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Honeymoon Vacation: Sexual-Orientation Prejudice and Inconsistent Behavioral Responses

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Majority group members often hold inconsistent attitudes and behave inconsistently toward minority group members (LaPiere, 1934). We conceptually replicated LaPiere (1934) to examine discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in two studies. As predicted, randomly selected bed-and-breakfasts were more likely to discriminate against gay male individuals when impersonally contacted (Study 1) than when personally contacted (Study 2), suggesting an attitude–behavior discrepancy. We reason that establishments were more likely to discriminate when they did not have the motivation to appear nonprejudicial, and we discuss the results in terms of the MODE model of attitude–behavioral processes.

Individuals' negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians often lead to discrimination in both overt and subtle ways (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Sullivan & Wodarski, 2002; Waldo, 1998). In most of the United States, for example, same-sex marriage is prohibited (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2010), and same-sex couples often face more challenges than heterosexual couples when adopting children (Clifford, Hertz, & Doskow, 2010). In addition, gay men who live together earn 23% less, on average, than similar married men (Elmslie & Tebaldi, 2007), and gay men and lesbians are less likely to receive hotel accommodations than heterosexual individuals (Jones, 1996). But gay men and lesbians also receive differential treatment and are the targets of discrimination in more subtle ways. For example, when confederates telephoned participants and asked them to help relay messages to their romantic partners, fewer messages were relayed on behalf of gay male and lesbian confederates than heterosexual confederates (Ellis & Fox, 2001; Gabriel & Banse, 2006).

Despite prevalent prejudice toward gay men and lesbians, studies indicate such negative attitudes do not always predict negative behavior toward these individuals (Conley, Evett, & Devine, 2007; Hebl, Foster,

Mannix, & Dovidio, 2002; Zitek & Hebl, 2006). For example, Zitek and Hebl (2006) found that when a confederate presented nonprejudicial cues, participants responded in a more positive manner to gay men and lesbians than when they were not faced with nonprejudicial cues. Likewise, Conley and colleagues (2007) found that participants who had imagined they would behave in a negative manner when interacting with a gay man did not actually behave negatively when in a face-to-face interaction with a gay man, and sexual minorities are no less likely to receive a job interview than heterosexual individuals (Hebl et al., 2002).

Fazio's (1990) Motivation and Opportunity as Determinants (MODE) model of attitude–behavior relations provides one theoretical explanation for these inconsistencies (see also Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Lord & Lepper, 1999; McGuire, 1985; Wallace, Paulson, Lord, & Bond, 2005; Zanna & Rempel, 1988). Briefly, the model argues that whether attitudes predict behavior depends on (a) the accessibility of the relevant attitude, (b) the opportunity to consider information alternative to one's attitude, and (c) the motivation to do something other than what the attitude might imply. Generally, attitudes are less likely to predict behaviors when individuals have both the motivation and opportunity to consider alternatives. Accordingly, individuals who are prejudiced toward gay men and lesbians but have both the motivation and opportunity to treat them positively will

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behave positively. However, it is important to note that regardless of motivation and opportunity, subtle bias may “leak” into implicit channels (e.g., Goff, Steele, & Davies, 2008; Shelton, 2003; Shelton, Richeson, & Salvatore, 2005; Weitz, 1972) even when individuals are outwardly acting in a nonprejudicial manner (Dovidio, Kawakami, Johnson, Johnson, & Howard, 1997; Hebl et al., 2002; Word, Zanna, & Cooper, 1974). According to the MODE model, this is because not all behaviors are controllable, thus reducing the opportunity for motivation to influence them.

A related explanation for these inconsistencies is that people are generally motivated to be seen positively by others (Aron, 2003). Given that people may feel more motivated to present themselves favorably during personal contact (e.g., face-to-face, over the phone) compared to impersonal contact (e.g., letters, e-mail; e.g., Baron, 1998; Latané, 1981; Naquin, Kurtzberg, & Belkin, 2008), individuals who are prejudiced toward gays and lesbians may be more likely to behave positively during personal encounters. Individuals are also motivated to adhere to social norms (Ajzen, 2005; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), which may impel them to be respectful and fair to others. Empirical evidence is consistent with this reasoning. For example, despite rampant prejudice toward the Chinese in the 1930s, LaPiere (1934) traveled across the United States with a Chinese couple seeking hotel accommodations and were welcomed at 66 of 67 hotels. In other words, despite prevalent prejudice toward the Chinese, none of the hotel employees behaved in a prejudicial manner during personal contact.

In contrast, prejudicial attitudes are more likely to guide behavior when individuals lack either the motivation or the opportunity to consider alternatives to attitude-consistent behavior. Given that people may feel less motivated to present themselves favorably during impersonal contact compared to personal contact (e.g., Baron, 1998; Latané, 1981; Naquin et al., 2008), individuals who are prejudiced toward gays and lesbians may behave negatively during impersonal encounters. Empirical evidence is consistent with this possibility. For example, LaPiere (1934) reported that 91% of the hotels denied accommodations for a Chinese couple when requested by mail. In other words, prejudice predicted behavior during impersonal contact.

Despite suggestive evidence that the distinction between personal and impersonal contact explains inconsistencies in the relationship between attitudes and behaviors toward minorities, we are aware of only one study that provides even indirect support for these ideas with respect to attitudes and behaviors toward sexual minorities. Specifically, Conley et al. (2007) randomly assigned individuals who pretested as either high- or low-prejudiced toward gays and lesbians to either imagine interacting with a gay man or actually

interact with a gay man. Although prejudiced participants imagined behaving more negatively toward a gay man than did less prejudiced participants, prejudiced participants did not actually behave more negatively when face-to-face with a gay man than less prejudiced participants. Thus, presumed prejudicial attitudes only predicted behaviors in the impersonal condition (i.e., imagined interaction) during which participants were likely to be less motivated to behave in a positive manner.

Nevertheless, the extent to which Conley et al. (2007) reconciles differences in the treatment of sexual minorities and sexual majorities is limited by the lack of a control group of heterosexual individuals. Specifically, although it appears from that study that prejudiced attitudes toward sexual minorities are *less* likely to predict behavior in situations involving personal contact, it remains unclear whether people will treat them the same as heterosexual individuals in such situations. In other words, even though high- and low-prejudiced participants treated sexual minorities the same way during personal contact, both types of individuals may have treated them more negatively than they would have treated equivalent heterosexual individuals.

Furthermore, it is likely that participants in Conley et al.’s laboratory study were aware that their treatment of gay men and lesbians was under scrutiny. Given that individuals are generally motivated to maintain positive self-presentation (Leary, 1996), submit to social desirability concerns (Baron, Bryne, & Branscombe, 2008), and adhere to social norms (Ajzen, 2005; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), participants who were aware their behavior was being monitored may have responded in a different manner than they would naturally. Just as LaPiere (1934) accomplished in his classic study of prejudice against Chinese individuals, it is necessary to determine how gay men and lesbians are treated in natural contexts that vary in terms of how personal they are. We are aware of only one study that examines discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in a natural context. Specifically, Jones (1996) demonstrated that hotels and bed-and-breakfast establishments that were contacted by mail offered fewer accommodations to same-sex couples than opposite-sex couples. Nevertheless, the extent to which Jones examined whether attitudes and behaviors toward sexual minority individuals are consistent in a natural context was limited by the fact that he did not also contact hotels and bed-and-breakfast establishments in a personal manner.

OVERVIEW OF PRESENT RESEARCH AND HYPOTHESES

The aim of the current studies was to examine whether people treat sexual minority and majority individuals

differently depending on the amount of personal contact required by the situation. Specifically, confederates were randomly assigned to pose as a member of either a sexual minority or heterosexual newlywed couple and to request accommodations from a random sample of bed-and-breakfasts and small, nonchain motels in the United States by either e-mail (i.e., impersonal contact) or telephone (i.e., personal contact). In addition to assessing whether accommodations were offered by e-mail and telephone, confederates coded the e-mail responses for various indices of subtle bias (e.g., friendliness, warmth, thoughtfulness, and hospitality). We predicted that establishments would offer gay men and lesbians fewer accommodations when impersonally contacted by e-mail than when personally contacted by telephone. Given that bias often “leaks” into less controllable (e.g., nonverbal) channels because people lack the opportunity to control such behavior (e.g., Goff et al., 2008; Shelton, 2003; Shelton et al., 2005; Weitz, 1972), we made additional predictions regarding more subtle treatment of gay men and lesbians. Specifically, we predicted that establishments contacted by sexual minorities would treat such patrons more negatively (e.g., be less friendly, warm, thoughtful, and hospitable) than heterosexual patrons. Thus, and consistent with previous research, we predicted that negativity toward sexual minorities would leak out in less controllable channels and through more subjective indicators of discrimination.

STUDY 1: E-MAILING BED-AND-BREAKFAST ESTABLISHMENTS

Methods

Participants. Two-hundred forty bed-and-breakfasts and small, nonchain motels were randomly selected from across the United States. Specifically, 240 five-digit numbers, representing zip codes, were randomly generated and entered into Google Maps to generate 240 lists of local bed-and-breakfasts. From each list, an establishment was randomly selected. Finally, these 240 randomly selected establishments were contacted via e-mail. Large, chain hotels were excluded from the sample because we believed their responses may be congruent with the views of corporate America, whereas we believed that the attitudes and behaviors of each smaller, locally-owned establishment would be congruent with the views of average Americans.

Procedures. In January 2009, each establishment received one randomly assigned e-mail from a heterosexual man, heterosexual woman, gay man, or lesbian woman. The e-mail indicated that the individual was

planning a wedding or a unity ceremony (depending on the confederate’s sexual orientation) and requested accommodations during the month of April.

Establishments received the following e-mail:

Hello! My name is [Rachel/Matthew]¹ Adams and I was hoping to get a little information regarding your establishment. My fiancé, [Matthew/Abigail/Luke], and I are planning our [wedding/unity] ceremony for the spring of this coming year. We were thinking about honeymooning in your area and were curious if you have any availability over any of the weekends in April. If you would, please e-mail me back with some information about your suites as well as whether or not you have availability. Thanks so much and have a great day! Sincerely, [Rachel/Matthew] Adams.

Coding e-mail responses. Two weeks after the requests were sent, the experimenter collected responses and removed all identifying establishment and patron information. Then, each e-mail was blindly rated by two research assistants for whether or not accommodations were offered (a lack of response was considered a refusal of accommodations) and a variety of subtle behaviors: friendliness (e.g., use of questions that deviate from professional interest, such as asking about the ceremony date, size, or location), warmth (e.g., use of congratulatory remarks), thoughtfulness (e.g., use of additional information such as the surrounding area, honeymoon packages, and romantic outings), and hospitality (e.g., use of phrases such as “we would love to have you stay with us”). The subtle behavior variables were coded on a 5-point scale, and lower scores indicated lower perceived levels of friendliness, warmth, thoughtfulness, and hospitality. An interrater reliability analysis using the Kappa statistic was performed to determine consistency among raters (for all variables, $\kappa \geq .63$, $p < .001$). Given their overlap, the four subtle behavior variables were combined to form a Subtle Behavior Index (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .95$).

Results

We predicted establishments would refuse requests more often from gay male and lesbian patrons than heterosexual patrons when contacted by e-mail (i.e., impersonal contact resulting in attitude-behavior consistency). Response frequencies are reported in the top half of Table 1. To test this prediction, we conducted two-factor (prospective patron sexual orientation and prospective patron gender), between-participants chi-square analyses examining the effects of patron sexual

¹The words in brackets designate those that were altered for each condition.

TABLE 1
Response Frequency

	<i>Heterosexual Men</i>	<i>Heterosexual Women</i>	<i>Gay Men</i>	<i>Lesbians</i>
Study 1				
Establishments contacted	60	60	60	60
Accommodations offered	40 _a	34 _{a,b}	29 _b	33 _{a,b}
Study 2				
Establishments contacted ^a	55	55	55	52
Accommodations offered	55	55	55	52

Note. Different subscripts across rows indicate significant differences at $p < .05$.

^aOnly establishments included in the analyses.

orientation and gender on differences of accommodations offered. Consistent with our hypothesis, there was a trend for establishments to offer accommodations based on patron's sexual orientation, $\chi^2(1, N = 120) = 2.44, p = .076$, one-tailed. A subsequent analysis revealed that the Patron Sexual Orientation \times Patron Gender interaction was not significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 240) = 1.70, p = .19$. However, we examined this effect within each gender and found that although gay men received fewer offers of accommodation than heterosexual men, $\chi^2(1, N = 120) = 4.13, p = .03$, one-tailed, no differences were found among lesbians and heterosexual women, $\chi^2(1, N = 120) = .034, p = .50$, one-tailed.

Also consistent with our hypotheses, differences in e-mail response time and subtle behaviors were found. After excluding two outliers who responded more than 1 week after the original e-mails were distributed (>2.91 SDs from the mean), men on average received faster responses ($M = 15.96$ hr, $SD = 21.89$) than women ($M = 31.25$ hr, $SD = 36.78$), regardless of sexual orientation, $F(1, 134) = 8.75, p = .004$. A 2×2 univariate analysis of variance examining the effects of patron sexual orientation and gender on subtle establishment behaviors demonstrated more subtle negative bias to sexual minority patrons ($M = 2.94, SD = .96$) than sexual majority patrons ($M = 3.28, SD = 1.05$), $F(1, 132) = 3.85, p = .05$. Subtle behaviors were not affected by patron gender, $F(1, 132) = .40, p = .53$. A subsequent analysis revealed that the Patron Sexual Orientation \times Patron Gender interaction was not significant, $F(1, 132) = .47, p = .49$.

Discussion

Our hypotheses were supported inasmuch as establishments were more likely to respond to heterosexual men, heterosexual women, and lesbians than to gay

men. Although gay men and lesbians are both oppressed due to their sexual orientation, heterosexuals' attitudes are more negative toward gay men than toward lesbians (Estrada & Weiss, 1999; Schellenberg, Hirt, & Sears, 1999) suggesting a possible explanation for the differences found in this study. Based on the MODE model of attitude-behavioral processes (Olson & Fazio, 2009), we believe establishments are more likely to express prejudiced attitudes when they do not have the motivation needed to be nonprejudiced. Specifically, establishments with negative attitudes toward gay or lesbian guests could have easily ignored or deleted the e-mails without any costs. Moreover, establishments who were outwardly willing to offer accommodations to gay and lesbian patrons also demonstrated more subtle bias to gay and lesbian patrons than heterosexual patrons.

STUDY 2: PHONING BED-AND-BREAKFAST ESTABLISHMENTS

In Study 2, randomly selected establishments were contacted by telephone and confederates posing as either a heterosexual or gay/lesbian individual requested overnight accommodations several months into the future. Given that a phone call is a more personal mode of communication than an e-mail, we expected establishments to be motivated to act in a nonprejudiced manner. In other words, we predicted that phone contact should lend itself to the more deliberative processes described by the MODE model (Olson & Fazio, 2009) that include motivation and/or opportunity. Specifically, participants should be motivated to not offend potential gay and lesbian guests and thus offer accommodations.

Methods

Participants. In a manner analogous to Study 1, a new sample of 240 bed-and-breakfast inns and small, nonchain motels were randomly selected. Because 23 of the establishments reported being closed during the winter months, they were excluded from all analyses, and the final sample consisted of 217 establishments. Subsequent phone calls to the reportedly closed establishments confirmed the establishments would indeed be closed.

Confederates. One 22-year-old male confederate and one 21-year-old female confederate contacted each of the establishments posing as either a man in a heterosexual or a gay male relationship or as a woman in a heterosexual or lesbian relationship, respectively.

Procedures. Similar to the procedures in Study 1, each of the 240 randomly selected establishments received a phone call during September 2009. Confederates explained they were planning their wedding or unity ceremony (depending on condition), were considering honeymooning in their area, and asked about accommodations during the month of January 2010. The confederates noted whether or not accommodations were offered.

Establishments received the following phone call:

Hi, my name is [Andrew/Becky]. My fiancé, [Matthew/Rachel], and I are planning our [wedding/unity] ceremony for this winter. We are thinking about honeymooning in your area, and are curious if you might have any availability in January 2010.

Results

We predicted establishments would not discriminate based on sexual orientation when contacted by phone (i.e., personal contact). Consistent with this prediction, we found that 100% of the patrons were offered accommodations and thus did not discriminate based on sexual orientation. Response frequencies are reported in the bottom half of Table 1. As we have argued, participants were likely more motivated to be inoffensive to the potential patrons when personally contacted.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

According to the MODE model (Fazio, 1990), attitude-behavior consistency is dependent upon an individual's motivation and opportunity to consider alternatives to attitude-consistent behavior. Previous research has found that impersonal modes of contact can lead to attitude-behavior *consistency* whereas more personal modes of contact may lead to attitude-behavior *inconsistency* (e.g., LaPiere, 1934). Consistent with these findings, the present research found that bed-and-breakfast establishments were more likely to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation when impersonally contacted by e-mail than when personally contacted by phone.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The present findings have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, these findings support a major tenet of the MODE model (Fazio, 1990). To predict attitude-behavior consistency, factors such as time, motivation, subtle bias, social desirability, and the desire to appear in a specific way must be considered. In the current research, it is likely that participants' attitudes and behaviors were consistent and discriminating when contacted by e-mail because an e-mail could quickly and easily be

deleted or ignored. In contrast, it is likely that participants' attitudes and behaviors were inconsistent and less discriminatory when contacted by phone because the discriminating individual would be required to deliberately, and personally, turn down the prospective patron.

Practically, although discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is not currently protected under the law, the present research offers a potential solution to those who experience discrimination. Specifically, gay men and lesbians should be aware that they will experience less discrimination and will be better received if they make personal requests (i.e., face-to-face, over the phone) rather than impersonal requests (i.e., letters, e-mail). By making personal contact, individuals are motivated to consider being nonprejudicial before deciding to act. In addition, because personal contact evokes more self-presentational concerns (see Baron, 1998; Naquin et al., 2008), it may prevent individuals who hold negative attitudes from behaving in a manner consistent with their attitudes that would lead to discrimination.

Strengths and Limitations

Several strengths of the present research enhance our confidence in the reported results.

First, given that both studies were conducted in a real-world setting using modern communication tools and included potential everyday interactions, we are more confident that our results are externally valid. Second, whereas previous research examining attitude-behavior consistency toward sexual minorities did not include a control group (e.g., Conley et al., 2007), the current studies included heterosexual individuals allowing comparisons to be made across the treatment of both groups. Finally, the current studies demonstrated effects utilizing an extremely minimal manipulation—a change in the names of confederates' romantic partners—demonstrating how simply and subtly the effect could be produced (Prentice & Miller, 1992).

Nevertheless, the present research is not without limitations. Because phone conversations were not recorded, we were unable to assess more subtle measures of prejudice in Study 2. Future research may benefit from recording phone conversations and attempting to use blind raters. That said, the present research certainly contributes to our understanding of when and how discrimination against gay men and lesbians occurs in real-world settings and provides a modern update to the oft-cited LaPiere (1934) study of discrimination.

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