Gender role stereotypes, attitudes towards homosexuality, and sexual orientation judgements from faces

Jessica K De La Mare, Maisie Taylor & Anthony J Lee
University of Stirling

BACKGROUND

Sexual orientation and gender typicality
- Judgements of sexual orientation (SO) are made quickly and automatically from faces1,2.
- Cues of facial gender typicality are used when making SO judgements:
  - Gender atypical individuals (feminine men, masculine women) tend to be perceived as homosexual.
  - Gender typical individuals (masculine men, feminine women) tend to be perceived as heterosexual1,4,5.

Individual differences
- Individual differences in the acceptance of stereotypes appear to influence how gender typicality cues are used when making SO judgements6,7.
- Prejudiced individuals tend to use stereotypes associated with the target group more often than those with less prejudice8.
- Therefore, participants who are more prejudice towards sexual minorities may be more likely to use stereotypes related to gender and sexual orientation (e.g., gender typicality).

HYPOTHESES
1. As face gender typicality increases, so will the likelihood the face will be judged as heterosexual.
2. The use of gender typicality cues will be moderated by participant belief in gender role stereotypes. Participants with a strong belief in gender role stereotypes will be more likely to use cues of gender typicality.
3. Participant sexual prejudice will also moderate the effect of facial gender typicality. Participants with greater sexual prejudice will be more likely to use cues of gender typicality.

STUDY 1

METHODS
Participants: 291 participants (195 female, 74 male, 10 non-binary, 4 other/undisclosed; M = 21.97 years, SD = 3.69 years) who identified as heterosexual (194), homosexual (20), bisexual/pansexual (58), or other/undisclosed (19).

Procedure: Participants completed a SO judgement task and gender role stereotype belief scale.

STUDY 2

METHODS
Participants: 219 participants (98 women, 88 men, 18 non-binary, 15 other/undisclosed; M = 25.86 years, SD = 8.62 years) who identified as heterosexual (98), homosexual (23), bisexual (59), other (27) or undisclosed (12).

Procedure: Identical to Study 1, also included a measure of sexual prejudice.

RESULTS
STUDY 1
- A binominal mixed effects model was conducted.
- Supporting H1, as gender typicality increased, so did the likelihood the face would be judged as heterosexual.
- Supporting H2, participants with stronger belief in gender role stereotypes were more likely to use cues of gender typicality.

Figure 1. The association between participant belief in gender role stereotypes and facial gender typicality, separated by face sex.

RESULTS
STUDY 2
- Binominal mixed effects models were conducted for belief in gender role stereotype and sexual prejudice separately.
- Supporting H1, as perceived/objective gender typicality increased, so did the likelihood a face would be judged as heterosexual.
- Contrary to H2 and H3, the use of objective gender typicality cues was not influenced by participant belief in gender role stereotypes or sexual prejudice.
- Supporting H2 and H3, greater belief in gender role stereotypes or sexual prejudice led to greater use of perceived face gender typicality cues.

CONCLUSIONS

- Across both studies, H1 and H2 were supported. As face gender typicality increased, so did the likelihood the face would be judged as heterosexual1,3,4,5. This effect was moderated by participant belief in gender role stereotypes - participants with stronger beliefs were more likely to use cues of gender typicality than those with weaker beliefs.
- In Study 2, H3 was supported - the use of perceived gender typicality scores (calculated from subjective masculinity/femininity) and objective face shape gender typicality.
- Face shape may account for only a small amount of variance of subjective ratings of facial gender typicality1,3,4. Therefore, non-shape cues of masculinity/femininity are likely important to our current findings.
- Study 2 results suggest that the use of gender identity cues, and the influence of participant belief in gender role stereotypes and sexual prejudice, is not specific to White faces, nor limited to extreme masculine/feminine faces.

REFERENCES

Contact: jessica.delamare@stir.ac.uk

University of Stirling