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The Impact of "Media Contact" on Attitudes Toward Gay Men

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ABSTRACT. In order to understand better the relation between "media contact" and attitudes, college students were asked to view a documentary film depicting events surrounding the life and death of a prominent gay politician. The participants completed the Attitudes Toward Homosexuals Scale during screening sessions and either prior to or after viewing the documentary. The film had a significant and positive effect on attitudes. In addition, data on the mood of the subjects were collected and analyzed in light of Devine's (1989) model of prejudice. The findings suggest possible extensions for Devine's model. [Article copies available from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: getinfo@haworth.com]
At the level of theory, Gordon Allport's (1954) contact theory remains popular with social psychologists as a framework for explaining how negative stereotypes that lead to prejudice and discrimination may be reduced. Allport suggested that close contact involving cooperative interdependence and participants of equal status can correct inaccurate information contributing to negative stereotypes, thereby decreasing prejudice. Since Allport's original work, a great deal has been learned about stereotyping (for discussions, see Hamilton, 1981; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986). In a discussion of a recent gender discrimination case argued before the Supreme Court (Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins, 109 S.Ct. 1775, 1989), Fiske et al. (1991) noted that social scientists "have contributed significantly to an understanding of the nature and operation of stereotypes." Fiske et al. suggest that research in three areas has been especially successful. These areas are (a) the nature of categorization processes (e.g., for several discussions, see Srull & Wyer, 1988), (b) the conditions that encourage the development of stereotypes (e.g., Fiske et al., 1987; also see Fiske & Neuberg, 1990), and (c) the role that stereotypes play in evaluations and causal explanations (e.g., Taylor & Falcone, 1982; Deaux & Lewis, 1984). Despite these "successes," Fiske et al. conclude their discussion of stereotyping research by noting that efforts designed to discourage and/or dispel stereotyping and its effects have been less well researched at the empirical level.

The current study was designed, in part, to address the question of whether and how one type of contact—"media contact"—reduces prejudice by looking at attitudes toward homosexuals. The extension of Allport's work (and the numerous others who have followed) to "contact" through the media seems to be not only timely, but also an obvious experimental step in our media-dominated information society. The effects of media on attitudes towards everything from detergent to public policy have been demonstrated in various ways by a plethora of researchers. Many researchers have argued that the media plays a central role in the development and maintenance of stereotypes and prejudice through stereotypic portrayals of minority group members (e.g., Klapper, 1960; Hearold, 1986). Other researchers have found that indirect contact through the media can have a positive impact on prejudice (e.g., Ball-Rokeach & Rokeach, 1984; Donovan & Leivers, 1993).1

In addition, the current study represents an effort to understand the affective and cognitive mechanisms that are associated with increasing tolerance and acceptance. Patricia Devine's recent model (Devine, 1989) relating affect and level of prejudice provides a useful framework for doing this.
ATTITUDES TOWARD GAYS AND LESBIANS

Considerable research suggests that the majority of Americans are socialized to hold negative stereotypes about gay men and lesbians (Herek, 1984). In addition, research studies indicate that the overwhelming majority of media portrayals of lesbians and gay men are negative (e.g., Hallett & Cannella, 1994) and contribute to negative stereotyping. However, research on attitudes toward homosexuals does indicate that prior contact with gays and lesbians is associated with less prejudice toward that group (e.g., Herek, 1984; Ellis & Vasseur, 1993) and helps to mitigate the effects of negative stereotypes. For the most part, however, these studies have been correlational and it remains unclear as to whether contact with gays and lesbians results in less prejudice or that less prejudiced individuals are more likely to have contact with gays and lesbians.

In one recent attempt to address this question, Ellis (1993) found that individuals who first contemplated a scenario in which a close friend or relative came to them and told them that he was gay responded with less prejudice on an attitude questionnaire than did individuals who did not first contemplate such a scenario. This finding suggests that anticipating contact with a gay male who is already a significant part of one’s life may reduce prejudice. In addition, this finding provides empirical support for the hypothesis that certain types of contact other than “direct” contact may reduce prejudice, regardless of previous contact with gays.

Devine (1989) posits a model of prejudice in which the adoption of nonprejudiced beliefs (greater tolerance and acceptance) does not immediately eliminate prejudice-like responses. Devine suggests that stereotyped cognitions, beliefs, and feelings that are in conflict with recently endorsed nonprejudiced beliefs may still be activated. That is, prejudiced beliefs and feelings may coexist with nonprejudiced thoughts within the same person and the model would suggest that newly acquired nonprejudiced beliefs may lead to considerable conflict within the individual.

In addition, the model assumes that due to common socialization experiences, high- and low-prejudice individuals share similar knowledge regarding group stereotypes. In discussing the model, Devine (1989) states that “whereas high-prejudice persons are likely to have personal beliefs that overlap substantially with the cultural stereotype, low-prejudice persons have decided that the stereotype is an inappropriate basis for behavior or evaluation and experience a conflict between the automatically activated stereotype and their personal beliefs” (p. 6). Furthermore, Devine et al. (1991) stated that “the change from prejudice to non-prejudice is not viewed as an all-or-none event but as a process during which the low
prejudiced person is especially vulnerable to conflict between his or her enduring negative responses and endorsed nonprejudiced beliefs” (p. 515).

Thus, consistent with the assumptions of Devine’s model, it is probable that attitudes held by college students about gay men and lesbians will either be consistent with the cultural stereotype or newly in conflict with that stereotype. Devine’s model would suggest that individuals who are less prejudiced would experience greater emotional intensity, reported as negative feelings about the self (or “compunction”) in response to a “contact” experience. As Devine (1989) and others (Ehrlich, 1973; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986) have noted, overcoming a lifetime of socialization experiences that encourage prejudice is a difficult task involving considerable internal conflict for those attempting to do so. High prejudice individuals, on the other hand, should report more emotional intensity as negative feelings toward others, reflecting their discomfort with an external stimuli.

The study also represented an exploratory attempt to understand how a “media contact” experience affects one’s level of prejudice. A meta-analysis of the effects of television showed that stereotyping had larger effects than anti-stereotyping messages (Hearold, 1986). However, the power of images are such that they “can penetrate even where people have consciously critical views toward the implicit assertion television is making . . . especially where they have little personal experience” (Entman, in press; see also Philo, 1990). Festinger and Maccoby’s (1964) classic distraction-persuasion study, combined with more recent work on the media and interference in information processing (e.g., Milburn & McGrail, 1992; Riggle et al., 1990), would suggest that both high- and low-prejudice persons could experience prejudice reduction from a media contact experience. Changes in attitudes and reduced prejudice toward an outgroup following a media presentation may also result from favorable affective responses, increased familiarity, or mere exposure. Although we do not directly test a distraction or interference model, responses to an open-ended question are used to evaluate these possibilities.

**METHOD**

**Overview**

In an attempt to gain better understanding of the relation between level of prejudice and “media contact” experiences, the current study was designed to consider the impact that a media contact has on attitudes, and the relation of level of prejudice and mood intensity resulting from the media contact experience. In order to do this, we showed college students...
the 88-minute Academy Award-winning documentary *The Times of Harvey Milk*. The documentary chronicles the life of Harvey Milk, one of the first openly-gay elected officials in the United States. In 1977, Milk was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and seven months later, he and George Moscone (the Mayor of San Francisco) were shot and killed by Dan White (a former member of the Board of Supervisors). Throughout the documentary, gay and non-gay individuals discuss their experiences and reactions to Milk. Included among these individuals is a blue-collar union organizer who talks about how his experiences with Milk greatly altered his perceptions of gays and lesbians. Milk is portrayed as an advocate, not only for gays and lesbians, but other minority groups and comes across as a likeable and competent politician. Our purpose in showing the documentary was to provide individuals, 44% of whom had reported on a pre-test having little or no contact with people they know to be gay or lesbian, an opportunity to “get to know” a gay man from clips of his life and interviews with people who know him.

**Subjects**

Several screening sessions were conducted at the beginning of the semester to obtain a sample of 314 college students (93 males, 214 females, and 7 whose gender was not reported) in introductory psychology courses. The screening sessions involved the completion of questionnaires from several researchers and took subjects an average of 90 minutes to complete. The Attitudes Towards Homosexuality Scale (ATHS) was included among the many questionnaires (see Herek, 1984, for an analysis of the validity and reliability of this 38-item scale).

Three weeks after the screening sessions were completed, 115 subjects participated in the second part of the current study. Subjects were asked to sign up for a study involving a movie and an attitude questionnaire. It was anticipated that some of the subjects who signed up for the second phase of the experiment would not have participated in the screening sessions and this was the case for 33 subjects. Participation in the second phase of the experiment resulted in partial fulfillment of an introductory psychology course requirement. As a result, complete data (screening and film session) were available for 82 subjects.

**Procedure**

As noted above, the subjects used in the majority of the analyses participated in both the screening session and the second phase of the experi-
ment. Subjects were scheduled in groups of 45 for three sessions (attendance for the three sessions was actually 37, 36, and 42). For two of the sessions (Experimental condition), the subjects arrived at a video screening room (6' screen) and, after completing the informed consent form, viewed the film *The Times of Harvey Milk*. After viewing the film, the subjects completed a mood scale, followed by the ATHS (identical to the ATHS completed during the screening sessions). Subjects were also asked to respond to an open-ended question concerning their “general reactions to the film.” Subjects were then debriefed and thanked for their participation. During the other session (Control condition), subjects came to the viewing room and after completing the informed consent form, they completed the ATHS, prior to viewing the film. After the film, these students completed the mood scale and open-ended question. They were then debriefed and thanked for their participation.

**Independent and Dependent Variables**

Both the mood and the ATHS responses were on a seven-point scale. For the mood scale, the students indicated how descriptive the word was of their mood at the current time, from “does not apply at all” (1) to “applies very much” (7). The mood scale was the same as that used by Devine et al. (1991) and consists of five subscales. The items in each subscale can be found in Table 2.

On the ATHS, the scales ranged from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7). In analyzing the data, fourteen of the ATHS items were reverse scored so that higher scores represented responses consistent with greater prejudice. At the end of the ATHS, subjects were asked if they

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1. Mean Attitude Composite Scores</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
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<tr>
<td>Control</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ATHS Scores</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1 – Screening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.40&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.51&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2 – Film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.87&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.42&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 44)</td>
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<td>(n = 28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Means with different subscripts differ at p < 0.05. The ATHS response scale ranges from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating greater prejudice toward homosexual men.
knew of anyone who was gay and their degree of association (ranging from 1 = mere acquaintance to 10 = close friend or relative) with the individual. If subjects knew more than one such individual, they were asked to think of the individual with whom they had the greatest level of association.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2. Mean Mood Responses MANOVA by Prejudice Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mood subscales</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE SELF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry at myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annoyed at myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regretful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disappointed with myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disgusted with myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE MOOD (DISCOMFORT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tense</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distressed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anxious</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bothered</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uneasy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uncomfortable</td>
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TABLE 2 (cont.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Mood</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energetic</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Others</th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angry at others</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated with others</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disgusted with others</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threatened</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threatened</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fearful</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Depressed</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depressed</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Cronbach’s alpha assessing inter-item consistency for each of the five subscales.

**Note.** Prejudice level based on median split (4.4) of 74 subjects who participated in both sessions of the experiment; n = 37 per level. Responses to the mood questions ranged from "does not apply at all" (1) to "applies very much" (7).

**RESULTS**

**Descriptive Analyses**

A composite score based on the 38 items on the ATHS was calculated for the 314 students who participated in the screening sessions. The mean composite score was 4.2 with a median of 4.4 and a standard deviation of 1.5. A score of 4.0 represented the actual mid-point of the scale; higher
scores were indicative of more highly prejudiced attitudes toward gay men. Of the 314 subjects, 180 (57%) reported knowing a gay male. The mean level of association indicated on the ten-point scale was 3.5 with a standard deviation of 2.8.

The mean composite score for the 82 subjects who participated in both phases of the experiment was 4.4 with a median of 4.4 and a standard deviation of 1.4. Of these 82 subjects, 46 (56%) knew a gay male with a mean level of association of 2.9 and a standard deviation of 2.3. Ultimately because of incomplete data, 72 subjects’ (30 males, 42 females) responses were used in the analyses comparing screening and film session attitudes.6

**Effects of Gender and Prior Contact**

Consistent with earlier studies (Herek, 1984; Kite, 1984; Ellis & Vasseur, 1993), female respondents held less prejudiced attitudes toward gay men ($M = 4.1$) than did male respondents ($M = 4.6$), $F(1, 288) = 6.55$, $p < 0.01$. Also consistent with these earlier studies, individuals who knew a gay male held less prejudiced attitudes ($M = 4.0$) than those who did not ($M = 4.6$), $F(1, 288) = 11.1$, $p < 0.01$. In addition, the correlation between prior association and attitude was .27 ($n = 176$, $p < 0.001$).

**Effects of Film on Attitudes and Mood**

The impact of the film and the individuals’ responses to the ATHS was assessed using a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ (Gender $\times$ Condition $\times$ Level of Prejudice) analysis of variance using subjects’ differences in composite scores as the dependent measure. Condition referred to whether subjects completed the ATHS (for the second time) either directly before the film was shown (Control) or after the film (Experimental condition). The level of prejudice was determined by using a median split of the composite prejudice scores (4.4) based on responses to the ATHS at the screening sessions.

This analysis revealed only a significant effect of Condition, $F(1,72) = 5.7$, $p < 0.02$. As can be seen in Table 1, subjects who completed the ATHS a second time after viewing the film responded in a less prejudiced way (regardless of prejudice level or the respondent’s gender) than those who completed the ATHS before viewing the film. There was very little change for those who completed the ATHS for the second time prior to viewing the film. A Pearson correlation coefficient of .90 was found for the two composite scores for subjects who completed the scale a second time prior to viewing the film. This finding indicates that the film had a significant impact on the attitudes as expressed on the ATHS.
With regard to mood, low-prejudice individuals were more affected by the movie than high-prejudice individuals. A MANOVA using composite scores for each of the six subscales as the dependent variables (see Table 2) found significant differences between the high- and low-prejudice individuals on three of the scales. Low-prejudice individuals felt significantly more discomfort, $F(1,72) = 3.77, p = 0.05$; felt more negative towards others, $F(1,72) = 8.2, p < 0.001$; and more sad and depressed, $F(1,72) = 7.6, p < 0.01$, than did high-prejudice individuals. The overall MANOVA was significant, $F(6,67) = 3.5, p < 0.01$. Subjects with greater mood intensity did not exhibit significantly different attitudes or changes in attitudes ($p > 0.10$).

The responses to the open-ended question showed some discrepancies from the results of the mood scale. Three raters scored the responses for expressions of sadness, confusion, anger at Dan White, anger at the system, anger at gays, generally upset, film affects, and changes in attitudes. The raters first conducted the scoring separately and then met to resolve any differences. Low prejudice individuals felt greater anger toward the perpetrator of the violence in the film (Dan White), $F(1,71) = 4.2, p < 0.05$, and commented more on the effect that the film had on them, $F(1,71) = 2.8, p < 0.10$, than did high-prejudice individuals. High-prejudice individuals expressed greater anger at gays than did the low-prejudice subjects, $F(1,71) = 5.1, p < 0.05$. The overall MANOVA was marginally significant, $F(8,64) = 2.0, p = 0.07$. Two raters also categorized the open-ended responses as “positive towards the movie and/or gays and lesbians” ($n = 51$), mixed positive and negative ($n = 26$), neutral ($n = 24$), or negative ($n = 14$).

**DISCUSSION**

The relation between media contact experiences and changes in level of prejudice was of primary interest in the current study. To manipulate “contact,” we presented subjects with a film depicting events surrounding the life and death of a prominent gay male politician. The film had a significant impact on viewers’ attitudes toward gay men and, regardless of level of prejudice, the impact was in the less-prejudiced direction. With regard to mood, however, low-prejudice individuals were found to have greater emotional responses to the film than high-prejudice individuals.8

In order to understand how the film affected attitudes, we looked at the responses to the open-ended question. As noted in the results, the majority of responses (67%) contained favorable statements towards gays and lesbians and/or the film. Included among the responses were statements such
as "I have been very touched and it has really almost changed my view on homosexuals. I previously had felt very little sympathy to the discrimination of homosexuals but now I see that I was very closed-minded"; "I feel that the film shows the importance of recognizing the rights of others regardless of personal feelings"; "I was opened to an entire other view of humans and the struggle that minorities have to go threw [sic]"; "coming from the background I do, I had no idea anything like this was going on"; and "this film seemed to show the gay community in a different way than I had ever heard . . . this film really touched me and made me want to support gay rights." The tendency of the film to portray Milk in a favorable fashion was illustrated by the following comment: "I believe Harvey Milk was not only an inspiration to the gay community but to everyone. Although I am not gay I would like to be like Harvey in some aspects—He was a good leader, responsible, and compassionate."

More moderate responses included statements such as "This was a very touching film, merely by the way it was put together and brought across. I still am very bothered by gay men and lesbians, but I guess as a society we must learn to deal with it"; and "I still do not agree with the idea of gay men . . . I do not hate them as long as they do what they do behind closed doors." Finally, other responses suggested that "all the gays should move in with each other in San Francisco," and several individuals made reference to religious beliefs and teachings that they believed were in conflict with homosexuality.

An extreme case illustrating the impact on mood intensity of low-prejudice individuals was described in the following statement: "I'm disturbed even more by the person sitting beside me who stated 'shoot all the damn gays' repeatedly during the film. I have never wanted to hit someone more in my whole life. I can understand the way people reacted to the verdict of Dan White although violence is not the answer." It seems that low-prejudice individuals' reactions to the film may have been affected by their perception of the cultural stereotype held by others watching the film.

Whereas Devine et al. (1991) found greater emotional intensity among low-prejudice persons expressed as negative feelings about the self, we found this intensity expressed as greater negativity towards others and discomfort (as well as sadness and depression). It is reasonable to expect that the negative affect towards others of low- and high-prejudice subjects would have different targets. In fact, the open-ended responses revealed that high-prejudice individuals tended to direct their negative affect towards homosexuals, while the low-prejudice individuals directed their negative affect at those who are intolerant of homosexuals. This is consis-
tent with Devine et al.’s work (1991); however, we do not find the same compunction in low-prejudice subjects.

Previous research looking at group decisions suggests that the perceived prevailing norm outside of a group can influence both group and individual decisions (e.g., Cvetkovich & Baumgardner, 1973; Ellis, 1989). Although we did not assess directly the subjects’ perceptions of the prevailing norm of the group, another study using a sample from the same subject population found the low-prejudice subjects rated others as more prejudiced towards gays than they themselves were. It is likely that the low-prejudice individuals in this study were aware of the prevailing attitude held by the majority of the participants. In the current study, the median composite attitude score fell on the negative end of the scale. Thus, in the film sessions, low-prejudice individuals may have perceived the situation as more conflictual than did high-prejudice individuals. Although speculative, this sense of conflict in the context could be responsible for the greater feelings of discomfort, negativity towards others, and sadness and depression among the low-prejudice individuals.

On the other hand, the idea that high-prejudice individuals experience less conflict (hence, less emotional arousal) suggests that they may have cognitively processed less of the information presented in the film or created barriers/interference (such as stating repeatedly “shoot all the damn gays”) to the processing of information. Even so, on average the film reduced the level of prejudice indicated on the ATHS for high-prejudice individuals, as well as low-prejudice individuals. Thus, high-prejudice subjects may have processed a counterattitudinal message because the medium interfered with their ability to counterargue (cf. Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Milburn & McGrail, 1992).

The film’s impact on participants’ mood possibly extends certain aspects of Devine’s model. For example, the mood responses of the low-prejudice subjects may have resulted not from internal conflict, but from sadness and upset due to the way in which gays and lesbians are treated in our society. This was clearly evident in the “negative towards others” subscale. Ultimately, the internal conflict experienced by low prejudice individuals may result not only from internal conflict based on socialization experiences but also from one’s perception of how members of the minority group are treated by society, depending in part on the context of the decision-making process.

From an applied perspective, the usefulness of the film and other “media contact” experiences was illustrated by comments such as “It is a very thought-provoking film, it makes the viewer re-evaluate his/her morals and view of other people. It gives a perspective on homosexuality that
is rarely seen by the general public.” This view is consistent with the
notion that lack of close contact with an outgroup results in inaccurate
views of what members of the outgroup are like. The impact of the film on
individuals’ views of gay men and lesbians (the film included some inter-
views with lesbians) supports Allport’s notion that “contact” helps dispel
inaccurate stereotypes.

The results also suggest that when very little is known about an out-
group the requirements of actual close contact of an interdependent and
equal nature may be substituted with a “contact” experience in which
individuals are exposed to information about the group through some
medium, such as a movie or television. This study focused only on short-
term effects on attitudes. Future research should consider how long such
short-term effects last, as well as what it takes to produce long-term
changes in attitudes. Ultimately, this study indicates that the ability of
media presentations to influence attitudes towards various outgroups and
to improve or deteriorate intergroup relations should not be ignored.

NOTES

1. It should be noted that the primary purpose of this study is to consider indi-
   vidual attitudes toward lesbians and gay men rather than the attitudes portrayed by
   the media.

2. Although we are interested in the relation between media contact and atti-
dudes toward both gay men and lesbians, the nature of the documentary caused us
to focus on attitudes toward gay men.

3. Here, contact involves an established relationship as opposed to more inci-
dental contact, such as a job interview or a “friend of a friend.” It should also be
   noted that, in the Ellis study (1993), the impact on attitudes of a scenario involv-
ing a lesbian friend or relative was less clear.

4. In the current study, the sample population consisted of college students.
   Sears (1986) has pointed out that attitudes of college sophomores tend to be less
crystallized than those of adults. As a result, research using college sophomores is
more likely to find that attitudes can be readily changed and that individuals are
unlikely to behave consistently with their attitudes. For obvious reasons, the gen-
eralizability of results based on college students is of concern (see also Tyler &
Schuller, 1991, for a recent study on the relation between aging and attitude
change). For the current study, however, the potential instability and “newness”
of college students’ attitudes were potentially beneficial, particularly in light of
Devine’s model of prejudice.

5. We acknowledge that there may be characteristics or special qualities of this
particular film which lead to results different from those which would be attained
from using a different film. We also acknowledge that there may be demand char-
acteristics associated with film itself or the proximity of the film and the attitude
survey. These are related questions which need to be addressed in future research.
6. We acknowledge that we employed a conservative approach to dealing with missing data; however, given that this approach does not significantly alter the sample or the findings, we chose this over more liberal approaches such as filling in the missing points with the means.

7. The categories were created by blind raters after reading the comments and before the scoring. Very few differences occurred in the scoring.

8. Given the correlational nature of the study, we cannot say which comes first, mood or attitude.

REFERENCES


