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# Formal and Interpersonal Discrimination: A Field Study of Bias Toward Homosexual Applicants

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*The current research studies discrimination from the perspective of people in stigmatized roles in actual employment settings. Confederates, who were portrayed as being homosexual or not, applied for jobs at local stores. Measures of formal bias (e.g., job offers), interpersonal behavior (e.g., length of interactions), and perceptions of bias (e.g., anticipated job offers by applicants) were assessed. Although confederates portrayed as homosexual were not discriminated against in formal ways relative to confederate applicants not presented as gay, they were responded to significantly more negatively in interpersonal ways. Moreover, there was a stronger relationship between interpersonal treatment and anticipated employment actions for confederates than there was between interpersonal responses and actual job offers by employers. These findings reveal the dynamics of the development of different impressions and expectations by stigmatizers and targets. Theoretical and practical implications are considered.*

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**A**lthough considerable attention has been devoted to understanding the processes underlying discrimination in the laboratory (see Oskamp, 2000; Zanna & Olson, 1994), relatively little research has experimentally examined processes involved in discrimination in more naturalistic settings (cf. Crandall, 1995). The current study examines how discrimination manifests itself and how this bias may be perceived by people in stigmatized roles in a real-world, job employment setting. Moreover, this research investigates the processes involved in stigmatization, including the behavior of potential stigmatizers, the perceptions of people in stigmatized roles, and the

relationship between these behaviors and perceptions (see Heatherton, Kleck, Hebl, & Hull, 2000).

Even though general attitudes toward homosexuality in U.S. society have improved over the past several decades, gay men and lesbians still face discrimination and antipathy on a daily basis (see Fernald, 1995; Franklin, 2000; Herek, 1991). According to a 1996 Gallup poll, 50% of Americans believe that homosexuality is not an acceptable alternative lifestyle, and according to a 1994 Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) poll, 46% of Americans think that homosexual relations should be illegal (Yang, 1997). Homosexuality differs from many other social stigmas in that it is concealable (see Jones et al., 1984); most individuals can choose and carefully manage to whom they disclose their social stigma. Despite this, research by Griffith and Hebl (in press) reveals that a sizable portion of gay and lesbian workers do disclose their sexual orientation or are "outed" by coworkers. Thus, the examination of discrimination against people for whom information about sexual orientation is publicly available is practically as well as theoretically important. Unlike women, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities, homosexual individuals are not protected under the laws and regulations that protect other groups in the workplace; that is, there are cur-

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rently no national laws and only 11 state statutes prohibiting discrimination against homosexual individuals.

Although there is considerable research about attitudes toward homosexuality (e.g., LaMar & Kite, 1998), relatively little evidence exists with regard to meaningful discrimination against gay and lesbian workers. In a review of the current literature on job discrimination, Crow, Folk, and Hartman (1998) commented on the lack of empirical research documenting homosexual work discrimination, noting that the vast majority of the research has been in the form of self-report studies (Levine, 1979; Levine & Leonard, 1984). In contrast, the present research explores the relation between actual bias, direct and subtle, and the perceptions of bias among people in stigmatized roles.

We propose that understanding stigma involves learning about the attitudes, attributions, and behaviors of both the stigmatizer and the target. In general, we hypothesize that potential stigmatizers are likely to be guarded about expressing overt, formal forms of discrimination (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986) but that they may still exhibit, perhaps unintentionally and without awareness, biases in more subtle ways (e.g., in how they interact with targets) (see Crosby, Bromley, & Saxe, 1980). From the perspective of the people who are being stigmatized, however, these more subtle, interpersonal expressions of bias may be interpreted as cues for the more formal, overt types of bias (e.g., Turban, Forret, & Hendrickson, 1998; Vorauer & Kumhyr, 2001).

In particular, in organizational settings, discrimination may be manifested in formal (e.g., job-related) or interpersonal ways. This conceptualization is similar to Dovidio and Gaertner's (2000; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986) distinction between overt and subtle discrimination. "Formal" discrimination refers to discrimination in hiring, promotions, access, and resource distribution. It is this type of discrimination that in many states is illegal. There are often organizational laws, company policies, or social norms against this type of discrimination. The state in which the current research was conducted (Texas) currently has no state law forbidding discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation; however, there is in effect an Executive Order by the Mayor of Houston proclaiming nondiscrimination toward city employees on the basis of sexual orientation. Formal discrimination is, thus, the type of discrimination that employers may be likely to avoid, particularly if they are attempting to maintain a nonprejudiced self-image (see Dovidio & Gaertner, 1991, 1998).

"Interpersonal" discrimination is more subtle; it involves the nonverbal, paraverbal, and even some of the verbal behaviors that occur in social interactions. There are no laws against interpersonal discrimination: A person cannot be arrested or formally reprimanded for glar-

ing at a homosexual individual. Similarly, there are no mandates on the number of words one must speak or the amount of smiling one must do to people on the basis of their sexual orientation. People, then, may show less interest, terminate interactions sooner, and feel and demonstrate less positivity toward homosexual than heterosexual individuals (Cuenot & Fugita, 1982). In the present research, we examine measures of formal and interpersonal discrimination toward job applicants who are depicted as gay or lesbian. We also examine the perceptions that applicants have of these types of discrimination. We examined these by having applicants (actually confederates) enter various places of employment and apply for a job. The applicant's sexual preference was either manipulated to be obviously gay or assumed heterosexual via statements professionally printed on baseball hats. These confederate applicants were unaware of which label, either "Gay and Proud" or "Texan and Proud," was printed on their hats. We recorded conversations in which participants asked in a standardized fashion if there were any jobs, if they could complete an application, what the job would entail if they were to get one, and if they could use the store bathroom. Applicants' perceptions of the interaction as well as coded recordings of the interactions from audiotapes were used to assess formal and interpersonal discrimination levels.

Within the racism literature, McConahay (1986) proposed that social biases may evolve from "old-fashioned" forms, in which negative attitudes are expressed openly and correspond directly with discriminatory behavior to "modern" forms, in which expressed attitudes become less negative over time and the patterns of discrimination become more complex and subtle. In particular, because of evolving norms, racial discrimination tends not to be expressed when standards of behaviors are well defined and public but occurs more readily in situations in which the appropriate egalitarian responses are less clearly defined (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998). Conceptually, our measures of formal and interpersonal discrimination correspond to the distinction between open and subtle bias in the literature on racial bias. Thus, because of the inclusion of both types of measures, the present research can help to illuminate the current nature of psychological processes underlying bias against gay and lesbian individuals, particularly with respect to McConahay's (1986) distinction between "old-fashioned" and "modern" forms of bias.

Although homosexuality is a stigma for which people still openly show their disdain (e.g., see Griffith & Hebl, in press; Weiner, 1995), we hypothesized that general egalitarian norms and emerging norms for equal rights for gay and lesbian individuals (Yang, 1997) may limit formal discrimination (i.e., on measures of being told

that there actually is a job available, being invited to fill out an application, being permitted to use the store bathroom,<sup>1</sup> and actually receiving a callback for a job interview) against gay/lesbian relative to heterosexual job applicants. These findings, by themselves, contribute to the scarce literature on the existence of employment discrimination against gay and lesbian individuals.

We further examined the interpersonal behaviors of potential employers toward confederates presented as gay/lesbian or assumed to be heterosexual. We hypothesized that although potential employers may be able to control and thus limit formal discrimination against gay and lesbian applicants, they may be less attuned to, less motivated to, or less able to control interpersonal discrimination. We therefore predicted that employers would terminate their interactions with stigmatized applicants sooner than they would with nonstigmatized applicants. Such interaction termination can be measured through interaction length as well as number of words spoken (see Hebl & Kleck, 2000; Kleck, 1968).

We also hypothesized that the responses and expectations of targets (i.e., the confederates) would be a function of their perceptions of the potential employer's interpersonal behaviors. Interpersonal cues are more immediate, particularly in employment situations in which actual employment decisions are made at a later time. Considerable research has demonstrated the powerful role of subtle interpersonal cues, such as paraverbal and nonverbal behavior, on people's impressions, attributions, and expectations (for a review, see DePaulo & Friedman, 1998). We therefore predicted that confederate applicants in stigmatized roles, who were not aware of their condition at the beginning of each session, would systematically perceive negative interpersonal responses by employers. We note that under some conditions, chronically stigmatized people may deny such negative treatment (e.g., see Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Crosby, 1982). However, the present research examines how individuals who are in stigmatized roles (in this case, confederates who are perceived by others to possess a stigma) are sometimes able to interpret interpersonal cues of bias accurately (e.g., see Vorauer & Kumhyr, 2001). Thus, we predicted that confederates would perceive more negative treatment by potential employers when they were in stigmatized roles than in nonstigmatized roles and that perceptions of more negative interpersonal treatment would relate to how targets make inferences about the extent to which the employers would engage in more formal discrimination.

In sum, the present research was designed to consider conceptually the nature of contemporary biases toward gay and lesbian individuals, to explore theoretically how the stigmatization of these individuals relates to the old-

fashioned and modern expressions of bias in other domains such as racism (McConahay, 1986), and to understand the relationship between the expression of bias and the response of potential targets of discrimination. Methodologically, drawing on work on subtle prejudice in other domains (e.g., racism; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986), we investigated how discrimination involves multiple forms of bias, including both open displays of rejection and more subtle, interpersonal forms. We also examined perceptions of discrimination from the target's perspective. The present work also complements, conceptually and methodologically, existing research on biases toward those who are gay and lesbian, which relies largely on self-report measures, by examining discrimination in a real-world field setting. Finally, pragmatically, the present work helps to identify the current magnitude of potential discrimination in hiring against gay and lesbian applicants, at least in this geographical context.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

Eight male and eight female undergraduate and graduate students from a university in Texas volunteered to act as applicants for the purpose of this study. Each individual applied for jobs at six different stores. Five of the targeted stores were closed, so individuals entered a total of 91 different stores. Of these interactions, seven were discarded because individuals saw the labels printed on their hats in store mirrors or glass doors. Hence, the results are based on a total of 84 interactions.

### *Procedure*

Each of the 16 applicants was assigned to apply to six stores. Each group of stores was matched to be similar in the type of merchandise sold and typical clientele. In addition, when the merchandise of a store was targeted predominately at one gender (such as a women's clothing store), the gender of the applicant was matched to the gender of the merchandise. All stores were part of a large mall area located in a Texan metropolis. For each of the six stores, the applicants were randomly assigned to be stigmatized for three of the interactions and nonstigmatized for the other three. In the stigmatized condition, the applicants wore a hat on which "Gay and Proud" was printed professionally across the front. In the nonstigmatized (control) condition, the words "Texan and Proud" were printed on the front. Of the 84 interactions that we used in our analyses, 41 involved the "Gay and Proud" hat and 43 involved the "Texan and Proud" hat. Pretesting supported the two hats as being perceived by participants in accordance with our intentions; that is, 19 independent raters were asked to rate how favorably they viewed each of the hats on a 7-point Likert-type scale

anchored by *negatively* (1), *neutrally* (4), and *positively* (7). Ratings indicated that the “Texan and Proud” hat was rated neutrally ( $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ , compared to the neutral midpoint of 4),  $t(18) = 0.63$ ,  $p > .25$ , and the “Gay and Proud” hat was rated negatively ( $M = 2.89$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ , compared to the neutral midpoint of 4),  $t(18) = 4.29$ ,  $p < .01$ . Except for the visible labels, the hats were identical in color and style.

Experimenters set up three stations throughout the mall area and the applicants were divided equally among the three stations. The stations were used as a home base where the applicants began and ended each interaction. Experimenters at each of the stations were responsible for directing each applicant to the stores to which they were assigned and ensuring that the applicant had the correct, preassigned hat for each interaction. Experimenters were also responsible for distributing the questionnaires to the applicants at the end of each interaction.

To standardize the interactions, the applicants were all dressed similarly in jeans and pullover jackets. Because the mall area was not particularly upscale and catered to a largely student population, this attire was deemed appropriate and highly customary for the typical customers visiting the mall stores. Applicants also had small tape recorders concealed in the front pocket of their jackets, which were used to record the interactions. Thus, at the beginning of each trial, the experimenters directed applicants to a particular store and distributed either a stigmatized or nonstigmatized hat. Applicants were trained specifically to hold their hats so that they would not be able to see which hat they were wearing. Similarly, they were trained to be aware that many stores had mirrors or store glass and that they should avoid looking at their reflections. Such warnings and practice ensured that applicants attempted to remain unaware of their initial assignment to their condition. Before entering the store, they put on their hats and turned on their recorders.

On entering the store, applicants were trained to ask to speak with the person in charge. In 39 of the 84 interactions, applicants indicated that they clearly saw a nametag that identified the employee as a store manager or learned from conversation that the employee was either the owner or manager. In the other cases, applicants were uncertain as to the hiring capabilities of the employee. To examine whether it was likely that applicants spoke to someone with hiring capabilities, in the remaining 45 interactions, we called these stores, asking personnel, “Is there someone present in the store right now who is authorized to make hiring decisions?” Of these 45 stores, 39 reported that there was a hiring manager on the premises at that time, 5 stores indicated that there was not a hiring manager present at that time, and

1 store underwent a change in management between the time when the study took place and the time the stores were called.

When the store interaction was complete, applicants again removed the hat without reading the front and returned to their home station where they completed a questionnaire on the interaction while still remaining unaware of the particular hat that they were wearing. At this point, the experimenters gave them a different hat for their next interaction.

To further standardize the interactions, the applicants were given a list of four questions to memorize. Each applicant rehearsed the questions with the researchers in simulated interactions before going out into the field. The questions were as follows: (a) “Do you have any job openings?” (b) “Could I fill out an application?” (c) “What sorts of things would I be doing if I worked here?” and (d) “Would you mind if I used your bathroom?” Although confederates were not told about the specific purpose of each question until after completion of the study, we included each of these four questions for specific reasons. The first two questions attempted to establish the individual as a job applicant and observe employers’ formal reactions and receptivity. It is important to note that within a week of the data collection period, two research assistants phoned each store to assess whether there were preexisting differences between conditions in the extent to which stores were looking for employees. There were no such differences. In addition, within a 6-week follow-up period of the study, all applicants reported any stores who called them back to arrange an interview or make a job offer.

The third question was an attempt to extend the duration and depth of the interaction, thereby assessing interpersonal discrimination, such as conversation length, number of words exchanged, and employer negativity. Finally, the fourth question was another attempt to assess discrimination formally, by examining whether a personal courtesy, often based on store policy, would be granted differentially to a stigmatized versus a nonstigmatized applicant. The applicants were instructed to ask these questions in the order just presented and follow the same script across all stores. Unless they accidentally saw their hats or were otherwise “outed,” applicants had no idea which hats they wore and how many times they wore each hat until they had completed all of their interactions. We further retained the independence of each trial by telling participants that it was possible that they might receive six “Gay and Proud” hats, six “Texan and Proud” hats, or any combination of the two sets.

We gave careful consideration to the ethics of conducting this study by talking to university lawyers to ensure legalities of conducting this research, gaining

approval through our Institutional Review Board, and discussing this study with numerous colleagues. We also thoroughly prepared our research participants over a 5-week period of planning sessions in a number of ways. First, we trained our assistants to be professional throughout the study, to act in a very standardized manner, and to respect the anonymity of the stores they would be entering and the personnel with whom they would be interacting. Applicants were given 3-weeks' advance notice about the specific variations that might appear on the hats they would be wearing so as to give them ample time to consider whether they wanted to participate. Second, to ensure that they clearly understood the goals, seriousness, and need for confidentiality of the study, we asked each confederate to sign an informed consent. In signing this form, confederates agreed that they would not misrepresent themselves in any way when completing the applications for employment and agreed that they could accept any job they might be offered. Third, and finally, to respect all stores and personnel, we carefully coded all data that we collected so as to keep the identity of individual stores anonymous, and we have kept our data in a locked cabinet within a locked laboratory.

#### *Measures of Formal Discrimination*

As already described, we measured (a) job availability, (b) permission to complete a job application, (c) job callback, and (d) permission to use the bathroom.

#### *Measures of Interpersonal Discrimination*

Throughout and following data collection, all of the audiotaped interactions were given an experimental number so that none of the stores and none of the store employees could be individually identified. The tape recordings of the interactions were then rated by three independent coders who were not involved in the data collection process and were unaware of the purpose or hypotheses of the study or the hats worn by the applicants.

*Interaction length.* To assess the possibility of a quicker interaction termination with a stigmatized interactant as compared with a nonstigmatized interactant (see Kleck, Ono, & Hastorf, 1966), coders recorded the length of each interaction to which they listened in minutes and seconds. The reliability among the coders using an intraclass correlation coefficient was .99.

*Word count.* The number of words that were spoken in the interactions were counted by transcribing the audiotapes and conducting a computer-calculated word count on the interactions. It is important to recall that confederate applicants followed a script and so the number of words that they spoke across conditions was not

different. To ensure this, we also compared the number of words spoken by applicants across conditions and found minimal variance and no significant differences.

*Perceived negativity (by applicants).* After returning from each store, the applicants filled out a questionnaire. Specifically, on 9-point Likert-type scales anchored by *not at all* (1) and *very much* (9), confederates indicated their responses to seven items, including the extent to which they found the store employer "helpful," "standoffish," "nervous," "motivated to end the conversation prematurely," "focused on their hat," "avoidant of eye contact," and "hostile." A principal components factor analysis was conducted on these seven items and revealed one factor, which we label "perceived negativity (by applicants)" (eigenvalue = 3.94, percentage variance accounted for = 56, loadings ranging from .59 to .87,  $\alpha = .87$ ).

*Perceived employer interest (by applicants).* To assess the extent to which applicants believed employers would be interested in hiring them, we utilized a single 9-point Likert-type scale anchored by *not at all* (1) and *very much* (9) and asked participants the extent to which they believed the store employer would be "interested in them as a job candidate."

*Coded negativity (by independent raters).* Because of problems with the recordings, such as applicants forgetting to turn on the recorder or the recordings being too unclear to understand, only 72 of the 84 interactions were able to be coded. The coders used a questionnaire very similar to that used by the confederates themselves, consisting of 11 items rated on a Likert-type scale anchored by *not at all* (1) and *very much* (9), which measured their impressions of the audiotaped interactions. Seven of the items assessed the nature of the store employers' behaviors and included the items of how "helpful," "cold," "interested," "nervous," "friendly," "hostile," and "motivated to end the conversation prematurely" employers were toward the applicants. These particular items were chosen based on items reflecting differences in past research investigating interactions between stigmatized and nonstigmatized individuals (see Herek, 1991; Kleck & Strenta, 1980). Principal components factor analysis was conducted on these seven items revealing one predominant factor, which we label "coded negativity (by independent raters)" (eigenvalue = 4.92, percentage variance accounted for = 70.3, loadings ranging from .56 to .95,  $\alpha = .92$ ). Interrater agreement for the composite, calculated using an intraclass correlation coefficient, was .78.

On four additional items using the same scale format, coders were asked to consider the applicants and assess how "relaxed," "nervous," "attentive," and "friendly" they were. These items were included to ensure that

applicants, despite the fact that they were supposed to be blind to their conditions, were not creating the differences, if any emerged, between the conditions. Principal components factor analyses revealed that all four items loaded on a single factor, which we call "applicant behavior" (eigenvalue = 3.23, percentage variance accounted for = 80.8, loadings ranging from .86 to .97,  $\alpha = .91$ ).

## RESULTS

Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure that the applicants' behavior was indeed standardized across conditions. As intended, an analysis of coders' evaluations of applicants' behaviors on the applicant behavior composite (composed of relaxed, nervous, interested, and friendly) did not reveal any differences as a function of whether applicants were wearing the stigmatized ( $M = 4.62$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ) or nonstigmatized hats ( $M = 4.91$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ),  $t(70) = 1.19$ ,  $p = .24$ . Similarly, no differences emerged across confederates; that is, the results did not depend on the particular person playing the role of a homosexual applicant. Also, to test the relation between the perspectives taken of the interaction, we conducted correlations between the perceived negativity (by applicants) and coded negativity (by independent raters) composites,  $r(72) = .37$ ,  $p < .01$ , and between perceived negativity (by applicants) and perceived employer interest (by applicants),  $r(72) = -.50$ ,  $p < .001$ . Both of these numbers suggest that there is a strong amount of overlap in the perspectives that applicants and independent coders held.

Initial analyses included consideration of the sex of the applicant and the sex of the employer. Because these analyses demonstrated no significant main effects and no interactions with each other or hat condition, these independent variables were not included in the main analyses, reported below.

### *Stigmatizer*

We hypothesized that measures of formal discrimination would not yield strong evidence of discrimination, whereas interpersonal measures would. Thus, two sets of analyses were conducted on the behavior of potential stigmatizers, one for the formal measures of discrimination and the other for interpersonal measures.

*Analysis of formal measures of discrimination.* To obtain an overall assessment of the extent to which formal discrimination was displayed, we first conducted an overall one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) on the dichotomous variables (see Frey & Gaertner, 1986) to determine the effect of stigma on job availability, permission to complete a job application, job callback, and permission to use the bathroom. As was mentioned previously, not all interactions were able to be coded and so

the degrees of freedom in various analyses depend on whether the analyses include variables only available through the audiotapes. For the overall MANOVA, there were 72 cases included for which data on all of the variables were available. As recommended by Smith (2000), significant multivariate effects were followed up with univariate analyses.

Consistent with our expectation that expressions of formal discrimination would be limited, this MANOVA did not reveal a significant stigma main effect for measures of formal discrimination,  $F(4, 68) = 0.37$ ,  $p = .83$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . Separate analyses of each of the individual variables reflected the same pattern of results. For each of the measures, no effects of stigma emerged. When applicants questioned whether there were "any jobs available," employers responded "yes" 43% of the time to applicants in the gay condition and 56% of the time to applicants in the nonstigmatized condition,  $\chi^2(1) = 1.12$ ,  $p = .35$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . Stigmatized applicants also received permission to complete a job application somewhat but not significantly less often than nonstigmatized applicants, 60% versus 71%,  $\chi^2(1) = 0.99$ ,  $p = .32$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . Employers also called stigmatized applicants back with job offers (job callback) somewhat, but not significantly, less frequently than nonstigmatized applicants, 12% versus 19%,  $\chi^2(1) = .66$ ,  $p = .42$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ , and were equally likely to allow permission to use the bathroom, 51% versus 56%,  $\chi^2(1) = .04$ ,  $p = .84$ ,  $\eta^2 = .0004$ . Thus, employers did not respond less positively to stigmatized than nonstigmatized applicants on these measures of formal discrimination.

*Analysis of interpersonal measures of discrimination.* Whereas discrimination was predicted to be limited on formal measures of discrimination, it was expected to be more apparent on the interpersonal measures of discrimination: interaction length, word count, perceived negativity (by applicants), and coded negativity (by independent raters). Because interaction length and word count could not be calculated on all of the interactions, a total of 61 cases were used to assess interpersonal discrimination. A one-way MANOVA was conducted on the variables of interaction length, word count, perceived negativity (by applicants), and coded negativity (by independent raters) and revealed, as predicted, a significant main effect for stigma,  $F(4, 56) = 3.38$ ,  $p < .03$ ,  $\eta^2 = .19$ .

Follow-up univariate analyses showed a consistent effect of stigma across the measures. Fewer words were spoken to stigmatized applicants ( $M = 169.45$ ,  $SD = 111.05$ ) than to nonstigmatized applicants ( $M = 257.18$ ,  $SD = 210.08$ ),  $F(1, 59) = 4.97$ ,  $p < .04$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ . Similarly, interaction length was shorter when employers were talking with stigmatized applicants ( $M = 4$  min., 5 sec.,  $SD = 3$  min., 45 sec.) than with nonstigmatized applicants ( $M = 6$  min., 23 sec.,  $SD = 4$  min., 40 sec.),  $F(1, 59) = 5.04$ ,

**TABLE 1: Correlations and *p* Values Among Measures and Independent Variables**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Job availability	1.00									
2. Permission to complete application	.48 (.01)	1.00								
3. Job callbacks	.23 (.05)	.24 (.04)	1.00							
4. Permission to use bathroom	.24 (.05)	.16 (.19)	.07 (.50)	1.00						
5. Interaction length	.31 (.01)	.43 (.01)	.30 (.02)	.18 (.15)	1.00					
6. Work count	.15 (.21)	.22 (.06)	.22 (.06)	-.15 (.19)	.46 (.01)	1.00				
7. Perceived negativity (applicant)	-.31 (.01)	-.02 (.87)	-.23 (.03)	.04 (.70)	-.19 (.12)	-.18 (.12)	1.00			
8. Coded negativity (independent raters)	-.44 (.01)	-.32 (.01)	-.23 (.05)	.03 (.83)	-.42 (.01)	-.31 (.01)	.37 (.01)	1.00		
9. Perceived employer interest	.42 (.01)	.25 (.03)	.17 (.12)	-.14 (.22)	.16 (.20)	.39 (.01)	-.50 (.01)	-.25 (.03)	1.00	
10. Stigma	.12 (.30)	-.12 (.33)	.09 (.42)	-.02 (.85)	.27 (.03)	.25 (.03)	-.37 (.01)	-.14 (.25)	.39 (.01)	1.00

NOTE: *p* values are in parentheses.

$p < .04$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ . A significant main effect for stigma condition on perceived negativity (by applicants) revealed that stigmatized applicants perceived the employers to be significantly more negative ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ) than did nonstigmatized applicants ( $M = 2.94$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ),  $F(1, 59) = 8.18$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .12$ . Exploratory analyses using post hoc *t* tests with Bonferroni corrections revealed that the individual items driving the composite to be significant included the fact that employers were less helpful, more standoffish, less interested in them as candidates, more likely to end the conversation prematurely, and more likely to avoid eye contact.

To gain another look at the amount of negativity that employers had toward applicants, we examined the coded negativity (by independent raters). Results revealed a significant main effect for stigma condition,  $F(1, 59) = 4.86$ ,  $p < .03$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ . As predicted, the means revealed that employers displayed higher rates of coded negativity (by independent raters) to stigmatized applicants ( $M = 4.40$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ) than to nonstigmatized applicants ( $M = 4.01$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ). Exploratory analyses using post hoc *t* tests with Bonferroni correction did not reveal any of the single items comprising coded negativity (by independent raters) to be significantly different across conditions, suggesting that the pattern for each of the variables was in the same direction but that one item did not seem to be driving the composite.

It is important to note that ratings on both negativity scales did not reveal excessive amounts of hostility; instead, all ratings of negativity were relatively low. Thus, consistent with theories of contemporary prejudice in other realms (see Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998) and with survey data on attitudes toward homosexuality (e.g., Klineberg, 2000), bias toward gay confederates was manifested in the present research less in terms of overt hos-

tility and dislike than in terms of discomfort and a failure to be as fully accepting of gay applicants as of straight applicants.

In summary, the results reveal evidence that applicants in the Gay and Proud condition were responded to significantly more negatively on interpersonal measures of bias than those in the Texan and Proud condition. In addition, as expected, the effect sizes were consistently larger for the interpersonal measures of discrimination (mean  $\eta^2 = .09$ ) than for formal discrimination (mean  $\eta^2 = .006$ ).

*Correlates of Perceived Negativity (by Applicants)*

The correlations among all of the measures in the present study are presented in Table 1. We hypothesized that perceived negativity (by applicants) would be strongly linked to their perceptions of being hired—and possibly more strongly than the link between perceived negativity (by applicants) and the actual likelihood of receiving a job callback.

Consistent with our hypotheses, perceived negativity (by applicants) was negatively related to perceived employer interest (by applicants),  $r(84) = -.50$ ,  $p < .001$ . The correlation between perceived negativity (by applicants) and job callback was also significant,  $r(84) = -.23$ ,  $p < .05$ . This latter correlation, however, was significantly lower than the former  $-.50$  correlation, as was evidenced by comparing<sup>2</sup> Fisher’s *Z* transformations of the correlations,  $z = 4.13$ ,  $p < .01$ . Thus, there was a stronger relationship between interpersonal treatment and anticipated employment actions for confederates than there was between interpersonal responses and actual job offers by employers. This pattern of relationships was similar in both the Gay and Proud and Texan and Proud conditions. In the Gay and Proud condition, the correlation

between perceived negativity (by applicants) and perceived employer interest (by applicants) was strong,  $r(38) = -.44$ ,  $p < .01$ , and higher than the correlation between perceived negativity (by applicants) and job callback,  $r(38) = -.23$ ,  $p = .16$ , although, due in part to the decreased power with a smaller sample size, this difference was not significant,  $z = .96$ ,  $p = .17$ . In the Texan and Proud condition, these correlations were respectively  $-.25$  ( $df = 40$ ,  $p = .12$ ) and  $-.13$  ( $df = 40$ ,  $p = .38$ ) and did not differ from each other,  $z = .57$ ,  $p = .28$ .

#### DISCUSSION

The current results support the value of conceptualizing discrimination in the workplace in terms of two different types: formal and interpersonal. As we predicted, the formal measures of discrimination did not reveal any significant differences between stigmatized and nonstigmatized applicants. Whereas evidence of formal discrimination was not strongly visible in the field setting, interpersonal discrimination was clearly evident. As predicted, employers were more verbally negative, spent less amount of time, and used fewer words when interacting with the stigmatized applicants than the nonstigmatized applicants. Thus, stigmatizers appear to be able to limit their formal discriminatory behaviors but some of the negativity that they experience may be expressed through interpersonal channels.

The current results are particularly striking given that we observed only a modest number of interactions, they were limited in time (less than 5 minutes), and they were structured largely by the confederate script. Still, applicants were able to detect discrimination. The employers were perceived to be more standoffish, nervous, and hostile and less interested and helpful with stigmatized than nonstigmatized applicants. The less overt, more nonverbal items further revealed that employers avoided eye contact and were more likely to negatively focus on the hat if the hat stated "Gay and Proud" than if it read "Texan and Proud." Moreover, the confederates seeking the jobs were clearly sensitive to the ways they were treated by employers interpersonally.

We note that, consistent with a considerable body of research on stigmatization and the self-fulfilling prophecy (see Jussim, Palumbo, Chatman, Madon, & Smith, 2000), our targets were confederates who played the role of stigmatized or nonstigmatized applicants. We acknowledge that responses of people who are chronically stigmatized may differ because they may tend to deny the experience of personal discrimination. For instance, Crosby (1982, 1993) demonstrated that women may report that although they are aware that their group as a whole is a target of discrimination, they personally experienced discrimination to a much lesser extent than other women. Alternatively, other research

indicates that stigmatized people can accurately perceive bias and may be attuned to potential signs of this bias in mixed interactions (Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Vorauer & Kumhyr, 2001) and, as a consequence, have developed coping styles or compensatory repertoires that are activated when they are aware of potential stigmatization in a given context (Crocker & Major, 1989; Frable, Blackstone, & Scherbaum, 1990; Miller & Myers, 1998). Investigation of the responses of chronically stigmatized people and when they are likely to deny or be particularly attuned to bias is thus a potentially productive avenue. Future research, for example, might explore how context moderates the sensitivity of stigmatized people to signs of bias. In employment settings, for instance, applicants may be motivated to seek accurate information about the job that they are seeking and the company for which they will be working (e.g., see Liden & Parsons, 1986; Turban et al., 1998) so they may be less likely to use self-protective strategies involving the denial of bias and be particularly sensitive to cues of discrimination. Nevertheless, what our research shows is that naïve confederates, because they reflect the general attributional bias of underestimating the role of situational constraints on an actor's behaviors (Nisbett & Ross, 1980), see a much stronger relationship between signs of personal negativity and formal employment discrimination than actually occurs. Thus, independent of the unique motivations and orientations of stigmatized people (which may vary across stigmas), our research demonstrates a basic difference in the perspective of stigmatizers and targets that can contribute miscommunication, distrust, and potential conflict in mixed interactions.

Although not the focus of our research, our study found no evidence of sex difference in bias toward applicants believed to be homosexual. Previous work has revealed that men generally tend to react more negatively to homosexuality than do women (see Herek, 1984; LaMar & Kite, 1998; Piskur & Degelman, 1992; Shaw, Borough, & Fink, 1994). Indeed, Kite and Whitley's (1996, 1998) meta-analysis did not find gender differences in attitudes for an older population, although they did find gender differences for college students. Also, despite previous evidence that society tends to be less accepting of male homosexuality than female homosexuality (e.g., see Herek, 2000; LaMar & Kite, 1998), we did not find evidence to suggest that lesbian applicants are responded to differently than gay male applicants. It is possible that the small cell sizes that were obtained when conducting higher order interactions may have limited the statistical power of our tests of the moderating effects of employer and applicant sex. Alternatively, the nature of the interactions in our study (brief and task focused), the nature of the positions for which our con-

federates applied (i.e., positions, such as store clerks, that involve nonintimate, voluntary contact that may minimally prime threat), and our measures (behavioral rather than directly attitudinal) may account for the weaker impact of sex; behavioral forms of discrimination and self-reported attitudes are only modestly related (Dovidio, Brigham, Johnson, & Gaertner, 1996). However, the issue of the potential impact of gender in employment biases against gay and lesbian applicants and workers remains an important one for future study.

Future research also might address some of the limitations of the present field experiment. For ethical reasons, we were limited in the data that we could collect from the employee's perspective. In the current study, it would have been very informative to adopt not only the perspective of the stigmatized applicant but also to capture the perspective of the employer as well. We were not able to do that outside of having independent coders rate the perceptions that they had of the employers' behaviors while remaining unaware of the study's purpose. However, it is likely that the perspective of the coder may have been more consonant with the perspective of the naïve applicant than the perspective of the employer, who may very well have suppressed much of his or her awareness of behaviors, feelings, and sentiments regarding the applicants.

In addition, future research might include other, potentially more sensitive measures of employer discrimination. Empirically, the relatively low rate of job callbacks overall, 16%, may have limited the sensitivity for finding differences as a function of the Stigma condition. However, the other three measures of formal discrimination also showed no significant effects for stigma condition ( $.32 < p < .84$ ) even though their associated rates were more intermediate: job availability, 50%; permission to complete a job application, 66%; and permission to use the bathroom, 54%. Use of continuous measures, such as recommended salary or strength of recommendation for a position, however, might add still more sensitivity to measures of formal discrimination. We note, though, that laboratory studies of employment bias (e.g., Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000) typically show similar patterns and strength of effects for yes-no hiring decision measures and strength of recommendation scales. Moreover, methodologically, differential sensitivity of our formal and informal measures cannot account, by itself, for the different results we obtained. To empirically test the impact that differential sensitivities of our measures might have on the outcomes, we dichotomized all of the interpersonal measures and then reanalyzed the data. We specifically recomputed the five continuous dependent variables (interaction length, word count, perceived negativity [by applicants], coded negativity [by independent raters], and perceived interest) into

categorical ones based on median splits of the frequency distributions. A MANOVA across these measures revealed a significant effect for stigma,  $F(5, 55) = 2.61, p = .035, \eta^2 = .19$ , which contrasts with the MANOVA results (previously reported) for the measures of formal discrimination using the same level of measurement,  $F(4, 68) = 0.37, p = .83, \eta^2 = .02$ . Nevertheless, although we acknowledge the different practical natures of the phenomena, future researchers might profitably consider using comparable measures for assessing interpersonal and formal forms of discrimination to help ensure equivalent sensitivity of the dependent measures methodologically.

Another limitation concerns the manipulation of stigma that we used. Our research focused on applicants who publicly identified themselves as homosexual. It is possible that interviewers were responding negatively to the political activism that they attributed to wearing hats with deviant labels rather than the homosexuality stigma itself. One way of examining this might have been to have had participants with "Straight and Proud" and "Gay and Not Proud" hats apply for jobs as well, although we think that these two control groups would have been problematic (one conjures up Klu Klux Klan sentiment while the other invokes insecurity). Although future research might attempt to institute more proper controls and reduce the amount of activism that might have been sensed, the current research provides insight into those homosexual workers who might choose to "out" themselves in the workplace. Such individuals report experiencing more favorable job satisfaction and working conditions if they are "out" (e.g., see Day & Schoenrade, 1997), although a larger percentage (a percentage somewhat unknown) does indeed remain "closeted."

Similarly, future research might examine whether the current findings generalize across different jobs (i.e., elementary school teaching, nursing). Jobs that differ in the extent of contact that employers have with the public may result in varying levels of formal and interpersonal discrimination. This possibility of variance by jobs is reinforced by research showing that whereas 89% of polled Americans think that gay and lesbian individuals should be hired as salespersons, only 51% believe that they should be hired as high school teachers (see Yang, 1997).

The current study also highlights practical difficulties in documenting discrimination against gay and lesbian individuals. Methodologically, evidence of discrimination was weaker on some measures, mainly the measures of formal discrimination, than on other measures, mainly the interpersonal measures. Nevertheless, because confederates demonstrated substantial sensitivity to the interpersonal cues, interpersonal cues may still

have a profound effect on the targets of this form of bias. Not only is the issue of discrimination complex within the methodological context of the present experiment, but it is also complex when different standards of evidence are applied. Specifically, whereas psychologists may apply one particular rule ( $p < .05$ ) involving the application of inferential statistics, other standards, involving disparate outcomes, operate in different monitoring contexts. Under the four-fifths rule established by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), discrimination exists if minority applicants are hired at less than 80% of the hiring rates of majority applicants (e.g., see Riggio, 2000, p. 116). In the present study, confederates wearing the Gay and Proud hat were hired at a rate that was 77% (43%/56%) of those hired wearing the Texan and Proud cap. Thus, by one standard (level of statistical significance), no discrimination in hiring occurred; however, outside of the laboratory, these same proportions of hiring would represent sufficient standards of evidence of discrimination. Thus, it is important to consider the implications of findings of this type not only with the community of academia but also in terms of policy implications.

Nevertheless, the present work also has practical implications, particularly for recruitment and the management of organizational diversity. Whereas a great deal of research has taken the perspective of the interviewers in examining stigmatized applicants (e.g., see Heilman, Block, & Lucas, 1992), less research has examined the stigmatized applicants' perspective. Our research suggests that because of their different perspectives and consideration of different factors, employers and stigmatized applicants may have divergent perceptions of equal opportunity within an organization. Stimulated in part by a growing body of legislation against discrimination, by genuine motivations to readdress discrimination against historically underprivileged and underrepresented groups, and by the high priority given to hiring the most qualified people (see Jackson, 1991; R. R. Thomas, 1992), targeted recruiting is now beginning to focus on populations of stigmatized individuals—the same individuals who not long ago were marginalized and viewed as employment outcasts (K. M. Thomas & Wise, 1999). The current results suggest that organizations may need to be concerned not only with their formal hiring policies but also with the interpersonal aspects of the interview process. These interpersonal cues, which may be readily perceived by applicants and used to infer the extent of formal forms of employment discrimination, may be very influential in determining whether stigmatized applicants accept or reject employment offers.

In conclusion, the current study goes beyond self-report research on attitudes toward gay and lesbian indi-

viduals to explore evidence of employment discrimination. It highlights the value of considering different forms of discrimination, such as formal or interpersonal and overt or subtle, and reinforces the importance of considering the perspectives of people in stigmatized roles as well as those in the role of a potential stigmatizer (see Swim & Stangor, 1998). The different perspectives of stigmatizers and targets, and the potentially different impressions they form during mixed interactions, can produce very different impressions of the existence of bias and thus on the processes and outcomes of these interactions.

#### NOTES

1. The measurement of bathroom use might not, at first, be considered a formal measure of discrimination because there are multiple reasons why employers might not want to let customers use the bathroom (e.g., hesitancy of sharing personal space, fear of shoplifting in the backroom, fear of stigma contagion), but the presence of public restrooms in the majority of the stores makes such customer discrimination formally illegal.

2. When computing these comparisons between correlations, we controlled for the relationship between perceived employer interest and job callback (see Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

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