

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF
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Introductory Psychology students were surveyed to assess levels of heterosexism before and after an educational presentation. A demographic questionnaire and the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men scale were administered to the participants. Factors such as differences between genders, age and backgrounds were explored. Seventy-one participants completed both scales.

Results indicated there were no significant overall changes in levels of heterosexism after the panel presentation. Levels of heterosexism were found to be greater in men than in women. Male and female participants demonstrated similar degrees of acceptance toward gay men and lesbians. Older participants indicated as consistent degrees of acceptance toward homosexuals as younger participants. There was no significant difference in findings from participants with urban backgrounds compared to participants residing in rural areas.

These findings suggest that more than a single presentation is required in order to reduce levels of heterosexism or to increase acceptance of gay men and women. Participants from outside the social science discipline would also enable generalization of the results found in this study.

**THE REDUCTION OF HETEROSEXISM
AS A RESULT OF PANEL PRESENTATION**

**A Thesis
Presented to
the Division of Psychology and Special Education
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Gay men and lesbians have never reached the level of acceptance equal to that of heterosexual men and woman. Researchers estimate 10% of the population consists of gay men and lesbians yet they frequently do not receive the same rights as heterosexuals (Buhrke, Ben-Ezra, Hurley,& Ruprecht, 1992; Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Gebhard, 1953; Wall & Evans, 1991). As of 1983, being a lesbian was legal in only 26 of the 50 states and in 18 of the 55 countries on which statistics were available (Rothblum, 1985). An example of the severe penalties imposed for gays is demonstrated by the law in Iran that states that if two women are sleeping together, without clothes, they will be warned two times and if they are found a third time they will be executed (Morgan, 1984). In the United States, the legal status of gay men and lesbians is determined by individual state laws.

Studies indicate common stereotypes concerning the gay men and lesbians and the gay community contribute to continuously low levels of acceptance (Wall & Evans, 1991). Stereotypes result when people try to generalize expectations for behavior from observations or patterns of a limited number of examples. Many misconceptions are perpetuated through secondary sources such as parents, teachers, friends and others who have an impact on the development of a child or adolescent. The child later learns to rationalize these negative views and carries these stereotypes throughout his/her lifetime (Levkovich & Kuzmitskaite, 1989; Paroski, 1987; Stangor, Sullivan, & Ford, 1991). If, at an early age, a person has been convinced gay people are not to be treated with the same respect as heterosexual individuals, acceptance of the gay portion of the population will not be achieved without reeducation.

Throughout history, different groups have had to struggle to acquire the basic rights which they enjoy today. Historically, ethnic minorities, women and physically challenged individuals were at one time denied the same status and protection as white males. For numerous years the consideration of gay men and lesbians as a minority has been met with silence (Greenberg & Bystry, 1982; Phillips, 1990). Gay men and lesbians still do not possess these basic rights and privileges. Commonly they are not allowed to legally marry, receive benefits from their partner's health or life insurance, file joint income tax returns, or adopt children. (Holleran, 1993; Phillips, 1990; Trumbach, 1977; Ungaretti, 1978; Washington & Evans, 1991). As quoted by Phillips (1990):

Other communities out of the revelation of their lives together bless fields and livestock, new businesses, cars and motorcycles, foxhounds and fishing fleets, troops and battleships; even a nuclear submarine called the *Corpus Christi*. Yet in all our joyful yes-saying to the beneficence of God, there is one place where in our dioceses as in some other we have been forbidden to bless: We may not give thanks for gay and lesbian faithful covenanted unions (p.192).

Even common activities such as holding your partner's hand while walking down the street, disclosing information about your personal life with family and sharing the experiences of everyday life with the one you love must be kept out of the view of the heterosexual world. These activities are taken for granted by most straight couples and are highly desired by gay men and lesbians. Until the general population comes to accept gay men and lesbians, equal rights will not be a reality.

Previous studies have focused on assessment and "diagnosis" of gay men and lesbians, the causes leading to development as a gay person, and the

adjustment levels of gay persons (Buhrke et al., 1992). A limited number of other studies have addressed topics related to attitudes toward gay men and lesbians but have mainly focused on assessing the stereotypical portrayals of this group, and whether the person possessing the negative image has had personal contact with a member of this particular group (Pagtolun-An and Clair, 1986; Wall & Evens, 1991). This researcher intended to expand upon this previous data and evaluate the level of acceptance toward gay men and lesbians. Little research has been conducted related to the degree of acceptance of gay men and lesbians. This study is aimed at providing a greater understanding of the problems a clinical psychologist or counselor might face when working with both gay and heterosexual clients. Heterosexism is defined as, "the continued promotion by the major institutions of society of a heterosexual lifestyle while simultaneously subordinating any other lifestyles (i.e.: gay/ lesbian/ bisexual)" (Neisen, 1990, p.25).

Review of the Literature

Prejudice against minority groups has long been a problem in our society (Elrich, 1994; Klein-Davis, Pagtolun-An & Clair, 1986). Many of these negative attitudes toward a particular group are based on stereotypes which are defined by Brigham (1971) as, "generalizations made about a ... group, concerning a trait attribution, which is considered to be unjustified by an observer" (p.31).

Stereotypes often begin with the first meeting of a person belonging to a group toward which that individual feels a particular bias. Examining stereotypes that arise after the initial meeting of a person is important because this is when social relationships begin. A negative image about a particular group may prevent some people from choosing to get to know the individual beyond the first meeting based solely on this group membership (Jaffe, 1990). If people were to acknowledge the

fact they are gay upon first meeting someone, they might fear being instantly rejected if the person does not accept gay men and lesbians. This results in many gay people hiding their sexual orientation. Commonly in the gay community people lead two separate lives, one in which a particular group knows the person is gay and another such as the work place where it is hidden.

Acknowledging biases

Some people have become less willing to openly express prejudiced views but still maintain their misconceptions (Jaffe, 1990). Gardner, Lalonde, Nero, and Young (1988) state, "to the extent that evaluative judgments are involved in stereotyping, it is possible that individual differences in social desirability may determine how readily subjects report them, for fear of appearing prejudiced" (p.44). Researchers have concluded people tend to be ashamed and try to repress attitudes that may reflect their personal prejudice (Allport, 1958; Devine, 1989; Weitz, 1972).

A major attitude projected toward the gay male population is that of blame for the AIDS epidemic. Reporting gay men as a high-risk group fosters the perception that associating with a person who is gay is a social risk. This has created the defensive reactions and rejection gay men and lesbians are forced to encounter many times throughout their lives (Dupras, Levy, and Samson, 1989; Hong 1984). In the study conducted by Dupras, Levy and Samson, discriminatory attitudes toward gay individuals, gay morality and the perception of gay people's psychological stability were assessed. It was demonstrated that homophobia was the biggest indicator of the negative attitudes concerning AIDS. It was suggested that providing information regarding AIDS and being gay not necessarily equalling one another would be beneficial in reducing the amount of heterosexism in the future.

Individuals may report having no prejudice within themselves. Stangor, Sullivan and Ford (1991) concluded that attitudes toward a group, of which one is not a member, are absent of positive feelings and may well as be full of strong negative feelings. In the study conducted by Stangor et al., participants were asked to list three positive and three negative characteristics about people belonging to nine different groups, ethnic, religious and sexual orientation. The qualities most often noted concerning gay men and lesbians were: loving, liberal, sensitive, abnormal, confused and fussy. Although positive qualities were also included, many of the negative qualities were much stronger and emotion laden. "[A]versive racism is based on the assumption that intergroup attitudes in contemporary society are no longer characterized by strong negative sentiments about outgroups, but rather by the absence of positive characteristics of those groups, in comparison to ingroups" (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986, p. 23). If acceptance of gay men and lesbians is going to be achieved, individuals who hold stereotypical views of this group must come to see value in its members.

A study conducted by San Miguel and Millham (1976) found there was a significantly higher degree of aggression toward homosexuals than directed toward heterosexuals. Being identified as a gay person increased the likelihood of negative responses from the heterosexual population. The researchers stated there is a personal threat to anyone who is described as being similar to a gay person.

The question Pagtolun-An and Clair (1986) attempted to investigate was whether positive interaction with individual gays changes attitudes toward gay people in general whereby increasing levels of acceptance toward this group. The most evident result of this study was females who were exposed to a gay person had a much lower level of homophobia than that of males. "Apparently, positive

interaction with a homosexual also had a positive effect on changing negative behavior or stereotypes concerning homosexuals" (p.132). If individuals realized that those who are different from themselves might contribute to their learning, fears would decrease and barriers between groups would soon become less rigid.

In a study conducted by Hong (1984), the degree of acceptance toward gay men and lesbians and the perceived level of normality was assessed. A greater degree of acceptance was found in the participants who were young, female, more educated and those who attended church infrequently. Conservative views of homosexuality as normal or abnormal were also indicated. "This implies that members of the public would rather accept the homosexual socially than admit he is normal, another double standard in society" (p.93). Other studies, trying to discover which factors lead to more accepting attitudes toward gays, have also been conducted. In one such study by Emulf, Innala and Whitam (1989), statements of theorists who adhere to the biological models of what determines a person's sexual orientation and those supporting the psychological models, were compared. The biological followers attacked those proponents of a psychological explanation saying the psychological models add to the negative attitudes directed to gay men and lesbians by imposing their beliefs that a gay person chooses to be gay or learns to be gay from others. Biological theories propose that if being gay is learned behavior it can be "cured" through therapy, behavior modification, or religious intervention. If it is a chosen way of life, gays are responsible for their actions and the government has no obligation to protect a gay person's civil rights. Results of this study found those participants who believed the biological explanation of being gay were significantly more tolerant of gay men and lesbians than those who believe a person's sexual orientation was a choice or learned from a secondary source.

Individuals in governmental agencies and academic settings, are more willing to support tolerance, as opposed to acceptance, toward gay men and lesbians (Salholz, 1990). The general consensus of the gay community is that tolerance is not enough. As Geller (1990) stated, "The reliance of the dictionary definition of acceptance is fine, but others argue that we have come to use it differently; as in, 'can't you accept me for who I am?' Tolerance says; 'I'll put up with you.'"(p.13).

Emotional Factors Considered

Emotions, with little or no cognition, appear to be a key indicator in the prediction of negative attitudes toward a particular group. Individuals' attitudes and desired relationships toward a member of the group are also greatly affected by these emotional factors. "Emotional responses to the target groups were found to be a more consistent and stronger predictor of attitudes and social distance than were social stereotypes" and "emotions were found to be a strong and reliable determinant of favorability toward the groups", in two studies by Stangor et al., (1991, p. 370). Harding, Proshansky, Kutner, and Chein (1969) also found people rationalize their negative feelings by creating stereotypes to agree with their irrational beliefs and emotions.

Previously learned negative emotions also play a key role in the socialization process adolescents experience when discovering they are gay (Martin, 1982). Many have been taught heterosexuality is the only healthy orientation so the adolescent who acknowledges he/she is not heterosexual feels confused and isolated. Heterosexual bias, or heterosexism, is defined as, "a belief system that values heterosexuality as superior to and more 'natural' than homosexuality" (p. 629). Paroski (1987) states:

The adolescent is placed at greater distance from his or her parents as many homosexual adolescents choose not to tell their family. For those who do, the family response is often not supportive, thus causing greater distance within the family" (p.191).

Family members often feel the adolescent is making a conscious choice to be gay and view being gay as a preference for same-sex relationships. This reaction from family members makes dealing with being gay increasingly more difficult for adolescents who do not feel they have control over their sexual orientation. In these situations it is more beneficial for everyone involved if the family recognizes that being gay is an orientation, not a choice, and can offer support to the adolescent (Ernulf, Innala & Whitam 1989 & Geller, 1990).

Stereotypes of gay men and lesbians are also common among gay youth (Paroski 1987; Wall & Evens, 1991). In a study conducted by Paroski, gay adolescents were surveyed concerning typical traits they perceived gay men and lesbians to possess. Examples of the results in this study were 80% of males and 78% of females viewed gay men as effeminate in every case and 79% of males and 84% of females saw lesbians as always being masculine. A majority of the time it was also believed all gay men hate women and all lesbians hate men. The results of this study showed adolescents had developed the stereotypic images of gay men and lesbians that society holds. Young people often try to conform to these images they perceive of the gay person. If the adolescent cannot achieve this image, problems such as feelings of poor self-esteem, low self-image and self-hatred may be developed. It was noted, "the societal presentation of myths and stereotypes tends to be confusing and restrictive" (Paroski, 1987 p.191). This may hinder adolescents from exploring their own personality out of fear that they will

not fit into the stereotypical "mold". Another study concerning stereotypes found more acceptance/tolerance of gay men who fit the image congruent with one's preconceived stereotypes. This was noticed when determining a person's group membership and information which does not fit the perceived image is discarded (Herek, 1984).

Several steps were outlined by Paroski (1987) in which a adolescent typically passes through in order to accept their own identity as being homosexual (p.190):

1. The realization of one's desire to have same-sex relationships and encounters.
2. The development of guilt, shame, fear of discovery of one's homosexuality, and a sense of engaging in abnormal behavior.
3. An attempt to "change" to heterosexuality through behavior and fantasy.
4. Failure to "change" sexual orientation, and subsequent development of poor self-esteem.
5. Investigation of the homosexual lifestyle through various methods including sexual activity.
6. Acceptance and development of a positive gay/lesbian identity.

Several of the steps included in the above list could be greatly affected by prejudicial views directed toward homosexuals (e.g.: steps 2, 3, 4 and 6). Guilt, shame, and fear are often associated with the biases the individual may have encountered as he/she is struggling with his/her sexual orientation. If the adolescent has only heard negative comments and depictions of gay men and lesbians, it will be difficult to progress through these steps and, ultimately, to accept a positive identity. The young gay person may feel the need to hide the

lesbians, it will be difficult to progress through these steps and, ultimately, to accept a positive identity. The young gay person may feel the need to hide the feelings they are experiencing. Behaviors such as deliberately getting pregnant can be an attempt to "prove" that the young lesbian is a heterosexual. This can serve as an example of the hiding or denial process some gay adolescents experience (Paroski, 1987; Schippers & Schorerstichting, 1990).

Changing Attitudes

In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its listing of mental disorders. The American Psychological Association (APA) followed this decision in 1975. It was declared that:

Homosexuality per se implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities ... [and] all mental health professionals ... [should] take the lead in removing the stigma of mental illness that has long been associated with homosexual orientations. (p.633)

A person who is gay is now considered to have psychological problems only if he/she is distressed about being gay and has the desire to become heterosexual (Rothblum, 1985).

Knowing someone who belongs to a particular group can sometimes be a necessary factor in modifying one's personal biases (Pagtolun-An & Clair, 1986). Gardner et al. (1988) stated, "the social salience of an ethnic (a) group will determine the extent of categorization and stereotyping. Therefore, variables related to such salience may also relate differently to the various stereotype measures. Examples of such measures of salience of an ethnic group include amount of contact with the group, type of knowledge about them, knowledge of their language, and perceived degree of ethnolinguistic vitality of the group."

(p.45). If people who hold strongly prejudiced views gain the opportunity to get to know someone of an ethnic minority or realized they probably already know someone who is a homosexual, they might begin to change negative perceptions to more positive ones. These beliefs which are, "held by individuals but shared by many" might soon be less judgmental and more accepting (Gardner et al., p. 57).

In one of the few studies examining the age at which a child develops prejudiced beliefs, Jaffe (1990), found that certain biases and preferences begin at a very early age, usually between 4 and 10, and continue to be strong during one's life and can increase with age. The child's or adolescent's personality is constantly shaped by their family's influence over social groups and social institutions (Levkovich & Kuzmitskaite, 1989). The purpose of the study conducted by Levkovich and Kuzmitskaite was to explore parental authority and how it influences ethnic consciousness and stereotypes in adolescents. They hypothesized that stereotypes which the adolescent learns are typically the prejudices the family has adopted. The 14-15 year old age group was used because, according to the researchers, this is when ethnic consciousness and self-awareness are strongly influenced. Not surprisingly, it was found the group which the participant belonged to was rated much more favorably than the groups different from the subject's own. Also in this group the level of parental authority was scored as either high or medium. "The study showed that the level of parental authority is an essential factor in the formation of heterostereotypes in adolescence: the greater the parental authority, the greater the degree of coincidence between both positive and negative parental and child heterostereotypes (p.59)". This suggests, if parents are going to impose their negative images upon their children, proactive education may

discrimination. Teaching acceptance toward gay men and lesbians to parents and adults may be just as helpful in changing negative attitudes as teaching these ideas in a school setting to children and adolescents.

Levkovich and Kuzmitskaite (1989) state, "the major role played by parental authority in assimilating the norms and values of the family group, including norms regulating interaction of the family's members with representatives of other ethnic groups, follows from the specifics of parental authority as one of the mechanisms for controlling a youth's behavior" (p.59). This requires that the child follows the positive as well as the negative influences provided by the parents. Four types of parent-child interactions were identified (e.g.: love-control, love-autonomy, hostility-control and hostility-autonomy), and percentages were provided regarding the degree of protectiveness or control the parent had over their child in each relationship. In each type of interaction, whether it was extremely controlling or not quite so rigid, the parents placed their personal value system upon the children. Parental authority was a necessary component in the development of stereotypes in the subjects. "[T]he greater the parental authority, the greater the degree of coincidence between both positive and negative parental and child heterostereotypes" (Levkovich & Kuzmitskaite, p.59). This suggests that if parents learn to be accepting of gay men and lesbians, it is extremely likely their children will also.

Precedents in Education

In an attempt to discover means in which education is most beneficial in countering negative attitudes, several approaches have been explored. In an experiment conducted by Greenberg (1975) high school age students were assigned to one of three groups: a health education class with a unit on homosexuality, the same course without the homosexuality section, or those

students who did not take the course. Results of this study showed no significant changes between the pre- and post-tests but those students who received education about homosexuality reported having attitudes which were more open to the idea of homosexuality after completion of the course.

Several authors have investigated how knowing a gay or lesbian person can lessen fears associated with this group. West (1977) found, upon completion of his study, "contact with homosexuals on a non-sexual basis may serve to lessen otherwise negative attitudes toward homosexual behavior" (p.28). Another study by Green, Dixon and Gold-Neil (1993) found after being exposed to a panel presentation females reported more positive attitudes than males; the panel was effective in changing the negative attitudes of females; however, white males showed no significant change in negative attitudes.

Herek devised the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLG) scale after researching many measures of homophobia and discovering that these measures did not distinguish between attitudes toward lesbians and gay men but rather distinguished only homosexuals as one group. Another problem noticed by Herek was the majority of existing measures did not have reliability data except information available from one study. While researching and administering various sample test items to students, Herek discovered that heterosexual men and women, "appeared to evaluate lesbians and gay men alike along one cognitive dimension. I labeled this the *condemnation-tolerance* factor and argued that the items constituting it corresponded to the personal and cultural attitudes popularly termed homophobia" (Herek, 1984, p. 208).

Two Likert-format surveys were developed by Herek with items focused on the condemnation-tolerance factor he had identified. The two versions differed in that one was used to determine attitudes toward lesbians and one toward gay men.

Two hundred eighty undergraduate students responded to the questionnaires and upon completion item-total correlations were figured and the items which had the highest correlation with the total were used to construct the ATLG scale. The internal consistency for the entire scale was calculated ($\alpha=.90$) and for each of the subscales ($\alpha_s = .89$ for the ATG and $.77$ for the ATL). The two subtests, ATL and ATG, were correlated with construct validity at the $p < .05$ level (Greene & Herek, 1994).

Summary

Acceptance for gay men and lesbians has long been a heated issue for both the gay and straight communities. Without taking the time to confirm or disprove stereotypes of gay people, many heterosexuals have accepted the negative stereotypes and have not accepted gay men and lesbians as individuals. Labeling people based solely on their belonging to a particular group can be harmful to the individuals being placed into these categories as well as to the person who categorizes them. Learning to judge others from information one has gained from secondary sources, without the opportunity to make decisions for oneself, promotes the idea that gay people do not deserve the right to a fair and equal chance at being accepted. A major issue the homosexual community must constantly face surrounds the debate for equal rights of gay men and lesbians. In addition to the obvious privileges gay people are denied, many gays argue that simple privileges are also not available. As Washington and Evans (1991) stated:

One important intangible privilege is living one's life without the fear that people will find out that who one falls in love with, dreams about, makes love to, is someone of the same sex. This fear affects the lives of gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons from the day they first

begin to have "those funny feelings" until the day they die.

Although many gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons overcome that fear and turn the fear into a positive component of their lives, they have still been affected, and those wounds, even after healed, are easily reopened (p. 197).

Clinical psychology could greatly benefit from research in this area. The information gained from this study could assist the psychologist when working with gay clients or those who are extremely heterosexist and at risk of committing violence toward this particular segment of the population. Understanding why people are prejudiced would allow educational programs to be developed in an effort to teach heterosexist individuals how to incorporate more positive ways of thinking about and dealing with gay men and women. Perhaps if we are taught, "... the value of diversity and its importance to the development of the human race" we can all become more concerned with learning about our differences, not hating because of them (Elrich, 1994, p.12).

Hypotheses

This study sought to explore differences between levels of acceptance of men and women toward gay men and lesbians. The age range of the participants was utilized to determine the ages which are most accepting of gay individuals. The population of the area in which the participant is from was expected to influence the levels of acceptance as well. It was hypothesized that the levels of heterosexism would be greater in men than in women and also a lesser degree of acceptance in men participants toward gay men than lesbians. The degree of heterosexism was hoped to be lowered in both male and female participants as a result of a panel presentation. It was also hypothesized that younger participants

(traditional college age, 18-22) would be more accepting of gay men and lesbians than older participants (non-traditional students, 22 and over). Those participants from rural (less than 30,000 people) environments would likely be less accepting of gay men and lesbians than those from urban (greater than 30,000 people) backgrounds.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

The population for this study was undergraduate students who were enrolled in an Introductory Psychology course at a small Midwestern university. The mean age of the participants was 21. Forty-nine women, 20 men and two who did not report their gender participated in the study. Students were asked to volunteer for the study in order to partially fulfill requirements for research participation credit in their Introductory Psychology class. After agreeing to be a part of the study, the participants were asked to complete a demographic information form (see Appendix A), a questionnaire designed to assess attitudes toward gay men and lesbians, view a one hour and fifteen minute long panel consisting of gay and lesbian members and, finally, complete the same questionnaire again in order to measure changes in attitudes toward homosexuals which may be attributed to the panel's influence. A total of 71 participants were obtained.

Procedure

After the participants had volunteered for the survey, an educational presentation was scheduled. This study was not conducted during regularly scheduled class time in order to prevent students from feeling obligated to be a part of the project.

Before completing the initial survey, an informed consent document (see Appendix B) was read aloud by the experimenter and it was required that each participant sign and date this form. The Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Questionnaire (ATLG) (see Appendix C) was then distributed and completed by

every participant. These two documents were collected separately by the experimenter in order to protect the anonymity of each participant.

A single panel discussion conducted by two gay men and two lesbians was then held. A moderator for the discussion was also used and was a member of the panel. Personal experiences from each panel member were shared. A list of questions (see Appendix D) for the panel to answer had been prepared by the experimenter prior to the panel discussion. Additionally, each participant was given a blank 3 X 5 note card on which to write questions (see Appendix E) arising during the presentation. These were answered by the panel members after the experimenter's prepared questions. Upon completion of the panel discussion, the ATLG questionnaire was completed by each participant again. The surveys were collected by the experimenter and the participants were thanked for their help in the study.

Instrumentation

The survey consisted of the Herek (1984) Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLG), and a demographic questionnaire. The ATLG is a 20 item Likert-format questionnaire with two subscales, one to assess attitudes toward lesbians (ATL) and one to assess attitudes directed toward gay men (ATG). Participants were instructed to read each item carefully and circle the number which best corresponded to their own personal attitudes toward gay men and lesbians using the 9-point Likert scale ranging from 1= "strongly disagree" to 9="strongly agree". Positive and negative items are included and negative items were reverse scored.

Statistical Design

A 2 X 2 design was employed with the dependent measure being the difference between pre- and post- test scores. T-tests were conducted in order to determine the differences between the means of the pre-test, post-test and overall scores. An ANOVA was utilized in order to determine differences between the attitudes of males toward gay men and lesbians and the attitudes of women toward gay men and lesbians. Pearson R correlations between the different scores and age and between age and pre-test score were used to assess if relationships existed to begin with or if the relationships were due to treatment.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

This study was designed to assess the effectiveness of a single panel discussion in changing measured attitudes of heterosexism. Of the 71 people completing the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLG) scale, 49 were female, 20 male and two who did not identify their gender. Ages of the participants ranged from 17 to 45 with a mean age of 21. Thirty-nine of the 71 participants reported knowing a gay or lesbian person. Thirty participants were freshmen, 24 sophomores, 12 juniors, four seniors and one person who did not report his educational classification. The sexual orientation of those completing the survey included 66 heterosexuals, three bisexuals, one homosexual and one participant who did not specify orientation.

Scores obtained from the Attitudes Toward Lesbians subtest (ATL) pretest ranged from 10 to 90. The range of scores from the Attitudes Toward Gay Men subtest (ATG) was 16 to 82. Post-test scores on the ATL ranged from 17 to 90. Post-test scores obtained from the ATG subscale ranged from 18 to 82. Total ATL and ATG, pre-test scores from both subtests ranged from 26 to 172. Post-test totals ranged from 35 to 172. Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 1 and reliability coefficient alpha levels in Table 2. The mean change in attitudes of females after treatment was -7.04 and of men -2.00. Post-test attitudes of women toward gay men and lesbians had a mean of 72.63 and men 103.20. T-tests for gender and population are noted in Tables 2 and 3, respectively.

Hypothesis one proposed that a lower degree of heterosexism would be found after the panel treatment than had been measured before treatment. This hypothesis was not supported, $t = -1.32$ (see Table 2). The study also hypothesized that levels of heterosexism would be greater in men than in women. To test this

prediction an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was calculated which yielded significance, $F(1,70) = 20.11$. Hypothesis number three suggested that men would possess a lesser degree of acceptance toward gay men than toward lesbians. By use of a t-test a level of significance was not obtained, $t = -2.66$.

Younger participants (traditional college age) would be more accepting of gay men and lesbians than older participants (non-traditional age students) was the speculation of hypothesis number four. Again, a significant difference between older and younger aged participants was not found, $t = -1.76$. The final hypothesis suggested participants from rural environments would be less accepting of gay men and lesbians than those participants from urban backgrounds. Once again, significance was not obtained for the pre- or post-test, $t = .53$ and $t = .91$ respectively.

Table 1

Mean and Standard Deviation Numbers of Pre-, Post- and Total Test Scores

	Mean	S.D.
ATTLR	39.48	17.55
ATTGR	47.61	16.55
ATTLO	37.31	19.95
ATTGO	43.84	17.89
ATTGLR	87.43	32.50
ATTGLO	81.16	36.95

ATTLR = Attitudes toward lesbians pre-test

ATTGR = Attitudes toward gay men pre-test

ATTLO = Attitudes toward lesbians post-test

ATTGO = Attitudes toward gay men post-test

ATTGLR = Attitudes toward gay men and lesbians pre-test

ATTGLO = Attitudes toward gay men and lesbians post-test

Table 2
T-tests for Gender

	Mean	t	p
Change			
female	-7.04		
male	-2.00		
		-1.32	.191
ATTGLO			
female	72.63		
male	103.20		
		-3.33	.001
ATTGLR			
female	80.52		
male	105.20		
		-3.01	.004

Table 3
T-tests for Population

	Mean	t	p
Change			
rural	-3.89		
urban	-9.20		
		-1.48	.144
ATTGLO			
rural	84.76		
urban	76.29		
		.91	.367
ATTGLR			
rural	89.84		
urban	85.50		
		.53	.596

Table 4
Correlation Coefficients

	RURAL	GENDER
ORIENTATION	.06	.16
AGE	-.07	-.11
CHANGE	-.18	.16
ATTGLO	-.11	.38*
ATTGLR	-.07	.35*

* Significance at the .01 level

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine levels of heterosexism among college aged participants and to explore whether an educational presentation was an effective intervention in lowering this degree of heterosexism. Variables such as gender, age and environment were considered.

Hypothesis number one proposed that a lower degree of heterosexism would be found after the presentation compared to that which had been measured prior to the presentation. This hypothesis was not supported. A possible explanation for this finding could be that a single presentation was not adequate to be an effective means of lowering heterosexism. The length of the presentation might also not have been sufficient to cause or allow participants to change lifetime beliefs as reflected in two surveys completed in one evening presentation.

Hypothesis number two stated that levels of heterosexism would be greater in men than in women. The results of this prediction were found to be significant. This finding is consistent with Pagtolun-An and Clair's (1986) research. Although, the question Pagtolun-An and Clair were interested in answering was the effect of knowing a gay man or woman on the levels of heterosexism these investigators found that before and after male and female participants came in contact with a gay man or lesbian the female participants possessed a lower level of heterosexism than the male participants. Hong (1984) also found female participants to be less heterosexist than males.

It was hypothesized that men would possess a lesser degree of acceptance toward gay men than toward lesbians. This was not supported. Of those participants who reported their gender, 49 were female and 20 male. The small representation of males could be a factor in the results on this question. A larger

sampling of male participants would be needed in order to accurately test this hypothesis.

Hypothesis number four stated that younger participants (traditional college age) would be more accepting of gay men and lesbians than older participants (non-traditional age). This hypothesis was not supported. This finding is contradictory to work conducted by Hong (1984) who found younger participants to be more accepting of gay men and lesbians. Again, a very small portion of the entire sample was represented by non-traditional age students. Fifty-five percent of the participants in this study were between the ages of 17 and 22. Only six percent of the sample had ages of 26 or older. In future research, a larger sample size including a greater age range in this area would be useful to re-test this hypothesis.

Another possible explanation for failure to find significance for this hypothesis may be due to the fact that non-traditional age participants are attending the University with primarily younger aged students which may encourage them to be more aware of these cases than someone who is not surrounded by younger people as much of the time. Also, the fact that the non-traditional aged students are engaged in education might account for their being as open minded as their younger counterparts.

Participants from rural environments would be less accepting of gay men and lesbians than those participants from urban backgrounds was the prediction stated in hypothesis number five. Results were not found to be significant. This may reflect universal influences such as increasing media coverage which educates/informs people in areas regardless of size or population.

Future research regarding the reduction of heterosexism might utilize a series of panel treatments in order to expose participants to education concerning gay men and lesbians on a long term basis. Students from other disciplines could also be utilized to explore the possibility of psychology students being different from those studying in other areas. Participants who are not college students might also be studied to determine whether being with other students in the college setting influences attitudes. Specific course work and reading may affect the views of college students.

In order to reduce discrimination it is necessary to develop ways to reeducate the general public and lower their fears of someone who is not exactly like them. Developing tools to assist the clinician, who may be working with these individuals may help reduce heterosexism in future clients.

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APPENDIX A

Please complete this demographic sheet before continuing with the questionnaire. Thank you for your participation.

Gender : Female Male

Age: _____

Year in school: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

I identify my sexual orientation as

A. Heterosexual B. Bisexual C. Homosexual

I was primarily raised in a(n) _____ area.

A. rural (less than 30,000 people)

B. urban (greater than 30,000 people)

Do you have any gay or lesbian friends or family? Yes No

If yes, what is your relationship with them? _____

Parent's educational level, please write the most appropriate letter.

Father: _____ Mother: _____

- a. did not complete high school
- b. received high school diploma, or G. E. D.
- c. attended a two year college
- d. attended a four year university
- e. graduated from a four year university
- f. attended graduate school
- g. completed masters degree
- h. additional schooling

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Document

I, the undersigned, do agree to participate in a study conducted by Lainie Armstrong as partial fulfillment of her graduate program at Emporia State University. I understand that I will be asked to complete a survey, and that the information I give will be used to compare groups. I have been informed that my responses will be kept strictly confidential, and that I have the right to have access to the results of the study upon its completion. Further, I retain the right to withdraw from the study at any time if I should, for any reason, decide that I do not wish to remain a part, and that my answers will not be used if I so desire.

signed _____

date _____

APPENDIX C

Circle the number which most closely matches your personal attitudes according to the following scale: 1= strongly disagree; 2= definitely disagree; 3= disagree; 4= somewhat disagree; 5= neither disagree or agree; 6= somewhat agree; 7= agree; 8= defiantly agree; 9= strongly agree.

The ATLG Scale

Attitudes Toward Lesbians (ATL) Subscale

1. Lesbians just can't fit into our society.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

2. A woman's homosexuality should *not* be a cause for discrimination in any situation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

3. Female homosexuality is detrimental to society because it breaks down the natural divisions between the sexes.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

4. State laws regulating private, consenting lesbian behavior should be loosened.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

5. Female homosexuality is a sin.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

6. The growing number of lesbians indicates a decline in American morals.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

7. Female homosexuality in itself is no problem, but what society makes of it can be a problem.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

8. Female homosexuality is a threat to many of our basic social institutions.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

9. Female homosexuality is an inferior form of sexuality.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

10. Lesbians are sick.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Attitudes Toward Gay Men (ATG) Subscale

11. Male homosexuality couples should be allowed to adopt children the same as heterosexual couples.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

12. I think male homosexuals are disgusting.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

13. Male homosexuals should *not* be allowed to teach school.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

14. Male homosexuality is a perversion.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

15. Just as in other species, male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in human men.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

16. If a man has homosexual feelings, he should do everything he can to overcome them.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

17. I would *not* be too upset if I learned that my son were a homosexual.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

18. Homosexual behavior between two men is just plain wrong.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

19. The idea of male homosexual marriages seems ridiculous to me.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

20. Male homosexuality is merely a different kind of lifestyle that should *not* be condemned.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

APPENDIX D

COMING OUT

- How and when did you know you were gay/lesbian?
- Did you have a hard time accepting you were gay? Explain.
- Do you feel being gay or lesbian is a choice or something you are born with? Explain why or why not.
- How did you come out to family and friends?
- Have you lost anyone who was important to you because they couldn't accept that you are gay?
- Is it important to you that people know you are gay? Why or why not?

RELATIONSHIPS

- Are any of you currently involved in a relationship or married?
- What are your thoughts on same sex marriages, adoptions etc.?
- Do any of you plan on having children? If so do you plan to have them yourself, adopt, etc.?
- Do you feel it would be hard on the child to have two moms/dads?
- Do you think your children would/will be gay because they live with gay parents? Why or why not?

DISCRIMINATION

- Does discrimination against homosexuals exist? Explain.
- Do you feel you have ever been discriminated against because you are gay or lesbian?
- Are gay people seeking "special" rights?

OTHER

- If you could change one misconception about homosexuality what would it be?

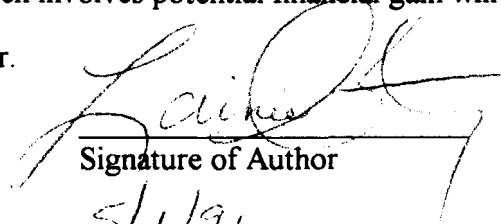
-If a person has one sexual experience with someone of their own gender, does that mean that they are gay?

APPENDIX E

Audience Questions

- What possible repercussions do you foresee if homosexuality is determined to be biological?
- Many times I've heard homosexuals say in defense "what we do behind our doors is none of your business". Do you think this reduces homosexuality to a sexual level instead of an emotional level?
- Was experimenting with another of the same sex a big factor in turning to gay or lesbianism?
- Did you have heterosexual relationships before you found out you were gay?
- How do you feel about stereotyping and how society treats you?
- I've been told that gay/lesbian people are very promiscuous, is this true?
- Have you ever gone through a period of having multiple partners?
- How has AIDS changed your relationships or your looking for a relationship?
- Have you ever felt any guilt concerning your lifestyle, and if so, was it because of a "social norm" outlook or was it a result of personal, internal beliefs or values?
- Within a homosexual couple how do you determine who takes on the masculine and feminine roles.
- If given the opportunity, would any of you choose to exchange your sexual orientation, and if so why?
- For what reasons does the government not allow gay/lesbian marriages?
- If you are going to have children, how would you deal with days like "Mothers Day" or "Fathers Day"?
- Bisexuals are not often received in the gay/lesbian community. How do you each feel about bisexuals?
- Would you be offended if a friend found out that you were homosexual and they ignored you because they did not know how to act around you?

I, Lainie Armstrong, hereby submit this thesis to Emporia State University as partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree. I agree that the library of the University may make it available to use in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I further agree that quoting, photocopying, or other reproduction of this document is allowed for private study, scholarship (including teaching) and research purposes of a nonprofit nature. No copying which involves potential financial gain will be allowed without written permission of the author.



Signature of Author

5/1/96

Date

THE REDUCTION OF HETEROSEXISM
AS A RESULT OF PANEL PRESENTATION

Title of Thesis

Wendy Cooper
Signature of Graduate Office Staff

May 3, 1996
Date Received