***Scared of Straights***:

**Effects of Intercultural Communication Anxiety & Gender on Homosexual Men Interacting with Heterosexual Men**

**1. Purpose of Research:**

The focus of this study is to test two communication theories that help predict behavior in initial interactions: Anxiety Uncertainty Management Theory (AUM) and Predicted Outcome Value Theory (POV). AUM, theorized by William Gudykunst, contends that humans experience great uncertainty and anxiety when communicating with individuals from different cultures. AUM predicts that as perceived similarity increases between intercultural interaction partners, then predictability will increase, thus decreasing anxiety and uncertainty. Conversely, when perceived similarity is low, then predictability decreases, thus increasing anxiety and uncertainty.

Relevant to the current study are the salient cultural differences that have been discovered between homosexuals and heterosexuals – mainly between heterosexual men and homosexual men. Most noteworthy is the finding that homosexual men, in particular, tend to be less sex-typed than heterosexual men (Hooberman, 1979; Lippa, 2000). It is possible this dissimilarity between these two cultures could incite anxiety. Consequently, due to this pervasive difference in sex-typing between homosexuals and heterosexuals, the current study asks the following questions: 1) Will there be a relationship between homosexual males’ state anxiety and their perceived level of masculinity of their anticipated interaction partner (the heterosexual male they are asked to imagine interacting with)?, and 2) Will there be a relationship between homosexual males’ state anxiety and their perceived similarity to their anticipated interaction partner?

The second theory being tested in this study is Michael Sunnafrank’s Predicted Outcome Value Theory (POV). POV focuses on initial interactions between people, and it argues that communication which occurs between interaction partners within the first time of meeting can engender POV judgments. POV judgments from individuals indicate whether or not one will anticipate positive interactions with someone in the future.

Mottet (2000) examined the relationship between POV judgments and the effect sexual orientation has on heterosexuals. He discovered that heterosexuals had lower POV judgments for homosexuals than they did for heterosexuals. The current study seeks to ask a similar question, but instead, is looking at the POV judgments of homosexual males. Specifically, sexual orientation and the perceived level of masculinity in an anticipated interaction partner will be manipulated to discover if POV is affected. Consequently, the following research question is asked: Will there be a relationship between homosexual males’ POV judgments and their perceived level of masculinity of their anticipated interaction partner?

To answer these questions, participants will complete a 30 minute survey online at SurveyMonkey.com. Participants will fill out the following scales: 1) Communication Anxiety Inventory: Form Trait (dyadic context – 7 items), 2) Communication Anxiety Inventory: Form State (20 items), 3) Bem’s Sex Role Inventory Short-form (20 items), 4) McCroskey’s Attitude Homophile Scale (4 items), and 5) Mottet’s POV Scale (7 items).

**2. Subject Population Description:**

Approximately 150 homosexual men ages 18 and older will be sought for the current study. Participants can be of any health-status and ability. Participants can be of any ethnic or racial background. Because this study is focusing on the perceptions of homosexual men communicating with heterosexual men, there will be a total of three qualifiers for the present study; 1) participants must be 18 or older, 2) participants can not be female (they must be male, transgendered, or other), and 3) participants must be homosexual. Qualifier questions will be asked in the beginning of the survey to ensure that only participants that qualify complete the survey.

**3. Research Procedures/Methods.**

**A. Recruitment and Selection of Subjects:**

Participants will be recruited via LGBTQ organizations on various university campuses throughout the United States. Gay/Straight Alliance chapters (organization promoting alliances between heterosexuals and the LGBTQ community), Lambda chapters (organization working to increase awareness to the homosexual, bisexual, transgendered, and progressive community, as well as promote alliances between heterosexuals and homosexuals), and Delta Lambda Phi chapters (an all-gay social fraternity) will be sought after for participation in this study.

Due to the potential difficulty in acquiring a generalizable sample for this study (limitations of population type), I will be contacting as many LGBTQ organizations as possible in order to increase participant response rate. A copy of the letter/e-mail I will be sending to each organization is attached in Appendix D. Any homosexual male over the age of 18 will be considered part of the sample population and encouraged to participate.

**B. Research Location(s):**

Participants will complete surveys online at their convenience. They will have approximately one month to complete the survey.

**C. Consent/Assent Process:**

Every participant will be made aware of their rights and responsibilities as participants in the current study. The consent form each participant will sign/approve is located in Appendix C. Students who choose to participate will simply answer survey questions online at Surveymonkey.com.

***How will you ensure that the voluntary nature of participation is apparent to subjects?***

The informed consent form will stress the survey’s voluntary nature, as well as the opportunity for participants to withdraw at any point without being penalized: “In order to maintain anonymity, please refrain from putting your name on the survey. All surveys will remain confidential. Be sure to read *each and every* section carefully and answer *all* questions honestly and thoughtfully. The questions have no right or wrong answer – the answers should come from your felt and experienced perceptions. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you are able to terminate your participation in the study at any time without penalty.”

Additionally, the consent form will be completely separate from the survey in order to ensure that no identifying information is linked to the surveys. Furthermore, this process will ensure anonymity of all participants.

***How will you implement a system whereby a subject can withdraw from the research aspects of the study without concern about being penalized?***

As mentioned above, participants will be made aware of their ability to withdraw at anytime without penalty. Furthermore, there will be an option for them to withdraw on every page of the survey.

**D. Describe the nature and timing of the research activities**

All surveys, the informed consent form, and the letter requesting LGBTQ organizations for potential participants are attached (see Appendices A, B, C, and D).

Homosexual men involved in LGBTQ organizations will be asked to participate. Once participants have agreed to participate, they will be asked to complete the survey online at Surveymonkey.com. The survey should take approximately 30 minutes for each participant to complete.

The survey will begin by asking qualifying questions to participants. Because the sample being sought is homosexual males over the age of eighteen, the beginning questions will be qualifying questions to ensure that only participants that meet those qualifications take the survey.

Participants will then be asked to watch one of two 30 to 40 second videos, which will introduce them to a heterosexual man they will be asked to anticipate interacting with. One video will introduce participants to a man that is manipulated to be more masculine (manipulation will occur through verbal and nonverbal messages), and the other will introduce participants to a man that is manipulated to be less masculine (once again, manipulation will occur through verbal and nonverbal messages).

After watching the video, participants will then fill out multiple scales; 1) Communication Anxiety Inventory: Form State (20 items), 2) Bem’s Sex Role Inventory Short-form (20 items), 3) McCroskey’s Attitude Homophile Scale (4 items), and 4) Predicted Outcome Value Scale (7 items).

Upon completion of all survey items, participants will be thanked for their participation. Additionally, they will be informed that the results and findings of the study will be made available upon their request.

**E. Procedures for Safeguarding Confidentiality of Information:**

***Who will have access to confidential data?***

Only the primary researcher.

***For how long will subject identifying information be linked to the data?***

No identifying information will be contained in the survey responses.

***Project specific data safety (e.g. recording security, protecting identities, etc.):***

As mentioned above, data will be stored by the primary researcher. Electronic and physical forms of the data will be saved. Electronic files (SPSS) will be saved and accessed only by the primary researcher (data will be saved to primary researcher’s two flash drives). The physical data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet that is only accessible by the primary researcher.

**F. Deception:**

Deception will *not* be used in this survey.

**G. Potential Modifications:**

Perceived level of masculinity will be manipulated in this study, therefore there will be two surveys. One survey will ask participants to imagine interacting with a heterosexual male who will be manipulated to be more masculine, while the other survey will ask participants to imagine interacting with a heterosexual male who will be manipulated to be less masculine. Participants will watch a video introducing them to a man that they will be asked to imagine interacting with. The video will manipulate the perceived level of masculinity.

Manipulating the independent variable in this fashion is the most effective method. The video will allow participants to witness verbal and nonverbal communication traits of their anticipated interaction partner, therefore providing them with a context that seems more authentic. Furthermore, having two surveys will make it easier for participants because the survey will be less time-consuming. Survey research can sometimes yield unreliable results due to participant exhaustion (occurs when the survey is too long). Having participants anticipate only interacting with one individual will create a shorter survey, which will hopefully provide more honest, genuine answers.

**4. Potential Risks and Discomforts:**

The current study involves minimal risk. Questions on the survey ask about normal behaviors and perceptions. The potential risk experienced here does not exceed that encountered in normal day-to-day activities. If a student does feel at risk, or if they feel any discomfort, however, they may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty (see Appendix C for Participant Consent Form). Additionally, if a participant experiences risk or discomfort, they may make an appointment or be referred to the appropriate university personnel (e.g., counseling center), or contact/be referred to the campus IRB office/staff.

**5. Potential Benefits:**

Literature pertaining to homosexual communication is vast. Research exists that examines how homosexuals perceive and communicate the process of coming out, how they build social support within homosexual communities, and how they interact with members of their family and society. Furthermore, research has examined how heterosexuals perceive and feel communicating with homosexuals. Research, however, has only begun to touch the surface of how homosexuals feel communicating with heterosexuals. Communication is a transactional process that involves at least two people. Homosexuals and heterosexuals communicate with one another on a daily basis. Unfortunately, homosexuals exist in a culture that is stigmatized and ostracized, which could potentially prevent them from being comfortable communicating with people of differing sexual orientations.

Accordingly, it is important to better understand how homosexuals and heterosexuals can begin to form relationships with one another, and what factors inhibit such relationships from being formed. The findings from this study will contribute and open up dialogue about what does and does not lead to homosexuals experiencing anxiety/forming negative POV judgments about anticipated heterosexual interaction partners. As a homosexual on Texas State University’s campus, I believe research pertaining to this area of study is integral in achieving understanding about homosexual issues, which could help foster a more diverse, accepting population.