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MASCULINE STEREOTYPES OF LESBIANS AND MASCULINE-LOOKING WOMEN: POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES OF ASSUMED AGENTIC QUALITIES IN EMPLOYMENT

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MASCULINE STEREOTYPES OF LESBIANS AND MASCULINE-LOOKING WOMEN:
POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES OF ASSUMED AGENTIC QUALITIES IN EMPLOYMENT

A Thesis

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree


Master of Science in Clinical Psychology

By


Kiah Breslin-Kessler

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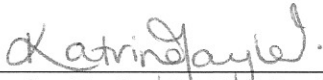
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MASTER'S THESIS

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to explore whether or not agentic stereotypes attributed to lesbian and masculine appearing women would provide an advantage in obtaining employment. Previous research has shown that lesbian women are favored over heterosexual women, and masculine appearing individuals are favored over feminine appearing individuals for traditionally masculine jobs. The present study contributes to this body of research in that it examines the role of appearance for lesbian women (in addition to heterosexual women), as well as the potential mediating role of agency in these hiring decisions. I predicted that the lesbian and masculine appearing applicants would be attributed more agentic stereotypes than heterosexual and feminine appearing women and that this would lead to higher agency and hireability ratings, as well as a higher salary. Participants in the present study were 222 undergraduate university students. They read a job description for “Executive Director,” followed by a vignette of a female job applicant, which included an image of a woman with more masculine or feminine facial features. They then rated the applicant on agentic traits, how hireable they thought she would be, how much they would pay her, and how high they assessed her salary allotment to be. As predicted, the lesbian applicant was perceived to be higher in agency, which accounted for higher hireability ratings than the heterosexual applicant. She was not allotted a higher salary, but participants assessed the salary they gave her to be higher. Compared to the feminine applicant, the masculine applicant was rated as more agentic and was given a higher salary (an effect not mediated by agency perceptions), but was not seen as more hireable. Results of this study suggest that lesbian women may benefit from “outing” themselves to employers when applying for traditionally masculine jobs in order to exploit the benefits of the stereotypes attributed to them.

Masculine Stereotypes of Lesbian Women and Masculine-Looking Women:
The Potential Advantages of Assumed Agentic Qualities in Employment

Is being stereotyped always a bad thing? That may very well depend on the context of the situation in which a particular stereotype is present. Given the right circumstances, certain stereotypes might actually provide an advantage. Consider, for example, employers preparing to make important hiring decisions. Their choice might be affected by the various stereotypes that they hold for their applicants. Therefore, one individual might have an advantage over another if he or she happens to fall into a group with stereotypes better suited for the current position.

In fact, there is such a hierarchy based on sex that currently pervades the workplace (Eagley & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 1983; Heilman & Eagley, 2008). For example, men tend to earn higher wages and advance to leadership positions at a much faster rate than women (Heilman & Eagly, 2008). This pattern may be due, at least in part, to stereotypic expectations about the differing competencies of men and women (Eagley & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 1983). But what about individuals who do not fit neatly into these traditional gender norms? Stereotype research has shown that lesbian women are actually thought to be more similar, in terms of trait characteristics, to heterosexual men than to heterosexual women (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009; Kite & Deaux, 1987; Wright & Canetto, 2009). Additionally, masculine appearing women are often attributed stereotypes more in line with leadership roles (Sczesny, Spreeman & Stahlberg, 2006) and may be favored for such positions over women who are feminine in appearance (Stockhausen, Koeser & Schezny, 2013). The purpose of the present study was to explore whether or not these masculine stereotypes of lesbian and masculine appearing women provide an advantage in obtaining traditionally masculine jobs.

Gender Discrimination in the Workplace

There is a large body of research showing that potential employers favor certain traits over others when making hiring decisions (Heilman, 1983; Hoyt, Simon & Inella, 2011; Koch, D'Mello & Sackett, 2015). The lack of fit model proposed by Heilman suggests that the perceived potential of on-the-job success of a particular candidate is often “determined by the fit between the perception [by the person making the hiring decisions] of an individual’s attributes and ... of the job’s requirements in terms of skills and abilities” (Heilman, 1983, pp. 278). Therefore, any assumed incongruities (largely based on stereotypes) in terms of fit for a particular job may lead to the exclusion of an individual despite actual qualifications.

Since its inception, the lack of fit model has been used primarily to explain prejudice against heterosexual women in workplace settings (Heilman, 1983). Within this body of research, stereotypically masculine traits are often labeled as agentic. Examples of these would be the traits of competence, self-confidence, and ability to perform under pressure. Stereotypically feminine traits, on the other hand, are often labeled as communal, and include the traits of warmth, expressivity, empathy and compassion (Heilman, 1983; Heilman & Eagly, 2008). While none of these are necessarily negative, agentic traits may seem more desirable in terms of employment, especially with regard to traditionally masculine jobs. Therefore, women, particularly those with a feminine appearance, may be excluded from these roles due to the expected lack of fit between their perceived (communal) attributes and the demands of the job (Heilman & Eagly, 2008; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Hoyt, Simon & Inella, 2011).

The role congruity theory developed by Eagly and Karau (2002) adds to the lack of fit model (Heilman, 1983) by focusing specifically on the perceived discrepancy between feminine gender roles and leadership positions. This theory suggests that these perceptions of incongruity

stem from two specific aspects of workplace prejudice. The descriptive aspect simply suggests that women lack leadership ability when compared to men. The injunctive aspect, on the other hand, is the negative evaluation of women from others when they behave in such a way that would fulfill a leadership role. This results from the perceived breaking of gender roles and occurs regardless of a woman's actual competencies. When these two factors combine, women find themselves at a significant disadvantage since deep-rooted gender role expectations often stand as major roadblocks in obtaining leadership roles (Eagley & Karau, 2002).

Backlash for women in leadership roles. As mentioned above, masculine traits are regularly valued over feminine traits with regard to positions of leadership, and therefore men fill these positions at a much higher rate than women do (Heilman, 1983). In addition, women may experience backlash when they are perceived to violate feminine gender norms, such as being emotional and submissive, as by taking on leadership roles (Eagley & Karau, 2002; Rudman & Glick, 1999; Rudman & Glick, 2001; Wessel, Hagiwara, Ryan & Kermond, 2014). In other words, women who actively present themselves in an agentic manner might, in fact, receive a negative response from potential employers despite the fact that these traits are generally favored (Eagley & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 1983; Heilman & Eagley, 2008). The reason for this is likely that women are expected to possess certain communal qualities, such as warmth and empathy (Rudman & Glick, 1999; Rudman & Glick, 2001).

Research on the backlash effect has shown that when women present themselves in an agentic manner, they are regularly assumed to have no warm or empathic qualities, which may actually lead to exclusion from certain jobs that would not hold the same requirements for men (Eagley & Karau, 2002; Rudman & Glick, 1999; Rudman & Glick, 2001; Wessel, Hagiwara, Ryan & Kermond, 2014). Interestingly, women experience backlash from both men and other

women equally (Rudman & Glick, 1999). The backlash effect has been found to be more salient for women seeking feminine jobs, such as nurse or teacher, although it still affects women seeking masculine roles to a lesser degree (Niedlich & Steffans, 2015; Rudman & Glick, 1999; Rudman & Glick, 2001).

Relevant research has focused primarily on the disparity between heterosexual men and women in work settings. However, it has largely ignored implications for sexual minorities and women who appear more masculine, who may not be expected to conform to traditional gender norms to the same degree as feminine appearing heterosexual women (Niedlich & Steffans, 2015; Write & Canetto, 2009).

Stereotypes of Lesbian Women

Implicit inversion theory. Implicit inversion theory states that gay men are assumed to be similar to heterosexual women and lesbian women are assumed to be similar to heterosexual men (Kite & Deaux, 1987). As with the lack of fit model (Heilman, 1983), the implicit inversion theory was suggested several decades ago, but its assertions still appear to hold true despite growing acceptance of homosexuality (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009; Write & Canetto, 2009).

A study by Write and Canetto (2009), examined the stereotypes of lesbian women and gay men within the framework of the implicit inversion theory (Kite & Deaux, 1987). Participants were asked to rate one of four female individuals, each of whom was either homosexual or heterosexual. Write and Canetto (2009) hypothesized that, consistent with the implicit inversion theory, trait stereotype ratings for lesbian women would be similar to ratings for heterosexual men. Indeed, the researchers found that lesbian women were rated as more similar to heterosexual men than heterosexual women in terms of their traits. In other words, lesbian women were assumed to have more independence, competence, and other traits that are

avored in the workplace, particularly in male dominated fields (Kite & Deaux, 1987; Niedlich, Steffans, Krause, Settke & Ebert, 2014; Niedlich & Steffans, 2015; Write & Canetto, 2009).

A 2014 study by Niedlich, Steffans, Krause, Settke & Ebert (2014) found additional evidence that lesbian women are attributed traditionally masculine stereotypes. In this study participants were asked to rate a female applicant on task-competence for a non- gender-specific job after reading a brief transcription of an interview with each applicant. The sexual orientation of the applicant was manipulated by mention of a male or female partner. Niedlich et al. (2014) also attempted to manipulate perceptions of masculinity and femininity by providing an excerpt about the applicant, which either stated that she was moving into town to look for a job or had moved to the area to follow her partner's career (potentially asserting a more traditionally feminine role). The participants' motivation to appear non-prejudiced was also measured. Results demonstrated that lesbian women were regularly judged to be more task-competent than heterosexual women. According to the researchers, these results were not due to the participants' desire to appear non-prejudiced and so represented true judgments (Niedlich et al., 2014).

The importance of disclosure. While stereotype perceptions of lesbian women fall more in line with those of heterosexual men than heterosexual women, disclosure may be key for these assumptions to be made at all. In a study by Gross, Green, Storck and Vanyur (1980), participants watched a short video clip of an interview with either a male or female subject. The participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions in which they were told that the individual was gay or lesbian before viewing the video, after viewing the video, or were not provided with any information about sexual orientation at all. The researchers found that when sexual orientation was disclosed, the traits attributed to the subjects in the video were significantly different than when no disclosure was made. For example, when the female subject

was labeled as a lesbian, she was rated as being more “dominant, direct, forceful, strong, liberated, and nonconforming,” (Gross, Green Storck & Vanyur, 1980, pp. 310), whereas when no disclosure was made, the female subject was typically assumed to be heterosexual and rated as more conservative. These results suggest that disclosure of sexual orientation has a significant effect on the stereotypes that will be attributed to any given individual. In other words, once a woman is labeled as a lesbian, others may assume that she possesses more agentic qualities than a heterosexual woman with a similar appearance (Herek, 2016).

Advantages for Lesbian Women in Hiring Decisions

Research that has specifically focused on whether or not lesbian women do, in fact, have an advantage over their heterosexual counterparts when seeking masculine jobs has been very limited. In 2015, Niedlich and Steffans conducted a study with a sample of college students in Germany. They manipulated sexual orientation of a female applicant (lesbian or heterosexual), job type (masculine-typed or feminine-typed), and qualification level (high or low). In the masculine-typed job condition, participants were asked to rate each applicant on perceived task-competence and hireability for the position of construction engineer. Niedlich and Steffans predicted that higher ratings of task-competence would translate into increased ratings of hireability. Although they replicated their earlier findings showing that lesbian women received significantly higher ratings of task-competence than heterosexual women, there was no difference in hireability ratings based on sexual orientation. Task-competence ratings did translate into hireability ratings for heterosexual women in that they received similar scores for both measures. Therefore, the researchers suggest that this lack of difference in overall hireability ratings for the lesbian and heterosexual woman was due to discrimination toward sexual minorities in job settings (Niedlich & Steffans, 2015). Although this research examines

perceived task-competence as it relates to hiring decisions for lesbian and heterosexual women, task-competence was not measured as a mediator between sexual orientation and hireability, which may have accounted for the lack of effect of task-competence on hireability.

Wage Benefits for Lesbian Women in the Workplace

Additional evidence to suggest that lesbian women might benefit from perceived masculine stereotypes comes in the form of wage discrepancy between heterosexual and lesbian women. Lesbian women actually earn more, on average, than heterosexual women and even gay men in some cases, although they still tend to earn less than heterosexual men (Ahmed & Hammerstedt, 2008; Antecole, Jong & Steinberger, 2008; Black, Sanders & Taylor, 2007). The reasons for this difference are not clearly understood, but stereotypes are likely to bear at least some of the blame (Ozeren, 2014).

It may be that men are expected to be more agentic than women and are therefore paid more because of the perceived fit between these characteristics and job expectations (Eagley & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 1983; Heilman & Eagly, 2008). In other words, men may be expected to outperform women in the workplace and be compensated accordingly. A report from *Business Insider* shows that on average, women earned only 78% as much as men for similar full-time work, as recently as 2013 (Baer & Kiersz, 2015). If lesbian women are, in fact, perceived to be more similar to heterosexual men than heterosexual women with regard to agency, it is possible that they also tend to be compensated more than heterosexual women because of employers high expectations regarding performance.

Stereotypes of Masculine Appearing Women

The way an individual looks can cause others to make various assumptions about his or her competencies. That is why it is common practice to dress professionally when applying for a

job as anything else may lead to disqualification from consideration (Harris & Garris, 2008). However, there are aspects of appearance that are not so easily changed. For example, people tend to recognize certain facial features as distinctly masculine or feminine. Thick eyebrows are typically considered masculine, whereas a small nose and a high eyebrow ridge are often considered feminine (Freeman, Johnson, Ambady & Rule, 2010; Friedman & Zebrowitz, 1992). Such features could influence people's judgments of someone, and perhaps affect that individual's perceived job-suitability.

A study by Scezny, Spreeman and Stahlberg (2006) examined the effect of masculine and feminine facial appearance on stereotype attribution, specifically in relation to leadership qualities (dominance, decision making, initiative, and assertiveness), which are similar to traits that measure agency (Trapnell & Paulhus, 2012). Participants were shown a photograph of a stimulus person who was either male or female with a masculine or feminine appearance and were asked to read a brief gender non-specific vignette. They were then asked to rate the individual on his or her perceived leadership qualities. In both the male and female conditions, the masculine appearing stimulus persons were rated significantly higher in leadership traits than the feminine appearing individuals. This research suggests that a masculine appearance for both men and women leads to more attribution of leadership (agentic) traits (Scezny, Spreeman & Stahlberg, 2006). Sexual orientation was not a consideration in this study, but it would make sense that this same pattern would be true for lesbian women. Therefore, appearing masculine may lead to attribution of agentic traits for both lesbian and heterosexual women whether sexual orientation is disclosed or not.

Appearance and hiring decisions. Assumptions about masculinity in masculine-appearing individuals could consequently influence one's job prospects. In a study by

Stockhausen, Koeser and Sceszny (2013), which examined hiring decisions, participants were shown a randomized series of images of male and female hypothetical applicants that had been manipulated to appear masculine or feminine. They were then shown two job listings; one that was considered masculine-typed and one that was feminine-typed, and asked to select which job they would choose each applicant for. Results of this study showed that the masculine appearing applicants were regularly favored for the masculine-typed jobs, and that feminine appearing applicants were favored for the feminine-typed jobs. Interestingly, this was consistent for both male and female applicants, although the male applicants were favored over female applicants for the masculine-typed job overall. Results from this study suggest that visual cues such as gendered facial features are salient enough to have an impact in hiring decisions (Stockhausen, Koeser & Sceszny, 2013). This study did not examine any potential mediating effects of agency (or any related measure) on overall hiring decision. However, it would make sense that assumptions about each applicant's characteristics and abilities would play a role in this process as masculine appearing individuals are often perceived to possess more leadership skills (Sceszny, Spreeman & Stahlberg, 2006).

These findings fall in-line with the lack of fit model (Heilman, 1983) in that certain stereotypes and competencies are first attributed to an individual and are then translated into hiring decisions. However, the original model proposes that these attributions are made on the basis of gender alone. Results of the research presented above extends beyond the simple explanation that men are masculine and women are feminine and suggests that appearance triggers the attribution of stereotypes above and beyond what is already present from simply being male or female (Sceszny, Spreeman & Stahlberg, 2006; Stockhausen, Koeser & Sceszny, 2013). There is currently no research on the effect of appearance for sexual minorities in hiring

decisions. Therefore, it is difficult to say whether or not these same patterns would hold true for a lesbian or gay applicant. However, because both men and women seem to be affected by their appearance in terms of hiring decisions, it would make sense that lesbian women (often perceived to be similar to heterosexual men; Kite & Deaux, 1987; Wright & Canetto, 2009) would experience a similar pattern. If so, lesbian women could have a double benefit as a result of possessing two qualities that cause others to view them as more agentic, thus causing them to be extra favored in hiring decisions. Because the impact of appearance has been largely ignored in research on hiring decisions for lesbian women (Niedlich & Steffans, 2015), I examined this in the present study.

Gender and Personal Prejudice of Potential Employers

While attitudes have become increasingly positive toward lesbian women and gay men over the past few decades, many still face significant prejudice and discrimination today (Priola, Lasio, De Simone & Serri, 2014). Herek (2016) explains various participant characteristics that are likely to come into play in these situations. For example, men and women “differ reliably in their attitudes toward homosexuality” (Herek, 2016, pp. 367). That is, women regularly report more favorable feelings than men toward gay men and lesbian women.

Religious beliefs, where homosexual behavior is regularly felt to be immoral, and personal experience (having no prior contact with a lesbian women or gay man or growing up in an environment that had negative attitudes regarding sexual minorities) might also affect prejudiced feelings and judgments (Herek, 2016). These attitudes are then likely to influence decision making in various contexts, including and most relevant to the present study, in hiring decisions. In these situations a hiring professionals’ personal prejudice may cloud his or her judgment and override most other considerations about a given applicant, as in the case of

devaluing a lesbian women with agentic qualities who is applying for a traditionally masculine job. Thus, personal prejudice against lesbian women was assessed in the present study in order to control for its effects.

The Present Study

Although Niedlich and Steffans (2015) conducted research regarding whether or not lesbian women have an advantage in obtaining employment over their heterosexual counterparts, they did not find that their construct of task-competence translated into hireability ratings for lesbian women. The researchers suggested that this was due to discrimination against sexual minorities that is not specifically addressed in the lack of fit model (Heilman, 1983; Niedlich & Steffans, 2015). Alternatively, the lack of effect may have been due to the way they assessed task-competence, a construct that was not as broad as the measure of agency in the present study. Niedlich and Steffans (2015) were interested in interactions between task-competence, sexual orientation, and job type; they did not analyze task-competence as a possible mediator.

The limited research on the advantages for masculine appearing individuals when seeking masculine jobs suggests that masculine appearing women will be attributed more agentic traits (Sczesny, Spreeman & Stahlberg, 2006) and will have an advantage over feminine appearing women who are seeking traditionally masculine jobs (Stockhausen, Koeser & Scesny, 2013). However, agency has not been analyzed as a potential mediator of these effects in prior research. Additionally, past research has excluded the effects of these same appearance constructs on first impressions and employment decisions for lesbian women. It is important to know if they have an extra benefit in the workplace if they also appear more masculine.

The present study extended beyond previous research in that it examined the effect of appearance on hiring and salary decisions for both lesbian women and heterosexual women.

Additionally, a unique salary assessment variable was included to examine how participants gauged their own allocation of salary to the applicant they were rating. Finally, agency was examined as a potential mediator. Given prior research, it would make sense that agency ratings would account for the advantages in hireability of either lesbian or masculine appearing women for traditionally masculine jobs.

In the present study, college students saw a profile of one of four female job applicants. The “job applicant” in the study was either a heterosexual or lesbian woman who was masculine or feminine in appearance, and was applying for the position of Executive Director at a major company. Based on the research described above, I predicted that the lesbian applicant would be rated as more hireable and deserving of a higher salary than the heterosexual applicant, and that this effect would be mediated by greater perceptions of agentic traits. Additionally, I predicted that a masculine appearance would lead to higher ratings of agency, and consequently higher estimates of hireability and deserved salary for both the lesbian and heterosexual applicants.

Participant gender was included as an independent variable because some research suggests that men and women respond very differently to sexual minorities and those who do not conform to traditional gender roles (Herek, 2016). Therefore, it was important to see if gender interacted with appearance or sexual orientation to affect the hiring and salary variables. Finally, I analyzed prejudice towards sexual minorities and impression management as potential covariates in order to control for their effects.

Method

Participants

All participants were from a public university in the Pacific Northwest. Participants signed up via an online system that allowed them to volunteer for research in exchange for

course credit in a psychology course. In my initial data set, there were 271 participants. Prior to running my main analyses, I determined the exclusion criteria. First, I deleted data from any participants ($n = 25$) who did not complete the study fully because the number of questions they answered did not yield enough data to use in my analyses. Second, I eliminated participants who failed at least two of the three data checking items ($n = 19$). These items were in place to ensure that participants were paying attention to the questions being asked and that participants were not simply selecting answers at random. Third, I eliminated any participants who failed the gender check ($n = 4$). This question asked participants to identify the gender of the (female) applicant from the vignette at the beginning of the study. Any participant who was paying attention should have easily been able to identify the gender of the applicant that they were rating. Participants who failed the job check item ($n = 1$) were also eliminated. This information check asked participants to recall the job that the applicant was applying for. I accepted only answers that were along the lines of business administration, management, etc., thus excluding one participant who wrote “housekeeper.” Too many participants failed the sexual orientation manipulation check to use it in the exclusion criteria. The reason for the high rate of failure was likely a result of giving participants the sexual prejudice measure before asking them to recall the applicant’s sexual orientation. Fortunately, the sexual prejudice measure came after the dependent measures.

Therefore, with the exclusion criteria in place I ended up eliminating a total of 24 participants in addition to the 25 that were initially excluded, leaving 222 participants overall (183 females, 36 males, and three other). Participants were primarily Caucasian ($n = 164$), with 30 identifying as Hispanic, four identifying as African American or black, 23 identifying as other or multiracial, and one participant who chose not to disclose race. The average participant age

was 20.92 ($SD = 4.30$). Most identified as heterosexual ($n = 193$) with only nine identifying as gay or lesbian, seven identifying as bisexual, 12 identifying as other (pansexual, asexual, etc.), and one participant who chose not to disclose sexual orientation.

Design

The present study was conducted using a between-subjects true experimental design. The participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (sexual orientation) \times 2 (appearance) factorial design. In my analyses, participant gender was also used as an independent variable. However, I chose to exclude the three-way interaction from the model for these analyses because the number of male participants in one of the eight conditions was too low to yield reliable results. Dependent variables in this study were participants' decisions about how hireable the applicant was (hireability), estimates of appropriate salary for that individual (salary allocation), and ratings of how high each participant thought the allotted salary was (salary assessment). Agency was assessed as a potential mediator. Personal prejudice toward gay and lesbian individuals, and impression management were also measured as potential covariates.

Procedure

All procedures in this study were approved through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Eastern Washington University. Participants signed up for and completed their participation via an anonymous online system, which randomly assigned them to one of four conditions.

Upon reading about the study and agreeing to participate, participants were brought to a page that provided a job description for an Executive Director position at a major company (a job typically dominated by men). Participants were then asked to thoroughly read through one of two vignettes of a female applicant (lesbian or heterosexual) for the position, which was presented with an image of either a masculine or feminine appearing applicant.

After they read the job description and vignette, participants completed the Agentive and Communal Values Scale (ACV), several measures of hireability and salary, and measures for sexual prejudice and impression management in that order. Some supplemental measures were included, such as the three data check items that asked participants to select a specific answer on the Likert-scale to ensure that they were paying attention, and items asking participants to recall the job title and the applicant's characteristics. As an assessment of participant suspicion, they were also asked to describe what they believed to be the purpose of the study. Finally, participants were asked to complete a demographics questionnaire, which included information about gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation. Upon completion of these scales, participants were brought to a page, which included information regarding the nature of the study and the expected findings. Participants were also provided with the contact information for the researcher and the IRB contact in the event that they had questions or concerns about their participation or the research in general. They were asked to keep the information learned about the study to themselves so as to maintain the validity of data from subsequent participants.

Materials

Job Description. The job description was a brief overview of essential functions, competencies and required education and experience for an Executive Director position. Essential functions included supervision of other department heads, maintaining a working relationship with community partners, and analyzing and enhancing budget, operations and services. Competencies included traits of leadership, decision-making, management, and communication. Finally, required education and experience consisted of a Master's degree in business or a related field and 8-10 years of relevant experience.

Applicant vignettes and manipulations. Applicant vignettes were brief descriptions of

each individual. The vignettes included demographics, education level, and job experience, all of which were based on information supposedly learned in a hypothetical interview. Each vignette was identical in terms of qualifications and background information. Differences between the applicants were manipulated only in terms of sexual orientation by stating that the applicant had either a boyfriend or a girlfriend, and included an image depicting either a masculine or feminine appearing woman. The images used were identical in terms of face shape, hairstyle and color, clothing, and background. They differed in terms of facial features, with the masculine appearing applicant having thicker eyebrows, a larger nose, thinner lips, and slightly smaller eyes than the feminine appearing applicant. The images were obtained from faceresearch.org and had already been operationalized as masculine or feminine in appearance. Permission was obtained directly from researchers to use in the present study (B. Jones & L. DeBruine, personal communication, October 5, 2016).

Agentic and communal values (ACV). Personality traits for each applicant were assessed using the Agentic and Communal Values Scale (ACV). The scale was developed in 2012 by Trapnell and Paulhus in order to provide a direct measure of agentic and communal traits, which was previously missing from the literature. Trapnell and Paulhus drew upon a number of pre-existing measurement tools, such as the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974), to develop the specific items on the ACV. As expected, the items measuring agentic traits (e.g., competence and achievement) had stronger correlations with the masculine items on the BSRI, whereas those measuring communal traits (e.g., altruism and honesty) had stronger correlations with feminine items on the BSRI (Bem, 1974). The final measurement includes 24 items that measure distinct agentic and communal traits.

The ACV was originally designed to assess an individual participant's perception of his

or her own agentic or communal traits. The ACV included instructions for participants to rate how much a particular item was “a guiding principle in [the participant’s] life,” (Trapnell & Paulhus, 2012, pp. 52). However, the present study was more focused on stereotypes attributed to the others, so the ACV instructions were adjusted such that participants were asked to rate the applicant they read about in terms of how much they believed the individual possessed each quality. Items were rated on a scale from 1, “not at all,” to 7, “completely.” To score, item means were calculated separately for the 12-item agency composite ($M = 5.22$, $SD = 0.75$, $\alpha = .83$), and 12-item communal composite ($M = 5.37$, $SD = 0.82$, $\alpha = .90$) scales, as done by Trapnell and Paulhus.

Measure of hireability and salary. For the purposes of the present study, a measure was developed in order to allow participants to determine how hireable the applicant was for the job of Executive Director. Hireability was assessed via three items using a scale from 1, “not at all,” to 7, “completely.” Items asked participants to make judgments about how well-qualified ($M = 5.74$, $SD = 1.13$), and how well-suited ($M = 5.69$, $SD = 1.09$) the applicant was for the job, as well as how likely they would be to hire the applicant ($M = 5.69$, $SD = 1.14$). I then averaged these items together to form a composite ($M = 5.70$, $SD = 1.02$, $\alpha = .89$).

Participants were also asked to determine the applicant’s annual salary. The salary allocation item asked participants “if you did end up hiring the applicant from the vignette, how much would you pay her as a starting salary?” and allowed participants to use a sliding scale from \$40,000 to \$100,000 ($M = \$60,555$, $SD = \$12,394$). A report from Chamberlin (2015) on glassdoor.com was used as a guide for determining this range. However, numbers in this report varied from \$60,000 to \$150 million annually and were based on salaries of individuals currently holding Executive Director positions at both small and major companies. I felt that the range

provided in the present study was more reflective of starting salary at an average company and would be somewhat easier to grasp for college students.

Finally, the salary assessment item asked participants to consider the salary range given and asked, “how high of a salary (relatively speaking) do you feel you offered the candidate in the previous question?” to examine the participants’ subjective feelings regarding how high of a salary they “gave” the applicant ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.04$). This item was rated on a scale from 1, “low,” to 7, “high.” I included this measure because there was some concern that participants may not have had a clear concept of salary. Therefore, it was important to ensure that participants actually meant to provide the salary amount that they chose. If there was a significant discrepancy between salary allotment and salary assessment it was likely that there was a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the measure.

Measure of sexual prejudice. To assess personal prejudice against lesbian women, participants were given a 22-item scale called the Sexual Prejudice Scale (SPS) that was developed by Chonody in 2013. The original scale included measures of prejudice against gay men but these items were eliminated for the purposes of the current study. The SPS addresses affective reactions, stereotyping, and symbolic beliefs of the participants with regard to sexual minorities. The affective items measure various emotions that an individual experiences in response to the idea of homosexuality. The cognitive items measure beliefs, or expectations about a particular group (i.e. stereotypes). Both of these components have been the foundation of previous scales and measure both positive and negative responses (Haddock, Zanna & Esses, 1993; Herek, 2016). Chonody, however, proposed a third component to measure symbolic beliefs. This component encompasses both social equality beliefs; personal feelings about political policy on the exclusion of sexual minorities and support for civil rights, and valuation:

judgments about lesbian women being in violation of cultural norms (Chonody, 2013).

Items on the measure are rated on a two-point scale (NO=0, YES=1). To score the SPS, any reversed items were first recoded so that higher scores indicated higher prejudice, and items were then averaged ($M = 0.84$, $SD = 0.20$, $\alpha = .85$). SPS showed adequate reliability and validity for measuring prejudice against sexual minorities when used with college students (Chonody, 2013).

Measure of impression management. Impression management, or the extent to which participants respond to items in such a way that would make them appear socially desirable, was measured using the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR; Paulhus, 1988). The assumption underlying the impression management items is that individuals will consistently over-report behaviors that they perceive as desirable and under report those they perceive as undesirable in order to gain social approval. According to Paulhus (1988), the measure will identify participants who consistently exaggerate their socially desirable behaviors and will help to prevent inflation of scores for participants who respond variably to the items. The BIDR has acceptable test-retest reliability and high internal consistency and concurrent validity (Paulhus, 1988).

The scale uses a 7-point Likert measure from 1, "not true," to 7, "very true" to rate both positive (e.g., "I never swear") and negative (e.g., "Sometimes I tell lies if I have to") items. To score this subscale of the BIDR, the negative items were reversed and only those responses at the extremes (ratings of 6 or 7) were given a point. Then the points were averaged to create a composite ($M = 0.36$, $SD = 0.19$, $\alpha = .78$).

Results

Correlations

To determine if participants were responding to questions honestly or in a way that they perceived as more socially acceptable, a series of two-tailed Pearson's r correlations were computed between impression management and each of the following: hireability, salary allocation, salary assessment, and agency. A significant positive relationship was found between impression management and hireability, $r(220) = .19, p = .004$, but the relationship was non-significant for agency and both salary variables. Therefore, participants' responses were only influenced by their need to respond in a socially desirable way when determining hireability of each applicant, but not when determining salary allocation, salary assessment, or agency. Thus, I included impression management as a covariate only in the analysis examining hireability.

To determine whether general level of sexual prejudice needed to be controlled for, an additional series of two-tailed Pearson's r correlations were performed between sexual prejudice and each of the following: hireability, salary allocation, salary assessment, and agency. Sexual prejudice was significantly correlated with salary assessment, $r(215) = .14, p = .045$, but not with any of the other variables. This suggests that sexual prejudice was related to participants' valuation of their salary allotment for the applicants, but not actual salary allocation, hireability ratings, or agency. Thus, I controlled for sexual prejudice in the analysis examining salary assessment.

Tests of Hypotheses

Perceptions of agentic traits. To examine whether the manipulations affected ratings of agency as predicted, a between-subjects 2 (appearance condition) \times 2 (sexual orientation condition) \times 2 (participant gender) analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed with agency as

the dependent variable. All two-way interactions were included in the model for all ANOVAs. The three-way interaction was excluded due to the small number of male participants in one of the conditions, which may have yielded unreliable results. Estimated marginal means are provided for all significant effects/interactions.

To ensure that the data being assessed was within normal limits, I looked at the standardized residual scores from each analysis. Standardized residuals are z scores that identify the outliers within a measure by illustrating how much a particular score deviates from the rest of the model. Any score that is more than 3 standard deviations away from the predicted scores in a given model (i.e., standardized residuals with an absolute value greater than 3) may be of concern.

Whenever outliers were identified based on this criterion, I examined the Cook's distance scores to determine whether or not it would be necessary to remove those particular scores from the analysis. Cook's distance shows the influence of a single score by measuring how much the analysis would be affected if it were deleted. Anything above an absolute value of 1 is of concern. One outlier was found for the ANOVA conducted on agency (Cook & Weisberg, 1982). The outlier in the ANOVA for agency had a Cook's distance score of .06, and thus was not considered an influential case, so it was retained in the analysis.

There were significant main effects of both sexual orientation, $F(1, 212) = 5.08, p = .025$, and appearance, $F(1, 212) = 4.29, p = .040$, on ratings of agentic traits. As predicted, the lesbian applicants were rated as higher ($M = 5.33, SE = 0.09$) than the heterosexual applicants ($M = 5.03, SE = 0.10$) in agentic traits, and the masculine appearing applicants were rated as higher in agency ($M = 5.32, SE = 0.10$) than the feminine appearing applicants ($M = 5.04, SE = 0.09$). There was also a significant appearance \times sexual orientation interaction on ratings of agentic

traits, $F(1, 212) = 12.01, p = .001$. I conducted simple effects tests to follow up on this and all other significant interactions to test for significant mean differences. Within the heterosexual condition, the masculine appearing applicant was rated as significantly higher in agency ($M = 5.27, SE = 0.17$) than the feminine appearing applicant ($M = 4.75, SE = 0.12$), $F(1, 212) = 6.50, p = .012$. There was no significant difference between the masculine ($M = 5.33, SE = 0.13$) and feminine appearing ($M = 5.33, SE = 0.12$) applicants in ratings of agency when the applicant was lesbian (see Figure 1 for the means). Thus, the applicant's appearance had no effect when she was lesbian; simply being lesbian was sufficient for participants to assume agentic qualities.

In addition, the ANOVA revealed an unexpected significant appearance \times participant gender interaction on ratings of agentic traits, $F(1, 212) = 5.58, p = .019$. Among male participants, the masculine appearance condition had significantly higher agency ratings ($M = 5.37, SE = 0.20$) than the feminine appearance condition ($M = 4.81, SE = 0.15$), $F(1, 212) = 5.06, p = .026$. Female participants did not significantly differ in their ratings of agency between the masculine ($M = 5.23, SE = 0.07$) and feminine ($M = 5.27, SE = 0.08$) appearance conditions (see Figure 2 for the means). Thus, male participants provided agency ratings that were in line with my initial predictions, but female participants did not. No other effects in the model were statistically significant.

Perceptions of hireability. A between-subjects 2 (appearance condition) \times 2 (sexual orientation condition) \times 2 (participant gender) ANCOVA was then performed on hireability scores with impression management included as a covariate. Standardized residual scores were analyzed and three outliers were found. The follow up test for Cook's distance showed that all were well below the threshold (ranging from .00 to .11), illustrating that they were not influential in the model and were therefore retained.

A significant main effect of sexual orientation on hireability was found, $F(1, 211) = 4.56$, $p = .03$. As predicted, the lesbian applicant was rated as significantly more hireable for the role of Executive Director, overall ($M = 5.77$, $SE = 0.12$) than was the heterosexual applicant ($M = 5.38$, $SE = 0.14$). Although the predicted appearance main effect on hireability ratings did not emerge, $F(1, 211) = 0.14$, $p = .708$, there was a significant appearance \times participant gender interaction on ratings of hireability, $F(1, 211) = 4.08$, $p = .045$. Among female participants, the feminine appearing applicant was rated as significantly more hireable ($M = 5.93$, $SE = 0.11$) than the masculine appearing applicant ($M = 5.61$, $SE = 0.10$), a pattern contrary to what I predicted for applicants overall, $F(1, 211) = 4.85$, $p = .029$. Male participants did not differ significantly in their hireability ratings of the masculine ($M = 5.52$, $SE = 0.28$) and feminine ($M = 5.14$, $SE = 0.21$) appearing applicants, as illustrated in Figure 3. Therefore, neither the female nor male participants provided hireability ratings that were in line with predictions in terms of appearance. There were no other statistically significant effects in the model.

Salary allocation. A 2 (appearance condition) \times 2 (sexual orientation condition) \times 2 (participant gender) between subjects ANOVA was performed on salary allocation. One outlier was found in the test for standardized residual scores. It was again found to be non-influential in the model based on the Cook's distance score of .03, and was thus retained.

There was a significant main effect of appearance on salary, $F(1, 210) = 4.61$, $p = .03$. As predicted, the applicant with the more masculine appearance was allocated a significantly higher salary ($M = \$64,870$, $SE = 2.11$) than the applicant with the more feminine appearance ($M = \$59,830$, $SE = 0.91$). Surprisingly, there was no main effect of sexual orientation, $F(1, 216) = 2.68$, $p = .103$. No other statistically significant effects emerged in the model. Thus, appearance was the only manipulation to influence salary allocation, which was is not in line with initial

predictions.

Additional Analyses

Salary assessment. Another 2 (appearance condition) $\times 2$ (sexual orientation condition) $\times 2$ (participant gender condition) between subjects ANCOVA was performed on salary assessment. Sexual prejudice was controlled for in this analysis given its relationship with the dependent variable. No outliers were found in the test for standardized residuals so no further analysis was needed.

A significant main effect of sexual orientation on salary assessment was found, $F(1, 210) = 8.21, p = .005$. In this analysis, participants gave a higher salary assessment rating for the lesbian applicant ($M = 4.53, SE = 0.13$) than the heterosexual applicant ($M = 3.98, SE = 0.14$). Therefore, participants tended to think that they were being more generous in their salary allotment when the applicant was lesbian than when she was heterosexual, though actual salary allocation did not differ between those conditions, as noted earlier. No other main effects or interactions were found in this analysis.

Perceptions of communal traits. Although not the focus of this study, a 2 (sexual orientation) $\times 2$ (appearance) $\times 2$ (participant gender) ANOVA was performed on ratings of communal traits in order to see if the patterns were complementary to those found for agentic traits. Analysis of the residual scores revealed only one outlier, which was deemed to not be problematic given its low Cook's distance score of .03. The ANOVA yielded a significant main effect of sexual orientation on communal traits $F(1, 212) = 4.52, p = .035$. Surprisingly, the lesbian applicant was rated as significantly higher in communal traits ($M = 5.50, SE = 0.10$) than the heterosexual applicant ($M = 5.19, SE = 0.11$). This was unexpected since the lesbian applicant was also perceived to be significantly higher in agentic traits. There were no other

significant effects or interactions found in this model.

Mediational Analyses

Because I predicted that ratings of hireability and salary would be due to the agentic stereotypes attributed to lesbian applicants, it was important to see if agency was actually a mediating variable for the effects of sexual orientation and appearance on the dependent variables. To examine this, I used Baron and Kenny's (1986) process for testing for mediation and then followed with the Sobel test for mediation. First, I ran a set of multiple regression analyses using the same models described for the ANOVAs on hireability, salary allocation, and salary assessment. Each analysis was run with agency added as a covariate to see if it was a significant predictor of the dependent measures in the full model and if its inclusion in the model reduced or eliminated the effects of the independent variables. Agency was a significant covariate in the analyses examining hireability, $F(1, 210) = 30.75, p < .001$, and salary assessment, $F(1, 209) = 10.66, p = .001$, but not salary allocation, $F(1, 209) = 0.89, p = .347$. Thus, agency was only a potential mediating variable for the effects we observed on hireability and salary assessment.

The main effect of sexual orientation on hireability disappeared when agency was added, $F(1, 210) = 2.04, p = .155$, further supporting the possibility that agency might be a mediator. Furthermore, a Sobel test indicated that the indirect effect of sexual orientation on hireability via perceptions of agentic traits was statistically significant, Sobel $z = -3.21, p = .001$. Thus, I observed complete mediation given that the F value for the main effect was non-significant when agency was included in the model.

The appearance \times participant gender interaction on ratings of hireability also became non-significant, $F(1, 210) = 1.48, p = .225$, when agency was included in the model, indicating

that agency may again be a mediator. This was confirmed with a significant Sobel test, Sobel $z = 2.23$, $p = .025$. Once again, complete mediation of agentic traits in the effects of the appearance \times participant gender on ratings of hireability was found.

Therefore, the significant main effect of sexual orientation, and the appearance \times participant gender interaction on hireability ratings were, in fact, due to the perceived agentic traits of the applicant. In other words, the lesbian applicant was perceived as higher in agency, which led to higher ratings of hireability. Additionally, feminine and masculine appearing applicants were given the same ratings of agency by female participants, which actually led to higher ratings of hireability for the feminine applicant. The masculine applicant was given higher agency ratings than the feminine applicant from male participants, which led to similar hireability ratings for both applicants.

The main effect of appearance on salary allocation was slightly attenuated, but still significant, $F(1,209) = 3.98$, $p = .047$, which made sense considering that agency was not a significant covariate in this analysis. I ran a Sobel test to confirm that there was no mediation of agency. Results of this test were non-significant, Sobel $z = -0.89$, $p = .375$. This, along with the still significant F value when agency was included in the model showed that agency was not a mediator for the effect of appearance on ratings of salary. Thus, although the masculine-appearing applicant was viewed as more agentic, this was not the reason that she was given a higher salary than the feminine-appearing applicant.

There remained a significant, though attenuated, main effect of sexual orientation on salary assessment, $F(1, 209) = 5.38$, $p = .021$, when agency was included as a covariate. This time, when running the Sobel test, I did find that there was significant mediation of agency, Sobel $z = 2.37$, $p = .012$. This was partial mediation because the F value for the main effect was

still significant in the model, which included agency. This suggests that while perception of the applicant's agency does partially account for the effect of sexual orientation on salary assessment there are other (unknown) factors that may explain why the lesbian woman received a higher salary assessment rating than the heterosexual woman.

Discussion

Review of Main Findings

Sexual orientation. I predicted that the lesbian applicant would be rated as more hireable overall than the heterosexual applicant, that she would receive a higher average salary, and that these differences would be due to stereotypes about lesbian women having more agentic traits. The lesbian applicant was, in fact, rated as more hireable than the heterosexual applicant regardless of appearance or participant gender. Additionally, she was rated as significantly more agentic than the heterosexual applicant and this accounted for the difference in ratings of hireability.

Although the lesbian applicant was rated as more hireable, there was no difference in salary allotment between the lesbian and heterosexual applicant. This result was unexpected because it stands in contrast to previous research showing that lesbian women earn a higher average salary than heterosexual women (Ahmed & Hammerstedt, 2008; Antecole, Jong & Steinberger, 2008; Baer & Kiersz, 2015; Black, Sanders & Taylor, 2007; Ozeren, 2014). It is possible that salaried pay as a construct was too abstract or foreign to the participants in this study since the vast majority were undergraduate psychology students.

While actual salary allotment did not differ between the lesbian and heterosexual applicant in this analysis, those in the lesbian condition believed that they were being more generous than those in the heterosexual condition. Agency was found to partially account for the

effect of sexual orientation on these subjective salary assessment ratings. It is possible that if, as suggested above, participants were just too unfamiliar with realistic salaried pay, they may have partially assessed their initial salary ratings on the presence of agentic traits for each applicant. Because the lesbian applicants were given higher hireability ratings due to their perceived agentic traits, the participants may have thought that they were providing her higher pay because she was more deserving, but their lack of knowledge ultimately led to no difference in actual salary allocation based on sexual orientation.

Appearance. I predicted that the masculine appearing applicant would be rated as more hireable and receive a higher salary than the feminine appearing applicant in both the lesbian and heterosexual conditions. Again, I expected that this effect would be due to stereotypes of agentic traits for the masculine applicant. As predicted, the masculine appearing applicant was rated as higher in agency, and was allotted a significantly higher salary than the feminine appearing applicant regardless of sexual orientation. In this case, however, higher ratings of agency did not account for the differences in salary allocation. As mentioned above, it is possible that the measure of salary allotment may have been too difficult for participants to grasp. Therefore, they may have completely based salary allotment on the only visual piece of information available, the applicant's appearance. While not ideal, this outcome does make some sense, as visual cues are particularly salient. Therefore, because men earn a higher average salary than women (Ahmed & Hammerstedt, 2008; Antecole, Jong & Steinberger, 2008; Baer & Kiersz, 2015; Black, Sanders & Taylor, 2007; Ozeren, 2014), participants may have seen more masculine (or manly) features as an indicator of higher worth and used this information alone to make their final salary decision.

Interestingly, the effects of appearance on hireability differed significantly depending on

the gender of the participant. Contrary to my initial predictions, male participants provided the same hireability ratings for both feminine and masculine appearing applicants, despite having rated the masculine applicant as significantly higher in agentic traits. Female participants, on the other hand, actually rated the feminine appearing applicant as more hireable than the masculine appearing applicant and did not differ in their ratings of agentic traits based on appearance alone. Hireability ratings in this case were again based on perceptions of agency, though not as predicted.

These results were unexpected. They stand in contrast to previous research, which shows that masculine appearance is consistently favored when the applicant is applying for a traditionally masculine job (Sczesny, Spreeman & Stahlberg, 2006; Stockhausen, Koeser & Scesny, 2013). The present study used only one image to represent masculine appearance and one image to represent feminine appearance, whereas previous research has used multiple representations of both and averaged the effects of those together (Scesny, Spreeman & Stahlberg, 2006; Stockhausen, Koeser & Scesny, 2013). While one image was clearly more masculine than the other in the present study, both images were fairly “average” in appearance and it is possible that with additional and somewhat more varied representations the results may have aligned more closely with previous findings.

Ratings from the male participants may be explained by the backlash effect that occurs for heterosexual women who are perceived as breaking traditional gender norms (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 1983; Heilman & Eagly, 2008; Rudman & Glick, 1999; Rudman & Glick, 2001). While higher agency did not necessarily lead to a disadvantage as male participants provided the masculine applicant with the same hireability ratings as the feminine applicant, it also did not offer any advantage. It is possible that the agentic qualities attributed to the

masculine appearing applicant led male participants to perceive her as breaking more gender norms. As a result, they may have judged her to be only as hireable as the less agentic feminine applicant.

Female participants, on the other hand, gave higher hireability ratings to the feminine applicant, even though they did not differ in their agency ratings in either appearance condition. It is possible that the backlash effect explains these results as well (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 1983; Heilman & Eagly, 2008; Rudman & Glick, 1999; Rudman & Glick, 2001). In this case, because both masculine and feminine appearing applicants were given similar agency ratings, having a feminine appearance may have offset the backlash effect and caused this applicant to be perceived as breaking fewer gender norms than the masculine applicant, thus leading to an advantage in hiring.

Alternatively, similar agency ratings for both the masculine and feminine applicants may have led the female participants to perceive the feminine applicant in this case to be more empowered than the masculine applicant because she was applying for a traditionally masculine job despite having traditionally feminine features. Based on these results, it would seem that in initial hiring judgments a feminine appearance provides an advantage when the employer is female for both heterosexual and lesbian applicants.

Supplemental Findings

Interaction between sexual orientation and appearance. Initially, I predicted that a masculine appearance would lead to higher ratings of agency, hireability and salary in a similar manner for both the lesbian and heterosexual applicants. Interestingly, however, the heterosexual applicant was the only one affected by her appearance in terms of ratings of agency. The heterosexual applicant received higher ratings of agency when she was masculine in appearance

and lower ratings when she was feminine in appearance, which is what I expected. In contrast, the lesbian applicant was given the same agency ratings in both the masculine and feminine appearance conditions. Considering that lesbian women are often perceived to resemble heterosexual men more closely than heterosexual women in terms of personality traits (Niedlich, Steffans, Krause, Settke & Ebert, 2014; Niedlich & Steffans, 2015; Write & Canetto, 2009), this would make sense. Once the participants in the lesbian condition became aware of the applicant's sexual orientation, her appearance no longer provided important information about the characteristics or traits she possessed. This supports the idea that disclosure of sexual orientation is key in stereotype attribution for lesbian women (e.g. agentic traits; Gross, Green Storck & Vanyur, 1980) and may actually cancel out stereotypes from first impressions based on appearance alone.

Communion. Another interesting result was that the lesbian applicant was attributed more communal traits than the heterosexual applicant. This meant that not only was the lesbian applicant perceived to be more agentic but she was also perceived to have more communal qualities than the heterosexual applicant. While somewhat surprising, this result may have again been due to the fact that perceptions of sexual minorities are very complex and do not conform to traditional gender roles (Kite & Deaux, 1987; Niedlich & Steffans, 2015; Write & Canetto, 2009).

Limitations

One major limitation in this study was the very small number of male participants. In fact, only sixteen percent (16%) of participants identified as male. I used participant gender in the model because, as previous research would suggest (Herek, 2016), it was clear that male and female participants responded differently to the measures of hireability and agency. While there

were significant results based on participant gender, I cannot say with certainty that these patterns would remain consistent with a larger pool of male participants.

Another limitation is the fact that most of the participants in this study were undergraduate college students, many of whom were majoring in psychology or a related field. It is likely that these participants had minimal knowledge of the workforce and likely even less familiarity with things like salaried pay, the possible implications of which are discussed above. Therefore, their responses to questions regarding hireability and salary may not completely reflect real world scenarios.

Additionally, psychology majors may be more likely to care about things like impression management when making hiring decisions than an actual employer would. It is possible that this accounted for the fact that impression management was significantly correlated with the hireability measure. This again could mean that the responses from the participants are not completely reflective of real world employers.

Although I did place the Sexual Prejudice Scale after the measures of hireability and salary, it was located before the manipulation check items. This may have affected the participants' recall of the applicant's sexual orientation. I found that an unusually large number of participants in the heterosexual condition misidentified the applicant as lesbian in the manipulation check. It is possible that these participants originally thought that the applicant was heterosexual, responded to the dependent variables as such, and were only confused after the sexual prejudice measure. However, it is also possible that they actually perceived the applicant to be lesbian when she was in fact heterosexual. It is impossible to tell which of the above scenarios is true due to the placement of the measures.

This has several implications. First, if the participants in the heterosexual condition did,

in fact, perceive the applicant to be lesbian, their responses would reflect that perception and would render the results invalid. Second, because there is no way of knowing whether or not this happened (save for the few participants who wrote in the comment section that they originally perceived the applicant to be heterosexual but changed their mind after the Sexual Prejudice Scale) I must assume that the placement of the Sexual Prejudice Scale did confuse most of the participants in question and that they responded to the questions about hireability and salary appropriately.

Future Directions

The present study was the first within this body of research to use appearance as a manipulation of first impressions for hiring and salary decisions for lesbian women. The lesbian applicant was rated as more agentic and more hireable regardless of her appearance overall, but a feminine appearance provided an advantage when the participants were female. Appearance also had an impact on salary allotment for both the lesbian and heterosexual participant as the masculine appearing applicant in each condition was given a higher salary. It is possible that appearance would play a bigger role in hiring decisions for lesbian applicants if one applicant was clearly much more masculine in appearance than the other. In the present study, there were no representations of either an overly masculine lesbian woman, or an overly feminine heterosexual woman. Both images were fairly “average” so future research may benefit from a more varied representation of appearance. Additionally, it may be interesting to investigate the effect of other masculinity cues, such as hair and clothing style, on perceptions of agency and hiring decisions.

Additionally, future research should explore the implications of the findings presented in this study in relation to lesbian women seeking traditionally feminine jobs. Because this study

only provided one job that the applicant could apply for, it is unclear if the agentic traits that are regularly attributed to lesbian women would actually be detrimental when applying for a traditionally feminine position. This would be especially interesting considering that the lesbian applicant was actually attributed more communal traits than the heterosexual applicant. Future research should explore how these stereotypes would affect lesbian women in a variety of job settings. Additionally, it would be interesting to see if appearance plays a bigger role in the hiring process when the applicant is applying for a traditionally feminine job versus a traditionally masculine one.

Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that lesbian women are attributed more agentic qualities than heterosexual women and are therefore found to be more hireable for the role of Executive Director at a major company (and likely other leadership roles). This pattern holds true regardless of appearance. This finding suggests that it may actually be self-beneficial for lesbian women to “out” themselves when applying for traditionally masculine jobs as the disclosure may be necessary for the attribution of agentic traits. Although appearance did not affect the initial hiring decision for the lesbian applicant, overall, it did affect salary allotment. This suggests that both lesbian and heterosexual women may want to appear more masculine in order to receive a higher salary.

At the beginning of this thesis I posed the following question: is being stereotyped always a bad thing? Results from the present study would suggest that the answer is, not necessarily. Stereotypes are present in every facet of our society and while some may be inherently negative, others seem to actually provide an advantage in the right context. In this case, masculine stereotypes attributed to lesbian women overall led to a perception of greater fit for a

traditionally masculine job opportunity. Additionally, masculine appearance led to higher salary allocation for both lesbian and heterosexual women. On the other hand, while masculine appearance also led to higher perceptions of agency, in some cases this may have been seen by participants as breaking gender norms and did not lead to a hiring advantage. When individuals possess an understanding of the stereotypes about their own group, they can learn in which circumstances the stereotypes may be advantageous and use this information to their benefit. However, they must also decide whether it would be ethical to do so as this may put others at a disadvantage for reasons that are not based on actual qualifications or competencies.

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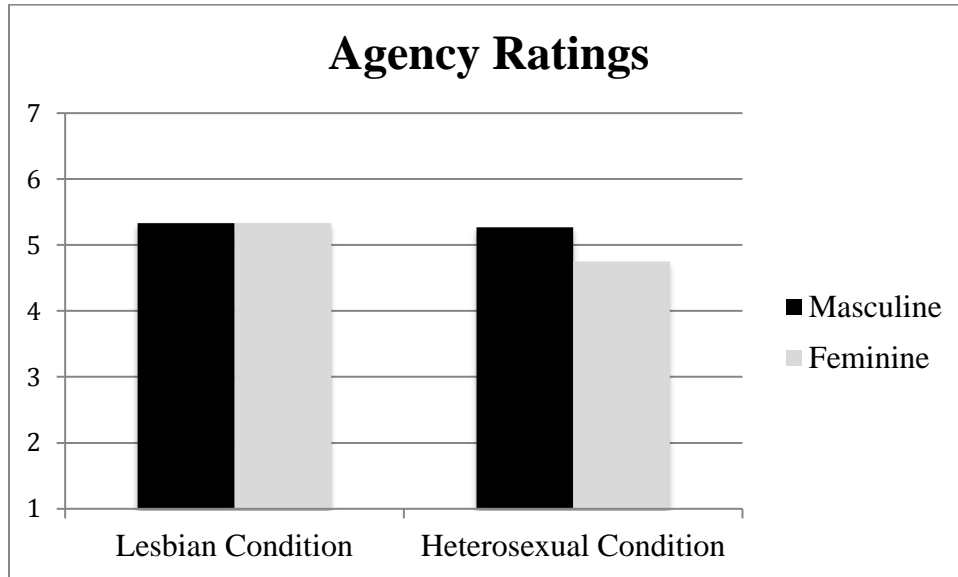
Figures

Figure 1. Appearance \times sexual orientation interaction on ratings of agency. Within the heterosexual condition, the masculine applicant received significantly higher ratings of agency, and there was no difference in agency ratings within the lesbian condition.

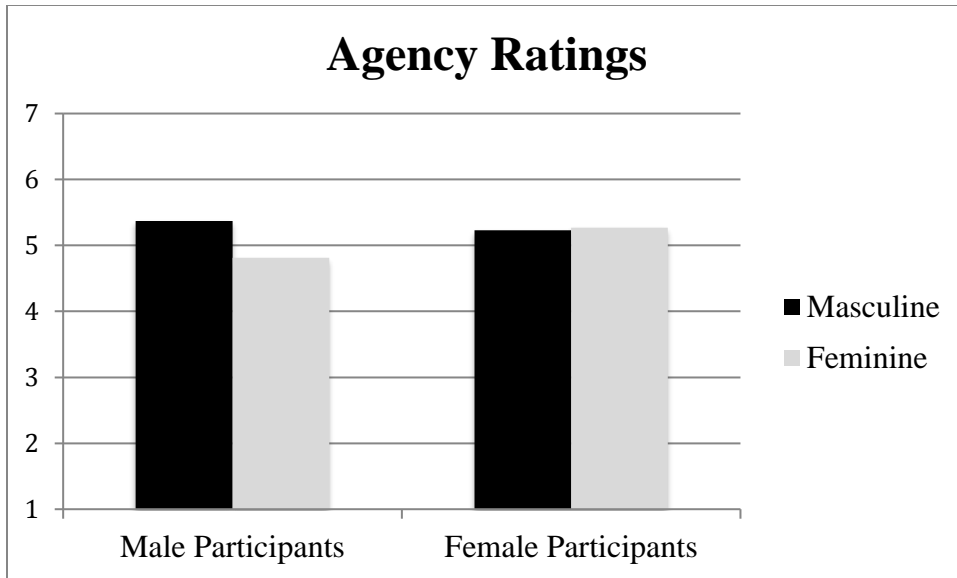


Figure 2. Appearance \times participant gender interaction on ratings of agency. Among male participants, the masculine applicant received higher ratings of agency, and there was no difference in agency ratings for either the masculine or feminine applicants among female participants.

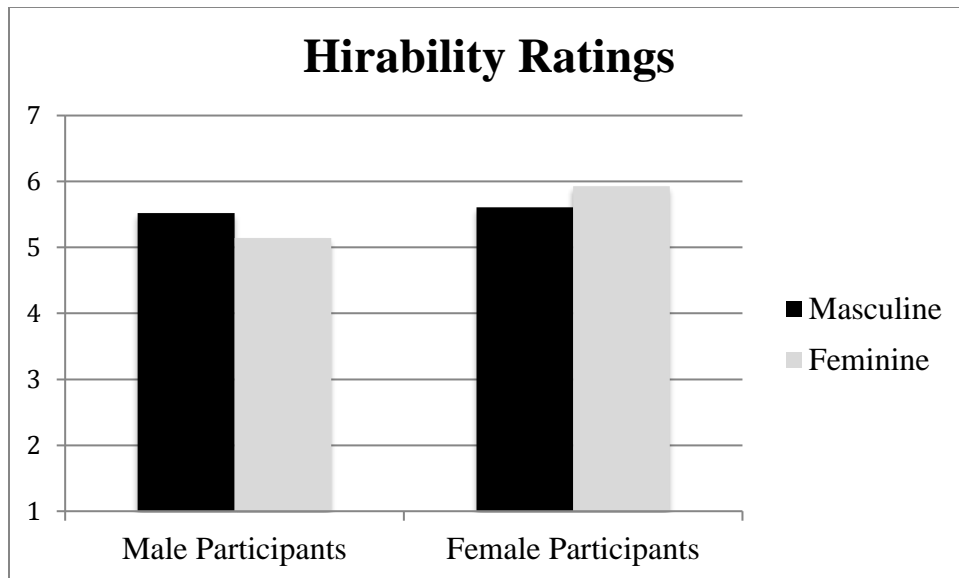


Figure 3. Appearance \times participant gender interaction on ratings of hireability. Among female participants, the feminine applicant received higher ratings of hireability, and there was no significant difference in hireability ratings for either the masculine or feminine applicants among male participant.

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