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AN INVESTIGATION OF ROWAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS'
ATTITUDES TOWARD HOMOSEXUALITY

By
AnnMarie Panarello

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts in School Psychology Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
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Approved by _____
Professor

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ABSTRACT

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AN INVESTIGATION OF ROWAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS'
ATTITUDES TOWARD HOMOSEXUALITY
2003/04
Dr. John Klanderman and Dr. Robertta Dihoff
Master of Arts in School Psychology

The purpose of this investigation was to investigate undergraduate student attitudes toward homosexuality. Between group differences were explored in terms of (a) gender, (b) religious affiliation, and (c) year of study. One hundred and twenty nine Rowan University Undergraduate students participated by answering a homophobia scale questionnaire, and a demographic questionnaire. A three-way analysis of variance revealed significant differences in mean scores between men and women, affirming that women scored lower on the homophobia scale than men. No other between group differences were found to be statistically significant. Implications for future research are discussed.

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Chapter I

The Problem

Need

Over the past two decades, the United States has been progressively overcoming centuries of sexual oppression. Current times in the United States are filled with controversial issues, which often surround issues of same-sex sexual practices. Homosexuality is on the menu for discussion at dinner tables throughout the United States. Whether people tend to condone homosexual activity or if they have disgust for the practice, it is on the forefront of political and social issues within our society. In recent years homosexuality is making it's way into the minds of the public whether they like it or not. Every sitcom on television is politically correct with its portrait of at least one homosexual, and shows such as Will & Grace have the public begging for more.

However, the debate over whether or not homosexuals should have the same rights as heterosexuals to marry, and hold certain jobs (including clergy and educators) remains the same. The American public is still split on these issues. Some believe homosexuals deserve equal rights, while others believe that same-sex marriage is an insult to the sanctity of marriage and should not be legalized. The question remains, why are some people accepting of differences in sexual practices, while others cannot bridge the gap between those who are different? Do culture, gender, and level of education influence levels of acceptance toward homosexuals?

Attention needs to be directed toward the topic of homosexuality in order to educate our society and free homosexuals from prejudice and discrimination. In studying

attitudes toward homosexuality researchers may be able to zero in on factors that contribute to tolerance. Through knowledge on the subject educators may be able to implement programs in schools to promote diversity and acceptance.

Purpose

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine undergraduate students' attitudes toward homosexuality. The researcher investigated differences in years of education, gender, and levels of religious affiliation. The question posed was whether or not a students' number of years in college correlated with attitudes toward homosexuality. Other factors such as religious affiliation, and gender were examined as well. This study has shed light on the relationship between a students' level of education, gender, and religious affiliation and their attitudes toward homosexuality.

Hypothesis

The researcher hypothesizes the following: One, that a students' year of study will influence their responses on the homophobia questionnaire. The assumption is based on the idea that as years of education increase so will tolerance, and ignorance will decline. The second hypothesis is that a students' level of religious affiliation will have a significant affect on their level of tolerance. Religion is often a factor that influences a persons' belief system, and may consequently shape one's view on homosexuality. Third, the researcher hypothesizes that women will show higher levels of tolerance than men, based on the fact that previous research has found that women are usually more accepting of homosexuality than men.

History

Sexuality is an idea that has not been understood and practiced collectively across history and time. The question often arises: What causes people to love and desire as they do? There have been many theories presented on what determines one's sexual preference, and there is still not enough conclusive evidence to support just one theory. There are many factors that determine one's behaviors, as the age-old debate is nature vs. nurture. The best explanation seems to derive from combining the two and chalking it up to biological, psychological, and social factors.

Although the question of why people differ in their sexual desires still remains unanswered, what is clear is that same-sex sexual activity has existed since man has inhabited the earth. In ancient Athenian society sexual relations between young and old men were idealized. Some scholars view such sexual acts not as same-sex desire, but rather as acts of power establishment. In some societies same-sex acts are participated in as rituals. In the highlands of New Guinea, in order for Sambia boys to enter adulthood, they must first swallow the semen of older men (Rupp, 1999). In most societies, including Europe until about 1700, same-sex sexuality falls into two categories. One is based on age-dissonant sexual dominance, where a younger and older male participate in a same-sex sexual act and doing so does not affect either man's status as a male. The second is based on gender-dissonant sexual dominance, where a manly man participates in a same-sex sexual act with a male who lives as a non-male, or a feminine male. Here, the masculine male does not lose any status for such an act (Halsall, 1997).

Native Americans had very diverse understandings of gender and sexuality. They exhibited a wide range of sexual practices and attitudes, which inevitably clashed

with that of the Europeans. Native Americans saw gender roles in terms of men, women, and a third category referring to half man/half woman. This third category contained men who took on the roles of women and had sexual relationships with masculine men, and women who took on the role and dress of a man and coupled with feminine women. Prior to contact with Europeans, it seems that Native Americans saw nothing deviant about such sexual relations. The Europeans however saw such acts as “devilish” or “lewd” (Rupp, 1999).

However open to sexuality the Native Americans were, that all changed once the early Americans colonized the new world. With their arrival came their perceived right to decree what sexual acts were acceptable and which would be condemned. They ended up adopting European legal and religious sanctions for acts perceived as deviant or perverse (Rupp, 1999).

In the early 1700’s, the first signs of a subculture of homosexuals emerged in Europe. They were a group of men who gathered at clubs and taverns, which tolerated male-male sexual activity. They were seen as an effeminate group of males and thus termed “mollies”. Moving into the 19th century and the time of sexual liberalism doctors known as sexologists began unraveling the mysteries of sexuality. They defined same-sex sexuality as “homosexuality” or “inversion”. The term homosexual was first used in the United States in 1892, and referred to “abnormal manifestations of the sexual appetite”. Rupp (1999) reports that prior to the use of the terms homosexual and heterosexual, “expressing desire for a person of the same sex, or engaging in a same-sex sexual act, or falling in love with someone of the same sex did not traditionally mean that one merited designation as a special kind of person” (p.75). However, with the

emergence of these definitions a new sub-culture began to emerge, and with the creation of the homosexual came the establishment of the heterosexual.

In the late 19th century medical doctors and psychologists began searching for causes of same-sex desire. They first believed that homosexuality was some kind of mental/emotional disorder. With this doctors felt a sense of pity toward homosexuality and they began criticizing legal and religious condemnation of homosexuals. With the increasing attention to inversion, or homosexuality came skepticism toward same-sex friendships. In the beginning of the 20th century the field of psychiatry devoted efforts to study homosexual activity among women in reformatories and prisons. By the 1920's intimate friendships between women were watched keenly (Rupp, 1999).

During the sexual revolution of the 20th century same-sex sexuality became more publicized, but it also came to be seen as the defining feature of a particular kind of deviant person. Homosexual acts were seen as deviant and individuals caught participating in such acts would be legally prosecuted. In 1914 fifty California men were charged with "social vagrancy", or in other words participating in same-sex acts, but not sodomy. Journalists following the case uncovered evidence of a "society of queers" numbering in the thousands. This was the beginning of the emergence of same-sex communities throughout the United States. In big cities men and women with same-sex desires gathered together, used certain terms to identify themselves and developed codes of dress to suit their lifestyle and to designate themselves as different (Rupp, 1999).

In the 1930's, homosexuality was forced out of the mainstream due to the economic struggle. However, with the United States entrance into the 2nd World War homosexuality again became a topic for discussion. The United States military made

every attempt to keep gay men out of the military. It was assumed that gay men were too feminine to participate in combat. There were intense screening processes in place; which blatantly questioned one's sexual preference. If a man admitted to being a homosexual he was denied entrance into the armed forces. For women it was slightly different. Initially there were no screening processes, and lesbians seemed to congregate in the military. However, once it was recognized that the armed forces were a gathering grounds for lesbians screening was implemented and all attempts were made to prohibit lesbians from enlisting. While attempts were made to keep homosexuals out of the military still some people lied about their sexuality in order to serve their country. Wartime cultivated a boom in the gay and lesbian subcultures. While off duty, homosexuals sought out places to gather together. This led to the establishment of the "gay bar". If military personnel were caught engaging in any homosexual behaviors they were discharged from the army, and once discharged they were denied GI benefits and access to a number of jobs. Post war discrimination spread into the government sectors as well. A 1950 Senate committee report titled *Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government*, led to the firing of homosexuals from all levels of government employment (Rupp, 1999).

The 1950's were filled with anti-gay propaganda and homosexuals were persecuted socially, politically, and economically. With the increase in scrutiny for the homosexual lifestyle, homosexuals began attempts to organize and fight for equal rights. In 1969, on the night of July 27th, the New York City police raided a gay bar known as the Stonewall Inn. This was a routine raid, but tonight it ended differently. Instead of submitting peacefully, the bar patrons put up a fight, and a riot ensued. Rupp (1999)

summarizes the impact of the Stonewall riot in 1969. The *Village Voice* newspaper at the time stated, “the liberation is under way”. The events at Stonewall came to symbolize the organization of a people who prior to this showed no self-acceptance, pride, or resistance. The riot marked a change for the homosexual subculture. Out of the riot came the Gay and Lesbian movement for equality, and in 1973 the first organization was formed, it was named the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

By the end of 1973, there were close to 800 gay and lesbian organizations in the United States. In 1975 the government ban on the employment of homosexuals in federal jobs was lifted. But by the 1980’s, a conservative force, led by Jesse Helms and Jerry Farwell, called Moral Majority Inc. united to slow the efforts of the gay rights movement. With the AIDS epidemic in the 1980’s, the gay community was in the spotlight. Anti-gay rhetoric increased, and political mobilization mounted against the gay community. However this caused a paradoxical affect and the gay community gained strength as well. Over the next two decades, half of the US states decriminalized homosexual behavior, and many large cities added sexual orientation in their civil rights statues (Family Education Network, Inc, “Milestones”, 2003).

In 1993, President Clinton made efforts to have the ban on homosexuals in the military lifted. He was met with great opposition, so he instead settled for the “*Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell*” policy, which permitted gays to serve in the military, but banned any homosexual activity. Then, in 1996 in the *Romer v. Evans* case, the Supreme Court struck down Colorado’s Amendment 2, which denied gays and lesbians protection against discrimination. In the year 2000, Vermont became the first state to legally recognize a civil union between same-sex couples. The civil union gives the same state

benefits to same-sex couples that married couples receive without referring to the union as a marriage. This was a great milestone for gays and lesbians, but still fell short of the intended goal of having the same rights as a heterosexual couple to marry. This year, the US Supreme Court ruled in the *Lawrence v. Texas* case that sodomy laws in the United States are unconstitutional (Family Education Network, Inc, "The American", 2003).

Although there is no doubt that homosexuals are in a better place than they were 50 years ago, they are still being blatantly discriminated against and being denied rights that they are entitled to under the constitution. The main agenda for gay and lesbian equal rights is marriage, and their entitlement to the legal commitment. Robinson (2003) reports that early in the year 2003, approximately 30 states enacted "Defense of Marriage Acts" that ban same-sex marriage. Basically the law restricts the definition of marriage to between one man and one woman. However this does not prevent legislature from creating a new category of laws, such as a civil union, to cover other relationships.

Marriage is a basic human right, which the United States feels they are able to withhold from the homosexual population. What is ironic is that this nation was built on the idea of freedom, and many came to this country to escape the oppression of other countries. However, on this issue we seem to be progressively behind other countries. In 2001, Holland added same-sex marriage in its definition of marriage. In 2003, Belgium did the same. Next, Ontario, Canada, and finally, same-sex marriage became permitted in both Canadian provinces of British Columbia and Ontario (Robinson, 2003).

So the question is, why are we so divided as a nation on this issue? Why do some Americans believe that everyone should have the same equal rights, while others believe only certain members of the population are entitled to particular rights? Hopefully

further studies on attitudes toward homosexuality will shed some light on why certain individuals are more tolerant of those who are different, while others see those who are different as being deviant.

Definitions

Civil union- a legal institution for which same-sex couples may enter into, which will provide them with approximately 400 state benefits that married couples receive. However, they are not entitled to the other 1,049 rights that the federal government provides to married couples.

Effeminate- having qualities of characteristics more often associated with women than men.

Gender- classification of sex.

Homosexuality (1892)- abnormal manifestations of the sexual appetite.

Homosexuality (modern)- sexual orientation to persons of one's own sex.

Inversion- the taking on of a gender role of the opposite sex.

Lesbian- a woman whose sexual orientation is to women.

Sexuality- the condition of being characterized by sex.

Sexual orientation- the direction of one's sexual interest toward members of the same, opposite, or both sexes.

Subculture- a cultural subgroup differentiated by status, ethnic background, residence, religion, or other factors that functionally unify the group and act collectively on each member.

Limitations

Limitations for this study include a limited ethnic diversity. A majority of the students surveyed were of Caucasian decent. Therefore, this study is limited in its generalizability to the overall population of college students. The generalizability is also limited due to a small sample size.

Assumptions

The researcher had assistants help administer the surveys therefore the researcher is assuming that all the surveys were administered the same way. In addition, all homophobia questionnaires were tallied by hand by three people, so the researcher has assumed that there were no errors in the scores tallied, and that all three scorers scored the test in a uniform fashion. Another assumption of the researcher is that the students who answered the survey have integrity and have answered the questions as honestly as possible.

Summary

In chapter two the researcher provides the reader with relevant information on the topic of attitudes toward homosexuality, the information is based on a review of previous research. In chapter three, the research presents the design used for the current study. In the fourth chapter the researcher presents the compiled data and research findings. Finally, in the fifth chapter the researcher analyzes and discusses the results and presents a summary of findings.

Chapter II

Review of Research

Homophobia is a phenomenon that has been studied extensively over the past two decades, and although society seems to be moving in a more liberal direction pertaining to this topic, as a minority group, homosexuals still sustain a sizeable amount of discrimination, and prejudice from the public majority. A substantial amount of past research has focused on factors associated with attitudes toward homosexuality, and researchers agree that factors such as gender, gender role beliefs, religiosity, culture, and interpersonal contact with a known gay or lesbian person are all factors associated with attitudes toward homosexuality. For purposes of this study, the researcher intends to focus on how the factors of gender, religiosity, and level of college education, influence individual attitudes toward homosexuality. Foremost interest lies in the examination of how level of education affects attitudes, because there is limited research in this area.

General Studies

There has been a considerable amount of research aimed at investigating attitudes towards homosexuality. Not only are researchers interested in attitudes, but they have also focused on attributes or predictors associated with certain attitudes toward homosexuality. Generally research suggests that negative attitudes toward homosexuals are associated with being a male, holding strong religious beliefs, and believing that homosexuality is a choice rather than having a genetic origin (Oldham & Kasser, 1999).

Sakalli (2002) investigated prejudice toward homosexuals. The researcher surveyed a sample of 307 undergraduate students from a university in Turkey. Sakalli

focused on prejudice in terms of the attribution-value model, which assumes that prejudice stems from regarding a behavior as controllable and viewing the behavior as perceived negative by ones' culture. Results suggested that those participants who perceived the origin of homosexuality as controllable, and felt that their culture looked down upon such behavior, were more prejudice toward homosexuals. Hereck and Capitanio (1995) found similar results in a study of black heterosexual attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. Respondents who believed homosexuality as being beyond an individuals' control held significantly more favorable attitudes toward homosexuals.

Oldham and Kasser (1999) conducted a study to see whether or not attitudes toward homosexuals would change from negative to more positive once individuals were given information that supported the idea that homosexuality has a biological base rather than being a chosen lifestyle. The researchers assessed student attitudes immediately before and one week after they presented students with material that suggested that male homosexuality has a biological foundation. They found that information had both positive and negative affects. Those who remembered the article during the retest and were biological science majors were more negative toward homosexuals after 1 week, and those who did not remember much detail to the article and whose majors were undecided showed improved attitudes toward homosexuals.

Interpersonal Contact

Another aspect looked at when researching attitudes toward homosexuality is the contact theory, the idea is that those who know either a gay man or a lesbian are likely to be more accepting of homosexuality than people who have no exposure to the lifestyle. Experimental finding suggest that the increase in acceptance toward homosexuality over

the past 14 can be attributed to increased contact with known homosexuals. In a 1984 survey of attitudes toward homosexuality 38% of participants reported knowing someone who is gay, in the 1998 follow-up study 74% of participants reported knowing someone who is gay (Altemeyer, 2001).

Familiarity with a gay or lesbian person is generally correlated negatively with homophobia (Span & Vidal, 2003). Having social contact with homosexuals might lead heterosexuals to a greater understanding of homosexuality and may begin to humanize homosexuals in the eyes of the heterosexual majority (Sakalli, 2002).

In Ontario, Canada, Howard-Hassmann (2001) interviewed 73 civic leaders on their attitudes toward gay rights. Of the 73 participants, 21 favored gay rights and 40 moderately favored gay rights. The interviewer found that more favorable attitudes toward gay rights were a direct consequence of participants learning that someone close to them was gay or lesbian.

In another interesting study, Bowen and Bourgeois (n.d.) surveyed 109 students in a college dormitory, and found that those students who lived on the same floor with a homosexual person held more positive attitudes toward homosexuals than students who had no exposure to homosexuality. Cullen, Wright, and Alessandri (2002) investigated personality variables and demographic variables of homophobic and non-homophobic individuals. The researchers surveyed 123 students from a Western University; results conveyed that contact with a homosexual person was the most critical predictor of whether or not someone was homophobic.

Results of previous research seem to confirm that having positive personal contacts or friendships with gay, lesbian, or bisexual persons is associated with more positive attitudes toward homosexuality on a whole (Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002).

Gender

In a 1999 national survey of attitudes toward gays and lesbians it was found that women generally hold more favorable views of homosexuals than men, attitudes in general are more negative toward gay men than lesbians, gay men are more likely to be labeled ill or be seen as child molesters, and adoption rights are more favorable for lesbians (Hereck, 2002).

A number of studies have found that men are less accepting of, and hold more negative attitudes toward homosexuality than women (Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002; Ellis, Kinzinger, & Wilkinson, 2002; Hereck, 2000; Schellenberg, 1999; Lamar & Kite, 1998; Finlay & Walther, 2003; Kim & D'Andrea, 1998; King & Witthaus, 2001). Finlay and Wather (2003) found that although there has been an increase in attention to gay rights by the media and religious organizations, young college students, especially males are still quite homophobic.

Ellis, Kitzinger, and Wilkinson (2002) explored the attitudes of 226 undergraduate psychology students at universities in the United Kingdom. Results indicated that although only a small percentage of respondents expressed negative attitudes toward homosexuality, men held significantly more negative attitudes than females. Males were more likely to endorse statements such as "I think male homosexuals are disgusting", "lesbians are sick", and "homosexual behavior is wrong". Males were also found to be less supportive of gay and lesbian human rights.

Lamar and Kite (1998) studied four components of attitudes toward gay men and lesbians: condemnation/tolerance, morality, contact, and stereotypes. A questionnaire was used to assess 174 student attitudes toward homosexuality. This multidimensional study found that on all factors except stereotypes men were less tolerant of homosexuality than women, and men were also found to be even less accepting of gay men than of lesbians. However, Lamar and Kite reported that on the contact scale both men and women were more negative toward contact with a same-sex homosexual than with an opposite-sex homosexual.

A number of studies have also found that heterosexual men often hold more negative attitudes toward gay men than they do lesbians. Data from a 1997 national survey showed that heterosexual women tend to hold similar attitudes toward both gay men and lesbians, whereas heterosexual men are more likely to show variation in their attitudes toward lesbians and gay men (Hereck, 2000). Sakalli (2002) found that when rating homosexuals in terms of stereotypes, heterosexual men used more stereotypes than heterosexual women, and again as in other studies, those participants who had social contact with a known homosexual were less stereotypical when rating gay men.

Estrada and Weiss (n.d.) assessed the attitudes of seventy-two male Marine Corps Reserves. Results showed that attitudes toward homosexuality were mildly negative, but attitudes toward gay men were significantly more negative than attitudes toward lesbians. In addition, Estrada and Weiss found that negative attitudes toward homosexuals were correlated with conservative political ideology, religious attendance, and lack of contact with a known homosexual person.

In contrast to the above there have been a few studies that found no significant differences in attitudes toward homosexuality between genders (Whitley, 2001; Lippincott, Wlazelek, & Schumacher, 2000; Lim, 2002).

Lim (2002) examined the attitudes of 365 students from Singapore, by use of a questionnaire. Findings suggest both men and women in Singapore still hold relatively negative attitudes toward homosexuals.

In another study comparing the attitudes of 34 Asian students to those of 32 American students, Lippincott, Wlazelek, and Schumacher (2000), found that Asian students were more likely to harbor negative attitudes toward homosexuals than American students, however they found no significant gender differences between groups.

Gender Role Beliefs

Gender role beliefs have also been found to be predictors of attitudes toward homosexuals. Studies report that there is a positive relationship between traditional gender role beliefs and negative attitudes toward homosexuals (Basow, 2000; Whitley, 2001; Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002; Lamar & Kite, 1998). The idea is that those who hold traditional views about how women and men should behave have a problem with homosexuality because gay men are perceived to have feminine qualities and lesbian are perceived to have masculine qualities. For people who hold traditional gender role beliefs, these stereotypes violate their personal belief system. It has also been found that heterosexuals with a more highly developed sense of heterosexual identity hold less negative attitudes toward homosexuality due to them being comfortable with their own sexuality (Simoni & Walters, 2001).

Parrott, Adams, and Zeichner (2002) administered a battery of questionnaires to 385 male subjects in order to determine whether homophobia incorporates a broad anti-feminine disposition. Results suggested that homophobia was related to heightened levels of masculinity and may develop in men who feel threatened by individuals whom they perceive to have feminine qualities.

Interestingly, Whitley (2002) found that traditional sexist beliefs are closely related to attitudes toward homosexuality. Whitley suggests that attitudes toward homosexuality derive from beliefs about proper roles for men and women. Findings suggest that participants who endorsed traditional male role attitudes were no more closely related to negative attitudes toward homosexuality than those who endorsed traditional female roles, and when men and women held similar gender-role beliefs, women were found to hold greater negative attitudes toward homosexuality.

Basow (2000) looked at predictors of homophobia in female college student. Basow studied the importance of gender-attribution, gender role attitudes, and authoritarian attitudes. Gender-attribution is the effect of gender stereotypes on ones' gender identity, and authoritarian attitudes are characterized by accepting traditional values and norms, possessing a willingness to submit to authorities, and having a tendency to aggress against those disapproved of by authorities. Results found that those women who held the most negative attitudes toward homosexuality had the highest scores on authoritarianism, and placed the greatest emphasis on feminine traits. These findings suggest that women who felt stereotypic feminine traits were important to their own sense of femininity were more homophobic than their peers who held such traits as less important.

Hinrich and Rosenberg (2002) surveyed 692 students from six liberal arts colleges. The researchers examined attitudes toward homosexuality by examining religiosity, contact with gays and lesbians, sex-role attitudes, and Greek affiliation. Their findings confirmed that those with more traditional sex-role attitudes had more negative attitudes toward homosexuals. This variable was found to be the most important predictor of negative attitudes toward homosexuals, more so than sex and religiosity.

Whitley and Aegisdottir (2000) studied the joint relationship between the roles played by gender beliefs, authoritarianism, and social dominance in attitudes toward homosexuality. They collected data from 122 male and 131 female college students, and assessed their attitudes toward homosexuality in terms of all three theoretical perspectives. The researchers found these theoretical constructs to be more complementary than competing in their explanations for negative attitudes toward homosexuality. They found that gender-role beliefs had both a direct and mediating affect on negative attitudes toward homosexuality. Gender-role beliefs affect social dominance orientation as well as authoritarianism. Also, higher social dominance orientation leads to men holding more traditional gender-role beliefs, and high authoritarianism also leads to more traditional gender-role beliefs. All three constructs play important roles in predicting attitudes toward homosexuality.

Religious Influence

Throughout history, Judeo-Christianity has encouraged homophobia in society, thus nurturing antigay oppression and dehumanizing homosexuals (Clark, Brown, & Hochstein, 1990). In a (2001) study, Howard-Hassmann found that those who were not fully accepting of gay rights felt that their religion made it difficult for them to tolerate

gay sexuality whatsoever. In general, studies regarding attitudes toward homosexuality have found that those who have a high level of religiosity, or are affiliated with a religious organization that hold more conservative beliefs tend to possess more negative attitudes toward homosexuality (Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002; Ellis, Kitzinger, & Wilkinson, 2002; Anderson, Fakhfakh, & Kondylis, 1999; Estrada & Weiss, n.d.; Finlay & Walther, 2003). In terms of religious affiliation, fundamentalism is strongly correlated with anti-gay prejudice (Kirkpatrick, 1990), and Baptists and Protestant are found to be the most conservative and intolerant religious organizations (Finlay & Walther, 2003; Cochran & Beeghley, 1991).

Hoffman and Miller (1998) researched denominational affiliation and its influence on attitudes toward a number of social issues. They found that conservative Protestants have maintained their cohesiveness in their attitudes toward homosexuality over the years, while Methodists and Lutheran have become significantly less unified in their attitudes toward homosexuality. In their (1992) study, Lottes and Kuriloff studied the effects of gender, race, religion, and political orientation on the sex-role attitudes of college freshman. They found only religion and political affiliation had a significant impact on measures. Jews as compared to Protestants were less negative in their attitudes toward homosexuality, as were liberals compared to conservatives. Rainey (2002) conducted a similar study with the purpose of determining factors that predicted levels of homophobia in 132 masters-level counseling students. One factor assessed was religiosity, which was correlated with attitudes toward homosexuality. Those participants who described themselves as being more religious were also more homophobic.

Finlay and Walther (2003) studied factors related to homophobic attitudes among university students. They surveyed 1160 undergraduate students, and analyzed homophobic attitudes based on religious affiliation and attendance. Results indicated that next to contact with a gay or lesbian person, religion was the strongest predictor of attitudes toward homosexuality. Also differences in religious affiliation dramatically affected attitudes toward homosexuals. Findings suggested that Conservative Protestants hold the highest levels of homophobia, while non-Christian groups were significantly more tolerant.

Fisher, Derison, Polley III, Cadman, and Johnston (1994) looked at the relationship between religiousness, religious orientation, and attitudes toward gays and lesbians. They performed two studies, participants of the first study were selected from a survey done for the purposes of jury selection, and the participants of the second study were college students. Study 1 was comprised of a population of 119 men and 175 women whose ages ranged from 18 to 89. Results indicated that Baptists, fundamentalists, and Christians displayed more antigay prejudice than all other religions, and even those participants who supported gay-tolerant religions were found to be more prejudice than people without a religious preference. Also, frequency of worship was significantly related to prejudice of homosexuals, but only among those belonging to anti-gay denominations. Study 2 was comprised of 123 female and 69 male undergraduate students from the University of Central Florida. Results revealed that self reported religiousness and frequency of worship correlated positively to prejudice against homosexuals.

While churches and denominations are powerful and influential, they do not work in isolation from other forces. When assessing the influential roles of religion other factors such as family, peer groups, social class, and ethnicity need to be taken into account (Cochran & Beeghley, 1991).

College Experience

There are a limited number of studies assessing the impact of college education on student attitudes toward homosexuality, there are however a few, and all generally support the same hypothesis that a higher level of education is associated with more positive attitudes toward homosexuality.

Loftus (2001) compiled data from a General Social Survey used between 1973 and 1998. The data was used to assess the changing of American attitudes toward homosexuality over the 25-year span. Results suggest that changes in demographics, particularly, the increase in levels of education can account for about one-half of the change in attitudes over the years. Similar, studies have found that those holding positive attitudes toward homosexuality are highly educated in comparison to those who are less tolerant (Hereck & Capitanio, 1995; Hereck & Glunt, 1993).

Lottes and Kuriloff (1994) carried out a study to measure the impact of college experience on political and social attitudes. They surveyed first year students in 1987, and then surveyed those same students four years later in 1991. The most substantial change in attitudes of first year student-to-senior occurred in acceptance of homosexuality. There was a 25% increase in acceptance of homosexuality, and a majority of senior students expressed accepting views about homosexuality. Schellenberg (1999) examined the influence of gender, faculty of enrollment, and amount

of time spent in college, on Canadian college student attitudes toward homosexuality. This was the first cross-sectional examination of year-by-year changes in attitudes toward homosexuality. Results support the hypothesis that attitudes about homosexuality become increasingly more positive as a function of time spent at college.

Probst (2003) conducted a study to test the effectiveness of a semester-long course promoting diversity among student attitudes with regard to gays and lesbians, the disabled, racial minorities, and ideas surrounding gender roles. Result indicated that the course was successful in promoting student attitudes toward gay men and lesbians.

Although there is limited research in the area of how education mediates tolerance, there is a reoccurring finding that increased levels of education do promote tolerance. This is an important factor that needs to be further studied in order to facilitate change in negative attitudes toward homosexuals.

Summary

Gay and lesbian rights continue to be on the forefront of political and public controversy. The public majority seems to be divided on whether or not homosexuals deserve the same rights as heterosexual couples. A significant number of individuals within our society are still very uncomfortable with the notion of two members of the same sex being intimately involved, while the other half seem to have no problem accepting homosexuality. The question that researcher continue to ask is; what makes some people accepting of homosexuality, while others remain opposed to the practice altogether? Scientific evidence suggests that in general; women are more accepting of homosexuality than men are, that religion is influential in whether or not attitudes are

negative or positive toward homosexuality, and that interpersonal contact remains the number one predictor of attitudes toward homosexuality.

Hopefully, future research will shed some light on ways to promote diversity and acceptance of homosexuality. Educators may be able to devise intervention programs and trainings based on the findings of attributes associated with positive attitudes toward homosexuality.

Chapter III

Design of the Study

Participants

Participants in the study were 129 undergraduate students attending Rowan University. Fifty-eight of the participants were female, and seventy-one were male. The sample ranged in age from 18 to 49 years of age, however a majority fell between the ages of 18 and 25. 110 students identified themselves as having some religious affiliation, while only 19 denied having any religious affiliation. Of the participants 31 were enrolled in their senior year, 44 in their junior year, 22 in their sophomore year, and 32 were in their first year of study. Interest of study varied significantly.

Measures

This study investigated student attitudes toward homosexuality, along with predictors associated with homophobic attitudes. Two questionnaires were used, the first one assessed attitudes toward homosexuality, and the second questionnaire dealt with personal demographics.

The assessment tool used was the *Homophobia Scale*, this scale was developed in 1999 by Lester Wright Jr., Henry Adams, and Jeffery Bernat. The *Homophobia Scale* is a 25 item questionnaire that consists of four factors: one that assesses negative cognitions regarding homosexuality, one that measures negative affect and avoidance of homosexual individuals, the third factor assesses negative affect and aggression toward homosexual

individuals, and the fourth, assesses overall level of homophobia. For purposes of this study subtypes were not calculated, only the overall score was determined. Items were rated using a 5-point likert scale anchored by “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree”. Total scores ranged from 0-100; zero indicating the least homophobic and one hundred indicating the highest level of homophobia.

The *Homophobia Scale* was found to have an excellent interitem correlation of 95.28. Reliability of the *Homophobia Scale* is .936, ($p < .01$), and has a test-retest reliability of .958, ($p < .01$). Validity of the Homophobia Scale was established using the IAH, results yielded a significant correlation of .658, ($p < .01$). Overall, the *Homophobia Scale* has very good internal consistency and reliability, and provides support for construct validity (Wright, Jr., Adams, & Bernat).

The second questionnaire was used to retrieve personal information about the participants. This questionnaire contained questions surrounding age, gender, race, year of study, sexual orientation, religious attendance, religious affiliation, and relationship to any gay or lesbian individuals.

Design

Participants were surveyed in a classroom setting. Professors were contacted prior to class and permission was allotted to survey the class by the professor. Participants were given a consent form to sign and were briefly told what the researcher was assessing. Participants were also told that partaking in the study was completely voluntary and that participants would remain anonymous. They were told there was no need to put their names on the questionnaires. Participants were then given the three

questionnaires to fill out, with no specific time frame. Upon completion the researcher collected all questionnaires and gave a debriefing statement.

Tests were then individually scored by hand to find participants' overall score on the questionnaire. Finally, data was analyzed to assess whether or not participant attitudes toward homosexuality differed between groups based on their gender, religious affiliation, and year of study.

Testable Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis

- 1- There will be no differences between men and women's attitudes toward homosexuality.
- 2- There will be no difference in attitudes toward homosexuality between those who attend church regularly and those who never attend.
- 3- There will be no difference in attitudes toward homosexuality between freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

Alternative Hypothesis

- 1- Men and women's attitudes toward homosexuality will differ
- 2- There will be differences in attitudes toward homosexuality between those who attend church regularly and those who never attend.
- 3- There will be difference in attitudes toward homosexuality between freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

Analysis

A three-way analysis of variance was used to determine whether or not there were any significant differences between groups in terms of their scores on the homophobia

scale. Score on the homophobia scale was the dependent variable, and the between subject factors were religion, gender, and year of study.

Summary

The study was conducted to determine whether or not there was a difference in attitudes toward homosexuality when gender, religious affiliation, and level of education were considered. The researcher was interested in what factors were the greatest predictors of negative attitudes toward homosexuality. One hundred and nineteen Rowan University undergraduate students served as participants for the study. A three-way analysis of variance was used to analyze the data and determine whether or not there were any significant differences in scores on the homophobia scale between groups.

Chapter IV

Analysis of Results

The current study investigated student attitudes toward homosexuality. Data was collected on 129 undergraduate university students. The data collected included demographic factors such as participants' gender, current year of study, and whether or not they were affiliated with any religious organizations. Subjects also participated in a 25-item homophobia questionnaire, for which composite scores were analyzed in search for group differences in relation to the demographic variables. The following were hypothesized:

Testable Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis

- 1 There will be no differences between men and women's attitudes toward homosexuality.
- 2 There will be no difference in attitudes toward homosexuality between those who attend church regularly and those who never attend.
- 3 There will be no difference in attitudes toward homosexuality between freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

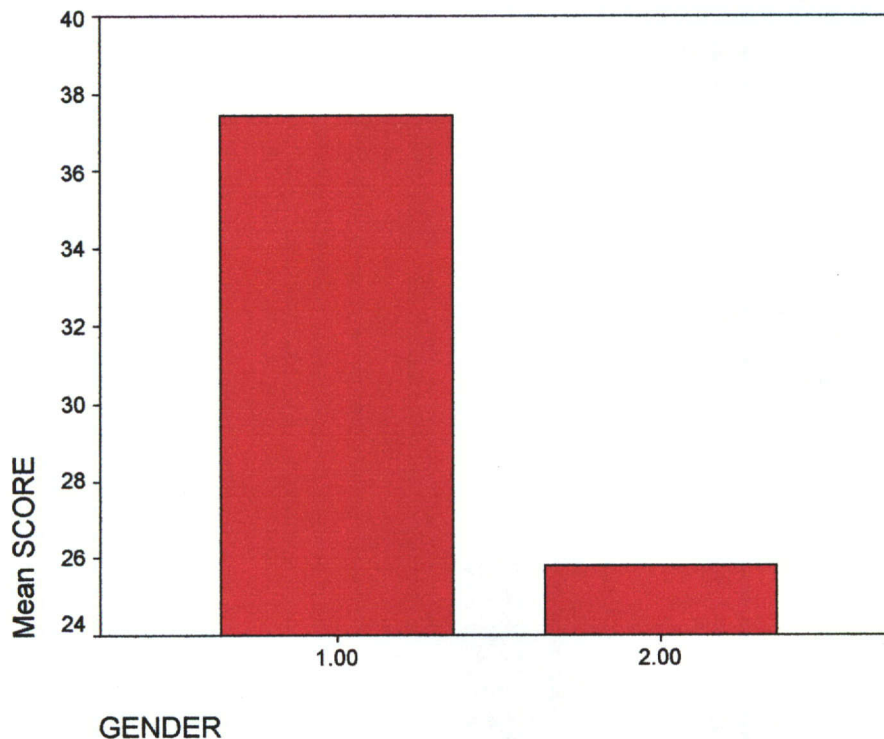
Alternative Hypothesis

- 1 Men and women's attitudes toward homosexuality will differ.
- 2 There will be differences in attitudes toward homosexuality between those who attend church regularly and those who never attend.

3 There will be difference in attitudes toward homosexuality between freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

With respect to the first hypothesis, the researcher found a significant difference in scores between men and woman on the homophobia questionnaire. Analysis confirmed that men ($M=37$) held more homophobic attitudes than women ($M=25$).

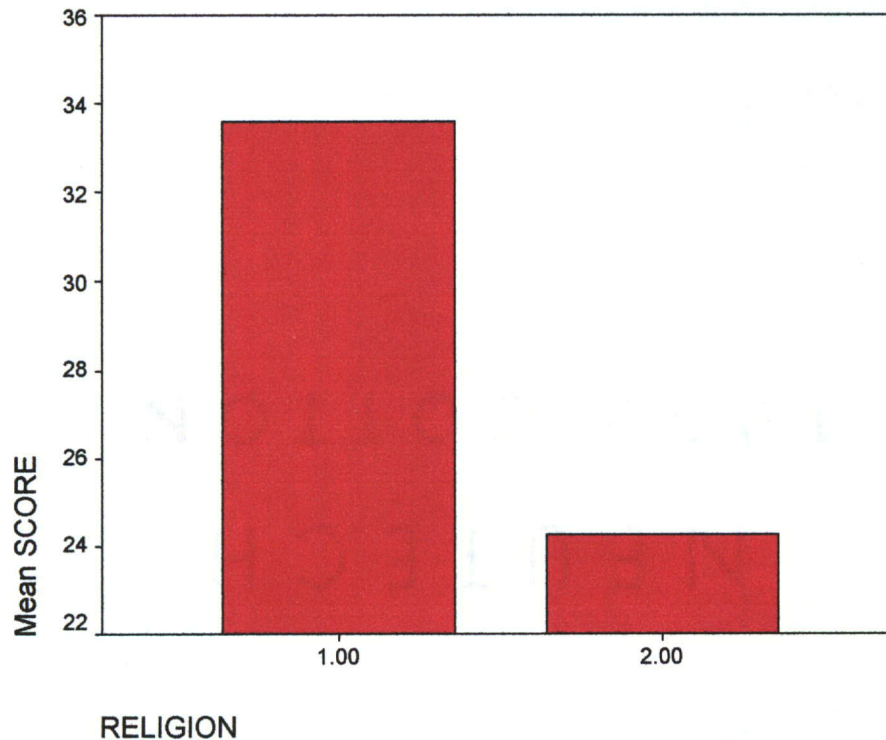
Figure 4. 1



As indicated in graph 4.1 men (1) scored significantly higher than women (2), which reflects that for purposes of this study men held more homophobic views than women.

Analysis of data for the second hypothesis yielded a low but still significant difference between the groups of religious affiliation (1) ($M= 33.57$) versus no religious affiliation (2) ($M=24.26$), as displayed in figure 4.2.

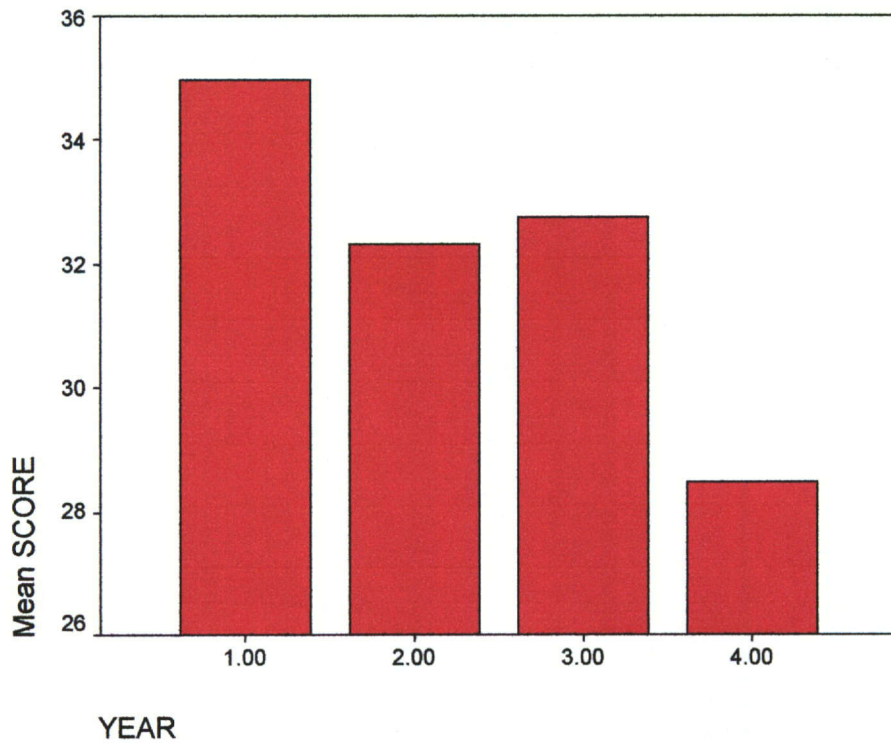
Figure 4. 2



However the slight statistical significance may be due to the fact that the number of respondents who identified themselves as having a religious affiliation (110) were disproportionate to those who identified themselves as having no religious affiliation (19). The disproportionate number of responses may have skewed the results.

In response to the third hypothesis, the researcher found no difference between the groups based on participants' year of study. There was no statistical significance between the scores of freshmen (1) ($M=34.96$), sophomores (2) ($M=32.31$), juniors (3) ($M=32.75$), and seniors (4) ($M=28.48$). However as clearly demonstrated in figure 4.3, seniors scored the lowest overall on the homophobia questionnaire.

Figure 4. 3



Summary

One out of the three alternative hypotheses were supported by the analyzed data. The researcher found that men and women's attitudes toward homosexuality do differ. However religious affiliation and year of study did not significantly relate to respondents' scores on the homophobia questionnaire. Overall, gender was the only factor that was found to have contributed significantly to respondents' scores on the homophobia questionnaire.

Chapter V

Summary and Conclusions

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate student attitudes toward homosexuality. The researcher was interested in differences between groups based on gender, year of study, and religious affiliation. It was hypothesized that women and men's attitudes toward homosexuality would differ; that attitudes toward homosexuality would differ across year of college study; and that attitudes would differ between those who identified themselves as having a religious affiliation as opposed to those denying any religious affiliation.

The data for this study was collected from 129 undergraduate Rowan University students. 71 participants were male, while 58 were female. A majority of the sample fell between the ages of 18 and 25. 110 students identified themselves as having some religious affiliation, while only 19 denied having any religious affiliation. Of the participants 31 were enrolled in their senior year, 44 in their junior year, 22 in their sophomore year, and 32 were in their first year of study.

Review of literature related to this research has proven to be supportive of the hypotheses under investigation. Literature has indicated that lower negative attitudes toward homosexuality were generally correlated with 1) being a female, 2) having higher levels of education, and 3) being less tied to a religious affiliation.

The researcher in this study examined the association between student attitudes toward homosexuality, and ones' gender, year of study, and religious affiliation. The

researcher administered two questionnaires, one was a demographic form, and the other was a homophobia scale. The homophobia scales for all 129 participants were scored by hand, then statistical analysis of the scores were examined in order to explore group differences.

Conclusion

The present study supported prior research on attitudes toward homosexuality and gender, however it did not support past research on attitudes toward homosexuality and level of education. A majority of prior research has found that women are less negative toward homosexuals than men. This study has contributed to the validity of past findings surrounding gender and attitudes toward homosexuality.

In contrast this research was unable to make any contributions to the study of homophobic attitudes and level of education. Since there is limited research in the area of education and attitudes toward homosexuality, it is unclear whether or not one can hypothesize that positive attitudes toward homosexuality can be attributed to an increase in level of education, or whether it can be accredited to other mitigating factors.

Finally, due to disproportionate group sizes, the findings for religious affiliation are inconclusive. For purposes of this study, one can neither accredit nor deny the impact of religious affiliation on attitudes toward homosexuality. However past research does support the idea that religious affiliation does influence a person's attitude toward homosexuality.

Discussion

Findings from this study suggested that women do hold less negative attitudes toward homosexuality than men. Review of literature has supported this theory

consistently, as cited in chapter two, numerous studies have found that men are less accepting of, and hold more negative attitudes toward homosexuality than women (Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002; Ellis, Kinzinger, & Wilkinson, 2002; Hereck, 2000; Schellenberg, 1999; Lamar & Kite, 1998; Finlay & Walther, 2003; Kim & D'Andrea, 1998; King & Witthaus, 2001).

In general, studies regarding attitudes toward homosexuality have found that those who have a high level of religiosity, or are affiliated with a religious organization that holds more conservative beliefs tend to possess more negative attitudes toward homosexuality (Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002; Ellis, Kitzinger, & Wilkinson, 2002; Anderson, Fakhfakh, & Kondylis, 1999; Estrada & Weiss, n.d.; Finlay & Walther, 2003). The current study investigated whether or not those identifying with any religious affiliation would report more negativity toward homosexuals than those who denied having any religious affiliation. Findings do suggest a statistical significance in mean scores between the two groups; those denying any religious affiliation on average scored lower, however this statistical significance could be due to the discrepancy between the populations of each group. Those denying any religious affiliation made up only 19 of the 129 participants sampled. Therefore it would be unfair to assume that the statistical results are accurate based on the disproportionate group sizes.

Finally, further data analysis was unable to support the final hypothesis. Unlike the findings of other studies, the researcher failed to find any differences in attitudes toward homosexuality based on year of study. Previous research in this area is limited, however, a few studies have found that those holding positive attitudes toward

homosexuality are highly educated in comparison to those who are less tolerant (Hereck & Capitanio, 1995; Hereck & Glunt, 1993).

Schellenberg (1999) found data to support the hypothesis that attitudes about homosexuality become increasingly more positive as a function of time spent in college. Unlike the current study, Schellenberg's study was a cross-sectional analysis; therefore subjects were followed from year to year, in order to assess any changes, and findings did suggest that the more time spent in college contributes to more positive attitudes toward homosexuality. The current investigation found no significant differences in attitudes toward homosexuality between freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

Limitations to this study include small sample size, a predominantly Caucasian sample, a disproportionate group size for (religious affiliation/no religious affiliation), limited time, in that the researcher was unable to assess changes in attitudes based function of time spent in college for the same individuals.

Lastly, religious affiliation proved to be too broad of a sample. Possible analysis of specific denominations may have yielded results that were more conclusive with past research.

Implications for Future Research

For the purpose of future research, it would be suggested that the factors including year of study and religious affiliation be further investigated. The present study compared college students' year of study across the span of all four years, however results may have been found between group differences if specifically freshmen and senior students were compared. The four-year comparison may have been too broad in spectrum to hone in on any between group differences attributable to level of education.

The second factor of religious affiliation may have been too broad in spectrum. A suggestion for future research would be to identify specific religions and make comparisons between religious groups in order to identify those religious affiliations that respond more negatively toward homosexuality.

Lastly, future studies would benefit from a higher participant size, and a more ethnically diverse group of subjects. Future studies may also want to factor in socioeconomic status as a factor that may influence attitudes toward homosexuality.

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Appendix A

Personal Demographics

Age _____

Gender (circle one):

M F

Race/Ethnicity (circle one):

African American

Asian American or Pacific Islander

Hispanic

European American

Native American/ American Indian

Other _____

Year in college (circle one):

A. Freshman

C. Junior

B. Sophomore

D. Senior

Sexual Orientation: Which of the following comes closest to describing your sexual orientation? (mark one):

_____ I am romantically or sexually attracted to members of the opposite sex

_____ I am romantically or sexually attracted to members of both sexes

_____ I am romantically or sexually attracted to members of my own sex

_____ I am uncertain about my romantic or sexual attractions

Religious attendance: How often do you USUALLY attend religious services? (circle one):

Never

Occasionally

Monthly

Weekly

More than once a week

Religious affiliation, if any (please write in below):

Number of Known GLB persons: How many people do you know who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual? (circle one):

0

1-2

3-5

6-10

11 or more

Relationship: Indicate which of the following describes your relationship to the gay, lesbian, or bisexual persons you know (mark all that apply):

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| A. Don't know any | E. Family member |
| B. Casual acquaintance | F. Roommate |
| C. Close friend | G. Other _____ |
| D. Romantic partner | |

Appendix B

Wright, Adams & Bernat Homophobia Scale

This questionnaire is designed to measure your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors with regards to homosexuality. It is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers. Answer each item by checking the number after each question as follows:

- 1= Strongly agree
- 2= Agree
- 3= Neither agree nor disagree
- 4=Disagree
- 5= Strongly disagree

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Gay people make me nervous.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Gay people deserve what they get.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Homosexuality is acceptable to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. If I discovered a friend was gay I would end the friendship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I think homosexual people should not work with children.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I make derogatory remarks about gay people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I enjoy the company of gay people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Marriage between homosexual individuals is acceptable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I make derogatory remarks like “faggot” or “queer” to people I suspect are gay.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. It does not matter to me whether my friends are gay or straight.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 11. It would upset me if I learned that a close friend was homosexual. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 12. Homosexuality is immoral. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 13. I tease and make jokes about gay people. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 14. I feel that you cannot trust a person who is homosexual. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 15. I fear homosexual persons will make sexual advances toward me. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 16. Organizations which promote gay rights are not necessary. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 17. I have damaged property of a gay person, such as "keying" their car. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 18. I would feel uncomfortable having a gay roommate. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 19. I would hit a homosexual for coming on to me. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 20. Homosexual behavior should not be against the law. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 21. I avoid gay individuals. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 22. It bothers me to see two homosexual people together in public. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 23. When I see a gay person I think, "What a waste." | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 24. When I meet someone I try to find out if he/she is gay. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 25. I have rocky relationships with people that I suspect are gay. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

