Don't tell me you are Gay: Coming out effects on attitudes towards homosexuals.

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Introduction

Coming out: self-disclosure of own sexual orientation

Direct coming out

➡ is explicit communication through self-categorization (i.e. "I am gay").

Indirect coming out

➡ communication by sharing other personal information (e.g., information about actual romantic relationship).

Button, 2001; Chrobot-Mason, Button, & DiClementi, 2001; Pachankis, 2007

Introduction

- Research examined mainly antecedents and consequences of Coming out.

- Little research has studied the event itself

- The present research aims to address this gap in the literature, exploring how the direct and indirect ways of coming out may affect attitudes toward a gay male target, within the social categorization framework.
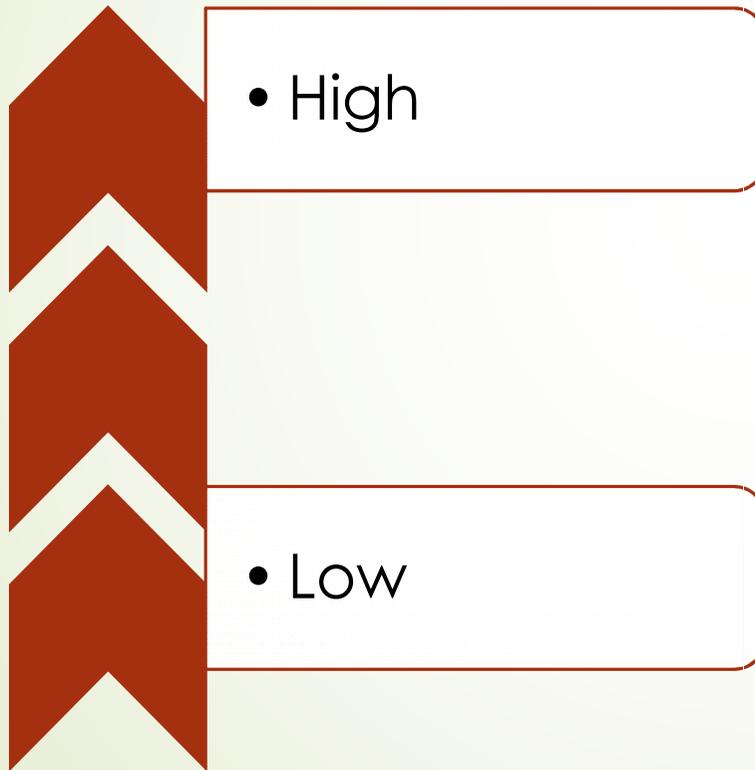
Herek, 1996, Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006

Social categorization

Social interaction

- Intergroup

- Interpersonal

Brewer & Miller, 1984; Tajfel, 1974; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987

Social categorization

Social categories salience

- High
- Low

Social interaction

- Intergroup
- Interpersonal

Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000; Brewer & Nakamura, 1984; Tajfel, 1974; Turner et al., 1987
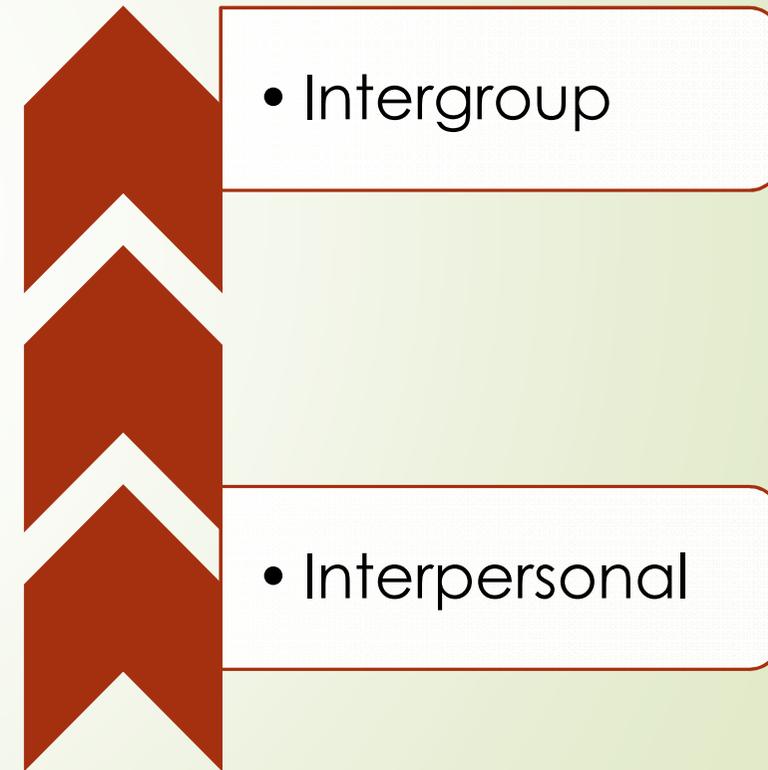
Social categorization

Social interaction

- Intergroup
- Interpersonal

Attitude

- Negative
- Positive

Brewer & Miller, 1984; Ensari & Miller, 2002, 2005; Ensari, Christian, Kuriyama, & Miller, 2012

Aims and hypothesis

- We argue that when a gay man comes out in a direct way through self-categorization (i.e., "I am gay"), the interaction may move from an interpersonal level to an intergroup level enhancing negative attitudes.

Hypothesis I

- Coming out in a direct way through self-categorization (i.e. "I am gay") would increase sexual orientation category salience and negative attitudes toward a gay male target.

Coming out	Category salience	Attitude
• Direct	• High	• Negative
• Indirect	• Low	• Positive
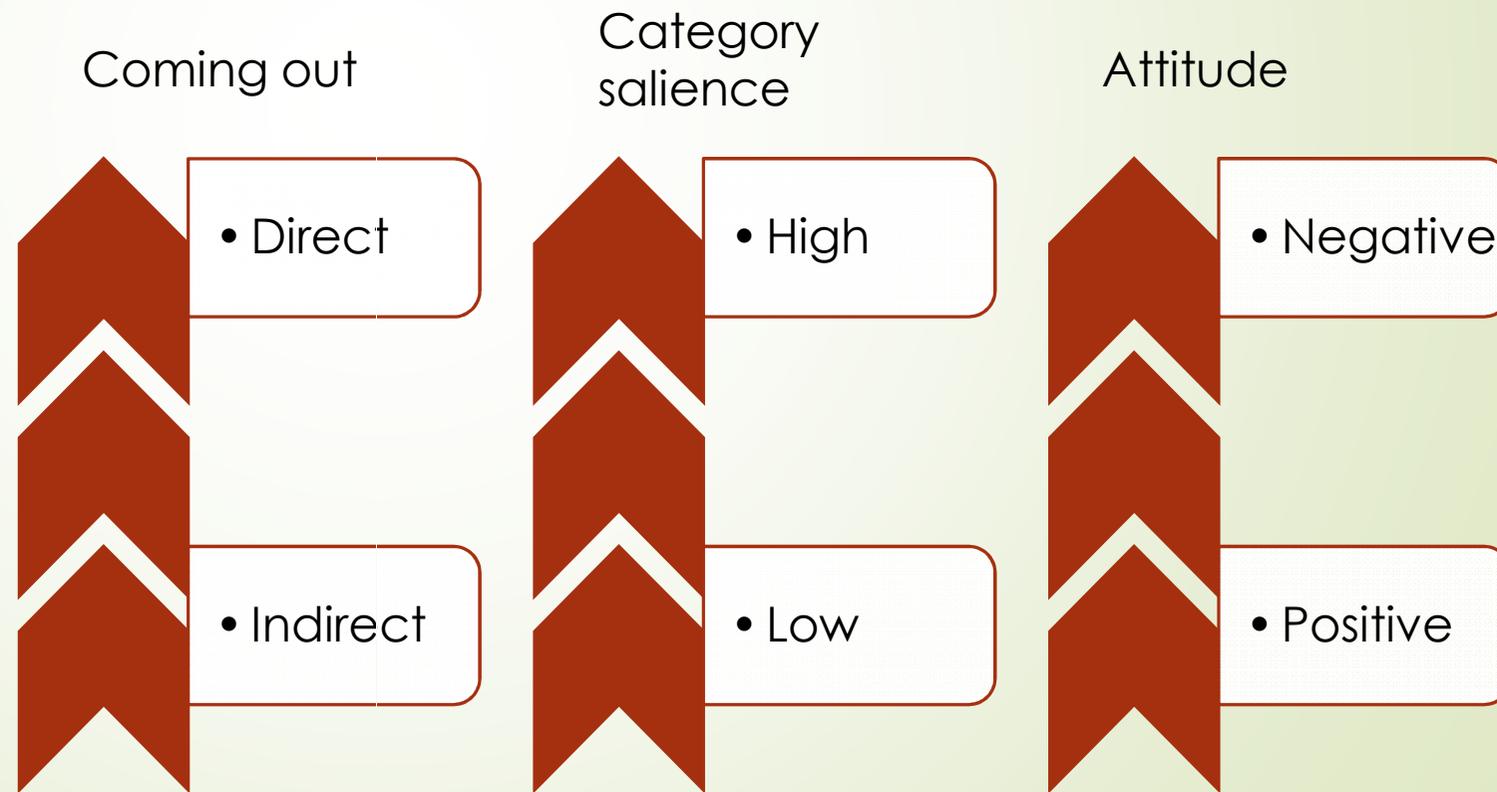
Hypothesis II

- The effect of direct coming out on negative attitudes toward a gay male ta[r]
  would be mediated by sexual orientation category salience.
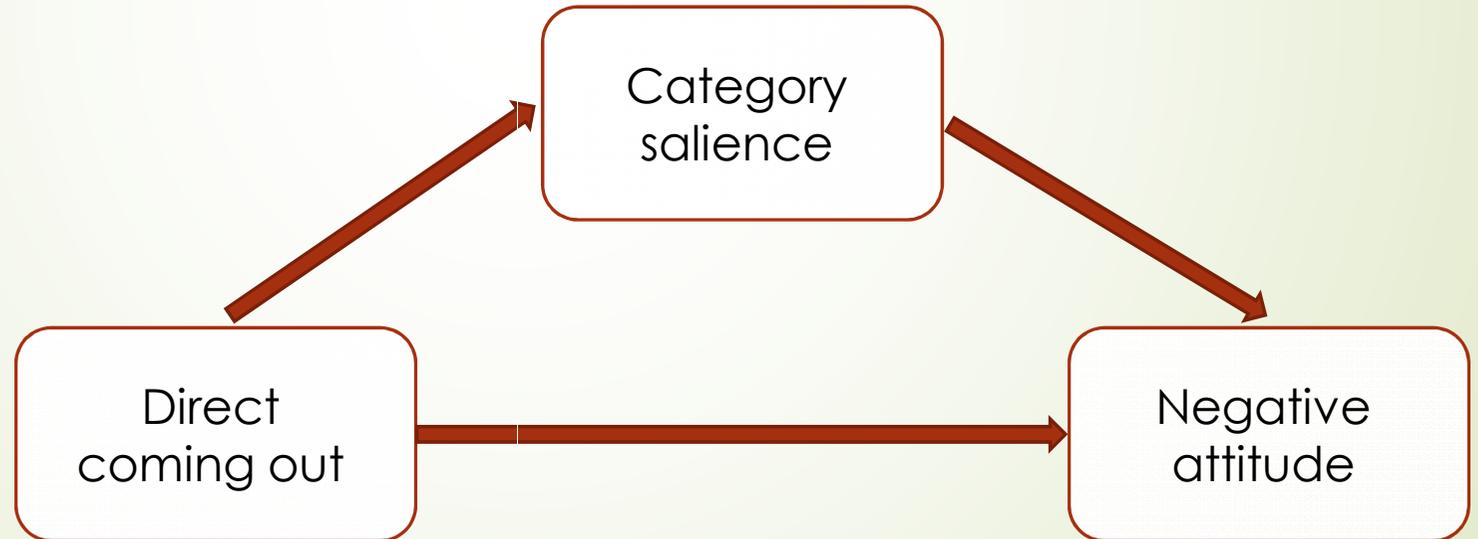
Method: Procedure

- We measured attitudes toward an (ostensibly) upcoming interaction with an unknown person.

- Participants were informed that:
  - they would be randomly assigned to a brief online interaction with an unknown partner.
  - they would fill in a brief survey about the upcoming interaction.

Partner profile page → Dependent measures

Buck & Plant, 2011; Buck, Plant, Ratcliff, Zielaskowski, & Boerner, 2013

Method: Participants

➡ Sample: 77 heterosexual males (Age: M=24.96; SD=4.73; range 19-47).

➡ Randomly assigned to one of the two conditions:

- Indirect coming out (n=40);
- Direct coming out (n=37).

Method: Materials

- *Profile page*. The profile description varied in relation to the two different conditions: Direct and Indirect.

- **Direct** coming out trough self-categorization included the phrase "I am gay", whereas the **Indirect** coming out condition did not.

"I am Marco, I am 24 years old. I live in Italy, and I'm in the final year of college for my Bachelor's degree. I study hard to get my degree. I am a friendly and truthful guy. I enjoy listening music, bicycling or swimming. Four years ago, while I was at a concert, I met my actual boyfriend. I plan to go to live with him as soon as possible. I spend my free time together with my friends and my boyfriend. We go to the pub, to the cinema, sometimes we simply stay at home playing cards".

Blashill & Powlishta, 2009; Liben & Bigler, 2002

Method: Salience Measures

- *Salience index*. We asked each participant to describe the target using up to six attributes. We assigned different values in relation to the use of "sexual orientation" category, and its positions, ranging from 1 (category sexual orientation not used at all) to 7 (category sexual orientation used in the first position). The higher the score, the greater the salience of sexual orientation.

- *Salience scale*. Five items measured salience of sexual orientation category (e.g., "How much his sexual orientation will matter during your upcoming interaction?"). The higher the score, the greater the salience of sexual orientation (a=.80).

Rohmer & Louvet, 2009; Voci & Hewstone, 2003; Harwood, Hewstone, Paolini, & Voci, 2005

Method: Attitude Measures

- *Interpersonal anxiety scale.* Six items to measure how participants felt (e.g., "awkward") about their upcoming interaction (a = .68). Higher scores indicate higher interpersonal anxiety.

- *Social contagion concerns.* Seven items (e.g., "I would worry that others will think I am gay if they know I am interacting with him") to measure concerns about being perceived as gay as a consequence of interacting with the profile target. Higher score indicate higher social contagion concerns (a = .72).

- *Background questions.*

Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Buck et al., 2013; Kinsey, Pomeroy & Martin, 1949
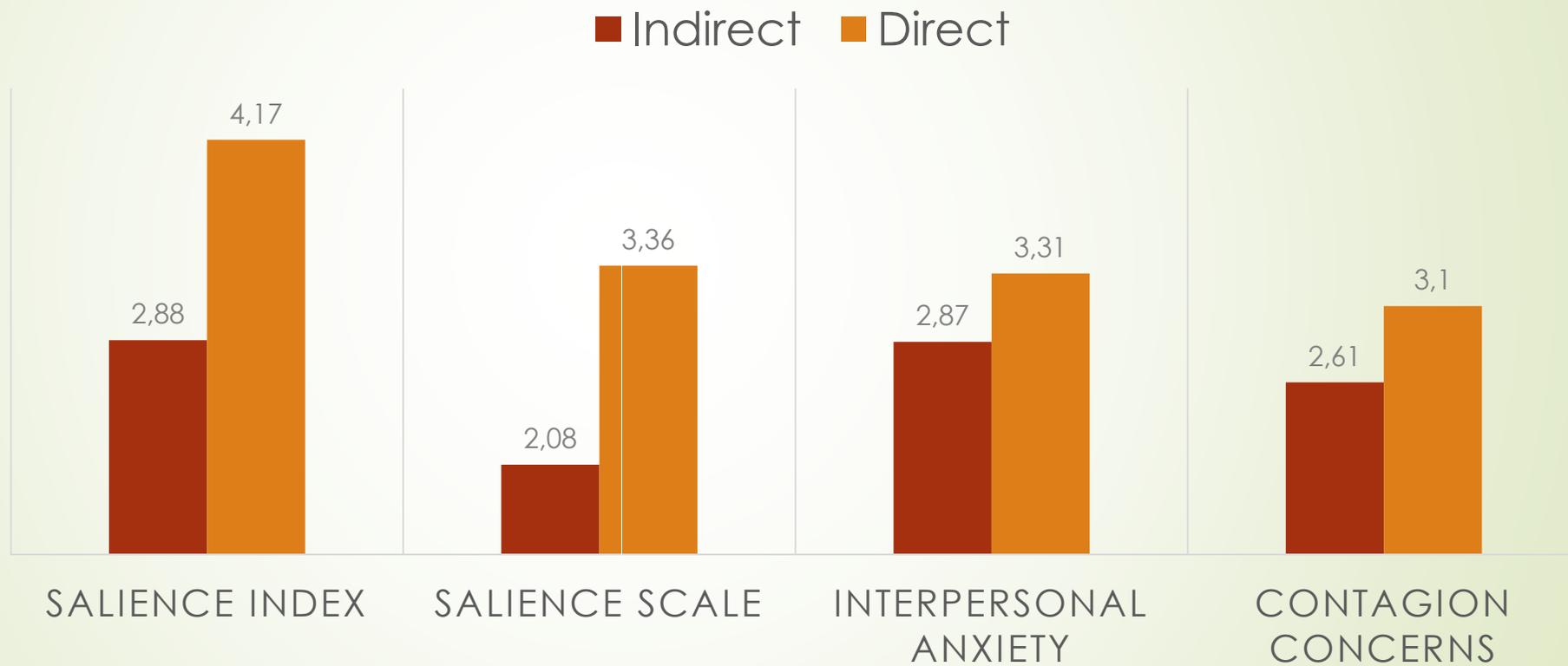
Results

MANOVA, , $F(4,72)=2.693$, $p=.038$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .87$, partial $\eta^2=.13$.
ANOVAs Salience index $F(1, 75) = 31.845$, $p=.008$; Salience scale $F(1, 75) = 7.936$, $p=.028$; Interpersonal anxiety $F(1, 75) = 3.715$, $p=.037$; Contagion concerns $F(1, 75) = 4.404$, $p=.042$

Results

- To test the hypothesis that Coming out (predictor variable) affects attitudes toward a gay male target (interpersonal anxiety, and contagion concerns as dependent variables) through category salience (salience scale as mediator) we used Preacher-Hayes bootstrap approach (10,000 resamples) to mediational analysis, since nonparametric bootstrap analyses are suitable for small samples.

- Since the predictor (Coming out) was a categorical variable, we created a dummy coded variable "Direct": the Indirect condition was coded 0 and the Direct condition was coded 1.
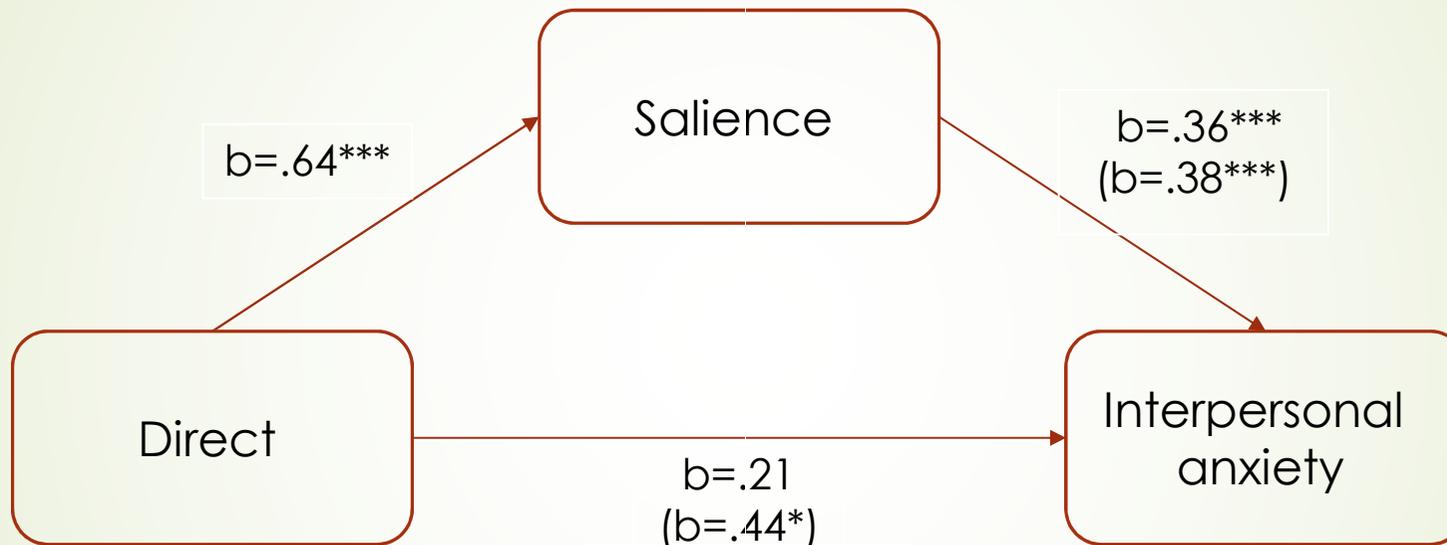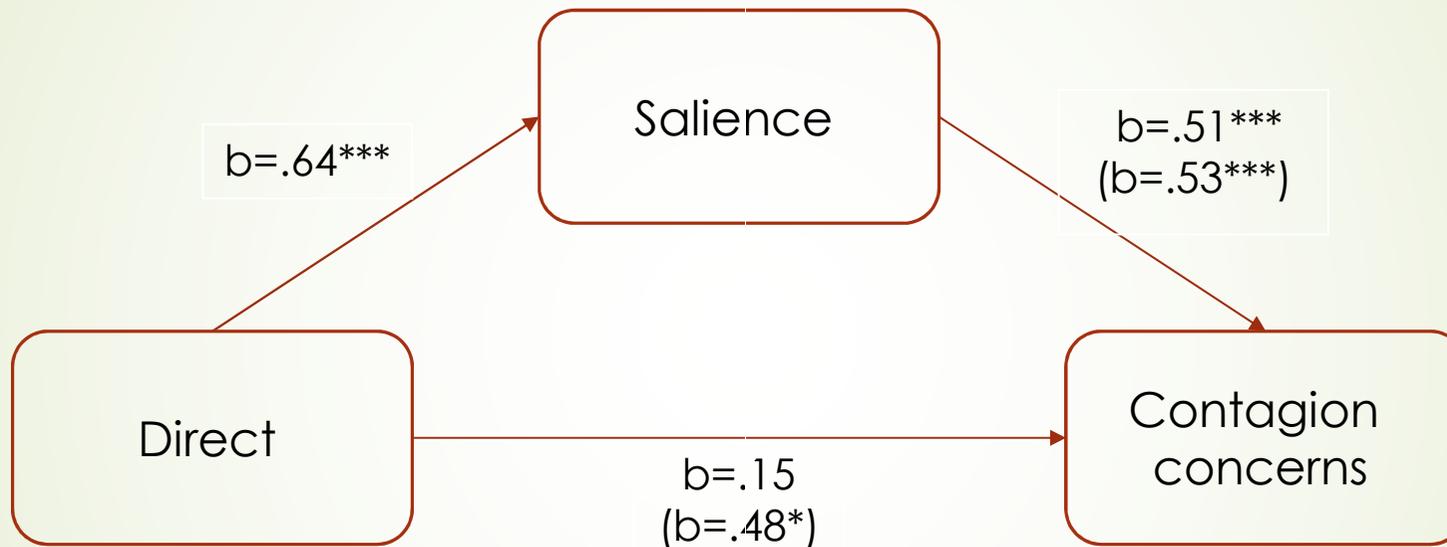
Hayes & Preacher, 2014; Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Hayes, 2009; Fritz & Mackinnon, 2007

Results

Note. Values without parentheses refers to b with all variables in the model, and values in parentheses refers to direct effects *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

The indirect effect (.25, SE=.11) of Direct on interpersonal anxiety did not include 0, 95% CI [.05, .51], thus confirming that category salience mediated the relationship between Direct (Indirect vs. Direct conditions) and interpersonal anxiety levels.

Results

Salience

b=.64***

b=.51***
(b=.53***)

Direct

Contagion concerns

b=.15
(b=.48*)

Note. Values without parentheses refers to b with all variables in the model, and values in parentheses refers to direct effects *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

The indirect effect (.33, SE=.15) of Direct on contagion concerns did not include 0, 95% CI [.06, .66], thus confirming that category salience mediated the relationship between Direct (Indirect vs. Direct conditions) and contagion concerns.

Discussions and Conclusions

- In line with our hypotheses, category salience was found to mediate the effect of coming out on negative attitudes toward a gay male target.

- This result is important because it directly addresses the suggestion that the direct way of coming out shifts the interaction from an interpersonal to an intergroup point, via enhancing category salience, thus supporting social categorization theory.

- Given the importance of coming out, and that most of the time gay men need to come out in a direct way (e.g., they are not in a romantic relationship), it is essential to focus on how to balance negative effects of a direct way to come out (e.g. through personalization).

Brewer & Miller, 1984; Tajfel, 1974; Turner et al., 1987

Discussions and Conclusions

- Our findings supported for the first time that coming out in a direct way through self categorization increased negative attitudes toward a gay male target, and the relationship between coming out and attitudes was mediated by salience of sexual orientation category.

- We also extended previous knowledge on the disclosure event, which so far has received little attention by researchers despite the importance of early interactions with outgroup members.

Kaufman & Libby, 2012; Buck & Plant, 2011; MacInnis & Hodson, 2014