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The Modern Family: Confronting Attitudes and Same-Sex Marriage Legislation Through Gay Male Relationships and Gender Roles on TV

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The Modern Family:
Confronting Attitudes and Same-Sex Marriage Legislation
Through Gay Male Relationships and Gender Roles on TV

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B.S., Media Communications, Webster University, 2010

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Table of Contents

List of Appendixes	4
List of Tables	5
Abstract.....	6
Changing American Attitudes	8
Literature Review	10
Gay Men and Lesbians on TV	10
Parasocial Contact	17
Social Cognitive Theory	22
Stereotypes.....	26
Gender Inversion Theory.....	31
Methods.....	36
<i>Modern Family</i> Representing a Gay Male Relationship.....	36
Sample.....	48
Measures	40
Exposure	40
Gender Role Perceptions	41
Parasocial Interaction	42
Attitudes	43
Voting Intentions	43
Possible Demographic and Psychographic Controls	44
Results	45
Discussion	48
References.....	58
Appendixes	63
Tables	72

List of Appendixes

A) *Modern Family* Exposure63
B) Personal Attributes Questionnaire.....64
C) PSI Scale66
D) Attitudes Toward Gay Men Scale67
E) Voting Intentions Questionnaire69
F) Demographics70

List of Tables

Table 1: <i>Modern Family</i> Exposure	72
Table 2: Exposure and Attitudes Regression	73
Table 3: Exposure and Voting Intentions Regression	74
Table 4: Gender Differences and Attitudes Regression	75
Table 5: Gender Differences and Voting Intentions Regression	76
Table 6: Means and Standard Deviations for Male and Female Perceptions of Character's Male and Female Attributes	77
Table 7: Before and After Hierarchical Regression With PSI and Exposure Interaction in Relation to Attitudes.....	78
Table 8: Before and After Hierarchical Regression With Gender Differences and Exposure Interaction in Relation to Attitudes	79
Table 9: Analysis of Covariance after Exposure Median Split for Split Viewers and Gender Interaction in Relation to Attitudes.....	80

Abstract

Media portrayals within the ABC television show *Modern Family* provide insight into how viewers perceive the monogamous gay relationship between the male characters Cameron and Mitchell, and how contact with these characters is related to attitudes and behaviors. A sample of 90 viewers and 157 non-viewers from the University of Missouri and social networks participated in an online survey. Exposure to the program predicted positive attitudes toward gay men and intentions to vote for same-sex marriage legislation. Perceptions of more heteronormative gender roles within the gay relationship did not predict positive attitudes or intentions to vote for same-sex marriage rights. A relationship between less heteronormative gender roles and intent to vote for same-sex marriage rights approached significance. These results indicate perceiving two males in a monogamous relationship as having similar gender attributes may predict intentions to vote for same-sex marriage legislation and needs further research. Viewer gender differences did not predict differences in perceptions of the characters' gender attributes. Parasocial interaction was also not a proven moderating variable between exposure and attitudes toward gay men. Distinct differences emerged between viewers and non-viewers, including differences in the outcome variables. This study adds to prior gay male media stereotypes, social cognitive, parasocial interaction, and gender inversion theory research.

Keywords: attitudes toward gay males, gay and lesbian visibility, gender effects, gender inversion, gender perceptions, hegemony, heteronormativity, *Modern Family*, parasocial interaction, same-sex marriage legislation

The Modern Family:
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A family portrait hangs above a fireplace. The composition includes a smiling toddler cradled between two loving pairs of arms. What makes this family modern are the two proud parents—who happen to both be male. They have a loving family, but are more than likely not married due to laws in many states prohibiting same-sex marriages. Yet, over the past four years, gay and lesbian parenting has gained an increase in support. In 2007, 50 percent of Americans thought it damaged society and in 2011, a smaller portion of 35 percent had those negative feelings (Pew Research Center, 2011). Support for same-sex marriage is also gaining speed. The picture of the American family is changing in real life and on television. Those who never met a gay couple face to face can see into their televised relationships. By addressing the interactions Americans have with televised gay couples and the perceived gender roles in such relationships, this research sought to find a connection between these factors, overall acceptance of this demographic, and support for same-sex marriage legislation.

Americans are diverse and have equally distinct opinions. Clarkson (2011) believes “at the heart of the politics of gay representation are two intersecting considerations” (p. 335). These connecting concepts are visibility and gender performance. Both help straight populations understand the gay and lesbian outgroup. Audiences see this group on television, providing public visibility, and grapple with understanding the gender role representation in this different type of relationship. Entertainment television becomes a classroom for understanding and learning to support a variety of monogamous relationships.

According to Gross (2001), Americans are “addicted to one of the most powerful drugs known to our species: entertainment,” which comes in the form of media (p. 2). Using TV as a cultural indicator of the current societal state began in the 1960s. Media images, narratives, conceptions, and frames were “cultural products” that showed shifts in public opinion (Shanahan & Nisbet, 2005, p. 3). Negative public portrayals match with negative public opinions. More positive portrayals of topics dealing with gay men and lesbians may coincide with a positive consensus.

Changing American Attitudes

A growth in support for gay and lesbian civil liberties is occurring and creates new relevance for studying perceptions of representations of this group of people in the media and civil rights legislation. In 2004, 70 percent of Americans believed homosexuality was morally wrong, but a majority was tolerant of basic political rights, such as protecting gay men and lesbians from housing and employment discrimination. Issues like AIDs and marriage still ignited negative attitudes (Shanahan & Nisbet, 2005).

Certain populations, like Californians, are in the public limelight for changing perspectives, but not changing exclusive legislation. Assessing polls from 1985 to 2006, Lewis and Gossett (2008) explore Californians’ opinions on same-sex marriage. Specific traits like age and gender were the most significant predictors for support. Older male Californians were more likely to condemn gay and lesbian rights and relations. But this group admits to becoming more accepting since they were 18 years old. Modern California youth are more accepting than past generations, and their acceptance is expected to grow as they age. Young females are considered the most supportive (Lewis & Gossett, 2008).

Race, contact, and religion were also factors in Lewis and Gossett's (2008) meta-analysis. The African American population's support has not risen like non-Hispanics, Latinos, and Asian Americans. Californians with gay friends were more likely to favor marriage rights. Those who are religious were less likely, although all religious affiliations still have a recent growth in acceptance. Lewis and Gossett (2008) believe religious intensity is weakening for younger generations and in whole populations.

More recent data shows similar patterns at the macro level. Nationally, there is a growth in overall acceptance and support for same-sex marriage rights. In 2009, 35 percent of the population favored legislation, and in 2011, 45 percent supported same-sex marriage. Americans under 50 years old were most accepting. Six in 10 members of this demographic favored gay men and lesbians receiving social acceptance (Pew Research Center, 2011). Newer generations are gaining newer perspectives.

Historically, the religious right has been a slow adopter of new ideologies. It may be easier to change their perspective on fairness and the human rights aspect of sexual prejudice than to change their outlook on the roots of people being gay or lesbian (Horn, 2008). For example, someone may think the act of homosexuality is wrong, but that same person may also accept that social alienation and discrimination is wrong. Tapping into the human qualities of sexual minorities may impact acceptance.

Media portrayals are meant for large audiences, including those that are religious. Gross (2001) says minorities are "culturally bilingual." Gay men and lesbians live in a media environment for straight people, so they know two cultures. Straight audiences may only speak one cultural language. Mass media images are mainly created for a straight audience that may project their own perspective of gay and lesbian identities. As

straight people see more visible gays and lesbians in media, this may change attitudes toward this outgroup (Shanahan & Nisbet, 2005). But in the end, the visibility may be on straight audience's terms.

Gay Men and Lesbians on TV

Television tends to be a lagging cultural indicator. Newspapers and films used to lead social change (Russo, 1987; Shanahan & Nisbet, 2005). Now, a public's social attitudes may change before they are visible on TV shows. One reason why it may lag is because the medium "reinforces newly established cultural orders" (Shanahan & Nisbet, 2005, p. 19). Public opinion may change and then TV portrayals may change to reinforce the new consensus. Cultural indicators map the visibility and not the quality or nature of the portrayals of televised gay males and lesbians. Heavy television viewers' tolerance levels for gays and lesbians are compared to their frequency of visibility on television, showing a positive relationship (Shanahan & Nisbet, 2005).

Visibility does not produce high quality and diverse gay media characters. Hegemonic power over representation may reinforce gender norms and possibly hide homosexuality to make a straight audience more comfortable. These false portrayals may still lead to acceptance and same-sex marriage support. I will explain that as gay men and lesbians became visible on television, criticized stereotypical characters were created for straight audiences, and a profitable gay and lesbian audience emerged.

Visibility

Within the past decade, there has been more gay media visibility than ever before. People grew into finding homosexuality acceptable and there has been some increase in civil rights protection. In 1971, there was only one gay character on television. In 2003,

there were 30 shows with gay or lesbian characters. This shows that political acceptance is related to television presence. A similar correlation is present in newspaper visibility and the public agenda (Shanahan & Nisbet, 2005, p.14). If projections are correct, public opinion changed and then gays and lesbians were presented on TV.

Media History of Gay and Lesbian Representation

Before homosexuality was on TV, it had to be acknowledged by the public. After noting an increase in visibility, distinct portrayals emerge that homogenizes the gay and lesbian subculture and its members' gender roles. This homogenization may occur because a majority of the audience is heterosexual and prefers these portrayals. TV lagged, and films only had implicit gay themes (Russo, 1987). In 1951, Donald Webster Cory wrote "The Homosexual in America: A Subjective Approach." This was the first positive public portrayal of homosexuality (Gross, 2001, pp. 22-23). Print media was the first to open the closet door and move toward equal rights for gays and lesbians.

Publications like *Time*, *Life*, and *Newsweek* ran stories about gay life to end social stigmas. Still, homosexuality was framed as a mental illness. The sexual revolution of the '60s and '70s created a safer climate to start gay communities (Gross, 2001). Publications had openly gay and lesbian writers, like the *New York Times*' Arthur Bell, who is known for advocating non-oppressive gay representation. He compared stereotypical gay film characters to the controversial black roles in early cinema (Russo, 1987).

After news coverage and some public visibility, in 1971, the first sympathetic television portrayal of a gay man occurred on the popular show *All in the Family*. The public didn't give the storyline much attention. More media, like made for TV dramas,

began showing members of the straight community accepting gays and lesbians (Gross, 2001). As these characters emerged, they formed identities with their own unique traits.

Gender roles and homosexuality collided. In 1975, David Kopay became the first pro athlete to publicly come out of the closet. He was a football player, the epitome of masculinity, and also gay (Gross, 2001). An athlete's image included masculine gender roles like enjoying competition, being aggressive, and loving female attention. Kopay's coming out may have influenced how people viewed gays and lesbians. Some media portrayals that didn't fit gender norms were questioned.

In the early '80s, the crime show *Cagney and Lacey* was canceled, because CBS claimed the characters were not feminine enough. Gross (2001) says, "Apparently, for program executives, progress means constructing images of lesbians that are not threatening to heterosexuals by erasing any sign of lesbian and gay sexuality" (p. 87). If a lesbian was on TV, she still needed to act like a lady. Not all lesbians or women in general, like Cagney and Lacey, fill that form.

Gay and lesbian visibility continued to receive some praise, while producers dealt with how to cover this topic. In the early '90s, the television show *Roseanne* became a center for debate when two females kissed. The production company received positive feedback and advertising dollars for their decision to air the program. In that same time period, straight men became more comfortable with and were publicly praised for playing gay roles. Teen shows like *My So Called Life* on NBC and *The Real World* on MTV are also considered milestones for speaking to a younger audience about gay and lesbian issues (Gross, 2001).

While visibility was on the rise, certain mainstream gay and lesbian guises appeared and are criticized for being ineffectual and generalized. For example, *My So Called Life* and MTV showed sad, young, and victimized portrayals of gay men. Transgendered and bisexuals were usually portrayed as promiscuous and confused on daytime talk shows, like *Oprah* and *Phil Donahue*. Mainstream media also showed this minority as villainous and desexualized or a-sexual. Critics believe Hollywood had a tendency to highlight other traits to hide homosexuality. These representations usually showed lesbians as mental predators and gays as young men that are vicious bums or victims (Gross, 2001; Russo, 1987). Even race, like Asian “rice queen” characters, focuses on race as a trait to stereotypically convey a gay identity or segment the gay population (Han, 2011). The humorous “flamer” character may even make this group less identifiable and mute empathy (Clarkson, 2011). These trends are a continuation of similar patterns that began in early films, before the public openly discussed homosexuality (Russo, 1987). Gay and straight audiences may be impacted by these negative trends that do not highlight positive or realistic gay qualities.

The majority of communication professionals are straight, and gay and lesbian audiences form opinions on how their group is represented in television narratives. Discussing a study of gay audiences, media critic, Freymiller (2005) says, “Essentially, respondents imply a desire for both less and more focus on gay sexuality; generally, they desire more scope, depth, and honesty to portrayals of same-sex relationships on TV” (p. 6). Common televised gay relationships do not focus on aspects of gay and lesbian relationships that every member experiences differently. There are exceptions, such as the documentary *The Word is Out*, which focuses on personal stories and self-disclosure

leading political and social change rather than portraying gays being sad and confused. Even day-time dramas have deep character-driven gay and lesbian storylines. The soap opera *One Life to Live* is hailed as having the “longest and most complex” homosexual plots (Gross, 2001, p. 216). However, these positive and realistic portrayals are scarce.

As more TV shows outed characters, there continued to be criticism for the modern gay image. In 1997, Ellen Degeneres’ famed character, Ellen Morgan, came out of the closet on the show *Ellen*. In later interviews, she said that her character’s decision to come out as a lesbian and her own sexual orientation shouldn’t frame her as a gay-rights activist. She is criticized for being submissive to heteronormative, or straight oriented, values (Skerski, 2007), but is still the first lead character to come out on network television (Gross, 2001). She may have become visible as a lesbian character, but she still followed the portrayal and social norms set by heterosexual producers and audiences. Since Ellen liked females, straight audiences perceived her as being more masculine. Looking at this character shows a contemporary and prominent portrayal of a lesbian on primetime television.

Ellen marks the “new age of gay visibility,” and echoes the complexities of sexual politics in modern media (Skerski, 2007). Audiences knew the character Ellen Morgan was gay before she came out (Gross, 2001). Ellen’s late coming out labels her as a “nouveau dyke.” She appeared to be a lesbian, but supposedly didn’t find out until she was older. Finding out about one’s sexuality may not always happen this way (Schneider, 2008, p. 160). Ellen was expressing her true identity in a way that does not match every gay, lesbian, and heterosexual pattern of realizing a natural sexual orientation.

Other shows followed with more gay and lesbian leading roles on cable and network television. “Despite Ellen’s impact on television programming, gay characters or themes still largely abide by their restrictive parameters that are least threatening to heterosexual hegemony,” says Skerski (2007), a media critic. Flamboyancy seems to be the dominant argument for heteronormative restrictions on gay men. It is often assumed that men that like men act like girls, because females have the role to like men. TV characters may perform gender-roles most comfortable with straight audiences (Gross, 2001).

Gay and lesbian audience members desire “to see the landscape of media portrayals to grow and expand” (Freymiller, 2009, p. 21). These representations may be indicators of social tolerance and not approval (Shanahan & Nisbet, 2005). Gay and lesbian visibility may benefit tolerant or approving straight audiences through media profits, and even negative but visible portrayals may help this group gain cultural acceptance and the right to marry.

Gay Visibility Creates Heterosexual Power

Having gay men and lesbians on TV provides visibility, but it also creates a new profitable demographic. By allowing this minority to enter modern television’s landscape, straight people may have the power to gain and shape it the way they want. From a hegemonic perspective, they may use these characters and means of attention to gain and maintain their heteronormative power (Lull, 2011). Including television in his equation, Lull (2011) says, “Relationships between and among major information-diffusing socializing agencies of a society and the interacting, cumulative, socially

accepted ideological orientations they create and sustain is the essence of hegemony” (p. 35).

An example of this is how gay people are defined by their sexuality, but are rarely shown acting sexually. This may be for the sake of keeping heterosexuality dominant (Freymiller, 2005). Using a film from the early 1930s, titled *Mädchen in Uniform*, as an example, Russo (1987) says, “American society has willfully deleted the fact of homosexual behavior from its mind” (p. 56). They are present, but they are harmless and don’t get married or have sex (Russo, 1987). Even though having gay and lesbian characters on TV seems like a hold on their social power, it may also be for financial power over this cultural group.

Through their “conspicuous representation” comes “conspicuous consumption” (Freymiller, 2009, p. 8). The often-stereotyped portrayals bring in a profit from straight and gay audiences. According to Shanahan and Nisbet (2005), media products as cultural indicators “compliment” economic and social developments (p. 2). Economic incentives may play a role in the tolerance of social change. Consumer data from Iwata (2006) shows in 2006, there were 16 million gay American consumers over 18 years old and they had a \$641 billion purchasing power (as cited in Freymiller, 2009). Having a negative outlook on power and visibility, Freymiller (2009) says, “It is important to note that the increase in companies seeking gay patrons is rarely connected to any significant way to fight to live free of discrimination and can be accorded equal rights in society” (p. 4). Hegemony infecting ideologies and cultural institutions, like those in the economy and TV industry, lack empirical findings. Quantitative, social science research can find more meaningful evidence for hegemonic patterns.

As gay men and lesbians became visible on television, stereotypes arose for straight audiences trying to understand this group, and a profitable gay and lesbian market was born. Since 10 percent of the American population is gay, most primetime network shows appeal to the majority (Gross, 2001, p. 253). More and more modern gay portrayals on TV shows teach a straight audience how gay relationships function. This representation may imbed heteronormative traits, like stereotypical gender roles. Using the parasocial contact hypothesis, social cognitive theory, stereotypes, and gender inversion theory to frame this study, contact with these stereotypical portrayals may positively influence attitudes and behaviors.

Parasocial Contact

Television allows gay and lesbian visibility and descriptions of those representations are often based on subjective, qualitative research. More quantitative research may elicit concrete empirical findings. Through contact with gay males and lesbians in real life and on TV, audiences can gain a humanistic perspective that may shape real-life perceptions of, attitudes for, and behaviors toward this minority.

Face-to-Face Contact Hypothesis

Initially, researchers studied how real-life interpersonal contact affected the formation of stereotypes and acceptance. "Intergroup contact" occurs in real life and through media experiences (Ortiz & Harwood, 2006). This social theory was deemed the contact hypothesis. It assumes stereotypes are false because of limited experience with outgroups, real-life experiences can change views toward outgroups, and people are willing to change their perspective. In all, a perception of common human interests through interpersonal contact can change an individual's worldview (Schneider, 2008).

Under a specific set of conditions, “cross-group” contact may even reduce prejudice (Cameron & Rutland, 2008). A level of commonality between two humans can impact how one sees others and the groups they belong to.

Empathy is a strong tool in attitude and behavior change. Schiappa, Gregg, and Hewes (2006) say there is an emotional effect in social contact. Ideally, the contact should include equal status among individuals, shared common goals, and must not be opposed by some type of authority figure, like a church or political leader. Positive contact with an outgroup member can create cognitive dissonance, or contradiction, with pre-existing beliefs. This mental discord may lead to attitude change (Schiappa et al., 2006). Membership in social networks can impact an attitude change as well (Bandura, 2001). For example, if accepting another individual is not compatible with mainstream ideology, it will be harder to change one’s ideas. Observing others initiating and then trying out contact may make it easier (Bandura, 2001). Interpersonal social contact can change perspectives on gay men and lesbians and other minorities, especially if they have commonalities, like heteronormative gender roles.

For an interpersonal context example, Herek and Capitano (1996) found experiencing social contact with two or more gay men or lesbians is associated with more favorable attitudes than having contact only once (as cited in Schiappa et al., 2006). Social contact theory also teaches gay men, lesbians, and heterosexuals gender roles (Holz-Ivory, Gibson, & Ivory, 2009). Specifically with children, interaction with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and school curriculum may impact how they discuss and think about homosexuality, which could lead to less prejudice (Horn, 2008). Children have a limited world perspective. Horn (2008) says, “Knowledge about fairness,

individual rights, and human welfare appear to be more salient in making judgments about the treatment of people” (p. 187). Also, with repeated and sustained exposure, a diverse representation of minorities, and interpersonal attractiveness, a positive attitude effect may occur (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005). Approaching interpersonal and mediated contact in this light will ensure positive outcomes.

Parasocial Contact Hypothesis

Some people may only experience contact with gay men and lesbians through television. If people process mass-mediated interactions similar to interpersonal interactions, then the same social benefits may occur (Schiappa et al., 2005). An added media element creates the parasocial contact hypothesis. The term “parasocial interaction” was etymologized by Horton and Wohl (1956) to measure mediated contact (as cited in Tian & Hoffner, 2010). This is often conceptualized as the level in which media exposure is like real-world interactions (Schiappa et al., 2005). For instance, Schiappa et al. (2005) found that parasocial contact with characters having varying sexual orientations is associated with lower levels of prejudice and a change in beliefs about gay men and transvestites. Interpersonal and parasocial contact with this group can create attitude and behavior changes.

Weak Moderators

Some groups share strong negative feelings toward gay men and lesbians. This does not negate the influence that contact has on attitude and behavior change. Through interpersonal and parasocial contact, even those with prejudicial personality characteristics can overcome negative attitudes toward minorities, like refusing them the right to marry (Hodson, Harry, & Mitchell, 2009). Hodson et al. (2009) infers that

variables like contact quality and quantity and friendship type moderate the promotion of social values for those with existing negative dispositions, like identifying highly as a heterosexual or authoritarian. People with little interpersonal contact can improve their pre-existing attitudes through more contact.

Similarly, people with affiliations typically associated with negative attitudes, like members of certain political and religious organizations, have less negative attitudes after experiencing contact with a gay or lesbian. Interpersonal contact and more positive attitudes usually lead to more contact and higher disclosure from outgroup members (Herek & Glunt, 1993). Those who are less likely to hold positive attitudes can improve their outlook through interpersonal contact.

Through “electronic acculturation,” contact with an outgroup through media, like TV, can shape audience opinions about other cultures and their own groups (Bandura, 2001, p. 271). There may even be a benefit for positive media exposure to create interpersonal contact (Dasgupta & Rivera, 2008). The show *Will and Grace* may be considered a positive portrayal of gay men through the characters Jack and Will. Viewers with a higher level of parasocial interaction with this show also have lower sexual prejudice toward gay men. Parasocial contact has a stronger influence on those with low real-life contact. This is even more meaningful because there is no significant relationship between prejudice and parasocial contact for those that have real-life gay friends (Schiappa et al., 2006). Parasocial contact is as strong as real-life contact and has the strongest impact on attitudes for those new to experiencing the homosexual outgroup.

Audiences with strong attitudes prior to exposure and low previous contact have the most to gain from parasocial contact. Schiappa et al. (2006) infers, “If all viewing

variation was explained by attitudes toward homosexuals, we should not have found that marked differences between the strength of the correlations between those with no gay contact and those with many gay friends” (p. 11). Prejudicial attitudes are thus changeable and not an outlying variable. These attitude changes are also present when 71 percent of respondents say heterosexual relationships are the only normal sexual relationship (Schiappa et al., 2006, p. 8). This furthers the idea that attitude change can occur in terms of accepting gays or lesbians as people with unalienable rights, without necessarily accepting their sexual acts.

Having a stronger connection to an ingroup member that has outgroup contact may create a connection like an indirect friendship. Ortiz and Harwood (2006) say this creates vicarious intergroup contact. Contact to positive intergroup interaction involving an ingroup member is associated with more positive attitudes toward the outgroup (Ortiz & Harwood, 2006). Direct and indirect interactions with outgroups can occur in real-life interpersonal and mediated situations.

Perceiving parasocial contact to be realistic is another important factor in relation to having more positive attitudes. Through mediated contact, those who perceive the gay character Will from *Will and Grace* to be a typical gay man have a lower social distance, or more positive attitudes toward this outgroup (Ortiz & Harwood, 2006). Contact with gay men and lesbians can improve attitudes and even voting intentions, but these cognitive processes and perceptions are complex. Perceiving gay traits, like gender roles, as “real” is a factor in this phenomenon.

Social Cognitive Theory

When audiences experience contact with an ingroup or outgroup, there are several mental processes that occur that shape what they perceive to be true. Observing gay and lesbian relationships on TV is considered vicarious social learning and mainstreaming also plays a part in mental model building. The founding father of social cognitive theory, Bandura (2001) says, “An extraordinary capacity for symbolization provides humans with a powerful tool for comprehending their environment and creating and regulating environmental events that touch virtually every aspect of our lives” (p. 267). These symbols are cognitive models that guide our attitudes and behaviors. These may include building false stereotypes for how gay men act and what gender roles they have in a monogamous romantic relationship.

Theory Background

Social cognitive theory tries to understand the formation and effects of cognitive models, like stereotypes. These models or schemas allow people to make assumptions about others. These judgments are based on perceived social norms, so they can be positive or negative, and true or false. When an individual approaches others, they use these stored mental categories to understand what is going on around them (Schneider, 2008). These models may lead someone to assume a man is gay because of the pitch of his voice or the feminine clothes he is wearing. Whether real or not, these assumptions are stored in brains and used in social situations.

The process of creating mental models includes two steps. First, there is the attention, or selective observation of a social norm. Then there is the retention of this schema as a categorized memory. Conceptual patterns retained in memory can guide

action. Whether or not to act using the observed attitude or behavior is based on motivation. There has to be some perceived incentive to act using the model. Observing others receiving benefits and the costs of an action can guide action. These are considered vicarious incentives (Bandura, 2001). “Self-devaluative behavior,” actions against morals also impact social accommodating behavior (p. 275). Media exposure may provide vicarious incentives.

No matter how they are formed, mental models are human’s perception of reality. If media influences the shape and emotions of these schemas, they may also impact the perceived realism of contact with and the formation of stereotypes for gay men.

Vicarious Social Learning

Numerous factors create these perceptions, including social learning through television exposure. Bandura (2001) refers to this as “triadic reciprocal causation.” Three types of interactions build social models of reality: personal, behavioral, and environmental interactions (Bandura, 2001, p. 266). Humans are also constantly evaluating their attitudes and behaviors based on how they pair up with an indirect reality (Bandura, 2011). Along with influences by parents, peers, and organizations or culture, vicarious experiences through mass media have an impact on perceptions of reality (Schneider, 2008). The representation of a gay man on TV has the same effect as having social contact with one in real life. Many elements create these perceptions, including man made realities on television.

Vicarious experiences also allow for vicarious verification of one’s own mental models (Bandura, 2001). Real life experiences like diverse school environments can develop or verify perceptions and foster an ability to empathize (Levy & Killen, 2008).

Vicarious and real-life experiences can teach features and emotions associated with categories and how to act with outgroups (Schneider, 2008). Observing others' experiences and then acting out in real-life situations influences learning gender norms.

Bandura (2001) says media can have a direct influence on behavior change. He also claims media influences are first filtered through connections to social systems, which then may change behaviors. For instance, a friend may act flamboyantly like Jack from the show *Will and Grace*. That friend may laugh and get others to join in, but their media exposure had an indirect influence on their group of peers.

Whether media has a direct or indirect effect on audience perceptions of reality, it may be a way to change morals and sway opinions, or become a way to reduce prejudice (Bandura, 2001; Cameron & Rutland, 2008). Television shows can impact individuals that become opinion leaders that model positive attitudes. Popular shows, like *Modern Family*, may be an opinion leader in itself by positively portraying a gay couple for others to vicariously check their social norms.

Mainstreaming

Both straight and gay audiences use media to see how they fit in and relate to outgroups (Clarkson, 2011). If everyone is using media to verify mental models, they all may end up having similar attitudes about gay men and lesbians. Mainstreaming reflects how background factors, which usually segregate groups, interact with television to increase a shared perspective. According to this theory, the more a person watches TV, the more likely they have shared perspectives with others and the portrayals of society they see in programming (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1984). According to Gross (2001), commercial TV is "homogenous" due to its need to reach many people

with little dissonance through balanced ideologies (p. 7). Since the advent of cable, more programming is fragmented to fit the needs of certain audience segments. Traditional television is more likely to fit the straight-oriented, or heteronormative, mainstreaming mold, which includes mainstream perceptions of gender roles within a marriage.

To keep all audience members watching, traditional coverage has to be middle-of-the-road and keep controversial topics objectively balanced. Through their research, Gerbner et al. (1984) says political issues are usually focused slightly to the right of center on the political spectrum. When it comes to social services programming, it is slightly more liberal. Mainstream media may then cultivate “moderate self perceptions among viewers” (Gerbner et al., 1984, p. 285). One may also infer that “radical leftists” and “ultra conservatives” will tend to not selectively watch TV (p. 297).

As audiences tune into television, they experience the cultivation and verification of social models. These are not basic scripts. Allen and Hatchett (1986), say “The concept of social reality effects is itself expanded to include not only perceptions about what society is like, but also attitudes toward self and the groups in which one belongs” (p. 117). This includes “social reality beliefs” about others.

Intergroup attitudes undergo a cognitive process to become perceptions of outgroup social norms, roles, and characteristics. Social cognitive theory is the basis for how certain intergroup attitudes and relationships may develop at certain times, are evaluated, and if they can ever change (Levy & Killen, 2008). Straight audiences use these schemas to form stereotypes that guide how they understand and relate to gay men and lesbians in real-life, including the opinions they have about the group and their rights.

Reading realistic gender stereotypes in same-sex relationships will also impact how straight audiences think and vote for same-sex marriage legislation.

Stereotypes

Stereotypical mental models are cognitive shortcuts humans have for perceiving outgroups. Audiences can apply pre-existing stereotypical gender conceptions to gay men and lesbians on TV, and this televised outgroup may enforce stereotypical characteristics. Accentuating certain stereotypes may be able to change audiences' perceptions of reality.

Stereotypes Altering Perceived Reality

There are varying conceptualizations of what a stereotype is and how they are formed. Hamilton and Troiler (1986) believe a stereotype is a "cognitive structure that contains the perceiver's knowledge, beliefs, and expectancies about some human group" (as cited in Arthur, Bigler, Liben, Gelman, & Ruble, 2008, p. 67). For example, straight audiences may be used to seeing heteronormative gender roles, like a wife being feminine and a husband being masculine. There is limited knowledge for how gay and lesbian stereotypes are instilled in audiences, but conceptualizing one's own identity and the identity of others is an early stage in cognitive development (Enesco, Guerro, Callejas, & Solbes, 2008).

Learning stereotypes are often based on vicarious experiences, like parasocial contact. They may then lack logic, because they aren't based on concrete evidence or statistics. Mass media plays a role in "shaping people's interpretations of the world around them" (Allen & Hatchett, 1986, p. 98). If someone believes a gay man or a married couple acts a certain stereotypical way in real life, they will judge a narrative experience and an outgroup based off of those fake norms.

Stereotypical schema on television, like gender roles within a relationship, may allow people to categorize outgroups that audiences may not have much real world contact with. Holz-Ivory et al. (2009) write, “Although minorities are sexually ignored or symbolically annihilated in media, when media do represent them, they use popular (yet negative and narrow) stereotypes as a code that the audiences can easily understand” (p. 178). That code may include stereotypes that straight audiences are more comfortable with. For example, if a marriage is perceived to be like a stereotypical, or traditional marriage, than it may be positively perceived by audiences, especially those with little real-world experiences. Stereotypes are interacting with how audiences perceive the reality of other groups.

Sexual Orientation as a Category

The category of sexual orientation has been under researched (Schneider, 2008). Within this category, other stereotypes like gender roles, race, and age may exist and create ingroup memberships between outgroups. This is called criss-cross classification. Straight people fall under many categories as well. For example a person may fall under a sexual orientation group, but also a gender one. Gay men in a monogamous relationship may fall under numerous stereotype categories, and stereotypical gender roles may be a way straight audiences realistically perceive or empathize with these relationships. Another example is a homosexual man as well as a straight female having an association in feminine attributes. Through one outgroup, sexual orientation, comes an ingroup, gender roles.

As previously noted, gay men and lesbians are homogenized on television and may not always be perceived as having many social categories. When a group is thought

to be more homogenous, people can infer certain group stereotypes and others begin to look more like the homogenous characteristics of a particular group (Schneider, 2008). Gay men are usually described as having more “mutable attributes,” or being more homogenous. When people compare gay and straight men, they tend to focus more on what makes the gay men different from the straight ones. This is even consistent when straight men were perceived as having fewer gender-related attributes (Hegarty & Pratt, 2001).

Gay men and lesbians are a “self-identifying minority,” meaning they usually have to disclose their group membership using physical or non-verbal cues (Gross, 2001, p. 16). Perceived gender attributes are a common stereotype for determining if someone is gay, especially if they haven’t given the audience a cue. When it comes to gay men, people tend to think of them as being more feminine. They habitually recall information about gay men that focuses more on emotional dispositional stereotypes, often related to women (Hegarty & Pratt, 2001). Gender stereotypes surface for different groups.

Homogenous characters fit into mainstream media, where everyone perceives similar stereotypes. If they saw something outside of the norm it could create dissonance (Gross, 2001). When gay men in a relationship are perceived as less gender homogenous, maybe they are perceived to be more like stereotypical straight men and women.

Gender stereotypes tend to create tense outcomes. The affective response for mismatched gender roles can create prejudice (Arthur et al., 2008). Prejudice, having a prejudgment, can lead to discrimination, using category schema to segregate others (Schneider, 2008). To some, not voting for same-sex legislation is considered discrimination. Perhaps the cognitive dissonance created by two men in a relationship

that possess similar gender roles creates prejudice and then voting discrimination. Specific representations may lead to social change (Clarkson, 2011).

Decreasing Prejudice Through Choice Stereotypes

Perceived belief similarity, possibly gender role beliefs, can play a part in decreasing prejudice. This is also known as the “inclusion of other in the self” (Cameron & Rutland, 2008). Perceiving a gay or lesbian relationship to be similar to an audience’s heterosexual relationship may weaken prejudice or exclusive social liberties.

Other instances may attack prejudicial attitudes. Living by a “deategorization model,” or thinking of others as individuals and not as a group member may help. Also, intergroup contact, keeping separate groups but experiencing others through interpersonal and parasocial contact, may improve prejudicial climates (Cameron & Rutland, 2008).

Tajfel and Turner (1979) approach social change through highlighting similar stereotypes between groups. By looking at social identities, they believe “comparing the ingroup to the outgroup on some new dimension” and “changing the outgroup (or selecting the outgroup) with which the ingroup is compared—in particular, ceasing or avoiding to use the high status outgroup as a comparative frame of reference” may help the situation. This social identity theory is the interaction of ingroup membership with outgroup members (p. 43). Instead of comparing the groups in terms of sexual preference, calling attention to another dimension like gender roles may improve socialization between groups and societal change.

Fitting into heteronormative gender roles may also be a social dimension that generally has a more positive connotation. Making a trait seem positive can increase the likeliness of acceptance and social change (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). If a gay or lesbian

couple is positively portrayed using traits a straight audience thinks of as being positive, then the perception of the couple may be transformed.

Partial decategorization may improve attitudes toward gay men. Stripping away the sexual orientation, gay relationships may also have gender norms. Gender norms tend to also impact gay stereotypes. Lesbians are more likely to be attributed to being masculine and having short hair. Gay men are conceived as having a high-pitched voice like a woman (Kite & Deaux, 1987). Using Ellen Degeneres as an example, Moore (2011) says people assume every lesbian dances like Ellen. But “just as lesbians are a diverse, rather than homogenous group, comprising women of varying ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, styles, classes, gender presentations and so on, their dance moves likely vary enormously” (p. 533). Gay men and lesbians are stereotyped with a variety of false accusations.

Gender Inversion Theory describes how gay and lesbian gender attributes are perceived by outgroup members. This straight group, often in charge or the audience for media messages, are used to seeing a “normative gay identity” (Clarkson, 2001). Normative gender roles may apply to both straight and gay relationships, including those on television. I will now describe how gender inversion theory reveals how heterosexuals’ perceptions of gay men and lesbians to be inverted, making men that like men to be perceived more like females that like men. This perception may change when two gay men are in a monogamous relationship. Using the same heteronormative perceptions, gay couples may be perceived as married couples with opposite gender roles.

Gender Inversion Theory

For the past 25 years, gender stereotyping has dominated the social psychological field. Conceptualizing gender roles within a same-sex marriage merges two distinct stereotyping categories—sexual orientation and gender. Schneider (2008) adds, “The issue is whether people prefer other people’s behavior to be consistent with stereotypes of their biological gender or with stereotypes of their sexual orientation” (p. 495). When audiences watch a media portrayal of same-sex couples, they see gay men and also each male’s gender attributes.

Theory Background

In accord with the “bipolar model” for heterosexual gender stereotypes, femininity and masculinity are typically reversed for gay men and lesbians (Kite & Deaux, 1987; Schneider, 2008). When a person judges a gay male, they perceive him to be more like a heterosexual female. Lesbians are perceived to be more like heterosexual men. The inversion correlation is stronger for females (Kite & Deaux, 1987). If this is the case, a gay couple in a same-sex monogamous relationships on television may fit into similar stereotyped gender roles presented for straight couples, or they may be perceived as the same inversed gender.

Gender roles categorize humans as acting feminine or masculine. This is a dominant and submissive dichotomy. Male roles are more dominant, whereas female roles are submissive. Same-sex couples on television showing these gendered roles, may impact real-life attitudes toward straight and same-sex couples (Holz-Ivory et al., 2009). This may include how audiences perceive married couples’ roles on TV and in real life.

Both gay and heterosexual couples are gendered on television programs (Holz-Ivory et al., 2009). Even if these gender roles are a “manufactured reality,” they create social norms (Rogers, 2011, p. 72). Gender roles may exist in household duties, like being the financial provider or homemaker (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1975). Even interests, communication techniques, and physical characteristics can create a gender role (Schneider, 2008). Gay, lesbian, and straight couples may have “wife” and “husband” roles within their relationship.

Though gay men and lesbians are perceived as having homogenous gendered roles, these perceptions may change when evaluating them in a monogamous relationship. Rogers (2011) critiques, “Transgressive gender performance, not just same sex desire is the root of antigay attitudes” (p. 336). As straight audiences try to figure out the gender roles in a gay relationship, this may create some kind of cognitive dissonance and negative attitudes.

Audience’s Gender Effects

Men and women read these representations differently. Gender trends exist in accepting gay men and lesbians. For example, attitude differences between gay and lesbian marriage are more related to male homophobia, not female predispositions. Men also tend to be more homophobic toward male couples than lesbian ones. They tend to be against male same-sex marriage more than heterosexual females. Straight men favor lesbians getting married, while women have no differentiation between biological sex and gay or lesbian marriage. This may be because straight men have sexualized female same-sex couples and can’t relate to male same-sex partners (Moskowski, Rieger, & Roloff,

2011). Accepting same-sex marriage may depend on the gender roles present in the narrative and the audience member's gender.

Reeves and Miller (1978) created a list of reasons why these gender differences exist (as cited in Eyal & Cohen, 2006): women tend to be more open to empathizing with people that are different than them; women may also look up to men more because of their social dominance, which makes them look up to any male, gay or straight. Male characters, regardless of sexual orientation, may also be appealing to females because they tend to be more frequent in television narratives.

Little previous research shows evidence of gender roles in televised gay and lesbian relationships relating to same-sex marriage voting patterns. Still, televised relationships between gay men show each partner has differing scores for submission and dominance (Holz-Ivory et al., 2009). Gender and sexual non-conformity proves to be a correlate of sexual prejudice (Horn, 2008). It appears non-gender conforming roles in relationships are less acceptable. Reasoning for accepting the gay male outgroup may be associated with how straight audiences perceive gender norms and roles.

Gross (2001) says, "Close to the heart of our cultural and political system is the pattern of roles associated with sexual identity: our conceptions of masculinity and femininity of the 'normal' and 'natural' attributes of men and women" (p. 13). Changing attitudes towards accepting same-sex marriage may be related to perceived heteronormative gender roles within these relationships. As part of the decategorization process, focusing on positive in-group attributes, like being perceived as a gendered relationship, may weaken negative outgroup perceptions.

As the parasocial contact hypothesis, social cognitive theory, and the conceptualization of stereotypes explain, exposure to these portrayals may influence attitudes and behaviors. This theoretical framework leads to my first set of hypotheses:

H1a: More exposure to a positive gay male relationship on TV will be positively related to positive attitudes toward gay men in general.

H1b: More exposure to a positive gay male relationship on TV will be positively related to intentions to vote for same-sex marriage legislation.

When gay male relationships are portrayed on television, they follow the same heteronormative gender roles stereotypically portrayed in straight relationships (Gross, 2001; Holz-Ivory et al., 2009). If these roles are normalized, certain audiences may have more positive attitudes toward gay males and then support marriage rights for a relationship that fits the social schemas of traditional married couples. This introduces another group of hypotheses:

H2a: Perceived heteronormative gender roles in a positively portrayed televised gay male relationship are positively related to positive attitudes toward gay men in general.

H2b: Perceived heteronormative gender roles in a positively portrayed televised gay male relationship are positively associated with intentions to vote for same-sex marriage legislation.

According to Baron and David (1986), a mediator acts as a conduit between two variables to show how a relationship occurs. Building upon H2a and H2b, this study proposes that attitudes are a mediator between exposure to heteronormative gender roles and intended behaviors. First the perceived heteronormative roles within the gay

relationship will be related to attitudes and through that mediator it will be related to behaviors. This creates a new hypothesis:

H2c: Attitudes toward gay men mediates the relationship between perceived heteronormative gender roles and intentions to vote for same-sex marriage legislation.

Since males and females read these relationships differently, they may have different perceptions of such roles (Moskowski et al., 2011; Reeves & Miller, 1978). This links to my first research question:

RQ1: Do straight male and female audience members have different perceived gender roles for couples positively portrayed in a televised gay male relationship?

Perceiving stereotypical gender roles within a gay relationship may relate to similar behaviors, values, and attitudes with an audience member (Schneider, 2008). Tian and Hoffner (2010) prove perceived similarity, which may include gender roles, was a significant predictor of identification and PSI. Tian and Hoffner (2010) say, "Producers should try to create characters that the target audience shares more similarities with, and characters that viewers can easily identify with or form parasocial attachment to, to maximize the effects of the message" (p. 266). If heteronormative gender stereotypes are present within same-sex couplings, straight audiences may have more PSI and then accept the message that this outgroup can be in a positive monogamous relationship. If heterocentrism and heterosexism "celebrate" heterosexuality, then audiences will empathize with gay couples acting like straight ones (Rogers, 2011). Empathy may decrease discrimination.

Some outside variables act upon a relationship to impact the statistical outcomes (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In this study, results may vary due to such moderators, like a person's level of parasocial interaction and gender. Increased parasocial interaction, creating contact that is perceived to be real, may moderate the relationship between exposure to a monogamous gay couple and voting for same-sex marriage. This leads to my last research questions:

RQ2: Does parasocial interaction moderate the relationship between exposure and positive attitudes toward gay men?

RQ3: Do audience gender differences moderate the relationship between exposure to a positive monogamous gay male relationship on TV and attitudes toward gay men?

Methods

***Modern Family* Representing a Gay Male Relationship**

Numerous television shows have recurring or lead gay or lesbian characters in a monogamous relationship. Exposure to these portrayals may contribute to heterosexuals having more positive attitudes toward gay couples seeking out similar life goals—like marriage (Freymler, 2005). One traditional TV show with a mainstream audience, ABC's *Modern Family*, is a prime example of a positive portrayal of a same-sex monogamous relationship on traditional television. This show is applauded for its high quality representations that may change attitudes to accept same-sex marriage laws, making it an optimal tool to guide this study.

Since it first aired in 2009, *Modern Family* has become an award-winning production. In 2011, it won a GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation)

award for best comedy. This pro-human rights group rewarded this television show for its “cultural conversation around gay marriage and adoption” and its possibility to “reshape some conservatives’ perceptions about gays and lesbians” (Hampp, 2011, p. 4). Through humor and real life situations, *Modern Family* tries to change perspectives of what a real modern family encompasses.

“We set out to do a family show with different kinds of families because it seemed to us that families are changing and (a gay family) was a logical type to explore,” says Steven Levitan, *Modern Family*’s co-creator. “We didn’t think it was the most commercial choice. We thought it would marginalize our audience a bit, but much to our surprise, it hasn’t” (Puente, 2010, p. 01d). In fact, the show leads in its time slot (Hampp, 2011). This may be an example of how this program is a lagging cultural indicator (Shanahan & Nisbet, 2005). The public is revising its opinions on gay relationships and *Modern Family* reflects that.

The show is set around three different families, one of which is comprised of two gay men, Cameron Tucker and Mitchell Pritchett, and their daughter Lily Tucker-Pritchett. Mitchell’s father’s and sister’s families comprise the other two family units. The show is labeled as a post-2000s “single-camera documentary style sitcom” with multicultural themes (Hampp, 2011). This voyeuristic, documentary approach may make the show and its families seem more realistic.

While some may perceive Cameron to be “flamboyant” and Mitchell to be “buttoned-up” stereotypical gay characters, there are aspects of these men that may not be seen as being consistent with heteronormative gender roles (Hampp, 2011, p. 4). For example, Cameron is also an ex-college football player, leaving room for open

interpretation of perceived gendered traits. At the same time, gay families in TV shows are also portrayed like any other heteronormative family (Hampp, 2011; Puente, 2010).

Compared to cable shows, Cameron and Mitchell's relationship may be considered less lust driven and reaches a broader or more mainstream audience. This show is a contemporary media tool to gauge audience exposure to a positive portrayal of a same-sex couple, perceptions of gender roles within a monogamous same-sex relationship, attitudes toward gay men, and same-sex marriage voting intentions.

Sample

Using *Modern Family* as an example of a positive representation of a monogamous gay male relationship, a convenience sample of viewers was gathered from UMSL's communication department and fan sites. There was a total response rate of 365. Many of the analyses required a viewer sample, because a non-viewer would not be able to judge the gender attributes of and their PSI with characters they had never been exposed to. Therefore, analyses of H2-RQ3 were conducted only with viewers. Responses saying the participant watched the television show totaled 183 (50 percent). Forty-four (24 percent) of the survey participants didn't complete the demographics section, so it was assumed they did not make it to the end of the survey. They were eliminated, along with five (four percent) participants who admitted to taking the survey before.

Respondents who reported viewing the program were also asked to answer a "confirmation question." The confirmation question was embedded amongst a series of Likert-type questions and asked the participant to "click 4." Those who didn't answer this question correctly, 35 participants (26 percent), were excluded from the analyses. It was

assumed they were not taking the time to carefully read the questionnaire and provide valid answers.

The nature of the hypothesis and research question analyses required a heterosexual sample. Nine (nine percent) viewers who did not identify their sexual orientation, or reporting to being gay, lesbian, or bisexual were also eliminated from the sample. Taking each of these factors into account, the final sample size of *Modern Family* viewers was 90.

Given the survey method, another group of non-viewers provided data as well. They were not asked questions about the *Modern Family* characters. Out of the initial responses, 182 (50 percent) participants said they hadn't seen the program *Modern Family*. Six (3 percent) participants did not complete the demographic section to complete the survey and 14 (eight percent) said they had previously taken the survey. After eliminating these responses, five (three percent) others were eliminated for not identifying themselves as a heterosexual. Non-viewers did not take the part of the survey with the confirmation question, so that adjustment was not conducted. This resulted in a final non-viewer comparison sample of 157.

The majority of the sample of *Modern Family* viewers, 77 (86 percent), found out about the survey through a course instructor. Seven (eight percent) were directed to the survey by a friend or family member, and six (seven percent) from a *Modern Family* fan discussion board, website, or social networking site. Sixty-two (70 percent) of the viewers were female, 27 (30 percent) were male, and one person did not choose to identify their gender. Seventy-two (81 percent) participants identified themselves as Caucasian. There were 13 (15 percent) self-identified Blacks, three (three percent)

Hispanics or Latinos, no Asians, and one (one percent) person identified as another race that was not listed. The mean age was 27 ($SD=8.64$) years and the median was 24.

Participants took a survey with closed-ended questions on a secure survey site. After reading a brief description of the study, they gave their consent and began the questionnaire. Participants who did not watch the show were directly moved to a later section in the study, addressing general attitudes toward gay men. They completed the final sections of the survey, along with viewers. Those that reported watching the show a) provided information on their exposure, b1) rated the character Cameron's gender attributes, b2) rated the character Mitchell's gender attributes, c) and reported their level of PSI with each character. All participants responded to questions measuring general attitudes for gay men, voting intentions on sexual-orientation legislation, and descriptive information, including previous contact with gay men and lesbians. At the end of the survey, students were moved to another site to collect an extra credit incentive. This insured that the survey was confidential. They provided their names and the name of a course and instructor so they could receive extra credit for their participation.

Measures

Exposure. The first part of the survey gauged levels of exposure to the show *Modern Family*. Participants reported if they ever watched the show (Appendix A). If so, they described their viewership using ordinal labels. The distribution of exposure is recorded in Table 1. On average, *Modern Family* viewers watched television for 11.77 ($SD=9.92$) hours a week. One outlier, reporting more than 100 hours of TV viewing per week, was eliminated from this average.

Gender Role Perceptions. A second section individually introduced the characters from the same-sex couple, Mitchell and Cameron. A headshot of each character reminded the respondents of the character's face and name. Participants rated each character's gender role attributes using a modified version of the Personal Attributes Questionnaire to measure female and male normative traits (Spence et al, 1975). This scale measures 18 female valued and 23 male valued traits on a 1 to 5 Likert scale, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. It is common for gender role perception to be coded using open-ended questions (Holz-Ivory et al., 2009; Schneider, 2008). Spence et al.'s measure (1975) was originally meant for personal evaluation of one's gender roles and has proven to be a closed-ended option. Using a shortened version of the scale has been a reliable and valid modern tool to measure feminine and masculine attributes (Fischer & Anderson, 2011, p. 5).

The words on the questionnaire were edited to refer to the intended media characters. One page had randomized survey questions for Cameron (male traits $\alpha=.85$; female traits $\alpha=.87$), and another page was for Mitchell (male traits $\alpha=.85$; female traits $\alpha=.89$) (Appendix B). Cameron's mean male score was 3.34 ($SD=.49$). His mean female score was 4.08 ($SD=.43$). Mitchell's mean male score was 3.51 ($SD=.47$) and his mean female score was 3.73 ($SD=.53$). In order to view these characters as a couple, a new comparison variable had to be computed. This variable compared each character's male and female traits to show where each character landed on a male to female spectrum.

If a couple fits into heteronormative gender roles, the male's attributes would place him on the masculine side (-5-0) of the spectrum, and the female's would be more on the female side (0-5). Higher heteronormative patterns would mean the difference

between the couple's scores would be greater, because they would be farther apart on the spectrum. On this scale, Cameron's mean comparison score was .76 ($SD=.52$). Mitchell's was .22 ($SD=.63$). Cameron was more on the feminine side and Mitchell was considered to be slightly more masculine. In all, the character's comparisons showed the characters were perceived as almost a perfect mix of male and female attributes. To take into account the analysis of the gender roles within the relationship, larger differences in the comparisons indicated higher perceptions of heteronormative roles within the relationship. For example, using the average scores to find the difference, or subtracting one from the other, Cameron and Mitchell's perceived gender role mean difference was .54 ($SD=.82$).

Parasocial Interaction. The third section of the survey measured levels of parasocial interaction. Participants responded to two questions based on cognitive aspects of parasocial interaction with a gay character used by Schiappa et al. (2006). These two questions deal with the realistic aspects of parasocial contact. Two affective based questions were borrowed from Schramm and Hartmann's (2008) PSI Process Scale. These questions address the emotion-driven empathetic and sympathetic aspects of contact with an outgroup. Participants answered questions for Cameron ($\alpha=.79$) and Mitchell ($\alpha=.77$). The 1-5 Likert scales had 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree (Appendix C). Participants' mean PSI with Cameron was 3.53 ($SD=.94$). For Mitchell, respondents' mean PSI score was 3.29 ($SD=.85$). Cameron and Mitchell's individual PSI scores were combined to create a PSI variable relating to them as a couple, $M=6.81$ ($SD=1.65$).

Attitudes. Next, there were combined measures for participants' attitudes toward gay men and homosexual civil rights. Two scales were used. One is Lannutti and Lachlan's (2007) Attitude toward Same Sex Marriage scale, which is a multi-item measure to gauge attitudes toward civic equality for gay men and lesbians, cultural endorsement, and personal contact. A modified version of this multi-item scale, using only the original questions Lannutti and Lachlan (2007) found factored together, was used to measure attitudes toward gay men. The other scale was a shortened version of Herek's (1998) Attitudes Toward Gay Men scale (ATG-S3). This version is a modified version of the Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gays scale. Versions of this scale are used to measure homophobia (Herek & Glunt, 1993; Moskowski et al., 2011; Schiappa et al. 2005; 2006). These questions were on a 1 to 5 Likert scale with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. Some questions were reversed so higher scores indicated more positive attitudes ($\alpha = .96$) (Appendix D). Viewers had a mean attitudes score of 4.11 ($SD = .83$).

Voting Intentions. Voting intentions was measured using another set of three items based on The Pew Research (2005) interview questions about same-sex marriage rights. These items included one item measuring intentions to vote for same-sex marriage legislation, a reversed question for prohibiting marriage rights, and a third option for legal agreements giving rights like those given to married couples. These questions were embedded amongst other policy questions like those used by Dasgupta and Rivera (2008). Similar to Dasgupta and Rivera (2008), respondents answered on a 1 to 5 scale with 1 being "very likely to vote against" and 5 being "very likely to vote in favor." (Appendix E)

An analysis on the three questions used for intentions to vote for same-sex marriage indicated that the third question weakened the instrument's reliability ($\alpha=.76$). After removing the question, the Cronbach's Alpha raised to a .83. The average score for voting intentions was 4.21 ($SD=1.14$) for viewers.

Possible Demographic and Psychographic Controls. To end the survey, participants provided their basic demographic information, like their age, race, and sexual orientation. Other demographic questions, for church attendance and political affiliation, were modified versions of questions used in national surveys (Pew Research Institute, 2009; 2010). Gerbner et al. (1984) used these facts as controls for analyzing similar outcomes. Participants also completed a modified version of Schiappa et al.'s (2006) measure for previous contact with gay men and lesbians (Appendix F).

All respondents ended their survey with the same round of questions. Out of those that viewed *Modern Family*, five (six percent) reported attending church more than once a week, 13 (14 percent) reported attending once a week, 16 (18 percent) reported attending one or two times a month, 25 (28 percent) reported attending a few times a year, 21 (23 percent) reported seldom attending, and 10 (11 percent) reported never attending. For political affiliations, 35 (39 percent) viewers identified with the Democratic Party, 15 (17 percent) identified with the Republican Party, and 40 (44 percent) identified as Independent, Libertarian, or Other. Viewers' mean previous contact with a gay male was 3.31 ($SD=1.16$) on a 1 to 5 ordinal scale, with 5 representing higher levels of previous contact.

Results

To test the hypotheses and research questions, I had to control for some outlying variables, based on respondents' demographic information, that were significantly related to the outcome variables. For example, church attendance, political affiliation, and previous contact with gay men were significantly associated with attitudes toward gay men in general and with voting intentions. These variables were used as controls for each of the regression analyses.

The first two analyses used the viewer and non-viewer samples to operationalize exposure. To test H1a, which predicted that more exposure to positive representation of a monogamous same-sex couple would be positively related to more positive attitudes toward gay men in general, a regression analysis was used to find a correlation between the variables and the possible predictor. As shown in Table 2, the regression analysis showed the relationship between exposure to *Modern Family* and attitudes toward gay men, $\beta = .22$, was significant, $p < .001$, after controlling for religiosity, political affiliation, and previous contact. H1a was supported.

The relationship between the independent variable and voting intentions for same-sex marriage legislation, addressed in H1b, was similar. A regression analysis using the same control variables produced a significant beta coefficient, $\beta = .1$, $p = .001$ (See Table 3). H1b was also supported.

A series of regression analyses were also conducted to test H2a and H2b, which predicted that heteronormative gender roles within the monogamous same-sex relationship would be related to attitudes and intentions to vote for same-sex marriage legislation. This and the remaining analyses used only the viewer sample, because non-

viewers did could not complete measures regarding their perceptions of and relationships with the program's characters.

The findings showed that heteronormative perceptions of the characters' gender attributes were not significantly associated with attitudes, $\beta = -.14$, $p = .15$ (See Table 4). Another regression analysis showed the relationship between perceptions of heteronormative gender roles within the monogamous homosexual relationship and voting intentions approached significance, $\beta = -.18$, $p = .06$ (See Table 5). The hypothesis predicting that more heteronormative perceptions would be positively associated with voting was not supported. The results showed a negative beta coefficient for the relationship between the variables that approached statistical significance. The size of the effect was small to medium, according to Cohen's criteria. As gender role differences were perceived to be less heteronormative, intent to vote for same-sex marriage legislation increased.

There does not seem to be a significant relationship between gender role perceptions and attitudes, so H2c, claiming attitudes mediated a relationship between perceptions of heteronormative gender roles and voting intentions, was not tested. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), mediation requires that "variations in levels of the independent variable significantly account for variations in the presumed mediator" (p. 1176). As they are unrelated to the independent variable, these attitudes cannot mediate a relationship between gender attribute perceptions and voting intentions for same-sex marriage legislation.

A series of independent sample *t*-tests were conducted to explore RQ1, which asked whether male and female viewers scored the characters' gender traits differently.

There were not significant differences in Cameron's masculine traits scores, $t(85) = -.80$, $p = .43$. There also weren't significant difference in perceptions of his feminine attributes, $t(40.56) = .07$, $p = .95$. The same analysis was conducted for Mitchell. The perceptions of Mitchell's level of masculinity were not significantly different, $t(86) = -.65$, $p = .52$. For perceptions of Mitchell's feminine traits, male and female scores were also not significantly different, $t(87) = -1.62$, $p = .11$. Addressed in Table 6, the means and standard deviations for attribute scores provide insight into the insignificant differences in perceptions between male and female *Modern Family* viewers.

In order to test RQ2, which asked whether PSI moderated a relationship between exposure to a monogamous homosexual couple and attitudes toward gay men in general, a hierarchal regression was carried out. The first step included the control variables, exposure, and the new combined PSI variable. The second step added an interaction term for PSI and exposure. The hierarchal regression analysis showed that including the interaction term did not significantly increase the variance explained by the model, $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $p = .12$ (See Table 7). In this instance, PSI did not moderate a relationship between exposure to *Modern Family* and positive attitudes toward gay men.

Several analyses were carried out to investigate RQ3, which asked whether the audience members' gender moderated the relationship between exposure to the program and attitudes toward gay men. There were no significant attitude differences between male and female viewers, $t(87) = -1.47$, $p = .14$. Males had a mean attitude score of 3.90 ($SD = .84$) and females had a similar mean score of 4.18 ($SD = .82$). A hierarchical regression analysis was done to check if an interaction with exposure created a meaningful relationship with attitudes. The first step included the control variables,

exposure, and gender. The interaction term was added on the second step. The results showed the interaction between gender and exposure was not significantly related to attitudes, $\Delta R^2 = .003$, $p = .57$ (See Table 8).

A median split with attitudes as the outcome was also conducted to see if there was a non-linear relationship between exposure and gender. Viewer exposure was split at the median to form categories of high and low viewers. High viewers watched the show once every week or more, while low viewers watched it three times, two times, or once a month. The same control variables used in the previous regression analyses were included as covariates. A two-way ANCOVA showed there was not a significant interaction between gender and exposure in relation to attitudes, $F(1, 80) = .002$, $p = .97$ (See Table 9).

Discussion

Many of the predictions in this study were not supported. However, it is still a contribution to the growing body of social science research on attitudes toward this outgroup, voting intentions for same-sex marriage legislation, gay visibility in the media, gender perceptions, and parasocial contact. Discussing these results leaves room for suggestions for further research and identifies this study's overall limitations.

Exposure to *Modern Family* was associated with the outcome variables. But follow-up analyses discussed below and the results showing neither PSI or perceptions of the characters' gender attributes were moderators may also help explain this pattern.

Further analyzing H1a and H1b, the relationship between exposure to the monogamous homosexual couple on *Modern Family* predicting positive attitudes and voting intentions, there seems to be something happening, but it is not what was

expected. An analysis of just those who viewed *Modern Family*, at least occasionally, found that different levels of viewers' exposure did not predict an increase in the outcomes. A regression analysis showed the relationship between viewers' levels of exposure to *Modern Family* and attitudes toward homosexuals, $\beta = -.10$, was not significant, $p=.31$, after controlling for religiosity, political affiliation, and previous contact. Similarly, a regression analysis using the same control variables produced an insignificant beta coefficient, $\beta = -.07$; $p=.48$, for the relationship between viewers' level of exposure and voting intentions.

A ceiling effect may be the cause of these findings. The viewers may already have strong positive attitudes ($M=4.12$, $SD=.83$) and intentions to vote in support of same sex marriage legislation ($M=4.21$, $SD=1.14$), so exposure to the show cannot predict them for varying levels of viewers. Differences between *Modern Family* viewers and non-viewers may show how H1a and H1b were supported through the original analyses because those who never watched the show had distinct differences from those who have.

As mentioned previously, a sample of non-viewers ($N=157$) contributed to the survey findings. In some ways this group was similar to the viewers, and in other ways they were very different. There was no significant difference in gender between viewers and non-viewers, $\chi^2(1)=.20$, $p=.65$. One hundred and five (67 percent) of the non-viewers were female, compared to 62 (70 percent) female viewers, and 52 (33 percent) were male, compared to 27 (30 percent) male viewers. Though their mean ages appeared to be slightly different, viewers with a mean of 27 ($SD=8.64$) and non-viewers with 25 ($SD=7.08$), there wasn't a statistically significant difference, $t(243)=1.80$, $p=.07$.

Differences in political affiliation were also insignificant, $\chi^2(4) = 4.26, p = .37$, along with church attendance, $t(245) = .743, p = .46$.

The significant differences between the groups may reflect demographic and psychographic information that distinguishes a *Modern Family* viewer or target audience. There was a significant difference in race between the two groups, $\chi^2(4) = 18.125, p = .001$. Ninety-one (58 percent) of non-viewers identified themselves as Caucasian, 45 (28 percent) as Black, three (two percent) as Hispanic or Latino, 13 (eight percent) as Asian, and five (three percent) as Other. This is compared to the viewers group with 72 (81 percent) reporting to be Caucasian, 13 (15 percent) as Black, three (three percent) as Hispanic or Latino, no Asians, and one (one percent) as Other. This study's sample shows a higher percentage of African Americans, Asians, and Other races are not watching the show.

Viewers also tended to differ from non-viewers in their attitudes toward gay men and voting intentions. Viewers tended to have more positive attitudes toward gay men, $M = 4.11 (SD = .83)$, than non-viewers, $M = 3.43 (SD = 1.07)$. This difference is significant, $t(224.29) = 5.5, p < .001, M = 4.21 (SD = 1.14)$, compared to non-viewers, $M = 3.45 (SD = 1.45)$, also had significantly higher intentions to vote for same sex marriage legislation, $t(220.88) = 4.55, p < .001$. Those that watch the show may have these positive attitudes and behaviors related to other reasons, not just because they watch *Modern Family*. These attitudes and behaviors may have existed prior to watching the show and *Modern Family* may just reinforce possible preexisting beliefs.

Future research can try to make sense of this. Media choice is affected by a viewer's political ideology. For example, Knobloch-Westerwick and Meng (2011) found

that people tend to selectively expose themselves to media that fits with their political attitudes. If a viewer noticed *Modern Family* fit their, what Knobloch-Westerwick and Meng (2011) call a, “political self-concept,” they would continue to expose themselves to the programming. In this instance, attitudes and voting intentions may predict exposure.

One factor that might explain why viewers have preexisting beliefs may be previous real-world contact with the outgroup. Compared to mediated contact, this interpersonal contact may be more significant. There was a significant difference in levels of previous real-world contact with gay men between *Modern Family* viewers and non-viewers, $t(244)=3.04, p=.003$. Viewers had a mean previous contact score of 3.31 ($SD=1.16$) and non-viewers had a mean of 2.83 ($SD=1.21$). A similar pattern occurred with previous real-world contact with lesbians. The differences in mean previous real-world contact with lesbians was also significant, $t(244)=2.24, p=.026$. Viewers had a mean score of 3.04 ($SD=1.23$) and non-viewers had a mean of 2.66 ($SD=1.31$). *Modern Family* viewers tend to have more positive attitudes toward gay men in general and are more likely to vote for same sex marriage legislation. This may be attributed to having previous experience with the portrayed outgroup, which may also lead them to watch this particular show. Contact is still an important factor, but not all audiences are receiving it at the same rate or at all (Schiappa et al., 2005; Hodson et al., 2009).

Even mainstream television shows, like *Modern Family*, attract viewers with certain demographics and psychographics. Gerbner et al. (1984) show general exposure to television programming varies for audiences, which is related to audience’s ideologies. Information regarding the television viewing time of the non-viewers of *Modern Family* were not collected in this study. It would be interesting to explore why this group is not

watching the show and what else they are choosing to watch. Future research may see how television viewership in general is related to attitudes toward gay men and lesbians and intentions to vote for same sex marriage legislation. This research could include the type of programming people watch and the frequency.

There is also more to examine after seeing the results for H2a and H2b, relating heteronormative perceptions of character's gender attributes to the attitudes and behavior of interest. While the hypotheses were not supported, the findings may be additions to gender inversion theory. Even two men in a monogamous gay relationship are perceived to have slightly more female attributes than male attributes. Audiences perceive the couple of interest within *Modern Family* as not having significant heteronormative gender roles. The characters weren't perceived as one having the dominant male role and the other having a submissive female role. The perceptions varied, but the couple was not viewed strictly as having heteronormative qualities. Even though the relationship only approached significance, when the gender attributes of the couple were perceived as more similar, or toward the middle of the male-female spectrum, audiences may also have higher intentions to vote for same-sex marriage legislation. With a larger sample size, this relationship may be significant, showing that perceiving gay characters as similarly masculine and feminine within a relationship is associated with more positive attitudes and behaviors.

Gender inversion theory holds for perceptions of gay men in general and possibly for gay men in a monogamous relationship. Perceptions of masculine attributes may even emerge when seeing two males in a relationship. Highlighting these stereotypes, not heteronormative ones, may predict audience attitudes and voting intentions. Future

research can explore these findings for gay television characters in a relationship that are both perceived as being effeminate and a similar mix of male and female attributes.

Another possible addition to data collection could be asking a series of questions that relates to audience perceptions of how realistic televised gay and lesbian couples are. *Modern Family* is of the comedy genre, so people may have lower levels of perceived realism. Future analysis can examine how perceptions of characters as realistic are related to positive attitudes toward gay men and intentions to vote for same sex marriage. Shows with higher perceived realism may mimic real-life contact more closely. This further analysis may also find other similarities, besides mainstream heteronormative stereotypes, that are relatable and are connected to more positive attitudes and behaviors toward the outgroup.

H2c, claiming attitudes toward gay men mediates the relationship between perceived heteronormative gender role perceptions and intentions to vote for same-sex marriage legislation, was not supported because there was no significant relationship between perceptions of heteronormative gender roles within Cameron and Mitchell's relationship and attitudes toward gay men in general. A regression analysis showed attitudes and voting are significantly related, $\beta=.91, p<.001$. This relationship may be self-evident, that someone's attitudes are related to voting intentions, but it is also proven to be positive and large, according to Cohen's criteria. If exposure to certain television shows is proven to predict more positive attitudes toward homosexual men, then there is a possibility voting intentions can also be assumed.

There are also some interesting findings within the RQ1 results. Males and females did not perceive characters' gender attributes significantly different. But males

did have more variance in their perceptions. The females were more consistent in their perceptions, while men tended to have more varied opinions. Males that watch *Modern Family* may have certain characteristics that differ from non-viewer males, which may then keep their mean scores statistically similar to females. For example, perhaps males and females that watch the show do not value traditional heteronormative gender roles.

If a group of men with varying characteristics were exposed to the show, they may have an average score that is different than women in general. Future research may look into characteristics in men and women that contribute to their perceptions of other people's gender attributes. One characteristic may be how respondents perceive their own gender. For example, a respondent that identifies as high in masculinity may perceive others' gender attributes differently than another respondent that identifies their own attributes as being less masculine. Hodson et al. (2009) examined a similar variable, level of self-identification as a heterosexual. These other variables could have been a control used in this study to compare viewers and non-viewers and deserve further research attention.

PSI is something that may include all types of viewers and was addressed in RQ2. This contact with the couple in *Modern Family* did not have a meaningful interaction with exposure. This interaction did not improve the significance of the relationship between exposure and attitudes toward gay men. In general, the audience had slightly more PSI with Cameron ($M=3.53$, $SD=.94$), compared to Mitchell ($M=3.29$, $SD=.85$). His character tends to be more comical. The combined PSI score ($M=6.81$, $SD=1.65$) did have a significant Beta coefficient in the hierarchical regression analysis before, $\beta=.30$, $p=.003$, and after the interaction variable was added, $\beta=.67$, $p=.009$ (See Table 7). If the

PSI with the couple was higher, maybe the variable would be more of a moderator. In general, the PSI had a mid-range average with these characters. A pre-test may have helped measure if there was enough PSI existing with these characters to have meaningful interactions with other variables. Other gay couples in other shows may have a higher combined PSI score.

There are several limitations within this study, including the use of the show *Modern Family*, operationalization of exposure, an inability to prove causation, and lack of generalizability. One major limitation is that these results are only for those viewers that watch the show *Modern Family*. Future research can address gender roles in homosexual men and lesbian couples across other television shows. Perhaps a content analysis could also provide insight into how gender roles are portrayed within numerous gay couples on television. A pilot test may have also shown that another show, or numerous programs, may have better fit the design of this study.

The instrument used to gauge exposure may also be refined. After the survey was open for participants to complete, key exposure questions were flagged as being faulty. The questions asking respondents how many hours they watched *Modern Family* per week and month did not take into account that the show was 30 minutes, or less than an hour, long. This may have been confusing for participants, creating invalid responses. This operationalization of the exposure variable was not used.

Since the ordinal variable was used, participants that were considered *Modern Family* viewers could have only seen the show once or only watched part of an episode. If someone only saw the show once or for a brief moment, their perceptions of these characters may not have had the time to mature like other viewers. It is also possible that

this casual viewer only encountered these characters for a couple of minutes because they were not the main focus of the episode they were exposed to. The most valid exposure would be how often a viewer came into contact with the couple.

This is also related to the fact that the research design is limited in its ability to prove causation. Having more control over how often a viewer was exposed to Cameron and Mitchell is most ideal in an experiment. The results of this study may have been different if having the control of an experiment was possible.

Another limitation is the sample itself. These findings may lack external validity. The sample is on the younger end of the voting population, and is limited to just heterosexual perspectives. A larger sample of viewers and non-viewers, including more homosexual comparisons, could possibly improve upon the findings.

It should also be noted that these results are only for perceptions of gay men. Any of the findings should not be generalized for lesbian populations. As Herek (2003) explains, lesbians and gay men should be two distinct targets of attitude research within the social sciences. The television characters and attitude measures were chosen and created specifically for perceptions of gay men.

These results are additions to further research on this current topic. Televised gay couples may be on the rise, so future research may learn more about the perceived gender roles in these modern relationships and how these couples interact with audience's overall acceptance of this group, and intentions to vote for same-sex marriage legislation. These attitudes and behaviors are related to many schemas in a person's brain. Whether it is religiosity, political affiliation, or previous real world contact, more research can address how to improve acceptance by overcoming these outlying factors. Changes in

legislation may start with exposing people to more relatable or realistic homosexual couples in real life and through media. Modern families are changing the pictures over American fireplaces. In the future, overall acceptance of gay men and lesbians and same-sex marriage liberties may change as well.

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Appendix A

Modern Family exposure

Have you ever watched the ABC television show *Modern Family*?

Which statement best describes your viewership of *Modern Family*?

I watch the show more than once a week.

I watch the show once every week.

I watch the show three times a month.

I watch the show two times a month.

I watch the show once a month.

On average, how often do you view *Modern Family* per week? Hours

On average, how often do you view *Modern Family* per Month? Hours

On average, how often do you watch television per week? Hours

Appendix B

Personal Attributes Questionnaire

Male Valued

1. Cameron Tucker is independent.
2. Cameron Tucker is not easily influenced.
3. Cameron Tucker is good at sports.
4. Cameron Tucker is not excitable.
5. Cameron Tucker is active.
6. Cameron Tucker is competitive.
7. Cameron Tucker is skilled in business.
8. Cameron Tucker knows ways of the world.
9. Cameron Tucker is adventurous.
10. Cameron Tucker is outspoken.
11. Cameron Tucker is interested in sex.
12. Cameron Tucker makes decisions easily.
13. Cameron Tucker does not give up easily.
14. Cameron Tucker is outgoing.
15. Cameron Tucker acts as leader.
16. Cameron Tucker is intellectual.
17. Cameron Tucker is self-confident.
18. Cameron Tucker feels superior.
19. Cameron Tucker takes a stand.
20. Cameron Tucker is ambitious.

21. Cameron Tucker stands up under pressure
22. Cameron Tucker is forward.
23. Cameron Tucker is not timid.

Female Valued

1. Cameron Tucker is emotional.
2. Cameron Tucker is considerate.
3. Cameron Tucker does not hide emotions.
4. Cameron Tucker is grateful.
5. Cameron Tucker is devoted to others.
6. Cameron Tucker is tactful.
7. Cameron Tucker has a strong conscience.
8. Cameron Tucker is gentle.
9. Cameron Tucker is helpful to others.
10. Cameron Tucker is kind.
11. Cameron Tucker is aware of others' feelings.
12. Cameron Tucker is neat.
13. Cameron Tucker is creative.
14. Cameron Tucker is understanding.
15. Cameron Tucker is warm to others.
16. Cameron Tucker likes children
17. Cameron Tucker enjoys art and music.
18. Cameron Tucker expresses tender feelings.

Repeated for Mitchell Pritchett, along with a confirmation question
1=strongly disagree 5=strongly agree

Appendix C

PSI Scale

(COGNITIVE)

I would like to get to know a person like Cameron.

Cameron is like a real person to me.

(AFFECTIVE)

Sometimes I really loved Cameron for what he did.

If Cameron felt bad, I felt bad as well; if Cameron felt good, I felt good as well.

Repeated for Mitchell Pritchett

1=strongly disagree 5=strongly agree

Appendix D

Attitudes Toward Gay Men Scale

1. Same-sex couples should be allowed the same rights as heterosexual couples.
2. It is wrong for the government to treat same-sex couples differently than heterosexual couples.
3. Same-sex couples should be allowed to name each other as insurance beneficiaries.
4. Same-sex couples should be allowed to adopt children.
5. Same-sex couples should be allowed to share property ownership.
6. Businesses should include employee's same-sex partners in health benefits.
7. If someone cannot make a health decision for themselves, their same-sex partner should be allowed to make those decisions on their behalf.
8. Same-sex couples deserve the same protections as heterosexual couples.
9. Same-sex couples should be allowed to marry.
10. I am against same-sex marriage (R)
11. I oppose any law that would make it impossible for same-sex couples to marry.
12. It is morally wrong for same-sex couples to marry. (R)
13. Allowing same-sex couples to marry would improve society.
14. Allowing same-sex couples to marry will change society for the worse (R)
15. I am disgusted by the idea of same-sex couples marrying. (R)
16. I believe that religious institutions should perform same sex marriages.
17. I would be happy if same-sex couples were allowed to marry.
18. If invited, I would attend a same-sex marriage ceremony.

Additions

19. I think male homosexuals are disgusting. (R)

20. Male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in men.

21. Sex between two men is just plain wrong. (R)

1=strongly disagree

5=strongly agree

Appendix E

Voting Intentions Questionnaire

What would your voting behavior be on legislation:

*allowing gay and lesbian couples to enter into legal agreements with each other that would give them many of the same rights as married couples?

*allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally?

*prohibiting legally sanctioned marriages for same sex couples? (R)

protecting gays, lesbians, and transgendered with stronger hate crime laws?

seeking to eliminate employee and housing discrimination?

1=very likely to vote against

5=very likely to vote in favor

Appendix F

Demographic Information

What is your gender?

Male Female

What is your age?

What is your race or ethnicity?

Caucasian Black Hispanic or Latino Asian Other _____

What is your sexual orientation?

Heterosexual Gay Lesbian Bisexual

Which of these parties come closer to your view on social issues?

Republican Democrat Independent Libertarian None Other _____

Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?

more than once a week

once a week

once or twice a month

a few times a year

seldom

never

Do you have a family member that is a gay man?

Yes/No

Which best describes your previous contact with gay men?

I do not know any gay men personally.

I am acquainted with a gay man through a close friend or family member that knows him personally.

I know a gay man personally.

I have a few (3 or less) close gay friends or close coworkers.

I have more than three close gay friends or close coworkers.

Do you have a family member that is a lesbian?

Yes/No

Which best describes your previous contact with lesbians?

I do not know any lesbians personally.

I am acquainted with a lesbian through a close friend or family member that knows him personally.

I know a lesbian personally.

I have a few (3 or less) close lesbian friends or close coworkers.

I have more than three close lesbian friends or close coworkers.

Table 1
Modern Family Exposure

	#	% N	% Viewers
Never	157	64	
Once a Month	32	13	36
Twice a Month	6	2	7
Three Times a Month	9	4	10
Once a Week	39	16	44
> Once a Week	3	1	3

Table 2
Exposure and Attitudes Regression

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Constant	1.59	.22		<.001
Republican Affiliation	-.32	.15	-.12	.03
Democrat Affiliation	.30	.12	.14	.01
Church Attendance	.27	.04	.38	<.001
Previous Gay Male Contact	.30	.04	.34	<.001
Exposure	.15	.03	.22	<.001

Table 3
Exposure and Voting Intentions Regression

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Constant	1.21	.30		<.001
Republican Affiliation	-.58	.20	-.16	<.01
Democrat Affiliation	.40	.16	.14	.01
Church Attendance	.36	.05	.39	<.001
Previous Gay Male Contact	.33	.20	.29	<.001
Exposure	.16	.05	.18	.001

Table 4
Gender Attribute Differences and Attitudes Regression

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Constant	2.84	.38		<.01
Republican Affiliation	-.55	.23	-.25	.02
Democrat Affiliation	.17	.18	.10	.34
Church Attendance	.22	.06	.37	<.01
Previous Gay Male Contact	.16	.07	.22	.02
Difference	-.14	.10	-.14	.15

Table 5
Gender Attribute Differences and Voting Intentions Regression

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Constant	2.69	.52		<.01
Republican Affiliation	-.74	.31	-.24	.02
Democrat Affiliation	.29	.25	.12	.25
Church Attendance	.30	.08	.37	<.01
Previous Gay Male Contact	.16	.09	.16	.09
Difference	-.26	.13	-.18	.06

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations for Male and Female Perceptions of Characters' Male and Female Attributes

	Male Viewers	Female Viewers
Cameron Male	3.40 (.48)	3.31 (.51)
Cameron Female	4.07 (.51)	4.08 (.40)
Mitchell Male	3.57 (.48)	3.49 (.48)
Mitchell Female	3.86 (.53)	3.67 (.52)

Table 7
Before and After Hierarchical Regression With PSI and Exposure Interaction in Relation to Attitudes

	<i>B (SE)</i>
Constant	1.77 (.56) ***
Republican Affiliation	-.46 (.22) *
Democrat Affiliation	.13 (.17)
Church Attendance	.22 (.06) ****
Previous Gay Male Contact	.16 (.06) *
PSI Combined	.15 (.05) ***
Exposure	.001 (.07)
R^2	.33
+ $p \leq .10$; * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .005$; **** $p \leq .001$	
	<i>B (SE)</i>
Constant	.43 (1.01)
Republican Affiliation	-.40 (.22) +
Democrat Affiliation	.14 (.17)
Church Attendance	.22 (.06) ****
Previous Gay Male Contact	.17 (.06) **
PSI Combined	.33 (.12) **
Exposure	.37 (.24)
PSI X Exposure	-.05 (.03)
R^2	.02
+ $p \leq .10$; * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .005$; **** $p \leq .001$	

Table 8
Before and After Hierarchical Regression With Gender Differences and Exposure Interaction in Relation to Attitudes

	<i>B (SE)</i>
Constant	3.04 (.43) ****
Republican Affiliation	-.47 (.24) *
Democrat Affiliation	.07 (.18)
Church Attendance	.22 (.06) ****
Previous Gay Male Contact	.14 (.07) *
Gender	-.16 (.18)
Exposure	-.05 (.06)
R^2	.26
+ $p \leq .10$; * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .005$; **** $p \leq .001$	
	<i>B (SE)</i>
Constant	3.01 (.43) ****
Republican Affiliation	-.48 (.24) *
Democrat Affiliation	.06 (.18)
Church Attendance	.22 (.06) ****
Previous Gay Male Contact	.14 (.07) +
Gender	.09 (.48)
Exposure	-.02 (.07)
Gender X Exposure	-.07 (.13)
R^2	.003
+ $p \leq .10$; * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .005$; **** $p \leq .001$	

Table 9

Analysis of Covariance after Exposure Median Split for Split Viewers and Gender Interaction in Relation to Attitudes

Variables	Univariate $F(1,80)$
Covariates	
Republican Affiliation	4.30 *
Democrat Affiliation	.12
Church Attendance	13.30 ****
Previous Gay Male Contact	4.60 *
Main Effects	
Gender	.48
Split Viewers	.99
Two-way Interaction	
Gender X Split Viewers	.002

⁺ $p \leq .10$; * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .005$; **** $p \leq .001$