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Taya Ball
Univeristy of North Florida

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Sex Role and Sexual Orientation Stereotyping: Gender of Attributions and Need for Cognition

Taya Ball

Faculty Sponsors:

Dr. Christopher Leone,
Professor of Psychology

LouAnne B. Hawkins, RN, MA,
Coordinator, Undergraduate Research

Despite growing knowledge and education about various groups of people, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination remain in present society (Fiske, 1998). It is unacceptable for people to openly show dislike or favoritism toward various groups of people due to an emphasis on being politically correct in America today (Voils, Ashburn-Nardo, & Monteith, 2002). Most people today have direct contact with other diverse groups of people. People who have exposure to other diverse groups of people tend to view these other diverse groups of people at the very least as human beings with equal basic legal rights (Shelton & Richeson, 2005). People have established laws to ban discrimination against certain groups of people such as African Americans, women, and people with disabilities (<http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/qanda.html>). However, even with increased exposure and education to other diverse groups of people, some of these groups of people (i.e., homosexuals, people with mental disabilities, and the elderly) still experience stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination (Shelton & Richeson, 2005).

Stereotypes

A stereotype is a collection of attributes that are applied by an individual to another person or group of people (Fiske, 1998; Hilton & von Hippel, 1996; Snyder & Miene, 1994). Because individuals are regularly exposed to a large amount of information, it is necessary to use cognitive shortcuts to reduce the cognitive effort needed to process incoming information (Macrae, Milne, & Bodenhausen, 1994; Snyder & Miene, 1994). If an individual holds a stereotype about a certain group of people, that individual may use his or her stereotype to try and predict attributes and behaviors of a person in that certain group of people (Fiske, 1998; Hilton & von Hippel, 1996; Macrae et al., 1994). For example, if a perceiver sees a man with bright clothing, a slight build, and meticulously coiffed hair, this perceiver may believe that this man is gay because this man fits into this perceiver's stereotype of a gay male. This perceiver may also use his or her gay male stereotype to predict that this man must also be effeminate in his mannerisms and knows how to decorate houses.

Individuals use stereotypes to pay attention to stereotype-confirming information and to not pay attention to stereotype-disconfirming information (Fiske, 1998; Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000; von Hippel, Sekaquaptewa, & Vargas, 1995). Individuals form stereotypes based on what information is important to these individuals about other individuals (Fiske, 1998). When individuals notice information that is important to them, a stereotype may be triggered (Biernat & Ma, 2005; Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000). For example, a perceiver may believe it is very important to know the sexual orientations of people with whom he or she interacts. If this perceiver has a stereotype of lesbians as being masculine and meets a woman with very short hair and trousers, this stereotype-confirming information could be used by this perceiver to reinforce this perceiver's stereotype of lesbians as being masculine. However, this perceiver may not have noticed that this woman had painted fingernails and a feminine

blouse. This perceiver would not use this stereotype inconsistent information to prevent this perceiver from categorizing this woman as a lesbian and disconfirm this perceiver's stereotype of lesbians as masculine.

Individuals use information they notice about other individuals to categorize these other individuals (Fiske, 1998; Hilton & von Hippel, 1996). Because an individual may notice an attribute of another person that corresponds with a stereotype of a certain group of people, that individual may then categorize that other person as belonging to that certain group of people (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996). For example, a perceiver may interpret short hair and trousers on women as attributes of lesbians. Based on information this perceiver noticed about a woman, this perceiver may categorize this woman with short hair and trousers as a lesbian.

Individuals may interpret information about other individuals in different ways as this information relates to those individuals' stereotypes (Jackson, Sullivan, & Hodge, 1993; Pettigrew, 1979). Information can be interpreted positively, negatively, or neutrally (Jackson et al., 1993; Pettigrew, 1979). For example, one perceiver may view a man who dresses flamboyantly and has well coiffed hair as being an indicator that this man's sexual orientation is gay. Another perceiver may view this man who dresses flamboyantly and has well coiffed hair as being an indicator that this man's profession is creative.

Individuals are also more likely to remember stereotype-confirming information than to remember stereotype-disconfirming information (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996). Because individuals notice stereotype-confirming information more often than they notice stereotyping-disconfirming information, these individuals get repeated exposure to and pay more attention to stereotype-confirming information than to stereotyping-disconfirming information (Cameron & Trope, 2004; Hilton & von Hippel, 1996; Trope & Thompson, 1997). When individuals repeatedly attend to certain information, these individuals are likely to remember this certain information (Hilton &

von Hippel, 1996). For example, if a perceiver notices that a gay man wears flamboyant clothing on a daily basis, this perceiver's repeated exposure to this information may lead to a strengthening of this perceiver's stereotype of gay men dressing flamboyantly.

Individuals use stereotypes to recall attributes of another person or group of people (Fiske, 1998; Hilton & von Hippel, 1996). Because stereotype-confirming information is more effectively stored in memory than is stereotype-disconfirming information, individuals can more easily retrieve and recall from memory stereotype-confirming information than from stereotype-disconfirming information (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996). For example, when a perceiver with a stereotype of lesbians as being masculine recalls meeting a woman with short hair and trousers, this perceiver is more likely to remember this woman's short hair and trousers and less likely remember this woman's painted nails or feminine blouse.

Individuals use stereotypes to infer attributes about another person or group of people (Fiske, 1998). Individuals use stereotypes as cognitive shortcuts to reduce these individuals' cognitive effort to help these individuals predict attributes and behaviors of others (Biernat & Ma, 2005; Fiske, 1998). When individuals can predict several attributes and behaviors of others based on a few known attributes, these individuals save themselves the cognitive effort of finding out more about those others (Fiske, 1998; Hilton & von Hippel, 1996). Individuals' stereotypes of groups of people are composed of lists of attributes that these individuals expect these groups to have (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996; Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000). Individuals may use these lists of attributes to infer missing information about other individuals that these individuals have categorized as members of those stereotyped groups (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996; Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000). For example, a perceiver's stereotype about gay men as effeminate may include that gay men are flamboyantly dressed, sexually

promiscuous, artistic, and weak. When this perceiver sees a man who is flamboyantly dressed and this perceiver has categorized that man as a gay man, this perceiver may also infer that because that man is a gay man, that man must also be sexually promiscuous, artistic, and weak to match this perceiver's stereotype of a gay man.

Individuals use stereotypes to make judgments about other individuals and groups (Fiske, 1998). Stereotypes are composed of attributes about people in those stereotyped groups (Gill, 2004). Some individuals may value certain attributes and devalue other attributes. Individuals may judge people within those groups based on those attributes these individuals believe these groups possess (Gill, 2004). For example, if a perceiver has a stereotype of lesbians as being masculine, this perceiver may view women who have masculine attributes as being lesbian and also as being deviant from feminine women. This perceiver views deviation of women from being feminine as negative and will view women with masculine attributes as lesbian and also as negative. If this perceiver meets a woman with masculine attributes, this perceiver will likely classify this woman as a lesbian and have a negative attitude toward this woman. This perceiver may then be more alert to other negative attributes than to positive attributes of this woman.

Individuals use stereotypes and attitudes based on those stereotypes to react to other individuals and groups (Fiske, 1998). Discrimination occurs when individuals act in a way to the advantage or disadvantage of groups of people or of an individual perceived to belong to those groups of people based on these individuals' stereotypes of those groups of people (Fiske, 1998). Individuals are more likely to act in an advantageous manner towards members of these individuals' own group than toward members of other groups (Fiske, 1998; Hilton & von Hippel, 1996). For example, a perceiver can have a stereotype of gay men as being promiscuous. If this perceiver were to be in charge of health care for this man, this perceiver may withhold helpful safe sex information for this man

because this perceiver believes this man is promiscuous and will contract a sexually transmitted infection (STI) eventually.

Sex and Sexual Orientation Stereotypes

Individuals have stereotypes about men and women. There are both positive and negative attributes in individuals' stereotypes of men (e.g., Eagly & Mladinic, 1989; Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Rudman & Goodwin, 2004). Positive stereotype attributes about men are men are less likely than women to be gullible, men are more independent than are women, and men make decisions more easily than do women. Negative stereotype attributes about men are men are more aggressive than are women, men are more arrogant than are women, and men are more insensitive than are women. There are also both positive and negative attributes in individuals' stereotypes of women. Positive stereotype attributes about women are women are more nurturing than are men, women are more helpful than are men, and women are more aware of others' feelings than are men. Negative stereotype attributes about women are women are more submissive than are men, women are more nagging than are men, and women are more melodramatic than are men.

Individuals have stereotypes about gay men and lesbians. There are both positive and negative attributes in individuals' stereotypes of gay men (e.g., Jackson & Sullivan, 1989; Kite & Whitley, 1996; Madon, 1997; Taylor, 1983). Positive stereotype attributes about gay men are gay men are more artistic than are heterosexual men, gay men are less physically threatening than are heterosexual men, and gay men are neater than are heterosexual men. Negative stereotype attributes about gay men are gay men are more likely than heterosexual men to molest children, gay men are more flamboyant in behavior and dress than are heterosexual men, and gay men are more sexually promiscuous than are heterosexual men. There are also both positive and negative attributes in individuals' stereotypes of lesbians (Madon, 1997; Newman, 1989; Taylor, 1983; Viss & Burn, 1992). Positive

stereotype attributes about lesbians are lesbians are more independent than heterosexual women, lesbians are more intelligent than heterosexual women, and lesbians are more open-minded than heterosexual women. Negative stereotype attributes about lesbians are that lesbians are more aggressive than are heterosexual women, lesbians are more unattractive than are heterosexual women, and lesbians are more sexually deviant than are heterosexual women.

Men and women differ in how they use stereotypes about other men and women (Beauvais & Spence, 1987). When perceiving others, men and women are more likely to pay attention to sex of individuals than to other factors (e.g., Beauvais & Spence, 1987). Men and women use sex as a primary way to categorize information about other people (e.g., Beauvais & Spence, 1987). Both men and women perceive women more favorably than men (e.g., Eagly & Mladinic, 1989). Men and women may favor women to men due to many factors (e.g., Eagly & Mladinic, 1989). Some of these factors are women are perceived as less threatening than men and that negative stereotyped attributes prescribed to women are less hostile than those attributes prescribed to men (e.g., Eagly & Mladinic, 1989). If a woman succeeds at a masculine task (e.g., fixing a flat tire), her success could be perceived as due to situational causes (e.g., Swim & Sanna, 1996). If a man succeeds at a masculine task (e.g., building a desk), his success could be perceived as due to dispositional causes (e.g., Swim & Sanna, 1996).

Men and women differ in how they use stereotypes about gay men and lesbians (Herek, 2000, 2002a; Herek & Capitano, 1999). Men have more negative stereotypes about gay men than do women (e.g., Herek & Capitano, 1999; Jellison, McConnell, & Gabriel, 2004; LaMar & Kite, 1998). Men also have more negative stereotypes about gay men than about lesbians (e.g., Herek & Capitano, 1999; Jellison et al., 2004; LaMar & Kite, 1998). Men have more favorable attitudes toward lesbians than toward gay men

perhaps because men eroticize lesbian sexuality and do not eroticize gay male sexuality (e.g., Louderback & Whitley, 1997). Women have similarly negative stereotypes about both gay men and lesbians (e.g., LaMar & Kite, 1998).

The speculated reasons behind the differences in men and women's perceptions of gay men and lesbians are many. Men's attitudes toward gay men and lesbians could be influenced by sex roles (Madon, 1997). Men may view gay men and lesbians as violators of prescribed sex roles for men and women (e.g., Madon, 1997). Women's attitudes toward gay men and lesbians could be influenced by many factors (e.g., Basow & Johnson, 2000). Women consider factors such as parental attitudes and education as well as violation of sex roles when forming attitudes about gay men and lesbians (e.g., Basow & Johnson, 2000).

Individuals use sex roles to distinguish what traits are socially desirable for men and women to possess (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989). It is socially desirable for men to possess positive masculine attributes such as assertiveness and confidence (e.g., Prentice & Carranza, 2002). It is socially desirable for women to possess positive feminine attributes such as nurturance and compassion (e.g., Prentice & Carranza, 2002). It is more socially desirable for men to possess negative masculine attributes such as arrogance and greed than for men to possess negative feminine attributes such as weakness and gullibility (e.g., Prentice & Carranza, 2002). It is more socially desirable for women to possess negative feminine attributes such as anxiety and difficulty making a decision than for women to possess negative masculine attributes such as aggression and insensitivity (e.g., Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Men and women who violate these sex roles may face prejudice and discrimination against them (e.g., Jellison et al., 2004).

Men, women, homosexuals, and heterosexuals are each an ingroup (Eagly & Stewart, 1995; Fiske, 1998; Lorenzi-Cioldi, Eagly, & Stewart, 1995; Ostrom & Sedikides, 1992). An ingroup for men is other men, an

ingroup for women is other women, an ingroup for homosexuals is other homosexuals, and an ingroup for heterosexuals is other heterosexuals. Individuals favor their ingroup more than their outgroups (Fiske, 1998; Ostrom & Sedikides, 1992). An outgroup is a group of individuals who do not belong to a perceiver's ingroup (Fiske, 1998; Messick & Mackie, 1989; Ostrom & Sedikides, 1992). For example, a heterosexual man belongs to his ingroup of heterosexuals and gay men and lesbians belong to his outgroup of homosexuals. Individuals often view members of their ingroup as being more diverse (i.e., heterogenous) than members of an outgroup (e.g., De Cremer, 2001; Fiske, 1998; Lorenzi-Cioldi et al., 1995; Ostrom & Sedikides, 1992). Individuals often view members of an outgroup as more similar (i.e., homogenous) than members of their ingroup (e.g., De Cremer, 2001; Fiske, 1998; Lorenzi-Cioldi et al., 1995; Ostrom & Sedikides, 1992).

Individuals view members of an outgroup as homogenous, and these individuals may rely upon their stereotypes of these outgroups when interacting with members of an outgroup (e.g., Hegarty & Pratto, 2004; Ostrom & Sedikides, 1992). Individuals view members of their ingroups as heterogenous, and these individuals may not rely upon their stereotypes of their ingroups when interacting with members of their ingroup (e.g., Hegarty & Pratto, 2004; Ostrom & Sedikides, 1992). All people are not equally inclined to use stereotypes. Some individuals may rely upon stereotypes more than other individuals.

Whether or not individuals engage in outgroup homogeneity may depend on other individual differences (e.g., personality differences). Individual differences may be a factor in how individuals pay attention to others, categorize others, remember information about others, and infer attributes about others. One such individual difference is the extent to which individuals will process and seek out information.

Need for Cognition

One individual difference that can affect individuals' processing of information is need for cognition. Need for cognition is defined to as "an individual's tendency to engage in and enjoy effortful cognitive endeavors" (Cacioppo, Petty, & Kao, 1984, p. 306). Individuals high in need for cognition seek out a variety of information about a target and enjoy effortful thought and problem solving (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982; Cacioppo, Petty, Feinstein, & Jarvis, 1996). Individuals low in need for cognition seek out the least amount of information about a target and do not enjoy effortful thought and problem solving (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982; Cacioppo et al., 1996). Individual differences in need for cognition can be a factor in the way individuals pay attention to information, interpret information, remember information, and infer from information (Cacioppo et al., 1996; Cacioppo, Petty, & Morris, 1983).

Because individuals high in need for cognition seek out a variety of information about a target, individuals high in need for cognition are more likely than individuals low in need for cognition to pay attention to a variety of information (e.g., Verplanken, Hazenberg, & Palenewen, 1992; Weiner, 1990). If an individual pays attention to a variety of information, this individual may notice information that is stereotype-disconfirming (e.g., Verplanken et al., 1992; Weiner, 1990). With more information that may include stereotype-disconfirming information, individuals high in need for cognition may not rely upon stereotypes when perceiving others (e.g., Cacioppo et al., 1996). If a perceiver high in need for cognition, for example, meets a man wearing flamboyant clothing, this perceiver may notice other information about this man such as paint brushes in this man's pocket, expensive shoes, and a wedding band. Because individuals low in need for cognition do not tend to seek out a variety of information about a target, individuals low in need for cognition are more likely than individuals high in need for cognition to pay attention to the least amount of information needed about a target (e.g., Verplanken et al., 1992; Weiner, 1990). If an individual pays attention to a small amount of information, this individual may not notice

information that is stereotype disconfirming (e.g., Verplanken et al., 1992; Weiner, 1990). With less information that may not include stereotype-disconfirming information, individuals low in need for cognition may rely upon stereotypes when perceiving others (e.g., Cacioppo et al., 1996). If a perceiver low in need for cognition, for example, meets a man wearing flamboyant clothing, this perceiver may not notice other information about this man.

Because individuals high in need for cognition notice a variety of information about a target, individuals high in need for cognition are more likely than individuals low in need for cognition to have a variety of interpretations for information about a target (e.g., Dudley & Harris, 2003; Weiner, 1990). With many possible interpretations for information about a target/others, individuals high in need for cognition may not rely upon a single interpretation of information based on a stereotype (e.g., Sargent, 2004). A perceiver high in need for cognition, for example, may notice that a woman has short hair as well as neatly applied makeup, painted nails, and is wearing pants. Because this perceiver has a variety of information, this perceiver may form many interpretations of this information (such as the woman being a businesswoman, a lesbian, or a busy housewife) which may not be based on a stereotype (Sargent, 2004). Because individuals low in need for cognition notice the least amount of information needed about a target, individuals low in need for cognition are more likely than individuals high in need for cognition to have a small number of interpretations for information about a target (e.g., Dudley & Harris, 2003; Weiner, 1990). With few possible interpretations for information about a target, individuals low in need for cognition may rely upon a single interpretation of information based on a stereotype (e.g., Sargent, 2004). A perceiver low in need for cognition, for example, may notice only that a woman has short hair. Because this perceiver has a small amount of information, this perceiver may form only a few interpretation of this information that may be based on a stereotype (such as the woman being a lesbian because this perceiver has a stereotype of lesbians having short hair).

Because individuals high in need for cognition pay attention to a variety of information, they are more likely than individuals low in need for cognition to remember a variety of information (e.g., Cacioppo, Petty, Kao, & Rodriguez, 1986; Cacioppo et al., 1983; Kardash & Noel, 2000). Individuals high in need for cognition tend to seek out additional information about a target (Cacioppo et al., 1996). Individuals high in need for cognition may remember both stereotype confirming information and stereotype disconfirming information when recalling a target (e.g., Cacioppo et al., 1986; Cacioppo et al., 1983). A perceiver high in need for cognition, for example, may notice that a man wears flamboyant clothing, a wedding band, expensive shoes, and carries paintbrushes. This perceiver will remember a great deal of information about this man when recalling this man later. Because individuals low in need for cognition do not pay attention to a variety of information, they are more likely than individuals high in need for cognition to remember a small amount of information (e.g., Cacioppo et al., 1986; Cacioppo et al., 1983). Individuals low in need for cognition tend to use stereotypes about a target (e.g., Cacioppo et al., 1986; Cacioppo et al., 1983). Individuals low in need for cognition may remember only stereotype confirming information when recalling a target (e.g., Cacioppo et al., 1986; Cacioppo et al., 1983). A perceiver low in need for cognition, for example, may notice only that a man wears flamboyant clothing. This perceiver will remember a small amount of information about this man when recalling this man later.

Because individuals high in need for cognition pay attention to a variety of information and remember a variety of information about a target, they are more likely than individuals low in need for cognition not to infer stereotypical attributes to a target (e.g., Dudley & Harris, 2003). Individuals high in need for cognition seek out many different kinds of information about a target and do not need to infer other attributes of that target when they have collected a wealth of information about that target (e.g., Sargent, 2004). When individuals high in need for cognition do not have enough information about a target, these individuals high in need for cognition will seek it out (e.g., Levin, Huneke, & Jasper, 2000). Perceivers high in need for cognition, for example, may notice and

remember that a woman has short hair, wears makeup, has painted nails, and wears trousers. Because this perceiver has many pieces of information about that woman, this perceiver may not infer other attributes of the woman (e.g., she is into sports). Because individuals low in need for cognition do not pay attention to a variety of information and remember a variety of information about a target, they are more likely than individuals high in need for cognition to infer stereotypical attributes to a target (e.g., Dudley & Harris, 2003). Individuals low in need for cognition do not seek out many different kinds of information about a target and do not need to infer other attributes of that target because these individuals low in need for cognition do not have enough information about that target (e.g., Sargent, 2004). When individuals low in need for cognition do not have enough information about a target, these individuals low in need for cognition will rely upon their stereotypes to complete missing information (e.g., Levin et al., 2000). Perceivers low in need for cognition may notice and remember only that a woman has short hair and wears trousers. Because this perceiver has few pieces of information about that woman, this perceiver may use a stereotype to infer other attributes about that woman (e.g., she is a lesbian).

Hypotheses

Based on this review of the literature pertaining to stereotypes, need for cognition, and the attitudes of gay men and lesbians, there are a few remaining questions. The attitudes of gay men and lesbians towards heterosexuals were not as thoroughly explored as were the attitudes of heterosexuals towards gay men and lesbians. A relationship between need for cognition and use of stereotypes had also not been explored. After reviewing the literature, three hypotheses were formed. First, participants will stereotype other individuals. That is, participants will attribute masculine and feminine qualities to a target individual depending on that target individual's sex (male versus female) and sexual orientation (heterosexual versus homosexual). And second, the tendency for participants to stereotype target individuals will depend on these participants' need for cognition. That is, participants low in need for cognition will be more likely than participants high in need for cognition to stereotype target individuals

based on those target individuals' sex and sexual orientation.

Method

Participants

A total of 276 participants were recruited for this study. One hundred sixty-seven students were recruited from undergraduate psychology classes for this study. Participants recruited from undergraduate psychology classes received extra credit in their classes for their participation. Participants were able to choose from many other studies to receive extra credit. One hundred nine participants were recruited from an annual Gay Pride event during August 2004. The participants recruited from this Gay Pride event received a non-alcoholic beverage as compensation for their participation. All of the participants volunteered to take part in a study titled "Individual Differences in Perceptions of Social Groups."

There were 159 females and 117 males in this sample. Most participants (68%) were between the ages of 18 and 25 and were either currently enrolled in a university or had obtained an undergraduate degree. This sample is therefore atypical (Sears, 1986). Sears (1986) had found that participants who have been involved in college tend to be more open-minded and have been exposed to a wider variety of people. Therefore, results from this study may not generalize to the general US population. Participants' mean age was 25.95 years ($SD=9.18$ years). Participants' modal age was 20 years.

There were 213 *Caucasian/White* participants, 23 *African American/Black* participants, 21 *Hispanic/Latino* participants, 10 *Asian/Pacific Islander* participants, and 9 participants who chose *other* when asked about their race. There were 169 participants that identified themselves as *heterosexual* and 107 participants that identified themselves as *non-heterosexual* (homosexual, bisexual, or transgendered). The researcher of this study discarded data from surveys in which a participant did not specify a sexual orientation or in which a participant wrote in a sexual

orientation that could not be classified as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or transgendered.

Participants were given informed consent forms and were required to read and agree to information in this informed consent before continuing in this study. All participants were treated in accordance with the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (American Psychological Association, 2002).

Procedure

The method of gathering data at the Gay Pride event was slightly different from the method of gathering data at the University of North Florida. Participants recruited from the Gay Pride event were approached by a female researcher and asked to volunteer for a study. These participants were given a brief overview of this study and what was expected of them as participants. Participants were seated with up to three other participants at a table and all participants were given an informed consent form. She explained this informed consent to these participants. Participants were given an option to keep this informed consent form after they read it. Participants from the Gay Pride event did not sign these informed consent forms in order to preserve anonymity. Anonymity was crucial in order to establish good rapport with these participants due to the sensitive nature of their sexual orientation. This researcher reminded participants that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to leave at any time should they become uncomfortable. Participants verbally agreed to continue their participation in this study after reading an informed consent.

Participants recruited from the University of North Florida volunteered for this study by signing up on a bulletin board in the university's psychology department. Participants were called or e-mailed by this researcher an evening before their appointment to remind them of the time and location for which they had signed up. Participants were taken into a room and seated with up to five other participants at a

table. A female researcher handed each participant an informed consent form to read. She informed participants of the general purpose of this study, the importance of this study, participants' right to withdraw at any time, the anticipated risks of this study, and the box where participants were to put their questionnaires upon completion. Participants verbally agreed to continue their participation in this study after reading an informed consent. There were no other procedural differences between the manner in which participants were recruited from the Gay Pride event and the manner in which participants were recruited from the University of North Florida.

This researcher gave participants a five-page questionnaire and asked participants to write their responses directly on this questionnaire. Participants were instructed not to put any identifying information on their questionnaires. Participants were randomly assigned one of four questionnaires: (1) a questionnaire in which participants were asked for their attitudes about a typical lesbian/homosexual woman on the first page and then asked for their attitudes about a typical gay/homosexual man on the second page, (2) a questionnaire in which participants were asked for their attitudes about a typical gay/homosexual man on the first page and then asked for their attitudes about a typical lesbian/homosexual woman on the second page, (3) a questionnaire in which participants were asked for their attitudes about a typical straight/heterosexual man on the first page and then asked for their attitudes about a typical straight/heterosexual woman on the second page, and (4) a questionnaire in which participants were asked for their attitudes about a typical straight/heterosexual woman on the first page and then asked for their attitudes about a typical straight/heterosexual man on the second page. Order of the sex and sexual orientation of these targets was counterbalanced to control for possible priming effects that sex and/or sexual orientation may have had on these participants' attitudes.

Participants were asked to indicate their attitudes toward each target using 40 items taken directly from the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974). Examples of items were 'Makes decisions easily,' 'Warm,' and 'Acts as a leader.' In the Bem Sex Role Inventory there was a 20-item Masculinity subscale and a 20-item Femininity subscale. Participants could have viewed each target person as masculine and/or as feminine. Examples of items on the Masculinity subscale were 'Self-reliant,' 'Athletic,' and 'Assertive.' Examples of items on the Femininity subscale were 'Yielding,' 'Affectionate,' and 'Sensitive to the needs of others.'

Participants judged these targets using a 5-point scale with response options labeled (a) *not at all characteristic*, (b) *mostly not characteristic*, (c) *sometimes characteristic*, (d) *mostly characteristic*, and (e) *completely characteristic*. Responses to items on the Masculinity and Femininity subscales of the Bem Sex Role Inventory were scored separately. Responses to individual items were scored by assigning a numerical score of 1 to (a), 2 to (b), 3 to (c), 4 to (d), and 5 to (e). Participants' responses were scored to yield a separate score on both the Masculinity subscale and the Femininity subscale of the Bem Sex Role Inventory. Scores on the Masculinity subscale and scores on the Femininity subscale of the Bem Sex Role Inventory were summed separately to indicate the participant's attitude toward each target person. Participants who viewed a target person as masculine obtained scores on the Masculinity subscale of the Bem Sex Role Inventory that ranged from 70-100 and obtained scores on the Femininity subscale of the Bem Sex Role Inventory that ranged from 20-69. Participants who viewed a target person as feminine obtained scores on the Masculinity subscale of the Bem Sex Role Inventory that ranged from 20-69 and obtained scores on the Femininity subscale of the Bem Sex Role Inventory that ranged from 70-100.

Several researchers (Bem, 1974; Bem, 1981; Wilson & Cook, 1984) have found

scores on the Bem Sex Role Inventory to be reliable on both the Masculinity (Cronbach's alphas of .86, .86, and .88, respectively) and Femininity (Cronbach's alphas of .80, .82, and .78, respectively) subscales. Bem reported test-retest reliability correlations in her 1974 study for scores on the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Masculinity $r=.90$, Femininity $r=.90$). The test-retest reliability found on scores in Bem's (1974) study has also been supported by Yanico (1985), in which female students from a university were tested twice over a 4-year interval. Yanico found a test-retest correlation after the 4-year testing interval for scores on both the Masculinity ($r=.56$) and the Femininity ($r=.68$) subscales of the Bem Sex Role Inventory.

In this study, when a target was a heterosexual man, a Cronbach's alpha of .89 was obtained from participants' scores on the Masculinity subscale of the Bem Sex Role Inventory and a Cronbach's alpha of .87 was obtained from participants' scores on the Femininity subscale of the Bem Sex Role Inventory. When a target was a heterosexual woman, a Cronbach's alpha of .86 was obtained from participants' scores on the Masculinity subscale of the Bem Sex Role Inventory and a Cronbach's alpha of .86 was obtained from participants' scores on the Femininity subscale of the Bem Sex Role Inventory. When a target person was a homosexual man, a Cronbach's alpha of .81 was obtained from participants' scores on the Masculinity subscale of the Bem Sex Role Inventory and a Cronbach's alpha of .79 was obtained from participants' scores on the Femininity subscale of the Bem Sex Role Inventory. When a target person was a homosexual woman, a Cronbach's alpha of .83 was obtained from participants' scores on the Masculinity subscale of the Bem Sex Role Inventory and a Cronbach's alpha of .84 was obtained from participants' scores on the Femininity subscale of the Bem Sex Role Inventory.

Bem (1974) found scores on the Masculinity subscale and the Femininity subscale of the Bem Sex Role Inventory to be independent of one another. Bem found no

correlation between scores on the Bem Sex Role Inventory and scores on the Guilford-Zimmerman Temperament Survey tests used to diagnose being bipolar. Many researchers (e.g., Bohannon & Mills, 1979; Evans & Dinning, 1982; Volentine, 1981) have found a correlation between scores on the Fe scale of the CPI and scores on the Bem Sex Role Inventory. Although the Bem Sex Role Inventory was designed using a normative sample gathered from a college-aged population, the Bem Sex Role Inventory has been administered to people from many age ranges without serious measurement problems (Lenney, 1991).

On all four versions of the questionnaire used in this study, there were questions about demographic information on the third page of this questionnaire. Participants indicated their age by writing their actual age on a blank line. Participants indicated their race/ethnicity by circling either (a) *Caucasian/White*, (b) *African American/Black*, (c) *Hispanic/Latino*, (d) *Asian/Pacific Islander*, or (e) *Other*. Participants indicated their highest completed level of education by circling either (a) *No high school diploma or GED*, (b) *High school diploma or GED*, (c) *Some college, but no degree*, (d) *Bachelor's degree*, or (e) *Some graduate education or graduate degree*. Participants indicated their sexual orientation by circling either (a) *Homosexual*, (b) *Bisexual*, (c) *Transgender*, or (d) *Heterosexual*. Participants indicated how "open" they were about their sexual orientation by circling either (a) *Completely open*, (b) *Open to most people*, (c) *Open to some people*, (d) *Open to a few people*, or (e) *Not at all open*. Participants who had indicated that they were Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, or Transgendered also indicated how long they had identified as such by circling either (a) *Less than 1 year*, (b) *1 to 5 years*, (c) *6-10 years*, or (d) *More than 10 years*.

The fourth and fifth pages of this questionnaire were the 18-item Need for Cognition Scale (Cacioppo, Petty, & Kao, 1984). Cacioppo and Petty (1982) designed

the Need for Cognition Scale to assess individual differences in participants' need for cognition. Participants read self-descriptive statements of situations and ideas (e.g., "I only think as hard as I have to"). Participants then agreed or disagreed with these statements. Participants responded to these statements using a 5-point Likert scale: (a) *strongly disagree*, (b) *disagree*, (c) *neutral*, (d) *agree*, and (e) *strongly agree*. Half of the items on the Need for Cognition Scale were positively worded for need for cognition (e.g., "I would prefer complex to simple problems."). Agreement on these items indicated a high need for cognition (Cacioppo, et al., 1984). The other half of the items on the Need for Cognition Scale were negatively worded for need for cognition (e.g., "I like tasks that require little thought once I've learned them."). Agreement on these items indicated a low need for cognition (Cacioppo, et al., 1984).

Responses to items on the Need for Cognition Scale that were negatively worded were reverse scored. Scores on individual items were summed. Scores on the Need for Cognition Scale could range from 18-90. Participants were categorized as either high in need for cognition or as low in need for cognition according to a median split of scores on the Need for Cognition Scale.

The researcher chose the 18-item Need for Cognition Scale as opposed to the 34-item Need for Cognition Scale for this study. Scores on both versions of the Need for Cognition Scale were found to be highly correlated ($r=.95$) with each other (Cacioppo, et al., 1984; Cacioppo et al., 1996). Several researchers (e.g., Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992; Kernis, Granneman, & Barclay, 1992; Verplanken, 1993) have found scores on the Need for Cognition Scale to be internally consistent and reliable (Cronbach's alphas of greater than or equal to .85). Sadowski and Gulgoz (1992) found a test-retest reliability of .88 over a 7-week testing interval using the 18-item Need for Cognition Scale. A Cronbach's alpha of .86 was derived from scores obtained from the current sample using the 18-item Need for Cognition Scale.

Researchers have found a high need for cognition as defined by scores on measures of Need for Cognition to be positively related to behavior such as enjoying thought, actively pursuing information, seeking out and focusing on relevant information when making decisions (Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992), being open-minded (Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992), and using empirical facts on which to base their judgments (Leary, Sheppard, McNeil, Jenkins, & Barnes, 1986). In contrast, researchers have found a high need for cognition as defined by scores on measures of Need for Cognition to be negatively related to behavior such as a tendency to (a) overlook or ignore information that is new (Venkatraman, Marlino, Kardes, & Skylar, 1990), (b) prefer predictable situations and people (Petty & Jarvis, 1996; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), (c) be close-minded (Petty & Jarvis, 1996; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), and (d) be decisive (Petty & Jarvis, 1996; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994).

While participants completed their questionnaires, a researcher remained nearby to answer any questions and to watch for signs of distress. This researcher was able to refer participants recruited from the University of North Florida to a counseling service on campus if necessary. Participants placed their completed questionnaires in an unmarked box at the end of a table and collected their beverage if recruited from Pride or their extra credit slip if recruited from the University of North Florida before leaving this testing area.

Results

The design of this study was a 2 (participant need for cognition: high or low) by 2 (target sex: male or female) by 2 (target sexual orientation: heterosexual or non-heterosexual) by 2 (gender of attributions: masculine or feminine) factorial design. The between-subjects predictor variables of this study were participant need for cognition and target sexual orientation. The within-subjects predictor variables of this study were gender attributions and target sex. The criterion

variable of this study was participant ratings of targets on a measure of masculinity and femininity. Results were analyzed using an analysis of variance procedure.

Preliminary Analyses

Because participant sex and participant need for cognition were measured and not manipulated, it was necessary to run preliminary data analyses to determine if there was multicollinearity between these variables. A chi-square analysis was run with participant sex (male versus female) and participant need for cognition (high versus low) as independent variables. Participant sex was not significantly related to participant need for cognition, $\chi^2(1, N = 276) = 1.12, p = 0.29$. In this sample, participant sex was not confounded with participant need for cognition.

Main Analyses

It was predicted that participants would engage in stereotyping targets by making certain personality attributions of these targets. Specifically, it was expected that participants would engage in stereotyping by attributing more masculine than feminine qualities to heterosexual male targets, by attributing more feminine than masculine qualities to heterosexual female targets, by attributing more feminine qualities to homosexual male targets than to heterosexual male targets, and by attributing more masculine qualities to homosexual female targets than to heterosexual female targets. Support for this hypothesis is found in the introduction of this paper. This tendency to stereotype was expected to be more evident for participants low in need for cognition than for participants high in need for cognition. Support for this hypothesis would be evident by a four-way interaction between the following variables: participant need for cognition (high vs. low), target sexual orientation (heterosexual vs. homosexual), target sex (male vs. female), and gender of attributions (masculine vs. feminine).

Main Effects. There was a main effect of target sex on participant ratings of targets across measures of both masculinity and femininity, $F(1, 272) = 19.07, p < .01$. Participants made more extreme ratings of female targets ($M = 69.17, SD = 5.68$) than of male targets ($M = 64.86, SD = 5.30$) regardless of participant need for cognition, target sexual orientation, and attribution gender.

There was also a main effect of attribution gender on participant ratings across all targets, $F(1, 272) = 63.29, p < .01$. Participants made more extreme ratings on masculine items ($M = 67.38, SD = 6.47$) than on feminine items ($M = 63.65, SD = 6.03$) regardless of participant need for cognition, target sex, or target sexual orientation.

Interactions. There was a two-way interaction between target sex and attribution gender on participant ratings of targets across measures of both masculinity and femininity, $F(1, 272) = 72.82, p < .01$. This two-way interaction was qualified by a three-way interaction which involved target sex, attribution gender, and target sexual orientation, $F(1, 272) = 419.46, p < .001$. This three-way interaction was qualified by a four-way interaction which involved target sex, target sexual orientation, attribution gender in addition, and participant need for cognition, $F(1, 272) = 4.02, p < .05$.

This four-way interaction was broken down into two “simple” three-way interactions (target sex, participant need for cognition, and gender of attributions) blocking on target sexual orientation. This simple three-way interaction was not reliable when the target sexual orientation was homosexual, $F < 1.00$. In other words, this simple three-way interaction was, however, reliable when the target sexual orientation was heterosexual, $F(1, 138) = 4.81, p < .01$.

This reliable simple three-way interaction with heterosexual targets was then broken down into two “simple” two-way interactions (target sex and gender of attribution) blocking on participant need for cognition. This simple two-way interaction

was reliable with participants low in need for cognition, $F(1, 69) = 132.62, p < .01$. This simple two-way interaction was also reliable with participants high in need for cognition, $F(1, 69) = 212.12, p < .01$.

Both reliable simple two-way interactions were then broken down into “simple” main effects using gender of the attribution. There was a simple main effect for attribution gender for participants low in need for cognition rating heterosexual male targets, $F(1, 69) = 107.08, p < .01$. Individuals low in need for cognition rated heterosexual male targets as more masculine ($M = 73.60, SD = 8.25$) than feminine ($M = 55.83, SD = 8.80$). There also was a simple main effect for gender for participants low in need for cognition rating heterosexual female targets, $F(1, 69) = 93.54, p < .01$. Individuals low in need for cognition rated heterosexual female targets as more feminine ($M = 71.63, SD = 6.45$) than masculine ($M = 60.29, SD = 7.19$).

Similarly, there was a simple main effect for gender for participants high in need for cognition rating heterosexual male targets, $F(1, 69) = 167.44, p < .01$. Individuals high in need for cognition also rated heterosexual male targets as more masculine ($M = 76.43, SD = 9.41$) than feminine ($M = 53.70, SD = 8.78$). Additionally, there was a simple main effect for gender for participants high in need for cognition rating heterosexual female targets, $F(1, 69) = 85.03, p < .01$. Individuals high in need for cognition also rated heterosexual female targets as more feminine ($M = 74.44, SD = 8.68$) than masculine ($M = 60.2, SD = 8.67$).

In short, participants high in need for cognition made more extreme masculine ratings of heterosexual male targets than did participants low in need for cognition. Participants high in need for cognition also made more extreme feminine ratings of heterosexual female targets than did participants low in need for cognition. In this sample, individuals high in need for cognition were apparently more likely than individuals low in need for cognition to rely upon sex role stereotypes when thinking about heterosexual persons.

Discussion

There were two hypotheses in this study about stereotyping and need for cognition. It was hypothesized that participants would stereotype other individuals (targets) such that participants would attribute masculine and feminine qualities to a target depending on that target's sex (male versus female) and sexual orientation (heterosexual versus homosexual). Specifically, participants would stereotype heterosexual men as more masculine than feminine and heterosexual women as more feminine than masculine. Similarly, participants would stereotype homosexual men as more feminine than masculine and homosexual women as more masculine than feminine. It was also hypothesized that participants would stereotype more or less depending on these participants' need for cognition. Specifically, it was expected that participants low in need for cognition would be more likely than participants high in need for cognition to stereotype target individuals based on those target individuals' sex and sexual orientation.

The first hypothesis of this study was largely supported. Participants stereotyped targets based on target sex and target sexual orientation. As expected, participants thought heterosexual male targets had more masculine traits than feminine traits. Similarly, participants thought heterosexual female targets had more feminine traits than masculine traits. These results are consistent with other results in which researchers found that men were thought of as more masculine than feminine and women were thought of as more feminine than masculine (e.g., Eagly & Mladinic, 1989; Lenney, 1991; Prentice & Carranza, 2002).

As expected, participants thought of homosexual female targets as possessing more masculine traits than feminine traits. Other researchers have also found that participants thought of homosexual women as violating traditional feminine sex-roles (e.g., Jellison, McConnell, & Gabriel, 2004; Taylor, 1983) and thought of homosexual women as

being similar to heterosexual men (e.g., Kite & Deaux, 1987).

Contrary to expectations, participants did not think homosexual male targets had more feminine traits than masculine traits. Instead, participants thought homosexual male targets were androgynous. Androgynous individuals have both masculine traits and feminine traits (Bem, 1974). These results are consistent with other results in which researchers found that homosexual men were thought of as more androgynous than as masculine or feminine. For example, McDonald and Moore (1978) found that homosexual men viewed themselves as more androgynous than as feminine or as masculine. Similarly, Robinson, Skeen, and Flake-Hobson (1982) conducted research using both homosexual and heterosexual male participants. These researchers found that homosexual men are more comfortable thinking of themselves as androgynous than are heterosexual men. Contrary to these findings, other researchers found that participants thought of homosexual men as violating traditional masculine sex-roles (e.g., Jellison, McConnell, & Gabriel, 2004; Madon, 1997) and thought of homosexual men as being similar to heterosexual women (e.g., Kite & Deaux, 1987; Madon, 1997).

The second hypothesis of this study was not supported. Participants low in need for cognition did not stereotype more than participants high in need for cognition. Contrary to this hypothesis, participants high in need for cognition stereotyped more than did participants low in need for cognition. This finding was significant when participants were asked to think about heterosexual male but not heterosexual female, homosexual male, or homosexual female targets. This finding is partially supported by other researchers such as Crawford and Skowronski (1998) who found that participants high in need for cognition and participants low in need for cognition both use stereotypes. Haugvedt and Petty (1992) also found that when presented with an unfamiliar target, participants high in need for cognition and participants low in need for cognition both

had similar attitudes about an unfamiliar target. It is possible that a portion of participants in this sample did not have much personal exposure with groups such as homosexual men and homosexual women. This lack of exposure to groups such as homosexual men and homosexual women would make these groups unfamiliar to participants high in need for cognition and low in need for cognition. If these targets were unfamiliar to participants high in need for cognition and low in need for cognition, then these participants could have similar thoughts about these unfamiliar groups.

Participants also could have been influenced by situational factors such as cognitive load (Dudley & Harris, 2002). A heavy cognitive load occurs when individuals experience a large amount of information (Dudley & Harris, 2002). Because individuals must expend some cognitive resources separating important information from unimportant information, these individuals may not be able to focus on relevant information (Dudley & Harris, 2002). These individuals may then spend little time thinking about a target based on that target's individual characteristics and rely heavily on heuristics such as stereotypes to lessen cognitive load (Dudley & Harris, 2002). If participants high in need for cognition were experiencing a heavy cognitive load during this study, then these participants may have also used stereotypes.

Plausible Alternative Explanations

There are a few plausible alternative explanations for the results of this study. It is possible that participants engaged in socially desirable responding. Participants could have been attempting to appear socially appropriate by responding to questions according to widely held stereotypes about men and women as well as homosexuals and heterosexuals. To mitigate this possible alternative explanation, participants were informed that their answers would be anonymous. However, it is still possible that participants felt some pressure to respond in a socially desirable manner. Given the

methodology of this study (i.e., anonymity of answers and participation), this possible alternative explanation is not plausible. Additionally, participants did not respond as expected. Participants thought of gay men as being androgynous. A widely held stereotype about gay men is that gay men are more feminine than masculine (e.g., Jackson & Sullivan, 1989; Kite & Whitley, 1996; Madon, 1997). Thus, participants did not engage in socially desirable responding because they did not respond with this widely held stereotype about gay men.

It is possible that participants high in need for cognition and participants low in need for cognition both stereotype for different reasons. Participants high in need for cognition are less likely than participants low in need for cognition to use simple heuristics (Cacioppo et al., 1996). Participants high in need for cognition, however, are more likely than participants low in need for cognition to have exposure to media such as newspapers and television (Cacioppo et al., 1996). People in the media often rely upon sex role and sexual orientation stereotypes (e.g., Hurtz & Durkin, 2004; Kolbe & Langefeld, 1993; Renn & Calvert, 1993). The more individuals are exposed to information, the easier these individuals can access this information (Schneider, 2004). Because participants high in need for cognition could have had more exposure than participants low in need for cognition to these sex role and sexual orientation stereotypes in the media, participants high in need for cognition could have been primed by this repeated media exposure to respond to questions in this study using stereotypes (Cacioppo et al., 1983).

Limitations

There were a few limitations of this study. One limitation was the methodology used in this study. Participants were asked to answer self-report measures about broad categories of people. These results may not have been the same had the researchers of this study looked at participants' behavior. Another way to measure participants' stereotypes would be to use tests such as the

Implicit Association Test (IAT) which is used to measure participant response time (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). Participants respond faster to words that are consistent with these participants' stereotypes than to words that are inconsistent with these participants' stereotypes (e.g., Brendl, Markman, & Messner, 2001; Greenwald et al, 1998; Rudman, Greenwald, Mellott, & Schwartz, 1999). If participants were asked to think about lesbians and these participants had a stereotype that lesbians were masculine, for example, then these participants would respond faster if presented with a word that was consistent with his/her stereotype such as "aggressive" than if presented with a word that was inconsistent with his/her stereotype such as "gentle." Another way to measure participants' stereotypes would be to use tests such as the "startle eye blink." Mahaffey, Bryan, and Hutchinson (2005) used the "startle eye blink" measure to look at participants' affective responses to homosexual men, homosexual women, and homosexual couples. These researchers found that when participants with a strong anti-gay bias were exposed to photographs of homosexuals, these participants had a strong physiological reaction (i.e., blinking).

Another limitation of this study was recruitment of participants. Approximately half of the participants in this study were recruited from a mid-sized north Florida university whereas approximately half of the participants in this study were recruited from a Gay Pride event in north Florida. Participants recruited from the university setting may have had different expectations about this study than did participants recruited from the Gay Pride event. Participants recruited from the university were tested within a lab at the university and these participants could have been primed by their setting to take this study more seriously than did participants recruited at the Gay Pride event. Participants recruited at the Gay Pride event were tested outdoors within the context of a celebration and these participants could have been primed by their setting to take this

study less seriously than did participants recruited at the university.

Future Directions

Future directions for this area of research include broadening the nature of targets. For example, there are only a few researchers who have looked at people's perceptions of bisexual men and women (e.g., Herek, 2002). Additionally, there are only a few researchers who have looked at what homosexuals think of groups such as heterosexuals and bisexuals (e.g., Lyons, Brenner, & Fassinger, 2005; White & Franzini, 1999). Lack of research on the views of homosexuals, bisexuals, and transgendered individuals may have a negative impact on matters such as social policy and law making. Many people who make laws, policies, and medical research consider only a population made up of heterosexual men and women and rarely consider homosexual, bisexual, or transgendered individuals. This lack of consideration leads to biased laws, policies, and medical research.

Other future directions include looking at behavior rather than answers on a self-report measure. The researchers of this study looked at participants' responses on a questionnaire and not at what participants would actually do when interacting with a gay or lesbian individual. It would be interesting to look at what participants thought about homosexual men and women when answering a questionnaire and then to look at how these same participants interacted with an individual who was gay or lesbian. Researchers that looked at both participants' responses to questionnaires and then looked at these same participants' interactions with individuals who were gay or lesbian might find a correlation between reported attitudes and behavior may be established. Alternatively, it would be interesting to see if participants who interacted with a gay or lesbian individual would later have stronger or weaker stereotypes about homosexual men and women based on these participants' interactions with gay and lesbian individuals.

Other future directions include looking at how stereotyped groups such as gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals are treated by health care providers and medical researchers. For example, other researchers have found that lesbians and bisexual women engage in many risky sexual behaviors and are exposed to sexually transmitted diseases (e.g., Champion, Wilford, Shain, & Piper, 2005; Morrow & Allsworth, 2000). Due to this lack of research and information about lesbians, most medical information about females is written specifically about heterosexual women (e.g., Arend, 2005; Youngman & Meryn, 2004). Other researchers have found that gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals have had unsatisfactory experiences with health care providers due to these health care providers' lack of knowledge about gay, lesbian, and bisexual health needs (e.g., Allen, Glicklen, beach, & Naylor, 1998; Beehler, 2001; Bonvicini & Perlin, 2003). Additionally, health care providers may have stereotypes about gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals that could bias how health care providers treat gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals (e.g., Beehler, 2001; Dean, Meyer, Robinson, Sell, Sember, Silenzio et al., 2000).

Conclusions

Individuals use stereotypes when perceiving men and women as well as homosexuals and heterosexuals. The way individuals use stereotypes may affect the way these individuals judge groups of people such as men and women as well as homosexuals and heterosexuals. Stereotypes, even though used by everyone, can be harmful when used to create laws and social sanctions on certain groups. Negative stereotypes about groups such as homosexuals can lead to discrimination based on membership in these stereotyped groups. People who discriminate against homosexuals may commit acts of discrimination which include violence. For example, recall the well publicized murder of Matthew Sheppard in Laramie, Wyoming

(<http://abcnews.go.com/2020/print?id=277685>). Matthew was beaten and left to die in the cold by a group of young men who knew that Matthew was gay. People who discriminate against homosexuals have also supported laws which separate homosexuals from the majority in an unequal way by refusing certain privileges or rights. For example, the Defense of Marriage Act (1996) was written to prevent homosexuals from marrying. Law makers defined marriage as one man and one woman. So, gay men and lesbians cannot get married. Married couples gain many federal rights and protections such as tax breaks and hospital visitation. If more individuals were made aware of the prevalence of stereotypes and the inaccuracies of these stereotypes, there is a chance that these negative stereotypes can be dispelled and groups such as gay men and lesbians can gain equal rights and experience less violence and discrimination than gay men and lesbians have experienced in the past.

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