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Attitudes, Subjective Experiences, and Behaviors in Imagined and Actual Encounters Between Gay and Heterosexual People

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ABSTRACT. Across four studies, we assessed the relationship between participants' attitudes toward gay men and their experiences during either imagined or actual interpersonal encounters with gay men. In the first three studies, participants imagined interactions with gay men and either responded in an open-ended or a closed-ended fashion. In these imagined interactions, participants reported that they expected to have considerable agreement between their attitudes and their subjective experiences during the intergroup encounter. However, during actual interactions, there were no differences between members of different prejudice

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levels in their responses to the gay confederate. A comparison of the actual and imagined interactions demonstrated that high prejudice people are particularly unlikely to have subjective experiences that match their negative attitudes concerning actual interpersonal encounters. doi:10.1300/J082v53n03_04 [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2007 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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INTRODUCTION

Gay men experience a variety of negative responses from some heterosexuals ranging from negative attitudes (Herek, 1984; Kite & Deaux, 1986) to actual verbal or physical attacks. For example, 94% of gay men and lesbians surveyed reported that they had experienced verbal or physical abuse as a result of their sexual orientation at some point in their lives (Berrill, 1992). However, heterosexuals as a group today are more likely to express positive attitudes toward gay men than in the recent past (e.g., Herek, 1994; Norris, 1991). For people who are interested in promoting the well-being of gay people, understanding interpersonal encounters between gay and straight people is important because gay men and lesbians live in a predominantly heterosexual world. How do straight people react to interactions with gay people? To understand this issue, we considered the relationship between *attitudes* toward gay people and *behaviors* toward gay people. We believe that examining both types of responses to gays can better illuminate interpersonal relationships between gay and heterosexual people.

The Relationship Between Attitudes and Behaviors

The famous travels of Richard LaPiere and his Chinese companions launched decades of research on the dissociation between attitudes and behavior. In a widely cited paper, LaPiere (1934) recounted his experiences traversing the country with a Chinese couple. According to LaPiere, although proprietors allowed LaPiere and his Chinese companions to visit their establishments, they later indicated to him by

telephone and letter that they would not accept Chinese customers. LaPiere's description of his experiences traveling across the country with a Chinese couple has become literally a textbook case of the dissociation between attitudes and behaviors and has been conceptualized as one of the motivations for research on the frequent absence of an obvious link between attitudes and behaviors. Following LaPiere's article, researchers for several decades attempted to ascertain the conditions under which attitudes might predict behaviors and ultimately identified specific circumstances in which attitudes do predict behavior (For a review, see Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Although by no means methodologically rigorous, in the context of understanding the processes of prejudice and discrimination toward gay people, LaPiere's demonstration raised many important questions. Notably, how can gay people know when someone has prejudicial attitudes toward them, if those negative attitudes are not accurately demonstrated through prejudicial behaviors during interpersonal encounters?

Although the lack of association between attitudes and behaviors has been demonstrated across a wide variety of attitude objects, many classical studies of intergroup interaction did not even include measures of prejudice, presumably because the researchers assumed that such measures would only reveal false low prejudice attitudes that were expressed as a result of social pressure to appear nonprejudiced (e.g., Word, Zanna & Cooper, 1974; Cuenot & Fugita, 1982). In this research, we examined associations between prejudicial attitudes, expected reactions, and actual thoughts, feelings, reactions and other experiences (subjective experiences) that heterosexual people reported in real encounters with a gay male.¹ Subjective experiences are contrasted with expected reactions (the experiences people expect to have when imagining interactions) and public reactions (the experiences people publicly display during intergroup encounters).

Interpersonal Encounters Between Different Groups and Attitude-Behavior Relationships

Interpersonal interactions between members of different groups have been a classic focus in social psychology and have been documented to be tense and uncomfortable (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). In, probably, the most famous study in this domain, Word, Zanna and Cooper (1974) found that when White participants interacted with a Black confederate they reacted with nervous mannerisms, such as speech errors, increased distance from the confederate, increased use of fillers such as "ums" and

“ers,” avoidance of eye contact and other nervous behaviors (see also Cuenot & Fugita, 1982). Some researchers argued that unobtrusive behavioral measures such as those used in the study by Word, Zanna and Cooper (1974) are more veridical tests of prejudice than more traditional self-report measures (Crosby, Bromley & Saxe, 1980; Cuenot & Fugita, 1982; Word, Zanna & Cooper, 1974). That is, although people state that they are nonprejudiced toward members of a given group, their true (prejudiced) attitudes are thought to be evidenced by these avoidant nonverbal behaviors. Thus, when intergroup encounters have been studied at the interpersonal level (Cuenot & Fugita, 1982; Weitz, 1972; Word, Zanna & Cooper, 1974), the focus has often been on attempts to “catch” members of the dominant group (e.g., heterosexual people, or Whites) in their expression of prejudice toward members of a marginalized group (e.g., gay people, or African Americans). Therefore, consistent with LaPiere’s original investigation, much of the early research in this area began with the assumption that attitudes would not correspond with behaviors.

Most of this interpersonal encounter research also made no distinction between people who expressed negative attitudes toward the groups with whom they were interacting, and those who did not. However, other research suggests that there are substantial differences in the way people of different levels of prejudice respond to intergroup situations. Devine, Monteith, Zuwerink and Elliot (1991) demonstrated that participants’ self-reported prejudice levels toward gay people predicted how easy it was for them to behave consistently with their attitudes. For example, Devine et al. (1991) utilized a *should/would* paradigm and found that people very low in reported prejudice levels were the most likely to report that they *would* respond to gay men consistently with how they felt that they *should* respond. Moderately prejudiced people reported more discrepancies between how they felt that they should react and how they would react, and even some people who were very high in prejudice responded with more prejudice than they thought acceptable. In other words, these groups expected to behave in ways that were more prejudiced than they thought appropriate.

Our interpretation of this finding is that Devine et al. (1991) elucidated a greater attitude-behavior relationship among people who are very low in prejudice toward gay men than people who are moderate or high in prejudice: People who are very low in prejudice seem to be more skilled at translating their low-prejudice standards into low-prejudice behaviors than do moderately low-prejudice people (Evet, 1996). However, we have no evidence that high-prejudice people try to act in a high-prejudice

manner but are unsuccessful in doing so. Based on further research concerning individual differences in prejudice (Devine, Evett & Vasquez-Suson, 1996; Evett, 1996), a further distinction was made between moderately low-prejudice and very low-prejudice people. Based on this research, we expected that moderately low-prejudice people would be especially unlikely to behave in actual interactions in a way that would be consistent with their attitudes (relative to very low- or high-prejudice people; cf. Devine, Evett & Vasquez-Suson, 1996). As a result, in this research, we examined separately the responses of people who score very low and moderately low in prejudice.

Social Norms as an Explanation for the Lack of a Relationship Between Attitudes and Behaviors

Explanations for the lack of association between attitudes and behavior in the LaPiere study have been based largely on social norms. One major explanation for the results that LaPiere demonstrated is that social norms prohibiting rudeness prevented participants from expression of the negative beliefs that they were subjectively feeling (e.g., Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). According to this perspective, although the proprietors in LaPiere's demonstration privately did not want to comply with the request to serve Chinese people, they publicly did so. Therefore, although their behavior changed, according to a social norms explanation, their subjective experience remained the same. In the logic of this analysis, the participants in LaPiere's demonstration were grudgingly engaging in behavior inconsistent with their personally held beliefs.

In the current research, we focus on the individual's subjective experience in intergroup situations as a way to understand the lack of association between attitudes and behaviors in these situations. If participants' behaviors in LaPiere's demonstration did not match their expressed opinions because of social norms, then although their observable behaviors did not match their attitudes, their subjective experiences in the intergroup situation were consistent with their attitudes. That is, they reported that they did not want to serve Chinese Americans and, indeed, even as they were serving Chinese Americans, they did not *want* to do so. Thus, one purpose of this research was to test the assumptions of the social norms perspective. To do this, we investigated potential similarities and discrepancies between people's expectations for interactions with gay men and their feelings during an actual encounter with a gay man. Based on the social norms perspective, we would expect that people who have negative attitudes about stigmatized group members

would also feel negatively about (i.e., have negative subjective reactions during) actual interactions with the stigmatized (even if their public behavior appears positive). Of course, people who have more positive attitudes should have public behavior that appears positive and also subjective, internal reactions that are positive.

The Importance of Expectations

Expectations constitute a theoretically important aspect of social interactions. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1974; Ajzen & Madden, 1986), behavioral intentions are an important mediator of the relationship between attitudes and behavior; attitude-behavior consistency is higher when an individual has expectations of engaging in a particular behavior. Indeed, expectations are important throughout the course of any interpersonal interaction. Darley and Fazio (1980) proposed an expectancy confirmation model of interpersonal interactions that highlights the crucial role that expectations play in the dynamics of an interaction. The expectations that each interactant brings to the interaction may be based on beliefs about the social category to which the interactant belongs, or on previously encountered information about that individual. These expectations influence how participants behave during the interaction. Therefore, according to the expectancy-confirmation perspective, people who come into an interaction with a group member toward whom they have a great deal of prejudice are likely to act negatively during an interpersonal encounter, elicit negative behaviors from this individual, and in the process of doing so, to confirm their initially negative expectations. Through a classic self-fulfilling prophecy, the expectancy-confirmation perspective suggests that people with negative attitudes and expectations about a particular group will come to elicit behaviors that confirm those negative images. Similarly, Blair, Park and Bachelor (2003) found that more prejudiced people expected to have more uncomfortable interactions with gay people. Moreover, Blascovich et al. (2001) demonstrated that people become more physiologically aroused in the context of intergroup interactions, which would further heighten the likelihood of a negative actual interaction.

To address the importance of expectations in intergroup encounters, in this research, we examined both the relationship between attitudes and behavioral intentions/expectations as well as the relationship between attitudes and actual behaviors. We would expect, based on Darley and Fazio's (1980) expectancy-confirmation model, as well as the research

of Blair, Park and Bachelor (2003) that people who have negative attitudes toward a particular group would have a bad experience during an actual interpersonal encounter with a member of this group, because they would elicit negative reactions from group member. This negative experience would be reflected both in the subjective experiences of the individual with the negative attitudes, and would also be obvious to the member of the stigmatized group with whom the person is interacting (i.e., because the high-prejudiced person is reacting negatively, the stigmatized person should also feel that the interaction is proceeding poorly).

The Current Research

To examine these issues, we examined expectations for reactions to encounters with a gay male, and subjective experiences in such encounters. We asked participants about their expected reactions (expectations) for how they would react to such a situation and also their subjective experience in an actual interpersonal interaction with a gay male. In doing so, we sought to determine (1) whether the social norms perspective can effectively explain the lack of attitude-behavior congruence during interpersonal interactions between members of different groups, (2) whether people who have negative attitudes toward a particular group do have more negative interpersonal encounters, which can be recognized by the stigmatized group member and (3) whether people of different prejudice levels might respond differently to this situation.

Hypotheses

Based on the social norms perspective and the expectancy-confirmation model, we generated the following hypotheses, which we discuss separately based on the prejudice level of participants.

1. *Low-prejudiced people.* In an imagined interaction, because a low-prejudiced person's attitudes are positive, they are expected to imagine a positive interaction and their reported reactions to the imagined interaction will be positive. In terms of actual interactions, because their attitudes are positive, they will react positively to the interaction and their private reactions to the interactions will be *positive*. Moreover, a stigmatized individual interacting with a low-prejudiced person should recognize this relative lack of prejudice and also experience a positive interpersonal interaction.

2. *High-prejudiced people.* We predict that in an imagined interaction, because their attitudes are negative, high-prejudiced people will imagine behaving negatively and their private reactions to the interaction will be negative. For actual interactions, though their attitudes are negative, high-prejudiced people will behave positively in the interaction because of social norms. Therefore, their subjective experiences in the interaction will be *negative*. Moreover, a stigmatized individual interacting with a high-prejudice person should recognize this prejudice and also experience a negative interpersonal interaction.

In addition to these two prejudice groups, we studied moderately low-prejudiced people. The social norms perspectives do not make specific predictions about this group. However, based on Devine et al. (1991), we were interested in the possibility that moderately low-prejudiced people would be especially challenged by the task of translating their generally positive beliefs into actions. That is, their reactions in an actual interaction might be more negative than their reactions during an imagined encounter.

OVERVIEW OF STUDIES

We conducted four studies. In Study 1a, participants described in an open-ended format how they would feel during an interaction with a gay man and subsequently completed the Heterosexuals Attitudes Toward Homosexuals scale (HATH; Larsen, Reed & Hoffman, 1980). In Study 1b, these procedures were repeated, however, participants were pre-selected based upon their HATH scores and asked to describe their reactions in individual sessions in the laboratory. The results of Studies 1a and 1b led to the development of a measure used in Studies 1c and 2: The Interpersonal Interaction Scale. The Interpersonal Interaction Scale assesses individuals' subjective experience during an imagined or real interaction with a gay male in a closed-ended fashion. In Study 1c, participants completed the HATH and the Interpersonal Interaction Scale. In Study 2, participants were selected based on their scores on the HATH and participated in either an imagined interaction or an actual interaction with a confederate who was portraying a gay introductory psychology student, then they provided open-ended and closed-ended responses to the interaction.

**STUDIES 1A, 1B, AND 1C:
IMAGINED INTERACTION STUDIES**

In the first set of studies, we assessed how participants responded to an imagined interaction with a gay person. Because of the conceptual similarities of these studies, they will be discussed as a group.

METHODS

Participants and Procedure

In Study 1a, 116 participants were recruited from public areas on a public university campus and from introductory psychology classes at a large public university and a technical college. For Study 1b, a large pool of students from Introductory Psychology classes at a large public university completed the HATH as part of a packet of questionnaires administered at the beginning of the term. Based on their HATH scores, 82 participants who were very high, moderately high, moderately low, or very low in prejudice were randomly selected and scheduled for individual sessions. For Study 1c, the participants were 413 students enrolled in introductory psychology classes at a large public university. The measures for Study 1c were included in a large packet of questionnaires that participants completed at the beginning of the term in exchange for extra credit.

Measures

We used three primary measures across the four studies in various combinations.

The HATH scale. Participants completed the Heterosexuals' Attitudes Toward Homosexuals scale, which assesses anti-gay attitudes (Larsen, Reed & Hoffman, 1980) and has been effective in making meaningful theoretical distinctions between members of different prejudice levels (e.g., Devine et al., 1991). It consists of 20 statements with which participants expressed agreement or disagreement on 5-point scales (α s > .85 for all studies). Participants who fell into predetermined prejudice levels (Devine et al., 1991; Devine, Evett & Vasquez-Suson, 1996) were utilized in these analyses: very low (HATH range = 20-32; $n = 21$);

moderately low (HATH range = 33-46; $n = 20$); moderately or very high (HATH range = 73-100; $n = 41$).² The HATH was utilized as a pre-screening measure in Study 1b and was administered after participants completed the open-ended measure of their responses to the imagined interaction in Study 1a.

Open-ended assessments of the interaction. Because we did not want to constrain participants to conceptualize the interaction in the way we did, in Studies 1a and 1b, we simply asked participants to imagine that they were interacting with a gay man and asked them to describe their thoughts and feelings during the interaction.

To code the open-ended responses, two coders utilized methods outlined by Backstrom and Hursh-Cesar (1981). Two coders identified common themes (average interrater reliability = .88); these themes were grouped into three categories: awkward, positive/normal, and hostile. Awkward responses suggest that participants would feel socially awkward, though not necessarily hostile. Examples of awkward responses included: "I would feel nervous and be cautious about what I said so as not to offend him . . . but I would be focusing on that so it wouldn't be natural," and "in interacting I would be concerned with trying to act completely normal so that he would not feel I was prejudiced." Examples of positive/normal responses included: "I'd behave the same and wouldn't feel uncomfortable" and "My feelings and thoughts would be no different than with any person." Examples of hostile responses included: "I would be highly disgusted with the way the person chose to live" and "I would try to avoid the person as much as possible. I would act in a rude manner." The number of statements that each participant made which fell into each of these three categories comprised their score on the normal/positive, awkward, and hostile indices.

The Interpersonal Interaction Scale. Based on the open-ended assessments of Studies 1a and 1b, we created a scale that reflected the three types of responses that were reflected in the open-ended questionnaire. Therefore, the three subscales were: hostile, positive/normal, and awkward. The exact items and reliability are described in Table 1. In Study 1c, participants completed this scale after being asked to imagine the interpersonal interaction.

Procedure

In this set of studies, participants completed the packets of questionnaires that are described above either in classes, laboratory rooms, or public spaces on college campuses. In Study 1a, participants were

TABLE 1. Interpersonal Interaction Scale Items and Reliability Scores

Interpersonal Interaction Scale Items	Study 1c	Study 2
	α	α
Hostile	.82	.95
I would feel (or I felt) . . .		
1. sickened		
2. disgusted		
3. offended		
4. annoyed		
5. hostile		
Awkward	.81	.79
I would feel (or I felt)		
1. uncomfortable		
2. nervous		
3. worried about appearing prejudiced		
4. awkward		
5. uneasy		
Positive/Normal	.83	.83
I would feel (or I felt) . . .		
1. calm		
2. trusting		
3. just like I would if I were interacting with a heterosexual		
4. relaxed		
5. confident		

recruited in approximately equal numbers from the Introductory Psychology subject pool, a psychology class at a community college, and from public areas on a college campus. In Study 1b, participants were selected from an Introductory Psychology subject pool. In Study 1c, participants completed the questionnaire during a mass testing session at the beginning of the term in their introductory psychology course.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Study 1a Results

Initially, a 3 (Prejudice Level: Low, Moderately Low, or High) \times 3 (Reactions to the Interaction: Positive/Normal, Hostile, Awkward)

ANOVA was conducted including the second factor as a repeated measure. This yielded a significant interaction, indicating that members of the three prejudice levels reported different levels of positivity, negativity and awkwardness, $F(4, 158) = 8.30, p < .0005$. One-way ANOVAs were then conducted on the (1) positive/normal, (2) hostile, and (3) awkward indices. As shown in Table 2, participants differed in the number of positive responses they imagined having during the interaction depending upon their level of prejudice. Specifically, planned comparisons revealed that very low-prejudice participants described significantly more positive/normal reactions than did moderately low-prejudice participants, $t(71) = 2.00, p = .049$, or the high-prejudice participants, $t(71) = 5.73, p = .0005$. In turn, the moderately low-prejudice participants described significantly more positive/normal reactions than the high-prejudice participants, $t(71) = 4.28, p = .0005$.

Participants of different levels of prejudice also differed in how likely they were to list hostile responses. Planned comparisons revealed that high-prejudice participants imagined having significantly more hostile reactions than did the moderately low-prejudice participants, $t(71) = 5.43, p = .0005$ or low-prejudice participants, $t(71) = 7.17, p = .0005$. Moderately low-prejudice participants imagined having more hostile reactions than very low-prejudice participants, $t(71) = 2.38, p = .02$.

Participants did not differ in the extent to which they reported expecting to have socially awkward reactions. It appears that participants were overall unlikely to list awkward reactions spontaneously, as evidenced by the low means on the awkward index. If anything, it appears from these data that moderately low-prejudice participants are slightly more likely to list awkward responses than the other two groups, though this difference was not significant.

Based on the results from Study 1a, participants' expectations for their subjective experiences during the interactions appeared to be consistent with their attitudes. Participants with less prejudicial attitudes toward gay people expected to feel more positive and normal during the interaction, whereas those with more prejudicial attitudes expected to feel more hostile. Therefore, the findings in terms of expected reactions are consistent with the social norms explanations for the relationship between attitudes and behaviors. Participants expected that their private subjective experiences during the interpersonal encounter would be consistent with their normally held attitudes. However, it is possible that participants' attitudes agreed with their expected behaviors because we first asked them about their expected reactions and then afterward asked them their attitudes. Therefore, participants may have felt com-

TABLE 2. Means and Standard Deviations for Scores on Normal/Positive, Awkward, and Hostile Indices for Studies 1-3

	Index	Prejudice Level			Significance
		Very Low	Moderately Low	High	
Study 1a	Positive/Normal				$F(2, 73) = 16.56,$ $p < .001.$
	M	2.46	1.96	.25	
	SD	.94	1.13	.71	
	Hostile				$F(2, 73) = 25.82,$ $p < .001$
	M	.15	.63	2.38	
	SD	.54	1.04	.92	
	Awkward				$F(2, 73) = 1.31,$ n.s.
	M	.75	.89	.49	
	SD	.46	1.37	.76	
Study 1b	Positive/Normal				$F(2, 81) = 19.38,$ $p < .001$
	M	2.14	1.65	.61	
	SD	1.24	1.09	.74	
	Hostile				$F(2, 81) = 29.13,$ $p < .001$
	M	.27	.55	2.83	
	SD	.78	.76	1.87	
	Awkward				$F(2, 81) = .275,$ n.s.
	M	1.38	1.30	1.12	
	SD	1.83	1.45	1.05	
Study 1c	Positive/Normal				$F(2, 127) = 31.10,$ $p < .0005$
	M	4.23	3.52	2.45	
	SD	.83	.82	.91	
	Hostile				$F(2, 127) = 81.04,$ $p < .0005$
	M	1.15	1.43	3.19	
	SD	.51	.49	.90	
	Awkward				$F(2, 127) = 26.63,$ $p < .0005$
	M	1.62	2.24	3.44	
	SD	.87	.92	1.02	

pelled to make their attitudes consistent with their already-expressed expectations. This possibility motivated Study 1b.

Study 1b Results

Study 1b was largely a replication of Study 1a. However, participants in this study were pre-selected based on their HATH scores and were not aware that their responses on the HATH were the basis for their selection into the study; therefore they would not be motivated to make their attitudes and behaviors consistent. The findings of Study 1b replicated those of Study 1a. Once again, the same overall 3×3 ANOVA was conducted and yielded a significant interaction, $F(4, 142) = 12.41$, $p < .0005$. Next, a series of One-Way ANOVAs was conducted on the positive/normal, hostile and awkward indices. As displayed in Table 2, very low-prejudice participants displayed marginally more positive reactions than the moderately low-prejudice, $t(79) = 1.62$, $p = .10$, or high-prejudice participants, $t(79) = 5.67$, $p = .0005$. Moderately low-prejudice participants also displayed more positive reactions than high-prejudice participants, $t(79) = 3.92$, $p = .0005$. High-prejudice participants described more hostile reactions than moderately low-prejudice participants, $t(79) = 5.82$, $p = .0005$ or low-prejudice participants, $t(79) = 6.60$, $p = .0005$. Low- and very low-prejudice participants did not differ in their hostile reactions. Once again, there were no differences on the awkward index. Therefore, the pattern of results was the same when participants described their expected reactions in a situation completely unrelated to the assessment of their attitudes. As in Study 1a, these findings are consistent with the social norms explanations for the relationship between attitudes and behaviors. Participants believed that their subjective experiences during the interpersonal encounter would be consistent with their attitudes. We utilized the data acquired in the open-ended portions of these two studies to develop the interpersonal interaction scale, which provided the means to study expectations in Study 1c.

Study 1c Results

The Interpersonal Interaction Scale, including the positive/normal, hostile, and awkward sub-scales was administered to participants immediately preceding the HATH. The overall 3×3 ANOVA was conducted first, and yielded a significant interaction, as in the previous two

studies, $F(4, 300) = 20.36, p < .0005$. One-Way ANOVAs were again conducted on each of the scales. As shown in Table 2, the results were similar, but much stronger in magnitude. Very low-prejudice participants reported more positive/normal expected reactions than moderately low-prejudice participants, $t(124) = 4.33, p = .0005$ or high-prejudice participants, $t(124) = 7.47, p = .0005$. Moderately low-prejudice participants reported more positive/normal reactions than the high-prejudice group, $t(124) = 4.22, p = .0005$. As in previous studies, high-prejudice participants reported more hostile expectations than moderately low-prejudice participants, $t(125) = 10.32, p = .0005$, or very low-prejudice participants, $t(125) = 12.71, p = .0005$. Moderately low-prejudice participants also reported more hostile expectations than very low-prejudice participants, $t(125) = 2.53, p = .013$. In this study, the possibility that participants might experience social awkwardness was salient, because it was specifically addressed in the closed-ended questionnaire. Under these circumstances, the same pattern of responses emerged for awkward expectations as for hostile expectations. That is, high-prejudice participants expressed the most awkward expectations. High-prejudice participants reported more awkward expectations than did very low-prejudice participants, $t(125) = 7.07, p = .0005$ or moderately low-prejudice participants, $t(125) = 4.34, p = .0005$. Moderately low-prejudice participants also reported more awkward expectations than the very low-prejudice participants, $t(125) = 3.52, p = .001$.

Therefore, regardless of the format of participants' responses (open-ended vs. closed-ended) and regardless of whether they completed the attitude and subjective experience questionnaires separately or at the same time, they expected that their subjective experience during the interaction mapped onto their attitudes. Consistent with the social norms explanation, participants believed that their subjective experiences during the interaction would be consistent with their attitudes outside of the interaction. In the next study, we examined how participants' attitudes mapped onto participants' subjective experiences during a real intergroup interaction. However, the final study provides a crucial test of the social norms and expectancy-confirmation predictions about the attitude behavior-relation in intergroup encounters. To the extent that participants' attitudes match their subjective experiences, it would suggest that the social norms mechanism is most appropriate explanation for the reactions to interpersonal encounters.

**STUDY 2:
ACTUAL INTERACTION STUDY**

In this study, we compared participants' reactions to an actual interpersonal interaction with a gay confederate to the expectations for the same interaction, with the participants imagining the interaction. Therefore, we were comparing expectations (which we examined in the previous studies) with subjective experiences during a real interaction.

Participants

Participants were 108 introductory psychology students from the predetermined HATH prejudice levels (i.e., very low, moderately low, and high or very high). One participant was excluded because his responses indicated he had knowledge of the experiment prior to participation.

Measures

Pre-interaction questionnaire. Participants completed two questions to assess their attitudes toward the interaction before they were told that the (real or imagined) interactant was gay. Specifically, they indicated how they expected to feel on two 7-point semantic differential scales: *uncomfortable-comfortable* and *good-bad*.

Thought-listing task. In this study, participants responded to the interaction using a thought-listing technique. Specifically, they were instructed to list their thoughts and feelings during the interaction in the order in which they occurred during the interaction. After they had completed listing the thoughts, they coded their thoughts as reflecting either (1) normal/positive feelings (2) hostile/angry feelings or (3) awkward feelings. Because this particular version of the task forced participants to describe their thoughts in discreet, enumerated units (unlike Studies 1a and 1b, which utilized a narrative approach), percentage of responses they gave that fell into each of these categories comprised their scores on these indices. The results are the same if the number of statements that fall into the three categories is used as the unit of analysis (as in Studies 1a and 1b). However, a percentage is a more accurate characterization of the participants' responses because it controls for the fact that some participants wrote substantially more than others.

The "Who am I?" questionnaire. Participants (and confederates) were instructed to answer the question "Who am I?" in five different ways. The question "Who am I?" was printed at the top of a sheet of

paper. Five blanks were listed below in which they could list any word or phrase that described their perception of themselves. These questionnaires were used only to establish the sexual orientation of the confederate. They were not used as a dependent measure.

The Confederate questionnaire. Confederates completed a very brief questionnaire after each of the interactions (obviously, data from confederates were only available in the actual interaction condition, when confederates were utilized). First they were asked how prejudiced toward gay men they thought that their partner was on a 7-point scale ranging from “not at all prejudiced” to “extremely prejudiced.” Next confederates classified their own reactions as being predominantly awkward, hostile, or positive/normal. Finally, they were asked to classify their interaction partners’ reactions to the interaction as being predominantly awkward, positive/normal, hostile or fearful.

Procedure

Participants were selected for inclusion in the study based on the HATH as in Study 1b. They understood that they would receive course credit in their Introductory Psychology course for their participation. To prevent differential attrition rates of high- and low-prejudice people, participants were not informed that the study concerned attitudes toward gays until they arrived at the experiment. No participants withdrew from the study when they arrived at the experimental setting and learned of the exact nature of the study.

Participants in the actual interaction condition were introduced to (ostensibly) another participant in the study, who was actually a confederate. Participants in the imagined interaction study were asked to imagine that they had been introduced to a male, who was about their age, clean-cut and seemed friendly (in the actual interaction study, our confederates were instructed to be clean-cut and they behaved in a friendly manner toward the participants). Then participants were told that the study concerned how people reacted to meeting new people and how people differed depending upon self-disclosure. The experimenter explained the cover story to participants. Specifically, they were informed that people can be more or less likely to disclose to other people and that they were chosen for the study based on pretesting that suggested that they are either high or low in tendency to self-disclose. The experimenter then explained that the current research concerned how individuals who have different levels of preference for self-disclosure react to social situations after they have disclosed. The participant (and

confederate, in the actual interaction condition) then completed the pre-interaction questionnaire.

Next, ostensibly to allow the participants to start getting to know each other, they were instructed to complete a "Who am I?" questionnaire. In this questionnaire, the participants listed five things about themselves. The confederates made the following statements. "I am a Poli Sci major," "I'm a perfectionist," "I have two brothers and a sister," "I am from Orange County," and "I just realized I'm gay." Then, the "Who am I?" questionnaires were exchanged so that the participants could learn about one another; in this way, the confederate was revealed to be gay. In the imagined interaction condition, participants were also given a questionnaire in which the confederates had hand-written these statements and were told to imagine that these statements were written by the male with whom they would shortly interact. Then the participants in the actual interaction condition talked in a free-form fashion for 3 minutes but were instructed to talk about new topics (i.e., other than those they had learned about in the "Who am I?" questionnaires). Participants in the imagined interaction condition were given the equivalent time to imagine the interaction. Then, in the actual interaction condition, the two interactants were taken into separate rooms.

After the real or imagined interaction, the participants completed questionnaires in which they described their thoughts and feelings during the interaction. Participants were urged to accurately portray their feelings during the interaction and that their responses would never be shown to the other participant in the study. The importance of honest answers was stressed. First, participants listed their reactions to the interaction in an open-ended fashion, via the thought-listing task, and coded their own responses as being awkward, hostile or positive/normal. Then they completed the interpersonal interaction questionnaire. Afterwards, they described what they thought the purpose of the study was. They were debriefed, given credit for their participation in the study, and excused.

Confederates. The confederates and the experimenters were blind to the participants' prejudice level. Indeed, they were not even told that participants of different prejudice levels had been pre-selected to participate in the study. They did know that the study concerned prejudice toward gay people. They were not given any specific script or set of responses to have during the interaction, but instead were told to act like they would if they were getting to know someone new (which, of course, they were). After the confederates finished interacting with the participants, they completed a questionnaire in which they assessed the

prejudice level of the participants with whom they interacted. Because the confederates were interacting with the prejudicial responses of the participant in mind, they were probably more likely to detect prejudicial reactions than the average introductory psychology student would be. However, this heightened attentiveness is consistent with the reactions of gay men and lesbians toward interacting with heterosexual people (Conley, Devine, Rabow & Evett, 2002). Therefore, this suspiciousness actually may actually make this study better representative of interactions that occur outside of the laboratory.

Three confederates participated. One was gay, a second was actually heterosexual but reported that others commonly assumed he was gay, and a third was heterosexual and did not report that others mistook him for gay. Because there were no significant differences in the participants' reactions to the confederates, we will not discuss the confederates' actual sexual orientation further.

RESULTS

Pre-Interaction Questionnaire

The pre-interaction questionnaire assessed participants' expectations for the interaction before knowing the sexual orientation of their interaction partner. There were no differences between participants on the pre-interaction questionnaire. Therefore, we have no reason to expect that our results could be attributed to pre-existing differences between members of the different prejudice level groups.

Confederates' Ratings of Participants

Anecdotally, the confederates noted that all of the interactions were generally positive. Regardless of prejudice level, none of the interactions seemed to go poorly, neither were they contentious. To determine if participants' behaviors differed depending upon their prejudice levels, we assessed the confederates' perceptions of the prejudice level of each participant. These analyses are restricted to the participants in the actual interaction condition, because no confederates were present in the imagined interaction condition. Once again, One-Way ANOVAs were conducted on confederates' ratings of the prejudice level of the

participants across the three *actual* prejudice levels of the participants (as determined by the HATH). The confederates were unable to distinguish between participants of different levels of prejudice, $F(2, 54) = .53$, n.s. This finding suggests that, just as participants in LaPiere's study did not treat the Chinese couple in an overtly prejudiced manner, the high-prejudice participants in this study did not portray themselves as being prejudiced. Likewise, confederates' ratings of their feelings during the interactions did not differ depending on the prejudice level of the participant with whom they interacted, $\chi^2(2) = .57$, n.s. The confederates also did not differ systematically with the participants' prejudice level in how likely they were to classify the participants as being predominantly awkward, hostile, positive/normal, or afraid, $\chi^2(5) = 2.38$, n.s. Therefore, participants' public reactions to the interaction were overwhelmingly positive. Inconsistent with the expectancy confirmation explanation, the individuals with the most negative expectations did not cause the actual interpersonal encounter to turn out negatively.

Participants' Ratings of the Interaction

We conducted a series of 2 (Interaction Type: Actual or Imagined) \times 3 (Prejudice Level: Low, Moderately Low, or High) ANOVAs on the positive/normal, awkward, and hostile scales and on the percentage of positive/normal, awkward, and hostile statements that the participants reported in the thought-listing task. Significant interactions emerged between Interaction Type and Prejudice Level on some of these measures, as shown in Table 3. More important are the specific analyses below, which test our theoretical predictions.

Imagined interaction. As shown in Table 3, replicating our previous research, significant differences emerged between groups on each of the closed-ended measures for participants in the imagined interaction condition. Specifically, very low-prejudice participants imagined they would experience more positive/normal reactions than high-prejudice participants, $t(50) = 4.47$, $p = .0005$, fewer awkward reactions than high-prejudice participants, $t(50) = 4.05$, $p = .0005$, and fewer hostile reactions than high-prejudice participants $t(50) = 9.76$, $p = .0005$. Moderately low-prejudice participants imagined they would feel more awkward reactions than low-prejudice participants, $t(50) = 3.67$, $p = .001$, and fewer positive reactions than very low-prejudice participants, $t(50) = 3.06$, $p = .004$. (They did not differ from very low-prejudice participants in the number of negative reactions.) High-prejudice participants imagined experiencing

TABLE 3. Means and Standard Deviations for Scores on Normal/Positive, Awkward, and Hostile Indices, Study 2

		Low Prejudice (%)	Moderately Low Prejudice (%)	High Prejudice (%)	Significance of the 3 × 2 Interaction (%)
Open-Ended Responses					
Positive/Normal					$F(2, 107) = 7.21,$ $p < .001$
Actual	<i>M</i>	64.81	65.81	56.57	
interaction	<i>SD</i>	33.74	29.32	35.58	
Imagined	<i>M</i>	88.35	66.15	28.18	
interaction	<i>SD</i>	14.48	21.40	29.21	
Hostile					$F(2, 107) = 11.41,$ $p < .0005$
Actual	<i>M</i>	0.53	3.33	2.86	
interaction	<i>SD</i>	2.29	11.55	10.69	
Imagined	<i>M</i>	0.00	1.79	28.14	
interaction	<i>SD</i>	0.00	5.98	30.99	
Awkward					$F(2, 107) = 5.30,$ $p < .006$
Actual	<i>M</i>	34.66	26.10	33.43	
interaction	<i>SD</i>	32.91	23.71	28.85	
Imagined	<i>M</i>	9.62	31.12	45.95	
interaction	<i>SD</i>	14.29	20.68	34.58	
Closed-Ended Scales					
Positive/Normal					$F(2, 107) = 1.09,$ n.s.
Actual	<i>M</i>	3.87	3.53	3.35	
interaction	<i>SD</i>	.87	.90	1.05	
Imagined	<i>M</i>	4.16	3.43	2.87	
interaction	<i>SD</i>	.64	.85	.85	
Hostile					$F(2, 107) = 22.34,$ $p < .0001$
Actual	<i>M</i>	1.06	1.06	1.40	
interaction	<i>SD</i>	.20	.20	1.06	
Imagined	<i>M</i>	1.16	1.27	3.25	
interaction	<i>SD</i>	.18	.45	1.16	
Awkward					$F(2, 107) = 2.00,$ n.s.
Actual	<i>M</i>	1.92	2.24	2.36	
interaction	<i>SD</i>	1.03	.85	.80	
Imagined	<i>M</i>	1.75	2.68	2.98	
interaction	<i>SD</i>	.68	.79	1.08	

significantly more hostile reactions, $t(50) = 9.29, p = .0005$, and marginally fewer positive reactions, $t(50) = 1.93, p = .06$, than the moderately prejudiced participants. They did not differ from moderately low-prejudice participants in the amount of awkwardness they imagined experiencing.

In the open-ended responses, very low-prejudice participants imagined they would experience more positive/normal reactions than high-prejudice participants, $t(50) = 8.47, p = .0005$, fewer awkward reactions than high-prejudice participants, $t(50) = 4.40, p = .0005$, and fewer hostile reactions than high-prejudice participants $t(50) = 5.26, p = .0005$. Moderately low-prejudice participants imagined they would feel more awkward reactions than low-prejudice participants, $t(50) = 3.14, p = .003$, and fewer positive reactions than very low-prejudice participants, $t(50) = 3.77, p = .0005$. (They did not differ from very low-prejudice participants in the number of negative reactions.) High-prejudice participants imagined experiencing marginally more awkward reactions, $t(50) = 1.80, p = .08$, significantly more hostile reactions, $t(50) = 4.93, p = .0005$, and significantly fewer positive reactions, $t(50) = 5.35, p = .0005$ than the moderately prejudiced participants.

However, when engaged in an actual encounter, participants of different prejudice levels did not respond significantly differently to the interaction, either in their open-ended or their closed-ended responses (all $ps > .10$). That is, in terms of simple main effects, there were no differences between high-, moderately low-, and very low-prejudice participants in their experiences during the actual interaction for any of the measures of subjective experience. Therefore, there appears to be a schism in the expected reactions to imagined interpersonal interactions and subjective experiences in actual interpersonal interactions. To better understand what is driving this difference we used planned contrasts to compare the reactions of participants of different prejudice levels in the imagined versus the actual interactions.

High-prejudice participants. High-prejudice participants experienced marginally more awkward feelings in the imagined interactions than in the actual interactions in their closed-ended responses, $t(100) = 1.81, p < .07$, but not in their open-ended responses, $t(101) = 1.21, n.s.$ They experienced significantly more positive feelings when they were in the actual interaction than in the imagined interaction, for open-ended $t(101) = 2.77, p < .007$, but not for closed-ended responses, $t(100) = .95, n.s.$ Finally, high-prejudice participants experienced significantly more hostile reactions in the imagined interaction than in the actual interaction, both in their open-ended, $t(101) = 2.59, p < .024$, and their closed-ended responses, $t(100) = 7.87, p < .0001$. Therefore, inconsistent

with the social norms explanation, participants who were high in prejudice actually felt more positive and less hostile during the real encounter with the gay confederate than they did in imagined interactions. Inconsistent with the social norms explanation, the individuals with the most negative expectations experienced positive subjective reactions during the actual encounter.

Moderately low-prejudice participants. Although moderately low-prejudice participants have previously been found to be concerned about translating their low prejudice attitudes into behaviors, there were no differences between the actual and imagined interactions of moderately low-prejudice participants. Therefore, moderately low-prejudice participants imagined the interactions with a gay person would be slightly awkward, and apparently their expectations were consistent with their experiences in the actual interactions (cf. Devine, Evett & Vasquez-Suson, 1996).

Low-prejudice participants. Low-prejudice participants experienced significantly more awkward feelings in the actual interactions than in the imagined interactions in their open-ended responses, $t(101) = 3.09$, $p < .003$, but not in their closed-ended responses, $t(100) = .63$, n.s. Likewise, they experienced significantly fewer positive feelings when they were in the actual interaction than in the imagined interaction, for open-ended $t(101) = 2.77$, $p < .007$, but not for closed-ended responses, $t(100) = .55$, n.s. There were no differences between the actual and imagined interactions in the extent to which low-prejudice participants reported negative feelings. This finding produces an unexpected but interesting caveat. Although low-prejudice participants imagine having comfortable and pleasant interactions with gay people, it appears that the standards they have set for these interactions are too high. In real interactions, moments of discomfort are bound to occur whether the interaction partner is straight or gay; likewise, the perhaps overly positive representation that people in imagined interactions thought they would have simply not map onto the reality of any interaction with a stranger.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In the current research, we compared people's reactions to real and imagined interpersonal encounters with a gay man. High-prejudice people, who anticipated that their reactions to such an encounter would be highly negative and characterized by hostility appeared to be out of touch with their own reactions. In fact, the reactions that high-prejudice participants

experienced during the actual encounter were substantially more positive than those of the participants who merely imagined the interactions. In contrast to the assertion that the participants in LaPiere's exercise were succumbing to norms of politeness when they provided service to Chinese patrons in 1934, but privately were distressed or hostile to the idea of providing these services, our high-prejudice participants' expressed hostile attitudes appeared to evaporate during actual interpersonal encounters. As a parallel, perhaps the participants in the LaPiere exercise found themselves having warm feelings toward the Chinese couple despite their professed negative beliefs.³

Theoretical Explanations

We argue that these results are consistent with a view of attitudes as being malleable by social situations and relationships, rather than stable and consistent (Hardin & Conley, 2001; Hardin & Higgins, 1996). Specifically, this interpretation is based on the theory of shared reality. According to shared reality theory, relationships are based on the establishment of consensus. Relationships do not progress unless there is some basic point of agreement among participants and consensus between members of different groups is associated with greater liking. Therefore, to the extent that participants felt obligated (perhaps by social norms) to carry on a normal interaction, they developed some rudimentary consensus with the confederate (which is necessary to carry on a conversation) and as a result felt more pleasant during the interaction than they expected to feel. As a result, they were not simply behaving in a positive, relaxed manner (due to social pressure), but were feeling positive and relaxed as well. Therefore, shared reality also provides a possible mechanism, which, when combined with a social norms explanation for these behaviors, may explain how participants with negative attitudes come to have relatively positive encounters with the objects of their dislike.

By the same token, our results are inconsistent with a purely social norms explanation. If it were purely social norms that caused participants to act in a positive way toward the stigmatized confederates, they would have expressed negative attitudes toward the interaction in their descriptions of their subjective experiences. The findings are also inconsistent with Darley and Fazio's (1980) expectancy-confirmation model. Participants who had negative attitudes and negative expectations for interacting with a gay person did not because the interaction to

play out negatively, as might be expected based on the expectancy-confirmation model.

Although we believe it is unlikely, it is possible that high-prejudice participants may have succumbed to the pressure of social norms when describing the actual encounter with the confederate, that is, they may have felt more hostile and negative in the interaction than they reported. However, the reactions to the actual and expected reactions were both given in anonymous questionnaires; participants in the actual condition were assured that their interaction partners would never see their responses to the questions. Moreover, high-prejudiced people were never shy about expressing extremely negative reactions about gay people in any of the previous anonymous questionnaire studies.

Also arguing against the assertion that our results were the product of social desirability is the lack of an explanation for why the high-prejudice participants in the imagined interaction felt they could express their hostility, but those in actual interaction felt they could not. Moreover, the confederates could not identify the high-prejudice participants. Even though the confederates were carefully examining the participants for prejudicial reactions, they did not detect any prejudice. It seems that if the person were truly seething with hatred during the interaction, it would be obvious to someone who was looking for it. This seems especially likely in this study because, unlike LaPiere's participants, no specific social script is available for our participants to follow (i.e., in contrast when a server approaches a patron in a restaurant, it is very clear what to say, usually something like "Can I take your order?"). Probably the most persuasive evidence against a social desirability explanation for these results is the fact that *low-prejudiced* people, who presumably should be the most likely to give us socially desirably answers, actually gave more hostile and awkward responses, but fewer positive/normal responses in their open-ended reactions to the actual interactions. Thus the group most likely to be concerned about appearing nonprejudiced actually provided slight more prejudiced responses in the actual interaction. However, to further solidify this argument, future research on attitudes toward gay people may utilize less direct measures of participants' experiences to completely eliminate concerns about social desirability.

An alternative but related mechanism for these results is suggested by recent research into the motivational components of social cognition. Sinclair and Kunda (2000) demonstrated that participants who are motivated to view a stigmatized target positively will apply positive stereotypes to the target and inhibit negative stereotypes. In fact, an impending

interpersonal interaction is enough motivation to inhibit negative stereotypes (Klein & Kunda, 1992). Therefore, participants in the actual interaction condition of Study 2 may have inhibited the negative stereotypes about gay men because they realized that they were obligated to interact with the confederate.

Implications for People of Different Prejudice Levels

The vastly different responses of participants of different prejudice levels further underscores the importance of considering individual differences in people's reactions to members of different groups. For high-prejudice people, there was a huge discrepancy between their attitudes and their expected subjective experiences versus their actual subjective experiences. This lack of correspondence could shed light on the prejudice reduction process. If prejudice is reduced through individual relationships with members of the stigmatized group (e.g., Herek & Glunt, 1993), then prejudice among high-prejudice people may be reduced to the extent that they are not feeling as uncomfortable during these interactions as they expected to be. Interestingly, moderately low-prejudice people did not have particularly negative feelings during the brief interaction, and, importantly, were not perceived to be prejudiced by the stigmatized confederates. Therefore, at least in terms of their interpersonal interactions, our research suggests that the concerns that moderately low-prejudice participants expressed about appearing prejudiced are largely unfounded, at least during a brief interaction.

High-prejudice participants experienced the greatest departures from their expected reactions to an encounter with a stigmatized person. However, another group of participants also had experiences that were inconsistent with their attitudes. Very low-prejudice participants in actual interactions actually experienced fewer positive/normal reactions, more hostile reactions and more awkward interactions than participants who were only imagining these interactions. Therefore, interactions with members of a stigmatized group might not be so rosy for people who profess to have only positive attitudes toward that group. We suggest that this finding is a result of the inherent discomforts present in any interaction with a stranger.

Applications of This Research to the Study Gay-Straight Tensions

This research presents a number of opportunities to better understand intergroup tensions. In future research, it may be interesting to assess

the attitude change as a result of interactions with members of a stigmatized group behaviors, using the conceptual framework outlined in this research to document the types of people with whom contact would be effective. Extrapolating from the current research, we might expect high-prejudice people to show the most change as a result of positive contact with stigmatized group members, because of the need to align their attitudes with their subjective experiences. In contrast, low-prejudice people might actually develop slightly more negative reactions to members of stigmatized groups after realizing that an interaction with members of the group may not be as easy as they expected it to be. Moderately low-prejudice people would not be expected to experience a great deal of change, given that the expected responses of this group were very similar to their actual responses in an interpersonal encounter. Therefore, by considering the schism between expectations and behaviors among people of different levels of prejudice, a clearer understanding may be developed of when interpersonal contact between gay and straight people should be effective in reducing prejudice (cf. Herek & Capitano, 1996).

One of the reasons we demonstrated the current set of results may be that contact is particularly effective at eliciting change in attitudes about gay men and lesbians, relative to other stigmatized groups (Herek & Glunt, 1993). Because simple “getting acquainted” conversations are generally positive and civil, it may be relatively easy to effect changes in attitudes toward gay people among high prejudice people as more gay people come out. That is, as more gay-identified people make their presence known in society, more high-prejudice people are put in the position of having positive and friendly interactions with gay men and lesbians. We believe that these interactions, even if unwelcome, could engender more positive attitudes toward gay men, even among the most prejudicial people.

NOTES

1. We focused on reactions to gay males because researchers have traditionally found more negative attitudes toward gay men than toward lesbians (for a review and extension, see Herek, 2000). Therefore, having gay males as a target group would yield a more stringent test of our hypotheses.

2. Because of the difficulty of acquiring high-prejudice participants, the very high- and moderately high-prejudice groups were collapsed in the current set of studies. Previous research (Evett, 1996) has demonstrated that moderately high-prejudice and very

high-prejudice groups (as assessed by the HATH) do not differ from each other in their reactions to interpersonal interactions with gay people.

3. We note that the majority of our participants were college students; thus, we do not know whether these results can be generalized to other samples.

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