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Conceptions of Masculinity and Femininity as a Basis for Stereotypes of Male and Female Homosexuals

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ABSTRACT. To date the majority of research published in relation to homosexuality has been concerned with the homosexual's problems, and with the etiology of homosexuality. As little as 8% of published research has dealt with attitudes toward homosexuals, and less still has been concerned with perceptions of and beliefs about homosexuals. Existing research on the latter is reviewed, and research is outlined that investigates perceptions of homosexuals. Stereotypes of male and female homosexuals are examined in the context of masculine-feminine traits using the Personality Attributes Questionnaire. Results strongly support the view that sex role definitions are a highly salient reference point for the public definition of homosexuals.

INTRODUCTION

Definitions of stereotypes have included the "picture in the head" that organizes our perceptions of the world (Lippman, 1922), the cognitive structure we act on as if it were a reality (Cauthen, Robinson & Krauss, 1971), and the consensus about the images evoked by a particular label (Katz & Braly, 1933). In addition, while stereotypes can be described as generalizations that help us to order reality, they have nevertheless come to be associated with narrow-mindedness on the part of the stereotyper, and inaccuracy on the part of the stereotype (Campbell, 1967). Although individualistic stereotypes have been referred to in the literature (Secord & Backman, 1964), the typical research focus has been consensual beliefs, most often assessed in terms of the personality traits associated with a particular group.

Research dealing specifically with stereotypes of homosexuals is quite

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rare, and the few studies that have been published are not easily organized into a unified commentary. Where one would hope for complementary results and designs as well as a developed theory to predict and explain the related findings, there is instead a wide variety of approaches to the question, and little organizing theory behind it. To date little evidence is available to allow definite comment on the extent and depth of homosexual stereotypes, their nature and function.

Of those studies concerned with stereotypes of homosexuals, the most straightforward is that reported by Simmons (1965). The stereotypes for 5 "deviant" groups were investigated, one of the groups being homosexuals. The 134 respondents (a quota sample with age, education, and sex differences controlled), were asked to mark off traits they thought characterized the 5 groups; a piloted checklist of 70 traits was used. The stereotype was taken to be those items most frequently selected by respondents as characteristic of a particular group. This is the typical approach to stereotype definition, although it is seldom clear where the cut-off point should fall for inclusion in the stereotype. For example, in Simmons' study the percentage agreement on items varied from 10% to 70%—it seems obvious that 70% agreement on an item implies it is part of the public stereotype, but this is less clear when only 10% of the sample agree on an item. The stereotype of homosexuals for this sample included the following (percentage agreement is given in parentheses): sexually abnormal (72%), perverted (52%); mentally ill (40%), maladjusted (40%), effeminate (29%), lonely (22%), insecure (21%), immoral (16%), repulsive (14%), frustrated (14%), weak-minded (12%), lacking self-control (12%), sensual (11%), secretive (11%), oversexed (10%), dangerous (10%), sinful (10%), and sensitive (10%).

Instead of piloting the traits responded to by subjects, Steffensmeier and Steffensmeier (1974) referred in part to previous research for their stereotypic items. They offered their sample of 373 students only three views of homosexuals: that they are psychologically disturbed ("sick"), are easily identified ("swish") and that they are dangerous because they prey on young people ("dangerous"). The descriptions "sick" and "swish" were included because they "seemed prevalent" to the authors, not because they were suggested by their own or others' research. Endorsement of these three beliefs was examined in relation to sex of homosexual target, sex of subject, and a social distance measure in relation to homosexuals. Almost 68% of the sample accepted the "sick" stereotype; 37% endorsed the "dangerous" stereotype, and 20% the "swish" one. The "dangerous" and "swish" stereotypes were attributed more to male than to female homosexuals. In addition tentative support was found for the view that rejection in terms of increased social distance is positively correlated with acceptance of the "dangerous" and "sick" stereotypes.

Staats (1978) asked a sample of 538 undergraduates to identify those traits, in a list of 84, they thought were typical of homosexuals in general. Respondents also rated homosexuals on a social distance scale (after Bogardus, 1925). The more frequently identified attributes for homosexuals were "sensitive" (230 respondents identified this as applicable), "individualistic" (200), "intelligent" (163), "honest" (127), "imaginative" (109), and "neat" (105). Less frequently selected were "reserved" (89), "alert" (89), "kind" (84), "faithful" (78), "courteous" (78), "sophisticated" (73), and "artistic" (70). It was found, using dummy variable analysis, that these adjectives correlated significantly with less social distance from homosexuals. The following were correlated significantly with increased social distance from homosexuals: "cowardly" (87), "sly" (75), "suspicious" (67), "shrewd" (64), "stupid" (60), "impulsive" (60), and "ignorant" (54). These adjectives can be seen as stereotypical because they are the more frequently selected items. The list, however, is restricted to those items that are closely related to social distance measures, which might lead to the exclusion of other aspects of the homosexual stereotype.

Weissbach and Zagon (1975) asked 20 students to rate an interviewee on a videotaped interview: half the subjects were led to believe that he was homosexual, half were not. Respondents rated the target on 10 bipolar scales, and the differences for the two conditions were compared. Five of the scales were selected "to reflect general personality characteristics" that were not thought to differentiate homosexuals and heterosexuals, and the remaining 5 were "believed *a priori*" to be sensitive to homosexual/non-homosexual differences. Significant differences after labelling suggested that the homosexual target was seen as weaker, more feminine, more emotional, more submissive and more unconventional than when he was not labelled homosexual.

In an anticipated interaction paradigm, Gurwitz and Marcus (1978) assessed the effect of homosexual stereotypes on first impressions. In a preliminary study, 40 students rated a list of 77 traits in terms of whether they applied more to homosexual than to heterosexual men and vice versa. An item was defined as stereotypic if more than 75% of the sample agreed that an item was more typical of male homosexuals than male heterosexuals. In this sense male homosexuals were seen as less aggressive and strong than heterosexuals, poorer leaders, more clothes conscious, more gentle, more passive and more theatrical. These and 9 other neutral traits (i.e., rated as applying equally to both target groups), were then used in the anticipated interaction experiment with a sample of 96 students. Five of the so-called neutral traits also led to different ratings for male homosexuals. The homosexual target was rated on these as less calm, less dependable, less honest and less religious than the male heterosexual.

Three studies have referred directly to homosexual stereotypes when studying determinants of homosexual attitudes. Storms (1978) tried to establish whether male homosexuals are disliked because they deviate sexually or because they are perceived to deviate from sex role prescriptions. A sample of 258 students were asked to rate their like/dislike for male targets who were hypo-, hyper- or average masculine, and homosexual or heterosexual. Analysis showed that although sex role deviance was disliked, sexual deviance was disliked more, and Storms suggested that sexual deviance is therefore more important in the evaluation of homosexuals. An interesting result was that masculine homosexual targets were disliked most. Storm explains this by referring to a general expectation that male homosexuals are effeminate, the suggestion being that masculine homosexuals are disliked more than feminine ones because they violate this expectation. In an indirect way this suggests that male homosexuals are perceived as sex role deviants.

Storms' design was adopted in two studies conducted by Laner and Laner (1979, 1980), which included a replication for Lesbian targets. The results were very similar to Storms' in that sex role deviance and sexual deviance were both implicated as bases for disliking homosexuals. One part of their work might be taken as a direct assessment of stereotypes of the targets. Respondents were asked to select, from a pool of 12, three words they thought characterized the various targets in the study. The 12 were selected from a larger pool to reflect varying degrees of "likeableness", i.e., some words were rated as more favorable than others. The words more frequently attributed to male homosexuals for example, were (percentage agreement is given in parentheses) "unappealing" (28%), "inoffensive" (18%), "disagreeable" (15%), "dangerous" (14%), "eccentric" (14%), "hostile" (13%), "agreeable" (12%), and "frivolous" (11%). However, these elicited descriptions of homosexuals are perhaps more useful in clarifying the attitudes toward the various targets in these studies, since they were selected from a pool of likeability adjectives.

The above summarizes the research to date on stereotypes of homosexuals. The stimuli used to elicit responses have varied from 3 items (Steffensmeier and Steffensmeier, 1974) to 84 items (Staats, 1978), from straightforward possession of a trait (Staats, 1978) to degree of possession of a trait (Gurwitz & Marcus, 1978), from clearly investigating stereotypes of male homosexuals (Weissbach & Zagon, 1975) to failing to distinguish male and female homosexuals by simply referring to "homosexuals" (Simmons, 1965).

Although most of the studies reviewed make certain assumptions about homosexuals on behalf of their respondents, the relevance of these assumptions tends not to be investigated prior to their use in target descriptions. Studies designed to assess respondents' actual be-

liefs about homosexuals are very rare. When stereotypes have been referred to in the course of other studies, the variety of stereotypes employed has confounded any generalization concerning stereotypes of homosexuals. The variety of approaches to homosexual stereotypes is in sharp contrast to the uniformity of the type of respondents taking part in their studies. With the exception of Simmons' (1965) work, all the studies reviewed have been concerned with students' perceptions of homosexuals; it would be interesting to extend the study of stereotypes of homosexuals beyond those held by the American student population. Most studies have used descriptions of homosexual targets that were not experimentally based—the common reference point has been the experimenter's beliefs about the general population's beliefs about homosexuals. Perhaps the most important problem has been the failure to develop a theory that might better explain and predict the nature of homosexual stereotypes.

IMPLICATIONS FROM RESEARCH ON ATTITUDES TOWARD HOMOSEXUALS FOR RESEARCH ON STEREOTYPES OF HOMOSEXUALS

One of the earliest attitude studies by Smith (1971) tentatively suggested that anti-homosexual individuals may be more cognitively rigid and authoritarian than individuals with more positive attitudes. This might imply a more strict and fixed view of homosexuals on the part of anti-homosexual individuals. Henley and Pincus (1978), referring to their sample of 211 students, reported significant and positive correlations between measures of attitude toward ethnic minorities and attitudes toward homosexuals. Dunbar, Brown and Vuorinen (1973) found that attitudes toward homosexuals correlated moderately with measures of sex-guilt and conservative sexual attitudes, which could be inferred from Smith's study. Again the relationship between attitude and authoritarianism might have implications for stereotypes of homosexuals. Direct comment on these implications was made by Brown and Amoroso (1975), whereby respondents with more negative attitudes tended to stereotype the sexes more; they were also more willing to attribute homosexuality to a male if he exhibited one feminine characteristic. Perhaps this reflects an association among three factors: the positive evaluation of sex-role norms, the assumption that homosexuals violate sex-role norms, and the negative evaluation of those who are believed to deviate from these norms.

This relationship was highlighted in a study by MacDonald and Games (1974) in which a battery of questionnaires was administered to a sample of 197 students. The questionnaires included measures of sexual atti-

tudes, attitudes toward homosexuals and attitudes toward sex-role standards and equality between the sexes. One finding was that greater adherence to traditional sex role prescriptions, and less approval for equality between the sexes, were positively correlated with more negative attitudes toward homosexuals. MacDonald and Games (1974) explained this by suggesting that stigmatizing homosexuality is a means of reducing sex role confusion; that is, by delineating what is acceptable behavior for men and women.

Much of the research following MacDonald and Games has attempted to clarify the extent to which sex role attitudes and sexual attitudes are correlated with attitudes toward homosexuals. For example, Minnegerode (1976), with a sample of 104 students, found that more negative attitudes toward homosexuality were significantly correlated with both conservative sexual attitudes and traditional beliefs about women. Weinberger and Millham (1977) presented results for a sample of 267 students in confirmation of their hypothesis that negative attitudes toward homosexuals are related to beliefs that homosexuals' behavior is incongruent with their anatomical sex. Karr (1978) manipulated the labeling of a confederate as homosexual and observed the differences in reaction toward the target. The 90 male students taking part in the study rated the male labelled "homosexual" as less masculine and less preferred; they also rated the labeller, another confederate, as more sociable and masculine. MacDonald and Moore (1978) administered questionnaires concerning attitudes toward women and homosexuality, as well as a personal sex role inventory, to 88 male homosexuals. Respondents who supported equality between the sexes held more positive attitudes toward homosexuality. Another study on this theme (Weinberger & Millham, 1979) confirmed the relevance of sex role evaluations to the evaluation of homosexuals. Although sex of homosexual target and sex of respondent were found to be relevant to the prediction of attitude score, they concluded that attitudes toward homosexuals were highly correlated with traditional sex role distinctions. And of course Laner and Laner (1979, 1980), following Storms (1978), showed that evaluations of men's and women's sex role behaviors were relevant to the evaluation of homosexuals.

Several articles have attempted to explain the relationship between sex role prescriptions and the evaluation of homosexuals. The most comprehensive analysis has been by Lehne (1976) who begins with several popular beliefs about homosexuals (as revealed by straight-forward opinion polls), and an assessment of their validity. The repeated empirical finding is that homosexuals are, in reality, poorly described by popular beliefs, and Lehne suggests that the stereotypes are not simply a function of contact with homosexuals, but are communicated socially, and serve some purpose other than description of

the real world. That is, stereotypes reflect the positive evaluation of traditional sex-role behaviors and are the conceptual basis for devaluing deviation from them. Thus, the social function of negative attitudes toward homosexuals is to define the acceptable limits of behavior for men and women. Ample evidence is available to suggest that sex role stereotypes are held by large sections of society (see Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson & Rosenkrantz, 1972). Assuming that homosexuals are defined by the public principally in terms of deviations from sex role, one would expect homosexual stereotypes to be as pervasive and stable as stereotypes of men and women in general, since they accentuate the values bound up with prescriptions for masculine and feminine behavior.

The analysis briefly presented here offers one explanation of the repeated finding that measures of sex role evaluation are one of the best predictors of attitudes toward homosexuals. Other commentators (MacDonald, 1974; Morin & Garfinkle, 1978) have also made this point when reviewing the related literature. Although this link has been suggested and tentatively supported, validation of part of the analysis has lagged—to show that sex role evaluations do have some relevance to evaluations of homosexuals one has also to show that homosexuals are believed to be sex role violators. Some of the reported research does suggest that homosexuals are believed to behave like the opposite sex, and several attitude studies have shown that describing homosexual targets in terms of sex role deviance is meaningful for respondents. In addition, attitude research has shown that agreement with traditional sex role prescriptions is an important predictor of negative attitudes toward homosexuals.

The review of the stereotype literature has shown an approach to homosexual stereotypes that has been rather piecemeal, both in terms of technique and supporting theory. The review suggests that the sex role emphasis found in the attitude research is a good starting point for operationalizing and predicting stereotypes of homosexuals. The present study was designed to do just that, i.e., to examine homosexual stereotypes within the domain of masculine and feminine traits.

Measures have been developed to assess beliefs within this domain—from Bem's Sex-Role Inventory (1974) to semantic differential assessments (Reece, 1964), from word association tests (Heilbrun, 1964) to projective tests (May, 1971). Most of the assessments have been concerned with the relative degree to which individuals possess masculine and feminine attributes. The Personality Attributes Questionnaire, developed by Spence, Helmreich and Stapp (1974), has been specifically used to assess stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. The P.A.Q. is a revision of the Sex Role Stereotypes Questionnaire of Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman and Broverman (1968). Given a large body of

validation for the S.R.S.Q., and the recency of the P.A.Q., as well as its specific use in the assessment of stereotypes, it seemed preferable to use the P.A.Q. scale. Another reason for its adoption is that it is in the form of 55 bipolar 5 point scales, which allows the comparison of homosexual and non-homosexual targets along a continuum, as distinct from other measures that are concerned with presence or absence of an attribute.

In general terms the study was concerned with stereotypes of male and female homosexuals, their differences and their relationship to stereotypes of non-homosexual men and women. More specifically it was expected that female and male homosexuals would be rated significantly differently than their heterosexual counterparts. It was not clear whether mean ratings for the homosexual targets would fall between those for heterosexual men and women, or whether homosexuals would be rated more extremely; i.e., the precise nature of the sex role deviance was not clear. However, as the review above suggests, it seemed likely that a major trend would be for male homosexuals to be rated less masculine/more feminine than heterosexual men, and for female homosexuals to be rated less feminine/more masculine than heterosexual women.

METHOD

Respondents

A group of 103 adults was randomly selected from a pool of subjects affiliated with the Psychology Department. This pool of several hundred adults included no students, but was made up of male and female adults recruited from the general population of the City of Aberdeen. Ages within the sample ranged from 17 to 64 years, the mean age being 42. Reflecting the distribution of the subject pool, there were 64 women and 39 men in the sample. Almost all of the subjects came from the city of Aberdeen, and most had remained at school until 16 years of age. The majority of the sample had skilled or white collar backgrounds.

Procedure

Respondents were provided with four copies of the Personality Attributes Questionnaire; each copy bore one of four group labels: "men," "women," "male homosexuals," or "lesbians." Respondents were asked

to rate each group on the P.A.Q. according to what they thought applied to most members of each group.

Three factors had to be considered in this procedure. First, at least some subjects might have been reluctant to cooperate if they believed their ratings were being taken to mean that they, the subjects, thought that every member of the group was exactly as their rating suggested. Therefore, it was made clear that this was not the way the scales would be interpreted, and that it would be assumed their ratings applied to a majority of the target group members. Second, possible order effects for the four sets of scales had to be countered by randomizing across the sample the order in which the groups were rated. Third, confusion might have arisen from the fact that homosexual men are a logical subset of all men. It was pointed out, therefore, that "men" referred to those men who were not homosexual and "women" referred to those women who were not heterosexual. That is, comparisons were being made between heterosexuals and homosexuals, as well as between males and females within these groups.

RESULTS

The sample's ratings for each item were subjected to analysis of variance, with the intention that differences between means would be investigated if significant F values were obtained. In fact, the F values for all the items were significant beyond the 0.001 level. The means for the homosexual targets were compared, and their relationship to the means for "men" and "women" was also examined.

Mean Rating Differences for the Targets "Male Homosexuals" and "Lesbians"

Table 1 shows the probability values associated with the differences in rating means for the 2 homosexual targets. In all, "male homosexuals" were rated significantly differently than "lesbians" on 41 of the P.A.Q. items.

Two sets of stereotypes can be derived from the items where the two homosexual targets were rated significantly differently than one another: the more straightforward involves describing each target group in terms of the item pole its mean was nearest to. The stereotype of "male homosexuals" would therefore be that they are "needful of others' approval, not runners of the show, helpful to others, expressive of tender feelings" and so on. Similarly, "lesbians" would be described stereotypically as "not needful of others' approval, runners of the show,

TABLE 1: SELECTED MEAN COMPARISONS BETWEEN PAIRS OF TARGETS

Item from P.A.Q. Fem. pole (1) Masc. pole (5)	Mean MH	Mean L	Sig. of Mean Differences			Cross Gender Hypothesis
			MH-L	MH-M	L-W	
Needful of others's approval/ indifferent to	2.8	3.1	ns	ns	**	✓
never sees self running the show/always does	2.8	3.3	**	**	**	✓
very helpful to others/not helpful	2.4	2.8	**	ns	**	✓
not ambitious/very ambitious	3.0	3.3	**	**	ns	✓
ignorant of ways of world/ knows ways of	3.6	3.6	ns	ns	**	x
cries very easily/never cries	2.9	3.1	ns	**	**	✓
expresses tender feelings/ never does	2.0	2.6	**	**	**	✓
very submissive/very dominant	2.8	3.5	**	**	**	✓
goes to pieces under pressure/ does not	2.8	3.2	**	**	ns	✓
very kind/not at all kind	2.2	2.7	**	ns	**	✓
not self confident/very self confident	2.7	3.3	**	**	**	✓
likes children/dislikes children	2.8	3.1	*	**	**	✓
very quiet/very loud	2.5	3.2	**	**	**	✓
not aggressive/very aggressive	2.5	3.3	**	**	**	✓
never hide emotions/always hide emotions	2.7	3.2	**	**	**	✓
feelings easily hurt/not easily hurt	2.2	2.7	**	**	**	✓
not interested in sex/very interested	3.6	3.4	ns	**	ns	x
very creative/not very creative	2.2	2.8	**	**	**	✓
very timid/not at all timid	2.9	3.5	**	**	**	✓
not able with mechanical things/ able with	2.8	2.9	ns	**	**	✓
excitable in major crisis/ not excitable in	2.6	3.1	**	**	*	✓
not independent/very independent	3.2	3.8	**	**	**	✓

TABLE 1 (continued)

Item from P.A.Q. Fem. pole (1) Masc. pole (5)	Mean MH	Mean L	Sig. of Mean Differences			Cross Gender Hypothesis
			MH-L	MH-M	L-W	
understanding of others/not understanding	2.3	2.8	**	**	**	✓
not competitive/very competitive	3.0	3.3	**	**	*	✓
able to devote self to others/ not able to	2.5	2.8	*	**	**	✓
not at all outgoing/very outgoing	3.1	3.2	ns	**	ns	✓
never takes a stand/always takes a stand	3.1	3.5	**	**	**	✓
excitable in a minor crisis/ not excitable	2.7	3.3	**	**	ns	✓
not good at sports/very good at sports	2.6	3.3	**	**	**	✓
home-oriented/very worldly	3.1	3.2	ns	ns	**	✓
not intellectual/very intellectual	3.5	3.3	*	**	ns	x
very considerate/not at all considerate	2.3	2.9	**	**	**	✓
feels inferior/feels superior	2.7	3.0	*	**	ns	✓
very tactful/completely tactless	2.6	3.0	**	**	**	✓
not forward/very forward	2.9	3.3	**	**	**	✓
strong need for security/little need for	1.9	2.1	ns	**	**	✓
very passive/very active	3.0	3.4	**	**	ns	✓
warm in relations with others/ cold in	2.3	2.9	**	**	**	✓
dislikes maths and science/ likes them	3.1	3.1	ns	**	**	x
not adventurous/very adventurous	3.0	3.3	**	**	**	✓
very religious/not religious	3.2	3.3	ns	ns	**	✓
has difficulty in making decisions/does not	2.9	3.1	ns	**	*	✓
not skilled in business/very skilled	3.2	3.2	ns	**	**	x
very emotional/not emotional	2.0	2.5	**	**	**	✓

TABLE 1 (continued)

Item from P.A.Q. Fem. pole (1) Masc. pole (5)	Mean MH	Mean L	Sig. of Mean Differences			Cross Gender Hypothesis
			MH-L	MH-M	L-W	
strong conscience/no conscience	2.8	2.8	ns	ns	**	x
very neat/not at all neat	2.0	2.8	**	**	**	✓
not at all outspoken/very outspoken	2.8	3.3	**	**	**	✓
very gentle/very rough	2.2	2.9	**	**	**	✓
never acts as leader/always does	2.6	3.2	**	**	**	✓
aware of others' feelings/not aware of	2.1	2.5	**	**	**	✓
very grateful/not at all grateful	2.6	3.0	**	*	**	✓
enjoys art and music/does not	2.0	2.6	**	**	**	✓
easily influenced/not easily influenced	3.1	3.6	**	**	**	✓
gives up easily/never gives up easily	3.2	3.6	**	**	ns	✓

*Table notes:

"ns" = the difference between means was not significant

**" = the difference between means was significant beyond the 0.05 level

***" = the difference between means was significant beyond the 0.01 level

"✓" = the mean for male homosexuals was nearer the feminine pole, and the mean for lesbians was nearer the masculine pole

"x" = the pattern for "✓" was not sustained

NB: That the order of the poles in Table 1 is Feminine first, and Masculine second, ie. the most feminine rating is "1", and the most masculine rating is "5". When presented to subjects 25 of the items had these poles reversed, ie. the most masculine rating was a "1", most feminine a "5". The means for these 25 items were reflected to allow a simpler presentation of the results.

unhelpful, not expressive of tender feelings" and so on. The second set of stereotypes involves a comparative description of the two homosexual targets for each item. In this way the stereotype of "male homosexuals" would be, for example, that they are "more needful of others' approval than 'lesbians'"; "lesbians" could similarly be the focus of comparisons. The full stereotype for the homosexual targets can be seen by referring to all the items in Table 1 where "male homosexuals" were rated significantly differently than "lesbians."

The Relationship between Homosexual Target Means and Heterosexual Target Means

The description of stereotypes of homosexuals detailed in the above section leaves out an important pattern in the ratings for the four groups, one which substantiates the general hypothesis suggested earlier; viz., that homosexuals are defined as sex-role deviants. Simple confirmation of this hypothesis would involve, for example, "male homosexuals" being rated significantly differently than "men," and "lesbians" being rated significantly differently than "women." Since the targets "men" and "women" were taken to represent heterosexual men and women in general, and the items in the P.A.Q. were devised to reflect general impressions of masculinity/femininity, it follows that such differences reflect a perception of homosexuals as sex-role deviants.

Table 1 shows that "male homosexuals" were in fact rated significantly differently than "men" and "lesbians" than "women," on the majority of items. The differences were significant for "male homosexuals"/"men" comparisons on 47 out of the 54 items and for "lesbians"/"women" on 45 of the items. This is strong evidence for the hypothesis that the homosexual targets were seen as sex-role deviants.

Another way of describing the rating pattern for the homosexual targets relates the homosexual target means to the pre-defined masculine and feminine pole of each item. With this reference point one would be interested to see if "male homosexuals" were nearer the feminine pole of each item, and "lesbians" nearer the masculine pole. The results of this simple analysis are shown in the last column of Table 1. On 48 occasions the "cross-gender hypothesis" was supported for the perception of homosexuals; i.e., "male homosexuals" were rated more feminine than "lesbians," and "lesbians" more masculine than "male homosexuals." Another assessment of this cross-gender pattern can be done by checking whether the mean for "male homosexuals" is lower than the mean for "lesbians" (given that the most feminine rating is one, the most masculine, 5).

The cross-gender hypothesis was not supported on six items; on four occasions the means for "male homosexuals" and "lesbians" were the same, and on two (interest in sex, being intellectual or not) "male homosexuals" were rated more masculine than "lesbians." (Note that for these and all the other items the means for "men" were nearer the masculine pole, and those for "women" nearer the feminine pole.)

DISCUSSION

A review of the literature on stereotypes of homosexuals reveals an inconsistency of approach and an accompanying lack of organizing theory. Examination of public stereotypes of male homosexuals has

been rare and rarer still has been the assessment of stereotypes of lesbians. The present study was concerned with a fuller assessment of both male and female homosexual stereotypes as well as with locating such an examination within a context that might serve to explain the content of the stereotypes.

The homosexual targets in the present study were rated differently on a large number of items, confirming that homosexual stereotypes existed for this sample, and that male and female homosexuals were perceived differently. An important point is that the majority of the differences are better described as comparisons. That is, there are few items where the homosexual targets are rated differently than all other targets; typically they are distinct from one another and rated similarly to their non-homosexual and opposite sex target. Thus the more accurate representation of the stereotypes is in the form of "more emotional than men," or "more emotional than lesbians," for example. Since all measures of stereotypes have their origins in item pools that are thought to characterize people in general, it seems a more reasonable assessment of stereotypes to ask to what degree the target group possesses an attribute, rather than whether or not it possesses the attribute at all. Placing homosexual stereotypes in this context has only been addressed in the most recent studies, and even then the contexts have been quite restricted. The present study has attempted to provide a full and relevant context for homosexual stereotypes.

One problem with providing a set of scales for eliciting stereotypes is that the elicited responses may be more a function of the scales used than of individuals' perceptions of the target group. However, subjects in the present study were clearly informed that they should rate according to what they believed, and that it was not a formal test of knowledge. If the responses were simply a function of the scales, it is unclear why responses were so consistent across this diverse sample of adults. Another important point is the meaningfulness of the results in relation to other studies concerned with attitudes toward homosexuals, which could be seen as predicting the pattern obtained so consistently here.

For several years evidence has been available to suggest that sex role evaluations are a major predictor of attitudes toward homosexuals. It has seemed obvious, to the extent of being left unresearched, that the correlation between the two involves the belief that homosexuals are sex role deviants. That is, those who value traditional sex roles devalue homosexuals because they perceive them to be role deviants, and those who do not value the roles so highly do not care. But the necessary antecedent for explaining the relevance of sex role attitudes, i.e., perceiving homosexuals as sex role deviants, has not itself been substantiated.

This is significant for several reasons. The present study shows not only that stereotypes of male and female homosexuals exist but also that they are predictable, for reasons outlined above. Most of the studies to date have simply assumed the perception of homosexuals as sex-role deviants in the course of explaining the relevance of sex-role evaluations to attitudes toward homosexuals. This assumption, which might otherwise be characterized as the stereotype researchers have of the public's stereotype, has had important consequences for research. In the work of Laner and Laner (1979; 1980), Storms, (1978) and Steffensmeier and Steffensmeier (1974), for example, the cross-gender perception has been used without investigating its prevalence and relevance.

It is clear that sex role evaluations (among other variables) are related to attitudes toward homosexuals. Research, however, has tended to neglect the respondents' actual perceptions of homosexuals by giving them descriptions selected *a priori* or by neglecting their perceptions altogether. We have had evidence to suggest that attitudes toward homosexuals are highly correlated with sex role attitudes. Perhaps more importantly for other research, the present study has substantiated the presumption that the necessary mediating belief, i.e., that homosexuals behave like the opposite sex, is alive and well.

Finally, a growing body of research (Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Masters & Johnson, 1979; Weinberg & Williams, 1975) clearly contradicts these public stereotypes of homosexuals. It is not the case, as most of the present respondents believe, that most homosexuals behave like the opposite sex. A striking feature of the present data is the consistency of this belief within a varied sample of adults responding to a large number of items. It is possibly the case that this reflects a socially transmitted view of homosexuals, as Lehne (1976) and others have suggested, and a well-popularized myth concerning the true nature of homosexuals. The finer points of a theory of homosexual stereotypes will have to deal with the development of these stereotypes in relation to media portrayals, for example, and personal contact with homosexuals. In addition it might explain the persistence of this inaccurate representation of homosexuals. It would also be of interest to examine the relationships among sets of attitudes (toward homosexuals, sex roles, etc.), contact with homosexuals, and deviations from the modal stereotypes documented here.

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