

Teach Your Children Well: A Mixed-method Exploration of the Link between Parent and Peer
Communication Regarding Homosexuality and Bisexuality and Individual Attitudes Toward
Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Phyllis Williams, and my grandmother Margaret McClamb and in loving memory of my grandparents, Shelby and Robert Foust, and my mother-in-law, Sally Stewart. They were unable to complete their desired level of education but never stopped learning and teaching others. I am grateful that they shared their knowledge and love with me.

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ABSTRACT

The literature on attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals has focused on the role of various demographic factors in predicting attitudes. At the same time, much of the literature on sexual socialization has attempted to document the contribution of formative communications and experiences to individuals' current sexual attitudes. This dissertation bridges both bodies of literature by examining the contribution of the early messages that individuals received regarding homosexuality to their current attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals.

Study 1 was based on semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 21 emerging adults (ages 18-24) from a large public Midwestern university. The primary goal of the study was to explore the content of the messages that participants received from multiple sources (parents, peers, community members) about homosexuality and bisexuality. Findings revealed that participants received few messages about bisexuality but numerous messages regarding the nature of homosexuality, and concerning the acceptance or disapproval of homosexuality within their close social networks (peers and family) and within the broader society.

Study 2 was quantitative study based on 429 emerging adults (55% female) from a large public Midwestern university. The study assessed emerging adults' exposure to messages about homosexuality from their parents and peers. Male sources provided more negative messages about homosexuality than did female sources, and female sources provided more positive messages than did male sources. The study also found that multiple demographic factors, such as gender, age, race, religious service attendance, country of upbringing, and parent education level, were correlated with levels and types of messages communicated.

Study 3 assessed the contribution of early messages about homosexuality to current attitudes about lesbians, gays, and bisexuals among heterosexual emerging adults. The study was based on data from 410 heterosexual participants from Study 2. Positive peer messages were a key factor in emerging adults' later attitudes. Exposure to positive messages from peers was associated with greater comfort with lesbians, gays, and bisexuals and stronger endorsement of

equal rights for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. Positive peer messages were also associated with less hostility toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In September 2010, syndicated columnist, Dan Savage, and his partner Terry Miller, launched It Gets Better (<http://www.itgetsbetter.org/pages/about-it-gets-better-project/>). The online video campaign was initiated in response to a series of suicides by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth who were bullied and teased by classmates (McKinley, 2010). For the campaign, individuals created brief videos through which they communicated to youth that: 1) it is okay to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender; 2) they are not alone because there are other lgbt people in the world; and 3) life will get better because they will one day find a community of people who love and support them.

The It Gets Better campaign garnered tremendous response and support from individuals around the world, including celebrities and public figures (Melnick, 2010; Stelter, 2010). What the campaign creators and those who supported the campaign's mission understood was that *messages matter*. The campaign recognized that many youth receive negative messages from peers and loved ones about homosexuality and bisexuality, and many youth are victimized by peers and loved ones because they are or are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. The consequences of these experiences can be dire, as rates of suicidal behavior among victimized youth is high (Haas et al., 2011). At the same time, however, the campaign recognized that receiving positive messages can be beneficial in the lives of youth and may even interrupt the effects of the negative messages that youth receive.

Like the It Gets Better campaign, the following dissertation recognizes the role of messages—positive and negative—in the lives of youth. To that end, the dissertation seeks to explore the messages youth received about homosexuality and bisexuality during their formative years. I have included heterosexual youth as well as lesbian, gay, and bisexual (lgb) youth because I recognize that both groups share many contexts (e.g., school, community) and receive many of the same messages. At the same time, I acknowledge that the messages youth—

especially heterosexual youth—receive shape youth’s attitudes, which in turn shape the social climate of the contexts they share with their lesbian, gay, and bisexual peers. Thus, the dissertation will also examine the contribution of early messages on emerging adults’ attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. Therefore, the dissertation is guided by the following goals:

- 1) To describe the messages that youth received about homosexuality and bisexuality during their formative years (ages 5 – 18);
- 2) To examine the link between early messages about homosexuality and current attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals among heterosexual emerging adults;
- 3) To explore how messages about traditional gender roles influence the association between messages about homosexuality and attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals.

The overarching goal of this dissertation is to understand what youth hear and observe about homosexuality and bisexuality. To do this, I use three related studies: one qualitative and two quantitative. Each of the studies is based on a sample of emerging adults. First, I present the theoretical framework that guides the dissertation. Next, I present a review of the literature on parent communication regarding homosexuality, bisexuality, and gender roles, followed by a review of peer communication on the same topics. I then present each of the dissertation studies.

The first study is a qualitative study that describes the content of messages that emerging adults receive about homosexuality and bisexuality. The attempt to distinguish between messages about homosexuality and messages about bisexuality is based on findings from prior literature, which suggest that individuals hold different attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals (Kite, 2010; Mulick & Wright, 2002). The study assumes that the differences in attitudes described in previous literature will be evident in the messages that individuals receive.

The second study, a quantitative study, is based on a larger sample of emerging adults. Guided by findings from Study 1, which revealed that participants received few, if any, messages about bisexuality, Study 2 focuses on individuals’ recollections of parental and peer communication about homosexuality during one’s formative years. In addition to examining the content and frequency of messages about homosexuality that youth received, I also evaluate the demographic correlates (e.g., parental education, race) associated with the transmission of these messages. Extending the findings from Study 2, the third and final study examines the contribution of early messages about homosexuality to individuals’ current attitudes toward

sexual minorities. The third study also examines how messages regarding homosexuality and traditional gender roles interact in shaping individuals' attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. Finally, I present a discussion of the key findings across each of the three studies and the implications of those findings for the field of developmental psychology.

Theoretical Framework

One theory used to describe the process by which individuals come to understand themselves and others as sexual beings is *sexual scripts* theory proposed by Simon and Gagnon (1986). According to the theory, individuals learn the values and norms regarding sexual behavior as they receive and interact with messages at three *levels*. At the *cultural level*, messages are transmitted from the broader context or dominant society. These messages may be transmitted via the media, which are thought to reflect dominant societal views, and via local and national laws, which instantiate societal norms and values. Indeed, considerable research highlights numerous sexual messages conveyed through media (see Ward, 2003; Wright, 2009). Additional scholarship has noted changes in sexual content and sexual messages during different decades and socio-historical periods (Hetsroni, 2007).

At the *interpersonal level*, messages are transmitted within more proximal contexts such as relationships with parents and peers and communities. The literature on sexual socialization indicates that parents and peers are among the top sources of sexual information concerning dating norms and expectations and the benefits and consequences of sexual and romantic relationships (DiIorio, Kelly, Hockenberry-Eaton, 1999; Lefkowitz, Boone, & Shearer, 2004). Stephens and Phillips (2005) recognize that Simon and Gagnon's (1986) cultural level focuses on messages that are designated for the general society—or dominant culture. Furthermore, the authors suggest that at the interpersonal level, individuals who are members of a specific cultural group (e.g., African American), receive and negotiate sexual messages that address sexual values and expectations of that cultural group. Here, family and peers are a source for sexual messages, which may or may not be consistent with the dominant societal norms present at the cultural level (i.e., Simon and Gagnon's cultural level), but still have considerable influence in the life of the individual. Indeed, previous scholarship has noted that some of the differences in sexual communication found across ethnic groups can be attributed to the values and specific traditions of particular ethnic/race groups (Espiritu, 2001; Kim, 2009; Raffaelli, Kang, Guarini, 2012; Townsend, 2008).

I submit that religious group membership also operates at the interpersonal level. Approaches to sexual norms and practices (e.g., the acceptance of premarital sex) have been found to vary across religions (see Regnerus, 2005). Moreover, the messages transmitted within one's individual religious group may or may not be consistent with the messages transmitted at the cultural level. In this way, religious group membership—particularly when one is an active member of one's religious group—offers a proximal socialization context with influence similar to that of one's family or peers. For instance, in their study of Southern Baptist mother-daughter dyads, Baier and Wampler (2008) found that mothers who taught their daughters to wait until marriage to have sex did so because they believed it was consistent with biblical teachings. Thus, scholarship on sexual communication supports Simon and Gagnon's (1986) cultural and interpersonal level of sexual script theory. The messages received at the cultural and interpersonal level convey guidelines for sexual attraction and behavior by informing the individual whom she should be attracted to, how she should express her desire, and how the object of her desire should interact with her.

Still, however, Simon and Gagnon (1986) propose that the individual also plays a significant role in sexual scripting theory. The individual is not viewed as a passive recipient of norms and values. Rather, the individual considers the messages that have been transmitted and whether or not those messages are relevant, comfortable, and appropriate for her life. Thus, the third and final level of the theory is referred to as the *intrapsychic level*. The literature on parental sexual socialization offers support for the intrapsychic level. Findings from this literature, however, have been mixed. Some studies have found that sexual communication predicts delayed sexual debut in some youth and contraceptive use among sexually active youth, whereas other studies have failed to find such link (see DiIorio, Pluhar, & Belcher, 2003). These findings, particularly those that show a link with contraceptive use, suggest that some youth do indeed consider the messages they received when choosing to engage in sexual activity. The following dissertation focuses on the interpersonal and intrapsychic levels and asserts that individuals' attitudes about homosexuality and bisexuality are due, in part, to the messages received from multiple interpersonal level sources.

Sexual Scripting and Developmental Theory

Sexual scripts theory originated as a sociological framework to describe how individuals become sexual beings. However, sexual scripts theory and the application of the theory are

closely aligned with developmental frameworks such as the person-in-context frameworks. For example, the ecological model of human development described by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) suggests that the individual's presence in and involvement with multiple contexts contribute—directly or indirectly—to the individual's development of beliefs and the enactment of those beliefs. Each context has import on the individual's life, as does the broader socio-historical period in which those contexts are situated. What scripting theory labels as levels, person-in context frameworks labels as contexts. Like sexual scripts theory, person-in-context theories recognize that the individual lives and operates within an immediate context that informs the individual's beliefs and behaviors, and that those contexts *and* the individual are influenced by a much broader context in which they are situated (Magnussen & Stattin, 1998; Miller, 2011).

Review of Extant Literature

Attitudes Toward Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals

The domain of sexual beliefs under investigation here are attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals (also referred to as *sexual minorities*¹). Attitudes toward sexual minorities have been operationalized as a multidimensional concept inclusive of beliefs or opinions regarding civil rights (e.g., legalization of same-sex marriage, same-sex parent adoption, freedom from job discrimination), morality, and the nature of homosexuality or bisexuality (e.g., is it a natural form of sexual expression) (Herek & Capitano, 1995; LaMar & Kite, 1998). The majority of literature on attitudes toward sexual minorities has examined attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals separately. *Homonegativity* and *binegativity* refers to attitudes that reflect disapproval of or discrimination against lesbians/gays and bisexuals (respectively) (Mulick & Wright, 2000; Negy & Eisenman, 2005). The underlying goals of scholarship on homonegativity and binegativity have been to highlight the prevalence and strength of these attitudes and to identify the factors associated with them. Although most factors can be attributed to the individual, socio-political and socio-historical periods must also be considered, as they, too, can influence attitudes toward sexual minorities. For example, historically, US society has not been accepting of homosexuality (Andersen & Fetner, 2008; Kite, 2011; Loftus, 2001), and has embraced traditional male/female sex roles (Collins, 2004; Deutsch, 2007). Yet as social climates shift from conservative to liberal, attitudes toward sexual minorities can shift from negative to

¹ Throughout this dissertation, the term sexual minority will refer to lesbians, gays, and bisexuals.

positive (respectively). Indeed, in a study of changes in attitudes toward homosexuality from 1973 to 1998, Loftus (2001) observed that conservative attitudes toward sexual minorities spiked during the late 1980's. Loftus notes that this increase coincides with the socially conservative presidential administration and the alarming rise of AIDS, which was largely thought to be a "gay" disease.

Still, several individual factors also have been linked with homonegativity. Older age, for example, has been associated with less favorable attitudes toward sexual minorities (Herek, 2002; Herek & Glunt, 1993; Schulte & Battle, 2004). Adherence to traditional male/female gender roles also has been linked to homonegativity, homophobia, and sexual prejudice (Davies, 2004; Keiller, 2010; Kite & Whitley, 1996; Wilkinson, 2006). Among the traits associated with a traditional male role are power, physical strength, emotional control, and being the financial provider. By contrast, traits associated with traditional female roles include being delicate in appearance and manner, being demure and subservient to men, and being primarily focused on tasks related to home-making and childrearing (Rudman & Glick, 2001; Wiederman, 2005). Whitley's (2001) meta-analysis of studies that examined gender roles and attitudes toward homosexuality indicates that heterosexual men and women who endorsed traditional male and female roles held negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. This finding held true regardless of the operational definition of gender role. The study also found that individuals who endorsed sexism, characterized by the differential treatment of women and men, also held negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Later research with heterosexual undergraduate students echoes prior findings that individuals who endorse traditional male/female roles see homosexuality *and bisexuality* as an affront to their beliefs about gender roles (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009; Whitley & Ægisdóttir, 2000).

Accordingly, some heterosexuals erroneously assume that homosexuality is manifested through behaviors that are typical of another gender. For example, gay men are associated with effeminate behavior (Keiller, 2010). Similarly, lesbians are perceived as embodying stereotypically masculine traits and preferring to engage in masculine behaviors (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009). Regardless of whether or not lesbians and gay men actually transgress their prescribed gender roles, they are still viewed negatively by many heterosexuals. Thus, one's attitudes toward lesbians and gays are not solely based on characteristics of the person who is

gay or lesbian, but also on the characteristics and social frameworks of the individual who holds the attitudes.

Individuals also hold unfavorable views of bisexuals, who are often viewed more negatively than are gay men and lesbians (Eliason, 1997, 2001). Mulick and Wright (2002) conducted a study of heterosexual and homosexual adult men and women and found that the majority of their participants viewed bisexuals as promiscuous. Across genders and sexual orientations, participants equated being attracted to both genders with being sexually indiscriminant.

Gender and Attitudes Toward Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals

Previous scholarship has noted several variations in heterosexuals' attitudes toward sexual minorities. One dimension on which attitudes vary is gender. Numerous studies indicate gender differences both in heterosexuals' attitudes toward sexual minorities (for a review see Kite & Whitely, 2003) and differences in attitudes based on the gender and orientation of the target of the attitudes (e.g., gay men, lesbian women, bisexual men). Generally, gay and bisexual men are viewed more negatively than are lesbians and bisexual women (Kite, 2011). Moreover, across African American and White samples, heterosexual men hold more negative attitudes toward gays and lesbians than do heterosexual women (Baker & Fishbein, 1998; Herek, 2002; Jenkins, Lambert & Baker, 2007; Negy & Eisenman, 2005). Disapproval of gay men may be related to greater societal emphasis placed on male masculinity and male heterosexuality. Within US society, men are penalized more severely for any perceived departure from masculine ideals—however slight—which is interpreted as weakness (Kehily, 2001; Keiller, 2010). Additionally, homosexual men may be perceived as predatory or a threat to heterosexuality.

Lesbianism, however, may not be viewed as a threat because women's sexuality is typically not taken seriously (Fine & McClelland, 2006; Tolman 1991). Feminist scholars have proposed that, within US society, women's sexual desire is secondary to men's desire, and women's sexuality is thought to exist, primarily, as a source of pleasure for men (Louderback & Whitley, 1997; Yost & Thomas, 2012). Heterosexual men may view lesbianism more favorably than male homosexuality because the thought of two women together is more sexually arousing than it is threatening. However, lesbianism does not necessarily appeal to heterosexual women in the same way. Although several studies suggest that heterosexual women hold more negative attitudes toward lesbians than toward gay men (Baker & Fishbein, 1998; Herek & Capitanio,

1995; Kite & Whitley, 1996), these findings have not been consistent across the literature. As with heterosexual men, some heterosexual women may perceive lesbians as predatory and thus worry about unwanted sexual advances from lesbians.

Recent scholarship has drawn attention to attitudes toward bisexuals, finding that both heterosexual and homosexual individuals display hostile attitudes toward bisexual individuals (de Bruin & Ardnt, 2010; Eliason, 2001; Mohr & Rochlen, 1999). In their study of heterosexual, gay, and lesbian participants, Mulick and Wright (2001) found that the majority of their participants viewed bisexuals as promiscuous. Across genders and sexual orientations, participants equated being attracted to both genders with being sexually indiscriminate. In a cross-ethnic study of adult heterosexual men and women, Herek (2002) found that whereas men held equally negative attitudes toward homosexuals and bisexuals, women held more negative attitudes toward bisexuals than toward homosexuals. These findings are consistent with the previous observations of gender differences in attitudes, which indicate that heterosexual men disapprove of any departure from male ideals and gender roles. Heterosexual women may be more accepting of homosexuality than bisexuality because homosexuality is consistent with sexual messages that dichotomize sexuality as heterosexual or homosexual. As with the findings from Mulick and Wright, women may disapprove of what they perceive to be sexual ambiguity.

Race and Attitudes Toward Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals

Several studies have examined racial differences in attitudes toward sexual minorities. In a study comparing White and African American college women, Vincent, Peterson, and Parrot (2009) found that, overall, African American women held more negative attitudes toward sexual minorities than did their White counterparts. When examined more closely, the findings revealed that African American women held more negative attitudes toward gay men than toward lesbians. The racial differences highlighted in this study may be related to more rigid gender role expectations among African American women. Here, it seems that African American women's attitudes about male homosexuality align with heterosexual men's attitudes about male homosexuality in that male homosexuality is seen as an unacceptable departure from masculinity.

Aside from these findings, racial differences in attitudes toward sexual minorities are seldom observed or, when observed, are not enduring. Several studies have found that when controlling for religion, racial differences in negative attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals disappear (Herek & Capitanio, 1995; Negy & Eisenman, 2005; Schulte & Battle, 2004).

Thus, religiosity, and not race, may be the driving force behind the apparent group differences in attitudes. Despite individual and cultural shifts in attitudes, many of the world's major religions have, at some point, condemned homosexuality and bisexuality (Adameczyk & Pitt, 2009). For some religious individuals, rejecting or disapproving of sexual minorities is a way of acting out one's religious beliefs. In a study of Christian college students, Woodford, Levy, and Walls (2012) observed that emerging adults engage with the tenets of their religion. Individuals who felt their beliefs were congruent with religious teachings, which conveyed that homosexuality is sinful, displayed negative attitudes toward sexual minorities. Individuals who felt a disconnect between their beliefs and their religious teachings maintained somewhat neutral attitudes toward lgb people.

Religion may be particularly influential in shaping attitudes among African Americans. Christianity, specifically involvement in the Christian church, has been documented as a prominent feature in the lives of many African Americans (Taylor, Mattis, Chatters, 1999; Wortham, 2009). For centuries, the church has been a primary site for social programs and services, education, and political organizing for civil rights. As a result, the church has been instrumental in establishing and maintaining a collective identity among African Americans, one that is based on shared moral values. For example, in a study comparing Whites' and African Americans' attitudes toward homosexuality and gay rights, Lewis (2003) found that African Americans were more likely than Whites to morally oppose homosexuality (e.g., view HIV/AIDS as punishment for sexual behavior). Interestingly, however, at the same time, African Americans were more likely than Whites to support laws prohibiting job discrimination for sexual minorities. These findings suggest that although African Americans' religious teachings justify disapproval of homosexuality, their past struggle for civil rights may compel them to advocate for the rights of other groups.

Sexual scripting through sexual socialization

Although the literature on sexual scripting is broad, it is complemented by scholarship on sexual socialization. Both bodies of literature indicate that individuals' sexual beliefs and behaviors are informed by implicit and explicit messages received from the people and contexts that surround them (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). Explicit messages are communicated in such a way that their meaning is clear and unmistakable; implicit messages, by contrast, require that the meaning be inferred or interpreted by the recipient (Dittus, Jaccard, & Gordon, 1999; Ward &

Wyatt, 1994). Throughout the sexual scripting and sexual socialization literature, parents and peers have been identified as two of the primary sources of formative sexual messages (e.g., Andre, Frevert, & Schuchmann, 1989; Maguen & Armistead, 2006).

Parental and peer communications regarding sexuality cover many topics. However, the information provided often focuses on abstinence until marriage, pregnancy prevention, and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and infections (DiIorio, Pluhar, & Belcher, 2003). When abstinence and disease prevention are discussed, it is typically within the context of heterosexual relationships. In this way, the messages conveyed are *heteronormative*. That is, they assume heterosexuality of individuals and promote heterosexuality as normal (Martin, 2009). For example, Martin found that mothers' communication to their young children regarding romantic relationships almost exclusively referred to love between a man and a woman. Within this heterosexual paradigm, specific gender roles (which will be discussed in greater detail later) are ascribed to men and women such that gender roles and sexuality become conflated.

Interestingly, just as communication about sexuality has typically been heteronormative, so too has the literature on sexual communication. The emphasis on heterosexuality as the norm may implicitly convey that other sexualities are not "normal." Accordingly, the current dissertation explored emerging adults' recollections of implicit and explicit communication from parent and peers regarding homosexuality and bisexuality.

Parental Communication About Homosexuality

Earlier studies indicated that homosexuality is among the many sexual topics that African American, White, and Hispanic parents discuss with their children (Fisher, 1988; King & Larusso, 1997). For example, Downie and Coates (1999) examined parents' communication about sexuality with their pre-school and pre-adolescent children. Among pre-adolescent youth, 52% of boys and 46% of girls reported that their fathers talked with them about homosexuality, and 85% of boys and 73% of girls reported that their mothers talked with them about homosexuality. However, although these findings indicate that homosexuality is discussed, information about the *content* and nature of this communication is limited. Findings from a handful of studies reveal that these communications can be both negative and positive. Surveying a sample of 641 US mothers (88% White, 5% Black, 3% Hispanic, 2% Asian, and 1% Native American), Martin (2009) explored the content of messages that mothers transmit to their young children (ages 3-6) about love and intimate relationships. Sixty-seven percent of the mothers in

the study reported that they did not make any statements about homosexuality to their children. However, among those who did discuss homosexuality, 8% of the mothers in the study reported that they conveyed negative messages about homosexuality and 26% told their children that it is unacceptable to make fun of sexual minorities.

Surveying 745 African American, White, Asian, and Latino undergraduate students, Calzo and Ward (2009) examined retrospective reports of messages about homosexuality received from parents, peers, and media. Participants in this study indicated how often they had received the following messages from each source: “Homosexuality is a question of orientation, not morality” and “Homosexuality is not perverse and unnatural.” Overall, participants received fewer messages about homosexuality from parents than from peers and media. This finding was true regardless of participants’ religious background or parents’ education level. There were, however, gender differences with regard to parent messages about homosexuality. Female participants reported receiving parental messages conveying that homosexuality is not perverse and unnatural more often than their male peers. With regard to race, differences between the messages conveyed by Black parents and White parents were accounted for by parents’ education level and participants’ religiosity. The study did not examine differences in communication by gender source (i.e., mother or father).

Finally, Foust and Ward (in press) examined the association between positive communication about homosexuality and attitudes toward lesbians and gays among African American college students. In addition to the messages measured by Calzo and Ward (2009), Foust and Ward assessed participants’ recollection of the following messages: *Homosexuality is okay* and *People who are LGBT should have the same rights as everyone else*. Overall, participants reported receiving positive messages regarding homosexuality with little frequency. Although there were no significant differences in men and women’s overall reports of parental communication in the sample of African American emerging adults, women reported receiving the message *Homosexuality is a question of orientation, not morality* more often than their male counterparts. This outcome mirrors Calzo and Ward’s finding. However, findings from the study suggest that individuals who frequently received positive messages about homosexuality from either parents or peers held more accepting attitudes toward lesbians and gays than those who reported never receiving positive messages. The same pattern was found with regard to

individuals' endorsement of equal rights for lesbians and gays (i.e., exposure to pro-civil rights messages was linked with stronger endorsement).

To summarize, it appears that some parents—even parents of young children—*do* convey information (albeit limited) that can promote acceptance of homosexuality or lesbians and gays. Moreover, the limited information that parents convey appears to be important in predicting children's later attitudes toward lesbians and gays. As the literature on the messages individuals receive about homosexuality continues to grow, so does our understanding of the factors that contribute to the messages that individuals receive. Thus far, religion and gender have accounted for individual differences in the messages received.

Parental Communication About Homosexuality Among Sexual Minority Youth

The limited literature on messages about homosexuality has been based on predominantly or exclusively heterosexual samples. However, there is a wealth of literature on perceived parental support/acceptance or rejection among sexual minority individuals (Bouris et al. 2010; Heatherington & Lavner, 2008; Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003; Sheets & Mohr, 2009). Given that heterosexual and sexual minority youth operate within similar societal contexts, it is likely that the two groups frequently receive similar messages. It is worthwhile, then, to consider general communication between sexual minority youth and their parents. Much of the scholarship on parental support/acceptance has examined support broadly, assessing whether or not parents are, generally, sensitive or responsive to the individuals' needs (Bouris et al., 2010; Heatherington & Lavner, 2008). A few studies, however, have examined support/acceptance specifically as it relates to youths' sexual identity (Elizur & Mintzer, 2003; Shilo & Savaya, 2012). Included in this research are samples of youth who have disclosed their sexual orientation to others and individuals who have not done so. Here, the degree of support/acceptance is measured by actual or anticipated response to the individual's sexual orientation. For instance, in Shilo and Savaya's measure of acceptance, response options ranged from 1 (rejection) to 9 (acceptance). Floyd, Stein, Harter, Allison, and Nye (1999) used a similar scale to assess participants' perception of their parental support but labeled this *parent attitudes regarding sexual orientation*.

Across studies, despite minor variations in scale or label, parental support/acceptance emerges as an important factor in the lives of sexual minority youth. In their longitudinal study of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth (15-19 years old), D'Augelli, Grossman, Starks, and Sinclair

(2010) found that perceived parental support was a factor in youths' decision to disclose their sexual identity. Youth who anticipated rejection or harassment upon disclosing their identity delayed or chose not to reveal their identity to their parents. Additionally, perceived parental support has been positively linked with self-esteem (Ryan, Russell, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2010) and comfort with and public acknowledgement of one's sexual identity (Floyd, Stein, Harter, Allison, & Nye, 1999). Collectively, the findings presented indicate that, among lgb youth, those who perceive that their parents support their sexual identity fare better emotionally than youth who believe that their parents are not accepting of their sexual identity.

Still, Perrin et al. (2005) argue that parents can convey both acceptance *and* rejection, and note the positive effects of support and negative effects of rejection on youth well being. Their findings indicate that a single scale of acceptance is not sufficient to understand the role of parental communication in the lives of lgb youth. According to Perrin and colleagues, parental support is multidimensional. Indeed, one limitation of the literature on parental support for lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth is that it does not articulate the diversity of messages individuals receive about homosexuality. What has yet to be clearly addressed in this body of literature is what constitutes support/acceptance and rejection. In other words, *what is the content of parental communication about homosexuality?*

Parental Communication About Bisexuality

The literature on parental communication about homosexuality is limited, and the literature on communication about bisexuality is even scarcer. Like parental messages about homosexuality, much of what is known about parental messages regarding bisexuality comes from research on parental support for bisexual youth. Few studies, however, have examined parental communication about bisexuality beyond conveying support. Sheets and Mohr (2009) contrasted the contribution of two types of parental and peer support (general and sexuality specific) to mental well-being of bisexual college students. Sexuality specific support from parents was associated with greater life satisfaction and lower reports of internalized binegativity. Although the findings suggest that perceived support/acceptance could have a salutary effect on individuals' attitudes about their own sexuality, the literature has not fully addressed the specific messages—and array of messages—that individuals receive about bisexuality.

Parental Communication About Gender Roles

Prior research suggests that parents provide few messages about homosexuality during youths' formative years; however, parents do provide numerous messages regarding gender roles and behaviors. In fact, much of the *sexual* information youth receive is imbued with gender roles and expectations. Among the gender roles identified in the sexual socialization literature are a sexual gatekeeper role for women (e.g., "Good girls don't") and a sexual seeker role for men (e.g., "Real mean score") (Fasula, Miller, Wiener, 2007; Hutchinson & Montgomery, 2007). Here, men are expected (and in some instances encouraged) to approach women and initiate romantic and sexual relationships, whereas women are expected and encouraged to prevent men from successfully accomplishing that goal. Although recent studies acknowledge the presence of messages that advocate equality between genders (e.g., Epstein & Ward, 2011; Grange, Brubaker, Corneill, 2011), messages about traditional gender roles tend to dominate sexual communication messages.

The gatekeeper and sex-seeker roles are important because they highlight the heteronormative nature of messages. Despite the fact that the roles could be applied to same-sex relationships, extant literature suggests that parents do not do so. Research with younger children indicates a link between parent's gender schema and children's gender beliefs. Tenenbaum and Leaper's (2002) findings revealed that parents' ideas about gender are related to their children's beliefs regarding gender roles. Considering the link between gender role attitudes and attitudes toward sexual minorities (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009) *and* the link between early messages and later sexual attitudes among emerging adults (DiIorio, Pluhar, & Belcher, 2003), it is worthwhile to explore how early communication regarding gender roles are connected to later attitudes toward sexual minorities.

Peer Communication About Homosexuality

Peers are another key source for sexual communication. Although individuals report greater confidence in the factual information provided by parents and formal sexual education programs, young people gain a considerable amount of their sexual knowledge from their peers (Maguen & Armistead, 2006; Whitaker & Miller, 2000). Close friends tend to share information about their own sexual experiences with one another (Kapungu et al., 2011) and in doing so, offer practical information regarding how to go about pursuing a partner or be physically or emotionally intimate with a partner. In sharing their experiences with one another, friends reveal what they feel is acceptable and unacceptable.

The literature on peer communication regarding homosexuality is growing rapidly. Much of what is known comes from school climate research that examines school related victimization experiences of lgbt youth, and from a separate body of research that examines the use of homonegative language among youth. Each body of research recognizes that collectively, the comments individuals make about sexual minorities and the way individuals behave toward sexual minorities create a climate that serves as a powerful agent of socialization for those within the environment (Poteat, 2008; Poteat & Rivers, 2010). Previous research highlights numerous instances, within the school context in particular, in which youth display hostile attitudes and beliefs toward sexual minorities (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Chesir-Teran & Hughes, 2009; Pilkington & D'Augelli, 1995) and those who are assumed to be sexual minorities (Toomey, Ryan, Diaz, Card, & Russell, 2010). For example, the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN) surveyed a nationwide sample of 7,261 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender middle and high school students (ages 13 to 21) to assess their in-school experiences of harassment and support (Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, & Palmer, 2012). Roughly 85% of students reported hearing anti-gay language used by their classmates. In terms of being the target of anti-gay hostility, 38% reported being physically harassed and 82% reported being verbally harassed because of their sexual identity. Moreover, the majority of the youth also reported that they felt unwelcome in their school because of their sexual orientation.

Additional research finds that negativity toward sexual minorities is not limited to the harassment of sexual minority youth. Terms like *faggot* or *lesbo*—epithets that are typically used to disparage gays and lesbians, respectively—are often used against heterosexual peers as a way of insulting or ostracizing them (Froyum, 2007; Pascoe, 2005). Poteat's (2008) study of middle and high school youth revealed that socializing with peers who engage in aggressive (i.e., bullying) behavior contributed to increased use of homophobic epithets (e.g., *fag* and *lesbo*). Here, it appears that using anti-gay language is a tactic of choice among youth who bully. Taken together, Poteat (2008) and Kosciw, et al.'s (2012) findings indicate that many youth are cognizant that sexual minorities are marginalized, and youth understand that they can stigmatize others by linking them to sexual minorities. Youth's willingness to physically harass sexual minority youth and verbally harass (using anti-gay language) is evidence of disapproval of, or disdain for, sexual minorities.

Similarly, the ubiquitous use of the phrase “*that’s so gay*” among adolescents and young adults has been a focal point of both scholarly and popular writings (Elliott, 2008; McCormack & Andersen, 2010). Although the phrase can be used to call out and label a particular behavior as evidence of same-sex attraction, it is primarily used to dismiss something as silly, stupid, or uncool (Korobov, 2004; McCormack & Andersen, 2010). Both Korobov and Pascoe (2005) found that although youth who used the phrase knew that the terms are used to describe (gay) and insult (fag/faggot, lesbo) gays and lesbians, the youth maintained that they did not use the terms to intentionally disparage sexual minorities. Most importantly, youth from both studies stressed that they would not use epithets to refer to sexual minorities and indicated that doing so would be rude or unacceptable. Despite their frequent use of the phrase *that’s so gay*, youth from Korobov’s study were adamant that they were not homophobic.

It may seem surprising that some youth are comfortable appropriating the use of gay epithets while distancing themselves from the nefarious meanings associated with those epithets. However, McCormack (2011) argues that youth are able to do this because of cultural shifts in the meaning of what he calls *homosexual themed language*. As evidenced in McCormack and Andersen’s (2010) study of university rugby players from the United Kingdom, athletes were disgusted by their coaches who used the words *gay* and *poof* (pejorative term for gays) to insult a player or challenge a player’s masculinity. The coaches’ behavior was viewed as characteristic of individuals from older generations. However, the rugby players considered their own use of terms like *that’s so gay* or *hey gay boy* to be disconnected from sexual or gender references and devoid of malice. Instead, players viewed homosexual themed language both as a tool for affectionate banter with friends and as a way to dismiss something they found silly or stupid. As in Korobov and Pascoe’s studies, McCormack and Andersen’s findings suggest that for many youth, the use of homosexual themed language does not carry the same stigma it did in previous generations. These findings are consistent with the literature on attitudes toward sexual minorities, which typically finds younger individuals to be more accepting of sexual minorities than older individuals (Herek, 2002).

Still, however, not all youth endorse homosexual themed language. In fact, some individuals are adversely affected by such language. In their survey of lesbian, gay, and bisexual college students, Woodford, Howell, Silverschanz, and Yu (2012) found that the majority of participants encountered homosexual themed language on their campus. Frequent exposure to

such messages was associated with feeling “left out” of the university community and with physiological symptoms of stress (e.g., reduced appetite, headaches). These findings echo those of Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, and Palmer (2012) and suggest that despite the ease with which many youth use homosexual themed language, it continues to leave some youth, particularly lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth feeling uncomfortable and unsupported.

One, perhaps more formal, way that youth show their support for sexual minorities is through their involvement in a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) group. A GSA is a school-based extracurricular club or organization for sexual minority youth and heterosexual youth who want to support sexual minority youth in the school community by increasing awareness of and advocating for the concerns of sexual minority individuals (Russell, Kosciw, Horn, & Saewyc, 2010). Studies that examine effects of school climate on the well-being of sexual minority youth indicate that sexual minority youth who attend schools with GSAs report fewer instances of hearing homophobic language and less harassment than sexual minority youth at schools without GSAs (Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, & Palmer, 2012; Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006; Toomey, Ryan, Diaz, & Russell, 2011). Additional studies of lgb youth find being involved in a GSA buffered the negative effects of school-based victimization on youth depression and suicide attempts (Toomey, Ryan, Diaz, & Russell). Having a large or active GSA within a school community likely conveys that youth—at least *some* youth—in the school are accepting and supportive of sexual minorities, and appears to alter the school climate.

Still, the acceptance and positive messages that are present among youth may be found more readily within close friendships and social group ties than within the broader student body. As youth move through adolescence, the close friendships they form become paramount as these bonds connect youth with peers who share their ideas and interests and are a source of emotional intimacy (Erikson, 1980; Way & Greene, 2006). In a longitudinal study of 7th-12th graders of varying racial backgrounds, Poteat (2007) examined the influence of peer attitudes and behaviors toward lesbians and gays on individual attitudes and behaviors. Poteat’s findings indicate that, over time, youth who associated with peers who held negative attitudes toward sexual minorities or used homophobic epithets adopted more negative attitudes and increased their use of homophobic epithets, which made them more similar to their peers. It was also true that youth who were in peer groups with more positive attitudes toward gays and lesbians, over time, adopted attitudes and behaviors that mirrored the attitudes and behaviors of their group. Poteat’s

research does not identify the specific messages transmitted between peers or how messages were transmitted, but Poteat's findings suggest that, whether implicitly or explicitly, peers *are* transmitting beliefs to one another, and that this communication in turn informs youth's views and treatment of sexual minorities. By contrast, Calzo and Ward (2009) examined undergraduate students' recollection of receiving two messages from peers: *homosexuality is not perverse or unnatural* and *homosexuality is a question of orientation, not morality*. Participants indicated that peers communicated each message occasionally. However, the study did not examine the connection between recalled messages and participants' attitudes.

Although the literature on peer communication regarding homosexuality provides some details regarding such communication, there is still a tremendous need to parse the nature and content of the messages that are transmitted. In addition to examining the specific messages communicated by peers regarding homosexuality, attention is needed concerning the context in which the message was received—whether or not the message was implicit, explicit, direct, or indirect. Also, as noted above, analyses are needed that connect exposure to these communications to youths' own attitudes toward homosexuality.

Peer Communication About Bisexuality

Recent studies suggest that some youth express an interest in exploring their sexuality or report being open to having a relationship with someone of any gender (Thompson & Morgan, 2006; Yon-Leau & Muñoz-Laboy, 2010). However, the literature regarding peer communication about bisexuality is scant. Similar to parental communication about bisexuality, research on bisexual youth's perceptions of support provides some information regarding peer communication about bisexuality. In their study of bisexual youth (ages 14-21), Doty, Willoughby, Lindahl, and Malik (2010) found that bisexual youth report receiving greater sexuality-specific support from sexual minority friends than from heterosexual friends. Although the study did not measure how support was conveyed, the findings suggest that peers in some way conveyed positive sentiments toward bisexual individuals—at the very least, their bisexual friend. Sexuality specific support from peers has been linked with lower reports of internalized binegativity (Sheets & Mohr, 2009) and emotional distress (Doty, Willoughby, Lindahl, & Malik, 2010).

Some bisexuals, however, encounter negative responses from others because of their sexuality. In their qualitative study of Latino/a bisexual youth, Yon-Leau and Muñoz-Laboy

(2010) found that some individuals felt pressure from others to define themselves as either gay/lesbian or heterosexual. Bisexual men, in particular, may experience this pressure more so than their female counterparts—specifically from females—as bisexual men experience rejection from female partners who fear contracting a sexually transmitted infection (Sandfort & Dodge, 2008; Wilson, 2008). Bisexual women, however, report a distinctly different problem with their potential male partners in that some men express an interest in bisexual women because men hope to watch or join their bisexual partner in a sexual act with another woman (Fahs, 2009). Some bisexual men and women report rejection from lesbian and gay partners who fear that a bisexual partner would leave the relationship to pursue a heterosexual relationship (McLean, 2010). The experiences of bisexual men and women are consistent with the literature on attitudes toward bisexuals and suggest that one of the messages transmitted regarding bisexuality is that bisexuality is not taken seriously and, as a result, is not considered a valid sexual identity (Burlinson, 2005; Morrison, Harrington, & McDermott, 2010; Mulick & Wright, 2002).

Peer Communication About Gender Roles

As has been evidenced earlier, messages about homosexuality and bisexuality are often interwoven with messages about gender. Just as parents convey expectations for how women and men are to behave and interact with one another, so, too, do peers. Although peer based gender socialization occurs across the lifespan, it appears to be heightened during childhood and adolescence.

One way in which gendered sexual norms are communicated by peers is via play activities. During middle childhood, for example, cross-gender games of chase (e.g., girls versus boys) provoke greater excitement and interest among peers than do same-gender games of chase. Although the consequences of being “caught” by the opposing team may vary, common consequences include being kissed or getting “germs” from the other gender (i.e., cooties) (Thorne, 1993; Thorne & Luria, 1986). Children recognize that kisses are an expression of affection and interest between two people. By using the kiss and capture as a threat, they engage with and play with this idea. Although the game is antagonistic, it reflects the heteronormative framework in which affection and interest occur between men and women. According to Myers and Raymond (2010), this type of play coincides with the emergence of outward expressions of interest in or attraction to others beyond platonic friendship.

As youth move through adolescence, the heterosexual framework continues to dominate social relationships and interactions. In contrast to middle childhood when youth are derided for cross-gender interactions, adolescents are expected to show interest in other gender peers in order to confirm a heterosexual identity (Renold, 2006). For boys, in particular, establishing a heterosexual identity becomes particularly important, as is establishing a masculine identity. Kehily (2001) proposes that masculinity is affirmed through heterosexuality. For boys, masculinity is something that can be challenged by others by implying that an individual is not heterosexual. As a result, boys' heterosexuality must be proclaimed and reclaimed repeatedly through public talk and behavior related to sex and desire for the female other (Froyum, 2007; Martin, 1996; Pascoe, 2005; Renold, 2007).

Pascoe (2005) acknowledges that the maintenance of heterosexual masculinity varies by race and gender. For instance, she observed that among the White adolescents in her study, boys who displayed an interest in their appearance or fashion would have their heterosexual masculinity called into question. For the African American boys, however, concern with appearance was viewed as part of one's masculinity. For girls in Pascoe's study, the pressure to claim heterosexuality was not as strong as it was for boys. In a separate study of African American adolescents (ages 12-17), Froyum (2007) found that girls policed heterosexual masculinity for boys as much as their male peers did and in a manner similar to youth from Pascoe's study. However, when policing their female peers' gender, the emphasis was primarily on physical appearance. Girls were expected to wear close-fitting clothing and make-up; baggy clothing was seen as 'tom-boy' clothing and inappropriate. Another gender role norm for females is the expectation for sexual chastity. Unlike boys, who are expected to pursue sexual activity with girls—indiscriminately to some degree—girls are expected to resist boys' sexual advances and be sexually inexperienced (Martin, 1996). In this way, peer communication regarding gender roles is similar to that of parental communication.

The findings presented suggest that, among adolescents, peer communication about gender roles is interlaced with expectations for heterosexuality. The fact that communication focuses on heterosexuality (a gender-normed heterosexuality) does not mean that it is inherently negative toward homosexuality and bisexuality. However, as has been noted previously, the emphasis on heterosexual relationships does render other sexualities invisible. When considered alone, the findings on peer communication regarding gender roles raises the following question:

How does peer communication about gender roles contribute to individual attitudes toward sexual minorities?

Summary

To summarize, individuals' sexual attitudes are shaped, in part, by their exposure to various sexual messages, which occur at multiple levels. Although the literature connecting sexual messages and attitudes about homosexuality and bisexuality is growing, it remains rather disjointed. The literature on parent communication has begun to identify messages but has yet to detail how messages relate to attitudes and behaviors. By contrast, literature on peer communication has yet to fully articulate the messages that exist but has established that peer attitudes provide a context that is instrumental in shaping youth attitudes and behaviors toward lesbians and gays.

The limited literature on parent communication regarding homosexuality (Calzo & Ward, 2010; Fisher, 1988; King & Larusso, 1997; Martin, 2009) suggests that parents provide little explicit communication about homosexuality. However, these findings must be taken with caution, as they focus on positive/accepting messages about homosexuality. The literature on sexual communication (specific to heterosexuality) has revealed that parental communication about sexual topics is multidimensional, consisting of both affirming and prohibitive messages (Ward & Wyatt, 1994). The literature has yet to clearly enumerate the richer set of messages that individuals receive about homosexuality. It is likely that messages about homosexuality are also multidimensional. Future research needs to explore this possibility and consider assessing multiple types of messages (e.g., messages of acceptance *and* disapproval). Additionally, future research should examine the link between parental communication and individuals' attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. To date, only one study has done this; however, those findings are currently in press (Foust & Ward, in press).

The literature on peer communication regarding homosexuality and bisexuality includes both qualitative and quantitative research. Previous qualitative studies have employed ethnographic methods in order to provide rich descriptions of the messages that are transmitted and *how* those messages are transmitted (Froyum, 2007; McCormack & Andersen, 2010; Pascoe, 2005). These studies also highlight the ways that peer language and behavior create a social context in which sexuality (specifically male heterosexuality) dominates social interactions. The

fact that youth across the three studies used homo-themed language and maintained heterosexual gender boundaries in a similar manner helps to substantiate the findings from each of the studies. Although the literature on peers also examines individual attitudes and behaviors associated with peer contexts (Poteat, 2007), the literature does so by examining attitudes toward lesbians and gays within specific peer groups, and by investigating how those attitudes influence individual attitudes and behaviors over time. The primary limitation of this approach is that it does not assess the individual's *perceptions* of their peers' attitudes. Examining youth's perceptions of their peers' attitudes acknowledges that youth are not passive participants in their surrounding environment. Rather, youth interpret what they hear and observe, and what is interpreted may have import on youths' attitudes and behaviors.

Goals of Current Study

This dissertation consists of three related studies that examine the content of emerging adults' early socialization experiences regarding homosexuality and bisexuality and the contribution of early messages to current attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. Participants for all three studies were drawn from the same population. Study 1 is a qualitative, descriptive study that identifies prevalent messages regarding homosexuality and bisexuality that emerge from individuals' early socialization experiences with multiple sources (parents, peers, community members, schools).

Studies 2 and 3 are quantitative studies that build on the findings from Study 1. Themes from Study 1 were used to develop items for the quantitative measure used to assess early messages about homosexuality in Study 2 and 3. Study 2 utilizes survey data to examine emerging adults' perceptions of positive and negative messages about homosexuality from parents and peers. The study investigates gender differences across sources (mother versus father, male peer versus female peer) and participants (women versus men). The study also examines the contribution of multiple demographic factors to parental and peer communication about homosexuality.

Study 3 investigates the link between emerging adults' current attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals and the messages received from parent and peer messages about homosexuality. The study also examines the interaction of messages regarding traditional gender roles and messages regarding homosexuality in predicting attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals.

CHAPTER 2

Study 1

Describing Socialization Experiences Regarding Homosexuality and Bisexuality

The primary goal of the current study is to describe the socialization experiences regarding homosexuality and bisexuality that occur during one's formative years (ages 5-18). Prior literature on sexual socialization suggests that parent and peer communication is instrumental in shaping individual sexual attitudes (DiIorio, Kelly, Hockenberry-Eaton, 1999; Lefkowitz, Boone, & Shearer, 2004). Little is known, however, about youths' socialization experiences regarding homosexuality (i.e., the content of communication about homosexuality and bisexuality). In her study of mother's communication with young children (ages 3-5) about relationship, Martin (2009) found that of the 347 mothers surveyed, 62% of mothers said nothing about homosexuality to their children; 8% of mothers said that homosexuality was wrong, and a third of mothers made other statements or comments about homosexuality. Even less is known about what youth learn about bisexuality. The literature on peer socialization experiences about homosexuality has been more informative (Calzo & Ward, 2009; Froyum, 2007; McCormack, 2011; Pascoe, 2005) and indicates that youth convey an acceptance of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. At the same time, however, youth convey a disdain for homosexuality.

The goal of Study 1 was to examine participants' recollections of their socialization experiences regarding homosexuality and bisexuality. Specifically, the study aimed to describe the various comments that individuals heard (or overheard) regarding same-sex attraction, desire, or behavior. Additionally, the study was concerned with any actions and behaviors individuals witnessed or experienced that conveyed acceptance or rejection of lesbians, gays, or bisexuals (e.g., defending or harassing someone who was lesbian, gay, or bisexual). To that end, the current study was guided by the research question: *What are youth's socialization experiences regarding homosexuality and bisexuality?* I anticipated that, across all sources, some experiences would convey an acceptance of sexual minorities, whereas some experiences would convey

disapproval; still, other experiences would convey information about homosexuality and bisexuality but without a clear positive or negative tone.

Method

Participants

Participants were 21 (14 female, 7 male) undergraduate students at a large public Midwestern university. A detailed list of participants and their demographic backgrounds is provided in Table 2.1. The majority of participants were juniors or seniors. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 21; age data was unavailable for 9 participants. Seven participants identified as Caucasian or White, eleven as Black or African American², one as Indian, one as Asian, and one as Puerto Rican. One female participant identified as bisexual, four males identified as gay, and one female identified as lesbian. All other participants identified as heterosexual.

Participant recruitment occurred in two phases. The first recruitment phase focused exclusively on African American participants, whereas the second phase of recruitment was open to participants of all ethnic groups. Participants were recruited through flyers posted in various campus buildings. The flyers indicated that the goal of the study was to explore what individuals learned about sexual attraction and desire, and invited participation from individuals who were 18 years old or older. Two sets of flyers were circulated. Flyers to recruit the African American sample featured images of African American male and female youth in conversation with peers or parents and specified that individuals interested in participating be African American. To ensure sufficient participation, African American participants were also recruited through snowball sampling. At the end of their interview, Black participants were asked if they would be willing to refer other participants to the study.

Recruitment flyers for the cross-ethnic group sample included similar images with individuals who appeared to be White or Latino; race was not listed as a criterion for inclusion on the flyer. For both flyers, individuals who were interested in participating in the study were instructed to email me, the principal investigator. Through email, participants were asked to confirm their race and age. Participants were provided with a description of the study as a 1.5 to

² Recruitment materials used the term African American. However, participants were allowed to participate if they identified as Black or African American. During the interview, I used the term that the participant preferred. For consistency, term Black is used in the Results and Discussion section—except when quoting participants—as Black refers to a broader race group inclusive of African Americans.

2 hour long interview during which the participant would be asked questions about the messages they received about attraction and desire while growing up. Participants were also notified that they would receive \$20 in iTunes gift cards for their participation. Twenty-two individuals responded to recruitment efforts. One potential African American male participant was prohibited from participating in the study because he was not 18 years old.

Procedure

All participants were administered a semi-structured interview. The interview protocol is included in Appendix A. Interview questions covered each of the following five domains: personal background and experiences; conceptualizations of sexuality and gender; socialization experiences with family, peers, community members, schools/teachers, religious group, and media regarding homosexuality and bisexuality; socialization experiences with parents regarding gender; and attitudes regarding civil rights for lesbian, gay, and bisexuals. Socialization experiences included comments that were explicitly stated by a source (e.g., *I will still love you if you are gay*, *Homosexuality is a sin*) and anything that the participant observed or overheard (e.g., a lesbian peer being harassed and called “dyke”). The semi-structured nature of interviews ensured that all interviews shared a common set of questions, which enabled me to more readily examine similarities and differences across participant responses. Semi-structured interviews also allowed me to probe unanticipated themes that arose in participants’ comments.

I conducted all interviews in an office located on campus in the Psychology Department. I am a Black gay woman. I have prior experience conducting in-depth interviews with adults and adolescents. Although my race group membership (Black) is readily perceived by others, my sexual identity is not, as I have been assumed to be heterosexual by some and gay by others. I was unsure of how I would be perceived by participants; however, I assumed that I would most often be perceived as heterosexual. I did not disclose my sexual identity to participants. Although my office normally contains pictures of my wife, who is White, I removed these photos during the study so that participants would not feel inhibited when responding to questions about homosexuality and race. My primary concern was that participants might be reticent to make negative comments about Whites or sexual minorities if they felt they might offend me, or those close to me (e.g., those in the pictures).

At the beginning of each interview, I let participants know that many of the interview questions would ask about the messages they received from family members, community

members, and peers. As a part of the consenting process, I also reminded participants that their participation was voluntary and confidential and that they were free to skip any question or terminate their participation at any time. At the end of the interview, participants were asked to select a pseudonym that would be used to in their transcript and to reference their comments. All interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed by me or a research assistant.

Analysis Plan

Interviews transcripts were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through this approach, the identified themes were based on participants' comments rather than theory. During an initial round of analysis, I analyzed and coded approximately eight transcripts with support from four research assistants. The transcripts were all from Black participants, as an initial aim of the study was to focus on messages among Black participants. Each of the eight transcripts was read multiple times. During the first reading, the transcript was read in its entirety; potentially interesting points were noted in the margins of the transcript, but themes were not generated. For the second reading, researchers worked independently to generate a list of any experiences related to homosexuality. After generating a list for each of the eight transcripts, the comments and behaviors were reviewed and organized into themes groups. The research team then met to discuss the themes and clarify the characteristics of each theme. The team reviewed the transcripts to verify that the comment or behavior was consistent with the identified theme. Comments and behaviors that did not fit within the theme were placed in a more appropriate existing theme or into a new theme. Themes were then reviewed to determine if and how themes were related to one another. Initially, data were organized into six themes each of which included multiple sub-themes.

During a second round of coding, transcripts from all participants were reviewed. I conducted all coding without research assistants. Transcripts were entered into Dedoose, an internet-based qualitative analysis software program. Dedoose facilitates qualitative analysis and allows researchers to quantify findings. Similar to the initial coding, each transcript was read multiple times. Using open coding, any experience related to homosexuality were highlighted and saved as an excerpt. After reviewing the highlighted excerpt, theme groups were generated. The coding scheme that was developed during the initial round of coding was used as a reference; however, I remained open to new themes that emerged. Themes were created and refined based on prevalence and on perceived impact of a particular theme. The excerpts were

reviewed again and all relevant codes were attached to the excerpt. As a final step, the theme groups were reviewed to determine the features of the group. Theme groups were merged or deleted based on their relevance.

Results

Five themes emerged from the data. In some instances, sub-themes highlighted the nuances of the broader theme. Included within each theme are comments that were explicitly stated by sources and those that were inferred by the participant based on their observations of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals and how others treated lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. As will be described in greater detail below, themes varied along several factors: prevalence of theme, source of theme (e.g., parent versus friend), and race, gender, or sexuality of participant. When examined together, the five themes offer insight into youth's socialization experiences regarding homosexuality and bisexuality.

Theme 1: Heterosexuality is the only sexuality

More than half of participants described being raised in contexts in which the overwhelming majority of those they encountered were heterosexual. In reflecting on the messages they gleaned from their observations of and communication with others with regard to homosexuality, participants were aware that their experiences were framed by the heteronormative nature of the contexts in which they operated.

Subtheme 1: Heterosexuality seems natural

As Eric, a heterosexual man, indicates, the absence of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals established heterosexuality as the normal, natural sexuality.

I think I was, um, probably a little slower to develop like re- relationships with the other gender. And so I think I saw more people just around me sort of forming relationships, and these are like the early relationships like I don't even think there was any like sexual interest in a lot of them just like we're supposed to start liking girls now or something. So, I kinda saw that around me and like, never having seen any other sort of sexual relationship other than just a guy and a girl or a man and a woman, it's sort of just seemed very natural, like that's how it's taught in- like in church and in school and so, it seemed natural.

(Eric, White heterosexual man)

In addition to reporting that sexual minorities were physically absent from many social contexts, participants reported that lesbians, gays, and bisexuals were absent from discussions on sexuality. Eric's comments also highlight the role of schools and religious groups as sources for messages about sexuality. Within these contexts, Eric noted an implicit expectation that individuals were heterosexual. Participants who were raised among lesbian, gay, or bisexual friends and family members also experienced expectations of heterosexuality. In total, 14 participants reported receiving heteronormative messages. In schools, sexual messages were transmitted as a part of formal sexual education program that ignored same-sex sexuality. In Christian churches, the emphasis on heterosexual relationships was presented as a religious truth— something that was proscribed by God.

We talked a lot about like what the Lord says and, is right, and that like, holy matrimony is between male and a female, or you know, man and a woman and like, you are to find your soul mate and marry them and have kids, like glorify the Lord in that way, but we never in church or bible study or Sunday school ever talked about the subject of homosexuality, or sexuality of any difference other than heterosexuality.

(Amy, White heterosexual woman)

Subtheme 2: Silence/No messages about homosexuality/bisexuality

When asked directly about what was communicated about homosexuality or bisexuality, some participants reported that they did not receive any communication from at least one of the key sources: parents, peers, teachers/school, media, and church.

Interviewer: Did your parents ever mention anything to you about people LGBTQ³ people?

Respondent: No, not really.

Interviewer: Did you ever hear any comments about homosexuality or people who were attracted to the same sex or same gender?

³ At the beginning of each interview, participants were asked which terms they used when referring to lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. Throughout the interview, I used the term the participant indicated.

Respondent: No, not from them. No.

(Maximillian)

However, when probed about their observations of how others treated lesbians, gays, and bisexuals in their community, participants were able to articulate experiences from which they learned how sexual minorities (and homosexuality and bisexuality) were perceived. Maximillian was the only participant for whom this was not so. He reported that his parents did not communicate anything to him about homosexuality, and he could not recall any incidents when his parents interacted with gays, lesbians, or bisexuals. The response patterns of the other participants, however, draw attention to the fact that communication about homosexuality does not only occur through direct comments about gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and homosexuality. Rather, as Eric's comments (above) revealed, youth learn a great deal about homosexuality (and to some degree bisexuality) by interacting with lesbians, gays, and bisexuals and by observing how others treat lesbians, gays, and bisexuals.

Theme 2: Nature of Homo/Bisexuality

When participants recalled socialization experiences related to homosexuality or bisexuality, participants described experiences that conveyed information about the nature of homosexuality and bisexuality. Although twenty participants reported the theme at least once, the theme appeared more frequently in transcripts of Black participants and the one Puerto Rican participant than in the transcripts of Caucasian/White and Asian participants. The Nature of Homo/Bisexuality theme is organized into four sub-themes that describe the nature of homosexuality and bisexuality with regard to: a) the origins of homosexuality and bisexuality, b) the fluid/fixed nature of homosexuality, c) examples of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, and d) the qualities and characteristics that are equated with being lesbian, gay, and bisexual. Collectively, the subthemes answer the question, "*What makes one gay/lesbian/bisexual?*"

Subtheme 1: Homosexuality/bisexuality is innate, cultivated, or a choice

Half of the participants who reported receiving messages about the nature of homosexuality and bisexuality received messages about the origin of homosexuality and bisexuality. However, of the four subthemes, this subtheme was reported the least. Within the subtheme, participants were exposed to comments or behaviors that suggested that

homosexuality or bisexuality was innate, cultivated by others, or a choice made by an individual. Family members, peers, and community were most often the source of this type of message. Below, Jamaal describes his observations of homosexuality within his own family, which suggested to him that homosexuality was innate and inherited.

Interviewer: You mentioned that you had a cousin who was gay; she was a lesbian. Did you have any other relatives or community members who were homosexual or lesbian?

Respondent: Somebody else in their family was homosexual, but then he decided to get married after he was homosex- he's confused. But that's why I think it's ingrown because, like people in their family were also homosexual, so I think it's ingrown, it comes in your genes, it just happens like that, I dunno.

(Jamaal, Black heterosexual man)

Another explanation of why one is gay or lesbian was that homosexuality can be cultivated. Cultivated homosexuality reflects the idea that one is gay or lesbian because they are exposed to homosexuality or because they were seduced into being gay or lesbian. This seduction was referred to as being “turned out.” The idea of cultivated homosexuality came up in interviews with Black participants *and* the one Puerto Rican participant; however, the phrase *turned out*, was only used among three Black participants. Alice describes her friends’ use of the term “turned out” and her understanding of its meaning. It is interesting to note that Alice appears to question the message that she receives.

People think that you can like turn someone gay. People think that Nolan did that to another girl where like, nobody ever went into detail, just like this idea of like, “Oh yeah, they turned them out,” which I don't really know how you could do that to someone if they don't really already have those feelings, but it's just like the whole perceived idea about how it happens: you get to be their close friend, then you guys hang out a lot and then they slowly put the moves on you, and then all of a sudden, you're gay.

(Alice, Black heterosexual woman)

Subtheme 2: (Homo)sexuality is Fluid vs (Homo)sexuality is Fixed

Of the four subthemes, messages regarding the fixed or fluid nature of (homo)sexuality were the second most prevalent subtheme. Community members and peers were the most common source of fixed/fluid messages. Generally, participants observations of participants encountered some individuals who had only been in opposite-sex relationships and others who had only been in same-sex relationships, participants also witnessed individuals who had been in opposite-sex *and* same-sex relationships (at different points). Each relationship conveyed information about the nature of sexuality as fixed (unchanging) or fluid (mutable).

I've actually had, like three good friends turn gay since coming—or admit that they're homosexual—and I actually think it's for a couple of them, it was something where they actually thought they were straight for a really long time and just discovered that they—, I mean so they might be considered bisexual still, I'm not, I'm not terribly sure.

(Eric, White heterosexual man)

At the same time, the way that others responded to the relationships also served as a message about the fluid or fixed nature of sexuality. Recalling comments she heard from others, Sydney, a Black heterosexual woman, noted that, “*Some people who say, like if a guy has sex with a gay, that they're always gay. You know, but I don't really know if I really believe that.*” As Sydney's comment suggests, men's sexuality was not viewed as fluid. If a man was known to have a past relationship with another man, others assumed his ‘true’ sexual identity to be gay, and past homosexuality experiences served as a stain on one's reputation. However, Sydney also observed that her brother had, at one point, identified as gay but, more recently, was open to dating men and women. For Sydney, her brother's experiences conveyed that sexuality was fluid and that male homosexuality was not permanent. Thus, Sydney's socialization experiences regarding homosexuality included two contrasting messages that were conveyed in different ways.

Two of the gay men in the study observed that male homosexuality was seen as fluid. However, this belief appeared to reflect others' disbelief or denial of the men's gay identity. Ethan recalled that when he came out to his mother, her initial response was shock and anger. Below, Ethan describes a later conversation with his father in which his father suggests that Ethan's mother had not accepted that Ethan was, in fact, gay.

We were just like you know, around the kitchen, like making dinner and stuff, and like hashing stuff out and it was really the first time that we had like openly talked so much about me being gay...He was like, "You know, I still had a hard time understanding. I'm trying to understand; it's still difficult, but your mom and sister, they both think it's still just a phase that you're going ... they still think you're going through a phase.

(Ethan, White gay man)

The observations and comments regarding the fixed or fluid nature of sexuality draw attention to an important issue surrounding sexuality: bisexuality is often ignored as a viable sexual identity. The messages conveyed in the excerpts above suggest that one must be either heterosexual or gay/lesbian.

Subtheme 3: Representations of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals

Several participants recalled encountering a gay, lesbian, or bisexual person (real or fictional) who served as an example of what gays, lesbians, and bisexuals are like. The individuals who participants encountered were varied; some individuals mirrored common stereotypes of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, whereas others did not. During the interview, participants acknowledged that the images presented in media were inaccurate, often exaggerated, representations of sexual minorities. However, some participants were unable to make this distinction at the time the messages were transmitted (during early adolescence). Ethan describes the messages he took away from the negative representations of gays that he encountered as a youth. The messages had a lasting impact on Ethan's views about his sexual identity and gays, in general.

...when I was six, seven, or eight, like, when I was home in the summer, there wasn't a lot on TV in the morning like during the weekdays and so, Jerry Springer and Sally Jessy Raphael was where it was at. So-o-o, I distinctly remember a lot of, "Oh, my husband's sleeping with my brother." You know, stuff like that and my sister and my mom would always be like, "Oh. Ew!"

I remember my mom telling me like, "I better never see you ever in a situation like that on Jerry Springer," and so I just, I kind of always, after I started realizing like I had these feelings [for other boys] and like this is kind of how I

was, I kind of connected that with Jerry Springer and I think that's part of the reason I pushed it [being gay] away, because it's like I connected being gay with being like trashy, and it was very, I mean even after I came out it took me a while to separate those two...

(Ethan, White gay man)

Subtheme 4: Markers of Homosexuality

Participants described socialization experiences in which others conveyed that homosexuality could be easily detected even if one's sexual identity had not been disclosed. Of the four message themes about the nature of (homo)sexuality, these messages were reported most frequently. Participants reported that their family members and peers believed that they could determine whether or not an individual was gay or lesbian based on certain markers—behaviors or characteristics—exhibited by the individual. Whereas the subtheme *Representations of Homosexuality/Bisexuality* included a broad range of examples of gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals, *Markers of Homosexuality*, includes a limited scope of behaviors and characteristics that individuals associate with homosexuality. Markers for bisexuality were not mentioned. Generally, the marker for being gay or lesbian was behaving in a way that was inconsistent with gender roles. In this way, sexuality was conflated with gender roles. For instance, when Vince, a heterosexual man, asked one of his peers why others often assumed he was gay, he was told, “*You just have feminine tendencies.*” Vince's friend further explained that Vince was sensitive in the way that a woman might be sensitive. Here, the marker for homosexuality was disposition. Similarly, if one carried one's self or moved one's body in a way that was inconsistent with gender roles, this was also a marker for homosexuality. Alia describes how her father and uncles responded to her male dance instructor whom they assumed was gay.

Like, I know for a fact he's not gay, but because he was dancing or it was kind of feminine like shaking his butt, then it was associated with like a “sissy” or like he was going to be gay....Like unless they were pop-locking— like if they would be getting down with us [girls] and, if we had anything that made our butts move and the guys did it, then “they're gay.” But if they were pop-locking, and crunk dancing and are doing really beastly, manly dances, then “Oh they're fine.” But if they're ballet or tapping, “Oh no, they're gay.”

(Alia, Black heterosexual woman)

Other markers of homosexuality were the friends or social activities one chose. Participating in gender atypical activities marked one as gay or lesbian. Additionally, having gay or lesbian friends marked one as gay or lesbian. For adolescent boys, having numerous platonic friendships with girls but no romantic relationships with girls marked one as gay. For adults, being single signaled that one was gay. Natalie identifies multiple markers that led her and her peers to speculate that their teachers were gay or lesbian. Natalie's comments highlight a curiosity about others' sexual orientation. Participants observed others' desire to speculate on and confirm others' sexual orientation as lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

Interviewer: And what made you suspect they [your teachers] were gay?

Respondent: Well, for my Spanish teacher, someone lived by her, I guess. And they saw her walking with her partner. This is all just hearsay, I guess. And like, she acts pretty- she's really butch, I guess. So that makes people assume she was gay. The atheist one- she was really feminist—that's also what people in high school think of as being gay. Basically, the unmarried girl teachers, it was like, "Yeah they're gay." And sometimes my friends— even with the unmarried guy teachers who were obviously into girls because they liked the high school girls, they were like, "Yeah, they're probably gay." I don't know— it was like a high school thing where we went around trying to figure out who was gay or whatever.

(Natalie, White bisexual woman)

Just as certain characteristics and behaviors identified one as gay or lesbian, other characteristics signaled that one was not gay. Below, LarryJones notes that he and his male friends were surprised to learn that their very attractive female friend was gay. For LarryJones and his friends, attractive women were *not* lesbians.

Interviewer: And what do you all talk about? What comes up in these conversations?

Respondent: Just the same thing, like first of all 'She too bad to be gay, man.' I don't know if you understand the terminology—you do. I know you do. But, you know, she too bad to be gay...

(LarryJones, Black heterosexual man)

In summary, men and women received messages about homosexuality and bisexuality—what it is and what it is not—informally through their encounters with lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals (real or fictional) and through their observations of the boundaries that others placed around homosexuality, bisexuality, and heterosexuality. What becomes apparent through the subthemes is that, in general, the boundaries that others place around sexuality constrict how the individual expresses herself. Additionally, the boundaries shape the way that gender is defined.

Theme 3: Being Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual is Okay

Nearly all (90%) participants recounted socialization experiences in which they received messages that conveyed an acceptance of gay, lesbians, bisexuals, and homosexuality. In some instances, as described by Sydney, participants were assured (by family or peers) that being gay or lesbian is okay. Generally, this message indicated that the individual would not be rejected because of her or his sexual identity.

So like I think I've always, I've always known my family would be accepting of it....I was sitting in front of the computer... I must have been looking at something, or we [my mom and I] might have been having a conversation and she just like casually said, "Oh yeah, if you ever liked a girl, it's fine with me." And then she just kind of made a joke about it and then we kept talking about something else.

(Sydney, Black heterosexual woman)

For lesbian and gay participants, another way that family and friends communicated that being gay or lesbian was okay was by making themselves available as a resource to the individual. Below, Alcides, a gay man, describes how his grandparents attempted to help him navigate sexual relationships so that he could have safe, healthy relationships.

[My grandparents] told me like, "Be careful with what you do," and they went around on like, giving me from the best of their knowledge, from like their heterosexual view, like, their heterosexual knowledge of how to coach me for sex, and like, interaction about sex the best they could. And they even told me when they were done, like, "We hope this does you some good, but we know this is- like, we're not covering everything, like there's stuff about this that we don't know about. So, we encourage you to find someone who's gonna tell you about it."

(Alcides, Latino gay man)

For heterosexual and gay, lesbian, and bisexual participants, seeing or knowing lesbian, gay, and bisexual people also communicated to participants that it is okay to be gay or lesbian. The presence of gay and lesbian individuals showed participants that there were sexual identities other than heterosexuality. For gay and lesbian participants, exposure to gays and lesbians validated their own sexual identity. For heterosexual participants, having lesbian, gay, and bisexual friends acquainted them with the adversity some sexual minorities encounter. Jodi, a heterosexual participant, was a member of her school's gay straight alliance (GSA) and saw that some parents were resistant to the group and reluctant to address concerns of sexual minority students in the school. Below, Jodi describes the messages that she took away from her experiences.

Interviewer: Can you give me an example of something that you learned while growing up that really formed what you think now?

Respondent: Just learning that there are gays and lesbians that are among us and that that's okay. Especially when my friend came out. That was kind of just- just like the experience—just seeing people come out just made me realize—because I hadn't been exposed to it before—that people can come out and it's not abnormal by any means and that it's okay to be a different sexual orientation and you have no right to be treated differently because of it.

(Jodi, Asian heterosexual female)

In some contexts, the presence of lesbians, gays, or bisexuals was the result of an effort to welcome sexual minorities. Considering that the majority of participants operated in contexts that were dominated by heterosexual individuals and heteronormative messages, participants viewed the act of explicitly welcoming sexual minorities into a context as a message of acceptance of sexual minorities.

Theme 4: Being Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual is Not Okay

By contrast, other behaviors and comments conveyed the message that homosexuality and bisexuality—or being lesbian, gay, or bisexual—was unacceptable or undesirable. Family members were the dominant source of this message followed by peers and religious groups, which conveyed the message with similar frequency. The message that being gay, lesbian, or bisexual is not okay was conveyed in one of four ways, which reflect the sub-themes: general

attitudes and comments, use of homonegative language, mocking gays and lesbians, and negative behaviors toward lgb individuals. Across all of the message themes that emerged in the study, this theme was the most prevalent. Although the message was observed most frequently among men and lesbian and gay participants, the message was also salient among heterosexual participants.

Subtheme 1: General Attitudes and Comments

Participants described socialization experiences during which sources—primarily family members, peers, and religious communities—conveyed that homosexuality is wrong. Of the four subthemes, *General Attitudes and Comments* was the most prevalent. As Alice, a heterosexual participant noted, “*It would just be little comments here and there where I knew that homosexuality was not okay in my household.*” Participants also believed that family and friends conveyed disapproval of homosexuality through their body language or demeanor. Although the majority of participants indicated that religious communities conveyed that homosexuality is wrong, few could clearly articulate a specific instance in which this message was communicated. Vince, speaking in generalities, recalled hearing the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in a church setting.

Like [pastors] always try to use the whole idea of a Sodom and Gomorrah, about how... God destroyed that city because of the people being gay. A lot of churches and stuff try to make being gay or homosexual really negative, like try to make it seem like it's so wrong that it goes against the natural order of God and yadda, yadda, yadda.

(Vince, Black heterosexual man)

Subtheme 2: That's So Gay

The use of homonegative language—specifically slang terms—also conveyed attitudes toward gays, lesbians, and bisexuals—though more terms were related to gay men than lesbians. No terms or phrases were applied to bisexuals or bisexuality. The terms ‘gay’, ‘faggot’, and its derivatives fag and faggy, were used pejoratively by peers and family members. Participants of all races reported exposure to homonegative language, at least once, but the subtheme was most prevalent among White participants. The *That's So Gay* subtheme was also more prevalent among men than women. Like, McCormack (2011), Eric and Rob observed that the term ‘gay’ was not applied to individuals who were known or presumed to be gay and thus, not intended to

disparage gays. Still, in most instances, fag, faggy, and gay carried a negative connotation and were applied to actions or things that are associated with homosexuality. Those who used the terms and those who heard the terms used were aware of this link. Eric describes different terms were used by their peers.

Um, I do remember that like, um, actually I don't know the definition of this word off the top of my head, like "faggot," but I remember like that was another thing that would be, like, tease, like, "you're such a fag," that was another one that I would take to mean the same thing as gay because it was used in sort of the same context but it was always used towards people. Like you wouldn't say, "something is faggy" or anything like that. It was-, things could be "gay" but people were "fags" apparently... that was like another sort of teasing. It would be, again I don't know if anyone knew what it meant, like, it was just something negative, it was something bad.

(Eric, White heterosexual man)

Subtheme 3: Making Lesbian and Gay Individuals the Butt of Jokes

Several message sources, primarily family members, peers, and community members, communicated that lesbians, gays, and homosexuality were something to be derided. Mocking gays and lesbians also conveyed that being gay or lesbian as something that was undesirable. Bisexuals and bisexuality were not treated in the same way. Among the four subthemes, this was the least prevalent—only 8 incidents were coded. The theme was observed among Black participants and one White participant. Additionally, of the behaviors and comments described in the *Being Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual is Not Okay* theme, *Making Lesbian and Gay Individuals the Butt of Jokes* was the only behavior that went unchallenged by others who observed the behavior. In each of the incidents described, it appeared as though deriding gays and lesbians was an accepted way of discussing homosexuality and gays and lesbians. As Alia notes, mocking gays and lesbians set them apart from others within the community.

Well when I was growing up, one of my grandma's like friends, I think his name was Ray or something; he was gay and my dad and all of the males had all of the laughing jokes to say about him. I don't remember anything specific because I was really young, but I do remember this guy and I do remember, like jokes being made about him based off of the fact that he was gay.

(Alia, Black heterosexual woman)

Subtheme 4: That's what you get, faggot.

The second most prevalent subtheme within *Being Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual is Not Okay*, and one of the more obvious examples of disapproval of lesbians and gays, was harassment or discriminatory behaviors (e.g., exclusion) toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. Heterosexual and gay, lesbian, and bisexual participants witnessed their peers and community members harass individuals who identified as lgb or who were presumed to be lgb. Participants noted that, in some instances, the fact that an individual was gay or lesbian was one of many reasons one was harassed. Eric recalls how several families in his church “ousted” his church pastor, who was a lesbian. In this instance, being lesbian was problematic because it was seen as inconsistent with religion.

I just remember like a lot of sort of snide comments like we'd be after church and—I can't remember like exact comments—it would just be like very slanderous like under your breath sort of things that would not be said to [the pastor] but it would be said like to groups of people that might not have known [she was a lesbian]. It's sort of just like really bad connotations without ever her having a chance to defend herself or anyone asking about it, and I don't even think like—I think like it probably started from like one or two people and it spread without anyone ever asking her anything about it. So it was a lot of like just behind the scenes, like people saying stuff amongst one another and then it eventually got back to her and I just think people confronted her about it and just like, 'how can you preach the faith like and also be-', ' I do remember it was like a direct confrontation like somebody just said something after church like when we were all still there like the service had just ended, and like I don't know if it was like a bad day or something, but somebody said something, and it was just like, very direct, kind of loud so multiple people could hear it and just, I just remember that she left crying and uh, resigned after that, so, it was kind of an ugly situation.

(Eric, White heterosexual man)

Although men and women were the targets of verbal harassment or rumors, only men were observed to be the target of physical harassment. Two of the gay men in the study recalled

experiences where they were physically harassed because of their sexual orientation. Physical harassment was witnessed among peers but not other message sources.

To summarize, the message that being gay, lesbian, or bisexual was not okay was conveyed across multiple sources (family, peers, church) but the intensity of the message appeared to vary by source. Participants vividly recalled instances when family members conveyed disapproval of homosexuality or bisexuality. Messages from family members served as a directive that warned the participant against being gay, lesbian, or bisexual. At the same time, however, participants observed that family members welcomed gay, lesbian, and bisexual relatives and close friends into their home and at family gatherings. Family members distanced themselves from lesbians, gays, and bisexuals who were *not* related more than they did individuals who were relatives. When participants observed exclusion or discrimination, it was primarily within peer or community contexts.

Theme 5: Lesbians are hot, gay men are not

Forty-five percent of participants recalled socialization experiences through which they learned of a double standard regarding male and female homosexuality. Generally, participants observed that others were more accepting of same-sex desire and behavior when it occurred between two women than when it occurred between two men. Despite the limited prevalence of the message, it appeared to be salient for those who received it. Men and women received the message from male peers who expressed an interest in seeing two women engage in sexual behavior. Alia observed, however, that her male peers were only interested in seeing same-sex sexual behavior between women who fit within mainstream standards of beauty.

I've heard guys, too, be like, "I'd love to see girls kissing girls, but not them two big girls right there." Like, they want to see the girls they've seen on the movies, that's like all skinny and pretty, but they don't want to see two fat girls kissing each other. They'll be like, "Ewww, that's nasty."

(Alia, Black heterosexual woman)

Participants who noted differences in acceptance of gay men and lesbians felt that lesbians (or bisexual women) were more accepted in media than were gay men as evidenced in the frequent presence of same-sex sexual behavior (or the suggestion of the behavior) in television and film. Jamaal was among those who observed differences in

the acceptance of lesbians and gay men. However, he was the only one who felt that there were differences in how media and society treat gays and lesbians. Based on his interpersonal experiences, Jamaal perceived that others were more accepting of lesbians than gay men. Yet, from his observation that lesbians were seldom represented in media, Jamaal gathered that gay men are actually more accepted than lesbians.

I mean TV shows have gay people in them every now and then, you know, but it's weird, you know you'll like make believe that lesbians are ok in society, but in movies and in the media, it tends to be more homosexuals on the screen—males, than it is females. Like a lot of the movies that I've seen have homosexual males, rather than homosexual females.

(Jamaal, Black heterosexual man)

Jamaal's observations are consistent with GLAAD's (2012) recent analysis of representations of sexual minorities in media, which found that gay men represent 60% of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender characters on television but lesbians and bisexual women only represent 10% and 7%, respectively. The difference in opinion between Jamaal and the other participants highlights the need to evaluate the representations of sexual minorities in media. Although lesbians have a limited presence in media, their presence in media may be more memorable to consumers because their presence is designed to titillate (Diamond, 2005).

Discussion

The goal of the current study was to describe emerging adults' socialization experiences regarding homosexuality and bisexuality. Using thematic analysis, I organized the experiences individuals reported into five themes: heterosexuality is normal and natural, silence about homosexuality and bisexuality, nature of homo/bisexuality, being gay/lesbian/bisexual is not okay, being gay/lesbian/bisexual is okay, and lesbians are hot, gay men are not. Collectively, the themes reveal the messages participants received about homosexuality and bisexuality during their formative years. Four key findings emerged from the current study and are detailed below.

The first key finding is that youth reported socialization experiences with several sources: family, peers, community, religion, school, and media. Some experiences occurred more frequently with some source than with others. For instance, the message that being lesbian, gay, or bisexual is not okay was conveyed by each source even though family members and religion

most often transmitted this message. Thus, the messages received from one source reinforced messages received from another source. This was not always so, however. In some instances, a socialization experience with one source challenged the socialization experience with another source. For example, by being supportive, Alcides' grandparents conveyed that it was okay for Alcides to be a gay man. By contrast, Alcides' mother, who attempted to change Alcides' sexual orientation by controlling his social life and religious activities, conveyed that being gay was not acceptable. The findings from the current study reflect a key aspect of sexual scripting theory (Simon & Gagnon, 1986) *and* person-in-context theories (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1996): socialization is a dynamic process. Indeed, the individual is constantly negotiating multiple messages conveyed through socialization experiences with multiple sources. In this study, some experiences were congruent with one another while others were not. In addition to negotiating multiple experiences, it appears that individuals negotiated relationships with the message source by assessing the benefits and costs associated with accepting or rejecting a specific message.

Some of the messages youth received were communicated explicitly through statements made by relatives, peers, and community members. Some messages were inferred through participants' observations of others' response to and treatment of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. Still, other messages were inferred from participants' interactions with and observations of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people—some of whom were relatives, peers, family members, and community members. Generally, participants recalled messages received through their interactions with and observations of others with relative ease. Participants had greater difficulty, however, recalling messages from media sources. This may be because participants were asked to describe what, if any, representations of sexual minorities, homosexuality, and bisexuality they saw in media. Media content, unlike personal conversations, is more diffuse and is not directed specifically to an individual viewer; it may therefore be more difficult to recall specific portrayals and conversations in detail. Also, the long-standing limited presence of sexual minorities in mainstream media, particularly television, may have offered few examples for participants to draw upon (GLAAD, 2012; Hetrosoni, 2007). Still, the representations of sexual minorities in media were positive, which, for participants, signified that media were accepting of homosexuality.

It is important to note that, regardless of the message or the source of the message, youth were not passive recipients of messages. Rather, youth evaluated the different messages they

received against one another as they made their own conclusions about lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and homosexuality. When evaluating messages from different sources, it appears that exposure to and relationships with lesbians, gays, and bisexuals overrode messages from other sources. This pattern is best exemplified in Sydney's comments about the nature of homosexuality as fluid or fixed. Sydney received messages from other sources that conveyed that homosexuality was fixed and that if someone, especially a man, had a same-sex relationship, his identity would always be gay. However, Sydney's observation of her peers and her brother—who demonstrated flexibility in their attraction to both genders—provided a message that sexuality was fluid, which challenged the message that homosexuality was fixed. This finding is supported, in part, by the Intergroup Contact Theory (Allport, 1954), which proposes that when an individual from a majority group is personally acquainted with an individual from a marginalized group, the individual from the majority group gains a deeper understanding of the concerns and experiences of the individual from the marginalized group. This process helps to diminish stereotypes and inaccuracies the individual from the majority group may have previously held about members of the marginalized group.

Thus, the second key finding emerging from the current study is that exposure to lesbians, gays, and bisexuals is, in itself, a powerful socialization force concerning youth's understanding of homosexuality. The role of exposure as a message is evident in Sydney's comments and in the comments of Jodi and Ethan who noted the importance of exposure to gay and lesbian individuals in shaping their understanding about the scope of human sexuality. With the exception of Raven, whose peer group was predominantly lesbian, participants in the study indicated that the various contexts they occupied during their formative years were heteronormative. That is, participants were surrounded not only by individuals who were heterosexual but also by the *assumption* that everyone was heterosexual. As Jodi, Ethan, and others recalled, encountering gays, lesbians, and bisexuals—whether in person or in media—in a heteronormative environment signaled that other sexualities do indeed exist.

The third key finding from the current study is that female homosexuality and male homosexuality are viewed differently. Consistent with prior research on differences in attitudes toward lesbians and gay men (Kite, 2011), participants indicated that female homosexuality is viewed as sexy and desirable, whereas male homosexuality is viewed with disgust and hostility. This discrepancy may be due, in part, to the lack of credence afforded women's sexual desire—

especially women's sexual desire for one another. Previous literature has articulated the ways in which lesbianism (or female homosexuality) has been viewed as something to be performed rather than one aspect of an individual's identity (including but not limited to sexual behavior) (Diamond, 2005). Alia, for example, observed that men want to watch "attractive"—by mainstream beauty standards—lesbians engaged in sexual behavior. Here, lesbianism is reduced to sexual behavior and deemed acceptable only to the extent that it is pleasing to men.

Another way in which female homosexuality is not taken seriously is in others' assumptions about which women are lesbians. Consider, for example, the surprise that Larry Jones' and his friends experienced upon learning that his attractive female friend was a lesbian. Underlying their surprise is the suggestion that lesbianism (or female homosexuality) is only for those who—because they are physically unappealing to men—have no other option. In other words: *Why would an attractive woman, who could have any man she chooses, want to be with another woman?* This sentiment is not surprising given that youth in this study operated within multiple heteronormative contexts (family life, school, religious community) with limited, often stereotypical, representations of sexual minorities (e.g., lesbians are masculine/gay men are feminine).

The heteronormative contexts in which participants operated also provided restrictive and reductionist messages about male sexuality. Participants (men and women) received the message that if a man had ever engaged in a same-sex relationship, he would be viewed as gay. This message has been highlighted in past research on heterosexual masculinity, which suggests that the two are viewed as synonymous, and that boys/men must carefully craft and carefully maintain an identity that establishes them as desirous of girls/women (preferably many girls/women) (Kehily, 2001; Renold, 2006; Yost & Thomas, 2012).

Thus, the fourth key finding from the study is that bisexuality and bisexuals are marginalized. The initial goal of the study was to explore the messages youth receive about homosexuality *and* bisexuality. However, as was seen throughout the paper, sources did not discuss bisexuality with the same frequency—and, in some cases, fervor—that they discussed homosexuality. The primary source of messages about bisexuality was in knowing someone who was involved with both men and women. Only six participants reported that they knew of someone who identified as bisexual. When participants encountered comments about bisexuality, comments most often focused on one dimension of bisexuality: the same-sex attraction/sexual

behavior. In other words, bisexuality was rarely, if ever, discussed as a sexual orientation that encompassed an attraction to both men and women.

In the same way that heteronormative messages render homosexuality and bisexuality (and other sexualities) invisible, messages that dichotomize sexuality into heterosexual *or* homosexual render bisexuality (and other sexualities) invisible. The observations about bisexuality are consistent with prior research on *biphobia* and *binegativity*, both of which reflect unfavorable attitudes toward bisexuals (Israel & Mohr, 2004; Mulick & Wright, 2002; Yost & Thomas, 2012). Although participants did not mention hostility toward bisexuals, the failure to acknowledge and take seriously bisexuality suggests a bias against bisexuality.

Finally, the findings presented here suggest that some of the messages communicated varied across race groups. For example, the use of homonegative language (e.g., *that's so gay*), was primarily reported among White (male) participants, and the message that homosexuality could be cultivated was only observed among Black participants.

Limitations and Future Directions for Research

Sample. Although the current study expands the literature on socialization about homosexuality and bisexuality, the study is not without limitations. One of the limitations of the current study is the sampling method. Participants were recruited through flyer posting and snowball sampling. The primary concern with flyer postings is that although flyers were posted on announcement boards in multiple on-campus buildings that are frequented by students from different academic programs and to which all students have access (e.g., student unions, library, gym), some students may not check announcement boards. Thus, the sample is not representative of all college students, and is not representative of students at the university where the study was conducted. To overcome this limitation, additional efforts should be taken to recruit students. Additional recruitment strategies include personally handing flyers to students in various on-campus locations during high traffic hours (e.g., during class changes) or major events (e.g., football games, cultural performances). Another concern with the sampling technique is the use of snowball sampling. Although snowball sampling was helpful in increasing the number of Black participants in the study, the fact that individuals recruited their friends could mean a lack of diversity in the sample. For instance, two of the participants attended the same high school and reported similar messages from their peers. Unless the goal is selective sampling of a specific group or community, efforts should be taken to recruit a diverse range of students.

Study scope. The goal of the current study was to explore the messages that individuals received about homosexuality and bisexuality during their formative years. However, during the coding process, it became clear that some of the messages participants received during their formative years were also transmitted during participants' college years. Half of the participants reported that, upon arriving at the university, they encountered peers (e.g., classmates, dorm-mates), faculty, and curricula that conveyed that multiple sexualities exist.

I kind of knew about like, bisexuality—a close friend of mine said she was and then changed her mind or something—but other than that I never like, had any interaction with that, but when I got to Ann Arbor, I had interaction with these girls on my team, which had a big impact. Just like getting to know lots more people that identified differently than like, straight up, “I’m heterosexual,” so, um, I think that my view didn’t really change on like how I felt inside, I just got to have more like, data. That was the biggest change being in [here].

(Amy, White heterosexual female)

Like Amy, other participants indicated that the messages they encountered during college were instrumental in broadening their understanding of sexuality. As Arnett (2010) suggests, emerging adulthood is a time to examine the values that were instilled during the formative years against the experiences and values that are encountered during college years. Thus, to understand the messages that contribute to emerging adults' thinking about homosexuality and bisexuality—and other sexualities—future studies should examine past *and* current messages received.

Analysis method. Data for the current study were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis provided a good overview of the prominent messages individuals received about homosexuality. However, the emergence of subthemes and the overlap between certain themes suggests that a deeper analysis of messages is warranted. As a future direction, using a different analysis method (e.g., grounded theory) would enable me to theorize how messages are transmitted and provide a more detailed explanation of the ways in which messages are interconnected. Further analyses might also provide more details about when and how youth internalize different messages.

CHAPTER 3

Study 2

Examining Patterns and Correlates of Socialization Messages About Homosexuality

Extant literature has consistently identified age, gender, and religious affiliation as key demographic factors associated with attitudes toward sexual minorities (Kite & Whitley, 1996; Whitley, 2008). Recent literature has begun to examine exposure to parental and peer communication about homosexuality. Calzo and Ward (2009) examined emerging adults' exposure to messages regarding homosexuality during their formative years. Participants in their sample reported that peers provided more communication about homosexuality than did parents. Findings from Foust and Ward's (in press) study of African American emerging adults, which focused on *positive* messages about homosexuality, also indicate that parents provide fewer messages than do peers. Additionally, Foust and Ward also found no gender differences in men and women's exposure to positive messages from parents. However, African American women reported receiving more positive messages from peers than did African American men. Neither Calzo and Ward nor Foust and Ward examined gender differences in communication across sources (e.g., messages from male sources versus messages from female sources).

The primary aim of Study 2 is to understand the degree to which messages about homosexuality are communicated. Using a larger sample from the same population as Study 1, the current study uses quantitative analysis to examine differences in communication by message source (e.g., parents versus peers, male sources versus female sources) and message recipient (e.g., women versus men). A third and final goal of Study 2 is to examine the association between messages and various background factors such as race, sexual orientation, religious involvement, country of upbringing, parent marital status, and parent education. With these goals in mind, I anticipated that:

- 1) Messages about homosexuality would differ by source, such that:
 - a. Peers would provide more positive messages than would parents.
 - b. Parents would provide more negative messages than would peers.

- c. Participants would report receiving similar levels of positive and negative messages from their peers.
 - d. Women (i.e., mothers, women friends) would provide more positive messages than would men.
 - e. Men (i.e., fathers, men friends) would provide more negative messages than would women.
- 2) Messages about homosexuality would differ by recipient, such that:
- a. Across sources, men would report more negative messages about homosexuality than would women.
 - b. Across sources, women would report more positive messages about homosexuality than would men.
- 3) Demographic factors would contribute to the homosexuality messages that were received, such that:
- a. Frequent religious service attendance would be associated with more negative messages and less positive messages.
 - b. Higher parental education would be associated with less frequent negative messages and more positive messages.
 - c. No *a priori* hypotheses were made regarding other background characteristics such as race, sexual orientation, and country of upbringing.

Method

Participants

The sample for the current study included 429 undergraduate students (55% female) between the ages of 18 and 24 ($M= 18.81$, $SD=1.00$). Participants were recruited from an introductory psychology course as part of a larger study on media use and social relationships. The initial sample included 510 participants. Approximately 50 individuals neglected to complete the entire measure for the independent variable. It is likely that these individuals did not complete the measure due to the long length of the survey. Thirty-one participants neglected to complete one or more items from the measure. The missing data appear to be Missing At Random (MAR), as no discernable pattern was found among those who neglected to complete items. The sample reflected the student body, which is predominantly Caucasian, heterosexual, and raised in the United States. The majority of participants reported that their parents were

married and had attended or completed some form of higher education (including graduate education). An overwhelming majority of the participants were acquainted with someone (either friend or family member) who is gay (see Table 3.1).

Procedure

Participants completed a pen-and-paper survey, which took approximately 1 hour to complete. Surveys were completed in small groups of 2-10 participants in a small lab on campus. The survey was a part of a larger study on media use, gender and sexual attitudes, and social relationships. As a part of the consenting procedures, participants were informed that the purpose of study was to understand their media use, the messages they received from others about romantic relationships, their attitudes regarding gender roles and social relationships, and their past romantic experiences. Participants were reminded that they were free to skip any part of the survey they did not want to answer. All participants received course credit for their participation.

Measures

Demographics. Participants completed a brief demographic inventory that included information assessing their sex, race/ethnic group, sexual orientation, religious involvement, marital status, and family background (parent marital status and parent education).

Religiosity. Religiosity was assessed using a single item, *How often do you attend religious services*. Whitley (2009) found that single item measures of religious attendance were as effective as multi-item religiosity scales in predicting attitudes toward gays and lesbians. Responses for the item was based on a 5-point scale: 1 (*never*), 2 (*less than once a year*), 3 (*maybe a few times a year*), 4 (*maybe once or twice a month*), 5 (*usually once a week*).

Messages About Homosexuality. A 9-item subscale was used to examine the messages participants encountered about homosexuality from their mother, father, male friends, and female friends. Each of the items and its origin is listed in Appendix A. The items were a part of a larger 50-item measure that assessed the messages individuals received regarding a broad range of topics related to relationships, dating, and sexuality. For each of the items, participants were asked to indicate how strongly each message was conveyed to them from their mother, father, female peers, and male peers during their formative years (between 5-18 years old). Responses were based on a 4-point scale including 0 (*none*), 1 (*a little*), 2 (*some*), 3 (*a lot*). Participant responses were guided by the following prompt:

During our formative years (i.e., ages 5-18), we receive many messages about how men and women should behave in sexual relationships. These messages come in many forms, and can be verbal or nonverbal, direct or implied, true or false. What kind of messages did you receive about sex? Listed over the next few pages are 50 ideas about dating and sexuality that exist in society. For each message, use the 0 to 3 scale to indicate how strongly this notion was communicated to you by each of the four sources. You may not agree with the message. We are interested only in whether or not you received it.

Because I could find no existing measure testing socialization of LGB attitudes, I pulled from existing attitude scales and other socialization scales to create a measure of this key construct. Five items were developed based on preliminary analysis of a subset of the in-depth interviews described in Study 1. The preliminary analysis of the interviews was conducted using selective coding and thematic analysis. After an initial reading of the transcript in its entirety, the transcript was read a second time during which time I selected text that referenced anything the participant heard (e.g., comments) or witnessed (e.g., mistreatment) regarding sexual minorities. The selected comments and behaviors were organized into theme groups based on their similarity. The groups were reviewed and, where appropriate, overlapping groups were collapsed into a single group. The five items that were developed were based on the theme groups that were most prevalent across these transcripts. The themes included: 1) acceptance of homosexuality/gays/lesbians, 2) equal rights and fair treatment of gays/lesbians, 3) nature of homosexuality as innate, choice, cultivated, and 4) nature of sexuality as binary or varied. Five items were taken from existing scales or prior studies (Calzo & Ward, 2009; Foust & Ward, in press; Herek, 1998; LaMar & Kite, 1998) and were also selected based on their relevance to the emergent themes identified from Study 1.

Scale Creation and Preliminary Analyses

As an initial step, separate exploratory factor analyses were conducted for each source (mother, father, female peer, male peer). As suggested by Costello and Osborne (2005), Maximum Likelihood extraction was used. An unrotated factor matrix was selected to see what factors emerged. The scree plot was used to determine the number of factors present, and the factors were compared across sources. Additional factor analyses were conducted as a follow-up. Maximum Likelihood extraction with an oblique rotation was conducted. The oblique rotation

permits correlation among factors, which is expected. Once the rotated factor structure was evaluated, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to verify the number of factors identified in the exploratory factor analysis. Additionally, item loadings of .40 or lower were suppressed (Costello & Osborne, 2005). The results of the confirmatory factor analysis are presented in Table 3.2.

Six items loaded on the first factor. The variance accounted by the items in the first factor was similar across sources (mothers, 45.86%; fathers, 45.06%; females, 40.61%; males, 41.61%). The items indicated support for sexual minorities and encouraged fair treatment of sexual minorities; this factor was labeled *Positive Messages* (e.g., *Homosexuality is okay*). Positive messages from mothers and positive messages from fathers achieved the same Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .92$). Likewise, positive messages from female peers and positive messages from male peers achieved the same alpha ($\alpha = .89$).

In addition to the factor analyses, comparative analysis of means was conducted using Repeated Measures ANOVA. Finally, multiple correlation analyses were conducted to examine the association among messages and between messages and the following demographic factors: age, participant gender (dummy coded 0/1=women), sexual orientation (dummy coded 0/1=not exclusively heterosexual), religious attendance, country of upbringing (dummy coded 0/1=not raised in US), parent marital status (dummy coded 0/1=unmarried parents), having a gay friend, having a gay family member, mother education level, and father education level. Race (Asian, Black, Latino, Middle Eastern).

Four items loaded on the second factor. Like factor one, the variance accounted for was similar across sources (mothers, 21.30%, fathers, 22.84%, females, 20.28%, males, 19.32%). The items reflected a disapproval of homosexuality; this factor was labeled *Negative Messages* (e.g., *Homosexuality is perverse and unnatural*). Item 15 (*People are either heterosexual or homosexual*) achieved a low factor loading across sources and did not load on either subscale. Additionally, an initial assessment of the scale reliability revealed that reliability for each source would be improved if item 15 were deleted. Thus, final *Negative Messages* scale included three items (mothers $\alpha = .77$; fathers $\alpha = .76$, female peers $\alpha = .69$, and male peers $\alpha = .66$).

Zero-order correlations were also conducted among message sources and are presented in Table 3.3. All positive messages (from each source) were positively correlated with one another. The correlation between mother and father messages was particularly high ($r = .87$) as was the

correlation between female and male peer messages ($r = .87$). Similarly, all negative messages were positively correlated with one another. Furthermore, negative messages from mother and father were highly correlated with one another ($r = .76$) as were negative messages from male and female peers ($r = .76$). Examination of the correlations between positive and negative messages *within sources*, indicated that for each source, positive and negative messages were negatively associated with one another. For example, higher reports of positive messages from male peers were linked with lower reports of negative messages from male peers.

Similarly, correlations between positive and negative messages *between sources* produced many expected associations. Positive messages from mothers were negatively correlated with negative messages from fathers, and positive messages from fathers were negatively correlated with negative messages from mothers. The same was true for positive and negative messages from male and female peers. The majority of the correlations between each parent source (mother or father) and each peer source (male or female) were not significant. However, positive messages from father were negatively associated with negative messages from female and male peers such that exposure to more positive messages from fathers was associated with exposure to fewer negative messages from male and female peers.

Results

Comparing Reports of Messages About Homosexuality Across Source Factors

The first aim of the study was to explore the degree to which individuals received messages about homosexuality. Mean scores of messages from each source are presented in the second column of Table 3.4. Overall, participants reported receiving positive messages from each source with low to moderate intensity. Participants reported receiving few, if any, negative messages from each of the sources. Multiple analyses were conducted to compare mean reports of messages about homosexuality on several dimensions related to the message source and the message recipient. Repeated measures analyses of variance (RM-ANOVA) were conducted to compare differences in mean reports of messages as related to the source of the message. RM-ANOVA collapses the source factors such that women, regardless of source (parent or peer) were analyzed together and peers, regardless of gender, were collapsed and analyzed together. Here, I used a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ design to evaluate differences related to the Source of the Message (parent or peer), Gender of Message Source (male or female), and Valence of Message (positive

or negative). Within this RM-ANOVA, Participant Religious Service Attendance was examined as a between-subject factor; Participant Gender was examined as a covariate.

The main effects for Source and Valence of message were significant $F(1,425) = 42.92, 127.39$, respectively. Overall, peers provided more messages than did parents, and positive messages were transmitted more than negative messages. The main effect for Valence was qualified by an interaction with Gender of Participant $F(1, 425) = 8.52, p<.01$ and an interaction with Participant Religious Service Attendance $F(1, 425) = 21.32, p<.001$. Although the main effect of Gender of Source was not significant, the Gender of Source \times Valence interaction was significant $F(1, 425) = 60.84, p<.001$ and indicated that women provided more positive messages than did men and that men provided more negative messages than did women. The Gender of Source \times Gender of Participant interaction was also significant $F(1, 425) = 25.45, p<.001$. Here, women reported receiving more messages from female sources than from male sources.

Multiple three-way interactions were significant, including one among the three main effects (message factors) Source \times Gender of Source \times Valence, $F(1, 425) = 17.10, p<.001$. In terms of positive messages, female peers provide more messages than mothers, but male peers provide more messages than mothers who provide more messages than fathers. In terms of negative messages, male peers provide more than fathers who provide more than mothers, and mothers provide more than female peers. Also significant was the interaction of Source of Message \times Valence \times Gender of Participant, $F(1, 425) = 7.09, p<.01$. Independent t-tests revealed significant gender differences among all peer messages but not among parent messages (see Table 3.4). Women participants reported receiving more positive messages from female peers and male peers than men did. By contrast, male participants reported receiving more negative messages from their male and female peers than did women.

Another significant three-way interaction was for Source \times Valence \times Religious Service Attendance, $F(1, 425) = 3.55, p<.05$. A One-Way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in message reports according to religious service attendance (see Table 3.5). For positive messages from all sources, those who never attended religious services or infrequently attended religious services provided higher reports of positive messages than did those who attended religious services frequently (at least once a week). Conversely, for negative messages from all sources, those who attended religious services frequently had higher reports of negative messages than did those who never attended religious services or did so infrequently.

Contribution of Demographic Variables to Messages Communicated

Positive Homosexuality Messages. Zero-order correlations were conducted to examine the association between messages from each source and the following eleven demographic factors: age, participant gender (dummy coded 0/1=women), sexual orientation (dummy coded 0/1=not exclusively heterosexual), religious attendance, country of upbringing (dummy coded 0/1=not raised in US), parent marital status (dummy coded 0/1=unmarried parents), having a gay friend, having a gay family member, mother education level, and father education level. Race (Asian, Black, Latino, Middle Eastern) was also included among the correlations; Whites were the reference category. The results are presented in Table 3.6. With regard to positive messages, multiple factors were negatively correlated with messages from each source. Older age, frequent religious service attendance, being raised outside the United States, and being Asian were associated with receiving fewer positive messages from mothers, fathers, female peers, *and* male peers. By contrast, having a gay friend, having a more educated mother, and having a more educated father, was each associated with higher reports of positive messages from mothers, fathers, female peers, and male peers. Interestingly, being Black was associated with receiving fewer positive messages from mothers, fathers, and female peers but not from male peers. Other factors were significantly correlated with positive messages from either parents (mother *and* father) or peers (male *and* female) but not both. For instance, being a woman or identifying as anything other than exclusively heterosexual was associated with higher reports of positive messages from male peers and female peers only. Having a gay family member was associated with higher reports of positive messages from mothers and fathers only. Finally, being Latino was associated only with receiving fewer positive messages from female peers only.

Negative Homosexuality Messages. With regard to negative messages, fewer demographic variables were associated with exposure to these themes, and being Black and religious service attendance were the only variables associated with negative messages from *each* source. Being Black was correlated with higher reports of negative messages from parents (mothers and fathers) and peers (male and female). Being a woman was associated with lower reports of negative messages from peers (female and male) but not parents. Similarly, having a more educated father was associated with exposure to fewer negative messages from peers but not parents. This correlation was particularly perplexing given that father's education was not significantly correlated with negative messages from mothers or fathers. Having a more educated

mother was associated with lower reports of negative messages from fathers. Frequently attending religious service was associated with higher reports of negative messages from each source *except* female peers. Being raised outside the US and being Asian were both associated with exposure to lower levels of negative messages from female peers only. Finally, having a gay friend was associated with receiving fewer negative messages from male peers only.

Race, Religion, and Homosexuality Messages. As indicated above several significant correlations emerged for two racial/ethnic groups (Blacks, Asians). Findings regarding racial differences in attitudes toward sexual minorities have been mixed (see Jenkins, Lambert, & Baker, 2007). However, Lewis' (2003) findings indicate that religiosity, which varies across race groups, is a key contributor to attitudes toward sexual minorities. Therefore, a partial correlation was conducted to examine the association between messages and race (Black, Asian) while controlling for religious attendance (see Table 3.7). Controlling for religious attendance modified the associations for Black participants but only slightly. For positive messages, being Black was no longer associated with receiving messages from female peers. Thus, even with religiosity controlled, being Black was associated with exposure to more negative message from each source and exposure to fewer positive messages from fathers and mothers only. Controlling for religion did not change the association between messages and being Asian.

Discussion

The goal of the present study was to examine the messages individuals receive about homosexuality from their mother, father, female peers, and male peers. To that end, the study explored differences in reports of messages as a function of three message factors: source of message (parent, peer), gender of message source (female, male), and valence of message (positive, negative). Additionally, this study examined correlates of messages about homosexuality, focusing on characteristics of the message recipient (participant): age, gender, religious attendance race, sexual orientation, gay friends, gay family members. Three parent characteristics were also explored (mother education, father education, parent marital status). The study expands the sexual socialization literature, which has focused, almost exclusively, on the messages youth receive about heterosexuality, mainly from parents.

Messages About Homosexuality Vary Across Message Sources

For the first hypothesis, I proposed that peers would provide more positive messages than parents, and that parents would provide more negative messages than peers. The results provided

partial support for this hypothesis. Peers provided more positive messages than did parents, and parents provided more negative messages than did peers, but only when participant gender or religious attendance was taken into account. This finding is consistent with previous research, which finds that peers provide more permissive and sex-positive messages than parents (DiIorio, Kelly, & Hockenberry-Eaton, 1999).

As a part of the first hypothesis, I expected that participants would report similar levels of positive and negative messages from peers. This hypothesis was not supported, as reports of positive messages from female peers were significantly higher than reports of negative messages from female peers. The same was true for male peers. I also expected that participants would receive more negative messages than positive messages from parents. This hypothesis was supported when mothers' and fathers' messages were analyzed separately. Mothers provided more positive messages than fathers, and fathers provided more negative messages than mothers.

Another aspect of the first hypothesis was confirmed without qualification. I expected that women would provide more positive messages than men and that men would provide more negative messages than women. Mothers and female peers provided more positive messages than fathers and male peers (respectively). Fathers and male peers provided more negative messages than mothers and female peers (respectively).

Messages about Homosexuality Vary Across Message Recipients

For the second hypotheses, I anticipated that men would report greater exposure to negative messages about homosexuality than would women. I also expected that women would report greater exposure to positive messages than would men. These hypotheses were only true for peer messages. Women reported greater exposure to positive messages from peers, and men reported greater exposure to negative messages from peers. Men and women did not differ in their exposure to positive and negative messages from parents.

These findings are consistent with the limited research on communication about homosexuality. The significant findings for peers but insignificant findings for parents may be due to the fact that youth are highly attuned to the messages they peers transmit because peers determine who is successful or unsuccessful in youth contexts. When considered alongside prior studies' findings (Froyum, 2007; Pascoe, 2005; Poteat, 2008; Renold, 2006) on the ways that youth respond to homosexuality and monitor the sexuality of their peers, it appears that peers

transmit messages that enable such monitoring. Men receive more messages that warn against homosexuality and women receive more messages that affirm homosexuality.

Messages about Homosexuality Vary Across Demographic Factors

For the third hypothesis, I expected that frequent religious attendance would be associated with lower reports of positive messages and higher reports of negative messages was also supported. Participants who did not attend religious services reported fewer negative messages and more positive messages. The converse was true for those who frequently attended religious services. It is important to note, however, that the study assessed participants' *current* religious attendance rather than religious attendance during formative years. Moreover, religious attendance was assessed for the participant, not the message source. Thus, the findings only speak to how the individuals' current religious participation relates to their current perceptions about their socialization experiences. Although participants' current religious attendance may be a reflection of participants' religious involvement during their formative years, which was likely a function of their parents' religious involvement and a determinant of their peer network, it was not possible to explore that here.

For my final hypothesis, I proposed that higher education for mothers and fathers would be associated with higher reports of positive messages and lower reports of negative messages. This hypothesis was supported and mirrors research on attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals which finds that individuals who have attended college display more liberal attitudes (Funk & Willits, 1987; Treas, 2002), including accepting attitudes toward sexual minorities (Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994), than those with fewer years of schooling. The link between education and acceptance of sexual minorities may occur because of the diversity available in college settings. Bowman and Brandenburg (2012) found that, within college environments, individuals are exposed to different experiences, beliefs, and perspectives—through other students, faculty, and curricula—that require individuals to reassess their own beliefs and experiences. Through this process, individuals become aware of and (to a degree) more accepting of others. Fifty-two percent of the participants in the study reported that their mother or father had attended college; thirty-nine percent indicated that their mother or father attended graduate school. The fact that so many participants had parents who attended college likely contributes to the higher reports of positive messages (compared to negative messages) observed in this study.

In addition to the hypothesized associations between messages and religious attendance and parental education, other important demographic correlations emerged and are worth noting. First, the finding that knowing gays, lesbians, or bisexuals (friends or family) was associated with greater exposure to positive messages is not surprising considering that previous studies have shown a link between knowing sexual minorities and acceptance of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals (Heinze & Horne, 2009; Herek & Capitanio, 1995). Race group membership was also associated with positive and negative messages from several sources for Blacks and Asians—even after controlling for religious attendance. This finding suggests that parental and peer communication about homosexuality may be rooted in cultural norms that are tied to one’s race group membership.

Scholars have drawn attention to the emphasis on Black male heterosexuality and the (heterosexual) family unit within Black and African American communities (Greene, 2000; Miller, 2011; Wilson, 2008). Similarly, some scholars have noted an emphasis on family cohesion and gender roles within the family within Asian and Asian American communities (Feng et al., 2012; Hom, 2003). The research from both communities suggests that the family unit is viewed as a way of preserving cultural heritage and traditions. Furthermore, the belief, among some community members, that bisexuals, gays, and lesbians challenge gender roles and are unable or unwilling to create families may contribute to a disapproval of sexual minorities.

Cultural values and expectations may also explain the finding that those who spent their formative years outside the US received few positive messages about homosexuality. In a study of global attitudes toward homosexuality, The Pew Research Center (2013a) found that attitudes were most favorable in Canada, the United States, and some countries in the European Union (e.g., Spain, Germany, the Czech Republic) and Latin America (e.g., Argentina). Attitudes were least favorable in sub-Saharan Africa (e.g., Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa), and areas of the Middle East (e.g., Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon). Attitudes in some Asian and South Asian countries (e.g., South Korea, Japan, Malaysia) were slightly higher but still unfavorable.

Finally, results from the current study indicate high inter-correlations among all parent messages and among all peer messages. The correlation between positive messages from fathers and negative messages from peers was surprising, in part, because other messages from parents were not associated with peer messages. Research on adolescent friendships finds that parents indirectly influence adolescents’ friendships by determining the environments in which the

adolescent is allowed to operate (community, school, extra-curricular activities), which in turn determines the pool of peers from which the adolescent will select his or her friends (Brown & Bakken, 2011). It may be that, for participants in the current study, fathers were instrumental in selecting the environment in which participants were raised and selected environments that reflected their accepting attitudes toward sexual minorities. Similarly, positive messages from fathers may be more meaningful for youth because, as men, fathers are least likely to be accepting of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. Having a father whose attitudes challenge societal norms regarding acceptance of sexual minorities may encourage one to adopt similar attitudes and distance oneself from others who are not accepting of sexual minorities.

Limitations and Future Directions

Retrospective reports. There are a few limitations to note when interpreting the results of the current study. First, participants were asked to recall messages they received about homosexuality between the ages of 5 to 18 years old. Although the broad time frame enables participants to recall messages received at any point during their formative years, messages that were communicated earlier during childhood may have been forgotten. Additionally, participants may be vulnerable to telescoping (Bachman & O'Malley, 1981), in which events that occurred at one point in time (e.g., earlier or more recently) are recalled more readily than events that occurred at a different point in time. For example, a participant whose mother stressed equal rights for sexual minorities and discouraged discrimination toward sexual minorities during recent conversations may not recall that, during his childhood, his mother espoused hostile attitudes toward sexual minorities. Thus, the reports of messages available for this study may not fully represent the full set of messages that the individual received between the ages of 5 and 18.

Sample. A second concern is that the findings are based on a predominantly White, heterosexual sample of undergraduate students from the Midwest. Additionally, the majority indicated that their parents attended graduate school. Therefore, the findings presented are not generalizable to all American youth. It is also important to note that the sample was drawn from a university that has publicly conveyed support for sexual minorities on multiple occasions. In 2010, a member of the local community publicly harassed the university's student assembly president and argued that the president should—because he was a gay man—resign his post at the publicly-funded institution (Dolak, 2012). Members of the university community, including the president of the university, denounced the harassment and affirmed their support of the

student assembly president (Coleman, 2010; Harper & Jones, 2010). Additionally, the university, which is located in state that does not recognize same-sex marriage, has publicly defended its decision to offer health care benefits to partners of same-sex employees (Gnagey, 2007; Woodhouse, 2011). Thus, the attitudes exhibited in this sample may be higher than those exhibited in other samples due, in part, to the university's supportive climate toward sexual minorities. Future studies should include samples from different types of college and university settings. Additionally, studies should explore samples of emerging adults who are not enrolled in college, as their experiences and attitudes may offer a contrast to findings from college based samples.

Measures. A final limitation of the current study is that the scale used to assess positive and negative messages for homosexuality was not an established scale. The scale relied upon items from existing scales and items developed by me, the primary researcher, and test-retest reliability has not been established for the scale. Therefore, I cannot say, with certainty, that the scale accurately and reliably assesses the messages individuals received about homosexuality. A next step in understanding the link between messages about homosexuality and attitudes (and behaviors) toward sexual minorities is to refine and test the reliability and validity of the scale.

CHAPTER 4

Study 3

Contributions of Messages About Homosexuality to Attitudes Toward Sexual Minorities

Overview

The final study of the dissertation expanded on the findings from Study 1 and Study 2, which explored the content and occurrence of the messages individuals receive regarding homosexuality. As was described in the first chapter of the dissertation, extant literature has consistently identified age, gender, and religious affiliation as key demographic factors associated with attitudes toward sexual minorities (see Whitley, 2008). However, one's demographic background is not the only thing that shapes one's attitudes. Prior research on sexual socialization has found that communication, specifically communication with friends and family, are instrumental in the development of sexual beliefs and attitudes (Lefkowitz & Espinoza, 2007). Recent literature on attitudes toward sexual minorities has begun to move beyond demographic factors to explore the ways in which parents and peers contribute to attitudes (Foust & Ward, in press; Jaspers, Lubbers, & deVries, 2008; Poteat, 2007; 2008). Thus, the primary aim of Study 3 was to examine the role of socialization about homosexuality in predicting individual attitudes toward sexual minorities. Given that expectations and attitudes regarding sexuality are often interwoven with expectations and attitudes regarding traditional gender roles (Hom, 2003; Townsend, 2008), Study 3 also examined the interaction of messages regarding homosexuality and messages regarding traditional gender roles in shaping individual attitudes toward sexual minorities. The study also took into account the contribution of various demographic variables on individual attitudes. Considering that sexual communication (DiIorio, Pluhar, & Belcher, 2003) and attitudes toward sexual minorities (Kite, 2011) vary as a function of gender, potential gender differences in reports of messages and attitudes were examined, as were gender differences in the link between messages and attitudes. To that end, I hypothesized:

1. Parent and peer messages about homosexuality would be linked with attitudes toward sexual minorities, such that:

- a. Positive messages would be associated with stronger support of Internalized Affirmativeness and Civil Rights attitudes and less support of Hate attitudes.
 - b. Negative messages would be associated with stronger support of Hate attitudes and lower support of Internalized Affirmativeness and Civil Rights attitudes.
2. Reports of messages and attitudes would differ for women and men, as would the link between messages and attitudes such that:
 - a. Women would report stronger Internalized Affirmativeness and Civil Rights attitudes than men.
 - b. Men would report stronger Hate attitudes than women.
 - c. Given the dearth of research on this topic, I made no *a priori* hypothesis regarding gender differences in the *overall* model for women and men.
3. Exposure to traditional gender role messages would be linked with lower support for Internalized Affirmativeness and Civil Rights and stronger support of Hate attitudes.
4. Messages about homosexuality would moderate the relation between gender role messages and attitudes toward sexual minorities, such that:
 - a. Contributions of traditional gender role messages to negative attitude outcomes would be reduced when messages about homosexuality are low.
 - b. Contributions of traditional gender role messages to positive attitude outcomes would be reduced when messages about homosexuality are high.

Method

Participants

Data for the study were based on the 410 heterosexual participants from Study 2 (55% female). Participants were between the ages of 18 and 24 ($M= 18.81$, $SD=1.00$). Participants were recruited from an introductory psychology course as part of a larger study on media use and social relationships. The initial sample included 510 participants. Approximately 50 individuals neglected to complete the entire measure for the independent variable. It is likely that these individuals did not complete the measure due to the long length of the survey. Thirty-one participants neglected to complete one or more items from the measure. The missing data appear to be Missing At Random (MAR), as no discernable pattern was found among those who neglected to complete items. Finally, participants who identified as

The sample reflected the student body, which is predominantly Caucasian, heterosexual, and raised in the United States. The majority of participants reported that their parents were married and had attended or completed some form of higher education (including graduate education). An overwhelming majority of the participants were acquainted with someone (either friend or family member) who is gay (see Table 1).

Procedure

Participants completed a pen-and-paper survey, which took approximately 1 hour to complete. Surveys were completed in small groups of 2-10 participants in a small lab on campus. The survey was a part of a larger study on media use, gender and sexual attitudes, and social relationships. As a part of the consenting procedures, participants were informed that the purpose of study was to understand their media use, the messages they received from others about romantic relationships, their attitudes regarding gender roles and social relationships, and their past romantic experiences. Participants were reminded that they were free to skip any part of the survey they did not want to answer. All participants received course credit for their participation.

Measures

Demographics. Participants completed a brief demographic inventory that included information assessing their sex, race/ethnic group, sexual orientation, and family background (parent marital status and parent education).

Religiosity. Religiosity was assessed using a single item, *How often do you attend religious services*. Whitley (2009) found that single item measures of religious attendance were as effective as multi-item religiosity scales in predicting attitudes toward gays and lesbians. Responses for the item was based on a 5-point scale: 1 (*never*), 2 (*less than once a year*), 3 (*maybe a few times a year*), 4 (*maybe once or twice a month*), 5 (*usually once a week*).

Homosexuality Messages. A 9-item subscale was used to examine the messages participants encountered about homosexuality from their mother, father, male friends, and female friends. Each of the items and its origin is listed in Appendix A. The items were a part of a larger 50-item scale that assessed the messages individuals received regarding a broad range of topics related to relationships, dating, and sexuality. For each of the items, participants were asked to indicate how strongly each message was conveyed to them from their mother, father, female peers, and male peers during their formative years (between 5-18 years old). Responses were based on a 4-point scale including 0 (*none*), 1 (*a little*), 2 (*some*), 3 (*a lot*).

Bivariate correlations from Study 2 revealed that for both positive and negative messages, mother and father messages about homosexuality were highly correlated with one another, as were male and female peer messages. Based on this finding, positive messages from mother were combined with positive messages from father to create *Positive Parent Messages* (12 items, 6 mother and 6 father, $\alpha=.96$), and positive messages from female peers were combined with positive messages from male peers to create *Positive Peer Messages* (12 items, 6 female and 6 male, $\alpha=.94$). Negative messages were combined in the same way resulting in *Negative Parent Messages* (6 items; $\alpha=.87$) and *Negative Peer Messages* (6 items; $\alpha=.82$).

Traditional Gender Role Messages. The gender role messages scales were developed based on previous literature on sexual scripts and communication (e.g., Darling & Hicks, 1982; DeLamater, 1989); a variation of the scale has been used with college samples (Epstein & Ward, 2008). Twelve items were used to assess traditional gender role messages (see Appendix B). The items were a part of the same 50-item scale in which messages about homosexuality were assessed. Participants were asked to indicate how strongly each message was conveyed to them from their mother, father, female peers, and male peers during their formative years (between 5-18 years old). Responses were based on a 4-point scale including 0 (*none*), 1 (*a little*), 2 (*some*), 3 (*a lot*). As will be discussed in greater detail in the Results section, only messages from male and female peers will be examined.

Maximum Likelihood factor analysis (unrotated) was conducted to determine the factor structure of the traditional gender roles variable. The analysis yielded a three-factor solution for mothers and fathers, a two-factor solution for female peers, and a one-factor solution for male peers. For each source, the majority of items loaded onto a single factor. As a follow-up, Maximum Likelihood factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation was conducted in which all items were fixed onto one factor (see Table 4.1). Items that failed to load onto the factor were excluded from the final analyses. The resulting 12-item scale obtained a Cohen's alpha of .86 (females peers) and $\alpha = .87$ (male peers). The female and male peer items were collapsed into one scale—as was done with the homosexuality messages—resulting in a 24-item scale ($\alpha = .92$). The mean score of the traditional gender roles scale was 1.52 ($SD = .63$).

Attitudes Toward Sexual Minorities. Participants' attitudes toward sexual minorities were assessed using the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Knowledge and Attitudes Scale for Heterosexuals (LGB-KASH, Worthington, Dillon, & Becker-Schutte, 2005). The multi-dimensional scale was

designed to assess heterosexuals' attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. Although the authors intended for the scale to distinguish attitudes toward gays from attitudes toward lesbians and bisexuals, factor analysis did not yield separate factors for each group (Worthington, Dillon, & Becker-Schutte). Internal consistency of the scale has been established with adult (18-57 years old) samples. The LGB-KASH consists of 28 items organized into 5 subscales. Three of the subscales were used in this study, as they are most closely linked with the research questions and study aims. The first subscale, *Internalized Affirmativeness* (5 items, $\alpha = .77$), indicates one's comfort around and willingness to publicly support sexual minorities (e.g., *I have close friends who are LGB*). The second subscale, *Civil Rights Attitudes* (5 items, $\alpha = .91$), indicates one's endorsement of equal rights and access for sexual minorities (e.g., *I think marriage should be legal for same-sex couples*). Finally, the *Hate* (6 items, $\alpha = .81$) subscale reflects a discomfort in being around sexual minorities (e.g., *It is important to me to avoid LGB individuals*) as well as an indifference or acceptance of the mistreatment that sexual minorities may encounter. Responses were based on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very uncharacteristic of me or my views*) to 7 (*very characteristic of me or my views*). Higher scores reflect a stronger endorsement of beliefs/attitudes.

Analysis Plan

Descriptive analyses were conducted to examine means of each of the independent and dependent variables. T-tests were conducted to evaluate gender differences across the independent and dependent variables. Correlation analyses were conducted to determine the link between demographic factors and the variables of interest.

To test the hypotheses regarding the role of parent and peer messages about homosexuality in predicting attitudes toward sexual minorities, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was conducted using Amos (20.0). The advantage of SEM over linear regression models is that it enables the researcher to include multiple related dependent variables within a single model and allow the dependent variables to be correlated with one another. The fit of the model is assessed using the chi-square statistic. A significant chi-square indicates that the null hypothesis should be rejected (McDonald and Ho, 2002). However, large sample sizes tend to yield significant chi-square statistic regardless of the model's validity. Therefore, McDonald and Ho advocate reporting the comparative fit index (CFI) and the root-mean-square-error of approximation (RMSEA) along with the chi-square and degrees of freedom. CFI values

above .90 indicate a good fit. RMSEA values below .05 are considered a good fit for the data; values between .05 and .08 are considered reasonable fit for the data.

Parent messages (positive and negative) were allowed to correlate with one another, as were peer messages. Additionally, positive messages (parent and peer) were allowed to correlate with one another, as were negative messages. Error terms of each of the endogenous variables were also allowed to correlate with one another. Multiple demographic correlates, identified in the preliminary analyses, were included in the model as control variables: age, religious service attendance, country of upbringing, race (Asian, Black, Latino, Middle Eastern), unmarried parents, having a gay friend, having a gay family member, mother's education, father's education.

Results

Preliminary Analyses of Homosexuality Messages

The first set of preliminary analyses describes reports of messages about homosexuality and attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. Reports of parent and peer messages mirror the findings from Study 2, which separated reports by gender (mother/father, female peers/male peers). On average, participants reported that positive messages about homosexuality were conveyed with low to moderate intensity ($M_{Parent}=1.42$, $SD=1.07$; $M_{Peer}=1.70$, $SD=.93$) and that negative messages about homosexuality were scarcely communicated ($M_{Parent}=.39$, $SD=.65$; $M_{Peer}=.47$, $SD=.60$). The only observed gender differences in reports were found between men and women's reports of positive peer messages about homosexuality; women reported higher levels of positive messages than did men. With regard to attitudes toward sexual minorities, overall, participants reported moderate levels of Internalized Affirmativeness, higher levels of Civil Rights, and low levels of Hate (see Table 4.2). Women's reports of Internalized Affirmativeness and Civil Rights were higher than those of men. However, men's reports of Hate were higher than women's reports.

Zero-order correlations were used to examine the association between each of the three attitude variables and the following demographic background factors: age, participant gender (dummy coded 0/1=women), sexual orientation (dummy coded 0/1=predominantly heterosexual), religious attendance, country of upbringing (dummy coded 0/1=not raised in US), parent marital status (dummy coded 0/1=unmarried parents), having a gay friend, having a gay family member, mother education level, and father education level. Race (Asian, Black, Latino, Middle Eastern)

was also included among the correlations; Whites were the reference category. Significant correlations are provided in Table 4.3. Being a woman, identifying as predominantly heterosexual, and having a gay friend was each associated with higher reports of Internalized Affirmativeness and Civil Rights and lower reports of Hate. Conversely, frequent religious attendance and being raised outside of the US were associated with less acceptance and greater hostility toward sexual minorities. Being Asian⁴ was associated with lower Civil Rights reports and higher Hate reports. Contributions of the other demographic variables were more sporadic.

Based on zero-order correlations, I found that all associations between messages and attitudes were significant and as would be expected (see Table 4.4). Positive messages were positively associated with Internalized Affirmativeness and Civil Rights and negatively associated with Hate. By contrast, negative messages were negatively correlated with Internalized Affirmativeness and Civil Rights, and positively correlated with Hate.

Preliminary Analyses of Gender Role Messages

There were no differences in women and men's exposure to traditional gender roles ($M_{Women}=1.55, SD = .64; M_{Men}=1.49, SD = .63$); $t(408) = -.89, ns$. Of the 14 demographic variables tested, as listed above, none were correlated with traditional gender role messages. In terms of attitudes toward sexual minorities, only Internalized Affirmativeness was associated with traditional gender role messages. Exposure to traditional gender role messages was associated with less comfort around sexual minorities ($r = -.13, p < .01$).

Contribution of Messages About Homosexuality to Attitudes Toward Sexual Minorities

For my first hypothesis, I anticipated that, for each source, positive messages would positively predict Internalized Affirmativeness and Civil Rights but negatively predict Hate. Conversely, it was expected that negative messages would positively predict Hate but negatively predict Internalized Affirmativeness and Civil Rights. For the second hypothesis, I hypothesized that the relation between messages and attitudes would be different for men and women. Based on these predictions, positive and negative messages from both sources (parents and peers) were entered into the model with each set of messages predicting each of the attitude scales. The

⁴ Cross-tabulation analysis revealed that only 6% of the sample identified as Asian *and* being raised outside the US, which indicates that the two demographic variable groups are not the same and should be considered separately.

model was poor fit for the data $\chi^2(340)=1423.54, p<.001, CFI = .84, RMSEA = .09 (.08-.09)$. Multi-group analysis was conducted to see if the fit of the model was different for men and women. I first analyzed a baseline model in which path coefficients were estimated separately for men and women and were unconstrained. With this model, $\chi^2(626)= 1251.10, p<.001, CFI = .91, RMSEA = .05 (.04-.05)$ the RMSEA improved compared to the model in which men and women were analyzed together. I also ran the model constraining all parameters to be equal across groups $\chi^2(777)= 1731.88, p<.001, CFI =.86, RMSEA = .05 (.05-.06)$. A chi-square difference test was conducted to determine if the constrained and unconstrained (baseline) models were significantly different from one another. To make this assessment, the difference between the chi-square value and the degrees of freedom of each model was calculated; a significant chi-square difference suggests a difference between the two models. The results of the chi-square difference test, $\chi^2(151)= 480.78, p<.001$, were significant. Thus, the unconstrained model is a better fit for the data, which suggests that the relation between messages about homosexuality and individual attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals differs for men and women. The results of the model for women are presented in Figure 2.1; the model for men is presented in Figure 2.2.

For Women. Exposure to negative messages about homosexuality from parents negatively predicted Civil Rights attitudes, such that women who were exposed to negative messages also reported less support of Civil Rights for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. This was the only significant parent message that predicted attitudes among women. In terms of peer messages, exposure to positive messages from peers was linked with stronger support of Civil Rights attitudes and less support of Hate attitudes. Negative messages from peers were not associated with attitudes.

For Men. Among men, exposure to negative messages from parents was linked with *higher* Civil Rights attitudes. Exposure to positive peer positive messages was associated with stronger support of Internalized Affirmativeness and less support of Hate attitudes. By contrast, receiving negative peer messages was linked with stronger support of Hate attitudes.

Interaction of Gender Role Messages and Messages About Homosexuality in Predicting Attitudes Toward Sexual Minorities

For my third and fourth hypotheses, I expected that messages regarding traditional gender roles would be associated with lower Internalized Affirmativeness and Civil Rights attitudes and

higher Hate attitudes. I also expected the relation between gender role messages and attitudes toward sexual minorities would be moderated by messages about homosexuality. Given that multiple peer messages about homosexuality—and only one parent message—emerged as significant predictors of individual attitudes, only peer messages were used to test the interaction between messages about homosexuality and gender role messages. Positive and negative messages about homosexuality, gender role messages, and an interaction between each of the homosexuality messages and the traditional gender roles were entered into the model as exogenous variables. The three attitude variables were included in the model as endogenous variables. Each of the main effect variables was standardized (mean centered) prior to analyses. All exogenous variables were allowed to correlate with one another. Error terms of each of the endogenous variables were also allowed to correlate with one another. The model controlled for the following demographic variables: age, religious service attendance, country of upbringing, race (Asian, Black, Latino, Middle Eastern), unmarried parents, having a gay friend, having a gay family member, mother's education, father's education.

The overall model was an acceptable fit for the data $\chi^2(140) = 313.15, p < .01$ CFI = .98, RMSEA = .03 (.02 – .04). Once again, multi-group analysis was conducted to test for gender differences in the model. The fit indices for the baseline model indicated that the model was a good fit for the data $\chi^2(204) = 254.73, p < .01$ CFI = .89, RMSEA = .02 (.01 – .03). When all parameters were constrained to be equal, the CFI decreased and the RMSEA increased $\chi^2(354) = 653.14, p < .01$, CFI = .85, RMSEA = .04 (.04–.05), suggesting that the constrained model was not a better fit for the data. Results from the chi-square difference test $\chi^2(150) = 401.71, p < .001$ confirmed this, indicating once again that the relation among variables is different for women and men. The results of the model for women are presented in Figure 2.3; the model for men is presented in Figure 2.4.

For Women. For the interaction model, exposure to positive message predicted stronger Internalized Affirmativeness and Civil Rights attitudes, and weaker Hate attitudes. Negative messages were associated with weaker Civil Rights attitudes and were marginally significant in predicting Hate attitudes. Traditional gender roles did not predict attitudes toward homosexuality among women. However, the interaction between positive messages and traditional gender role messages predicted Civil Rights attitudes (see Figure 2.5) and Hate attitudes (see Figure 2.6). Efforts to represent this interaction graphically indicate that participant endorsement of Civil

Rights was strongest when traditional gender role messages *and* positive messages about homosexuality were high. Endorsement of the same attitudes was lowest when traditional gender role messages were high and positive messages about homosexuality were low.

Negative messages about homosexuality also interacted with traditional gender role messages. Participant endorsement of Civil Rights was highest when traditional gender role messages were low and negative messages about homosexuality were low. Participant endorsement of Civil Rights attitudes was lowest when traditional gender messages were low and negative messages were high.

For Men. With regard to positive peer messages about homosexuality, the findings for men mirrored those for women. Negative peer messages were linked with weaker endorsement of Civil Rights attitudes and stronger endorsement of Hate attitudes. Traditional gender role messages were linked with weaker Internalized Affirmativeness attitudes. The interaction between negative peer messages and traditional gender role messages was significant in predicting Civil Rights attitudes among men (Figure 2.7). However, it appears that, regardless of exposure to traditional gender role messages, frequent exposure to negative messages contributed to weaker endorsement of Civil Rights attitudes.

Discussion

The goal of the present study was to examine the role of messages about homosexuality in predicting attitudes toward sexual minorities in a sample of college students. Specifically, the study examined attitudes related to comfort with sexual minorities (Internalized Affirmativeness), endorsement of equal rights for sexual minorities (Civil Rights), and hostility toward sexual minorities (Hate). To that end, I tested two models. In the first model I examined positive and negative messages about homosexuality from parents *and* peers. In a second model, I focused only on peer messages and examined the interaction between messages about homosexuality (positive and negative) and messages regarding traditional gender roles in predicting attitudes toward sexual minorities. The present study is unique in its contribution to existing research because it examines, *within one study*, the association between the messages individuals receive about *and* later attitudes toward sexual minorities.

The relation between messages and attitudes toward sexual minorities is different for women and men

The results of the study suggest that there is indeed a connection between socialization messages youth are exposed to during their formative years and their later attitudes toward homosexuality. I hypothesized that exposure to positive messages would positively predict expressing more accepting attitudes and less disapproving attitudes. I also hypothesized that more frequent exposure to negative messages would predict expressing less accepting attitudes and more disapproving attitudes. My hypotheses were partially supported, as some, but not all, messages emerged as significant predictors of attitudes. However, the fact that multiple messages were found to be significant predictors suggests that parents and peers may have the ability to shape how individuals feel about lesbians, gays, and bisexuals.

A key finding from the study, however, was that gender matters in terms of what messages are received and how those messages are employed. Consistent with prior research, women appeared to be more supportive of and comfortable with sexual minorities than did their male counterparts (see Loftus, 2001), as evidenced by their higher levels of Internalized Affirmativeness and Civil Rights attitudes. In terms of the link between socialization messages encountered and current attitudes, the results suggest that the effect of messages about homosexuality differs by gender. Findings from the first model indicate that both women and men benefit from receiving positive messages about homosexuality from peers. For men, the benefit of positive messages is relational, as positive messages contribute to less hostility toward and greater ease with sexual minorities. For women, however, the benefit is relational and political, as positive messages contribute to less hostility toward sexual minorities and a stronger endorsement of equal rights for sexual minorities.

The first model also highlighted gender differences in the contribution of negative parent messages and Civil Rights attitudes. Women who were exposed to negative messages about homosexuality frequently expressed less support for equal rights for sexual minorities. This link adds to the limited number of studies that have found that conservative parent messages predict later conservative attitudes among youth (see DiIorio, Pluhar, & Belcher, 2003). However, men who frequently received negative messages from parents more strongly endorsed equal rights for sexual minorities. One possible explanation for this finding is that men are actively rejecting the messages once conveyed by their parents. Past research on gender differences in adolescent socialization proposes that men and women are socialized differently (see McHale, Crouter, & Whiteman, 2003). For instance, women are perceived to be the conduit for cultural traditions and

heritage and are expected to embrace family attitudes. The same constraints are not imposed on men who, by contrast, are afforded more freedom to explore and depart from those traditions and attitudes. Thus, the negative association between negative messages from parents and men's Civil Rights attitudes may reflect the fact that men do not feel the same pressure to adopt their parents' values and beliefs (as evidenced in the messages they transmitted).

In the second model, parents were removed from the model and peers were the only message source evaluated. Here, men and women who frequently received positive messages from peers or parents during their formative years showed greater comfort and less hostility around sexual minorities and greater support for equal rights for sexual minorities. When women and men frequently received negative messages, however, they were less supportive of equal rights for sexual minorities. This connection between negative messages and Civil Rights attitudes was stronger among men than women.

My hypothesis that exposure to traditional gender role messages would predict lower levels of Internalized Affirmativeness and Civil Rights attitudes but positively predict Hate attitudes was partially supported. Traditional gender role messages contributed to only one of the three attitude variables and only among men. For women, there was no link between traditional gender role messages and attitudes toward sexual minorities. For men, however, receiving traditional gender role messages during one's formative years contributed to less comfort around sexual minorities during one's college years. Thus, it appears that gender role messages may be important in shaping men's interpersonal relationships with sexual minorities but little else.

The gender differences observed in both models may reflect societal expectations concerning same-sex interactions. Prior research indicates that within society men are expected to maintain physical and emotional boundaries in their relationships with other men (Schope & Eliason, 2003). A consequence for breaching those boundaries—or accepting others who breach those boundaries—is being perceived as gay or not masculine, which could result in ridicule, rejection, or physical harassment (Froyum, 2007; Pascoe, 2005; Renold, 2006). The same threat does not exist for women, whose sexuality is not often called into question when they display physical and emotional closeness with other women (Solebello & Elliott, 2011; Weiderman, 2005).

Receiving messages that convey acceptance of sexual minorities may contribute to men's comfort around sexual minorities because the messages signal to men that their sexuality and

masculinity will not be called into question. However, receiving messages that convey disapproval of sexual minorities *or* messages that reinforce heterosexualized masculinity may prompt men to distance themselves from sexual minorities as a way of maintaining boundaries and preserving the perception of their heterosexuality and masculinity.

Still, messages *do* matter for women. It appears that exposure to positive socialization messages, in particular, contribute to women's current attitudes. The observation that the effect size of positive messages on Civil Rights and Hate attitudes was greater for women than men may be connected to women's existing attitudes—favorable—toward sexual minorities. For women, receiving positive messages may reinforce already positive attitudes. At the same time, women's favorable disposition toward sexual minorities may make them less vulnerable to the influence of negative messages about homosexuality.

Peers are a key contributor to youth attitudes toward sexual minorities

In the first model, multiple peer messages predicted attitudes toward sexual minorities. However, only one parent message (positive messages about homosexuality) predicted attitudes toward sexual minorities (Civil Rights). The finding that, for men and women, more peer messages were significant predictors of attitudes than were parent messages draws attention to differences in the role of parents and peers in shaping youth perspectives. It may be that peer messages were most influential because youth—adolescents and emerging adults alike—must successfully navigate a social context dominated by peers. In other words, for youth, it is peers, not parents, who determine which individuals gain entrée into social groups. As individuals seek peer acceptance, they may espouse attitudes similar to those with whom they wish to be friends. Alternatively, the observed association between messages and attitudes may occur because youth seek out friends whose attitudes reinforce their own attitudes toward sexual minorities.

Positive and negative messages are unique in their contribution to attitudes toward sexual minorities

It is important to note that positive and negative messages did *not* predict the same attitudes. For both models, receiving positive messages contributed to each of the attitude outcomes, but negative messages only contributed to Civil Rights attitudes and Hate attitudes. As has been highlighted in the previous discussion of differences across participant gender and message source, and as the findings from the first model suggest, the contribution of positive and negative messages is nuanced. This was evident in the first model in which there was

considerable variation in the contribution of positive and negative messages on men and women's attitudes.

Taken together, the findings suggest that positive messages are not simply the reverse of negative messages. Rather, positive and negative messages convey distinct beliefs and attitudes toward homosexuality and in doing so, uniquely contribute to attitudes. This finding echoes prior findings that sexual socialization is a multidimensional construct (DiIorio, Pluhar, & Belcher, 2003; Grange, Brubaker, & Corneille, 2011; Ward, 2003) and warrants being measured as such. Moreover, the findings are consistent with research by Perrin, Cohen, Gold, Ryan, Savin-Williams, and Schorzman (2004), who found that parents of sexual minority children provided positive (acceptance) *and* negative (rejection) responses to their child's identity. Future studies should examine positive and negative messages separately rather than simply recoding responses to fit the direction of other items in a scale. Doing so will enable scholars to understand the unique contribution of each type of message to individual attitudes and behaviors toward sexual minorities.

Gender role messages and messages about homosexuality interact to shape attitudes toward sexual minorities

I expected that messages about homosexuality would moderate the association between traditional gender role messages and attitudes toward sexual minorities. This expectation was supported by the data. Positive and negative messages from peers about homosexuality attenuated the contribution of traditional gender role messages to Civil Rights attitudes for women. For men, however, only negative messages about homosexuality attenuated the relation between gender role messages and attitudes toward sexual minorities. In a context filled with gender role messages, receiving positive messages appears to make a difference in whether or not women endorse equal rights for sexual minorities. By contrast, in a context with little communication about gender roles, negative messages about homosexuality wield influence over women and men's attitudes toward equal rights.

Thus, my hypotheses regarding interactions were partially supported. However, it is likely that, for women, the observed interactions were driven by the overall strength of the contribution of positive and negative messages to Civil Rights attitudes given that the main effect for traditional gender role messages was not significant. The lack of findings with regard to men's Internalized Affirmativeness attitudes was surprising. I expected that positive messages

would attenuate the link between traditional gender roles and attitudes toward sexual minorities—at least for Internalized Affirmativeness attitudes. The failure to find a link may be due to the way that traditional gender roles were assessed. I assessed traditional gender role messages regarding dating and relationships. However, a measure that assessed traditional gender role messages regarding masculine and feminine characteristics (e.g., men are assertive; women are sensitive) may be a more appropriate predictor of attitudes toward sexual minorities (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009), as individuals' negative attitudes toward sexual minorities have been linked to individuals' beliefs that gays embody feminine characteristics and lesbians embody masculine characteristics.

Limitations and Future Directions

Sample. The present study makes a much-needed contribution to existing research. The study, however, is not without limitations. The first limitation is that the findings are based on a sample of Midwestern undergraduate students, all of whom were recruited through university subject pool. Although ethnic and sexual minorities were included in the sample, they represented a very small percentage of the overall sample. Additionally, the majority of participants in Studies 2 and 3 had parents who had attended graduate school, which may have contributed to greater exposure to positive messages reported among participants (Andersen & Fetner, 2008). Thus, the findings are not generalizable to the larger population of American young people. Another concern is with the limited representation of sexual minorities in the sample, which prevented me from comparing participant reports and overall models between individuals of different sexual orientations. Future studies should include adequate representation of individuals of all sexual identities, which would enable scholars to examine differences in the transmission and influence of messages across sexual identities. A second limitation of the study was the cross-sectional nature of the data, which prevents any causal links between messages and attitudes. A longitudinal study would enable researchers to observe changes in messages over time and determine if attitudes are the result of the messages received.

Measures. Another concern relates to the scales used to measure messages regarding homosexuality. Although the study's use of positive and negative subscales broadens prior research on messages about homosexuality, which has relied on individual items or uni-dimensional scales to assess messages, the positive and negative message subscales may not capture the broad range of messages that individuals potentially receive regarding homosexuality.

The items in the subscales primarily focused on messages regarding the morality or nature of homosexuality (e.g., *homosexuality is perverse and unnatural*) and fair treatment for sexual minorities. Also, the message scales focused on homosexuality and did not explore messages individuals may have received related to bisexuality. Prior research indicates that individuals hold more favorable attitudes toward gays and lesbians than toward bisexuals (deBruin & Ardnt, 2010; Eliason, 2001), and that, in general, individuals hold more positive attitudes toward lesbians than toward gay men (Kite, 2011). Prior research has also found that whereas some individuals associate homosexuality with men, particularly White men (Whitley, Child, & Collins, 2011), others associate gay and lesbian identities with gender atypicality (e.g., effeminate gay men, masculine lesbians) (Schope & Eliason, 2003).

Future studies should explore the messages individuals receive regarding the prevalence and nature of homosexuality and bisexuality (e.g., sexual fluidity) in society and within specific ethnic groups. It would be worthwhile to examine how messages about the associations of race and sexuality contribute to one's perceptions of and attitudes toward sexual minorities. Additionally, future studies should explore how the different messages individuals (heterosexual and sexual minority) contribute to individuals' sexual identity development. As prior research indicates, among sexual minorities, receiving positive messages about homosexuality contributes to greater comfort with one's sexuality and overall mental and emotional well-being (see Bouris et al., 2010). Negative messages, as would be expected, contribute to negative mental health outcomes (e.g., depression) (Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2009). *How might messages about homosexuality influence heterosexual youth's—especially heterosexual men—understanding of their own sexuality?*

Another limitation was the use of religious attendance as predictor (and control) for individual attitudes. Although single item measures of religious attendance have been used to predict attitudes toward sexual minorities (Finlay & Walther, 2008; Jenkins & Lambert, 2007; Whitley, Childs, & Collins, 2011), Woodford, Levy, and Walls (2012) argue that *syncretism*, the degree to which an individual endorses the doctrine associated with their religious affiliation, is more useful in helping researchers understand the link between religion and attitudes toward sexual minorities than measures of religious service attendance. For the current study, current religious attendance emerged as a significant predictor of each of the attitude variables in the model for men and two of the attitude variables (Civil Rights and Hate) for women. Future

studies that assess individuals' endorsement of religious doctrines may be able to articulate what aspects of one's religious involvement and beliefs contribute to specific attitudes.

Alternative socialization sources. Finally, although the study shows that multiple factors are related to individuals' attitudes toward sexual minorities, the study does not address the broader context in which messages were received. The study was conducted in 2012, a year in which same-sex marriage and anti-gay bullying were frequent topics in various news publications (Calmes & Baker, 2012). During the same time, 35 of the 701 recurring characters (4.4%) on primetime broadcast television (ABC, NBC, CBS, Fox, the CW) were lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (GLAAD, 2012)—the highest rate in the last 5 years. Thus, it is possible that participants' exposure to messages about homosexuality through news stories, political discourse, and television characters contributed, to some degree, to their current attitudes toward sexual minorities. It is also possible that participants' exposure to news stories, political discourse, and television characters—even if to a lesser degree—during their formative years are linked with the attitudes that individuals currently hold. Socialization is not the unique effect of one type of message on the individual. Rather it is the confluence of many messages from many sources working with and, in some instances, against one another to leave a lasting impression on the individual. Indeed, sexual scripting theory proposes that the scripts (messages) received from *various* sources come together to form scripts that the individual will use as a guide for her or his beliefs and actions (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). In addition to exploring societal messages that individuals receive about homosexuality and bisexuality, future studies should examine how messages from multiple sources interact in their influence on individuals' attitudes toward sexual minorities.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

The overall contribution of the dissertation to existing literature is that it articulates the messages individuals receive about homosexuality and bisexuality during their formative years and highlights the contribution of those messages to individuals' current attitudes toward sexual minorities. In doing so, the dissertation offers three key findings.

Gender influences the messages that are transmitted and received

Gender was an important aspect of each of the three studies. As has been shown in prior research, how individuals feel about gays, lesbians, and bisexuals has as much to do with the individual's own gender (Kite, 2011) as it does the gender of individuals who are gay, lesbian, and bisexual (Herek, 2002; 2000). Our understanding of sexuality and the messages we receive about sexuality, specifically homosexuality, are interwoven with messages about gender—and by extension, gender roles (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009; Parrot & Gallagher, 2008; Whitley, 2001). For many individuals, gender roles and sexuality are inextricably linked. As was seen in Study 1, when message sources identified individuals as gay or lesbian, sources most often relied on the individuals' departure from gender roles as a key identifier (or marker) of homosexuality.

Another example of the role of gender in the messages that youth received about homosexuality was in the double standard for men and women's homosexuality. Male homosexuality garnered more disapproval than female homosexuality. This was seen in the use of homonegative language in that all terms used were terms that are applied to male homosexuality (gay, fag). It was also seen in the way that male homosexuality was contrasted with female homosexuality. Same-sex sexual activity between women was viewed as titillating, whereas same-sex sexual activity between men was viewed with disgust. Thus, a woman's attraction to and sexual relationship with another woman—when acknowledged—was more desirable.

A double standard was also observed in terms of which gender was allowed sexual fluidity. In Study 1, participants observed that it was socially acceptable for women, but not men, to experiment with their sexuality. Women could have relationships with other women and later identify as heterosexual. For men, however, once they engaged in a relationship with another man, they would from that point on be viewed as gay.

In Studies 2 and 3, the observed gender was an important factor in terms of the message source and message recipient. Overall, male sources provided more negative messages than did female sources, and female sources provided more positive messages than did male sources. In terms of receiving messages, men reported greater exposure to negative messages from peers than did women yet women reported greater exposure to positive messages from peers. Additionally, women reported more favorable attitudes toward sexual minorities and men reported more hostile attitudes toward sexual minorities.

Gender was an important feature across each of the studies. From the messages that were received, to the interpretation and application of the messages, homosexuality meant different things—and had different consequences—for men and women. For men, homosexuality was something to be avoided, but for women, homosexuality was something to be watched.

Communication about homosexuality is complex and multidimensional

As with socialization of other topics, the messages that youth receive about homosexuality are multidimensional. Study 1 identified five themes reflecting the messages that were communicated to emerging adults during their formative years: *heterosexuality is the only sexuality*, *nature of homo/bisexuality*, *being gay/lesbian/bisexual is okay*, *being gay/lesbian/bisexual is not okay*, and *lesbians are hot, gay men are not*. Three of the identified themes were further distinguished by subthemes. Additionally, Study 1 revealed that participants received multiple messages from multiple sources. Studies 2 and 3 consolidated the messages individuals received about homosexuality into two dimensions (positive messages and negative messages) and focused on messages from two sources (parents and peers). Although Study 2 and 3 examined fewer dimensions of messages about homosexuality, the findings highlight the varied nature of the messages that youth receive about homosexuality.

Exposure to lesbians, gays, and bisexuals matters

Across all three studies, knowing gays, lesbians, and bisexuals was important in shaping individual's ideas about gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and homosexuality. These findings are not

novel, however, as prior research has emphasized role of interpersonal relationships in minimizing bias against marginalized groups (Heinze & Horn, 2009; Herek & Capitanio, 1995; Pettigrew & Troop, 2006). Research on exposure to sexual minorities via media (television and film) indicates that exposure to positive images of sexual minorities in media contributes to more favorable attitudes toward sexual minorities (Bonds-Raacke, Cady, Schlegel, Harris, & Firebaugh, 2007; Rössler & Brosius, 2006; Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2006).

As previous research has indicated, many individuals' perceptions of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals reflect prevalent stereotypes (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009). Unchallenged, stereotypes about sexual minorities contribute to less favorable attitudes toward sexual minorities. For many individuals, acceptance of sexual minorities is rooted in their religious beliefs (Woodford, Levy, & Walls, 2012). Although some religious teachings may discourage one from discriminating against others (e.g., sexual minorities), the teachings may also convey that homosexuality is sinful and thus, unacceptable. Meaningful and positive interactions with lesbians, gays, bisexuals enables others to learn about sexual minorities as individuals, not stereotypes.

Implications

Given recent gains in equal rights for sexual minorities, it may be hard for some to understand the relevance of the study's main findings. Public opinion polls have shown a steady increase in acceptance of sexual minorities and endorsement of same-sex marriage (Pew Research Center, 2013b), and that lesbians, gays, and bisexuals now have a stronger media presence (GLAAD, 2012). To add to this, in 2011, the US government repealed the Don't Ask Don't Tell policy that prohibited openly gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals from serving in the armed forces (Bumiller, 2011). And, in the last 4 years, 10 US states moved to legally recognize marriages between same-sex couples (Pew Research Center). For some, it may appear as though the overall climate for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals is one of acceptance. However, this is not necessarily so.

Although 13 US states and the District of Columbia now permit same-sex marriages and 10 recognize same-sex partnerships through civil unions or domestic partnerships, 35 states *prohibit* same-sex marriages (Ahuja & Chow, 2013). The US Supreme Court recently issued their decision on two major cases related to civil rights for lesbian, gays and bisexual couples. The first decision determined that the federal government, which previously had not recognized married same-sex couples, must grant married same-sex couples the same federal recognition

and protections afforded married heterosexual couples. The second Supreme Court decision determined that the 2008 vote to ban same-sex marriages—which had been legalized—in California was in violation of the US Constitution. Only 21 of 50 US states, prohibit employment discrimination based on sexual orientation (Human Rights Campaign, 2013). Additionally, although the US prosecutes *hate crimes* (criminal activities that target an individual based on sexual orientation, race, gender, religious affiliation, national origin, or disability) 30% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans report being threatened or physically attacked (Pew Research Center, 2013c). Finally, as has been mentioned previously in this manuscript, 82% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender high school students report being verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation, and 45% report being physically harassed because of their sexual orientation (Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, & Palmer, 2012). Thus, the current social climate in the United States is one that privileges heterosexuality over other sexualities. Furthermore, despite the advances made in recent years, lesbians, gays, and bisexuals remain vulnerable to the political and personal interests of their fellow citizens.

A recent Pew study found that 72% of Americans surveyed believe that the legalization of same-sex marriage is inevitable (Pew Research Center, 2013b). Perhaps the findings from this dissertation will help to expedite the shift in attitudes. The findings presented here indicate that one way to counter the heteronormativity that pervades society and contributes to a limited awareness and understanding of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals, is to ensure that individuals get to *see* and *know* gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. In other words, lesbians, gays, and bisexuals need to be visible in society. But in order for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals to be visible, people need to be able to be open about their sexual identity without fear of discrimination or harassment. Herein lies the quandary. Rather than place the onus of exposure and education on sexual minorities other socializing agents should take the lead. Media are a key source for sexual information (Ward, 2003). Schools, many of which provide sex education, *could* provide accurate information that educates youth about *all* sexualities (Bay-Cheng, 2003; Fine & McClelland, 2006). Given the positive effects of media on attitudes toward sexual minorities (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2006), media should increase their representation of sexual minorities. Increasing the representation of sexual minorities in media and school-based sex education is only one step in providing positive messages about homosexuality and bisexuality, but it may be a very important step in improving attitudes toward sexual minorities.

Limitations and Future Directions

Limited sample. As has been noted in each of the studies, the primary limitation of the dissertation is sample. The findings are based on a sample of undergraduate students from a large Midwestern public university. Each of the studies lacked diversity in terms of sexual orientation, and Studies 2 and 3 lacked racial diversity, which prevented comparisons across racial groups. As discussed in the discussion of Study 3, the majority of participants in Studies 2 and 3 had parents who had attended graduate school. The fact that many participants came from parents who were highly educated may have contributed to greater exposure to positive messages reported among participants (Andersen & Fetner, 2008). Thus, the findings presented are not generalizable to other emerging adults. Future studies can address these limitations by employing multiple recruitment methods to obtain more diverse samples within university settings. Additionally, future studies should include samples of emerging adults who are not enrolled in college.

Social desirability. A second key limitation of the study is that, in general, participants reported favorable attitudes toward sexual minorities and low exposure to negative messages about homosexuality. Both reports may be due to the sample selection in that participants were drawn from a sample of college students on a campus that openly supports sexual minorities. Another contributing factor could be, as was previously mentioned, the fact that the majority of participants came from parents who were college graduates and had attended graduate school. However, given that the university is accepting of sexual minorities, the generally positive attitudes toward homosexuality that were observed may be due, in part, to social desirability (Krumpal, 2013; Tourengau & Yan, 2007). Despite the anonymous nature of the survey and the fact that the measures were a part of a larger study on media use, gender and sexual attitudes, and social relationships, participants may have reported attitudes and messages that were more favorable than their actual attitudes and the messages they received. Future studies should include additional measures that enable researchers to assess social desirability among participants. Although these measures will not prevent participants from providing socially desirable responses, the measures will help researchers gauge how they should interpret participants' responses on the measures of interest.

Single, retrospective accounts. A third limitation of the dissertation is that findings from all studies are based on single report data. With the exception of Alice and Courtney, who

attended the same middle school and shared similar messages, there are no other sources to corroborate the messages individuals reported receiving. However, gathering data from multiple informants does not guarantee agreement of messages. Several studies have highlighted inconsistencies between the parent and child reports on various topics (Carlston & Ogles, 2008; Guion, Mrug, & Windle, 2009). To fully understand the messages youth receive and the contexts in which youth receive messages, scholars should incorporate multiple ways of assessing messages. In addition to measuring source reports of messages transmitted and recipient reports of messages received, future research may wish to assess attitudes held by message sources using established scales or newly developed measures. This method will likely be time consuming and costly but will provide a rich description of the messages that are transmitted and how the messages are transmitted.

Another limitation is that the studies are based on retrospective data. Although retrospective data are commonly used in socialization research, the messages that participants recall may not accurately reflect the messages received (Capaldi, 1996). It is also possible that participants forgot many of the messages they received and, as a result, only report a small sampling of the messages. It is also possible that recall of some messages occurs more readily than others because of the memories associated with the message or period when the message was conveyed. Thorne's (1995) findings suggest that memories are tied to social relationships and developmental period. For emerging adults in Thorne's study, memories from early childhood were generally happy memories that focused on parents, whereas memories from adolescence centered on peer relationships and included more feelings of discord related to those relationships. When individuals are asked to recall their experience—or the messages they took away from an experience—the individual must contend with other factors that may coincide with the experience. In this process, some important messages may be forgotten (or ignored) because messages that are connected to other experiences take on greater importance.

Evaluating retrospective accounts of socialization is sufficient if the goal is to understand individuals' general recollections of messages or individuals' most salient memories of messages received. However, in attempting to understand how the messages individuals receive shape the attitudes that individuals hold, a longitudinal study may be most informative approach. Assessing messages at multiple time points would minimize the messages that are lost as a result of time and fading memories. Additionally, longitudinal research allows researchers to capture changes

in messages that may occur as a result of shifts in the broader socio-political climate in which those messages are transmitted (Andersen & Fetner, 2008; Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 2006).

Finally, as was discussed in Study 1, participants in Study 1 noted that their attitudes became more favorable because of their interactions with others and the courses they took while in college. Thus, when examining the contribution of socialization to attitudes among undergraduate students, it is important to assess the messages they received prior to coming to college as well as the messages they received during college.

Attitudes, not behaviors. Study 3 examined the contribution of early messages about homosexuality on emerging adults' current attitudes toward sexual minorities. However, future studies should examine the contribution of messages to emerging adults' behaviors. It may be that individuals' attitudes are not consistent with their behaviors. In other words, individuals may indicate that they believe same-sex couples should be allowed to marry but vote against (or abstain from voting on) laws that would extend marriage to same-sex couples. Additionally, individuals may exhibit favorable attitudes toward sexual minorities but use homonegative language or engage in other homonegative behaviors (e.g., exclusion, physical harassment) (Goodman & Moradi, 2008, Schope & Eliason, 2000). Future studies should explore behaviors such as previous and prospective voting on issues related to civil rights for gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. Future studies should also examine the contribution of messages to the use of homonegative language and the treatment of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals (e.g., harassment, exclusion, or discrimination of sexual minorities).

Conclusion

This dissertation is an important contribution to the sexual socialization literature and the literature on sexual prejudice. The studies presented here serve as a reminder that youth receive multiple messages from multiple sources about homosexuality and, to a lesser degree, bisexuality. Most importantly, the studies show that youth are listening to the messages that others transmit. At the same time, youth are *watching* what others *do* and interpreting others' behaviors as messages. Receiving positive messages from peers during ones' formative years contributes to emerging adults' comfort around lesbians, gays, and bisexuals and to their support for equal rights for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. This dissertation is a key component in our

understanding of the precursors to attitudes toward sexual minorities, as it helps to elucidate *what* and *how* individuals learn about homosexuality.

Table 2.1
Study 1 Sample Characteristics

Name	Gender	Race	Sexual Orientation	Age	Class
Alcides	Man	Latino (Puerto Rican)	Gay	21	Senior
Alex	Man	Black/African American	Gay	<i>Not available</i>	Junior
Alia	Woman	Black/African American	Heterosexual	20	<i>Not available</i>
Alice	Woman	Black/African American	Heterosexual	20	Junior
Ally	Woman	Black/African American	Heterosexual	18	Freshman
Amy	Woman	White	Heterosexual	<i>Not available</i>	Junior
Courtney	Woman	Black/African American	Heterosexual	20	Junior
Emerald	Woman	Black/African American	Heterosexual	<i>Not available</i>	Junior
Eric	Man	White	Heterosexual	<i>Not available</i>	Senior
Erica	Woman	White	Heterosexual	22	Senior
Ethan	Man	White	Gay	20	Senior
Jamaal	Man	Black/African American	Heterosexual	18	Freshman
Jodi	Woman	Asian (Indian)	Heterosexual	19	Junior
LarryJones	Man	Black/African American	Heterosexual	<i>Not available</i>	Freshman
Maximillian	Man	Asian	Heterosexual	<i>Not available</i>	Freshman
Natalie	Woman	White	Bisexual	21	Senior
Raven	Woman	Black/African American	Lesbian	20	Senior
Rob	Man	White	Gay	<i>Not available</i>	Senior
SusieQ	Woman	White	Heterosexual	<i>Not available</i>	Sophomore
Sydney	Woman	Black/African American	Heterosexual	19	Sophomore
Vince	Man	Black/African American	Heterosexual	<i>Not available</i>	Senior

Table 3.1
Study 2 Sample Characteristics

Group	N	%
Full Sample	429	
Gender		
Women	234	55
Men	195	45
Race		
White	299	70
Asian	89	21
Black	14	3
Latino/a	12	3
Mideast	11	3
Multiracial	4	<1
Sexual orientation		
Exclusively heterosexual	369	86
Predominantly heterosexual	41	10
Bisexual	6	1
Exclusively homosexual	2	<1
Predominantly homosexual	7	2
Not sure	4	<1
Religious Attendance		
Never	65	16
	68	17
Sometimes	152	37
	71	17
Often	54	13
Country of Upbringing		
US raised	399	93
Foreign born/raised	30	7
LGB Contact		
LGB friend	308	72
LGB family member	106	25
Parent marital status		
Married	357	83
Unmarried	72	17
Highest level of mother's education		
Did not complete HS	10	2
HS diploma/graduate	31	7
Some college/College graduate	221	52
Some/completed graduate school	167	39
Highest level of father's education		
Did not complete HS	6	1
HS diploma/graduate	31	7
Some college/College graduate	158	37
Some/completed graduate school	234	55

Table 3.2
Study 2 Factor Scores for Homosexuality Message Items for Parents and Peers

Factor	Mother		Father		Women		Men	
	Item	Factor Loading	Item	Factor Loading	Item	Factor Loading	Item	Factor Loading
1. Positive Messages	47	.86	47	.87	47	.87	47	.84
	18	.85	36	.86	36	.82	36	.79
	33	.84	18	.83	43	.75	33	.78
	36	.84	33	.83	33	.73	43	.77
	45	.77	45	.76	45	.73	18	.71
	43	.74	43	.74	18	.69	45	.70
2. Negative Messages	11	.78	11	.75	11	.68	11	.67
	40	.71	40	.71	48	.66	40	.61
	48	.67	48	.69	40	.61	48	.57
	15	.41	15	.53	15	.42	15	.46

Table 3.3
 Study 2 Zero-Order Correlations Between Parent and Peer Messages

	Mother Positive	Father Positive	Female Peer Positive	Male Peer Positive	Mother Negative	Father Negative	Female Peer Negative	Male Peer Negative
Mother Positive Messages	—							
Father Positive Messages	.87**	—						
Female Peer Positive Messages	.70**	.67**	—					
Male Peer Positive Messages	.63**	.68**	.87**	—				
Mother Negative Messages	-.25**	-.19**	-.01	-.03	—			
Father Negative Messages	-.16**	-.20**	.00	-.06	.76**	—		
Female Peer Negative Messages	-.19	-.15**	-.17**	-.16**	.53**	.51**	—	
Male Peer Negative Messages	-.13	-.14**	-.13**	-.25**	.46**	.50**	.76**	—

Note. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$, two tailed

Table 3.4

Study 2 Comparison of Parent and Peer Message Means by Gender

	Sample N = 429		Female Participants N = 234		Male Participants N = 195		<i>t</i> -test
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
<i>Positive Messages</i>							
Mother	1.50	1.11	1.58	1.11	1.40	1.09	$F(427) = .56, ns$
Father	1.31	1.11	1.32	1.13	1.29	1.07	$F(427) = 2.22, ns$
Female Peers	1.85	.96	2.00	.93	1.69	.98	$F(427) = 1.81,$ $p < .001$
Male Peers	1.56	.95	1.65	.65	1.44	.97	$F(427) = 1.41,$ $p < .05$
<i>Negative Messages</i>							
Mother	.38	.71	.40	.72	.36	.69	$F(419) = .36, ns$
Father	.42	.73	.40	.73	.45	.72	$F(414) = .39, ns$
Female Peers	.35	.57	.30	.52	.41	.62	$F(379) = 7.58,$ $p < .05$
Male Peers	.60	.71	.51	.66	.70	.76	$F(492) = 4.92,$ $p < .01$

Note. The response scale ranged from 0 (*never*) – 3 (*a lot*).

Table 3.5
Study 2 Comparison of Message Means by Religious Attendance

	1 No Religious Attendance	2	3 Some Religious Attendance	4	5 Weekly Religious Attendance	
	<i>N</i> =69	<i>N</i> =68	<i>N</i> =161	<i>N</i> =76	<i>N</i> =55	
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>F</i> (4,428)
Positive Messages						
Mother Positive	1.68 (1.22)	1.97 (1.07)	1.55 (1.13)	1.21 (.99)	.96 (.73)	8.85***
Father Positive	1.40 (1.21)	1.70 (1.10)	1.40 (1.16)	1.03 (.99)	.83 (.68)	6.65***
Female Peer Positive	2.12 (.93)	2.12 (1.00)	1.86 (.93)	1.70 (.93)	1.39 (.96)	6.63***
Male Peer Positive	1.80 (.94)	1.80 (.99)	1.56 (.95)	1.34 (.87)	1.23 (.95)	5.06***
Negative Messages						
Mother Negative	.23 (.56)	.23 (.59)	.31 (.61)	.52 (.84)	.80 (.88)	8.06***
Father Negative	.39 (.75)	.33 (.66)	.34 (.63)	.51 (.80)	.71 (.85)	3.34**
Female Peer Negative	.26 (.45)	.25 (.47)	.31 (.55)	.46 (.66)	.54 (.66)	3.63**
Male Peer Negative	.48 (.61)	.52 (.68)	.55 (.69)	.77 (.79)	.75 (.75)	2.67*

*** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

Table 3.6
Study 2 Correlation of Demographic Variables with Messages About Homosexuality

	Mother Positive	Father Positive	Female Peer Positive	Male Peer Positive	Mother Negative	Father Negative	Female Peer Negative	Male Peer Negative
Age	-.16**	-.18**	-.16**	-.12*	.05	.06	.01	-.01
Women	.08	.02	.16**	.11*	.03	-.04	-.10*	-.13**
Not exclusively heterosexual	.07	.02	.14**	.12*	.01	.02	-.04	-.08
Religious attendance	-.24**	-.19**	-.23**	-.21**	.24**	.13**	.17**	.14**
Not raised in US	-.22**	-.21**	-.21**	-.19**	.03	.02	.16**	.09
Asian	-.34**	-.31**	-.15**	-.11*	.06	.00	.11*	.05
Black	-.10*	-.12**	-.07**	-.06	.13**	.12*	.10*	.11*
Latino	-.06	-.04	-.02**	-.01	.00	-.00	.06	.08
Mideast	-.04	-.03	-.02	.01	.01	-.02	.04	-.01
Unmarried Parents	.04	.01	.05	.00	-.01	-.03	.04	.02
Gay friend	.21**	.20**	.33**	.33**	-.08	-.05	-.09	-.14**
Gay family member	.19**	.15**	.06	.05	.02	.05	-.02	.01
Mother education	.25**	.24**	.17**	.17**	-.09	-.11*	-.07	-.08
Father education	.16**	.18**	.13**	.17**	.00	-.07	-.14**	-.13**

*** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

Table 3.7

Study 2 Correlation of Race with Messages About Homosexuality Controlling for Religious Attendance

	Mother Positive	Father Positive	Female Peer Positive	Male Peer Positive	Mother Negative	Father Negative	Female Peer Negative	Male Peer Negative
Asian	-.37***	-.33***	-.17***	-.13**	.07	.01	.13**	.06
Black	-.10*	-.12**	-.07	-.06	.13**	.12**	.10*	.11*

*** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

Table 4.1

Study 3 Maximum Likelihood Factor Analysis with Direct Oblique Rotation of Gender Norm Messages

Item Number	Item	Female Peers	Male Peers
		.39	.52
2	Sex transforms boys into men.		
		.49	.42
4	Men don't respect women who sleep with them early in the relationship.		
		.59	.60
6	Men want sex; women want relationships.		
	It's better for women to use their feminine charm than express interest	.52	.48
9	directly.		
		.63	.61
12	Men think about sex all the time.		
		.70	.64
21	It's difficult for men to resist their sexual urges.		
		.54	.58
22	It's up to women to limit men's sexual advances.		
		.62	.69
23	In dating, the goal is for men to score with as many women as possible.		
		.62	.68
27	It's worse for a woman to sleep around than a man.		
		.69	.70
28	Men want as much as they can get on the first date.		
	Men should be the initiators in romantic relationships, should ask women	.51	.54
29	out.		
	Men are most interested in women as potential sex partners and don't want	.65	.60
34	to be 'just friends' with them.		
		.48	.63
38	Women are overly emotional and complicate sex.		
		.35	—
42	It's not appropriate for women to be too interested in or to plan for sex.		
		—	—
50	Good girls don't have sex.		

Note. Items 2, 42, and 50 were excluded from final analyses because they failed to load onto the factor for all four sources.

Table 4.2
Study 3 Comparison of Means for Attitudes

		Sample N = 429		Females N = 234		Males N = 195		
	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> -test
LGB-KAS	1 - 7							
Internalized Affirmativeness		3.26 _a	1.49	3.76	1.48	2.67	1.25	t(427)=8.22, <i>p</i> <.001
Civil Rights		5.76 _b	1.35	6.03	1.23	5.44	1.42	t(387) = 4.59, <i>p</i> <.001
Hate		1.77 _c	.91	1.56	.78	2.02	1.00	t(363) = -5.20, <i>p</i> <.001

Note. Means with different subscripts differ significantly from one another.

Table 4.3
Study 3 Zero-Order Correlations of Demographic Variables with Attitudes

	Internalized Affirmativeness	Civil Rights	Hate
Age	-.09	-.06	.04
Women	.37**	.22**	-.25**
Not exclusively heterosexual	.38**	.19**	-.13**
Religious attendance	-.25**	-.28**	.19**
Not born in US	-.08	-.17**	.24**
Asian	-.03	-.12**	.18**
Black	.03	-.08	.03
Latino	.04	.02	-.02
Mideast	-.02	.04	-.07
Unmarried Parents	.12*	-.00	.04
Gay friend	.44**	.33**	-.35**
Gay family member	.14**	.08	-.11*
Mother education	.04	.17**	-.08
Father education	.01	.16**	-.09

*** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

Table 4.4

Study 3 Zero-order correlation between parent and Peer Messages and Individual Attitudes

	Internalized Affirmativeness	Civil Rights	Hate
1. Parent Positive Messages	.38**	.43**	-.34**
2. Peer Positive Messages	.47**	.50**	-.44**
3. Parent Negative Messages	-.16**	-.26**	.16**
4. Peer Negative Messages	-.23**	-.41**	.35**

*** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

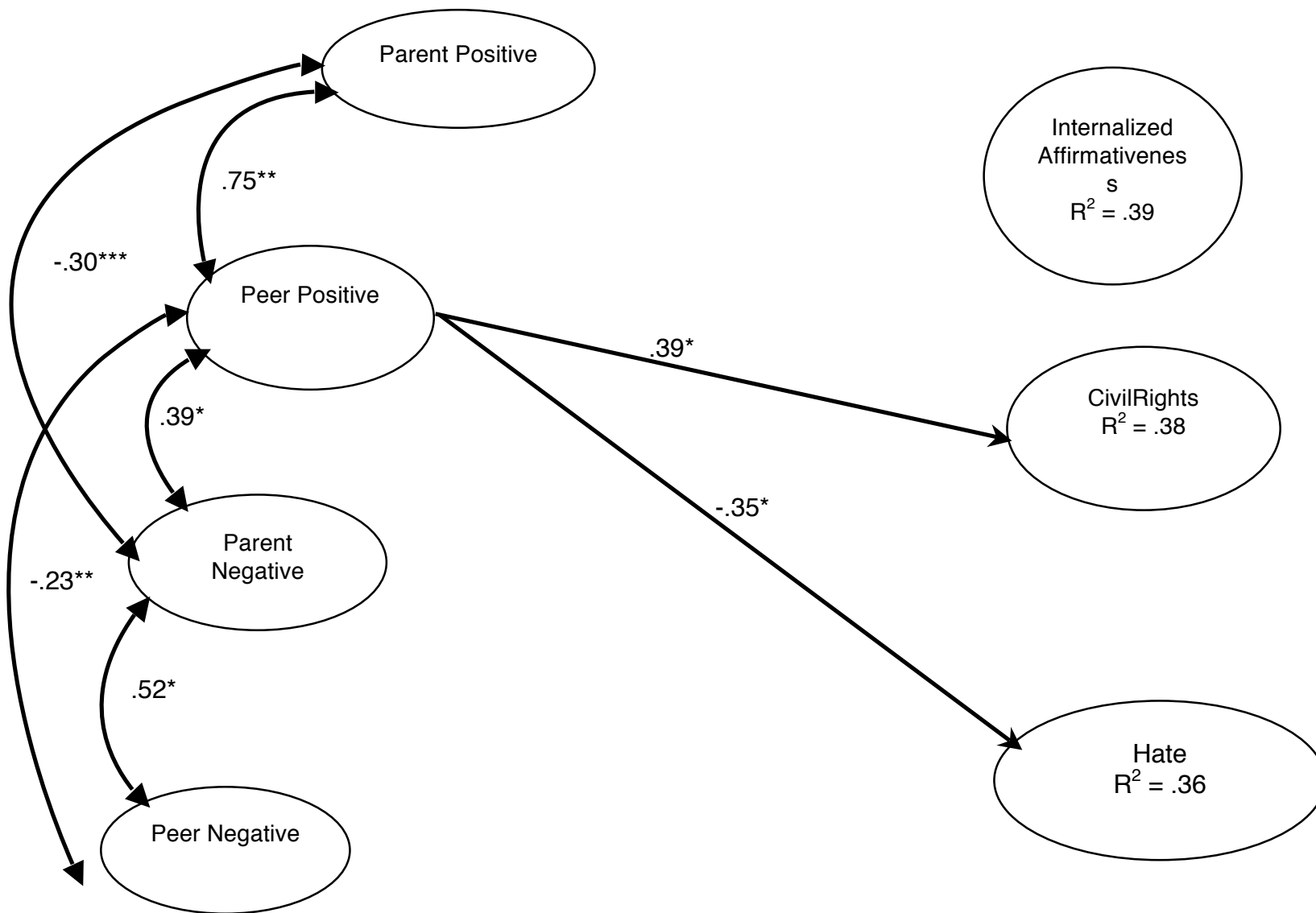


Figure 2.1. Parent and peer messages predicting attitudes for women model fit using SEM in AMOS. $\chi^2 (626, N=221) = 1267.31, p < .001$. CFI = .90; RMSEA = .05. *** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$. + $p < .10$. Demographic control variables are indicated in Table 3.6.

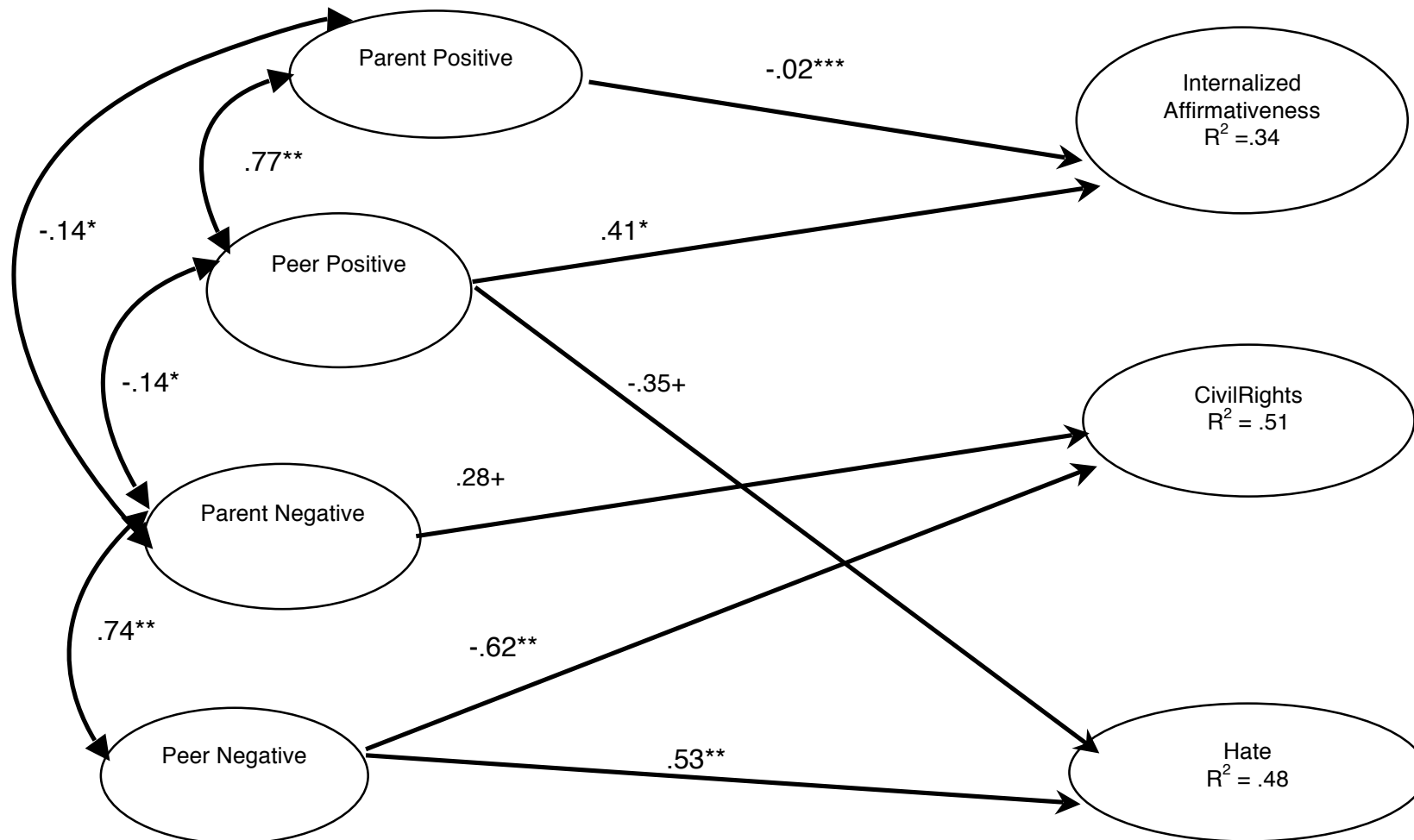


Figure 2.2. Parent and peer messages predicting attitudes for men model fit using SEM in AMOS. $\chi^2(626, N=189) = 1267.31, p < .001$. CFI = .90; RMSEA = .05. $***p < .001$ $**p < .01$ $*p < .05$. Demographic control variables are indicated in Table 3.6.

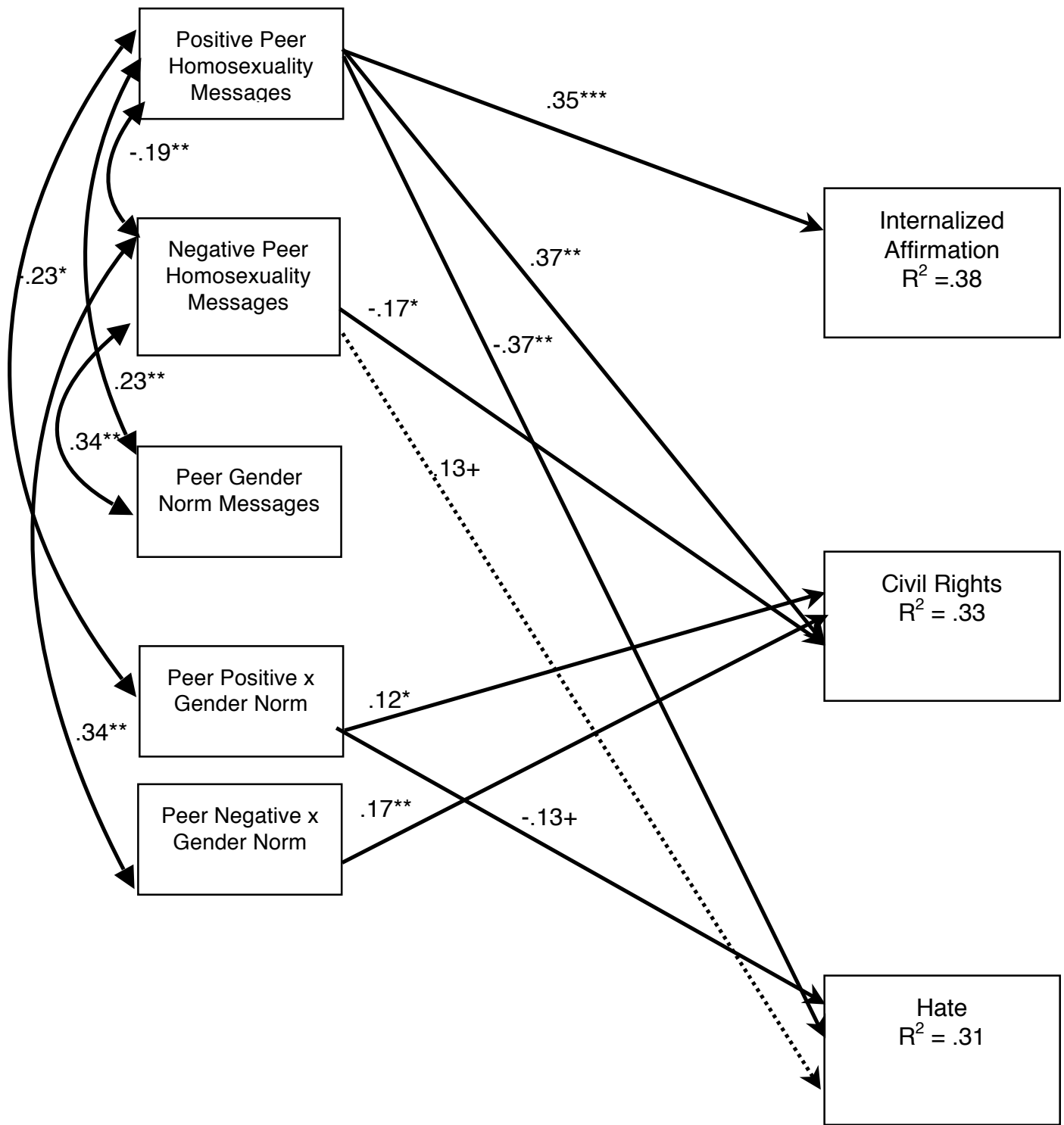


Figure 2.3. Path model for interaction of homosexuality messages and gender role messages for women. $\chi^2 (146, N=221) = 267.70, p < .01$ CFI = .93, RMSEA = .05. $^{***}p < .001$ $^{**}p < .01$ $^*p < .05$ $^+p < .10$. Only significant paths are presented. Demographic control variables are indicated in Table 4.3.

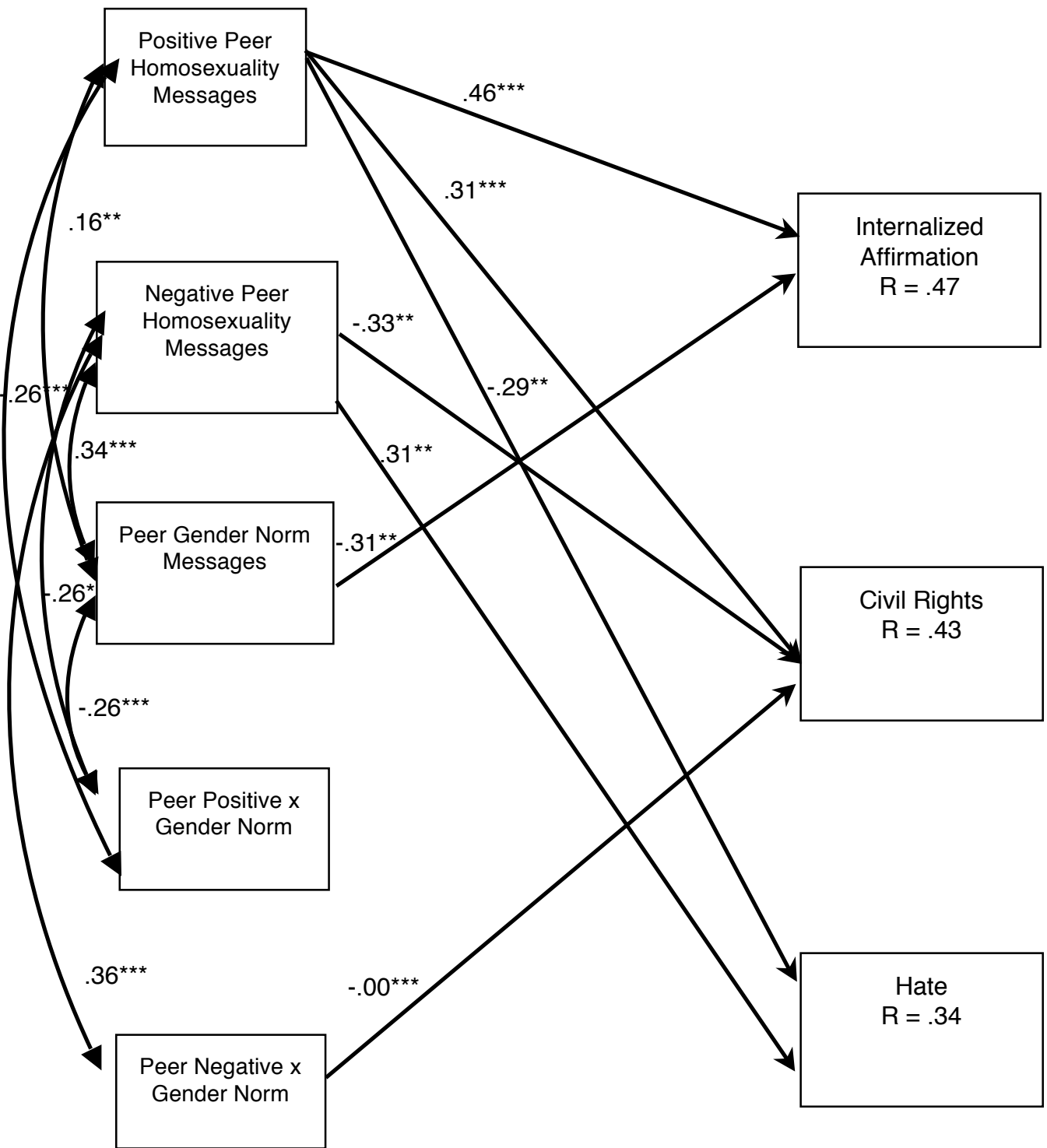


Figure 2.4. Path model for interaction of homosexuality messages and gender role messages for men. $\chi^2 (146, N=189) = 267.70, p < .01$ CFI = .98, RMSEA = .05, *ns.* CFI = .93, RMSEA = .04 Only significant paths are presented. Demographic control variables are indicated in Table 4.3.

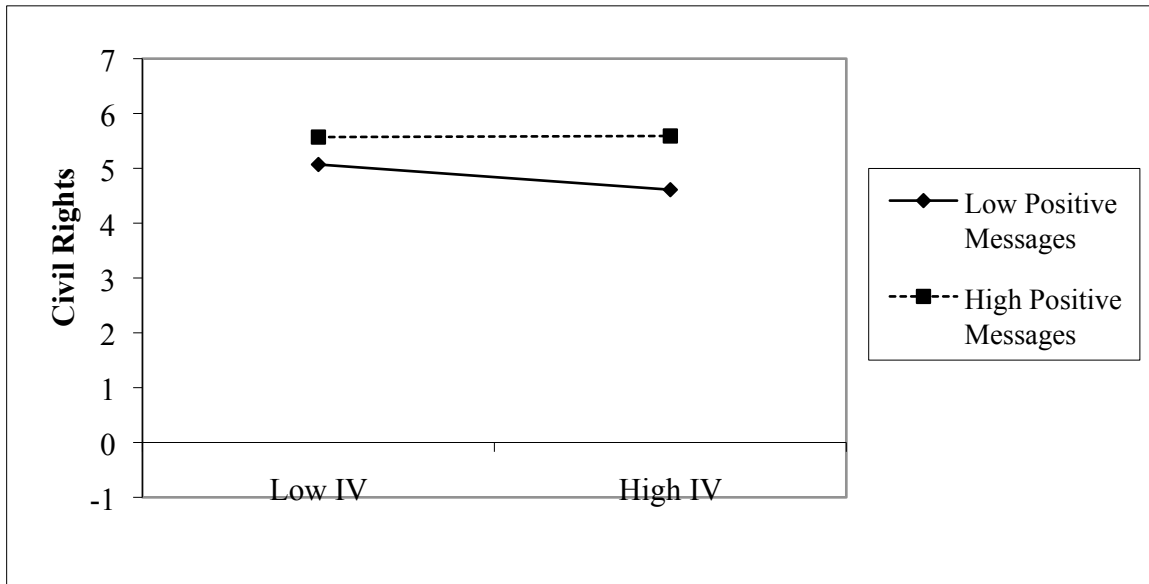


Figure 2.5 *Interaction of Traditional Gender Role Messages (IV) and Positive Messages About Homosexuality Among Women*

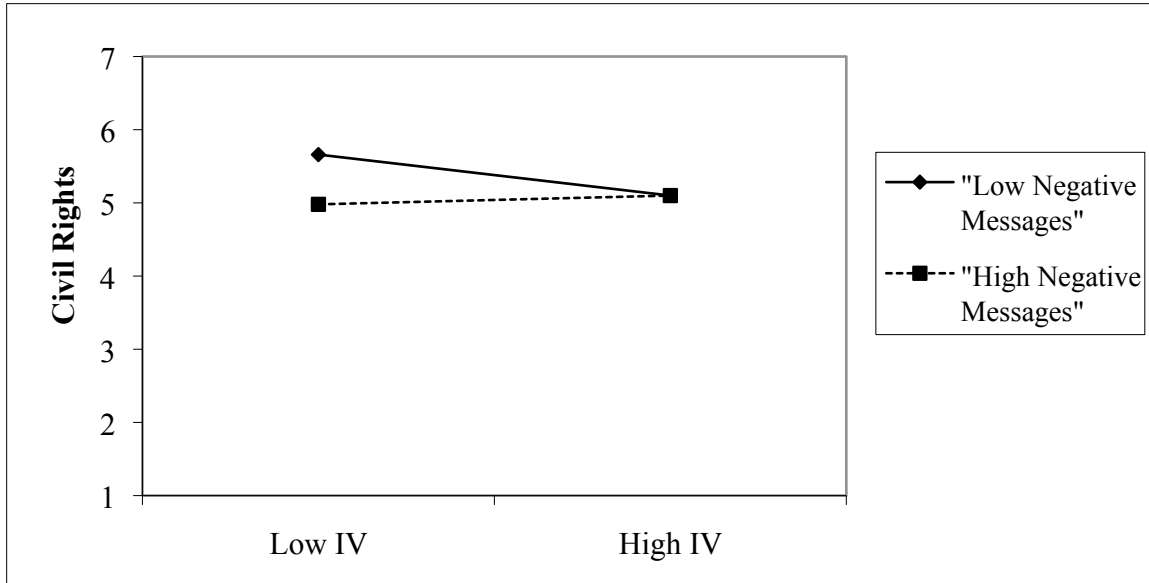


Figure 2.6 *Interaction of Traditional Gender Role Messages (IV) and Negative Messages About Homosexuality Among Women*

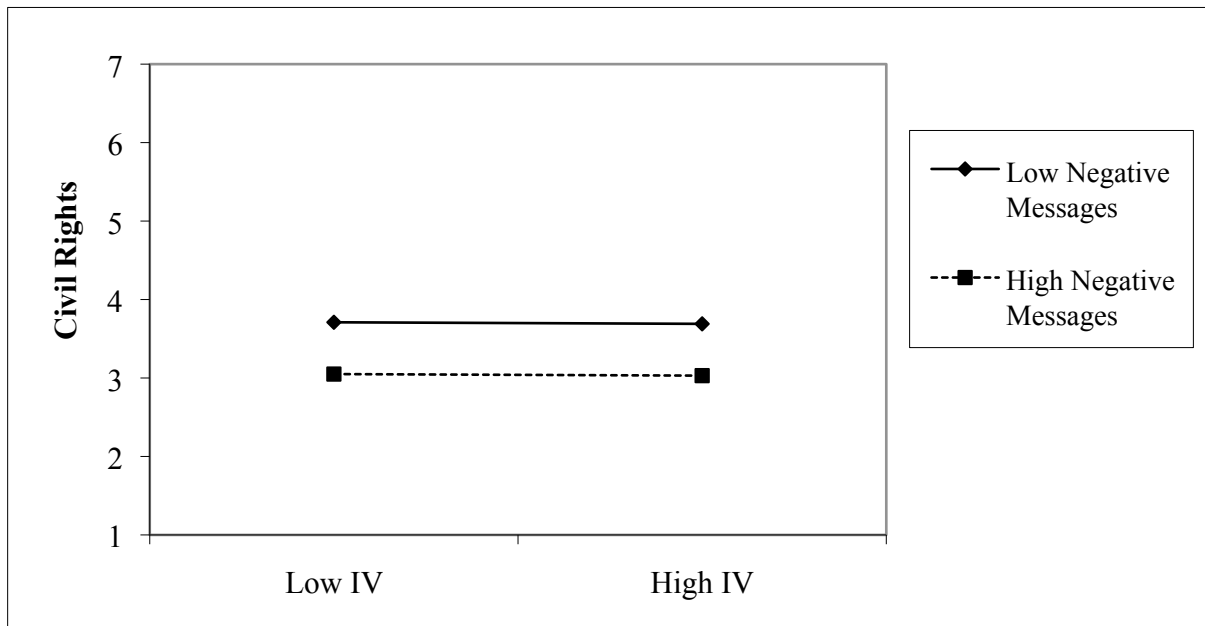


Figure 2.7 *Interaction of Traditional Gender Role Messages (IV) and Negative Messages About Homosexuality Among Men*

Appendix A

Interview Protocol for Study 1

Introduction

This is a study about the messages people get about sexuality while they're growing up. I want to get a sense of what parents tell their children about sexuality—what is acceptable and what is not acceptable—and how similar or different those messages are from the messages youth receive from the media and their friends. There are no right or wrong answers- we all get a lot of different messages from a lot of different sources. Sometimes we get the same messages from different sources, and sometimes we get different messages from the same source!

I'm interested in all messages from all sources- whatever they may be! I'm also interested in your thoughts about sexuality and sexual orientation and what you think those mean. I know that different people have different comfort levels talking about this kind of stuff, and that's okay. On the other hand, I also want to encourage you to tell me whatever you feel like telling me... don't worry about being graphic or crass. You won't shock me. Whatever you feel like saying is okay. If there is anything that you are uncomfortable answering, tell me and I'll move on to another question. Also remember that everything we discuss will be confidential. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

About You- *First, I'd like to learn a little about you.*

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself. How would you describe yourself? How would others describe you?
 - a. What year are you?
 - i. What's your major?
2. Where are you from? What is it like there?
3. Where did you spend most of your childhood (between 5-18)? [Probe if necessary to get a sense of the geographic region in which s/he was raised.]

4. Who would you say raised you between the ages of 5- 18? [Probe to see who were the main players in the home: mom/dad/step-parent/grandmother. Refer to this/these individual(s) in the socialization questions.]

What is Sexuality- In this interview we'll be talking a lot about your beliefs about sexuality and sexual orientation. Before we begin, I just want to ask you to clarify a few terms so that I understand exactly what you are telling me.

1. When you hear the word sexuality, what are some things that come to mind? [Get a sense of the language they use (same sex attraction, homosexuality, etc.)—use their language throughout the interview. Homosexuality and bisexuality may come up. Probe for fluidity versus finite categories; set or evolving]
 - a. What is included in sexuality? [probe to see if it's thoughts, behaviors, desires]
 - b. What does it mean if someone is attracted to someone of the same gender?
Different gender? Both genders?
 - c. Is there a difference in being attracted to someone and having sex with someone (of the same/different/both genders)?
2. When you hear the word homosexuality, what are some things/images that come to mind? [Probe appearances and physical factors, anything]
 - a. What does the term homosexuality mean (to you)?
 - b. Is this a term that you use?
3. When you hear the word bisexuality, what are some things/images that come to mind? [Probe appearances and physical factors, anything]
 - a. What does the term bisexuality mean (to you)?
 - b. Is this a term that you use?
4. When you hear the word heterosexuality, what are some things/images that come to mind?
 - a. What does the term heterosexuality mean (to you)?
 - b. Is this a term that you use?
5. Are there any other terms that you prefer to use- better describe sexuality?
6. How has your view of sexuality changed since you started high school? [or college- depending on the age/stage of the individual]

7. Do you think homosexuality and bisexuality (same sex relationships) are common among Black people? [Can also probe for famous gay/lesbian/bisexual people]
 - a. When you think about Black lesbians, who or what images come to mind?
 - b. When you think about Black gay men, who or what images come to mind?
 - c. When you think about Black bisexuals, who or what images come to mind?

Gender- *Now, I'd like to know about your thoughts on gender.*

1. Would you consider yourself to be a typical boy/girl? Why, why not?
 - a. What do you think it means to be a boy?
 - b. Is there anything that a boy should/shouldn't do?
 - c. Why are these things important to being a boy?
 - d. What does it mean to be a girl?
 - e. Is there anything that a girl should/shouldn't do?
 - f. Why are these things important to being a girl?

Socialization Messages. *Now, I'd like to know about the things you heard from your parents, friends, and other people while you were growing up. I'll also ask some questions about your thoughts and opinions. We all hear a lot of different things from the people in our lives. Sometimes we agree with what others say- sometimes we don't. It's okay to say whatever you heard, and it's okay if you disagree (or agree) with the things you heard.*

Messages About Homosexuality/Bisexuality (Parents)

1. Think back to when you were growing up, what kinds of things did your parents [the people who raised you] say to you about sexuality? [Probe for what was said about attraction, desire, sexual behavior]
2. Did you parents ever say anything about same sex attraction- or people who are attracted to people of the same gender?
3. Did your parents ever say anything to you about dating someone of the same gender? What did they say?
4. Did anyone in your home or close to you/your family have an intimate (physical/emotional) relationship(s) with someone of their same gender? [Probe for relatives]
 - a. What was this person's relationship to you/your family?

- b. Describe this person. What was this person like? [Probe for characteristics. Probe for race. Probe affect- gender typical/atypical]
 - c. How did you know this person had same sex relationship(s)?
 - d. What did you think about the fact that they had same sex relationships?
 - e. Did your parents know this person?
 - i. Do you think your parents knew about this person's same sex relationships?
 - ii. How do you know your parents knew about this? [Did you and your parents ever talk about this?]
 - iii. How did your parents treat this person?
 - iv. Tell me about a time when you saw your parents interacting with this person. What was this interaction like? [Probe for how their parents interacted with them. Any characteristics of the individual.]
 - v. Was there ever a negative or a positive interaction that had something to do with the individual's sexuality? Tell me about that interaction.
5. Did you know anyone who had relationships with both men and women?
- a. What was this person's relationship to you/your family?
 - b. Describe this person. What was this person like? [Probe for characteristics. Probe for race. Probe affect- gender typical/atypical]
 - c. How did you know this person had relationships with men and women?
 - d. What did you think about the fact that this person had relationships with men and women?
 - e. Did your parents know this person?
 - i. Did your parents know about this person's relationships?
 - ii. How do you know your parents knew about this? [Did you and your parents ever talk about this?]
 - iii. How did your parents treat this person?
 - iv. Tell me about a time when you saw your parents interacting with this person. What was this interaction like? [Probe for how their parents interacted with them. Any characteristics of the individual.]

- v. Was there ever a negative or a positive interaction that had something to do with the individual's sexuality? Tell me about that interaction.
- 6. How do you think your parents felt about homosexuality/same sex relationships? [if this is not clear from questions 1-4]
 - a. What gave/gives you the impression that they felt this way? [probe for verbal, non-verbal]
 - b. What things did your parents say to you (directly) about homosexuality?
 - i. How did these conversations come up?
- 7. What kinds of things did you overhear your parents say to other people about people who have intimate relationships with people of the same sex? [if this wasn't addressed in earlier questions]
- 8. Were there any people in your neighborhood or community who were in a same sex relationship (or were known to have same sex relationships)? [Probe about Black gays]
 - a. Describe this person. What were they like? [Probe for characteristics. Probe for race. Probe affect- gender typical/atypical]
 - b. How did your parents treat them?
 - c. Tell me about a time when you saw your parents interacting with this person. What was this interaction like? [Probe for how their parents interacted with them. Any characteristics of the individual.]
 - d. How did other people in your community/neighborhood treat these individuals?
 - e. Tell me about a time when you saw others interacting with this person. What was this interaction like? [Probe for how others interacted with them. Any characteristics of the individual.]
- 9. Were there any gay/lesbian people you looked up to?
 - a. Who?
 - b. What was it about them that you looked up to?

Messages about Gender (Parents)

- 1. What kinds of things did your parents say to you about being a boy/girl?
 - a. What kinds of things did your parents expect of you as a boy/girl? How did they communicate this to you?

- b. Was there anything your parents didn't let you do- because you were a boy/girl?
How did they communicate this to you?
- c. Did you have siblings who were of a different gender? Were there things that you felt your sibling(s) was able to do because of his/her gender that you were not able to do because of your? [Probe to see if the opposite is also true- things that the sibling couldn't do but participant could do- because of gender.]

Messages about Homosexuality and Bisexuality (Peers)

- 1. What about your friends, when you were growing up, did you all talk about attraction and desire? [Probe for the general tone of the friendship circle- was it an open space for people to be attracted to anyone or was it primarily 'opposite' sex attraction oriented]
- 2. What were their attitudes towards people who were attracted to [dated, had sex with] people of the same gender?
 - a. What gave/gives you that impression?
 - b. What kinds of things did they say about homosexuality/gays/lesbians? [Probe for accepting or demeaning comments]
 - c. How did they treat gays/lesbians?
 - d. What were their attitudes towards people who were attracted to both males and females?
- 3. Growing up, were any of your friends attracted to members of their same gender [or to both genders]?
 - a. How did you know about this attraction?
 - i. What was it like when they came out to you?
 - ii. Did your relationship change in any way?
 - b. How were they treated by other people?
 - i. What did you think about the way others treated them?

Messages about Homosexuality and Bisexuality (Media)

- 1. When you were growing up, were there ever any references to homosexuality and bisexuality/same sex attraction in the media?
 - a. Movies
 - b. TV shows
 - c. Magazines

- d. Music
 - e. Books
2. How was homosexuality talked about in the media? [explicit examples]
 3. What are some of the images of gays and lesbians that you saw in media? [probe]
 - a. Physical appearance
 - b. Emotional/social characteristics
 - c. Did you ever see any images of [Black] gays and lesbians?
 - i. Where did you see/hear about [Black] gays & lesbians?
 - ii. How were they portrayed?
 1. Physical appearance
 2. Other characteristics
 - d. How was bisexuality talked about in the media? [explicit examples]
 - e. What were some of the images of bisexuals?
 - a. Physical appearance
 - b. Emotional/social characteristics
 - f. Did you ever see any Black bisexuals?
 - a. Where did you see/hear about [Black] bisexuals?
 - b. How were they portrayed?
 - i. Physical appearance
 - ii. Other characteristics

Messages about Homosexuality and Bisexuality (School)

1. Did homosexuality or bisexuality ever come up in school?
 - a. Were gays/lesbians/bisexuals ever brought up in curriculum?
 - b. How did your teachers talk about gays/lesbians/bisexuals?
 - c. What did students in school say about gays/lesbians/bisexuals?
 - d. Did your school have a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA)?
 - i. Was it active?
 - ii. Who participated in the GSA?
 - iii. What did you think about the GSA?
 - iv. Were you involved in GSA?
 - v. How did others feel about/treat GSA?

- e. Do you know if your school had any anti-harassment rules?
 - i. What were they?

Messages about Homosexuality and Bisexuality (Religion)

1. Were you a part of a religious/spiritual community when you were growing up?
 - a. Which one?
 - b. Are you still a part of that community?
2. What were your religious community's views on homosexuality? Bisexuality?
 - a. Were you aware of those views as you were growing up?
 - b. Do you know where those views came from (religious book, religious leaders, etc.)?
 - c. How did you feel about those views then?
 - d. How do you feel about those views now?
 - e. Were any gays/lesbians/bisexuals a part of your religious/spiritual community?
 - i. Was it well known that they were gay/lesbian/bisexual?
 - ii. How were they treated?

Sexual Identity- *Now, I want to ask you a few questions about your sexuality and your experiences.*

1. What do you consider your sexuality to be?
2. How long have you identified as that?
 - a. Has this identity changed at all?
 - b. What prompted the change?
3. When did you start noticing that you were attracted to people of the same/different/both genders?
 - a. How did that come about?
 - b. What did you think about the feelings that you were having?
 - c. Have you ever considered whether or not you could be attracted to someone of the same gender/different gender?
 - i. What were these thoughts like?
 - ii. Did you talk to anybody about these thoughts?
 1. Who? Why?
 2. Why not?

- d. Have you ever had an emotional (intimate) relationship with someone of the same gender? Different gender?
 - e. Have you ever had a consensual (sexual) physical relationship with someone of the same gender? Different gender?
4. When did you first start having relationships (physical or emotional) with people of the same/another/both genders?
- a. Did you tell other people about these relationships?
 - i. If yes- whom did you tell?
 - ii. If no- what kept you from talking to others?
 - b. How did you think others would respond?
 - c. How did they respond? [probe parents, friends, relatives, classmates]
 - d. [for homosexuals/bisexuals] In terms of being out, did you ever consider how others [African Americans] might treat you? [Probe to see if this was a concern, and if there were any common responses among African Americans]

Gay Rights & Treatment- *There's been a lot of talk in the news about gay, lesbians, and bisexuals. I'd like to know your thoughts about some of the topics that have come up.*

1. Do you think that same sex couples should be allowed to legally marry? Why, why not?
 - a. Do you think that they should have civil unions?
2. Do you think that same sex couples should be allowed to adopt children? Why/why not?
 - a. Should gay/lesbian/bisexual individuals be allowed to adopt?
3. Do you think that gays should be allowed to serve openly in the US military? Why/why not?
4. Do you think that there should be laws against hurting or discriminating against gays, lesbians, and bisexuals? Why/why not? [If necessary, probe their thoughts about discrimination laws in general?]
5. In advocating for gays, lesbians, and bisexuals (and transgender people), some people refer to the Civil Rights Movement. Do you think there are similarities in the African American's struggle for equality (i.e., Civil Rights Movement) and LGBTQ people's struggle for equality?

Wrap Up

Are there any messages you wish you *hadn't* heard about sexuality/homosexuality/bisexuality?

Are there any messages you wish you *had* heard about sexuality/homosexuality/bisexuality?

[Ask participants if there are any final thoughts he or she would like to add. Thank him/her for participating. Ask for a pseudonym.]

Appendix B

Messages About Homosexuality

Item Number	Item	Item Origin
	<i>Positive Messages</i>	
18	Homosexuality is okay.	Foust and Ward (in press)
33	Lesbian, gay, or bisexual people should have the same rights as everyone else.	Developed from Study 1
36	The love between two lesbians is no different from the love between a man and a woman.	<i>Attitudes Toward Homosexuality Scale</i> LaMar & Kite (1998)
43	Don't mistreat people because of their sexual orientation.	Developed from Study 1
45	I would support you if you were gay.	Developed from Study 1
47	The love between two gay men is no different from the love between a man and a woman.	<i>Attitudes Toward Homosexuality Scale</i> LaMar & Kite (1998)
	<i>Negative Messages</i>	
11	Homosexuality is perverse and unnatural.	Calzo & Ward (2009)
15	People are either heterosexual or homosexual.	Developed from Study 1
40	If a person has homosexual feelings, he or she should try to overcome those feelings.	<i>Attitudes Toward Gay Men</i> Herek (1988)
48	People aren't born gay; they get turned gay.	Developed from Study 1

Appendix C

Traditional Gender Norm Messages

Item Number	Item
2	Sex transforms boys to men.
4	Men don't respect women who sleep with them early in the relationship.
6	Men want sex; women want relationships.
9	It's better for women to use their feminine charm than express interest directly.
12	Men think about sex all the time.
21	It's difficult for men to resist their sexual urges.
22	It's up to women to limit men's sexual advances.
23	In dating, the goal for men is to score with as many women as they can.
27	It's worse for a woman to sleep around than a man.
28	Men want as much as they can get on a first date.
29	Men should be the initiators in romantic relationships, should ask women out.
30	Women have just as many sexual urges and desires as men.
34	Men are most interested in women as potential sex partners and don't want to be "just friends" with them.
38	Women are overly emotional and complicate sex.
42	It is not appropriate for women to be too interested in sex or to plan for sex.

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