1-1-2011

West Virginia School Psychologists' Attitudes toward Gay and Lesbian Students

Lauren B. Winter
lbwinter81@yahoo.com

WEST VIRGINIA SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTSø ATTITUDES TOWARD GAY AND
LESBIAN STUDENTS

Thesis submitted to the
Graduate College of
Marshall University

In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Education Specialist
in School Psychology

by

Lauren B. Winter, M.A.

Approved by

Sandra S. Stroebel, Ph.D., Committee Chairperson
Fred J. Krieg, Ph.D.
Stephen L. OøKeefe, Ph.D.

Marshall University

May 2011

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my professors, Dr. Sandra Stroebel, Dr. Fred Krieg, and Dr. Stephen O¢Keefe, for providing me with guidance and support in the completion of my thesis and throughout the duration of the program. I would also like to thank my friends and family for supporting me, particularly my mother who was always there to assist me when I needed it, and my fiancé, Jon, for enduring the brunt of my complaints in times of great stress.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ABSTRACT

West Virginia School Psychologists' Attitudes Toward Gay and Lesbian Students
by Lauren Winter

Given the alarming rates of harassment of gay and lesbian students in our nation's schools, it is important to ascertain the attitudes of school personnel toward homosexuality. Particularly important are the attitudes of school psychologists. The present study examines the attitudes of West Virginia school psychologists toward gay and lesbian students, and how their contact with, knowledge of, and level of religiosity affect these attitudes. Results indicated that respondents' attitudes toward homosexuality were positively correlated with contact and knowledge and negatively correlated with religiosity. Contact was the strongest predictor of positive attitudes. There were no significant differences between demographic variables, including gender, age, rank, and years of experience.

CHAPTER ONE

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Homophobia can be defined as negative and/or fearful attitudes about homosexuals or homosexuality (Sprecher & McKinney, 1993). But what makes a person homophobic? Herek (2000) discusses the different motivating factors that could be responsible for creating homophobia in particular individuals. Specifically, Herek delineates homophobia that is created as a result of (1) unpleasant interactions with homosexual individuals, (2) fear directed toward homosexual individuals, (3) the pressures of societal norms and practices, and (4) one's own personal belief system. These four factors individually can contribute to negative attitudes or can combine to produce homophobia in a particular person. The more factors contributing to an individual's homophobia, the more difficult it is to change the individual's prejudicial views (Herek, 2000).

Homophobic attitudes potentially can manifest through verbal or physical aggression. Homophobia-related crimes make up 18.5% of all hate crimes (FBI, 2010). Unfortunately, the school setting fosters an environment where these behaviors run even more rampant. Assault and harassment are not uncommon toward gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, questioning (GLBTQ) students. In fact, GLBTQ students are three times more likely to report feeling unsafe at school than non-GLBTQ students (GLSEN, 2010a). In addition, 84.6% of GLBTQ students reported being verbally harassed, 40.1% reported being physically harassed, and 18.8% reported being physically assaulted at school because of their sexual orientation. Twenty percent of GLBTQ students missed a day of school due to feeling unsafe compared to 6.7% of their non-GLBTQ peers.

GLBTQ students are more than twice as likely to have depression (Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, & Azrael, 2009). In addition, 30% reported suicidal ideation and 21% reported incidences of self-harm. Due to the increased victimization, GLBTQ students generally have poorer grades and an increased risk of drug and alcohol abuse (Almeida, et al., 2009).

In 2010, two particularly high profile cases caught the attention of the media and were elevated from statistics to household names. Seth Walsh, a 13 year-old boy from Tehechapi, California, hanged himself from a tree in his backyard after years of being bullied at school for his sexual orientation (Alexander, 2010). He died nine days later. Eighteen year-old Tyler Clementi, a Rutgers University student, was secretly recorded having intercourse with another male student, the video of which was posted on the Internet. As a result, Tyler killed himself by jumping off the George Washington Bridge after changing his Facebook status to õjumping off the gw bridge sorryö (Friedman, 2010).

People are beginning to take notice of the alarming rates of harassment in our nationøs schools. Recently, Congress has proposed two bills that directly address the well being of GLBTQ students: The Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA) and The Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA). Both bills currently have bi-partisan support in both the House and Senate and, if passed, would provide protections for students based on perceived or actual sexual orientation (Presgraves 2010a, 2010b). In addition to these federal policy proposals, there has been a number of intervention programs designed to increase the acceptance of GLBTQ students in the educational setting. The Pride and Prejudice program, No Name Calling Week, Project 10, and Advocates for Youth are all

well-researched programs that have shown to have a positive effect on GLBTQ

acceptance in secondary schools (Bridge, 2007; Higgins, King & Witthaus, 2001;

Kosciw, Diaz, Colic & Goldin, 2005; Advocates for Youth, 1992). The two major

components of these programs are knowledge of homosexuality and interaction with

homosexual individuals, indicating that the more knowledge and exposure a person has

of homosexuality, the more accepting he or she will be of homosexuals (Lance, 1987;

Reinhardt, 1994). In addition to these programs, the National Association of School

Psychologists (NASP) has endorsed an anti-bullying program titled õWhat Does Gay

Mean?ö Created by the National Mental Health Association, õWhat Does Gay Mean?ö is

based on an educational pamphlet of the same name, and encourages parents to help their

kids understand and respect the rights of gay, lesbian, and transgendered individuals

(Mental Health America, 2011).

There have been other school-based initiatives to improve the educational

experience of GLBTQ students. Gay History Month, celebrated every October, was

created in 1994 by high school teacher Rodney Wilson due to the lack of homosexual

issues in the school textbooks and was endorsed by the National Education Association in

1995 (Equality Forum, 2010). The National Day of Silence, created by Gay, Lesbian,

Straight Education Network (GLSEN), is a day when students take a vow of silence to

bring attention to the silencing of GLBTQ youth in schools (GLSEN, 2010b). Gay-

straight alliances, also created by GLSEN, are school-based clubs for GLBTQ and

straight individuals to come together and serve as a support group for one another and to

foster a gay-positive school environment (GLSEN, 2010c). Additionally, a number of

high schools targeted specifically to GLBTQ students have been created, including the

Triangle Program in Toronto, Canada, the Harvey Milk School in New York City, and the Walt Whitman Community School in Dallas, Texas. These schools provide GLBTQ students a setting in which, not only can they complete their education, but they also can acquire the coping strategies and supports needed to succeed in a predominantly heterosexual society (Little, 2001).

Research has shown that these policies and programs have a positive effect on the school experience of GLBTQ students (Bridge 2007; Higgins, et al., 2001; Kosciw, et al., 2005; Stopanio, 2006) and that there is significantly less GLBTQ victimization in schools with Gay-Straight Alliances, supportive staff, and anti-bullying policies that include sexual orientation (GLSEN, 2010a). However, the majority of school systems do not address these issues (GLSEN, 2010a; Besner & Spungin, 1995). Considering roughly 10% of students identify themselves as GLBTQ, that leaves a large portion of students unprotected (Little, 2001). Schools operate under strict budgetary and time restraints, so it is possible that they simply cannot afford these programs. Another possibility, however, is that teachers and administrators do not support these changes due to underlying attitudes of homophobia. Research has consistently shown that the experiences of GLBTQ youth are greatly affected by the attitudes and support of their teachers (Kosciw & Diaz, 2006; Mufioz-Plaza, Crouse Quinn, & Rounds, 2002; Russell, Seif, & Truong, 2001). Likewise, the personal beliefs of the teacher affect his or her classroom practices (Baker, 1980; Benz, Pfeiffer, & Newman, 1981; Bledsoe, 1983; Cahill & Adams, 1997; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Sears, 1991); thus, it is important to understand the attitudes and behaviors of school-based personnel toward GLBTQ students before any system-wide changes can be effectively implemented.

What is the likelihood that teachers, staff, and administrators do harbor homophobic attitudes? Although it is difficult to make broad generalizations, homophobic attitudes have been correlated with a number of variables. Men are more likely than women to report negative attitudes toward homosexuals (Herek & Gonzales-Rivera, 2006; Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002; Mohipp & Morray, 2004). Blacks report a higher rate of homophobia than whites (Hirsch, 2008; Mudrey-Camino, 2002; Sears, 1991). Republicans report more negative views than Democrats (Brewer, 2003; Herek & Gonzales-Rivera, 2006; Wood & Bartowski, 2004). Frequent church attendance has been correlated with more negative attitudes (Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002; Hirsch, 2008; Sullivan, 2003). Younger individuals report more positive attitudes than older individuals (Pew Research Center, 2009; 2010a; 2010b).

Research in the attitudes of pre-service teachers has been consistent with these demographics (Baker, 1980; Hirsch, 2008; Mudrey & Medina-Adams, 2006). In addition, pre-service elementary teachers score more negatively toward GLBTQ students than pre-service secondary teachers (Sears, 1991). Moreover, pre-service teachersø lack of knowledge of homosexuality has been negatively correlated with their homophobic attitudes, indicating that the more knowledge an individual has of homosexuality, the less homophobic attitudes he or she reports (Hirsch, 2008; Morgan, 2003).

Thus far, research has primarily focused on non-school-based personnel and pre-service teachers in teacher education programs. Research in the attitudes of current, school-based personnel is scarce, particularly when it comes to school counselors and school psychologists, which are two professions that should be well-equipped to handle the mental health issues of GLBTQ students. Although homophobic attitudes do exists

among school counselors and school psychologists, it has been found that students who graduated with counseling or psychology degrees are more accepting of GLBTQ individuals (Liu & Chao, 2006). School psychologists, like school counselors, deal with the consequences of GLBTQ victimization. Unlike school counselors, however, school psychologists are well-positioned within the school system to serve as advocates for GLBTQ youth and to influence the changes in policies and procedures to create a more GLBTQ-friendly school atmosphere (Bahr, Brish, & Croteau, 2000; NASP, 2006).

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) is clear when it comes to its position statement regarding sexual minority youth:

> NASP believes that school psychologists are ethically obligated to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity for the development and expression of their personal identity in an environment free from discrimination, harassment, violence, and abuse. To achieve this goal, education and advocacy must be used to reduce discrimination and harassment against GLBTQ youth by students and staff (NASP, 2006).

In addition, NASP proposes specific school-based interventions to create safe schools for GLBTQ students, including (1) õestablishing and enforcing non-discrimination policies that apply to all students,ö (2) õeducating students and staff about GLBTQ issues,ö (3) õdirect intervention with perpetrators of harassment and discrimination,ö (4) õdirect intervention and support for students who are targeted for GLBTQ victimization,ö and (5) õpromoting societal and familial attitudes and behaviors that affirm the dignity and rights within educational environments of GLBTQ youthö (NASP, 2006, para 4-8).

Despite these recommendations from NASP, the majority of school psychologists do not agree with the school-based supports for gay and lesbian students, as outlined by NASPøs position statement, regardless of their attitudes toward GLBTQ individuals (Kilanowski-Press, 2009). The reasons for this disagreement are unknown, but could be attributed to various factors, including negative attitudes toward GLBTQ individuals, not believing these issues belong in the school, or not being aware of the full extent of the problem. Furthermore, very few school psychologists have had experience working with GLBTQ students, and only one half have received training in this area (Kilanowski-Press, 2009).

Despite this lack of training, school psychologists generally have a positive attitude toward GLBTQ individuals (Choi, Thul, Berenhaut, Suerken, & Norris, 2006; Thul, 2004). However, a study conducted with school psychology graduate students suggested that participants had strong positive attitudes toward social justice in general but were comparatively more negative toward and had less knowledge of GLBTQ individuals (McCabe, 2008). School psychologistsønegative attitudes toward GLBTQ individuals are negatively correlated with exposure to and knowledge of homosexuality (Choi, et al., 2006; Thul, 2004; Wolf, 2009). In addition, female school psychologists reported fewer homophobic feelings than males (Thul, 2004; Wolf, 2009) and religiosity was a predictor for homophobia (Wolf, 2009). Interestingly, though, fewer negative attitudes toward GLBTQ parents are reported among school psychologists who spend less time conducting assessments (Thul, 2004). Overall, this research is consistent with the aforementioned research conducted with non-school psychologists, indicating the same mechanisms that contribute to non-school psychologistsønegative attitudes may

also contribute to school psychologists' negative attitudes regardless of professional

training and experience (Herek & Gonzales-Rivera, 2006; Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002;

Hirsch, 2008; Mohipp & Morray, 2004; and Sullivan, 2003).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to determine the attitudes and knowledge of school

psychologists in the state of West Virginia toward gay and lesbian students in public

schools. Previous studies focusing on the attitudes of school psychologists have

neglected to include West Virginia; therefore, this study will determine how West

Virginia school psychologists and school psychology students align with the previous

research. If it is found that West Virginia school psychologists have a more positive

attitude toward gay and lesbian individuals, then they should help facilitate the changing

of the policies and practices of the state of West Virginia regarding the discrimination of

gay and lesbian students and assist in the implementation of curriculum designed to

address these issues. The focus of this study will be primarily on sexual orientation and

gay and lesbian students and will not address attitudes toward gender orientation and

transgendered students.

Statement of Hypothesis

Consistent with previous research, the following are hypothesized:

1. There will be a positive correlation between a person's knowledge of
   homosexuality and their attitudes toward homosexuals.

2. There will be a positive correlation between the amount of a person's contact with
   homosexuals and their attitudes toward homosexuals.

3. There will be a negative correlation between religiosity and attitudes toward gay and lesbian students.

4. Older, more experienced school psychologists will be more negative toward gay and lesbian students than younger school psychologists.

5. Male school psychologists will be more negative than females toward gay and lesbian students.

6. School psychologists who spend more time doing assessments will have more negative attitudes toward gay and lesbian students than those who practice a variety of professional activities.

Definition of Terms

There are a number of important terms used in this study, the definitions of which are widely accepted and not to be attributed to any single source. They are defined as the following:

1) Homosexuality: Sexual desire or behavior directed toward a person of one's own sex.

2) Homophobia: An irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuality or homosexuals.

3) Heterosexism: A prejudiced attitude or discriminatory practices against homosexuals by heterosexuals; the belief that heterosexuality is morally better than homosexuality.

4) Sexual Minority Youth: Used to refer to an individual who does not identify himself or herself as being heterosexual. This can include gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender individuals, or those questioning their sexuality.

5) Transgender: Persons who think that the gender assigned to them at birth is not a

correct or complete description of what they feel.

CHAPTER TWO

METHOD

Subjects

One hundred and fifty-five school psychologists and school psychology students were invited to participate in the study. Of those, there were 70 respondents (45%). Forty-four (62.9%) of the respondents are practicing school psychologists and the remaining 26 (37.1%) are students or interns enrolled in Marshall University Graduate College's school psychology program. Of the respondents, 63 (90%) are female and seven (10%) are male. Twenty-four respondents (34.8%) are under the age of 30, with 17 (24.6%) between the ages of 30 and 39, 10 (14.5%) between 40 and 49, 9 (13%) between 50 and 59, and 9 (13%) aged 60 and above. Eighteen (38.3%) have fewer than 5 years experience in school psychology, six (12.8%) have 6 to 10 years of experience, three (6.4%) have 11 to 15 years of experience, four (8.5%) have 16 to 20 years of experience, and 16 (34%) have 20 or more years of experience.

Instrumentation

Data regarding the attitudes of school psychologist and school psychology students toward gay and lesbian individuals were collected using a modified version of the Component Measure of Attitudes toward Homosexuality survey. The original survey, created by Kite (1998), was intended to determine whether or not respondents had more negative views toward gay men than toward lesbians. Although the original study found some variation in attitudes among male respondents, female respondents generally reported more consistent attitudes. Given this consistency and the scope and nature of

the present study, õgay manö and õlesbianö have been combined into the broader category of õhomosexual.ö This survey uses a Likert scale to measure respondentsøattitudes across the following four subscales: Condemnation/Tolerance (e,g,,õHomosexuals are a danger to young peopleö), Social Norms/Morality (e.g.,õHomosexuals endanger the institution of the familyö), Contact (e.g.,õI avoid homosexuals whenever possibleö), and Stereotypes (e.g., õMost homosexuals like to dress in opposite-sex clothingö). In the present study, the Condemnation/Tolerance and Social Norms/Morality subscales are used to measure õattitudesö and the Stereotypes subscale is used to measure respondentsø knowledge of homosexuality. õContactö will be measured by the questionnaireøs contact subscale. In addition to responding to the forty-nine items on the Component Measure of Attitudes toward Homosexuality scale, respondents were also asked to provide demographic information, such as gender, age, years of experience, and religiosity. Age and years of experience were each grouped into five distinct categories, and respondents were asked to choose in which grouping they belonged. Respondents were also asked their opinions pertaining to policy changes and the implementation of curriculum-based intervention programs aimed at reducing the discrimination of gay and lesbian students. The total survey contains 57 questions and takes approximately 10-15 minutes for respondents to complete (see Appendix I for survey).

Procedures

Participants were sent an email with a description of the study and a link to the online questionnaire, which was created and maintained using the online survey tool, Survey Monkey. The survey was anonymous, and respondents gave informed consent by

reading about the study on the first screen and clicking to proceed to the questions.

Participation was voluntary, and subjects could withdraw at any time.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

Twenty eight respondents (42.4%) stated they had experience working with gay and lesbian students. Forty respondents (59.7%) either õagreedö or õstrongly agreedö that it was the schooløs responsibility to teach gay and lesbian acceptance to students. Similarly, forty (59.7%) respondents either õagreedö or õstrongly agreedö that it was part of their job description to decrease homophobic attitudes among students and, to a slightly lesser extent, thirty-seven (54.4%) indicated it was in their job description to educate teachers about gay and lesbian acceptance. Thirty-one respondents (48.4%) indicated that bullying of gay and lesbian students is a problem in their school system, and thirty (45.5%) thought that their school system should adopt a primary prevention program that targets decreasing homophobic attitudes.

Hypotheses one, two, and three were addressed by conducting Pearson correlations to determine the relationship of knowledge, contact, and religiosity with attitudes. As shown in Table 1, results revealed significant positive correlations between attitudes and knowledge ($r = .638$, $p < .01$), attitudes and contact ($r = .844$, $p < .01$), and knowledge and contact ($r = .618$, $p < .01$). In addition, there were significant negative correlations between religiosity and attitudes ($r = -.519$, $p < .01$), religiosity and knowledge ($r = -.290$, $p < .05$), and religiosity and contact ($r = -.420$, $p < .01$). In order to determine the predictive strength that knowledge, contact, and religiosity have on attitudes, a stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted. Results in Table 2 show a strong correlation between the predictor variables and attitudes ($R = .871$), with knowledge, contact, and religiosity accounting for 75% of the variance in attitudes ($R^2 = $

.748). Furthermore, contact with homosexuals was the strongest predictor of attitudes (ß

= .641, $p < .01$), followed by religiosity (ß = -.196, $p < .01$) and knowledge (= .184, $p <$

.05). In addition, results in Table 3 indicate that contact has a positive correlation with

respondentsøexperience working with gay and lesbian students in the school setting ($r =$

.293, $p < .05$).

In order to address the fourth hypothesis of whether or not there are significant

differences in attitudes, knowledge, and contact among age, years of experience, and rank

(school psychologist vs. student/intern), a MANOVA was performed. Results of this

MANOVA, displayed in Table 4, revealed no significant differences among these

variables, and no interaction effects were observed. Due to the fact that the majority of

the respondents had either fewer than five years or greater than twenty years experience,

a one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there were any differences between

these groups. As indicated in Table 5, there were no significant differences between the

least experienced and most experienced school psychologists.

A one-way ANOVA was performed in order to determine the fifth hypothesis of

whether or not there were significant differences between male and female school

psychologists. Results are presented in Table 6 and indicate that there were no

significant differences in reported attitudes, contact, or knowledge.

Pearson correlations were conducted to address the sixth hypothesis of whether or

not the type and frequency of the professional activities the respondent engages in had a

correlation with his or her attitudes. Results in Table 7 did not reveal any statistically

significant correlations between attitudes and any of the professional activities, indicating

that there was no relationship between participantsø views on homosexuality and the

professional activities in which they engaged.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to determine the attitudes of West Virginia school psychologists and school psychology students/interns toward gay and lesbian students. It was hypothesized that contact and knowledge would be positively correlated with attitudes and that different demographic variables would affect the attitudes, contact, and knowledge of the respondents.

Overall, the participants in the present study reported positive attitudes toward homosexuality, which is consistent with previous research conducted with school psychologists and school psychology students (Choi, et al., 2006; Thul, 2004). The majority of respondents felt that it was part of their job description to decrease homophobic attitudes among students (59.7%) and that it was the school's responsibility to teach gay and lesbian acceptance (59.7%); however, fewer respondents (45.5%) thought that their school system should adopt a formal intervention program aimed at achieving these goals. This difference between attitudes and program implementation could be due to a number of factors, including budgetary constraints, perceived willingness of their district, and the lack of knowledge of specific programs. It is also interesting that, considering the alarming statistics of gay and lesbian victimization in schools (Almeida, et al., 2009; GLSEN, 2010a), fewer than half of respondents (48.4%) indicated that bullying of gay and lesbian students is a problem in their school system. This could be due to the fact that only twenty-eight respondents (42.4%) stated they had experience working with gay and lesbian students; thus, their perception of the problem

could be based on the amount of professional experience they have with gay and lesbian students. Furthermore, respondents may have indicated that bullying of gay and lesbian students was not a problem because they are simply unaware of the prevalence of homosexuality in their schools, possibly because, for many of them who work primarily at the elementary level, they may assume that this is a problem more typically seen at the middle and high schools.

As stated in hypotheses one and two, results proved that both contact and knowledge had strong, positive correlations with attitudes. This is also consistent with previous studies, which have indicated that individuals' attitudes are correlated with their contact with and knowledge of homosexuals (Choi, et al., 2006; Hirsch, 2008; Morgan, 2003; Wolf, 2009). Further analysis revealed that contact was the strongest predictor of attitudes toward homosexuals, indicating that the school psychologists who reported more contact also reported more favorable attitudes. The types of questions asked in the contact scale suggest that it is not the amount of contact the respondent has with gay and lesbian individuals but rather the hypothetical reaction of the respondent should contact occur. Questions pertaining to the actual rates of contact with homosexuals in general were not asked; however, respondents were asked to rate on a Likert scale how much they agreed with the statement, õI have experience working with gay and lesbian students in the school setting.ö Results indicated that there was a significant, positive correlation between this question and contact; however, the direction of this relationship cannot be determined. Are respondents more likely to report favorable views regarding contact because they have more experience with gay and lesbian students, or are respondents

more likely to work with gay and lesbian students because they view contact more favorably?

The third hypothesis claimed that there would be a negative correlation between religiosity and attitudes. This hypothesis was supported as results revealed negative correlations across all dependent variables, indicating that the more religious the respondent, the less likely he or she was to report positive attitudes, have more contact, and be more knowledgeable about homosexuality. The strongest correlation was between religiosity and attitudes ($r = -.519$, $p < .01$), followed by religiosity and contact ($r = -.420$, $p < .01$) and, to a lesser degree and significance, religiosity and knowledge ($r = -.290$, $p < .05$). This suggests that those who identify as being highly religious individuals may report negative views due to reasons other than lack of knowledge. This makes sense, considering the subscales that make up the attitudes component include questions related to condemnation, social norms, and morality.

Results did not support hypothesis four, which stated that older, more experienced respondents would report more negative views than younger, less experienced respondents as there were no significant differences among the demographic variables of age, rank (school psychologists vs. students/interns), and years of experience. This result indicates that younger, less experienced respondents had similar views to the older, more experienced respondents. These findings are inconsistent with previous research, which indicates that younger individuals have more positive attitudes toward homosexuality (Pew Research Center, 2009; 2010a; 2010b).

Results also did not support the fifth hypothesis as there were no significant differences between the attitudes of male and female respondents. This result is

inconsistent with previous research (Herek & Gonzales-Rivera, 2006; Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002; Mohipp & Morray, 2004; Thul, 2004; Wolf, 2009), which indicates that females generally have more positive attitudes toward homosexuals than males. This inconsistency could be attributed to the fact that the present study is composed of only seven males (10%); therefore, the male to female ratio may not be large enough to make a statistically valid comparison. Fewer males may have responded due to the fact that there are fewer male school psychologists in the state of West Virginia; however, it is also possible that fewer males responded because they had more unfavorable views.

The sixth and final hypothesis stated that school psychologists who spend more time doing assessments will have more negative attitudes than those who practice a variety of professional activities. Results did not support this hypothesis, which is inconsistent with previous research (Thul, 2004); however, there has only been one previous study that found any correlation between professional activities and attitudes toward homosexuality.

Although the majority of respondents reported positive attitudes toward homosexuality, a few did not. It cannot be assumed, however, that these respondents are prejudicial in any way toward homosexuals, nor is it fair to suggest that these respondents are unqualified to work with gay and lesbian students.

Limitations

The main limitation to the present study is that many participants, in an effort to be more politically correct, may have felt compelled to respond to the survey in a more positive way than they actually feel. In addition, those who have more negative views

may have been uncomfortable answering the questions and therefore may have abstained from participating in the study altogether.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should focus on how West Virginia School psychologists compare to other West Virginia school-based personnel, including teachers, counselors, and principals. In addition, a qualitative study to interview some of the respondents in this study, particularly in the area of religiosity, in order to further explore the connection between religious beliefs, moral beliefs, and attitudes toward homosexuals, and to assess the prejudicial behaviors toward homosexuals, given the strength of that connection. Furthermore, a survey of students is suggested in order to see if they corroborate the school psychologistsø perceptions of the amount of gay and lesbian victimization in their schools. Finally, because the present study focused only on gay and lesbian students, future research should explore how these attitudes differ from attitudes toward transgendered students.

Table 1. Pearson correlations among attitudes, knowledge, contact, and religiosity

	Attitudes	Knowledge	Contact	Religiosity
Attitudes	1	.638**	.844**	-.519**
Knowledge	.638**	1	.618**	-.290*
Contact	.844**	.618**	1	-.420**
Religiosity	-.519**	-.290*	-.420**	1

** Significant at the 0.01 level
* Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 2. Step-wise multiple regression predicting attitudes

R=.871; R²=.748

		Beta	t
1	Contact	.840**	12.379
2	Contact	.755**	10.649
	Religiosity	-.202**	-2.843
3	Contact	.641**	7.548
	Religiosity	-.196**	-2.855
	Knowledge	.184*	2.287

** Significant at the 0.01 level
* Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 3. Correlation between contact and experience working with gay and lesbian students

	Experience working with gay and lesbian students	Contact
Experience working with gay and lesbian students	1	.293*
Contact	.293*	1

*Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4. MANOVA among experience, age, and rank

	df	*Wilks' Lamdba*	*F*	*Sig.*
Experience	12	.622	1.219	.287
Age	12	.504	1.833	.058
Rank	3	.915	.867	.470
Experience X Age	18	.532	1.106	.362
Experience X Rank	0	1.00	--	--
Age X Rank	0	1.00	--	--
Experience X Age X Rank	0	1.00	--	--

Table 5. One-way ANOVA between experience

	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1	2.805	3.344	.077
Within Groups	32	.839		
Total	33			

Table 6. One-way ANOVA between genders

	df	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
Attitudes	1	.006	.014	.905
Contact	1	.523	1.583	.213
Knowledge	1	.359	1.216	.274

Table 7. Pearson correlations between professional activities and attitudes

Professional Activity	Attitudes	Sig.
Assessment	.013	.922
Counseling	.110	.417
Consultation	.190	.145
Prevention	.138	.328
Crisis Intervention	.201	.144
In-Service Training	-.070	.610

APPENDIX I

I am: a school psychologist   a student/intern

If a practicing school psychologist, how long have you been practicing?
          <5 yrs   6-10 yrs   11-15 yrs   16-20 yrs   >20 yrs

Gender: Male   Female

Age: < 30   30-39   40-49   50-59   60 and >

Professional Activities:
0-20%   21-40%   41-60%   61-80%   81-100%
          What percentage of time do you do assessments?
          Counseling?
          Consultation?
          Prevention?
          Crisis Intervention?

Please use the following scale to respond to the items below:

1   2   3   4
          5
Strongly
          Strongly
Agree
          Disagree

1. I consider myself to be a deeply religious person.
2. I have experience working with gay and lesbian students in the school setting.
3. I feel it is the schools responsibility to teach GLBT acceptance to students.
4. It is part of my job description to decrease homophobic attitudes among the students.
5. It is part of my job description to educate teachers about gay and lesbian acceptance.
6. My school system should adopt a primary intervention program that targets decreasing homophobia.
7. Bullying of GLBT students is a problem in my school system.

Condemnation/Tolerance

8. Apartment complexes should not accept homosexuals as renters.

9. Homosexuals should be required to register with the police department where they live.
10. Homosexuals should not be allowed to hold responsible positions.
11. Job discrimination against homosexuals is wrong.
12. Homosexuals are a danger to young people.
13. Homosexuals are more likely to commit deviant acts such as child molestation, rape, voyeurism (peeping Toms) than are heterosexuals.
14. Homosexuals dislike members of the opposite sex.
15. Finding out an artist was a homosexual would have no effect on my appreciation of his/her work.
16. Homosexuals should be allowed to serve in the military.
17. Homosexuals should not be discriminated against because of their sexual preference.
18. Homosexuals should not be allowed to work with children.

Social Norms/Morality

19. The increasing acceptance of homosexuals in our society is aiding in the deterioration of morals.
20. Homosexuals endanger the institution of the family.
21. Many homosexuals are very moral and ethical people.
22. Homosexual couples should be able to adopt children the same as heterosexual couples.
23. The idea of marriages between homosexuals seems ridiculous to me.
24. State laws regulating private, consenting behavior between homosexuals should be loosened.
25. Homosexuals just can't fit into our society.
26. Homosexuals do need psychological treatment.
27. Homosexuals are a viable part of our society.
28. Homosexual behavior is just plain wrong.
29. Homosexuality, as far as I am concerned, is not sinful.
30. Homosexuality is a perversion.
31. I find the thought of homosexual acts disgusting.

Contact

32. I enjoy the company of homosexuals.
33. It would be upsetting to me to find out I was alone with a homosexual.
34. I avoid homosexuals whenever possible.
35. I would feel nervous being in a group of homosexuals.
36. I think homosexuals are disgusting.
37. I would enjoy attending social functions at which homosexuals were present.
38. Bars that cater solely to homosexuals should be placed in a specific and known part of town.
39. I would feel comfortable working closely with homosexuals.

40. If a homosexual approached me in a public restroom, I would be disgusted.
41. I would not want a homosexual to live in the house next to mine.
42. Homosexuals holding hands or displaying affection in public is revolting.
43. I would be nervous if a homosexual sat next to me on a bus.
44. I would decline membership in an organization if I found out it had homosexual members.
45. If I knew someone was a homosexual, I would go ahead and form a friendship with that individual.
46. If a member of my sex made advances toward me, I would feel angry.
47. I would feel comfortable knowing I was attractive to members of y sex.
48. I would be comfortable if I found myself attracted to a member of my sex.
49. I would feel uncomfortable if a member of my sex made an advance toward me.

Stereotypes

50. Homosexuals prefer to take roles (passive or aggressive) in their sexual behavior.
51. The love between two homosexuals is quite different from the love between two persons of the opposite sex.
52. Homosexuals have weaker sex drives than heterosexuals.
53. A homosexual's mother is probably very domineering.
54. Most homosexuals have a life of one-night stands.
55. Most homosexuals like to dress in opposite-sex clothing.
56. Most gay men have feminine characteristics and most lesbians have masculine characteristics.

REFERENCES

Advocates for Youth. (1992). When I'm grown. Retrieved March 1, 2010, from http://www.advocatesforyouth.org.

Alexander, B. (2010, Oct. 2). The Bullying of Seth Walsh: Requiem for a Small-Town Boy. *Time*. Retrieved January 3, 2010 from http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2023083,00.html

Almeida, J., Johnson, R.M., Corliss, H.L., Molnar, B.E., & Azrael, D. (2009). Emotional distress among LGBT youth: The influence of perceived discrimination based on sexual orientation. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 38*, 1001-1014.

Bahr, M.W., Brish, B., & Croteau, J.M. (2000). Addressing sexual orientation and professional ethics in the training of school psychologists in school and university settings. *School Psychology Review, 29*, 222.

Baker, D. F. (1980). A survey and knowledge about homosexuality among secondary school teachers in training (Master's thesis). Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX.

Benz, C. R., Pfeiffer, I., & Newman, I. (1981). Sex role expectations of classroom teachers grades 12. *American Educational Research Journal, 18,* 289-302.

Besner, H. F. & Spungin, C. J. (1995). Gay and lesbian students: Understanding their needs. Washington, DC: Taylor and Francis.

Bledsoe, J. C. (1983). Sex differences in female teachers' approval and disapproval behavior as related to their self-definition of sex-role type. *Psychological Reports, 52,* 711-714.

Brewer, P. R. (2003). The shifting foundations of public opinion about gay rights.

> *Journal of Politics, 65,* 1208-1220.

Bridge, D. (2007). Breaking a spell of silence: The Tasmanian evaluation of the 2006

> Pride and Prejudice program. *Youth Studies Australia, 26(1)*, 32-40.

Cahill, B. & Adams, E. (1997). An exploratory study of early childhood teachersø

> attitudes toward gender roles. *Sex Roles, 36(7/8)*, 517-529.

Choi, H., Thul, C. A., Berenhaut, K. S., Suerken, C. K., & Norris, J. L. (2006). Survey of

> school psychologistsøattitudes, feelings, and exposure to gay and lesbian parents
>
> and their children. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 22(1)*, 87-107.

Equality Forum. (2010). *Gay History Month*. Retrieved March 15, 2010 from

> http://www.glbthistorymonth.com.

FBI. (2010). *Uniform Crime Reports*. Retrieved December 31, 2010, from

> http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/ucr.

Friedman, E. (2010, Sept. 29). Victim of Secret Dorm Sex Tape Posts Facebook

> Goodbye, Jumps to His Death. *ABC WorldNews*. Retrieved January 3, 2010
>
> from http://abcnews.go.com/US/victim-secret-dorm-sex-tape-commits-suicide/
>
> story?id=11758716

GLSEN. (2006). *Ten things educators can do…: Ten action points to ensure respect for*

> *all is taught in your school.* New York: Author.

GLSEN. (2008). *The principal's perspective: School safety, bullying and harassment*.

> Retrieved December 12, 2010, from http://www.glsen.org/binary-
>
> data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/000/001/1167-2.pdf.

GLSEN. (2010a). *The 2009 National School Climate Survey*. Retrieved December 1,

2010 from http://www.glsen.org/binary-

data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/000/001/1675-5.PDF

GLSEN. (2010b). *National Day of Silence*. Retrieved March 15, 2010, from

http://www.dayofsilence.org/.

GLSEN. (2010c). *Gay-straight alliances*. Retrieved March 15, 2010, from

http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/2342.html.

Herek, Gregory M. (2000), "The psychology of sexual prejudice," *Current Directions in

Psychological Science, 9,* 19622.

Herek, G. M., & Gonzales-Rivera, M. (2006). Attitudes toward homosexuality among

U.S. residents of Mexican descent. *Journal of Sex Research, 43*, 122-135.

Higgins, D., King, R. & Witthaus, D. (2001). Pride and Prejudice: Facilitating change in

the attitudes of students toward gay men and lesbians. *Health Promotion Journal

of Australia, 12(3)*, 238-241.

Hinrichs, D.W., & Rosenberg, P. J. (2002). Attitudes toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual

persons among heterosexual liberal arts college students. *Journal of

Homosexuality, 43*, 61-84.

Hirsch, A. J. (2008). *Future teachers' attitudes and anticipated behaviors toward sexual

minority youth* (Doctoral dissertation). Michigan State University, East Lansing,

MI.

Kilanowski-Press, L. (2009). *National Association of School Psychologists member state

of practice for work with lesbian, gay, bisexual and questioning (sexual minority)

youth* (Doctoral dissertation). Indiana University, Indiana, PA.

Kite, M. E., *Component Measure of Attitudes Toward Homosexuality*, initially published
    in LaMr, L. & Kite, M. E. (1998). Sex differences in attitudes toward gay men
    and lesbians: A multi-dimensional perspective. *The Journal of Sex Research, 35*,
    189-196.

Kosciw, J. G., Diaz, E. M., Colic, D. M. & Goldin, R. (2005). *No Name Calling Week
    Project: Year One Evaluation.* New York: GLSEN.

Kosciw, J. G., and Diaz, E. M. (2006). *The 2005 National School Climate Survey: The
    experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in our nation's
    schools.* New York: Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network.

Lance, L. (1987). The effects of interaction with gay persons on attitudes toward
    homosexuality. *Human Relations, 40(6)*, 329-336.

Little, J. N. (2001). Embracing gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered youth in school-
    based settings. *Child and Youth Care Forum, 30(2)*, 99-110.

Liu, A. & Chao, S. (2006). Counseling LGBT youth: A survey research of attitudes
    toward LGBT and training issues for school counselors. *Chinese Annual Report
    for Guidance and Counseling, 20*, 201-228.

McCabe, P. C. (2008). Committing to social justice: The behavioral intention of school
    psychology and education trainees to advocate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and
    transgender youth. *School Psychology Review, 37(4)*, 469-486.

Mental Health America (2011). *What Does Gay Mean?* The National Mental Health
    Association. Accessed online March 1, 2011 from
    http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/whatdoesgaymean

Mohipp, C., & Morray, M. M. (2004). The relationship of symbolic beliefs and prior contact to heterosexuals' attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women. *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science, 36,* 36-44.

Morgan, B.A. (2003). Knowledge and attitudes of preservice teachers toward students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered (Doctoral dissertation). University of North Texas, Denton, TX.

Mudrey, R. & Medina-Adams, A. (2006). Attitudes, perceptions, and knowledge of pre-service teachers regarding the education isolation of sexual minority youth. *Journal of Homosexuality, 51(4),* 63-90.

Mudrey-Camino, R. (2002). The educational isolation of sexual minority youth. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association, Columbus, OH.

Mufioz-Plaza, C., Crouse Quinn, S., and Rounds, K. A. (2002). Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students: Perceived social support in the high school environment. *The High School Journal, 85*, 52-63.

National Association of School Psychologists (2006*). Position Statement on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (GLBTQ) Youth* (formerly Sexual Minority Youth). Retrieved December 12, 2010, from http://www.nasponline.org/about_nasp/pospaper_glb.aspx.

Pew Research Center (2009). Most still oppose gay marriage but support for civil unions continues to rise. Retrieved December 12, 2010 from http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1375/gay-marriage-civil-unions-opinion

Pew Research Center (2010a). Most continue to favor gays serving openly in military.
Retrieved December 12, 2010 from http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1812/dont-ask-
dont-tell-repeal-public-supports-gays-serve-openly-in-military

Pew Research Center (2010b). Gay marriage gains more acceptance. Retrieved December
12, 2010 from http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1755/poll-gay-marriage-gains-
acceptance-gays-in-the-military

Presgraves, D. (2010a). Franken introduces Student Non-Discrimination Act in Senate to
end anti-LGBT discrimination in schools. Retrieved December 15, 2010, from
http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/news/record/2579.html.

Presgraves, D. (2010b). GLSEN lauds introduction of Safe Schools Improvement Act in
Senate. Retrieved December 15, 2010 from *http://www.glsen.org/cgi-*
bin/iowa/all/news/record/2601.html.

Reinhardt, B. (1994). Reducing homophobia through gay and lesbian speaker panels.
Paper presented at the Annual meeting of the Texas Psychological Association.
Retrieved July 10, 2008, from
http://ezproxy.marshall.edu:2472/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN
=ED398853&site=ehost-live.

Russell, S. T., Seif, H., and Truong, N. L. (2001). School outcomes of sexual minority
youth in the United States: Evidence from a national study. *Journal of
Adolescence, 24*, 111-127.

Sadker, M. & Sadker, D. (1994). Failing at fairness: How American's schools cheat
girls. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Sears, J. T. (1991). Educators, homosexuality, and homosexual students: Are personal feelings related to professional beliefs? *Journal of Homosexuality, 22(3/4),* 29-79.

Sprecher, S. & McKinney, K. (1993). *Sexuality.* Sage. Thousand Oaks CA. In: Williamson, I.R. (2000) Internalized homophobia and health issues affecting lesbians and gay men. *Health Education Research Theory and Practice, 15(1)*, 97-107.

Stopanio, J. A. (2006). The relationship among school policies and procedures and teachersøattitudes and behaviors toward homosexuality (Doctoral dissertation). Hofstra University, Long Island, NY.

Sullivan, M. K. (2003). Homophobia, history, and homosexuality: Trends for sexual minorities. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 8,* 1-13.

Thul, C. A. (2004). A survey of school psychologistsøattitudes and feelings toward gay male and/or lesbian parents in addition to their awareness and professional service offered to these families (Doctoral dissertation). University of South Dakota, Vermillion, SD.

Wolf, P. D. (2009). Religiosity and social contact with LGB individuals: School psychologistsøattitudes (Doctoral dissertation). Pace University, New York, NY.

Wood, P. B., & Bartowski, J. P. (2004). Attribution style and public policy attitudes toward gay rights. *Social Science Quarterly, 85,* 58-74.

Lauren Winter, M.A.
winter9@marshall.edu

Education:	**Marshall University Graduate College**, South Charleston, WV Education Specialist of School Psychology, May 2011 (anticipated) **Marshall University Graduate College**, South Charleston, WV Master's of Elementary Education, August 2010 **West Virginia University**, Morgantown, WV Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, December 2007
Experience:	**Kanawha County Schools**, Kanawha County, WV *School Psychologist Intern* (August 2010 – Present)

- Develop behavior intervention plans for children exhibiting a wide variety of behavior problems in the classroom within a three tiered model of behavior intervention
- Conduct functional behavior assessments to target the individual behavior needs of students
- Consult with parents, teachers, counselors, and principals to help target varying academic and behavior difficulties within the school environment
- Provide individual counseling to students with different psychological needs and age groups
- Conduct group therapy with different age groups
- Assess students with norm-referenced tests within a variety of disability categories and age groups
- Compose comprehensive evaluation reports as necessary for eligibility requirements under WV Policy 2419
- Contribute to the Student Assistance Team at one of the largest elementary schools in the county
- Participate in multidisciplinary evaluation team meetings
- Present in-service training to elementary school principals regarding behavior intervention plans

Marshall University Graduate College, South Charleston, WV
Graduate Assistant, NCATE Coordination (March 2010 – Present)

- Help prepare documentation for NCATE accreditation of the College of Education
- Compile and analyze survey data

Kanawha County Schools, Kanawha County, WV
Practicum Student (September 2008 – June 2010)

- Created functional behavior assessments and behavior intervention plans according to the needs of the student
- Observed and interacted with the school psychologist on a regular

basis
- Administered cognitive, achievement, behavior rating scales, and adaptive behavior scales
- Consulted with teachers and parents regarding the academic and behavior needs of the student
- Provided individual and group counseling

The Arc of Three Rivers, Charleston, WV
Service Coordinator (December 2007 – August 2008)
- Prepared applications for individuals with Mental Retardation to receive MR/DD Waiver services by conducting interviews, obtaining records, and preparing correspondences
- Served as a liaison between Waiver applicants and the Department of Health and Human Resources

REM (The Mentor Network), Morgantown, WV
Coordinator (May 2007 – December 2007)
- Implemented residential and community-based rehabilitation programs for individuals with developmental disabilities
- Assisted individuals in activities of daily living

Hospice Care Corporation, Morgantown, WV
Patient Care Volunteer (January 2007 – August 2007)
- Provided respite care to Hospice patients in the Morgantown area

West Virginia Family Grief Center, Morgantown, WV
Volunteer Facilitator (October 2006 – November 2007)
- Provided support for children between the ages of 3 and 18 who had experienced a personal loss
- Facilitated a safe environment in which children and adolescents could express their emotions and provided activities to assist in the grieving process

Professional Affiliations:
- National Association of School Psychologist (NASP) – member since 2008
- West Virginia School Psychologists Association (WVSPA) – member since 2008
- International School Psychology Association (ISPA) – member since 2008

References: Available upon request

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY.

www.marshall.edu

Office of Research Integrity   FWA 00002704
Institutional Review Board
401 11th St., Suite 1300   IRB1 #00002205
Huntington, WV 25701   IRB2 #00003206

February 9, 2011

Sandra Stroebel, Ph.D.
Psychology Department, MUGC

RE: IRBNet ID# 213798-1
At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Stroebel:

Protocol Title:	[213798-1] West Virginia School Psychologists' Knowledge of and Attitudes towards Gay and Lesbian Students	
Expiration Date:	February 9, 2012	
Site Location:	MUGC	
Type of Change:	New Project	APPROVED
Review Type:	Exempt Review	

In accordance with 45CFR46.101(b)(2), the above study and informed consent were granted Exempted approval today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Chair for the period of 12 months. The approval will expire February 9, 2012. A continuing review request for this study must be submitted no later than 30 days prior to the expiration date.

This study is for student Lauren Winter.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Coordinator Bruce Day, CIP at (304) 696-4303 or day50@marshall.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.