

# Judgments of American English male talkers who are perceived to sound gay or heterosexual: Certain personality traits are associated with each group of talkers

Department of Psychology, University of North Carolina Pembroke

## Introduction and Objective

•As described by Campbell-Kibler (2011), linguistic styles allow for connections among clusters of acoustic features, personality traits, and group identity.

•For example, listeners associated /s/-fronting with gay male talkers. However, when utterances included both /s/-fronting and —ing, perception of other traits (e.g., smart and effeminate) became stronger.

•Other researchers also investigated which traits are associated with gay and heterosexual male talkers. Gaudio (1994) found that listeners connected masculinity with heterosexual talkers and femininity with gay speakers. Levon (2006) discovered a connection between gay talkers with friendliness and neatness, while heterosexual talkers are connected with aloofness and messiness.

•Tracy and Charlton (2016) discovered that gay talkers were more likely to be described as outgoing and stuck-up, while heterosexual talkers were more likely to be described as bored and sad. Both groups of talkers were described as mad and intelligent.

•The main objective of the current experiment was to assess how participants would rate different groups of speakers along those traits identified by Tracy and Charlton (2016).

### Experiment

•Stimuli. The utterances were a concatenated string of three monosyllabic CVC words (e.g., dose-wet-soap and sell-tone-niece). They were produced by four groups of talkers collected by Tracy, Bainter, and Satariano (2015).

- ·6 gay talkers perceived as gay-sounding
- ·6 gay talkers perceived as heterosexual-sounding
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- •There were 48 stimuli (2 utterances X 24 talkers).

Participants and Procedure. After hearing each utterance, 63 listeners indicated, using a 7-point scale, how strongly the talker was associated with one of eight personality traits (e.g., boring, confident, intelligent, mad, old, outgoing, sad, and stuck-up).

•For instance, listeners heard dose-wet-soap and indicated how sad the talker sounded (7=very sad; 1 = not sad).

Acknowledgements: The author wishes to thank Jonathon Godwin, Cesar Palacios, and Jason Shuping for their assistance in running participants, and Ashley Allen for her helpful feedback.

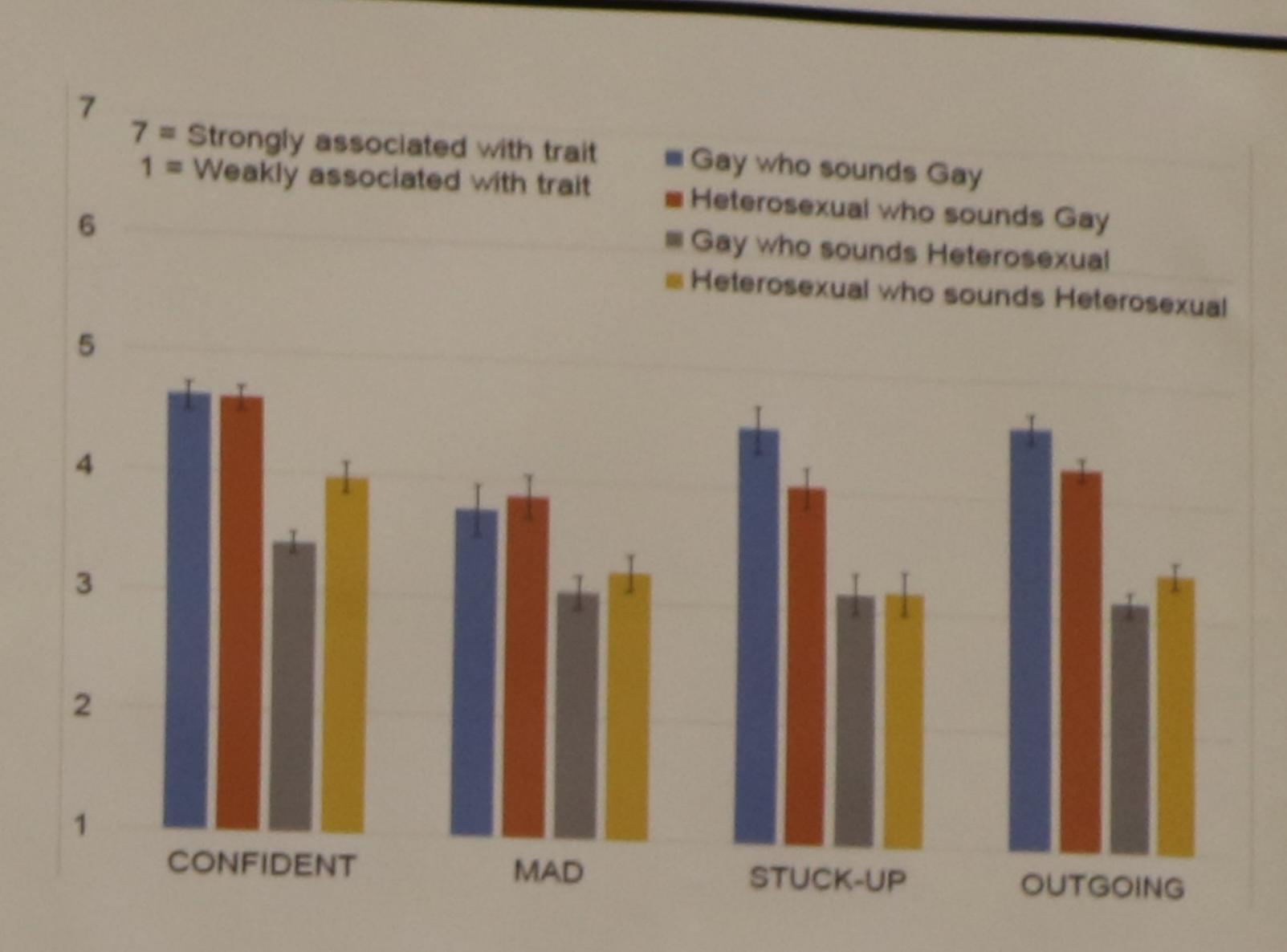
•During the experiment, the talkers' sexual orientation was not referenced.

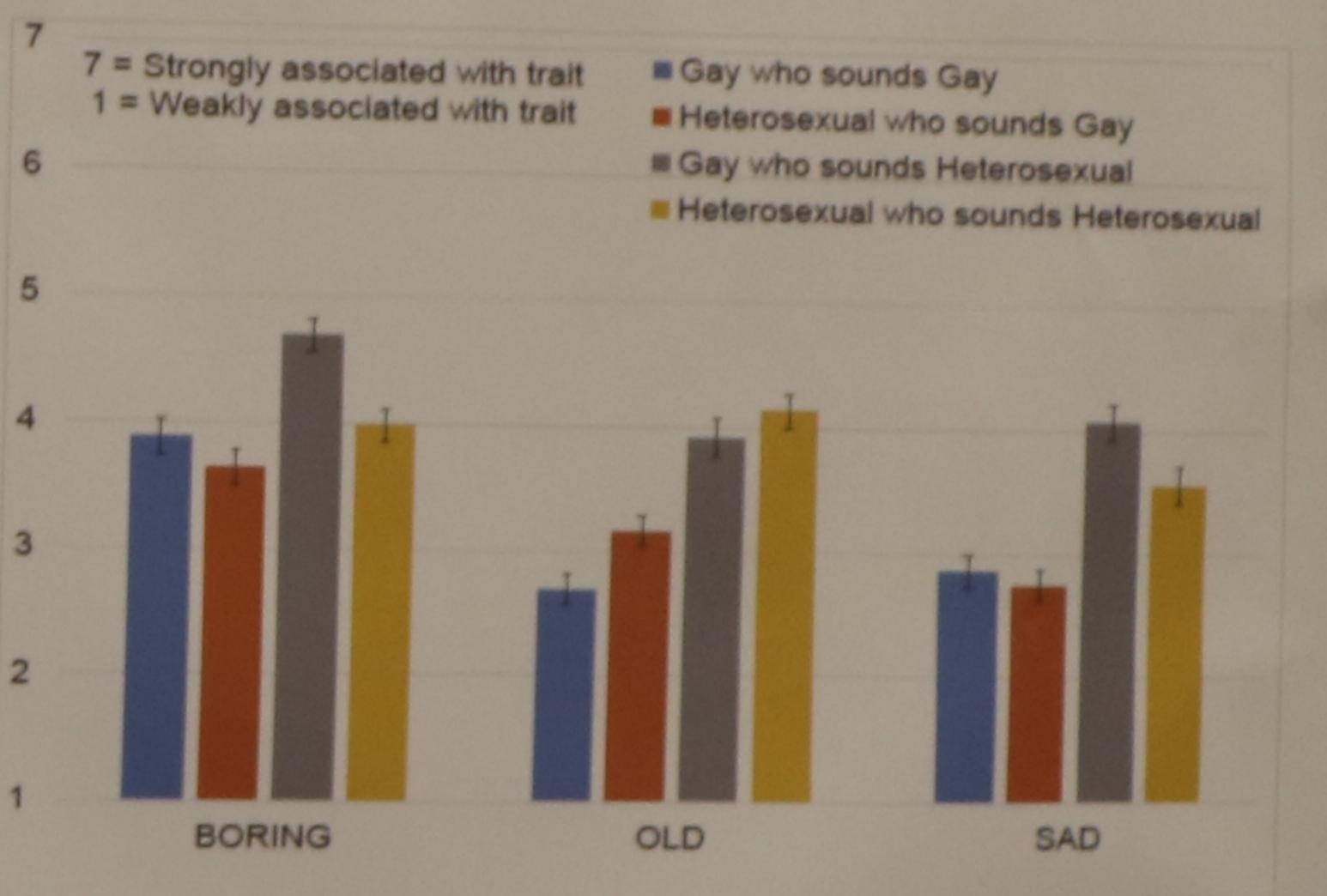
•Results. Gay and heterosexual talkers who were perceived as gay-sounding were rated as being significantly more confident, mad, stuck-up, and outgoing.

 Gay and heterosexual talkers who were perceived as heterosexual-sounding were rated as being significantly more boring, old, and sad.

•With respect to intelligence, there were no significant rating differences among the four groups of talkers.

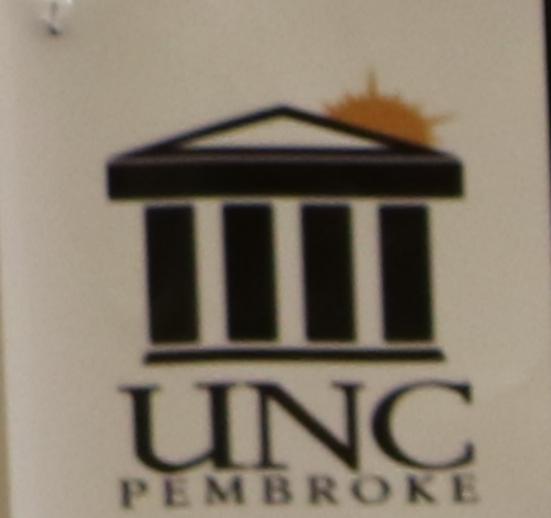
•Discussion. The results demonstrated that certain traits (e.g., confident, mad, stuck-up, and outgoing) are associated with gay-sounding talkers and other traits (e.g., boring, old, and sad) are associated with heterosexual-sounding talkers.





### Future Directions

- •Future experiments could investigate two further research questions.
- 1. Campbell-Kibler (2011) found that clusters of phones are connected with intelligence. It is unclear if other traits (e.g., stuck-up, boring) are associated with other clusters of phones.
- 2. If listeners are aware of the talker's sexual orientation, it is unclear if a stronger connection between sexual orientation and certain traits could emerge. For example, if listeners knew that a talker was gay, then they may perceive the talker as being more stuck-up. If listeners did not know that a talker was gay, then they may perceive the talker as being less stuck-up.



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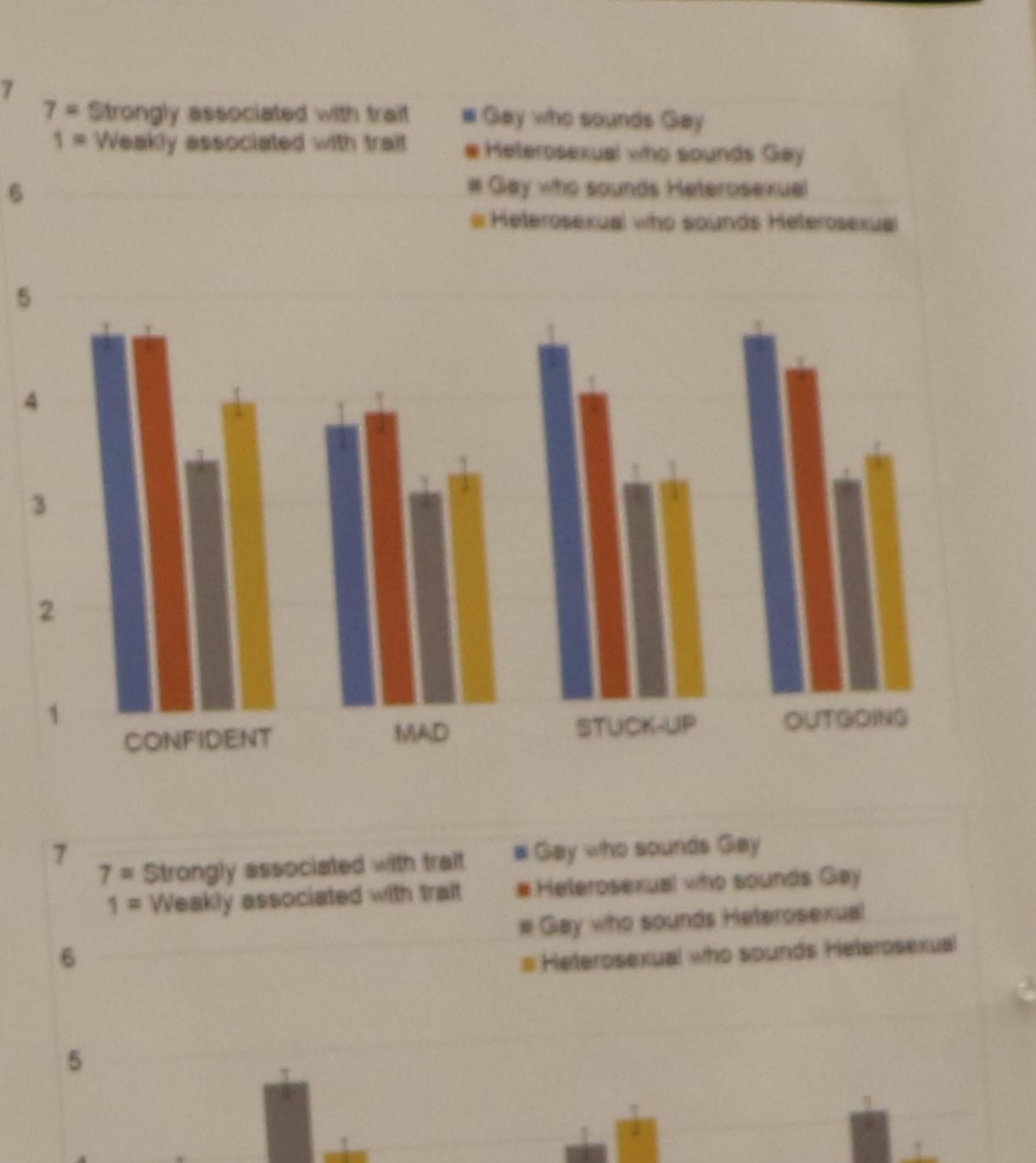
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