and (**he/she**) asks if I want to go back to (**his/her**) apartment. So I say yes, and we walk back to the apartment, and go into (**his/her**) room, and we get onto the bed and like start making out again. And things are kind of progressing, and we take our clothes off, and we end up going down on each other. And after a while we stop, and start making out again. Then eventually we turned the lights on and put our clothes back on cuz I had to go back to my friend's apartment. And (**he/she**) pointed me in the right direction, but I basically knew where I was going, so it wasn't a big deal. So, yea, then I left. It was random, but whatever, I had fun...

Note: pronouns in bold were either all male or all female based on the sexual orientation of the subject depicted in the video (e.g. for the homosexual video with the male actor, guy/he/his were used).

Appendix B

Perceived Competence Scale
Adapted from Marks & Fraley (2005)

For each of the following statements, please rate the person you saw in the video using the following rating scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

1. This person is trustworthy.
2. This person is respectful.
3. This person would make someone a good boyfriend/girlfriend.
4. This person would make someone a good husband/wife.
5. This person is immoral. *
6. This person is dishonest. *
7. This person is careless. *
8. People like this person.
9. I would want to be friends with this person.
10. People listen to this person.
11. No one likes this person. *
12. This person will make a lot of money.
13. This person would make a good leader.
14. This person is successful.
15. This person often takes control of situations.
16. This person influences others.
17. This person is intelligent.
18. This person is responsible.
19. This person is a failure. *
20. This person performs well in everything he/she does.
21. This person makes a lot of mistakes. *
22. This person does well in school.

Note: items with asterisks are reverse scored (). Within the actual experiment, statements will appear on a computer screen, and participants will be asked to select a number (1-6) from a block similar to the one pictured above.*

Appendix C

Promiscuity Scale

Developed from Conley, Collins, and Garcia (2000)

Part A: for each of the following statements, please rate the person you saw in the video using the following rating scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6
extremely unlikely	moderately unlikely	slightly unlikely	slightly likely	moderately likely	strongly likely

1. This person will get an STD.
2. This person will enter a long-term relationship soon. *
3. This person frequently has one-night stands.
4. This person is sexually experienced.
5. This person engages in risky behavior.
6. This person hasn't had very many sexual partners. *
7. This person has a bad reputation.
8. This person uses birth control (e.g. condoms, birth control pill, female condom, diaphragm). *

Part B: for the following statement, please rate the person you saw in the video using the following rating scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

9. This person has too much sex.

Part C: How many sexual partners do you think this person has had, including vaginal, anal, and oral sex?

Note: items with asterisks are reverse scored (). Within the actual experiment, statements will appear on a computer screen, and participants will be asked to select a number (1-6) from a block similar to the one pictured above.*

Appendix D

Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al, 1995)

For each of the following statements, please give your opinion using the following rating scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

1. Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the United States.
2. Women often miss out on good jobs due to sexual discrimination. *
3. It is rare to see women treated in a sexist manner on television.
4. On average, people in our society treat husbands and wives equally.
5. Society has reached the point where women and men have equal opportunities for achievement.
6. It is easy to understand the anger of women's groups in America. *
7. It is easy to understand why women's groups are still concerned about societal limitations of women's opportunities. *
8. Over the past few years, the government and news media have been showing more concern about the treatment of women than is warranted by women's actual experiences.

Note: items with asterisks are reverse scored (). Within the actual experiment, statements will appear on a computer screen, and participants will be asked to select a number (1-6) from a block similar to the one pictured above.*

Appendix E

Attitudes Toward Sexuality Scale

Adapted from Fisher and Hall (1988) and Hudson, Murphy, and Nurius (1983)

For each of the following statements, please give your opinion using the following rating scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

1. Information and advice about contraception (birth control) should be given to any individual who intends to have sex.
2. It is acceptable for young unmarried people to have sex without affection if they both agree.
3. A person's sexual behavior is his or her own business, and nobody should make judgments about it.
4. Sexual intercourse should occur only between two people who are married to each other. *
5. I think there isn't enough sexual restraint among young people. *
6. Sex should be for procreation. *
7. There is too much sex in television and movies. *
8. Pornography should be banned from bookstores. *
9. Oral sex is an acceptable form of sexual activity.

Note: items with asterisks are reverse scored (). Within the actual experiment, statements will appear on a computer screen, and participants will be asked to select a number (1-6) from a block similar to the one pictured above.*

Appendix F

Attitudes Toward Homosexuals Questionnaire
 Adapted from Lambert et al. (2006) and Hudson (1980)

For each of the following statements, please give your opinion using the following rating scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

1. People should not be judged based upon their sexual preference. *
2. Gay males are more feminine than other men.
3. Lesbians are more masculine than other women.
4. I would sign a petition asking the government to do more to stop violence against gays.*
5. Gays and lesbians should have the same rights as anyone else. *
6. Gay men should be allowed to be Boy Scout troop leaders. *
7. Lesbian women should be allowed to be Girl Scout troop leaders. *
8. Homosexual couples should be allowed to legally marry each other. *
9. Gay/lesbian couples should not be allowed to be foster parents.
10. Gays/lesbians should be allowed to adopt children. *
11. I would be willing to accept a job that required regular contact with gay/lesbian clients/customers. *
12. I would be willing to socialize with gay/lesbian individuals. *
13. I would feel comfortable working with someone who is gay/lesbian. *
14. I would be comfortable with having a gay or lesbian person as a close friend. *
15. I would be uncomfortable with a gay or lesbian roommate.
16. I feel that homosexuality is wrong.
17. I am disgusted by homosexuality.
18. I would feel uncomfortable if I learned my neighbor was gay/lesbian.
19. I would be uncomfortable if I learned my best friend of my sex was gay/lesbian.
20. If I had a gay/lesbian friend, I wouldn't tell my parents.
21. If a member of my sex made an advance toward me, I would be flattered. *
22. I would be comfortable being seen in a gay bar. *

Note: items with asterisks are reverse scored (). Within the actual experiment, statements will appear on a computer screen, and participants will be asked to select a number (1-6) from a block similar to the one pictured above.*