

Inventing a Gay Agenda: Students' Perceptions of Lesbian and Gay Professors¹

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Students' perceptions of lesbian and gay professors were examined in 2 studies ($N_s = 622$ and 545). An ethnically diverse sample of undergraduates read and responded to a syllabus for a proposed Psychology of Human Sexuality course. Syllabuses varied according to the political ideology, carefulness, sexual orientation, and gender of the professor. Students rated professors on dimensions such as political bias, professional competence, and warmth. Lesbian and gay professors were rated as having a political agenda, compared to heterosexual professors with the same syllabus. Student responses differed according to their homonegativity and modern homonegativity scores. The findings from these studies suggest that students may use different criteria to evaluate lesbian, gay, and heterosexual professors' ability to approach courses objectively.

Psychology has a rich history of research on prejudice against people of color in the United States, with recent work concentrating on subtle forms of racism. The work on subtle prejudice against other marginalized groups, such as lesbians and gay men, has received less scholarly attention (Whitley & Kite, 2010). Likewise, the experiences, evaluations, and perceptions of women and people of color in the academy have been subjects of research, but again, fewer studies have examined experimentally students' perceptions and judgments of lesbian and gay professors.

The academic environment in general, and the classroom in particular, are important environments to study discrimination against lesbian and gay professors. For professors, academia is a workplace in which their livelihoods and careers can be threatened with discrimination by students through course evaluations and by supervisors' performance evaluations. The classroom setting provides an opportunity to examine student perceptions of lesbians and gay men. Lesbian and gay professors serve as important role models for young women and men with newly emerging sexual identities, in addition to their potential to influence the perceptions of all students toward lesbians and

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gay men. For a lesbian or gay student, an identifiably gay professor could inspire hope and confidence and reduce alienation that results from the system of heterosexism that marginalizes lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people.

The present studies examine subtle prejudice in students' perceptions of lesbian and gay professors. *Subtle prejudice* is based on the assumption that many people hold negative stereotypes about stigmatized groups while simultaneously subscribing to egalitarian ideals and a desire to avoid societal sanctions against those who discriminate. This desire to appear unprejudiced is offset by actual negative feelings and beliefs about stigmatized groups, resulting in complex forms of biased responses. For instance, subtle prejudice based on an aversive racism framework (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004) involves rationalized discrimination whereby people who feel a need to defend or justify prejudicial treatment seek a rationale that appears to be independent of prejudice.

In situations in which judgment about a group would appear to be based solely on bias, discrimination is unlikely. If, however, the situation allows the individual to rationalize evaluations based on nonprejudiced characteristics, discrimination may occur. Subtle forms of prejudice can be examined using self-report measures as well. For instance, modern racism is assessed by people's agreements with statements such as "Blacks are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights." Modern racism (McConahay, 1986), as both a concept in social psychology and a set of real-life practices, contrasts with old-fashioned racism (e.g., "Black people are generally not as smart as Whites"), which is an overt form of prejudice.

The two studies presented here use two measures of subtle prejudice toward lesbian and gay professors. Study 1 draws on the work on aversive racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). We provided student respondents with nonprejudicial rationales for their ratings of lesbian and gay versus heterosexual professors. Study 2 draws on the work of modern racism (McConahay, 1986) to examine the relationship between students' old-fashioned and modern homonegativity and their attitudes toward lesbian and gay versus heterosexual professors.

The studies presented here extend the work on subtle prejudice—most often examining White prejudice against African Americans (Whitley & Kite, 2010)—to perceptions of lesbians and gay men. In a study on subtle prejudice against lesbians and gay men, Moreno and Bodenhausen (2001) asked respondents to read and respond to a handwritten essay advocating for gay rights, and presumably written by a lesbian or a gay man. The respondents themselves were categorized as high or low on anti-gay affect (although all respondents professed egalitarian views toward homosexual-

ity). Some of the respondents read an essay containing several typographical errors, whereas others read the same essay without errors. Moreno and Bodenhausen found that when the essay contained errors, those who had scored high on anti-gay affect were more likely to derogate the writer of the essay than were those low on anti-gay affect. When the essay did not contain errors, there was no difference in evaluations by respondents with low and high anti-gay affect. Thus, those who were strongly anti-gay used the typographical errors in the essay as an excuse to derogate the writer. Those who were not anti-gay did not feel the need to derogate the essay writer in either condition.

To examine students' perceptions of lesbian and gay professors in the present study, the students read a syllabus in which various sources of information were manipulated. These sources were whether or not the course was taught by (a) a woman or a man; (b) a lesbian/gay man or a heterosexual; (c) a politically conservative or politically liberal professor; and (d) a professor with a syllabus containing typographical errors or no errors. Political ideology and typographical errors on the syllabus were provided as two different possible rationales for discriminating against lesbian and gay professors.

Response Amplification and Overcorrection

One manifestation of subtle prejudice is evident in of response amplification (Katz & Hass, 1988) or overcorrection (Aberson & Dora, 2003). *Response amplification* occurs when a majority group member wants to appear nonprejudiced and thus gives overly positive evaluations to minority group members in certain situations. In different situations however, when there is a nonprejudicial justification available, the respondent will evaluate the minority group member negatively. A cognitive explanation for response amplification suggests that a lack of information about out-groups results in reduced cognitive complexity surrounding representations of out-groups, thus leading to more extreme reactions to out-group members (Linville, 1982).

Anderson and Smith (2005; Smith & Anderson, 2005) found evidence of response amplification in their experiments on students' perceptions of Latina/o professors. In their study, the gender, the ethnicity (Latina/o vs. Anglo), and the teaching style (strict vs. lenient) of the professor were manipulated in an experimental design. No overt bias in the form of significant main effects for professor ethnicity on the part of students toward the Latina/o professors occurred. However, there was evidence of polarized responses in the form of response amplification. For instance, when Latina/o professors taught the course with a lenient teaching style, they

received highly favorable evaluations from students—more favorable than Anglo professors with the same teaching style. However, when Latina/os taught the course with a strict teaching style, they received much lower evaluations from students—lower than the Anglo professors with the same teaching style. In other words, the ratings of Latina/o professors were polarized and contingent on their teaching style, whereas the ratings of Anglo professors were not.

While response amplification in evaluations of minority groups has been found in some studies (e.g., Anderson & Smith, 2005; Smith & Anderson, 2005), a recent study on students' ratings of lesbian and gay lecturers did not demonstrate the effect. Ewing, Stukas, and Sheehan (2003) exposed introductory psychology students to a strong or weak quality guest lecturer who was lesbian/gay or heterosexual. Instead of finding the predicted effect of students rating weak lesbian/gay lecturers more negatively than weak heterosexual lecturers, they found the opposite pattern: After a strong lecture, students rated lesbian/gay lecturers more negatively than strong heterosexual lecturers; but after a weak lecture, they rated lesbian/gay lecturers more positively than weak heterosexual lecturers. Ewing et al. reasoned that prejudice sometimes manifests in the denial of positive evaluations of out-groups, in addition to restraint in applying negative evaluations. In their study, subtle prejudice might have been exhibited not through explicitly negative evaluations, but rather through the denial of deserved positive ratings.

Expectancy Violation

Individuals possess expectations of socially normative behavior for groups or typical behavior for a specific person. These expectancies tend to be stereotypical when detailed or person-specific information is lacking (Burgoon & Hubbard, 2005). The violation of these expectancies can lead to negative affect because they violate the perceiver's sense of prediction (Olson, Roese, & Zanna, 1996). A recent study found support for expectancy violation as it pertains to people's perceptions of gay men's speech (Gowen & Britt, 2006). In this study, participants listened to a college admissions interview with a man who was labeled gay or not gay and who spoke with gay-sounding speech or with straight-sounding speech. Participants responded more positively when there was consonance between the man's sexual orientation and speech type; that is, the gay man with gay-sounding speech and the straight man with straight-sounding speech were viewed more positively than were the gay man who sounded straight and the straight man who sounded gay. In fact, gay men who sounded straight were particularly

penalized: They were viewed as much less desirable, compared to members of the other three groups (Gowen & Britt, 2006).

Gowen and Britt's (2006) results are consistent with the negative effects of expectancy violation. The violation of expectancies people hold about other people is typically accompanied by negative affect as a result of the threat the disconfirmation poses for order and predictability. Respondents may prefer conformity to stereotypes, allowing clear distinctions for who belongs to which social category. The contradictory information presented by a heterosexual speaker with gay speech or a gay speaker with straight speech requires participants to use more detailed processing than a clear stereotypical case, resulting in a less favorable response.

In addition to the stereotyped expectations of professors based on social category membership of the professors, Moore and Trahan (1997) found that the content of a course and the professor delivering the course can create a powerful set of preconceptions that affect students' evaluations of courses and professors. They asked students to rate a syllabus for a proposed Sociology of Gender course. Students rated the hypothetical woman professor as more biased and more likely to have a political agenda than the hypothetical man professor, despite the fact that the course content was identical in both cases and varied only by the gendered name of the professor in each condition. Moore and Trahan surmised that women who teach courses on gender are sometimes met with resistance and skepticism because students are predisposed to see them as promoting a self-serving political agenda.

Similarly, another study found that female professors who taught about gender inequality were viewed as more biased and more sexist toward men than were male professors who taught with the same lecture content (Abel & Meltzer, 2007). Ludwig and Meacham (1997) drew on cognitive dissonance theory and designed a study in which race (African American vs. White) was a factor hypothesized to affect students' ratings of a syllabus for a course entitled *Racism and Sexism in American Society*. Consistent with Moore and Trahan's (1997) findings, students rated the course as more controversial when taught by an African American professor than by a White professor, and when taught by a woman than by a man. Ludwig and Meacham explained that when the content of a course is discrepant with many students' attitudes, a more credible delivery of the material would come from an instructor who is a White man. Paradoxically, students expected White men to be less effective than African American men, while there were no differences in effectiveness ratings for African American and White female instructors (Ludwig & Meacham, 1997). In some cases, then, gender and ethnicity interact with each other and interact with course content.

Study 1

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Study 1 utilizes a course syllabus paradigm to examine students' perceptions of lesbian and gay professors teaching a course on human sexuality. Previous related research, described earlier in this paper, has resulted in somewhat contradictory patterns of attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. Likewise, there have not been uniformly negative reactions to lesbians and gay men in prior research (Clausell & Fiske, 2005). Therefore, various hypotheses in the present study might be in order. In this study we ask the question, do students use professors' political ideology or the presence of typographical errors in the course syllabus as excuses to discriminate against lesbian and gay professors?

If overt prejudice is operating, we would expect students to provide negative ratings of lesbian and gay professors, regardless of their political points of view or errors on the syllabus. In this case, we would expect main effects to be associated with the professor's sexual orientation. Because of pressure to appear egalitarian in their judgments, we do not expect students to categorically show bias against lesbians and gay men. Therefore, we do not expect many main effects associated with sexual orientation, with two exceptions. First, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 1. Lesbian and gay professors who teach a course on human sexuality will be viewed as more biased than will heterosexual professors teaching the same course with the same syllabus.

This prediction is based on the studies described previously finding that female professors who teach courses on gender and African American professors who teach courses on race are perceived as biased, compared to professors who are male and White, respectively (Ludwig & Meacham, 1997; Moore & Trahan, 1997). The hypothesis that lesbian and gay professors will be perceived as biased has also found support in the widespread stereotype that lesbians and gay men are highly sexualized and flaunt their sexuality (Anderson, 2010; Mohr, 1988/2007). Second, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 2. Lesbian and gay professors will be viewed as more professionally competent to teach the human sexuality course, as compared to heterosexual professors.

The rationale for this prediction was drawn from Ludwig and Meacham's (1997) finding that African American professors teaching a course on race

were viewed as more biased than were White professors, and were also viewed as more effective instructors than were White men. Again, because of the stereotypes associating lesbians and gay men with sexuality, we expect that they will appear to be more expert on the topic, relative to heterosexual professors.

In addition to these expected main effects for professor sexual orientation, we expect that professor sexual orientation will interact with political ideology and errors in the syllabus. If subtle prejudice operates, we expect students to use the professors' political ideology or the errors in their syllabuses as a rationale for denigrating lesbian and gay professors, relative to heterosexual professors. For example, as we stated previously, one common stereotype about lesbians and gay men is that they "flaunt" their sexuality. Gay men, in particular, are thought to be more promiscuous than are heterosexuals (McGann & Goodwin, 2007). This stereotype might be erroneously generalized and extended to the belief that lesbians and gay men are politically liberal. If students evaluate lesbian and gay professors differently from heterosexual professors based on political ideology, this might indicate that they are using stereotypes about lesbians and gay men, that they are politically liberal (Madon, 1997). Specifically, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 3. Lesbians and gay men teaching the course with a liberal political ideology will be viewed as more biased than will either liberal heterosexuals or conservative lesbians and gay men.

Because gay men specifically are viewed as liberal (Madon, 1997), we anticipate a three-way interaction of professor sexual orientation, professor gender, and political ideology.

Hypothesis 4. Politically liberal gay men will be viewed as more biased than other combinations (e.g., politically liberal lesbians; politically conservative gay men; politically conservative or politically liberal heterosexuals).

Students evaluating syllabuses of a human sexuality course taught by a politically liberal gay man might perceive the course as containing too much sexual content or being too opinionated, compared to the same course with the same content taught by others. In addition, if expectancy confirmation (Burgoon & Hubbard, 2005) is at work, we expect the following:

Hypothesis 5. Liberal lesbian and gay professors will be seen as better suited (i.e., more competent) to teach human sexuality than will conservative lesbian and gay professors.

If differential evaluations are based on people using neutral excuses to denigrate gay men and lesbians, as was the case in Moreno and Bodenhausen's (2001) study, we expect the following:

Hypothesis 6. Lesbian and gay professors with errors on their syllabuses will be rated as less competent than will heterosexuals with errors on their syllabuses.

Students might negatively evaluate gay professors with errors on their syllabuses, relative to heterosexual professors with errors on their syllabuses, using sloppiness as the basis for denigrating the professor, rather than using sexual orientation.

Method

Participants

Undergraduate students ($N = 622$; 398 women, 224 men) were recruited from social science courses at a midsize public university in Texas. Respondents' ethnic backgrounds were as follows: 40% Latina/o, 29% African American, 17% White, 7% Asian American, and 3% "other" (4% declined to disclose their ethnicity).

Materials

A syllabus for a course called Psychology of Human Sexuality was created for the present study. Each syllabus included a cover page and a rating form. The cover page asked students to read the enclosed syllabus for the recently designed course to be taught by (professor name) and answer the attached questionnaire regarding the class and the professor. We created 16 versions of the course syllabus, which varied according to the four independent variables: professor political ideology, typographical errors, professor sexual orientation, and professor gender. Each respondent was randomly assigned to examine one syllabus.

Political ideology. Political ideology was manipulated to convey a professor with either politically conservative or politically liberal beliefs, based on the wording in the course description, the choice of a supplementary text (the primary text was the same for both ideologies), and the wording of some of the course topics described in the course schedule. For instance, the first sentence of the course description of the conservative syllabuses stated "The Psychology of Human Sexuality emphasizes sexual restraint and abstinence."

The first sentence of the course description of the liberal version stated “The Psychology of Human Sexuality emphasizes acceptance and celebrates the variety of human sexual behavior.”

Typographical errors. A second manipulation was the presence or absence of typographical errors throughout the syllabus. There were 13 errors on the first page of the syllabus and 5 additional errors throughout the rest of the syllabus. Errors consisted of misspelled words and repeated words and dates (e.g., “the the”). Some of the typographical errors were hand-corrected, making the mistake and the correction obvious, while other errors were not.

Sexual orientation and gender. The professor’s sexual orientation was indicated in the text of the cover page, which provided a description of the professor’s name and professional credentials, including membership in professional organizations, such as “the Association of Lesbian and Gay Psychologists,” in the case of lesbian and gay professors; and “the American Psychological Association,” in the case of heterosexual professors. The biographical information also included a statement about personal relationship status, such as “Dr. Michelle Saunders lives in Houston with Lori, her partner of three years,” in the case of a lesbian professor; and “Dr. Michelle Saunders lives in Houston with David, her husband of three years,” in the case of a heterosexual professor. Professors’ gender was indicated by their names and pronouns used throughout the stimulus packet.³

Measures

Immediately following the course syllabus, there was an evaluation form on which students were to rate their agreement with 24 statements made about the course and the professor (see Table 1). The form was adapted from Smith and Anderson (2005), who used a similar procedure. The statements were similar to those on a standard course evaluation (e.g., “The requirements for this course seem to be clearly explained”). In addition, there were statements that have been shown to measure perceived political bias, which were adapted from Moore and Trahan (1997); as well as questions of knowledge and warmth, about which students have been shown to evaluate professors according to gender stereotypes (Bachen, McLoughlin, & Garcia, 1999; Basow, 1995; Feldman, 1993). Participants indicated their agreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Participant demographic information was solicited at the end of the evaluation form.

³Copies of the syllabuses are available upon request from the authors.

Table 1

Factor Loadings and Composite Scores

Factor and items	Factor loading	α
Factor 1: Political bias		.802
The topics for this course seem to reflect the professor's personal or political biases.	.757	
The professor seems to have a political agenda.	.803	
The professor seems to use this class to express her own political opinions.	.831	
The professor seems like she would force her views about sexuality on students.	.666	
Factor 2: Appropriate topics/material		.813
The topics for this course seem interesting.	.785	
The topics for this course seem appropriate for this course level.	.678	
This course covers material appropriate for this class.	.506	
This course seems boring. ^a	.649	
I would like to take a course like this.	.670	
Factor 3: Professional competence		.770
The goals of this course are clearly stated.	.645	
The requirements for this course seem to be clearly explained.	.678	
The grading criteria for this course seem to be well thought out by the professor.	.650	
The professor seems knowledgeable.	.699	
The professor seems well organized.	.664	
The professor seems to need more teaching experience. ^a	.474	
Factor 4: Professor warmth		.876
The professor seems like she cares about her students.	.686	
The professor seems like she could inspire students to be interested in the subject.	.643	
The professor seems like she would be responsive to students seeking help.	.725	
The professor seems capable of leading interesting class discussions.	.574	
The professor seems approachable.	.802	
The professor seems like she is someone I would want to take a class with.	.668	
The professor seems warm.	.755	
Factor 5: Course difficulty		.223*
This course seems challenging.	.772	
The assignments for this course seem to be too much work for a three-credit class.	.666	

^aResponses were reverse-coded before constructing the composites.* $p < .01$.

Procedure

With the permission of the classroom instructor, the study was conducted during class time. Some of the instructors provided extra credit to students who participated. Only students attending class the day of administration were asked to complete the anonymous survey. Each student received a stimulus packet containing the cover page, a syllabus for the course, and an evaluation form. Students were asked by the researchers to give their impressions of a recently designed course. Completed forms were returned from over 95% of the students who were asked to participate.

Results

Data Reduction

A principal components analysis with a varimax rotation was performed on respondents' answers to the 24 statements about the instructor and the course. After component loadings less than .45 were suppressed, the 24 statements loaded cleanly onto five components, reflecting the following dimensions of professorial competence: political bias, appropriate topics/material, professional competence, professor warmth, and course difficulty. These components were tested for reliability, and the means of each component were averaged to create five composite indices. Only the political bias and professional competence factors were used in the present analyses. The specific statements that loaded onto each factor, factor loadings, and reliability scores are shown in Table 1.

Analyses

A series of planned contrasts was conducted. In order to control for Type 1 error, the significance criterion was held at .01. Hypothesis 1 predicted that lesbian/gay professors would be viewed as more politically biased than heterosexual professors with the same syllabus. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a one-way between-participants ANOVA with professor sexual orientation as the independent variable, and the political bias component as the dependent variable. This hypothesis was supported, as indicated by a significant main effect for professor sexual orientation, $F(1, 617) = 9.29$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .02$. As predicted, students viewed lesbian/gay professors ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 0.98$) as more politically biased than heterosexual professors ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 0.85$). Hypothesis 2 predicted that lesbian/gay professors would

be viewed as more professionally competent than would heterosexual professors. We conducted a one-way ANOVA with professional competence as the dependent variable. The main effect for professor sexual orientation was not statistically significant; therefore, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that lesbian/gay professors with liberal political ideologies would be viewed as more biased than either liberal heterosexuals or conservative lesbians and gay men. Hypothesis 4 further predicted that politically liberal gay men would be viewed as more biased than the other combinations of political ideology, sexual orientation, and professor gender. To test Hypotheses 3 and 4, we conducted a 2 (Political Ideology) \times 2 (Professor Sexual Orientation) \times 2 (Professor Gender) between-participants ANOVA with political bias as the dependent variable. Hypothesis 3 was not supported, as indicated by the nonsignificant Political Ideology \times Professor Sexual Orientation interaction. A significant Political Ideology \times Professor Sexual Orientation \times Professor Gender interaction emerged, $F(1, 611) = 6.63$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .01$. We conducted follow-up simple-effects tests to examine whether or not Hypothesis 4 was supported. Contrary to what Hypothesis 4 predicted, among men with conservative ideologies, gay men ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.87$) were perceived as more biased than were heterosexual men ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 0.78$), $F(1, 144) = 10.15$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .07$. Also contrary to Hypothesis 4, among women professors with liberal ideologies, lesbians ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 0.93$) were viewed as more biased than were heterosexual women ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 0.88$), $F(1, 165) = 7.97$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .05$.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that liberal lesbian/gay professors would be viewed as more professionally competent than would conservative lesbian/gay professors. We tested Hypothesis 5 using a one-way (political ideology) ANOVA with professional competence as the dependent variable. Only those respondents who examined the syllabuses of lesbian and gay professors were included in this analysis. The one-way ANOVA was not significant; therefore, Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that lesbian/gay professors who had typographical errors on their syllabuses would be rated as less competent than would heterosexual professors with such errors. A 2 (Errors) \times 2 (Professor Sexual Orientation) ANOVA with professional competence as the dependent variable was conducted; however, the interaction was not significant. Therefore, Hypothesis 6 was not supported.

Discussion

Study 1 examined students' perceptions of lesbian and gay professors based on their impressions of a course syllabus. We examined perceptions of

political bias, and, professional competence. We looked for evidence of both relatively overt bias and relatively subtle bias against lesbian and gay professors, relative to heterosexual professors. In terms of relatively overt bias, lesbian and gay professors who teach a course on human sexuality were viewed as more biased than were heterosexual professors teaching the same course with the same syllabus.

This finding adds to other experiments with other target groups finding that men and White professors are viewed by students as more objective and less political when teaching about minority issues than are those from the minority group themselves. For instance, Moore and Trahan (1997) found that among professors teaching a course on gender, male professors were believed to be more objective and less political than were female professors. Likewise, Ludwig and Meacham (1997) found that White men were regarded as more objective and less opinionated than were African American professors when it comes to teaching a course on racism and sexism. In all three studies—that is, the present study, Moore and Trahan (1997) and Ludwig and Meacham (1997)—the syllabuses were equivalent except for the gendered names of the professors and the information indicating race or sexual orientation. These findings suggest that students believe that “minorities” bring political baggage into the classroom; whereas Whites, men, and heterosexuals bring with them cool heads of objectivity.

Drawing from the work on response amplification (Anderson & Smith, 2005; Moreno & Bodenhausen, 2001) and aversive racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004), patterns reflecting more subtle forms of bias were expected as well. Students were expected to use the stereotype that gay men (and, perhaps to a lesser extent, lesbians) are oversexed and politically liberal as rationales for downgrading politically liberal lesbian and gay professors, as compared to politically liberal heterosexual professors (and conservative lesbian and gay professors). An alternative prediction, based on expectancy violation theory (Burgoon & Hubbard, 2005), is that students will look for stereotype consonance that might lead respondents to view not liberal lesbians and gay men, but conservative lesbians and gay men as biased. The idea here is that a conservative lesbian or gay professor will disrupt students' ideas about typical homosexuals (Geiger, Harwood, & Hummert, 2006; Madon, 1997).

The prediction that students would find liberal lesbian and gay men to be politically biased was supported only for lesbian professors. Contrary to expectations associated with response amplification, and in support of expectancy violation theory, politically conservative gay men were viewed as more biased than were conservative heterosexual men. The case of lesbian professors reveals the reverse. Politically liberal lesbian professors

were viewed as more biased than were liberal heterosexual women. So, there was not one version of bias that accounted for students' perceptions of both lesbians and gay men: Conservative gay men and liberal lesbians were viewed as more biased than were liberal gay men and conservative lesbians. In contrast, heterosexuals were not judged according to their political ideology.

Because of the perception that lesbians and gay men are highly sexual (Mohr, 1988/2007), we expected that lesbian and gay professors would be viewed as more professionally competent in terms of teaching the human sexuality course, as compared to heterosexual professors. We also expected that liberal lesbian and gay professors would be seen as more professionally competent to teach human sexuality than would conservative lesbian and gay professors. We did not find evidence for patterns associated with professional competence. Apparently, competence to teach the human sexuality course was not a dimension on which students rated lesbian and gay or heterosexual professors. Perhaps other dimensions (e.g., professors' political bias) were more salient for students.

We also expected that lesbian/gay professors with errors on their syllabuses would be rated as less competent than would their heterosexual counterparts with errors on their syllabuses. This hypothesis was inspired by the principle of aversive racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004) and by a study conducted by Moreno and Bodenhausen (2001) finding that when people want to appear unprejudiced, they use neutral excuses to denigrate out-groups. Although typographical errors were quite salient to respondents, as measured by manipulation checks not reported here, the Errors factor seems to have had no utility in respondents' differential treatment of professors. The lack of significant findings associated with typographical errors was one of the inspirations for considering errors in Study 2.

Study 2

Study 1 examined the role of professors' political ideology and typographical errors on students' perceptions of lesbian, gay, and heterosexual professors. In Study 2, we add another potential predictor of perceptions of professors: students' self-reported attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. We used students' responses to the Modern Homonegativity (Morrison & Morrison, 2002) and Homonegativity (Morrison, Parriag, & Morrison, 1999) scales to categorize the students according to old-fashioned and modern views about homosexuality.

Old-Fashioned and Modern Homonegativity

Homonegativity is rooted in old-fashioned ideas about lesbians and gay men in a way similar to old-fashioned racism reflected beliefs about African Americans as biologically and morally inferior to Whites (for a review, see Whitley & Kite, 2010). *Homonegativity* reflects unfavorable social judgments of lesbians and gay men on the basis of presumed moral grounds, or on claims of psychopathology (Morrison et al., 1999). For instance, individuals who score high on homonegativity agree with statements such as “Gay men should not be allowed to work with children,” and “Lesbians are immoral.” We expect those with high scores on homonegativity to show a general bias against lesbian and gay professors, regardless of the professors’ political ideology and the presence of typographical errors on the syllabus. Specifically, we predict the following:

Hypothesis 7. Those high in homonegativity will view lesbian and gay professors as more politically biased, less professionally competent, less likely to have appropriate topics for the course, and not as warm, in comparison to heterosexual professors.

Whereas homonegativity reflects a fundamental rejection of homosexuality as immoral and sick, modern homonegativity is less categorical in its rejection. Like *modern racism*, which regards racism as a thing of the past and presumes that African Americans would succeed if they just tried harder (McConahay, 1986), *modern homonegativity* rejects lesbians and gay men on the grounds that they attempt to obtain special privileges because of their orientation, or because it is believed that they flaunt their sexuality (Morrison & Morrison, 2002). Those who score high on modern homonegativity agree with statements such as “In today’s tough economic times, Americans’ tax dollars shouldn’t be used to support gay organizations,” and “Lesbians should stop shoving their lifestyle down other people’s throats.”

Modern homonegativity emphasizes the social importance of assimilation on the parts of lesbians and gay men, rather than all-out rejection. If modern homonegativity works like other forms of subtle prejudice, we would expect that those high in modern homonegativity will not categorically dismiss lesbian/gay professors presumably the way those high on homonegativity would. Therefore, rather than viewing lesbian/gay professors as biased, we predict the following:

Hypothesis 8. Those high on modern homonegativity will view liberal lesbian/gay professors as politically biased, relative to liberal heterosexual professors.

Here, political ideology would be used as an excuse for the differential treatment of lesbian/gay professors. According to Morrison and Morrison (2002), modern homonegativity is correlated with conservatism; thus, liberalism would be used as an excuse to discriminate against lesbians and gay men. We propose the following:

Hypothesis 9. Those high on modern homonegativity will use typographical errors on syllabuses as an excuse to discriminate against lesbians and gay professors.

In other words, we expect that lesbian/gay professors with errors on their syllabuses will be viewed as less professionally competent than will heterosexual professors with errors on their syllabuses.

In Study 2, we categorized participants based on their responses to items on the Homonegativity and Modern Homonegativity scales. These ratings placed participants into three groups: homonegatives, modern homonegatives, and non-homonegatives. Those individuals who scored low on both scales were not expected to differentiate lesbian/gay professors from heterosexual professors.

We also examined whether or not respondents' attitudes would affect their reported interest in taking the course. We predict the following:

Hypothesis 10. Homonegatives will be less interested in taking the course than will modern homonegatives, who, in turn, will be less interested in taking the course than will non-homonegatives.

We are also interested in whether or not the political ideology and sexual orientation of the professor will interact with respondent attitudes and influence respondents' interest in taking the course. We propose the following:

Hypothesis 11. Homonegatives will be most interested in taking a course from a politically conservative, heterosexual professor.

Finally, we are interested in whether or not the presence of typographical errors will interact with professors' sexual orientation and attitudes. Thus, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 12. Those high in modern homonegativity will be less interested in taking a course from lesbian/gay professors with errors on their syllabuses, as compared to heterosexual professors with the same syllabus.

Method

Undergraduate students ($N = 545$; 354 women, 191 men) were recruited from social science courses at a midsize public university in Texas. Respondents' ethnic backgrounds were as follows: 42% Latina/o, 31% African American, 17% White, 6% Asian American, and 4% "other."

Materials and Measures

We used the same syllabus with the same independent variables (i.e., political ideology, errors, professor sexual orientation, professor gender) and the same 24-item evaluation form in Study 2 as we used in Study 1. Unique to Study 2 was the addition of two measures: the Homonegativity Scale (Morrison et al., 1999) and the Modern Homonegativity Scale (Morrison & Morrison, 2002).

Homonegativity Scale (HS; Morrison et al., 1999). The HS consists of items that reflect old-fashioned negative attitudes toward homosexuality. Sample items include "Lesbians should be avoided whenever possible," and "Gay men should not be allowed to work with children." The HS has parallel versions for attitudes toward lesbians and attitudes toward gay men. Each version contains six items that are rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Modern Homonegativity Scale (MHS; Morrison & Morrison, 2002). The MHS consists of parallel forms—one pertaining to lesbians and the other pertaining to gay men—of a 12-item scale representing modern homonegativity. Sample items are "Lesbians seem to focus on the ways in which they differ from heterosexuals, and ignore the ways in which they are the same," and "Gay men have become far too confrontational in their demand for equal rights."

We created a 34-item survey, combining the lesbian and gay versions of the HS (Morrison et al., 1999) and the MHS (Morrison & Morrison, 2002). The survey includes the 12 HS items and 22 items from the MHS. There are 2 MHS items appearing on the lesbian and gay versions of the scale that are the same in both versions (i.e., "The notion of universities providing students with undergraduate degrees in Gay and Lesbian Studies is ridiculous," and "Celebrations such as 'Gay Pride Day' are ridiculous because they assume that an individual's sexual orientation should constitute a source of pride"); therefore, they appeared only once on our version.

The survey items were shuffled such that every other item pertained to lesbians/gay men, and the HS and MHS items were mixed throughout the survey. All participants responded to the survey items in the same order. The procedure of Study 2 was identical to that of Study 1.

Creating Homonegativity Categories

Respondents' scores on the combined HS and MHS were calculated to form three groups: (a) homonegatives; (b) modern homonegatives; and (c) non-homonegatives. *Homonegatives* ($n = 74$) were those participants whose mean scores on the HS items were above the 3.0 midpoint (regardless of how they scored on the MHS items). *Modern homonegatives* ($n = 195$) were those whose mean scores on the HS items were below 3.0 and whose scores on the MHS items were above 3.0. Finally, *non-homonegatives* ($n = 257$) were those respondents whose mean scores on the MHS and the HS items fell below 3.0.

Results

Analyses

A principal components analysis produced the same components described in Study 1. Therefore, political bias, appropriate topics/material, professional competence, and professor warmth served as dependent variables for the analyses reported here.

Hypothesis 7 predicted that homonegatives would view lesbian/gay professors as more politically biased, less professionally competent, less likely to have appropriate topics for the course, and not as warm, in comparison to heterosexual professors. In order to test Hypothesis 7, we conducted a 3 (Homonegativity Category: homonegative, modern homonegative, or non-homonegative) \times 2 (Professor Sexual Orientation) between-participants MANOVA on political bias, professional competence, appropriate topics/material, and professor warmth. We used a MANOVA for this analysis because the dependent variables were correlated. MANOVA controls for Type 1 error, which is a risk, given the number of tests associated with this hypothesis.

A statistically significant Homonegativity Category \times Professor Sexual Orientation omnibus F was necessary to find support for Hypothesis 7. This interaction was not significant; therefore, Hypothesis 7 was not supported. However, a significant main effect for Homonegativity Category was found, and the patterns associated with this main effect may illuminate why there was no Homonegativity Category \times Professor Sexual Orientation interaction, as expected. The omnibus F on homonegativity category was significant, Wilks's $\Lambda = .88$, $F(8, 976) = 8.06$, $p = .00$, $\eta^2 = .06$. Three of the univariate tests with homonegativity category were statistically significant: political bias, $F(2, 491) = 9.76$, $p = .00$, $\eta^2 = .04$; appropriate topics/material, $F(2, 491) = 25.62$, $p = .00$, $\eta^2 = .09$; and professor warmth, $F(2, 491) = 4.25$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .02$.

Tukey's post hoc tests determined that, in terms of political bias, homonegatives ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.11$) were more likely to believe that the professors teaching the course are politically biased than were non-homonegatives ($M = 2.62$, $SD = 0.92$, $p = .00$), but were no different from modern homonegatives ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 0.89$). In terms of respondents' perceptions of the course having appropriate topics and materials, non-homonegatives ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.71$) and modern homonegatives ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.70$) were more likely than were homonegatives ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 1.03$) to think that the course had appropriate topics/materials ($ps = .00$). Also, homonegatives ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.81$), as compared to modern homonegatives ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.62$, $p = .02$) and non-homonegatives ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.76$, $p = .02$) were less likely to view professors as warm, regardless of sexual orientation.

Hypothesis 8 predicted that modern homonegatives would view liberal lesbian and gay professors as politically biased, relative to liberal heterosexual professors. A 3 (Homonegativity Condition) \times 2 (Political Ideology) \times 2 (Professor Sexual Orientation) ANOVA on political bias tested this hypothesis. The expected three-way interaction was not significant. However, a significant Homonegativity Condition \times Professor Sexual Orientation interaction provides partial support for Hypothesis 8, $F(2, 491) = 6.62$, $p = .00$, $\eta^2 = .03$.

Follow-up simple-effects tests reveal the following patterns. Among modern homonegatives, lesbian/gay professors ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.09$) were viewed as more politically biased than were heterosexuals ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 0.08$), $F(1, 196) = 20.95$, $p = .00$, $\eta^2 = .10$. Among those respondents who examined the syllabuses of lesbian/gay professors, non-homonegatives ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 0.87$) viewed the professor as less politically biased than did homonegatives ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.32$) and modern homonegatives ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.85$), $F(2, 231) = 12.73$, $p = .00$, $\eta^2 = .10$. Although these findings did not directly test Hypothesis 8, they provide some insight into why Hypothesis 8 was not supported. This relationship will be explored in the Study 2 Discussion.

Hypothesis 9 predicted that modern homonegatives would use typographical errors on syllabuses as an excuse to discriminate against lesbian/gay professors. This hypothesis was tested with a 3 (Homonegativity Condition) \times 2 (Professor Sexual Orientation) \times 2 (Typographical Errors) between-participants MANOVA. Again, political bias, appropriate topics/materials, professional competence, and professor warmth were the dependent variables for this analysis. Like the first analysis in Study 2, there was a statistically significant omnibus effect for homonegativity condition, but the results are redundant with the previous summary, so they are not reported here. The omnibus test for the Homonegativity Condition \times Professor Sexual

Orientation \times Typographical Errors reveals only a nonsignificant trend; therefore, the univariate tests associated with it were not examined. Hypothesis 9 was not supported.

Finally, we examined students' response to the statement "I would like to take a course like this." Hypothesis 10 predicted that homonegatives would be less interested in taking the course than would modern homonegatives who would, in turn, be less interested in taking the course than would non-homonegatives. We were also interested in whether or not students' interest would interact with the political ideology of the course. We were interested in whether or not the political ideology and sexual orientation of the professor interacted with homonegativity condition and influenced respondents' interest in taking the course.

Hypothesis 11 predicted that those high on homonegativity would be most interested in taking a course from a politically conservative, heterosexual professor. A 3 (Homonegativity Condition) \times 2 (Professor Sexual Orientation) \times 2 (Political Ideology) ANOVA on the statement "I would like to take a course like this" produced a statistically significant homonegativity condition main effect, $F(2, 484) = 22.25, p = .00, \eta^2 = .08$. Tukey's post hoc tests reveal a difference between all three levels of homonegativity condition, consistent with Hypothesis 10. Specifically, modern homonegatives ($M = 3.86, SD = 1.19$) were more likely than were homonegatives ($M = 3.11, SD = 1.57$) to be interested in taking the course ($p = .00$). Non-homonegatives ($M = 4.19, SD = 1.05$) were more likely to be interested in taking the course than were both modern homonegatives ($p = .01$) and homonegatives ($p = .00$).

There was a statistically significant Homonegativity Condition \times Political Ideology interaction, $F(2, 484) = 3.19, p = .04, \eta^2 = .01$, suggesting partial support for Hypothesis 11. Simple-effects tests reveal several patterns. Homonegatives were more interested in taking the course with a politically conservative professor ($M = 3.49, SD = 1.44$) than with a liberal professor ($M = 2.63, SD = 1.62$), $F(1, 60) = 4.82, p = .03, \eta^2 = .07$. Non-homonegatives ($M = 4.17, SD = 1.12$) reported being more interested in taking the course than did homonegatives ($M = 3.49, SD = 1.44$) if the course was taught by a conservative professor, $F(2, 249) = 4.89, p = .01, \eta^2 = .04$. Non-homonegatives ($M = 4.21, SD = 0.98$) were more interested in taking the course with a liberal professor than were modern homonegatives ($M = 3.82, SD = 1.25$), $F(2, 241) = 20.02, p = .00, \eta^2 = .14$; and homonegatives ($M = 2.63, SD = 1.62, p = .00$). In addition, modern homonegatives were more interested in taking the course with a liberal professor than were homonegatives ($p = .00$).

Finally, we were interested in whether or not the presence of typographical errors would interact with professor sexual orientation and

homonegativity status. Hypothesis 12 predicted that those high in modern homonegativity would be less interested in taking a course from lesbian/gay professors with errors on their syllabuses, as compared to heterosexual professors with the same syllabus. The second ANOVA, with the statement "I would like to take a course like this" as the dependent variable, was a 3 (Homonegativity Condition) \times 2 (Professor Orientation) \times 2 (Typographical Errors) design. There was a statistically significant main effect for homonegativity condition, which is redundant with the homonegativity main effect reported previously. There were no significant interactions associated with homonegativity condition; therefore, Hypothesis 12 was not supported.

Discussion

Study 2 examined the role of students' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men in students' perceptions of lesbian/gay professors. We predicted that homonegatives would view lesbian/gay professors as politically biased, relative to heterosexuals teaching the same course with the same materials, from the same political perspective. Instead, regardless of who taught the course, and regardless of the political perspective of the professor, homonegatives found the course to be problematic. Specifically, homonegatives (relative to non-homonegatives) tended to believe that the professors teaching the course were politically biased. Homonegatives (as compared to non-homonegatives and modern homonegatives) felt that the professors' topics and materials were inappropriate; and homonegatives (relative to non-homonegatives and modern homonegatives) believed that the professors lacked warmth. These patterns occurred, regardless of the professors' sexual orientation or political ideology. Homonegativity is correlated with religiosity, authoritarianism, and conservatism (Morrison et al., 1999), which may explain the rather categorical discomfort about the course by homonegatives. Also, homophobia is correlated with a lack of knowledge of sexual information (Wright & Cullen, 2001). Homonegatives—that is, those who are high in old-fashioned homophobia—may simply be uncomfortable or uninterested in a class on human sexuality.

Drawing on the work on modern racism (McConahay, 1986), we expected that modern homonegatives would use political ideology or typographical errors as a way of denigrating lesbian/gay professors. We found, regardless of political ideology, that modern homonegatives viewed lesbian/gay professors to be more politically biased than heterosexual professors with the same syllabus. Similarly, modern homonegatives viewed lesbian/gay professors as more biased than did non-homonegatives, but less biased than homonegatives. Contrary to our expectations, modern homonegatives did not utilize

the two provided "excuses" (i.e., professor political ideology, typographical errors) to denigrate lesbian/gay professors. Modern homonegatives were relatively overt in their beliefs that lesbian/gay professors brought political baggage with them to the classroom, while heterosexual professors did not.

Consistent with predictions, modern homonegatives more than homonegatives were likely to be interested in taking the course, particularly if the course was taught by a liberal professor. Modern homonegatives were less interested in taking the course than were non-homonegatives. Homonegatives were more interested in taking the course with a conservative professor than with a liberal professor. Non-homonegatives were more interested in taking the course with a liberal professor than were modern homonegatives, and modern homonegatives were more interested in taking the course with a liberal professor than were homonegatives.

General Discussion

The two studies described here examined students' perceptions of lesbian/gay professors, based on information presented to them in a course syllabus. Across both studies, there is evidence that students' beliefs about sexual orientation inform their impressions of a course. Consistent with previous experiments using other target groups, such as women (Abel & Meltzer, 2007; Moore & Trahan, 1997) and African Americans (Ludwig & Meacham, 1997), professors who are members of minority groups are viewed as politically biased and subjective in their presentations, relative to heterosexual White men. The undergraduate students in the present study viewed heterosexuals as the normative professor who is relatively objective and value-free. Lesbian/gay professors who taught a course with the exact same syllabus as heterosexual professors were viewed as coming to the course with a political agenda, with personal biases, and with the aim of forcing their views of sexuality on students (to paraphrase the wording from some of the statements that comprised the Political Bias factor).

In addition to the relatively overt bias targeting lesbian/gay professors, the professors' political ideology and whether or not their syllabuses contained typographical errors were offered as potential safe havens where students could hide their anti-gay attitudes under the auspices of rejecting a professor's political identity or a professor's errors on the syllabus. Professor political ideology and typographical errors were examined as potential excuses students could use to denigrate lesbian/gay professors, relative to heterosexual professors, but without admitting to being discriminatory.

Typographical errors did not appear to be used as a safe haven for discrimination, as they have in other studies (Moreno & Bodenhausen, 2001).

Professor political ideology did show some utility in this function. Politically conservative gay men were viewed as more biased than were conservative heterosexual men. This particular finding lends tentative support to expectancy violation theory: that people are comfortable with those who behave in ways consistent with their expectations. However, the pattern regarding respondents' views of lesbian professors is more difficult to place in existing theory. The case of lesbian professors reveals the reverse of gay men. Politically liberal lesbian professors were viewed as more biased than were liberal heterosexual women. So, there was not one version of bias that accounted for students' perceptions of both lesbians and gay men: Conservative gay men and liberal lesbians were viewed as more biased than were liberal gay men and conservative lesbians. In contrast, heterosexuals were not judged according to their political ideology. The finding of differing views of lesbian and gay men based on their political ideology supplies more evidence that lesbians and gay men should not be considered as one category of "homosexual" (e.g., Geiger et al., 2006). Individuals respond differently, at least in some instances, to lesbians and gay men; therefore, future research should take this into account.

Respondents' modern and old-fashioned attitudes about homosexuality and homosexuals played a role in their views about the human sexuality course and the professors who taught it. Homonegatives were less interested in taking the human sexuality course than were modern homonegatives and non-homonegatives. Furthermore, they perceived the course as politically biased, with fewer appropriate topics and materials, and taught by professors with less warmth than the other two attitude categories. Students with high levels of homonegativity, then, present a particular challenge, perhaps in the form of resistance to a faculty member who teaches courses such as human sexuality. Whereas homonegatives categorically dismissed the course, modern homonegatives viewed lesbian and gay professors as more politically biased than heterosexual professors with the same syllabus.

This study is limited by the following considerations. First, students' evaluations of professors were based solely on a course syllabus and not on a face-to-face encounter with a particular professor or a semester-long experience with a faculty member whom a student gets to know as an individual. Many studies have found that stereotypes decrease as individuals get to know out-group members (e.g., Anderssen, 2002). Second, the present studies were based on a syllabus for a human sexuality course. The generalizability of the findings here to other courses remains to be seen.

Another limitation of the present study is that there was no manipulation check or piloting of the survey to test whether or not respondents attended to the sexual orientation of the professor, or other independent variables. However, in terms of the sexual orientation manipulation, there were several

statistically significant effects associated with professor sexual orientation, and in a comment section of the survey, several students referred to the professor's sexual orientation (in the lesbian/gay condition). Therefore, we believe that the study attended to this difference. In terms of the manipulation of errors on the syllabus, there were many statistically significant effects associated with typographical errors (e.g., professors with errors on their syllabuses were viewed as less professionally competent than were those without errors), but because they were not part of the hypotheses, they were not reported.

The present studies contribute significant additions to the literature. First, individuals demonstrated relatively overt bias directed at lesbian and gay professors in the form of a double standard in evaluating professors based on sexual orientation. Also, there were relatively more subtle manifestations of differential evaluations of professors based on sexual orientation when neutral "covers" were presented to students, such as the political ideology of the professor.

This study is distinguished from previous empirical research in that much of the work examining student expectations and evaluations of instruction have relied on first-person accounts and non-experimental methods examining actual courses with actual student evaluations (e.g., Basow, 1995; Sinacore, Healy, & Justin, 2002). While those studies are valuable in their own right, the present studies used an experimental paradigm that controls for type of course, course content, gender of the professor, sexual orientation of the professor, sociopolitical valence, and professor carefulness. In this way, relevant variables are isolated, thus allowing for the control of extraneous variables that might affect the results. This point about experimental control is important when the topic of investigation is stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. Anecdotes about individual experiences of discrimination are easily dismissed with the claim that the target of discrimination is overly sensitive or is seeing things that are not there. Experimental findings on prejudice and discrimination are not as easily dismissible.

The results from this project will expand the scope of the existing body of work documenting students' preconceptions of professors and will provide a greater context for understanding the complex interactions that result in students' evaluations of faculty. The present studies also contribute to filling the gap in the social sciences literature on stereotypes of lesbian and gay professors. Students' early perceptions of professors are meaningful and can affect the way students approach a course and interact with the professor. Gender- and sexuality-based preconceptions could have an impact on students' own educational experiences, as well as experiences of professors who are lesbian and gay. That impact could be magnified when professors teach controversial, politically charged topics, such as human sexuality.

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