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## Concerns about Misidentification as Gay/ Lesbian and Fear of Sexual Advances

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FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

CONCERNS ABOUT MISIDENTIFICATION AS GAY/LESBIAN  
AND FEAR OF SEXUAL ADVANCES

By  
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To my husband, Jason: five years of marriage, four advanced degrees, and three moves have culminated in this. It's been a long time coming.

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## ABSTRACT

Social contagion concerns, which are defined as heterosexuals' fears about being misidentified as gay/lesbian, can lead to avoidant and hostile responses toward gay men/lesbians. I argue that fear of becoming the target of sexual advances from gay men or lesbians, if misidentified, contributes to contagion concerns. I further hypothesized that the overperception of sexual interest from gay/lesbian individuals leads to heightened fears of sexual advances by same-sex gay/lesbian individuals if misidentified. Consistent with these predictions, in two studies fear of sexual advances was identified as a strong, independent predictor of social contagion concerns (Study 1a & 1b). An additional study (Study 2) showed people who are higher in trait contagion concerns thought their gay/lesbian interaction partner displayed more sexual interest in them, compared to those lower in trait contagion concerns. However, contagion concerns did not influence the interpretation of sexual interest from a heterosexual interaction partner. Additionally, when paired with a gay/lesbian partner high trait contagion participants were more concerned about being misidentified as gay/lesbian, more anxious about the upcoming interaction, and more interested in avoiding the interaction. Finally, perceptions of sexual interest and concerns about sexual advances mediated the indirect effect of the partner sexual orientation X contagion concerns interaction on concerns about being misidentified during the interaction. High contagion participants with a gay/lesbian interaction partner perceived more sexual interest from their partner, which was associated with increased fear of sexual advances from their partner, which then predicted increased concerns about being misidentified as gay/lesbian during the interaction.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Recent research has shown that some heterosexual people avoid gay men and lesbians due to concerns about being misidentified as gay/lesbian themselves. Termed social contagion concerns, these concerns lead to a variety of negative responses toward gay men and lesbians (Beck, Cascio, & Plant, 2017; Buck, Plant, Ratcliff, Zielaskowski, & Boerner, 2013; Plant, Zielaskowski, & Buck, 2014) including anxiety, avoidance, and derogation of gay men and lesbians. In order to better understand and eliminate these concerns, research has focused on looking at the implications of being misidentified as gay/lesbian (Cascio & Plant, 2016; Plant, et al., 2014). Heterosexual people who are misidentified as gay/lesbian face many possible consequences, including becoming the target of prejudice and discrimination, missing out on mating opportunities, and anxiety about their self-identity (Bosson, Prewitt-Freilino, & Taylor, 2005; Bosson, Vandello, Burnaford, Weaver, & Wasti, 2009; Buck et al., 2013; Plant et al., 2014). Given the negative implications of these contagion concerns, it is critical to examine the factors that may contribute to these concerns.

In the current work, I focused on a key factor that I argue contributes to social contagion concerns, fear of unwanted sexual advances from gay men and lesbians. Specifically, I posited that some people are highly concerned about unwanted sexual advances from gay men or lesbians should they be misidentified as gay/lesbian, which leads to heightened concerns about misidentification. Additionally, I predicted that these fears about sexual advances stem, in part, from an overperception of sexual interest from gay men or lesbians. That is, some people may perceive sexual interest from gay/lesbian individuals, even when no actual interest is present. This overperception may then lead to increased concerns about receiving sexual advances from

gay men or lesbians, which in turn may lead to increased contagion concerns and negative reactions to gay/lesbian individuals.

### **Social Contagion Concerns and Sexual Orientation**

Due to the concealable nature of sexual orientation, individuals risk being misidentified as gay/lesbian when interacting with a known gay/lesbian individual. Previous research has shown that associating with members of a stigmatized group can lead to outgroup members also becoming stigmatized, called stigma by association (Goffman, 1963; Hebl & Mannix, 2003; Neuberg, Smith, Hoffman, & Russell, 1994; Sigelman, Howell, Cornell, Cutright, & Dewey, 1991). For example, Sigelman and colleagues (1991) found that when a male target whose sexual orientation was not explicitly disclosed was seen voluntarily associating with a gay man, prejudiced individuals reported that the target had stereotypically gay traits and likely engaged in homosexual behaviors. Additional research has shown that heterosexual men who are seen interacting with a gay man are rated negatively and avoided (Neuberg et al., 1994) and that men who confront antigay prejudice are both more disliked and more likely to be perceived as gay themselves compared to men who do not confront prejudice (Cadieux & Chasteen, 2015). Thus, the real possibility of misidentification contributes to contagion concerns.

People who report being highly concerned about being misclassified as gay or lesbian (i.e., people who possess high levels of social contagion concerns) experience a greater desire to avoid contact with gay men and lesbians, and heightened anxiety about such contact (Buck et al., 2013; Plant et al., 2014). People high in contagion concerns, compared to those low in contagion concerns, also respond in an anxious, avoidant, and unfriendly manner when interacting with gay men and lesbians and express an interest in avoiding such contact altogether (Buck et al., 2013). It should be noted that contagion concerns, although related, are distinct from traditional sexual

prejudice, which has been conceptualized as negativity toward gay men and lesbians based on moral condemnation (see Kite & Whitley, 1996; Herek, 1998). Additionally, contagion concerns predict anxious and avoidant responses to gay men and lesbians more strongly than traditional sexual prejudice (Buck et al., 2013). Given the fact that numerous studies have shown that positive intergroup contact is one of the best ways of reducing negative outgroup attitudes (e.g., Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011; Plant, 2004; Plant & Devine, 2003), the avoidance of gay men and lesbians that stems from contagion concerns can have detrimental effects for both heterosexual and gay/lesbian individuals.

Additional research has demonstrated that some people high in contagion concerns may go beyond simply avoiding gay/lesbian people to prevent misidentification as gay/lesbian. People high in contagion concerns are less willing to publicly support LGBT rights, less willing to intervene in situations where someone is being bullied due to their sexual orientation, and more likely to publicly derogate gay men and lesbians to others (Beck et al., 2017; Buck et al., 2013; Plant et al., 2014). Given the negative responses that result from contagion concerns, decreasing contagion concerns is vital to promoting more positive interorientation contact.

### **Costs of Misidentification**

In order to reduce these social contagion concerns, it is useful to understand what factors contribute to contagion concerns. One such way is to look at what people think might happen to them if they are misidentified as gay/lesbian. People should be concerned about misidentification as gay/lesbian to the extent that there are negative costs associated with being misidentified (Neuberg et al., 1994). For heterosexual people, being misidentified as gay/lesbian could have a range of negative implications, including self-conscious discomfort, threats to one's heterosexual identity, becoming the target of sexual prejudice, and losing out on potential mating

opportunities (Bosson et al., 2005; Bosson et al., 2009; Buck et al., 2013; Plant et al., 2014). For example, evidence has shown that mating motivations play a role in contagion concerns (Plant et al., 2014). Heterosexual people high in social contagion concerns are more likely to express negative attitudes about gay men and lesbians to an opposite-sex interaction partner than are people with lower contagion concerns (Plant et al., 2014). Additionally, this tendency is intensified when their contagion concerns are experimentally heightened by activating mating motives. It was argued that these negative ratings were a way to show the interaction partner, who could be a potential mate, that the individual was not gay/lesbian and, thus, available as a partner.

Recent work has also demonstrated that fear of becoming the target of prejudice and discrimination if misidentified is a strong predictor of contagion concerns (Cascio & Plant, 2016). When participants were exposed to nonprejudiced norms, they exhibited significantly lower contagion concerns, and less anxious and avoidant responses toward gay men and lesbians compared to a control condition. This effect was mediated by a decrease in fear of becoming the target of prejudice if misidentified, suggesting that identifying and targeting the potential perceived costs of misidentification is an effective way of reducing contagion concerns.

Relevant to the current work, another potential cost of misidentification, which could contribute to concerns about such misidentification, is fear of sexual advances from gay men/lesbians. Presumably if someone was thought to be gay/lesbian, that person is at risk for receiving sexual advances or flirtations from gay/lesbian individuals. For heterosexuals, this possibility of unwanted sexual advances can be very distressing (Bosson et al., 2005; Herek, 2004; Secord, & Backman, 1965; Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & Giesler, 1992). For example, a recent study showed sexual prejudice, or prejudice based on sexual orientation, was largely due

to attempts to avoid unwanted sexual interest (Pirlott & Neuberg, 2014). Pirlott and Neuberg (2014) demonstrated that heterosexual women believed that those who did not share their explicit sexual interests (bisexual men, bisexual women, and lesbians) directed unwanted sexual interest toward them; the same was true for heterosexual men's perceptions of bisexual and gay men (but not bisexual women, who they still had sexual interest in). Additionally, more negative reactions were directed at targets believed to express unwanted sexual interest (e.g., heterosexual women toward lesbians, heterosexual men toward gay men) than targets with whom they shared mutual sexual interest (e.g., heterosexual women toward heterosexual men) or mutual sexual disinterest (e.g., heterosexual women toward gay men). Perceptions of unwanted sexual interest, in turn, mediated the relationship between the target group's sexual orientation and negativity toward that group. These findings suggest that negativity toward gay men and lesbians may be due to a motivation to avoid being the target of sexual advances from someone with whom there is not shared sexual interest.

Because wanting to avoid sexual interest from gay men or lesbians is a significant contributor to prejudice toward gay men and lesbians, wanting to avoid said sexual interest should also have a significant effect on concerns about being misidentified as gay/lesbian. For example, people may fear being misidentified as gay/lesbian because this puts them at increased risk of becoming the target of unwanted sexual advances from gay men or lesbians.

The actual likelihood of being the target of sexual advances from a gay/lesbian individual is uncertain, but presumably relatively low. Gay men and lesbians are a much smaller percentage of the population than heterosexual individuals, so base rates for sexual advances should also be lower. Additionally, gay men and lesbians may be especially wary of making sexual advances toward anyone, unless they know that person shares their sexual orientation. For example,

showing sexual interest toward people who are actually heterosexual at best would be an unsuccessful endeavor and worse may put gay men and lesbians at risk for being the target of prejudice. Despite the relatively low likelihood, there are theoretical reasons for heterosexuals to be attentive to the possibility of receiving sexual advances for gay/lesbian individuals. For instance, an affordance-management perspective states that people are motivated, due to natural selection, to manage affordances (threats or opportunities) in their environments (Gibson, 1979; McArthur & Baron, 1983; Neuberg, Kenrick, & Schaller, 2010, 2011). Early humans faced many adaptive problems, anything that may have hindered survival or reproduction, resulting in an evolved affordance management system. As such, people pay particular attention to anything around them that may be especially helpful or harmful for their survival and the propagation of their genes. Supporting this idea, many studies have shown that negative attitudes toward outgroups come from the threats that these outgroups present (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Maitner, Mackie, & Smith, 2006). Heterosexual individuals, for example, have been shown to be prejudiced against gay men in part because gay men are associated with disease and represent a health threat (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Herek & Capitanio, 1999).

Based on affordance-management theory, people may also be highly attentive to unwanted sexual advances from gay men and lesbians because these unwanted advances may be threatening in several ways. For example, sexual advances from gay men or lesbians may threaten an individual's group membership (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2001) as a heterosexual, if they lead to further misidentification from other heterosexuals. Sexual advances from gay men or lesbians may also cause an individual to doubt his or her own heterosexual self-identity (Adams, Wright, & Lohr, 1996; Herek, 2000a,

2000b; Weinstein et al., 2012). Additionally, unwanted sexual advances more generally pose a threat to an individual's sexual autonomy (Buss, & Malamuth, 1996; Lalumiere, Harris, Quinsey, & Rice, 2005). Therefore, heterosexual individuals may benefit from being vigilant toward advances from gay men and lesbians.

Similarly, error management theory states that individuals are biased towards making less costly- vs. more costly- errors (Haselton & Buss, 2000; Haselton & Nettle, 2006). For example, men invest less in offspring than women do and have a higher potential reproductive output (Trivers, 1972). For men, therefore, the more costly error is to miss out on a potential mating opportunity rather than make an overture and be turned down. Supporting error management theory, research has shown that men tend to overperceive sexual interest from women (Haselton, 2003; Koenig, Kirkpatrick, & Ketelaar, 2007; Perilloux, Easton, & Buss, 2012) and that those with a more unrestricted sociosexuality (who are more open to casual sex) overperceive interest from others (Howell, Etchells, & Penton-Voak, 2012; Perilloux et al., 2012).

Focusing specifically on heterosexual individuals perceiving sexual interest from gay men or lesbians, there are two types of errors one could make: (1) overperceiving sexual interest when there is none or (2) missing sexual interest when it is actually present. In this situation, incorrectly overperceiving sexual interest from a gay/lesbian person may be the less costly error to make. If a heterosexual individual were to assume a gay/lesbian individual was making sexual advances, they would be able to reject the unwanted advances quickly and leave themselves free for other potential mates. They also would not spend time inadvertently leading someone on or investing in a relationship where the individuals have different goals, creating awkward situations down the line. Rejecting sexual advances from a gay man or lesbian could even be seen as a way of reaffirming or demonstrating one's heterosexual identity to other heterosexuals.



The consequences of incorrectly rejecting a mistaken sexual advance from a gay/lesbian individual are therefore relatively minor compared to the benefits of said rejection.

Conversely, it would be more costly not to perceive sexual interest from a gay/lesbian individual and not reject it than to falsely perceive sexual interest. For instance, the individual who did not perceive actual sexual interest would be spending time interacting with a gay/lesbian person when they could be spending time looking for mates. Additionally, they could end up in awkward situations where they have to turn the person down later on, after more time has been invested. They could even be inadvertently signaling to others that they are gay/lesbian if they don't reject the sexual advances. For all these reasons, it may be more beneficial for heterosexuals to overperceive, rather than underperceive, sexual advances from gay men/lesbians.

Due to the risk of unwanted sexual advances and the associated costs they may incur, I hypothesized that fear of sexual advances from gay/lesbian individuals would directly contribute to contagion concerns. That is, the more someone fears sexual advances, the more that individual will be worried about misclassification as gay/lesbian. Furthermore, I predicted that *overperceiving* sexual interest from same-sex gay/lesbian individuals contributes to increased fear of sexual advances. Due to the fact that overperception would be the less costly error, heterosexuals may be biased to assume gay/lesbian individuals are making sexual advances toward them, even when they are not. This overperception of sexual interest would then lead to increased concerns about sexual advances and contagion concerns more generally.

### **The Present Work**

Across three studies, I examined the relationship between fear of sexual advances and social contagion concerns. I hypothesized that fear of sexual advances by gay/lesbian people

would contribute to contagion concerns. In two initial examinations into this issue, using an adult nonstudent sample (Study 1a) and a student sample (Study 1b), I examined several factors that may affect contagion concerns. These factors included fear of sexual advances, fear of missing out on potential mates, fear of becoming the target of prejudice, one's own level of sexual prejudice (Studies 1a and 1b), and fear of negative evaluation (Study 1b), to determine which of these factors strongly and independently predicted contagion concerns. I then conducted an additional study (Study 2) to examine whether some heterosexuals overperceive sexual interest from gay men/lesbians and whether this overperception leads to fear of sexual advances, and thus, contagion concerns.

## CHAPTER 2

### STUDY 1A

The first studies (Studies 1a & 1b) were part of an examination into the range of factors that influence people's social contagion concerns. These studies focused on identifying the potential costs of misidentification. Included amongst these costs was the threat of becoming the target of unwanted sexual advances. I hypothesized that fear of unwanted sexual advances from gay/lesbian people would predict an individual's contagion concerns. In addition, I explored other factors that theoretically should be related to contagion concerns, to determine if fear of sexual advances predicted contagion concerns, above and beyond other theoretically-related variables. Therefore, I additionally included measures of participants' concerns about missing out on potential mates and concerns about becoming the target of prejudice and discrimination. In addition, I assessed their sexual prejudice because people who feel strong moral condemnation of gay men and lesbians would also likely object to being identified as gay/lesbian themselves.

#### Method

##### Participants

Respondents were 93 MTurk workers (53% female; 11% Hispanic, 75% White nonHispanic, 14.6% multiracial; 6% Asian/Pacific Islander;  $M_{\text{age}} = 35.62$ ,  $SD = 13.01$ ) who participated in exchange for a 20 cent payment. Participation was limited to adult MTurk workers from the United States. Five additional participants completed the procedures, but identified as gay/lesbian, and so were not included in the analyses.

##### Procedure and Materials

Participants filled out a series of questionnaires online, in the order described below.

**Implications of misidentification.** Participants completed a questionnaire that assessed anticipated reactions if they were perceived as gay or lesbian (see Appendix A). Male participants answered questions about being perceived as gay, and female participants completed items about being perceived as lesbian. Three items assessed their concerns about unwanted sexual advances from gay/lesbian people if they were perceived as gay or lesbian (e.g., “If people mistakenly thought I was gay, I worry that they would make sexual advances toward me,” “I would be concerned that gay/lesbian people would hit on me if they thought I was gay/lesbian,”  $\alpha = .91$ ). Six items assessed their concerns about losing out on romantic/sexual partners if they were perceived as gay or lesbian (e.g., “I would be concerned about being misidentified as gay/lesbian, because it would interfere with me finding a romantic partner,” “It would bother me if I lost out on potential mates because people misidentified me as gay/lesbian,”  $\alpha = .93$ ). To assess concerns about being the target of prejudice, participants completed five items that assessed their anticipated reactions from others if they were perceived as gay or lesbian (e.g., “I would worry people would treat me negatively if they thought I was gay/lesbian,” “I would be insulted or harassed if people mistakenly thought I was gay/lesbian,”  $\alpha = .90$ ). Responses were given on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) with higher scores indicating more concern about the specific cost of misidentification.

**Social contagion concerns.** Participants completed items drawn from Buck et al.’s (2013) social contagion concerns scale that asked about concerns regarding contact with gay men or lesbians, matched to the gender of the participant (see Appendix B). Six items assessed participants’ social contagion concerns (e.g., “If I was hanging out with a gay man, I would worry that other people would think I was a gay man, too,”  $\alpha = .89$ ). Responses were made on a rating scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), reverse scored where necessary, so

that higher scores indicated greater contagion concerns. Three of the items ask about being misidentified as gay/lesbian by other heterosexuals and three of the items asked about misidentification by gay/lesbian persons (e.g., “It wouldn’t bother me if a gay man thought I was gay too”).

**Attitudes toward lesbians and gay men.** Participants’ own sexual prejudice was measured using the 10-item Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men scale (ATLG; Herek, 1998, see Appendix C). This scale assesses traditional sexual prejudice/moral condemnation (e.g., “Sex between two men is just plain wrong,” “Female homosexuality is a perversion”). Agreement with scale items was measured using a 9-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 9 = *strongly agree*) with higher scores indicating more negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men ( $\alpha = .93$ ).

## Results and Discussion

I first examined the correlations between social contagion concerns and fear of sexual advances, concerns about missing mating opportunities, concerns about being the target of prejudice, and ATLG scores (see Table 1 for correlation matrix). Contagion concerns were significantly correlated with fear of sexual advances ( $r = .75$ ), concerns about missing mating opportunities ( $r = .61$ ), concerns about being the target of prejudice ( $r = .58$ ), and ATLG scores ( $r = .69$ ),  $p$ 's < .01.

To determine which factors would independently predict contagion concerns, fear of sexual advances, concerns about missing mating opportunities, concerns about being the target of prejudice, ATLG scores, and participant gender were entered into a multiple regression with participants’ contagion scores as the dependent variable. Gender was included as a predictor since there is some precedent that men tend to experience higher levels of social contagion

concerns than women (e.g., Buck et al., 2013; Plant et al., 2014). There was a significant effect of fear of sexual advances on contagion scores,  $B= 0.41$ ,  $SE= 0.09$ ,  $t(87)= 4.72$ ,  $p < .001$ , such that greater fear of sexual advances was associated with greater contagion concerns for the individual. In addition, there was a significant effect of participants' own prejudice level,  $B= 0.31$ ,  $SE= 0.04$ ,  $t(87)= 7.22$ ,  $p= .001$ , such that higher prejudice was associated with higher levels of contagion concerns. However, after controlling for the other factors, there was no effect of concerns about loss of partners, concerns about being the target of prejudice, or gender on contagion concerns,  $p's > .20$ .

These results indicate that people's fears of sexual advances are related to contagion concerns, over and above concerns about loss of partners, concerns about being the target of prejudice, and own level of sexual prejudice. Concerns about receiving unwanted sexual advances from gay men/lesbians are associated with people being more worried about misidentification as gay/lesbian.

## CHAPTER 3

### STUDY 1B

Study 1a revealed that fears of sexual advances are a significant and independent predictor of contagion concerns. Study 1b aimed to replicate this effect using a college sample. Given the average age of the previous sample was 35 years old and that attitudes toward gay men and lesbians have become more positive over time (Gallup, 2013; Yang, 1997), it is possible that younger participants would not have the same fear of sexual advances from gay men or lesbians that older participants expressed. Additionally, I wanted to further examine how participants would feel if they received sexual advances from a gay man/lesbian, and how they would respond to those advances. I anticipated that feelings of negativity or discomfort when receiving or refusing unwanted sexual advances from gay/lesbian individuals would contribute to fears of sexual advances. Because receiving unwanted sexual advances may be uncomfortable or even threatening, it is possible that participants would report feeling awkward and angry if they received sexual advances from a gay man or lesbian, thus leading them to be concerned about such advances. Additionally, I considered the possibility that participants would report being uncomfortable when declining said advances, causing them to fear such sexual advances. I also added a measure assessing participants' responses if they received sexual advances from someone they found unattractive, in order to examine whether fear of sexual advances from gay men and lesbians was due to more than negative reactions resulting from a general lack of shared sexual interest. Additionally, I assessed fear of negative evaluation, or participants' general concerns that they would be viewed negatively by others (Watson & Friend, 1969), to demonstrate that contagion concerns go beyond simple concerns about being viewed negatively.

## Method

### Participants

Participants were 140 undergraduates (70.1% female; 25% Hispanic, 61.4% White nonHispanic, 5.7% Black nonHispanic;  $M_{\text{age}} = 19.5$  years,  $SD = 4.24$ ) who participated in partial fulfillment of a requirement for their introductory psychology course. Three additional participants completed the procedures but identified as gay/lesbian, and so were not included in the analyses.

### Procedure and Materials

Participants were brought into the lab individually where they filled out a series of questionnaires on the computer. Participants completed the same implications of misidentification questionnaires from Study 1a. Three items assessed their concerns about unwanted sexual advances from gay/lesbian people if they were perceived as gay or lesbian ( $\alpha = .86$ ). Six items assessed their concerns about losing out on romantic/sexual partners if they were perceived as gay or lesbian ( $\alpha = .85$ ). Five items assessed their concerns about being the target of prejudice and discrimination if misidentified ( $\alpha = .82$ ). Participants also completed a longer 10-item version of Buck et al.'s (2013) scale assessing general social contagion concerns ( $\alpha = .86$ ; see Appendix D) and Herek's (1998) ATLG scale ( $\alpha = .86$ ). They also completed four additional measures in this study, described below.

**Reactions to sexual advances.** Participants completed two measures assessing how they would feel if they received sexual advances from a gay/lesbian person. One measure contained 31 items adapted from the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) and included 7 positive ("excited," "flattered,"  $\alpha = .82$ ) and 24 negative ("angry," "awkward,"  $\alpha = .94$ ) emotions. Responses were given on a 1 (*Very slightly*) to 5



(*Extremely*) scale. A second measure contained eight items assessing how they would respond if they were to be the recipient of sexual advances from a gay/lesbian person. Two items assessed discomfort with having to turn down the advances (“I would find turning a gay/lesbian person down for a date awkward,”  $\alpha = .72$ ). Two items assessed concerns about appearing prejudiced by turning down the advances (“If I refused to go on a date with a gay/lesbian person of my same gender, other people may assume that I dislike gay men and lesbians,”  $\alpha = .90$ ). Four items assessed whether being the target of sexual advances from a gay/lesbian individual would make others think the target was gay/lesbian as well (“If others saw a gay/lesbian person of my own gender hitting on me, they would probably assume I was gay/lesbian too,”  $\alpha = .89$ ). Responses were given on a 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*) scale.

**Fear of negative evaluation.** Fear of negative evaluation was assessed using the brief 12-item Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) scale (Leary, 1983; see Appendix E). This questionnaire measures participants’ concerns about being judged negatively (e.g., “I am frequently afraid of other people noticing my shortcomings,” “I am usually worried about what kind of impression I make,”  $\alpha = .90$ ). Responses were given on a 1 (*Not at all characteristic of me*) to 5 (*Extremely characteristic of me*) scale. Higher scores indicated higher fear of negative evaluation.

**Sexual advances from unattractive others.** Participants completed a questionnaire assessing how they might feel if they were approached by an unattractive member of the opposite sex (see Appendix F). Five items assessed their responses toward sexual advances from an unattractive person (“I would not like it if an unattractive person of the opposite sex tried to flirt with me,” “I would be uncomfortable having to deal with sexual advances from someone of

the opposite sex who I'm not attracted to,"  $\alpha = .78$ ). Responses were given on a 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*) scale.

## Results and Discussion

Replicating the pattern of results from Study 1a, contagion concerns were significantly correlated with fear of sexual advances ( $r = .71$ ), concerns about missing mating opportunities ( $r = .59$ ), concerns about being the target of prejudice ( $r = .51$ ), and ATLG scores ( $r = .54$ ), as well as fear of negative evaluation ( $r = .23$ ) and concerns about sexual advances from unattractive others ( $r = .30$ ), all  $p$ 's  $< .01$  (see Table 2 for correlation matrix). Additionally, fear of sexual advances from gay men/lesbians and concerns about sexual advances from unattractive others were significantly, but modestly correlated ( $r = .33, p < .01$ ), demonstrating that fear of sexual advances from gay men/lesbians is more than fear of sexual advances from an undesirable partner.

When contagion concerns were regressed onto the predictor variables, fear of sexual advances ( $B = 0.34, SE = 0.06, t(133) = 5.78, p < .001$ ), concerns about loss of potential partners ( $B = 0.18, SE = 0.07, t(133) = 2.83, p = .005$ , and own level of prejudice ( $B = 0.17, SE = 0.05, t(133) = 3.60, p < .001$ ) independently predicted contagion concerns, while fears about being the target of prejudice, FNE, and concerns about advances from unattractive others did not,  $p$ 's  $> .10$ .

To examine how people would react if they received sexual advances from a gay/lesbian individual, I first looked at the negative emotions they anticipated feeling. Using an exploratory factor analysis, I found that emotions related to anger/disgust loaded onto one factor (e.g., nauseated, irritated), emotions relating to awkwardness loaded onto a second factor (e.g., embarrassed, awkward) and emotions related to anxiety loaded on a third factor (e.g. nervous,

anxious). I then examined which of several potential factors were contributing to fear of sexual advances. I included three factors assessing emotions when receiving advances (anger/disgust, awkwardness, anxiety) as well as three factors assessing concerns when refusing advances (feeling discomfort, appearing prejudiced, being misidentified) in a model with fear of sexual advances as the dependent variable. Results showed that feeling awkward about receiving unwanted sexual advances significantly predicted fear of sexual advances ( $B = 0.78$ ,  $SE = 0.13$ ,  $t(136) = 6.15$ ,  $p < .001$ ). People who anticipated feeling more awkward being the target of sexual advances from a gay/lesbian individual also reported being more concerned about such an event occurring. All other factors were not significant predictors of sexual advances,  $p$ 's  $> .05$ .

Similarly to Study 1a, results from this study showed that fear of sexual advances is a significant predictor of contagion concerns, over and above concerns about loss of partners, concerns about being the target of prejudice, and own level of sexual prejudice, as well as fear of negative evaluation and concerns about advances from unattractive others. Results also showed that fear of sexual advances was not related to anticipating feeling angry or anxious when receiving sexual advances nor to concerns about feeling discomfort, appearing prejudiced, or being misidentified when turning down sexual advances from gay/lesbian people.

## CHAPTER 4

### STUDY 2

Studies 1a and 1b demonstrated that fear of sexual advances from gay men or lesbians is a strong and significant predictor of concerns about being misidentified as gay/lesbian. Study 1b also showed that these fears do not stem from anger or anxiety about receiving sexual advances or from discomfort from having to turn down sexual advances. I next wanted to examine why some heterosexuals are so concerned that they will be the target of sexual advances from gay men or lesbians if they were thought to be gay/lesbian. Given the relatively low numbers of gay/lesbian individuals in the population, it seems likely that the risk of becoming the target of sexual advances if misidentified is fairly low. Therefore, I hypothesized that some heterosexuals may overperceive sexual interest from gay/lesbian people and that these overperceptions may be feeding into fear of sexual advances. That is, some heterosexual individuals may think gay men or lesbians are sexually interested in them, even when they aren't, and this overperception is leading them to be especially wary of sexual advances from gay men or lesbians.

Specifically, I thought that trait contagion concerns would moderate overperceptions of sexual interest. Trait contagion concerns are participants' general, chronic concerns about being misidentified as gay/lesbian (as measured in Studies 1a and 1b). These concerns can be distinguished from state contagion concerns, which are people's immediate concerns that they may be misidentified as gay/lesbian in the current situation. People who are more worried about such misidentification in general (i.e., high trait contagion concerns) may perceive more sexual interest from gay/lesbian individuals, which may be related to increased fears of sexual advances and increased concerns about misidentification during interactions with gay/lesbian people (i.e., state contagion concerns).

In order to examine these issues, heterosexual participants who had been pre-screened for their trait contagion concerns were brought to the lab where they were told they would be interacting with another student. After making their own introductory video, they viewed a video ostensibly created in response by their partner for the upcoming interaction. In half of the videos, the partner was a same-sex gay/lesbian individual; in the other half, the partner was an opposite-sex heterosexual individual. After viewing the videos, the participants completed evaluations of their partner, including perceptions of their partner's sexual interest in them. They also completed several questions assessing how they felt about the upcoming interaction, including anxiety, desire to avoid the interaction, and concerns about being misidentified as gay/lesbian during the interaction

I predicted that heterosexual participants who were more worried about being misidentified as gay/lesbian in general (i.e., high trait contagion participants) would perceive more sexual interest from the gay/lesbian interaction partner than participants who were less worried about misidentification. However, trait contagion concerns should be unrelated to perceptions of sexual interest from a heterosexual interaction partner. Additionally, I expected that high trait contagion participants in the gay/lesbian (but not heterosexual) condition would report more concerns about sexual advances from their partner than low contagion participants. I also predicted that high contagion participants in the gay/lesbian condition would have increased concerns about misidentification during the upcoming interaction (i.e. state contagion concerns), would express more anxiety about the upcoming interaction, and would express more desire to avoid the interaction, than low contagion participants. Furthermore, I predicted that perceptions of partner sexual interest and fear of sexual advances would mediate the relationship between the partner sexual orientation X contagion concerns interaction and state contagion concerns. That is,

perceived sexual interest would mediate the relationship between the interaction term and fear of sexual advances; fear of sexual advance would, in turn, mediate the relationship between perceived sexual interest and state contagion concerns (see Figure 1).

## Method

### Participants

Participants were 75 heterosexual students (69.3% female; 20% Hispanic, 60% White nonHispanic, 12% Black nonHispanic; 4% more than one race;  $M_{age} = 20.17$ ,  $SD = 2.17$ ) who completed the study in partial fulfillment of a requirement for their introductory psychology course. Thirteen participants incorrectly identified or stated that they did not know the sexual orientation of their gay/lesbian interaction partner<sup>1</sup> and were excluded from subsequent analyses.<sup>2</sup> A power analysis using G\*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) for the main dependent variable of perceived sexual interest from interaction partner ( $R^2 = .22$ ) showed that obtained power was .68.

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<sup>1</sup> Participants unaware their partner was homosexual did not differ on level of prejudice, social anxiety, or sociosexuality from participants who knew their partner was gay/lesbian. They were significantly lower on trait contagion concerns, implying that people lower in contagion concerns may not even attend to others' sexual orientation as much as those higher in contagion concerns. Additionally, participants who were unaware of having a gay/lesbian partner did not significantly differ from participants with a heterosexual partner on the predictor variables.

<sup>2</sup> Sixteen participants stated they were unaware of the sexual orientation of their heterosexual partner. Even if unaware, they mostly assumed the partner was heterosexual, given that most of the general population is heterosexual. Additionally, they did not significantly differ from participants who knew their partner was heterosexual and were included in the analyses to maintain power.

## **Pretest Measures**

Before coming into the lab, participants completed a short pretest online. Included in the pretest were the general contagion concerns measure and a revised version of the sexual advances from unattractive others questionnaire from Study 1b. This revised questionnaire focused on reactions to advances from someone the participant was specifically not interested in, termed uninterested advances, (e.g., “I would not like it if a person of the opposite sex who I was not interested in tried to flirt with me,”  $\alpha = .83$ ), rather than just someone unattractive. Also included in the pretest were the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SAIS; Mattick & Clarke, 1998) and the revised version of the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI-R; Penke & Asendorpf, 2008) for potential exploratory analyses. The SAIS measures general fears about social interactions (e.g., “When mixing socially, I am uncomfortable,”  $\alpha = .92$ ). The SOI-R assesses an individual’s attitude toward, past experiences with, and desire for uncommitted sex (e.g., “I can imagine myself being comfortable and enjoying ‘casual’ sex with different partners,”  $\alpha = .89$ ). Pretests were completed at least 24 hours before the in-lab sessions.

## **Procedure and Materials**

For the in-lab component, participants came into the lab where they were told they were participating in a study about interactions. They were told that the purpose of the study is to examine the impact of knowing information about a person prior to having an interaction. Participants then created a video greeting that they thought would be sent to their interaction partner, who they were told was another student that they would be working with later in the lab. In the video, they provided a little information about themselves (e.g. major, year in school, hobbies; see Appendix G for questions they could use). Then, they were told the video was being watched by their partner, who had been asked to create a video in return. The partner’s video was

actually a scripted video created by either a male or female confederate. Each confederate created a version where s/he indicated being gay/lesbian and one where s/he indicated being a heterosexual by referring to the sex of a prior romantic partner (e.g., my ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend). Participants were randomly assigned to have a same-sex gay/lesbian or an opposite-sex heterosexual interaction partner. Therefore, participants either saw the video of a same-sex gay/lesbian partner or an opposite-sex heterosexual partner (see Appendix H for script). Other than partner sex and sexual orientation, all information provided by the confederates, as well as tone and length was the same for both conditions.

After watching their partner's video, participants were told that the partner was coming to their lab room for the interaction. Participants were then given a behavioral measure of avoidance via a chair placement task (see Goff, Steele, & Davies, 2008). In this task, the participants were asked to retrieve a chair from just outside the experiment room and place it in the room for their partner to use during the in-person interaction. This task is considered a behavioral measure of distancing or avoidance, such that participants who feel more psychologically distant from their partner will put the chair physically further away from themselves. After placing their partner's chair in the room, participants completed several questionnaires. While the participant was completing these questionnaires, the experimenter surreptitiously noted the chair's location using a coded measurement system, before leaving the room. Distance was noted in 6-inch increments.

**Partner evaluations.** Participants first evaluated their partner on a variety of qualities (e.g. friendly, interesting; see Appendix I). Included in the partner evaluations were four questions assessing perceptions of sexual interest (e.g., flirtatious, sexual). Responses were given on a 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*) scale. Participants also completed three items



assessing how interested in them the partner seemed (e.g., “How much do you think your partner is interested in dating you?”). Responses were given on a 1 (*Not all at*) to 7 (*Very much*) scale. Responses from the seven questions assessing partner sexual interest were averaged to create a perceptions of sexual interest score ( $\alpha = .79$ ). Additionally, seven of the positive evaluation items (e.g., friendly, interesting) were combined into a positive partner evaluation score ( $\alpha = .80$ ).

**Social interactions questionnaire.** Participants also completed a questionnaire assessing how they felt about the upcoming interaction and their concerns during the interaction (e.g., “I will enjoy interacting with this person,” “It would bother me if my interaction partner thought I was not smart,” see Appendix J). Four items assessed fear of sexual advances from their interaction partner (e.g., “I worry that my interaction partner will make sexual advances toward me,”  $\alpha = .83$ ). Three items assessed state contagion concerns (e.g., “I am concerned that my interaction partner will think that I am gay,” “If other people see me interacting with my interaction partner, I worry they will think I am gay,”  $\alpha = .85$ ). Four items assessed anxiety about the upcoming interaction (e.g., “I am nervous about interacting with this person,”  $\alpha = .87$ ) and four items assessed desire to avoid the interaction partner (e.g., “If given the option, I would avoid interacting with this person,”  $\alpha = .77$ ). Responses were given on a 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*) scale.

As an attention check, participants were then asked questions about their partner, including the partner’s sexual orientation (see Appendix K). Participants then completed the ALTG scale and demographic information. Participants were then told they were not actually having an interaction, debriefed on the true purpose of the study, thanked, and awarded credit for participating.

## Results

Because previous studies have found gender differences in perceptions of sexual interest from heterosexual opposite-sex others (i.e. males perceive more interest than females; Haselton, 2003; Koenig, Kirkpatrick, & Ketelaar, 2007; Perilloux, Easton, & Buss, 2012), it is possible that men may also perceive more sexual interest from gay men than women do from lesbians. In order to examine this possibility, first I conducted a *t*-test to determine if gender affects perceptions of sexual interest. Results showed that gender did not significantly affect perceptions of sexual interest,  $p = .18$ . Nevertheless, consistent with previous research, gender did have a significant effect on trait contagion concerns, with men ( $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = .19$ ) having higher contagion concerns than women ( $M = 2.55$ ,  $SD = .19$ ),  $t(52) = -3.06$ ,  $SE = .29$ ,  $p = .003$ . Additionally, gender had a significant effect on sociosexuality, with men ( $M = 4.93$ ,  $SD = 1.81$ ) having more unrestricted sociosexuality than women ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ ),  $t(51) = -1.79$ ,  $SE = .44$ ,  $p < .001$ . However, neither gender nor sociosexuality were significant predictors in any regression model and are thus excluded from subsequent analyses.

I then examined the correlations between general contagion concerns, perceptions of partner's sexual interest, state contagion concerns, fear of sexual advances from their partner, anxiety about the interaction, desire to avoid the interaction, ATLG scores, concerns about uninterested advances, social anxiety, and sociosexuality. See Table 3 for zero-order correlations. Consistent with the hypothesis that overperception of sexual interest was associated with fear of sexual advances from the interaction partner, the more participants perceived their partner was sexually interested in them, the more they reported fearing sexual advances from their partner. Additionally, the more participants feared sexual advances from their interaction partner, the more they were worried about being misidentified as gay/lesbian in general (trait

contagion concerns), and specifically about being misidentified during the interaction (state contagion concerns). More concerns about advances from the interaction partner were also associated with more concerns about advances from someone they weren't interested in. Finally, the more participants were worried about being misidentified as gay/lesbian in general, the more they desired to avoid their interaction partner and the higher they were in traditional sexual prejudice. Although these relationships were generally reasonable, the main focus of the present work was how the responses to the partner and upcoming interaction varied as a function of interaction partner condition and trait contagion concerns.

### **Regression Analyses**

For all regression analyses, partner sexual orientation, trait contagion concerns, and the interaction of partner sexual orientation and trait contagion concerns were included as the main predictor variables. Because I was interested in the implications of contagion concerns rather than people's general sexual prejudice, social anxiety, or tendency to dislike being flirted with by undesired others, ATLG, social anxiety, and uninterested advances were also included as control variables. Unless otherwise noted, ATLG, social anxiety, and uninterested advances had no effect on the dependent variables.

To determine if participants who are generally higher in contagion concerns overperceive sexual interest from gay/lesbian individuals compared to participants lower in contagion, perceptions of sexual interest was regressed onto the predictor and control variables. There was a significant main effect of partner sexual orientation on perceptions of sexual interest,  $B = 0.34$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ ,  $t(48) = 3.04$ ,  $p = .004$ , with greater perceived interest from heterosexual partners. Contagion concerns marginally predicted perceptions of sexual advances,  $B = 0.25$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ ,  $t(48) = 1.72$ ,  $p = .092$ , with higher contagion participants perceiving more sexual interest from

their partners. However, these main effects were qualified by a significant interaction between partner sexual orientation and contagion concerns,  $B = -0.26$ ,  $SE = 0.13$ ,  $t(48) = -2.10$ ,  $p = .042$ . To test the prediction that high contagion participants perceive more sexual interest than low contagion participants for gay/lesbian partners, but not heterosexual partners, I ran two simple slopes analyses examining contagion across the two partner conditions. When the interaction partner was gay/lesbian, contagion concerns significantly predicted perceptions of sexual interest,  $B = 0.51$ ,  $SE = 0.22$ ,  $t(48) = 2.34$ ,  $p = .024$ , such that participants higher in contagion concerns perceive more sexual interest from their gay/lesbian interaction partner than participants lower in contagion concerns (see Figure 2). However, when the interaction partner was heterosexual, contagion concerns did not predict perceptions of sexual interest,  $p = .918$ . I also examined the simple slopes for participants one standard deviation above and below the mean for trait contagion concerns. The simple slope for partner orientation was not significant for participants high in contagion,  $p = .588$ , meaning high contagion participants perceived equal amount of sexual interest from gay/lesbian and heterosexual interaction partners. Conversely, participants low in contagion perceived significantly more sexual interest from heterosexual partners than gay/lesbian partners,  $B = 0.61$ ,  $SE = 0.18$ ,  $t(48) = 3.42$ ,  $p = .001$ .

To determine if higher contagion participants, compared to lower contagion participants, would report more concerns about sexual advances from their gay/lesbian partners, fears of partner sexual advance was regressed onto the predictor and control variables. Counter to predictions, partner sexual orientation,  $p = .947$  and the interaction of sexual orientation and contagion concerns,  $p = .574$  did not predict fears of sexual advances. Contagion concerns were a significant predictor of fear of sexual advances, with those participants higher in contagion concerns being more worried about sexual advances from their interaction partner,  $B = 0.32$ ,  $SE =$

0.14,  $t(46)= 2.23$ ,  $p = .031$ . Concerns about advances from uninterested others also predicted fear of advances from the interaction partner,  $B= 0.26$ ,  $SE= 0.10$ ,  $t(46)= 2.60$ ,  $p = .012$ .

It was also expected that higher contagion participants in the gay/lesbian condition would have increased concerns about misidentification during the upcoming interaction (i.e. state contagion concerns) than lower contagion participants. Partner sexual orientation did not predict state contagion concerns,  $p = .554$ . Trait contagion concerns did predict state contagion concerns,  $B= 0.24$ ,  $SE= 0.12$ ,  $t(48)= 2.10$ ,  $p = .041$ , such that participants higher in trait contagion concerns were also higher in state contagion concerns. Importantly, this main effect was qualified by the interaction of contagion concerns and partner sexual orientation, which significantly predicted state contagion concerns,  $B= -0.21$ ,  $SE= 0.10$ ,  $t(48)= -2.10$ ,  $p = .041$ . Simple slopes analyses revealed that participants higher in trait contagion concerns also expressed greater concerns about being misidentified as gay during the interaction, than lower trait contagion participants, when paired with a gay/lesbian partner,  $B= 0.45$ ,  $SE= 0.17$ ,  $t(48)= 2.55$ ,  $p = .013$ , but not when paired with a heterosexual partner,  $p = .81$  (see Figure 3). Additionally, low contagion participants expressed similar amount of state contagion concerns, regardless of partner sexual orientation,  $p = .285$ , whereas high contagion participants expressed more state contagion toward the gay/lesbian interaction partner than the heterosexual partner,  $B = -0.27$ ,  $SE= 0.13$ ,  $t(48)= -2.07$ ,  $p = .044$ . Also, when fears of sexual advances from the partner were added to the model, they also significantly predicted state contagion concerns,  $B = 0.38$ ,  $SE=.11$ ,  $t(47)= 3.59$ ,  $p = .001$ .

I also tested whether higher contagion participants would have more anxiety about interacting with and higher desire to avoid the gay/lesbian partner, compared to lower contagion participants. Social anxiety was a significant predictor of anxiety about the interaction,  $B= 0.65$ ,

$SE= 0.17, t(48)= 3.77, p < .001$ , with those higher in social anxiety being more anxious about the interaction. Concerns about uninterested advances were also a significant predictor,  $B= 0.33, SE= 0.13, t(48)= 2.43, p = .019$ , with participants who were more concerned about advances from someone they were uninterested in also being more anxious about the interaction. The main effects of partner orientation ( $p = .46$ ) and trait contagion concerns were not significant ( $p = .149$ ) but the interaction between contagion concerns and partner sexual orientation was significant,  $B= -0.37, SE= 0.17, t(48)= -2.18, p = .035$ . Simple slopes analyses revealed that participants higher in trait contagion concerns also expressed more anxiety about the interaction, than lower trait contagion participants, when paired with a gay/lesbian partner,  $B= 0.65, SE= 0.30, t(48)= 2.22, p = .031$ , but not when paired with a heterosexual partner,  $p = .70$  (see Figure 4). Additionally, high contagion participants were equally anxious about interacting with the gay/lesbian and the heterosexual interaction partner,  $p = .25$ , while low contagion participants were marginally less anxious about interacting with the gay/lesbian partner,  $B= 0.49, SE= 0.24, t(48)= 2.00, p = .052$ .

For desire to avoid the interaction, contagion concerns significantly predicted desire to avoid,  $B= 0.44, SE= 0.16, t(48)= 2.73, p = .009$ , as did social anxiety,  $B= 0.32, SE= 0.14, t(48)= 2.25, p = .029$ . Furthermore, the interaction of contagion concerns and partner sexual orientation significantly predicted desire to avoid the interaction,  $B= -0.32, SE= 0.14, t(48)= -2.32, p = .025$  (see Figure 5). As with anxiety about the interaction, participants higher in contagion concerns wanted to avoid the interaction more than participants lower in contagion concerns when the partner was gay/lesbian,  $B= 0.76, SE= 0.24, t(48)= 3.14, p = .003$ , but not when the partner was heterosexual,  $p = .528$ . Also, high contagion participants were equally likely to want to avoid the gay/lesbian and the heterosexual interaction partner,  $p = .155$ , while low contagion participants

were marginally less likely to want to avoid the gay/lesbian partner than the heterosexual partner,  $B= 0.39$ ,  $SE= 0.20$ ,  $t(48)= 1.95$ ,  $p = .058$ .

I next examined whether participants who were higher in contagion would place the chair for their gay/lesbian partner physically farther away from them for the upcoming interaction than those lower in contagion concerns. However, results showed that neither partner sexual orientation, contagion concerns, or the interaction term predicted chair placement,  $p$ 's  $> .60$ . Own level of prejudice trended toward predicting chair distance,  $B= 4.47$ ,  $SE= 2.98$ ,  $t(46)= 1.51$ ,  $p = .14$ , with more prejudiced participants placing the chair farther away from themselves. Concerns about uninterested advances marginally predicted chair distance,  $B= 4.28$ ,  $SE= 2.24$ ,  $t(46)= 1.91$ ,  $p = .063$ , with those more concerned about uninterested advances placing the chair farther away from themselves.

Finally, in order to demonstrate that contagion and partner sexual orientation specifically affect perceptions of sexual advances, rather than just feeling less positive toward the partner, I regressed positive partner evaluations onto contagion concerns, partner sexual orientation, the interaction term, ATLG, and social anxiety. None of the predictor variables were significant predictors of positive partner evaluations,  $p$ 's  $> .18$ . Additionally, when including positive evaluations as an additional covariate in the model for predicting perceptions of sexual advances, positive evaluations did not predict perceptions of sexual advances,  $p = .18$ .

### **Mediation Analyses**

I predicted a two-step mediation model whereby the partner sexual orientation X contagion interaction predicted perceptions of sexual interest, which in turn predicted fears of sexual advances, which then predicted state contagion concerns (interaction term  $\rightarrow$  perceptions of sexual interest  $\rightarrow$  concerns about sexual advances  $\rightarrow$  state contagion concerns). Consistent

with this proposed model, in the regression analyses presented above, the interaction term did predict perceptions of sexual interest. Additionally, when included in the regression analysis for fear of sexual advances, perceptions of sexual interest predicted fear of sexual advances,  $B=0.52$ ,  $SE=0.14$ ,  $t(47)=3.77$ ,  $p < .001$ , with participants who perceived more sexual interest from their partner reporting greater concern about sexual advances from the partner. Providing support for the second part of the mediation model, when fears of sexual advances from the partner were added to the regression model for state contagion concerns, they significantly predicted state contagion concerns,  $B=0.38$ ,  $SE=0.11$ ,  $t(47)=3.59$ ,  $p = .001$ .

Even though the interaction of contagion concerns and partner sexual orientation did not predict fear of sexual advances from the partner, it is still possible for there to be indirect effects (see Hayes, 2009). Therefore I ran a mediation analysis using Hayes PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2012), examining the indirect effect of the partner sexual orientation X contagion interaction on state contagion concerns through perceptions of sexual interest and fear of sexual advances from the interaction partner, including ATLG and social anxiety as covariates. Consistent with mediation, perceptions of sexual interest significantly predicted fears of sexual advances, and fears of sexual advances significantly predicted state contagion concerns. Additionally, when perceptions of sexual interest and fears of sexual advances are included in the model, the interaction term only marginally predicted state contagion concerns,  $B= -0.28$ ,  $SE= 0.15$ ,  $t(44)= -1.92$ ,  $p = .061$ . The bootstrapping analysis indicated that perceptions of sexual interest and concerns about sexual advances mediated the direct effect of the interaction term on state contagion concerns, indirect effect =  $-0.08$ ,  $SE= 0.06$ , 95% CI  $[-.25, -.01]$ , while the indirect effect of either mediator alone was not significant (i.e. 95% CIs contain 0). Thus, high contagion participants with a gay/lesbian interaction partner perceive more sexual interest from their



partner and are thus more concerned about sexual advances during the interaction, which in turn leads to higher state contagion concerns (see Figure 6). Additionally, if the model is run with the mediators in reverse order (concerns about sexual advances → perceptions of sexual interest), the mediation pathway is not significant, indirect effect = 0.0001,  $SE = 0.02$ , 95% CI [-.04, .03].

As exploratory analyses, I also examined if perceptions of partner sexual interest and fear of sexual advances mediated the relationship between the interaction term and anxiety about the interaction or the relationship between the interaction term and desire to avoid the upcoming interaction. However, no mediation analysis for anxiety or avoidance was significant, with all 95% CIs containing 0.

## **Study 2 Discussion**

Studies 1a and 1b showed that fear of sexual advances was a significant predictor of contagion concerns. This study was designed to explore why some people appear to be so concerned about sexual advances from gay men and lesbians, considering this may be relatively unlikely to happen. I hypothesized that people who are particularly concerned about being misidentified as gay/lesbian may actually overperceive sexual interest from gay men or lesbians in ordinary interactions (i.e., perceive sexual interest when none is present) and that these overperceptions lead to fears of sexual advances. Essentially, high contagion people may assume that gay men or lesbians are sexually interested in them, even when they aren't, and this leads to them to be fearful of said sexual advances. Specifically, I thought that people who were relatively higher in trait contagion concerns, those chronically more worried about being misidentified as gay/lesbian, would be overly vigilant toward sexual interest from gay/lesbian individuals and would overperceive sexual interest.

Results showed that participants higher in trait contagion concerns perceived more partner sexual interest than participants lower in contagion concerns when their interaction partner was gay/lesbian, but not when their partner was heterosexual, supporting the main hypothesis. In fact, high contagion participants perceived similar amounts of sexual interest from both gay/lesbian and heterosexual partners. Considering the videos were scripted to be friendly but not overly flirtatious and made beforehand, any perception of sexual interest from the interaction partner could be considered overperception. In this case, it would be fair to say that, although all participants overperceive sexual interest from the heterosexual interaction partner, only high contagion participants overperceive sexual interest from gay/lesbian individuals.

As stated previously, the actual likelihood of a gay or lesbian individual making sexual advances toward a heterosexual person is unknown but likely uncommon. Given the amount of sexual prejudice that is still prevalent in our society, it is probable that gay and lesbian individuals would be very cautious in making sexual advances toward anyone they were not certain shared their orientation, lest they risk becoming the target of prejudice. Therefore, gay men and lesbians may be less likely than heterosexual individuals to make advances toward an individual of unknown sexual orientation. Additionally, the majority of the population is heterosexual and heterosexuality is perceived as the default sexual orientation (Berlant & Warner, 1998). Thus, even if the participants did not mention their sexual orientation in their introductory video, they could assume their interaction partner would think they are heterosexual. It would then be particularly risky for a gay/lesbian individual to show sexual interest in the partner they were going to interact with, given the interest would not likely be returned and may even be retaliated against. Therefore, any perceived sexual interest on the part of the participant is likely an over-, rather than accurate, perception.

Also, it was proposed that overperceptions of sexual interest would lead to more fears of sexual advances and increased state contagion concerns. Supporting the idea that overperceptions of sexual interest were strongly associated with fear of sexual advances, participants who perceived more sexual interest from their interaction partner also expressed more fear of sexual advances from their partner. Results for state contagion concerns also supported the idea that overperceptions of sexual interest result in higher state contagion concerns. High contagion participants with a gay/lesbian partner had significantly more concerns about being misidentified as gay/lesbian during the interaction than low contagion participants did.

Furthermore, the full mediation model showed that the indirect effect of the partner sexual orientation X contagion was mediated by perceptions of partner sexual interest and fear of sexual advances. That is, high contagion participants perceived more sexual interest from their gay/lesbian interaction partner than low contagion participant did, and such overperceptions were associated with more fear of sexual advances from the partner. These increased fears of sexual advances, in turn, were associated with more concerns about being misidentified as gay/lesbian during the interaction.

In addition to overperceiving sexual interest, being more fearful of sexual advances, and being more concerned about being misidentified as gay/lesbian during the interaction, it was also expected that high contagion participants with gay/lesbian partners would have more anxiety about and be more eager to avoid the interaction. Again, results supported these hypotheses. When paired with a gay/lesbian interaction partner, high contagion participants in the gay/lesbian condition reported significantly more anxiety about and desire to avoid the interaction than low contagion participants. However, neither of these effects was mediated by perceptions of sexual interest or fear of sexual advances.

Overall, the results provided support for the idea that participants who are relatively higher in trait contagion concerns overperceive sexual interest from gay/lesbian individuals. Additionally, this overperception likely leads to more fear of receiving sexual advances from the gay/lesbian person, which in turn result in increased concerns about being misidentified as gay/lesbian when interacting with their gay/lesbian partner.

## CHAPTER 5

### GENERAL DISCUSSION

Social contagion concerns, heterosexuals' concerns about being misidentified as a gay man or lesbian, can have many detrimental outcomes for intergroup relations, including anxious, avoidant, and unfriendly responses to intergroup interactions, public derogation of gay men and lesbians, and even unwillingness to intervene when a gay/lesbian individual is being bullied (Beck, Cascio, & Plant, 2017; Buck, Plant, Ratcliff, Zielaskowski, & Boerner, 2013; Plant, Zielaskowski, & Buck, 2014). Understanding what factors contribute to social contagion concerns may provide an effective way of combating these concerns.

The present work focused on one important factor associated with contagion concerns—fear of sexual advances from gay men or lesbians. For both nonstudent adult (Study 1a) and student (Study 1b) participants, fear of sexual advances was a significant predictor of contagion concerns, over and above other factors such as own level of prejudice. Additionally, fear of sexual advances by gay/lesbian people was not due to anticipating feeling angry or anxious when receiving sexual advances nor to concerns about feeling discomfort, appearing prejudiced, or being misidentified when turning down sexual advances from gay or lesbian people.

To better understand why some people may be particularly fearful of sexual advances from a gay/lesbian person, Study 2 focused on the overperception of sexual interest from gay men and lesbians as a possible reason. As suggested by error management and affordance management theories (Gibson, 1979; Haselton & Buss, 2000; Haselton & Nettle, 2006; McArthur & Baron, 1983; Neuberg, Kenrick, & Schaller, 2010, 2011), some heterosexual people may be particularly vigilant toward advances from gay men or lesbians. Results suggest that fear of sexual advances may be due, in part, to overperceptions of sexual interest from gay/lesbian

individuals. Specifically, participants who were relatively higher in general concerns about misidentification perceived more sexual interest from a gay/lesbian interaction partner than did participants lower in contagion concerns. These overperceptions of sexual interest were associated with increased fears of sexual advances during the interaction, which were related to increased state contagion concerns. This pattern of findings suggests that high contagion participants thought their gay/lesbian partner was more sexually interested in them, which led them to be more fearful of sexual advances from the partner. These fears of sexual advances led to more concerns about being misidentified as gay/lesbian during the interaction. Taken together, these findings indicate that fears of sexual advances contribute to contagion concerns and that these fears can be partially attributed to overperceptions of sexual interest from gay men or lesbians.

This work provides a better understanding of why some people may be concerned about sexual advances if misidentified as gay/lesbian and why some people are concerned about such misidentification more generally. Additionally, overperceptions of sexual interest may even partly explain why people fear sexual advances from gay/lesbian individuals (Pirlott & Neuberg, 2014), even when they aren't misidentified as gay/lesbian themselves. Indeed, perceptions of sexual interest and fear of sexual advances in Study 2 did not include misidentification as gay/lesbian in the items. That is, participants were asked how interested they thought their partner was them and how worried they were about sexual advances from the partner. Participants were not asked how interested would their partner be in them, if the partner thought they were gay/lesbian. Therefore, these results may generalize to a broader context of fear of sexual advances from gay men or lesbians, regardless of misidentification.

Furthermore, this work gives insight into additional pathways for reducing contagion concerns. Previous work (Cascio & Plant, 2016) has shown that decreasing concerns about being the target of prejudice, one factor contributing to contagion concerns, is an effective way of reducing contagion concerns and their associated negative consequences. Results from the current studies suggest that fear of sexual advances may be an important factor contributing to contagion concerns.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

This work was the first examining overperceptions of sexual interest and fear of sexual advances as related to contagion concerns. Thus, there are many possibilities for future research. First, Study 2 highlights some of the benefits associated with being low in contagion concerns. For example, participants who were lower in trait contagion concerns perceived significantly less sexual interest from the gay/lesbian interaction partner than from the heterosexual partner and were also less concerned about sexual advances in general, regardless of partner sexual orientation. These results suggest that low contagion people may be less worried about sexual advances from others and perceive sexual advances from gay men or lesbians as no more threatening than sexual advances from heterosexuals. Indeed, the affordance management perspective (Gibson, 1979; McArthur & Baron, 1983; Neuberg, Kenrick, & Schaller, 2010, 2011) states that people will pay more attention to threats and opportunities in their environments. If low contagion participants do not see sexual advances from gay/lesbian individuals as threat, it is logical that they would not attend to them. Additionally low contagion participants were not more concerned about being misidentified as gay/lesbian when interacting with a gay/lesbian partner than when interacting with a heterosexual partner. This implies that low contagion participants may be more comfortable with gay men and lesbians in general,

because they do not think associating with them will result in misidentification. Supporting this idea, low contagion participants were also marginally less anxious about interacting with and marginally less likely to want to avoid a gay/lesbian partner than a heterosexual partner. It is also possible that, even if they think misidentification may happen, low contagion participants are simply not bothered by this possibility. That is, even if someone else mistakenly thinks they are gay/lesbian, they are not threatened by the misclassification. Future research should explore whether low contagion people think misidentification is relatively unlikely to happen or whether they are not bothered by misidentification, even if it were to occur. It is also worth noting that participants who reported they did not know their gay/lesbian partner's sexual orientation were significantly lower on contagion concerns than participants who did notice their partner was gay/lesbian. It is possible then that sexual orientation is simply not important to low contagion individuals, and this is why they are not any more anxious about interacting with or avoidant of gay/lesbian individuals.

Given the benefits associated with being low in contagion concerns, it is also vital to find ways to decrease contagion concerns. This work highlights the importance of fear of sexual advances predicting general contagion concerns and overperceptions of sexual interest predicting fear of sexual advances. Therefore, targeting overperceptions of sexual interest or fear of sexual advances could be an effective way of reducing contagion concerns. There are many possible ways of doing this. For example, assuring people of the relative rarity of receiving sexual advances from a gay/lesbian individual may be enough to reduce overperceptions and fear of sexual advances. As I argued previously, it seems unlikely, though not impossible, that gay/lesbian people would take on the associated risks to make sexual advances toward someone, if they were not sure that person shared their sexual orientation. Thus, simply making this clear



to people may help reduce overperceptions or fears of sexual advances, which may lead to decreased concerns about interacting with a gay/lesbian person. Another theoretically reasonable route to reduce fear of sexual advances would be to decrease people's perceptions that receiving sexual advances would lead to misidentification as gay/lesbian. If people think they are unlikely to be misidentified as gay/lesbian, even if they do receive advances from a gay/lesbian person, then they be less worried about misidentification during the interaction. Therefore, exposing heterosexual people to experiences where they receive advances but are not misidentified or examples from others who were not misidentified after receiving sexual advances may effectively reduce fear of sexual advances and contagion concerns.

Additionally, Study 1b showed that feeling awkward when receiving sexual advances from gay/lesbian individuals significantly predicted fear of sexual advances. It may be possible then to target this awkward feeling as a way of reducing fear of sexual advances and contagion concerns more generally. Although people may not enjoy receiving sexual advances from a gay man or lesbian, these advances do not necessarily have to be viewed negatively. For example, perhaps sexual advances from gay/lesbians could be reframed as complimentary, rather than uncomfortable (see Olatunji, Cisler, & Deacon, 2010, for meta-analysis of reframing on anxiety). It may also be possible for people to learn to ignore or deal these advances in a positive way rather than react negatively toward them, either through repeated exposure or modeling of appropriate responses. More research will be needed to explore these possibilities.

The current research showed many significant interaction effects for partner sexual orientation and trait contagion concerns, despite being underpowered. Although usually lack of power should lead to missing real effects, it is also possible that being underpowered could lead to finding effects that aren't real, due to something unusual about the small sample available, or

finding effects that are overinflated (Button et al., 2013). Therefore, it will be important to continue running participants to obtain a fully powered study to ensure that the obtained effects were both robust and real. Additionally, there were some effects that were marginal which may become significant when fully powered, strengthening the overall work.

It is also worth noting the interaction of partner sexual orientation and trait contagion concerns significantly affected perceptions of partner sexual interest, even though the manipulation of partner sexual orientation was fairly subtle. The partner script contained only one sentence that mentioned an ex-boyfriend or girlfriend. As a result, some participants were not aware when the partner was gay/lesbian. Future work should focus on using a stronger manipulation, such as mentioning being part of an LGBT group or even filling out a survey where sexual orientation is directly stated, so that all participants are explicitly aware of partner sexual orientation, to replicate or even strengthen the present findings.

Another limitation of Study 2 is that the sample was comprised of mostly-female college students. Because this is an important time period for finding a partner and forming a long-term relationship, it is possible that adolescents and young adults are more likely to overperceive sexual interest from others than older adults in presumably more settled relationships. Although results from Study 1a demonstrate that fear of sexual advances predicts contagion concerns in a non-student adult sample, it would be beneficial to show in other samples, that this effect is associated with overperception of sexual interest. Additionally, gender differences were not found in Study 2 for the main dependent variables. Male participants, though, were higher in trait contagion concerns than female participants, the typical pattern for contagion concerns (Buck et al., 2013). It is possible then that male participants may actually have increased perceptions of sexual interest and fear of sexual advances and that having a mostly-female sample did not allow

for enough power to observe these effects. Additional studies run with equal numbers of male and female participants would help to further clarify this possibility.

Although internally sound, the procedure for Study 2 was somewhat complex and unrealistic in nature. It seems unlikely that someone will create and exchange introductory videos before having an interaction. Therefore, findings may not generalize as well to ordinary interactions. For example, partner sexual orientation was made salient directly before having the interaction. This may have implicitly primed participants for thinking about sexual interest or have alerted them to be extra-vigilant toward sexual advances, then resulting in increased perceptions of sexual interest. It would be useful to examine interactions where sexual orientation was not revealed until further into the interaction or mentioned more organically to see if high contagion participants still more perceive sexual interest from their partner.

While the partner sexual orientation X contagion interaction did predict many of the expected outcomes, it did not predict the behavioral measure of avoidance- distance on the chair placement task. Fear of sexual advances also did not predict chair distance. It may be that the size or set-up of the room simply did not allow for enough variability in chair placement, although the mean and standard deviation of the distance measure suggest a fair amount of variability ( $M = 56.80$  inches,  $SD = 17.59$ ). However, chair placement may be better considered a measure of psychological distance, rather than avoidance. Although psychological distance is related to prejudice (Goff et al., 2008), it is perhaps unrelated to contagion concerns. People could be very concerned about being misidentified as gay/lesbian even if they don't hold negative attitudes toward gay men or lesbians themselves. The fact that ATLG marginally predicted chair distance also supports this interpretation. Social anxiety also marginally predicted chair placement. Thus, there may be other additional variables that affect chair placement not

measured in this study, such as personal space preferences or even stereotype threat (Goff et al., 2008).

Future studies should focus on using different behavioral measures to show that contagion concerns and fear of sexual advances affect avoidance. For example, participants could be given the option of not having the interaction to see if these factors predict actual opting out of the interaction. In future work, it will also be important to explore how overperceptions of sexual interest or fears of sexual advances affect other sorts of behavioral responses, such as actual behavior during an interaction with a gay/lesbian partner or actual responses to receiving sexual advances. For instance, after a brief in-person meeting with their partner, participants would watch the partner video first and then make their video in response to see if they overperceive unsolicited sexual interest from the gay/lesbian partner and if that affects how they respond to the partner in their own videos.

Finally, my predictions were based on the idea that contagion concerns were due to fear of sexual advances, which in turn were the result of overperceptions of sexual interest from gay/lesbian people. Indeed, I found that (over)perception of sexual interest from the gay/lesbian partner was associated with state contagion concerns, via increased fear of sexual advances, but only for people who were naturally higher in trait contagion concerns. This still does not answer the causal question of whether perceptions of sexual interest led to higher contagion concerns initially. Although both logically reasonable and consistent with the demonstrated mediation model, it would be necessary to actually manipulate sexual interest from the gay/lesbian partner to show that these concerns are causing increased fear of sexual advances and contagion concerns. For example, a study where sexual interest is manipulated by having some of the

gay/lesbian partners overtly flirt with the participants in their videos would provide much stronger evidence for the expected causal relationship.

### **Conclusions**

In order to combat social contagion concerns, more must be learned about factors contributing to contagion concerns. The current work focused on one particularly important factor, fear of sexual advances from gay men or lesbians. Fear of sexual advances predicted contagion concerns, over and above other related factors. Additionally, fear of sexual advances was shown to stem, in part, from overperceptions of sexual interest from gay men or lesbians. Thus this work provided a better understanding of where fear of sexual advances from gay/lesbian individuals comes from and how it contributes to contagion concerns. If overperceptions of sexual interest or fears of sexual advances could be reduced or eliminated, this should also reduce concerns about misidentification. In turn, this could decrease the negative effects of contagion concerns, such as anxiety about interacting with and desire to avoid gay men and lesbians, ultimately leading to better contact between heterosexuals and gay men and lesbians.

## APPENDIX A

### IMPLICATIONS OF MISIDENTIFICATION

For the following questions, please indicate how much you agree with the following statements. Your answers will be completely confidential. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. For us to learn anything, it is important that you respond openly and honestly to all questions.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree						Strongly agree

#### Fear being target of prejudice from others

1. I would worry people would treat me negatively if they thought I was gay/lesbian.
2. If I were to be misidentified as gay/lesbian, I would be concerned about becoming the target of prejudice and discrimination.
3. I would be insulted or harassed if people mistakenly thought I was gay/lesbian.
4. Other people would treat me badly if they thought I was gay/lesbian.
5. I would worry about being the target of aggression or violence, if I was mistaken as gay/lesbian.

#### Fear of sexual advances

1. If people mistakenly thought I was gay, I worry that they would make sexual advances toward me.
2. I would be concerned that gay/lesbian people would hit on me if they thought I was gay/lesbian.
3. If I were perceived as gay/lesbian, gay/lesbian people would try to flirt with me.

#### Fear of losing out on romantic/sexual partners

1. I would be concerned about being misidentified as gay/lesbian, because it would interfere with me finding a romantic partner.
2. I worry that I would not be able to find a heterosexual romantic partner if I people thought I was gay/lesbian.
3. It would bother me if I lost out on potential mates because people misidentified me as gay/lesbian.
4. If men/women thought I was gay/lesbian, they would not be willing to date me.

## APPENDIX B

### SOCIAL CONTAGION QUESTIONNAIRE GENERAL

#### Contagion Concern Items

1. If I were hanging out with a homosexual, I would worry that other people would think I was a homosexual, too.
2. If I were to become friends with a gay or lesbian person of my own gender, I would be concerned that he or she might think I was homosexual too.
3. If I went out to dinner with a gay/lesbian person of my same gender, I would worry that people would think we were on a date.
4. It would bother me if other people mistakenly thought I was a homosexual.
5. I would worry that others would think I was a homosexual if they knew I was friends with a homosexual person.
6. If I were friendly toward a homosexual person of my same gender, he or she would likely mistake my friendliness for flirtation.
7. If I had to interact with a homosexual person of my same gender, I would worry that he or she would flirt with me.
8. It wouldn't bother me if a gay person thought I was gay too. (reverse)
9. If I had a gay or lesbian friend, I would not be concerned that other people would think I was gay. (reverse)
10. If I was working closely with a same-sex gay or lesbian person, I would want him or her to know that I was straight.

## APPENDIX C

### PARTNER INTRODUCTION VIDEO SCRIPT

Hi, thanks for sending your video along. I'm looking forward to meeting you. Let's see- My name is **Jeremy/Kate**. I'm from Orlando, Florida and I'm a sophomore majoring in business. I picked business because I think it's really interesting and I want to get my MBA someday.

During my free time, I enjoy going to the movies and spending time with my friends. I used to go the cheap movie theater with my **ex-girlfriend/boyfriend** all the time; **she/he** is actually the one who really got me into movies. I also like to play soccer on the weekends and I try to go home and visit my family as much as I can. I came to FSU because I knew I wanted to stay close to home and go to school in-state and FSU was by far the best school that I toured my senior year of high school and it seemed like it had the most to offer me. My biggest challenge at FSU is the parking! It's crazy how long it takes to find a spot. I'd like to say that I am a pretty outgoing, approachable person, but that I can have my shy moments. I'm pretty motivated as a student but I like to go out and have fun with my friends. I've got a pretty good group of friends that I've been hanging out with a lot lately. Um, I think that's it, see you soon.



## APPENDIX D

### PARTNER EVALUATION FORM

We want to get a sense of how you feel about your partner before having an interaction. Please rate your agreement with these statements. My interaction partner seems.....

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
_____ 1.							
_____ 2.							
_____ 3.							
_____ 4.							
_____ 5.							
_____ 6.							
_____ 7.							
_____ 8.							
_____ 9.							
_____ 10.							
_____ 11.							
_____ 12.							
_____ 13.							
_____ 14.							
_____ 15.							
_____ 16.							
_____ 17.							
_____ 18.							
_____ 19.							
_____ 20.							
_____ 21.							

Please answer the following questions. How much do you think your partner is interested in....

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Very much

- 1. Interacting with you?
- 2. Hanging out with you?
- 3. Becoming your friend?
- 4. Hitting on you?
- 5. Going out with you?
- 6. Dating you?
  
- 7. How attractive do you think your partner is, objectively?
- 8. How attracted are you to your partner?

## APPENDIX E

### SOCIAL INTERACTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Male Version: The following set of questions asks about your upcoming interaction. Your answers will be completely confidential. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. For us to learn anything, it is important that you respond openly and honestly to all questions. Please give your response according to the scale provided with each item.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7  
Strongly                                                                                                                                                    Strongly  
disagree                                                                                                                                                    agree

1. I wish I did not have to interact with this person.
2. I expect to feel awkward when interacting with my interaction partner.
3. I worry that my interaction partner will make sexual advances toward me.
4. I am happy about interacting with this person.
5. I am concerned that my interaction partner will flirt with me.
6. I would not mind if my partner thought I was mean.
7. I am concerned that my interaction partner will think that I am gay/lesbian.
8. I would not mind if my partner thought I was dumb.
9. I am anxious about this interaction.
10. If given the option, I would avoid interacting with this person.
11. If I became friends with my interaction partner, I would worry that he or she would think I am gay/lesbian.
12. I am uncomfortable about interacting with my interaction partner.
13. It would bother me if my interaction partner thought I was not smart.
14. If other people see me interacting with my interaction partner, I worry they will think I am gay/lesbian.
15. I will enjoy interacting with this person.
16. If other people see me interaction with my interaction partner, I would worry other people would assume I was incompetent.
17. I want to make it clear to my interaction partner that I am smart.
18. I worry that my interaction partner will think of me in a sexual way.
19. I am worried my interaction partner will think I'm disagreeable.
20. I want to make it clear to my interaction partner that I am not gay/lesbian.
21. I am nervous about interacting with this person.
22. It would bother me if my interaction partner mistakenly thought I was not kind.
23. I am worried that my interaction partner will view friendliness on my part as a sexual advance.
24. If I saw my interaction partner on campus, I would avoid him or her.
25. I am looking forward to interacting with my interaction partner.
26. I want my interaction partner to know I am friendly.
27. I would not mind hanging out with my interaction partner outside of this study.

## APPENDIX F

### TABLES

Table 1

*Correlation Matrix for Study 1a*

	1	2	3	4	5
(1) Contagion concerns ( <i>M</i> = 3.32, <i>SD</i> = 1.56)	--	.76**	.63**	.59**	.70**
(2) Fear of Sexual Advances ( <i>M</i> = 3.67, <i>SD</i> = 1.83)		--	.79**	.70**	.45**
(3) Fear of Losing Out on Partners ( <i>M</i> = 3.93, <i>SD</i> = 1.72)			--	.61**	.37**
(4) Fear of Targeted for Prejudice ( <i>M</i> = 3.74, <i>SD</i> = 1.63)				--	.32**
(5) ATLG ( <i>M</i> = 3.33, <i>SD</i> = 2.27)					--

\*\**p* < .01

Table 2

*Correlation Matrix for Study 1b*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(1) Contagion concerns ( <i>M</i> = 3.32, <i>SD</i> = 1.23)	--	.71**	.59**	.51**	.54**	.23**	.30**
(2) Fear of Sexual Advances ( <i>M</i> = 4.21, <i>SD</i> = 1.51)		--	.52**	.45**	.49**	.17*	.33**
(3) Fear of Losing Out on Partners ( <i>M</i> = 4.39, <i>SD</i> = 1.37)			--	.59**	.36**	.31**	.27**
(4) Fear of Targeted for Prejudice ( <i>M</i> = 3.58, <i>SD</i> = 1.28)				--	.37**	.27**	.20*
(5) ATLG ( <i>M</i> = 3.00, <i>SD</i> = 1.70)					--	.06	-.03
(6) FNE ( <i>M</i> = 3.29, <i>SD</i> = 0.83)						--	.22**
(7) Unattractive Others ( <i>M</i> = 3.60, <i>SD</i> = 1.19)							--

\**p* < .05\*\**p* < .01

Table 3

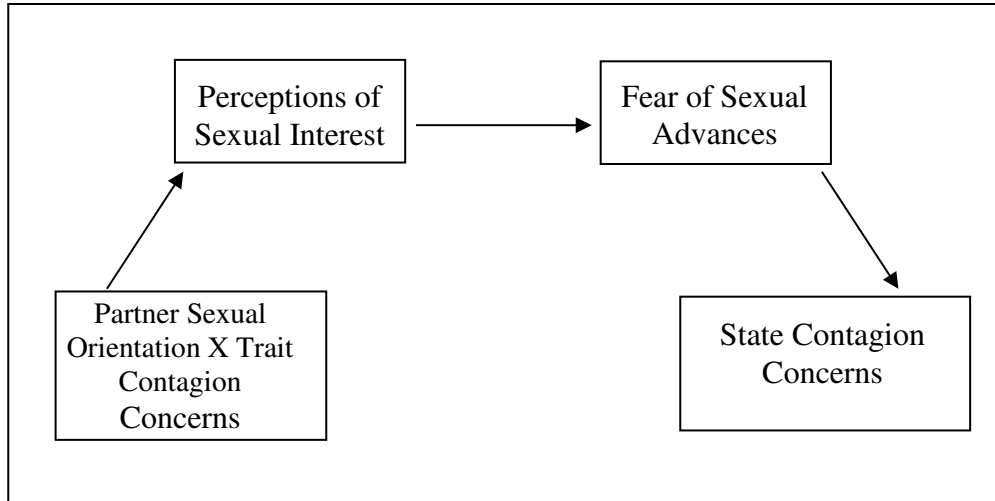
*Correlation Matrix for Study 2*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
(1) Trait Contagion ( <i>M</i> = 2.88, <i>SD</i> =1.11)	--	.05	.20	.31*	.08	.33*	.47**	.11	.12	.07
(2) Perceptions of Sexual Interest ( <i>M</i> = 2.27, <i>SD</i> = 0.85)		--	.17	.41**	-.05	.13	.005	-.05	-.05	.08
(3) State Contagion ( <i>M</i> = 1.47, <i>SD</i> = 0.62)			--	.43**	-.01	.19	-.09	-.03	.17	.13
(4) Fear of Sexual Advances ( <i>M</i> = 1.88, <i>SD</i> = 0.84)				--	.12	.15	.09	.35*	.10	-.07
(5) Anxiety about Interaction ( <i>M</i> = 3.46, <i>SD</i> = 1.30)					--	.46**	-.11	.26	.54**	-.22
(6) Avoidance of Interaction ( <i>M</i> = 2.78, <i>SD</i> =0.98)						--	.10	.18	.36**	-.07
(7) ATLG ( <i>M</i> =2.65, <i>SD</i> = 1.49)							--	.21	-.24	-.12
(8) Uninterested Advances ( <i>M</i> = 3.62, <i>SD</i> = 1.21)								--	.11	-.45**
(9) SAIS ( <i>M</i> = 2.61, <i>SD</i> = 0.73)									--	-.34*
(10) SOI ( <i>M</i> = 3.79, <i>SD</i> = 1.76)										--

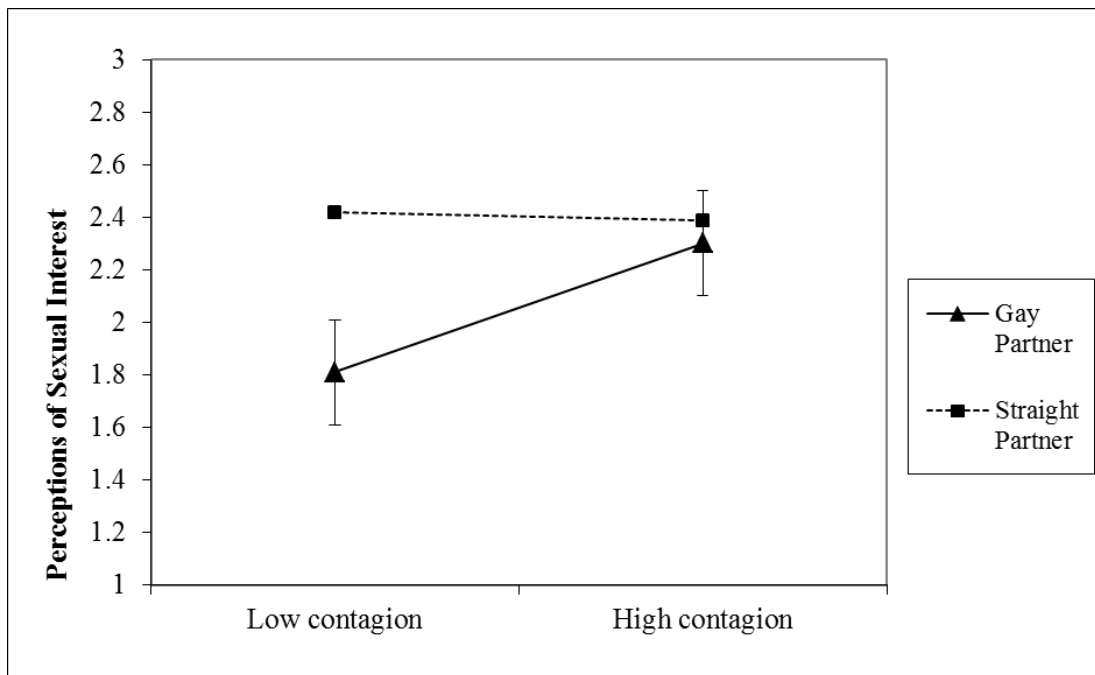
\**p* < .05                      \*\**p* < .01

## APPENDIX G

### FIGURES



*Figure 1.* Proposed mediation model of the effect of the partner sexual orientation X trait contagion interaction on state contagion concerns through perceptions of sexual interest and fears of sexual advances.



*Figure 2.* Perceptions of sexual interest as a function of partner sexual orientation and trait contagion concerns.

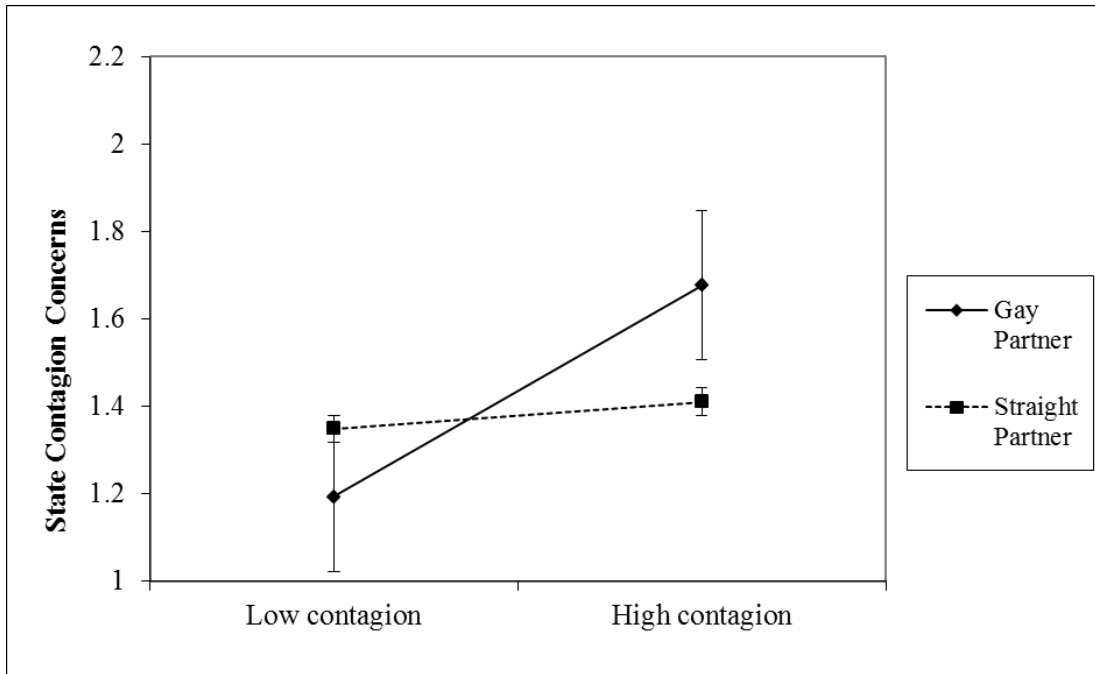


Figure 3. State contagion concerns as a function of partner sexual orientation and trait contagion concerns.

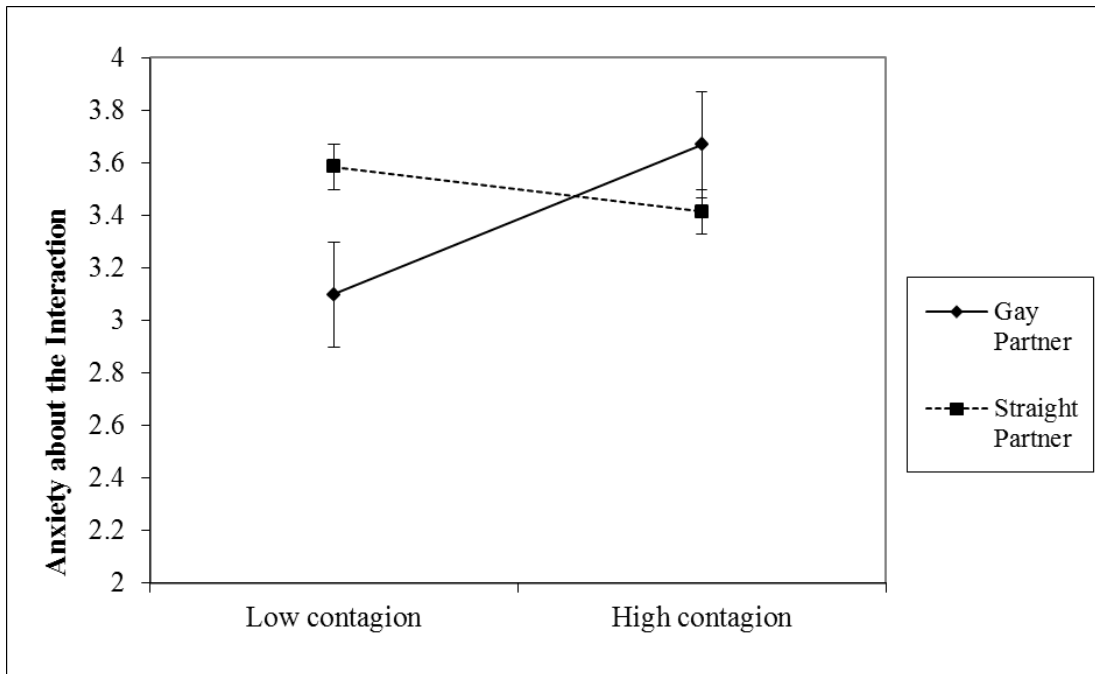


Figure 4. Anxiety about the interaction as a function of partner sexual orientation and trait contagion concerns.



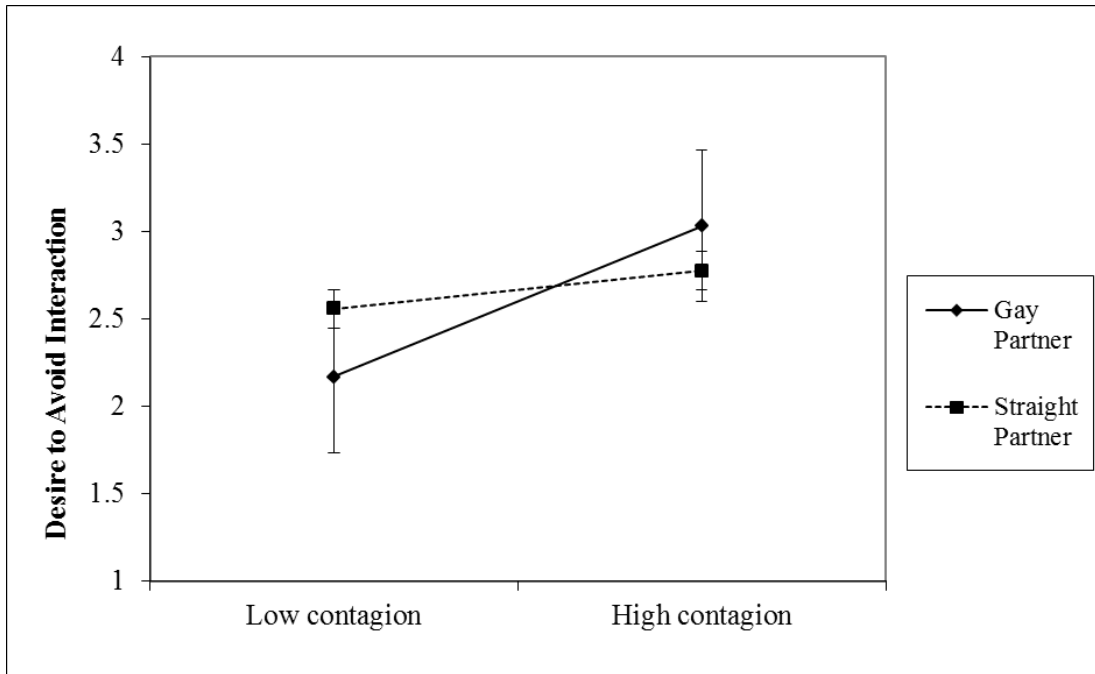


Figure 5. Desire to avoid the interaction as a function of partner sexual orientation and trait contagion concerns.

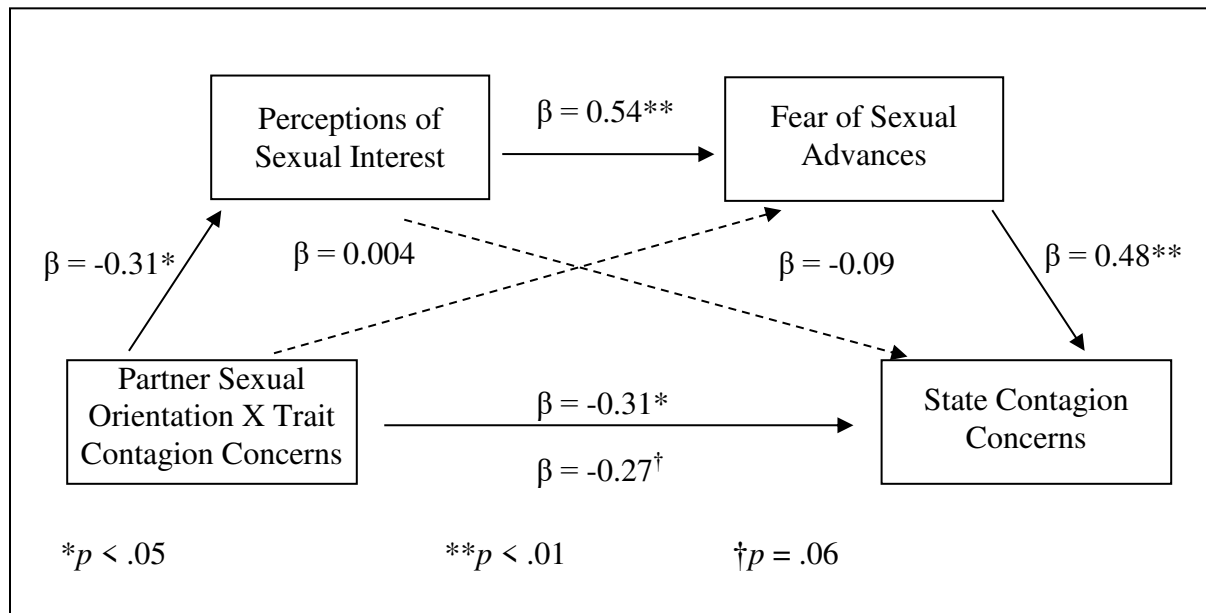


Figure 6. Mediation model showing the indirect effect of the partner sexual orientation X trait contagion interaction on state contagion concerns through perceptions of sexual interest and fears of sexual advances.

**APPENDIX H**  
**IRB APPROVAL LETTER**

The Florida State University  
Office of the Vice President For Research  
Human Subjects Committee  
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742  
(850) 644-8673, FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 2/10/2017

To: Jessica Cascio [XXX@XXX]

Address: XXX  
Dept.: PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research  
Concerns about Misidentification and Sexual Advances

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the research proposal referenced above has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Committee at its meeting on 02/08/2017. Your project was approved by the Committee.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 2/7/2018 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition,

federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is FWA00000168/IRB number IRB00000446.

Cc: **Ashby Plant, Advisor**  
HSC No. **2017.20329**

# APPENDIX I

## APPROVED CONSENT FORM

### Consent Form

I freely and voluntarily and without element of force or coercion, consent to be a participant in the research project entitled "Impressions of Others." This research is being conducted by Jessica Cascio, psychology graduate student, under the supervision of Ashby Plant, Professor of Psychology at Florida State University. I understand the purpose of his research is to better understand the way people form impressions of other people. I understand that if I participate in the project, I may be asked to evaluate people who differ from me in their social group membership (i.e., age, racial group, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, national origin). Additionally, I will be may be creating about myself or viewing a video of another individual, or hearing stories from other individuals. In addition, I will report my attitudes and beliefs about different social issues and groups. The total time commitment will be about 30 minutes and I will be compensated by receiving a ½ research credit for my time.

I understand that my participation is totally voluntary and I may stop participation at any time. If I decide to stop participation, I will still be entitled to the credit. At all times my responses will remain confidential to the extent allowed by law. Although my name is recorded on this informed consent form and the website under which I signed up for this experiment, neither of these will be linked to my responses keeping them anonymous. Also, no individual responses will be reported. Only group findings will be reported. The data will be stored in A306, which is a locked room in the new psychology building. I understand there is minimal level of risk involved with participating in this research project. I understand there are benefits for participating in this research project. I will be providing researchers with valuable insight into people's perceptions of others. I understand that this consent may be withdrawn at any time without prejudice, penalty, or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I have been given the right to ask and have answered any inquiry concerning the study.

Questions, if any, have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I may contact Jessica Cascio, Florida State University, Department of Psychology PDB [REDACTED], or at [REDACTED] or Dr. Ashby Plant, Florida State University, PDB [REDACTED], or at [REDACTED] for answers to questions about this research or my rights. Group results will be sent to me upon my request. If I have questions about my rights as a participant in this research, or if I feel I have been placed at risk, I can contact the Chair of Human Subjects Committee, Institutional Review Board, through the Office of the Vice President for Research, at (850) 644-8633 or at [humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu](mailto:humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu). I have read and understand this consent form

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Printed Name

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Signature

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Date

FSU Human Subjects Committee approved on 02/09/2017, void after 02/07/2018. HSC #2017.20329

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## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Jessica Cascio received her B.S. in Psychology in 2008 from Lamar University, her M.S. in Industrial/Organizational Psychology in 2010 from Lamar University, and her M.S. in Social Psychology in 2014 from Florida State University. She enrolled in the Social Psychology doctoral program at Florida State University in fall 2011. Her advisor is Dr. E. Ashby Plant and her work focuses on how concerns about social judgment affect individuals' personal attitudes, behaviors, and values in the prejudice and morality domains.