CHAPTER 7

Sexual Orientation and Self-Perception

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The awful confusion about homosexuality in American society is made evident by contrasting the depth and extent of antihomosexual attitudes against the prevalence of homosexual behavior.

It is clear that many people dislike homosexuals intensely (Churchill, 1967; Lehne, 1975; Levitt & Klassen, 1974; Morin & Garfinkle 1978; Weinberg, 1972). Levitt and Klassen (1974), for example, surveyed a large, representative sample of adults in the United States. The majority of respondents believed that homosexuality is sick, disgusting, and can cause the downfall of civilization. Sixty percent of the sample favored restricting jobs for homosexuals and outlawing homosexual behavior.

If laws against homosexual behavior were ever enforced, an incredible number of people would have to be locked up. Kinsey and his associates (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhart, 1953) reported that nearly 40% of all men and 30% of the women interviewed had engaged in homosexual behavior. Kinsey's definition of homosexual behavior was quite conservative: he did *not* count sexual play behavior which occurred before or during puberty; he counted only behaviors that involved direct genital manipulation and that resulted in sexual orgasm. When Kinsey included people who had homosexual fantasies but had never acted on them, he found that 50% of men and almost as many women had some degree of homosexual tendency.

If homosexuality is anathema to so many people, then a large number of

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them must experience a great deal of anxiety and uncertainty about their own sexual nature at some time in their lives. For some people this uncertainty is resolved rather quickly, one way or the other, by deciding that they are "gay" or "straight." But for others, the anxiety grows to pathological proportions and produces what is formally termed "sexual orientation disorder."

Deep consternation over one's sexual orientation is understandable, not only because of social attitudes toward homosexuality, but also because of the vastly different lifestyles homosexuals and heterosexuals are presumed to lead. Although many of these differences are imaginary, some are real. Will one date the opposite sex and someday take a spouse; or will one date the same sex and someday take a lover? How can a person decide which path is truer to his or her underlying sexual orientation? The answer to that question has an enormous number of ramifications for a person's self-identity, roles, and social behaviors.

In this chapter, we will outline a tentative model of the process by which people decide their sexual orientation. We will assume, like any good attribution theorist, that sexual orientation is not simply "known" but is inferred from data about one's own behavior, thoughts, and feelings. We will suggest that two sources of information about the self provide the primary inputs into the self-perception process—information about one's erotic impulses (as evidenced by one's sexual behavior and erotic fantasies) and information about one's gender characteristics (as evidenced by one's "masculine" and "feminine" behaviors and attributes). Finally, we will present data we have recently collected that bear on the role these two types of information play in self-attributions of sexual orientation.

Components of Sexual Orientation

Attribution theory (Kelley, 1967) and related self-perception theory (Bem, 1967) are predicated on the assumption that people do not have simple, direct knowledge of their attitudes, abilities, or dispositions. Instead, individuals infer their own attributes by observing their own behaviors and thoughts. People act like amateur psychologists (although not always like good psychologists) who diagnose themselves from the available evidence.

If, as we assume, people self-attribute their sexual orientation in this way, we might be able to understand the conclusions they arrive at by examining the information they infer from. A prerequisite to understanding how people decide their sexual orientations is to identify the sources of information that feed into

those decisions. Unfortunately, there has been no research to date that bears directly on this issue. Although we are fairly certain what people think *about* homosexuals, we do not know what people think homosexuality *is*, or for that matter what heterosexuality is.

Although we do not know what people in general think are the signs, symptoms, and distinguishing features of homosexuality, we do know what psychologists think. A survey of professional writing about homosexuality reveals two primary components of sexual orientation that have been measured, researched, and discussed—an individual's gender attributes (that is "masculinity" and "femininity") and an individual's erotic impulse (that is sexual fantasy and behavior). To the extent that psychological theory either reflects or molds popular opinion, then gender characteristics and erotic impulse may also be the two most important variables that people look to within themselves for some indication of their own sexual orientation. We will discuss these two components of sexual orientation separately.

Gender Characteristics

Oddly enough, the most widely discussed aspect of homosexuality has nothing to do with erotic sexuality *per se*, but instead involves attributes of gender. Sexual orientation is often associated with an individual's masculine or feminine identity. Sexual attraction to women is assumed to be fundamental to a masculine identity, and sexual attraction to men is assumed to be fundamental to a feminine identity. Homosexuality, therefore, is associated with gender inversion, that is, having or desiring to have characteristics of the opposite sex including attraction to one's own sex.

The presumed association between gender inversion and homosexuality is evident in the two most historically important theories of the causes of homosexuality—those of Krafft-Ebing (1965) and Freud (1959). Krafft-Ebing proposed that homosexuality is caused by the desire to be like the opposite sex in every possible way including dress, mannerisms, role in society, and choice of sexual stimuli. Freud posited that gender inversion and homosexuality stem from an overidentification with (or sometimes reaction formation against) the same-sex parent.

Neither Krafft-Ebing nor Freud bothered to explain how two homosexuals (let's say, for example, men) could ever coordinate a sexual act if both really want to be women. Do a pair of homosexual men think of themselves as women who are having a lesbian relationship? But then lesbians really want to be men. Or do homosexual men, who want to be women, desire copulation with homosexual women, who want to be men? But then that would be heterosexual

copulation with roles simply reversed. Despite these logical stumbling blocks, Krafft-Ebing's and Freud's theories became so popular that the term "inversion" is a commonly used synonym for homosexuality (Tripp, 1975).

Inversion theories of homosexuality are important both for their historical impact and for their influence on current thinking. The work of some contemporary psychologists continues to reflect the inversion idea (e.g., Bieber, 1962). Furthermore, as Constantinople (1973) points out, the two most widely used psychodiagnostic instruments for detecting homosexuality are really gender inversion scales. The Hsx Scale from the MMPI (Panton, 1960) draws most of its items from the Masculinity/Feminity scale of the MMPI. And the Terman Inversion Scale (Terman & Miles, 1936), as its name implies, is also composed mostly of gender-related items. Both scales were validated on samples of gender-inverted individuals and both are notoriously poor at identifying practicing homosexual individuals.

There is also evidence that current popular stereotypes about homosexuals incorporate the notion of gender inversion. MacDonald (1974) found that the extent of people's attitudes opposing homosexuals is directly related to the extent of their attitudes favoring traditional sex roles. In our own research (Storms, Stivers, Lambers, & Hill, 1977) we asked 80 college students to describe homosexual men and women on an open-ended questionnaire. Only 5% of the responses referred to specific sexual or erotic characteristics of homosexuals, 20% of the responses referred to characteristics unrelated to gender, and fully 75% of the responses described homosexuals in terms of inverted gender characteristics.

In another study (Storms, 1978) we further discovered that gender inversion is a firmly held role expectation for homosexual men that people resent having disconfirmed. In an impression-formation study, male and female college students expressed their liking for a college male target who was described as masculine or feminine and as heterosexual or homosexual. Not surprisingly, subjects liked the masculine heterosexual man considerably more than the feminine heterosexual man. But in sharp contrast, subjects liked the feminine homosexual man more than they liked the masculine homosexual man. We reasoned that this effect obtained because the masculine homosexual man, although he has the otherwise positive trait of masculinity, is guilty of violating the stereotypic role expectation that he should be feminine.

Given the abundant evidence that psychologists and laypersons alike subscribe to the notion that homosexuality relates to gender inversion, it seems reasonable that gender characteristics may be an important factor in self-attributions of homosexuality. If people believe that gender characteristics relate to sexual orientation, individuals may examine their own sense of masculinity and femininity as one clue to their underlying sexual orientation.

Erotic Impulse

While notions of gender inversion may still hold popular appeal, they are dubious as psychological theories. In more recent times, some investigators have argued that sexual orientation must be understood in terms of its basic erotic component, that it is primarily a sexual response to stimuli associated with members of one sex or the other. Homosexual, then, is merely the label we give to individuals whose own sex matches the sex of the stimuli that arouse their erotic response. Everything else that is associated with homosexuality, whether truly or falsely, is the result of stereotyping and social labeling (Tripp, 1976; Weinberg & Williams, 1974).

The work of Kinsey and his associates (Kinsey *et al.*, 1948; Kinsey *et al.*, 1953) has probably done more than any other to establish this view of homosexuality. Kinsey believed that sexual orientation should be described in terms of the basic empirical facts about the extent, type, and frequency of an individual's sexual behaviors and erotic fantasies. On the basis of the data collected, Kinsey proposed the then-revolutionary idea that sexual orientation is a continuum from homosexuality to heterosexuality, and that most people lie somewhere along that continuum rather than at either extreme.

Although Kinsey considered both erotic fantasy and sexual behavior in determining an individual's standing on the sexual orientation continuum, he placed considerably more emphasis on the role of erotic fantasy. Kinsey noted that an individual's actual sexual experiences can present a distorted picture of his or her sexual makeup, whereas erotic fantasies are more consistent with and central to underlying sexual orientation. Furthermore, erotic fantasies frequently appear more concordant with the individual's own view of his or her sexual identity.

Sexual behavior can be episodic and fortuitous, the product of unique circumstances and situational pressures. A particular sexual incident can overrepresent a very minor aspect of a person's underlying sexual orientation, or can even occur contrary to actual sexual desires. The ambiguous meaning of sexual behavior is evident in the common notions that a homosexual act does not necessarily imply a homosexual orientation, especially if the behavior occurs at specific times (during puberty or early adolescence), in specific places (prisons, all-male or all-female schools, and military barracks), or under specific circumstances (when "horny," drunk, and unable to obtain a member of the opposite sex).

Similarly, heterosexual behavior does not necessarily imply a heterosexual orientation. A large but unknown number of individuals are strongly oriented toward their own sex but remain "in their closets," date the opposite sex, and even get married. While leading an ostensibly heterosexual life, these people (especially men, it would seem) may obtain frequent homosexual gratification in

such places as public restrooms. Humphries (1970) surveyed the clientele of several public restrooms (called "tearooms") known for homosexual activity. Over half of the men who visited these tearooms for homosexual contacts were married.[1]

In contrast to the extremely complex determinants and possible interpretations of sexual behavior, erotic fantasy may be a purer expression of true sexual orientation. Fantasies are less subject to public scrutiny and, therefore, influence. Thus, fantasies are less likely to be monitored and controlled (assuming they are controllable, which is debatable) by the individual. Erotic fantasies occur more frequently and across a wider variety of situations than do sexual behaviors. In general, then, erotic fantasy may be a more direct expression of erotic impulse. Finally, people may base their own sexual identities more on fantasy than behavior. Money and Tucker (1975) argue that self-awareness of sexual orientation is developed during puberty as individuals observe the contents of their earliest sexual dreams and masturbation fantasies. In our own studies we have interviewed a number of men who claim to be heterosexual or homosexual despite having sexual contacts in the opposite mode. Frequently they will report having fantasized about the sex of their preference, rather than the sex of their partner, during these contacts.

We would propose, then, to include erotic fantasy as the second input variable in our tentative model of the self-attribution process. We would propose that individuals observe and assimilate information about their gender characteristics and their erotic fantasies, and from that information infer their underlying sexual orientation. In the next section of this chapter, we will discuss some exploratory research we have conducted to test this model.

Preliminary Research on the Self-Attribution Model

As an initial test of the self-attribution model, we surveyed a large sample of college undergraduates about their gender characteristics, erotic fantasies, and

[1] Incidentally, Humphrey's finding sheds an interesting light on the notion that homosexual contacts are fleeting, promiscuous, and unsatisfying (as suggested by Reuben, 1971). This type of homosexual behavior may be unique to those individuals who are desperate to maintain a heterosexual facade and not at all characteristic of adjusted homosexuals. In general, this phenomenon may typify a number of self-fulfilling prophesies. Negative stereotypes about homosexuals (they are lonely, have unstable relationships and promiscuous sex) can produce social reactions against homosexuals (outlawing homosexual behavior and marriage) that can produce unhealthy attitudes within homosexuals (fear, guilt, secretiveness) that can contribute to the very behaviors the stereotypes describe.

sexual orientation self-attributions to see how well the first two variables would predict the third.

The first step in this project was selecting the instruments by which these variables could be measured. For the outcome variable, self-attributions, the choice of measures was simple. We presented and explained Kinsey's 7-point scale and asked subjects where they would assign themselves. In addition, we asked subjects which of the following labels they would give to themselves if they had to choose—"straight," "bisexual," or "gay." In fact, out of 185 subjects, there was a perfect correspondence between Kinsey self-ratings and our three labels. All subjects who placed themselves on the first third of the Kinsey scale also labeled themselves "straight"; all subjects who placed themselves on the middle third of the Kinsey scale labeled themselves "bisexual"; and all subjects who placed themselves on the last third of the Kinsey scale called themselves "gay." For simplicity, we performed all our analyses using the simpler, tripartite label measure.

Selecting a suitable measure of the first input variable, gender characteristics, was made more complicated by recent advances in research on masculinity and femininity. In a review of this literature, Constantinople (1973) points out that past theorists and researchers thought of masculinity and femininity as opposite ends of a unidimensional continuum. One implication of a unidimensional construct is that to the degree one is more masculine, one must be less feminine, and vice versa. But internal analyses of masculinity-femininity scales in combination with other data suggested that masculinity and femininity are not perfectly correlated. Instead, masculinity and femininity seem to operate as two separate dimensions; people can be low on both, high on both, or high on one and low on the other.

Evidence is mounting rapidly that a two-dimensional concept of masculinity and femininity is more valid, accurate, and useful. Two large research programs are presently investigating the bidimensionality of masculinity and femininity (Bem, 1974; Spence & Helmreich, 1978). Both research projects have developed and validated bidimensional scales of gender attributes. For a variety of reasons which are tangential to our present discussion, we selected the Spence and Helmreich (1978) instrument, the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) as the measure of gender characteristics in our initial research. The PAQ contains 24 items asking prople about their behaviors, feelings, and personal characteristics. Of these items 8 form a masculinity scale and 8 form a femininity scale. Subjects' scores on each scale are compared to normative statistics and are coded as above or below the population median for both sexes on each scale. On the basis of these median splits, subjects are then classified into one of four gender attribute categories: traditional masculine (high score on the masculine scale and low on the feminine), traditional feminine (high on feminine, low on masculine), androgynous (high on both scales), or undifferentiated (low on both scales).

For a measure of our second input variable, erotic fantasies, the literature provided us with no established instrument. Kinsey and his co-workers (Kinsey *et al.*, 1948; Kinsey *et al.*, 1953) are the only individuals who have done substantial research on erotic fantasies and sexual orientation, and they used a complicated interview methodology that would be impractical for our purposes. Before we could proceed any further, it was necessary to develop our own questionnaire measure of erotic fantasies.

In considering how to construct an erotic fantasies scale, we noted the parallel between the Kinsey sexual orientation scale and past research on masculinity-femininity. The Kinsey unidimensional continuum of sexual preference was an earth-shaking conceptual breakthrough in its day. But now it may be outmoded in exactly the same way that old masculinity-femininity scales are outmoded. Heterosexuality and homosexuality, like masculinity and femininity, may be two separate dimensions.

A two-dimensional conceptualization of erotic impulse has immediate intuitive appeal. Just as in Spence and Helmreich's (1978) work, it suggests a matrix of four erotic orientation categories: heteroerotic (people who are high on heteroerotic fantasy and low on homoerotic fantasy), homoerotic (high on homoerotic fantasy, low on heteroerotic), ambierotic (high on both), and anerotic (low on both).

A bidimensional construct of erotic orientation has at least two possible advantages over a unidimensional construct. First, a two-dimension matrix creates a category for asexual individuals, who do not fit anywhere on the Kinsey scale. Second, a two-dimensional system implies a different view of bisexual individuals. On a unidimensional scale a person loses degrees of one quality as he or she moves toward the other end of the scale; thus bisexuals on the Kinsey scale are seen as half heterosexual and half homosexual, or a compromise somewhere between the two. But on a two-dimensional map, bisexuals are those individuals who are *high* on both homoerotic and heteroerotic orientation, not *medium* on both.

In our own research, we have collected data that suggest that bisexuals are extremely high on both homoeroticism and heteroeroticism (Storms *et al.*, 1977). We asked a class of 73 male and female college students to report the extent and frequency of their homoerotic and heteroerotic fantasies on two 6-point scales (0 = none to 5 = very frequently). The 11 subjects who labeled themselves bisexual reported as much heteroerotic fantasy (4.27) as the 57 heterosexuals (4.53), both groups reporting more than the 5 homosexual subjects (3.20).[2] Similarly, the bisexuals reported as much homoerotic fantasy (4.36) as the homosexuals (4.80), both groups reporting more than the heterosexuals

[2] Significant at $p < .05$, by two-tailed t-tests using an error term based on the overall MS-within adjusted for each pair of unequal ns.

(1.67). It would be incorrect, given these data, to think of bisexual individuals as having moderate amounts of erotic fantasy somewhere between those of heterosexuals and homosexuals. Instead, bisexuals experience large amounts of both types of sexual fantasy, in concurrence with the notion that bisexuals are high on two separate dimensions of erotic orientation.

Given the plausibility of separate dimensions for homoeroticism and heteroeroticism, we constructed a two-scale erotic fantasy questionnaire, called EROS (Erotic Response and Orientation Scales). Each scale on EROS described eight basic types of erotic fantasy experiences including, for example, thinking that another person is sexually attractive, thinking about having sex with another person, daydreaming about sex, and masturbating while thinking about sex. On one scale, each of the eight erotic items was described with men as the object of the fantasy (the androerotic scale). On the other scale, women were described as the object of the fantasy (the gynoerotic scale). On each item, subjects were asked how often they had had that erotic fantasy experience, from "never" to "almost daily."

Before EROS was used to test the self-attribution model, it was first subjected to a pilot study to ascertain its basic psychometric properties. EROS was administered to 70 college students (31 men and 39 women) in two lower-level psychology courses. Subjects' responses on each of the two scales were treated to Guttman Scalogram analyses. Those analyses first revealed that the most valid way of scoring each item was dichotomously, with a score of 0 for each item the subject reported never having experienced and a score of 1 for each item the subject reported having experienced at least occasionally. The Guttman analyses indicated that this way of scoring produced scales that were internally reliable (coefficients of reproducibility were .935 and .917 for the androerotic and gynoerotic scales, respectively) and internally valid in the sense of being coherent and cumulative (coefficients of scalability were .701 and .713).

Once we were assured of having internally reliable and valid scales, our next concern was how to use the scales to classify subjects into the four erotic orientation categories of heteroerotic, homoerotic, ambierotic, and anerotic. Again, following Spence and Helmreich's (1978) lead, we calculated the overall medians on each scale by averaging the medians of female subjects and male subjects. This procedure produced a midpoint of 6.5 on the androerotic scale and 5.5 on the gynoerotic scale. Female subjects who scored above the androerotic midpoint and below the gynoerotic midpoint, and male subjects who scored below the androerotic midpoint and above the gynoerotic midpoint, were classified as heteroerotic. Women below the androerotic and above the gynoerotic midpoints, and men above the androerotic and below the gynoerotic midpoints, were classified as homoerotic. All subjects above both midpoints were classified as ambierotic, and all subjects below both midpoints were classified as anerotic.

The distribution of subjects across the four erotic categories was calculated next and the results are presented in Figure 1. The patterns thus produced were highly encouraging in that they closely match the Kinsey (Kinsey *et al.*, 1948; Kinsey *et al.*, 1953) data on the distribution of sexual orientations in the population. Kinsey reported that approximately 4% of the population is exclusively homosexual and EROS identified 4%-5% of our sample as homoerotic. They reported that approximately 60% of the population is exclusively heterosexual, and EROS identified 64% of our sample as heteroerotic. Finally, they reported that about 35% of the population has a mixed heterosexual and homosexual orientation. The Kinsey studies did not provide data to distinguish between bisexuals and asexuals. If we assume that since asexuals would show no clear heterosexual or homosexual preference they may have been counted as bisexuals in the Kinsey research, then the Kinsey figure of 35% comes close to the total percentage of anerotics (5%) and ambierotics (27%) identified by EROS.

Since EROS appeared to have satisfactory internal psychometric properties and some indication of external validity, it was adopted as a tentative measure of erotic orientation for our preliminary study of sexual orientation self-attributions. The 70 EROS pilot subjects also received the other two key measures, the PAQ measure of gender characteristics and the self-attribution questions, and were included in the main study. But it was also desirable to increase the number of homosexual individuals in the main study. Therefore, an additional 115 subjects (55 men and 60 women) were recruited from campus gay student organizations.

In summary, in the main study 185 college students (86 men and 99 women) were given a battery of scales designed to measure their gender characteristics, erotic fantasies, and sexual orientation self-attributions. The hypotheses to be tested were: (1) that subjects with inverted gender characteristics (i.e., feminine men and masculine women) would label themselves "gay" whereas subjects with noninverted gender characteristics would label themselves "straight"; and (2) that subjects with homoerotic fantasies would label themselves "gay" whereas subjects with heteroerotic fantasies would label themselves "straight."

To test the first hypothesis, that gender characteristics relate to self-attributions of sexual orientation, subjects' classifications on the PAQ were compared to their self-assigned sexual orientation labels in separate chi-square analyses for men and women.[3] As shown in the top part of Table I, no relationship was obtained between these two variables, $\chi^2(6) = 5.76$, ns., and 6.95, ns., for men and women respectively. For men, the percentage of gender-inverted (feminine) subjects who called themselves gay (42%) was slightly higher than the percentage of gender-appropriate (masculine) subjects who called themselves gay (36%); but overall, androgynous men were the most likely to ascribe the

[3] Due to the nonparametric nature of the PAQ, EROS, and self-attribution classification systems, all our analyses were limited to chi squares.

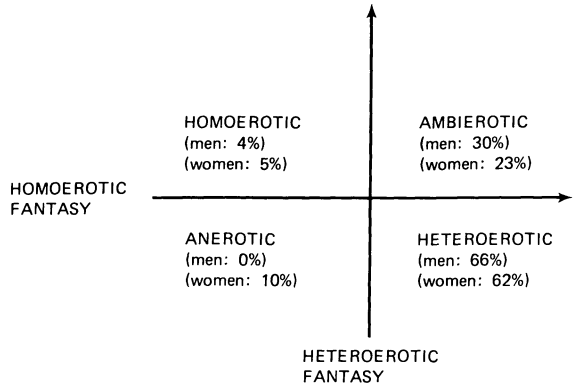

Fig. 1. Classification of erotic fantasy orientations: homoerotic fantasy = androerotic scale scores for men and gynoerotic scale scores for women; heteroerotic fantasy = gynoerotic scale scores for men and androerotic scale scores for women. The midpoint is based on the mean of men's and women's medians on each scale. Percentages shown are of the normative sample of 31 men and 39 women.

homosexual label to themselves (50%). For women, not one single gender-inverted (masculine) subject labeled herself gay.[4]

To test the second hypothesis, that erotic fantasies relate to self-attributions of sexual orientation, subjects' EROS classifications were compared to their sexual orientation self-labels in separate chi-square analyses for men and women. As the bottom part of Table I shows, the degree of association between erotic fantasies and sexual orientation self-attributions was extremely high and in the predicted pattern. All the homoerotic men and 80% of the homoerotic women labeled themselves "gay." All the heteroerotic men and 90% of the heteroerotic women labeled themselves "straight." Anerotic subjects, although there were very few of them, all labeled themselves "straight." Finally, ambierotic subjects were considerably more divided across the three self-attribution categories. Despite the ambiguity of the ambierotics, the total pattern produced highly significant chi squares for men and women, $\chi^2(6) = 71.49$ and 68.70, both $ps < .001$.

It appears that for homoerotic and heteroerotic individuals, their erotic fantasies alone account almost totally for their sexual orientation self-attributions, and gender characteristics (at least as measured by the PAQ) are largely irrelevant. For ambierotic individuals, however, sexual fantasies do not account for their

[4] The apparent sex difference between androgynous men (who tended to label themselves "gay") and androgynous women (who tended to label themselves "straight") can be misleading. Some aspect of the sampling procedure, which was deliberately rigged to include more homosexuals, may have produced this difference.

Table I. Cross-Tabulation of Gender Characteristics (PAQ) and Erotic Orientation (EROS) by Sexual Orientation Self-Attributions

	Percentage men's self-attributions[a]			Percentage women's self-attributions[a]		
	Straight	Bisexual	Gay	Straight	Bisexual	Gay
Gender characteristics						
Androgynous	33.3 (8)	16.7 (4)	50 (12)	54.1 (20)	18.9 (7)	27 (10)
Feminine	47.4 (9)	10.5 (2)	42.1 (8)	77.8 (21)	11.1 (3)	11.1 (3)
Masculine	57.1 (8)	7.1 (1)	35.7 (5)	75 (6)	25 (2)	0
Undifferentiated	66.7 (14)	4.8 (1)	28.6 (6)	73.7 (14)	10.5 (2)	15.8 (3)
Erotic orientations						
Ambierotic	15.8 (6)	23.7 (9)	60.5 (23)	45.5 (15)	33.3 (11)	21.2 (7)
Heteroerotic	100 (33)	0	0	97.7 (43)	2.3 (1)	0
Homoerotic	0	0	100 (12)	6.7 (1)	13.3 (2)	80 (12)
Anerotic	100 (1)	0	0	100 (5)	0	0

[a] Percentages are across rows; raw frequencies are in parentheses. Data represent total sample of 86 men and 99 women excluding missing observations from 2 men and 2 women on erotic orientation and 8 women on gender characteristics.

self-attributions. At this point we suspected that perhaps ambierotic subjects made some use of gender characteristics information in determining their self-attributions, but that this relationship was obscured in the earlier overall analysis of PAQ scores. However, a supplementary chi-square analysis of PAQ scores and sexual orientation self-attributions for ambierotic subjects alone produced the same results as the earlier overall analysis—no relationship between gender characteristics and self-attributions.

Current Status of the Sexual Orientation Self-Attribution Model

Initially we proposed that people infer their sexual orientation from information about their gender characteristics and erotic fantasies. The data we have collected so far support half of that model.

Clearly a strong association exists between erotic orientation and self-attributed sexual orientation. If an individual's erotic fantasies are predominantly oriented toward his or her own sex, that individual will think of himself or herself as gay (although perhaps with some reluctance or anxiety, given the current social climate).

On the other hand, if an individual experiences a nearly equal mix of fantasies about both sexes, that information is not sufficient to attribute sexual orientation, otherwise most ambierotics would label themselves bisexual. In our entire study, only 9 men (all of them ambierotic) and 14 women (11 of them ambierotic) chose the bisexual label. The reluctance to call oneself bisexual may stem from poorly defined roles, lifestyles, social institutions, and subcultures for bisexuals in our society. Although Kinsey and co-workers (Kinsey *et al.*, 1948; Kinsey *et al.*, 1953) would argue that most of us are, in fact, bisexual to some degree, we may experience considerable social pressure to make a more definite choice between homosexuality and heterosexuality.

Some individuals who have strong ambierotic tendencies may accept the bisexual label, but most of them probably seek out additional information to resolve their dilemma. The present study provides no indication of what that additional information might be. Merely as speculation, we would suggest that actual sexual experiences may provide the key to understanding an ambierotic's choice of label. For a variety of reasons, perhaps many of them circumstantial, an ambierotic individual may accumulate a greater number of homosexual or heterosexual experiences. In turn, that may lead to a greater likelihood of forming affectional and social bonds with members of one sex or the other, and developing into a more established straight or gay lifestyle. Obviously, the collection of sexual experience data is a crucial step to take next in this research.

The present data give no support to the hypothesis that gender characteristics information plays a role in the self-attribution process, either for ambierotic individuals or for any of the other erotic orientation groups. It may be that the hypothesis is simply untrue, despite the abundant evidence that people believe homosexuality relates to gender inversion.

On the other hand, it may be that the specific measure of gender characteristics used in this study, Spence and Helmreich's (1978) PAQ, does not reflect the type of gender characteristics information that people perceive as relevant to sexual orientation. In fact, the items on the PAQ are rather subtle. They may not be perceived by subjects as related to gender characteristics, and they may be irrelevant to subjects' *self-concepts* of masculinity and femininity. When we selected the PAQ for our research, we may have failed to distinguish between *gender attributes* (or "objective" characteristics of masculinity and femininity) and *sex-role identity* (or self-perceptions of masculinity and femininity). In retrospect, the PAQ is probably more related to the former construct while our model is more related to the latter.

Nevertheless, the information we gained from the PAQ is not wasted. It is interesting in its own right that this more objective measure of masculine and feminine attributes did not correspond to sexual orientation labels for any of our subjects. That is damaging empirical evidence against the broadly assumed relationship between gender characteristics and sexual orientation. It will be paradoxical if future research shows that this assumption still plays a role in the self-perception process simply because the assumption is widely believed.

A final comment is needed about the issue of causality in the self-attribution model. For the sake of exposition, we have discussed the model in terms of inputs (sex-role identity and erotic fantasy information) and outputs (sexual orientation self-attributions), which suggests a definite causal sequence. But as Byrne (1977) recently argued, human sexual development is probably cyclical. While sex-role identities and erotic fantasies may contribute to self-attributions, self-attributions in turn may influence the development and perception of sex-role identities and erotic fantasies. Furthermore, actual sexual experiences, which we have discussed very little in this paper, may be both an input variable affecting self-attributions and an output variable affected by self-attributions. Obviously there is a great deat of conceptual slippage among the definitions of gender characteristics, sex-role identity, erotic orientation, sexual orientation, and sexual behavior. Considerable research is required to distinguish among and show relationships between these constructs before any causal directions can be specified.

Whatever patterns emerge from this research, one fact is clear. People in general are bound to be as uncertain about the meaning of sexual orientation as psychologists are. From that uncertainty, individuals will be fashioning self-

concepts that have enormous impact on their lifestyles, subculture memberships, and roles in society.

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