

Running head: SEXUAL IDENTITY ISSUES AT LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

The Preliminary Assessment and Incidence of Sexual Identity Issues at Liberty University

Jessica Buker

A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for graduation
in the Honors Program
Liberty University
Spring 2009

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

Dr. Clay Peters, Ed.D.
Thesis Chair

Mr. Mark Cooksey, M.A.
Committee Member

Mr. Rob Van Engen, M.A.
Committee Member

Marilyn Gadowski, Ph.D.
Assistant Honors Director

Date

Abstract

Currently, homosexual identity development is discussed through various models: stage model theory and milestone events. Different researchers propose their own models of homosexual identity development. These models may have different stages, but have the same underlying themes which are acceptance, attitude changes, frequent disclosure, and increased social contact with other homosexuals. There was a great need to develop an appropriate measure of homosexuality to be used by the Student Care Office at Liberty University. The measure could be used to assess and obtain a preliminary measure of incidence of the people who met our criteria for being included in the study. An assessment was created that contains 19 items assessing the two subscales: Sexual Identity Confusion and Sexual Identity Decision.

Preliminary Assessment and Incidence of Sexual Identity Issues at Liberty University

The Liberty University Student Care office assists students struggling with many different issues; one issue is sexual identity issues. This study is being conducted in collaboration with Student Affairs division of the university to assess the manner in which Student Care deals with these students and their struggle with this issue. The Student Care office is located on campus and gives students the opportunity to seek guidance with a paraprofessional counselor. An improvement in the manner in which Student Care treats students struggling with same-sex attraction will be gained by giving Student Care a framework in which to consider these students' problems. Currently, the Student Care Office offers three different treatments to individuals struggling with same-sex attraction issues: group therapy, accountability, individual sessions or any combination of those three treatments. However instead of developing a treatment plan, the goal is to develop an appropriate assessment for Student Care to use as an intake procedure and a post-test on the students struggling with same-sex attraction in a religious, collegiate population.

The view of homosexuality has been changing throughout the years. Until 1973, sexual deviation was the understood diagnosis in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals (Bartoli & Gillem, 2008). The manner that clinicians view homosexual identity development has also changed. In the 1970s, researchers began viewing homosexuality as a semi-linear event (Cass, 1979). Since then, many researchers have proposed their own theoretical stage models for homosexual identity development. Another way of viewing homosexuality identity development is through milestone events in which homosexual identity development is marked through significant moments that serve as benchmarks in the development process.

Literature Review

Religion and Same-Sex Attraction

Same-sex attraction and religion need to be operationally defined for the purpose of this study. Same-sex attraction is defined as same-sex thoughts, fantasies, feelings, behaviors or identifications. Religion is limited to Christianity and defined as meaningful and personal convictions and connection to God, along with a desire to adhere to the religious doctrines.

Individuals experiencing same-sex attraction often experience extreme negativity from religious organizations and populations. These individuals often report high levels of sexual prejudice, which is defined as negative attitudes toward homosexual individuals explicitly due to their orientation. Further, individuals who regularly attend religious services or are members of conservative denominations report higher levels of sexual prejudice (Mark & Tsang, 2008). Mark and Tsang (2008) also reported on Allport's findings regarding sexual prejudice and intrinsic/extrinsic religiosity. Intrinsic religiosity and sexual prejudice were found to have a positive relationship, but extrinsic religiosity and sexual prejudice were found not to be related. Griffiths, Dixon, Stanley, and Weiland (2001) studied the relationship between intrinsic religiosity and attitudes toward homosexuals and found that intrinsic religiosity is correlated with negative attitudes toward homosexuals.

Religiously conservative Christians believe that sexual relationships were fashioned by God for a man and a woman exclusively in marriage. Religiously conservative Christians, going through the homosexual identity development process, often experience internalized negativity while they try to understand their own homosexual identity development processes in the framework of their own religious context. This situation often compels the individual to seek counseling (Benoit, 2005; Yarhouse & Burkett, 2002). Additionally, individuals experience

extreme dissonance when religious communities discriminate and disregard their homosexual orientation. These individuals then experience conflict between their current religious identities and sexual orientations which may lead to depression, suicidal thoughts, or therapy (Yarhouse & Tan, 2005). However, conservative religious therapists often consider individuals struggling with same-sex attractions differently than gay-affirmative therapists because of their religious conviction (Yarhouse & Burkett, 2002).

Many religious environments view same-sex sexual behaviors as strictly against Scripture, while other religious environments hold a tolerant view of homosexuality and believe that same-sex orientations are accepting God's unique creation for certain individuals (Gagnon, 2005; Mark & Tsang, 2008; Rodriguez & Ouellette, 2000; Thumma, 1991). Gagnon described a homosexual relationship as a struggle between a Christian identity and a biological orientation, and claimed that it was Christians' responsibility to overcome their biological urges. Additionally, Gagnon urged individuals to find their identity in Christ instead of in their sexual orientation. Theologically, Gagnon viewed same-sex attraction as self-delusional, narcissistic, self-deceptive, and sinful.

Most evangelical populations stress the concept of loving and accepting the individual while not accepting the individual's sin (Mark & Tsang, 2008). However, initially in the sexual identification development process, individuals are unable to differentiate themselves from their sexual identities. Therefore, the individual experiences dissonance between their religious and sexual identification.

Same-Sex Attraction in Collegiate Settings

In collegiate settings, many individuals disclose their same-sex attractions for the first time, and are often met with extremely negative reactions. Waldo (1998) investigated how these

reactions affected students and their perceptions of the universities they were attending at the point of disclosure. He found that these students were more dissatisfied with the university than heterosexual students.

Basset, Kuyper, Johnson, Miller, Carter, and Grimm (2005) investigated the attitudes toward homosexuals on a Christian college campus. In 2000, Basset, et al. found that Christian students claimed that they were able to delineate the homosexual behavior from the person, and that they value the person and not their behaviors. However, Christians often struggle with homonegativity, homophobia, stigmatizing based on the homosexual label, and being unable to see past the homosexual identity and value the person (Basset, et al., 2005). Homophobia and homonegativity are widespread on religiously affiliated campuses; however, it is hard to estimate the level of intolerance on these campuses (Getz & Kirkley, 2006; Lance, 2008).

McMinn (2005) identified various factors facing Christian students struggling with same-sex attraction issues on the college campus. Some students experienced a self-loathing of their sexual identity. These students considered themselves to be an abomination to God and experienced intense pain and remorse over their same-sex attraction. These students often felt isolated from their Christian peers because of their different sexual identity. They often longed after the perceived intimacy in the relationships of their heterosexual friends. Some students struggled with same-sex attraction felt as if they were viewed by their peers as different and in need of healing.

Models of Homosexual Identity Development

Stage Model Theory.

Currently, homosexual identity development is most often viewed from the perspective of a particular model of homosexual identity progression. These models vary in the number of

stages (most often they consist of three, four, five, or six stages). However, these stages have similar themes of progression for identity development (Cass, 1984). Cass explained the similarity in the models:

Almost uniformly, identity formation is conceptualized as a developmental process marked by a series of changes, growth points, or stages along which certain experiences can be ordered. Progress through the stages is characterized by, firstly, increasing acceptance of the label homosexual as descriptive of self; secondly, development of a positive attitude towards this self-identity; thirdly, a growing desire to disclose the existence of this identity to both homosexuals and non-homosexuals; and fourthly, increasingly more personalized and frequent social contacts with homosexuals (145-146).

During the 1970s, researchers first began to study the process of homosexual identity. Cass (1979) proposed a theoretical model which she called homosexual identification formation. Although she was not the first researcher to propose a theoretical model for homosexual identity development, her study was widely accepted and used, and is still the most predominantly applied models for homosexual identity development (Marszalek et al., 2004). Cass's model stemmed from her clinical work with individuals struggling with homosexuality. It is important to note that she proposed that males and females follow the same identity development processes (Yarhouse, 2001).

In 1979, Cass identified a six stage model: identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride, and identity synthesis (also cited in Cass, 1984). Identity confusion is explained as individuals being unsure about whether their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors could potentially be defined as homosexual. These ideas bring the individual extreme mounts of confusion. Identity comparison is characterized by the individual

admitting that they may possibly develop a homosexual identity. Identity tolerance is distinguished by the individual tolerating their homosexual self, but not yet accepting their identity. This stage can be portrayed by the individual beginning to look for homosexual friends. Identity acceptance is characterized by the individual accepting their sexual identity and spending more time in the homosexual community. Identity pride is distinguished by increased feelings of pride in their sexual identity and in the homosexual community. However, the individual is unable to associate comfortably with people outside of the homosexual community. Identity synthesis is distinguished by the ability of the individual to associate comfortably with people outside their homosexual community.

In 1979, Troiden, (also cited in Yarhouse, 2001) used a retrospective self-report from 150 gay men to formulate his model identified as Gay Identity Acquisition. He acquired his participants by interviewing gay men and then asking them to list the names of other gay males who would be willing to be interviewed. This method is better known as the “snowball” method. In the interview Troiden asked the men a series of questions, and their responses led to the development of his model which consists of four stages: sensitization, dissociation and signification, coming out, and commitment.

In 1982, Coleman (as cited in Yarhouse, 2001) introduced his five stage model of sexual identity development. His version of sexual identity development is more closely associated with the coming out experience than of the development of a specific sexual identity. Coleman’s model proposed the coming out process for both gays and lesbians. Coleman’s five stages are labeled: pre-coming out, coming out, exploration, first relationships, and integration.

In 1989, Troiden (also cited in Yarhouse, 2001) broadened his model to incorporate the sexual identity development of lesbians and gays. He presents a new four stage model developed

from a theoretical and sociological perspective. He incorporates ideas from previous research and the available literature, while adding his own theoretical views. He considers this to be an “ideal-typical model of homosexuality formation” (Troiden, 1989, 43). His four stage model is labeled as follows: sensitization, identity confusion, identity assumption, and commitment.

In 1986, Sophie proposed a model of lesbian identity development. Her theory of lesbian identity development was based on six other theories of homosexual, lesbian or gay identity development and interviews. Sophie interviewed 14 women who were in the midst of lesbian identity development. Sophie proposed a four stage model, and her stages are labeled as follows: first awareness, testing and exploration, identity acceptance, and identity integration.

In 2001, Yarhouse proposed a model of sexual identity development that involved the religious considerations of the identity development process. This model included gay and lesbian identity development. His model consisted of five stages which are labeled as followed: identity confusion or crisis, identity attribution, identity foreclosure versus expansion, identity reappraisal, and identity synthesis.

Milestone Event Theory.

Instead of a linear, stage model of sexual identity development, some researchers define identity development by milestone events. Milestone events are defining moments in the coming out process that mark the progression of the identity formation. This view of the sexual identity development is used to try to remedy the purely linear aspects of the stage models.

In 1982, McDonald (also cited in Yarhouse, 2001) used milestone events to define sexual identity development about the coming out process of gay men. Initially, he questioned a sample of 600 people, and from those 600 males he identified a sample of 199 gay men that he further questioned with regard to their homosexual experiences. His milestone events are an awareness

of same-sex inclinations, same-sex activities and experiences, an understanding of the meaning of the word “homosexual,” a homosexual self-description, the first homosexual relationship, and the adaption of a positive gay identity.

On average, McDonald (1982) found that awareness of same-sex inclinations occurred at age 13; same-sex activities and experiences occurred at, and an understanding of the meaning of the word “homosexual” occurred at, age 19; the first homosexual relationship occurred at age 21; disclosure to a heterosexual occurred at age 23; a positive gay identity was acquired at age 24. Some of McDonald’s findings did not agree with earlier findings of other researchers. Troiden (1979) found that the individual’s first homosexual relationship occurred after the manifestation of a gay identity. However, McDonald (1982) reported the first homosexual relationship occurred at age 21 and the manifestation of a positive gay identity occurred at age 24 (Yarhouse, 2001).

Floyd and Stein (2002) brought together earlier research in milestone events and stage model theory. The purpose of Floyd’s research was to investigate the variations in the homosexual identity developmental process for homosexuals and bisexuals. Floyd acquired the underlying theories from the stage model perspectives to form appropriate milestones events. Floyd developed four main milestone events based on Troiden’s stage model theory (1979): first recognition of same-gender attractions, first same-gender sexual activity, first disclosure to someone, and first disclosure to parents. Additionally, he included 6 other milestone events assessing the coming out process (Floyd & Stein, 2002).

Assessments

In 1984, Cass developed a research project to test the validity of her theoretical model and its stage descriptions. To test her model appropriately, Cass developed a questionnaire which

measured the participant's degree of development and assigned each participant to one of the six stages. She also used personal responses of each participant to determine whether her six stage model was appropriately assessing the stage of development for each participant. She used two instruments in her study: the Stage Allocation Measure (1984), used to place the participants appropriately into one of the stages based upon their self-report, and the Homosexual Identity Questionnaire (1984), a 210 item questionnaire used to measure the stages based on the responses of the participants. This study supported that Cass's six stage model was an apt measure of homosexual identity formation (1984).

Brady and Busse (1984) developed another measure that was constructed from Cass's (1984) six stage model titled the Gay Identity Questionnaire. This questionnaire was created for the purpose of identifying homosexual males and their stage from Cass's Homosexual Identity Formation model. Some benefits of Brady and Busse's Gay Identity Questionnaire were the length and simplicity. First, the Gay Identity Questionnaire contains only 45 items, compared to 210 items in the homosexual identity questionnaire. Second, the Gay Identity Questionnaire consists of only true and false questions making it easier for the participants to use the questionnaire. Third, Brady and Busse's (1984) tool would be easier for the clinician to score and identify the stage of each participant.

In 2000, Mohr, for his dissertation, developed, refined, and tested a scale for assessing lesbian and gay identity development. Initially, the scale contained 40 items that the participant rated on a seven point scale from disagree strongly (one) to agree strongly (seven). The survey was designed to evaluate seven core constructs: internalized homonegativity, confusion about one's sexual orientation, belief in the superiority of lesbian and gay people relative to heterosexual people, fear of judgment from others regarding one's sexual orientation, desire to

hide one's sexual orientation, and perception of one's identity development process as having been difficult. One thousand four lesbians and gays took the survey (Fassinger & Mohr, 2000). After analysis of the survey data, the final scale consisted of 27 items which evaluated six constructs (Internalized Homonegativity/Binegativity, Need for Privacy, Need for Acceptance, Identity Confusion, Difficult Process, and Superiority). The revised scale was generalized to be applicable to lesbians, gays, and bisexuals, and renamed the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Scale (2005).

Prevalence of Same-Sex attraction

The prevalence of same-sex attraction is a complicated issue (Throckmorton & Yarhouse, 2006). One reason that prevalence is difficult to calculate is due to disclosure issues. Same-sex attraction is underreported because individuals are often unable to disclose until they have completed certain stages of identity development. Further, due to the negative perceptions of homosexuality, individuals with a conscious homosexual identity may struggle to disclose to researchers their sexual orientation.

Another reason for the difficulty in assessing prevalence is that a universal definition of homosexual orientation is not established. It is not clear whether same-sex oriented thoughts, attractions, fantasies, behaviors, relationships or identification with same-sex orientation are enough to define homosexual orientation. Without a universally defined term, researchers are unable to collaborate in their attempts to grasp the prevalence of sexual orientation issues. Researchers are also unable to compare the figures they do acquire through study with different definitions of sexual orientation.

A third reason it is difficult to assess prevalence is that self-report measures are commonly used. As previously stated, without a clear definition of same-sex attraction, self-

report may be unreliable. Also, individuals may not report that they are experiencing same-sex thoughts, attractions, fantasies, behaviors, or relationships if they have not identified internally as being a homosexual.

Keeping these limitations in mind, some researchers have attempted to assess the prevalence of same-sex attraction. In a birth cohort study, Dickson (2003) reported the prevalence of same-sex attraction (ranging from occasional to predominant attraction) and behaviors of 26 year olds in New Zealand. He found that 10.7% of men experienced same-sex attraction at least once compared to 24.5% of women. However, only 16.4% of women and 5.6% percent of men experienced those attractions at the time of the study. Even fewer of the participants expressed that the same-sex attractions were their predominant current attraction (1.6% of men and 2.1% of women) at the time of the study. Recently, another study (Wu, Leung, & Leung, 2008) documented that 21% of the students at a secondary school reported being unsure of their sexual orientation, while 4% identified as having same-sex attractions. Further, Hegna and Larsen (2007) studied same-sex experiences, and found that 27.4% of women and 6.5% of men reported having a same-sex experience. However in a study of colleges in the United States and Canada, Ellis, Rob, and Burke (2005) reported much lower reports of same-sex attraction: 3% of males and 2% of females identifying as homosexuals, and 10% of males and females experiencing some same-sex fantasies (Ellis, Robb, & Burke, 2005). Throckmorton and Yarhouse (2006) summarized many different studies on the prevalence of homosexual orientation, and more statistics can be found in that article.

Purpose and Goals

The primary focus of this research is to find an appropriate measure that the Liberty University Student Care office can use for the intake and assessment process of their counseling

methods. All of the assessments listed above could not be used in this setting without editing of the items or adding additional items. Therefore, a measure was created for the purpose of this study, Sexual Identity Survey, and the details of the measure will be discussed more thoroughly in the following section. The Sexual Identity Survey was created to intertwine the two models of homosexual identity development discussed previously. This measure was also intended to be applicable across genders.

A secondary goal of this research is to begin to obtain a preliminary measure of the incidence of students struggling with same-sex attraction on this campus by obtaining the prevalence of individuals who took the survey that demonstrated either confusion about their sexual orientation or proclaimed a homosexual identity. The limitations that were listed earlier should be kept in mind whenever reading about or researching the prevalence of same-sex attraction. However, in an attempt to combat these limitations, a definition has been developed for this study. Same-sex attraction has been defined as same-sex thoughts, fantasies, attractions, behaviors or identifications. Further, it is important to understand that the sample obtained through this study is not representative of the population, and the measure of incidence obtained is strictly for preliminary informational purpose. Generalization of the prevalence of same-sex attraction to the population will not be applicable because the sample obtained through this study is not representative. The incidence statistics being obtained will be the first attempt measuring same-sex attraction in this population.

Hypothesis

The first hypothesis is that the data will delineate five clear stages of sexual identity development. This hypothesis is drawn from the low reliability scores of the fifth stage of the Gay Identity Questionnaire (Brady & Busse, 1984) which is based on Cass's (1979) model of

Homosexual Identity Formation. It is hypothesized that individuals can skip the fifth stage during the identity development process.

The second hypothesis is that more females than males will report that they are experiencing same-sex attraction (thoughts, fantasies, attractions, behaviors, or identification). This hypothesis is drawn from the previously stated statistics that have shown that females report same-sex attraction more often than males.

The third hypothesis is that approximately 10% of males and females responding to this survey will be experiencing same-sex attraction. Other studies of the prevalence of same-sex attraction have shown higher percentages of same-sex attraction, but because of the religious nature of the campus and the potential negative social pressure, same-sex attraction may be underreported.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were a convenience sample of psychology students at Liberty University, a mid-sized eastern United States religious university. The only requirement for participation in this study was that the individual must be a current student at Liberty University. Also, there are no limitations as to what type of student they must be (undergraduate, graduate, residential or distance learning). However, all of the participants must be 18 years or older.

A large sample of psychology students (N=582) participated in the survey, and out of those individuals, 54 were included in the analysis because they demonstrated either confusion about their sexual identity or proclaimed a homosexual identity. This was determined initially by an individual's response on an item which asked the individual to rate his or her level of same-

sex attraction on a scale from one to ten (one represented no homosexual attraction and ten represented strong homosexual attraction). If the individual responded that he or she experienced no homosexual attraction, he or she was immediately eliminated; however, if he or she responded with an answer of three or higher, he or she was included. If the individual rated his or her homosexual attraction as a two, his or her other responses were evaluated for the presence of previous same-sex experiences. Further, if the individual had any previous same-sex experiences, he or she was included only if he or she responded true to four or more items in the final section of the survey.

Instrument

All three of the assessments addressed earlier (Homosexual Identity Questionnaire; Gay Identity Questionnaire; Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Scale) have major limitations for use at Liberty University. Cass's Homosexual Identity Questionnaire (1984) is too exhaustive and complicated for both the participant and the clinician. Also, reports of reliability or validity were unable to be discovered. The Homosexual Identity Questionnaire was developed for both males and females, but it may not consider the religious affiliations of the students or the counselors at Liberty. The goal of therapy at Liberty would not be homosexual identity synthesis as in Cass's model of sexual identity development. Therefore, this model of identity development and the Homosexuality Identity Questionnaire's underlying theoretical assumptions oppose the religious values at this institution.

The Gay Identity Questionnaire (Brady & Busse, 1984) has serious limitations as well. First, the questionnaire may not be applicable to the lesbian population because the method was specifically constructed for homosexual males (Peterson & Gerrity, 2006). Second, the questionnaire may not be applicable to a Christian population. Third, the fifth stage of this

questionnaire was not found to be internally consistent ($r=.44$). As a result, this measure may not be appropriate for use within the Liberty Student Care office (Brady & Busse, 1984).

The Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Scale (Mohr, 2005) is not applicable for use at Liberty University for a few reasons. First, there were no reports of the validity or reliability for the revised scale. Second, the scale was generalized to be applicable to lesbians, gays, and bisexuals, and the purpose of this study is only to evaluate same-sex attraction. Without some revision, this scale may not be applicable to this population.

The Sexual Identity Survey was created to be used at Liberty University for the purpose of assessment of homosexuality issues on this specific campus by integrating both models of homosexual identity development. The goal is to acquire information about the prevalence of homosexuality on this campus. Further, through this information, a more accurate stage model for development of the homosexual identity, an appropriate intake assessment for counseling purposes, and a treatment plan for these issues will be developed. This survey is distinct because it integrates the two main models of homosexual identity development: stage model and milestone events. The complete survey can be found in Appendix A.

This web survey consisted of 72 items, and was broken up into five sections. Also, the survey was a completely anonymous survey, as no identifying information was collected. The first section on the survey was made up of seven items which are demographic items regarding gender, age, current denomination, race, marital status, and parents' marital status. Sections two through four of the surveys were items that M. A. Yarhouse (personal communication, November, 2008) contributed to the survey to increase the likelihood for the results to be generalized to other collegiate populations and to increase the depth of the survey. The second section on the survey consisted of only two items that asked the individual to rate his

homosexual and heterosexual attractions on a scale from one to ten (one representing no attraction and ten representing strong attraction). The third section consisted of 14 items that assessed the milestone events of the both the homosexual and heterosexual identity development of the individual. The participant was instructed to list the age that a specific event occurred in his life and briefly explain the context in which it occurred. The fourth section consisted of only two items that asked the individual to choose a label that described his public and private sexual identity. The fifth section consisted of 46 items that were all of the items from the Gay Identity Questionnaire (GIQ) (Brady & Busse, 1984) and select items from the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Scale (LGBIS) (Mohr, 2005). Some of the selected items from the LGBIS have been edited for use in this population. In this section, the participants were instructed to answer the items (either true or false) as they applied to their current sexual orientation.

Procedure

This study was conducted through web survey. The survey was posted on the psychology experiments page for access by any psychology student desiring class credit through this means. The web survey remained on the webpage for 13 days. The data that were collected was kept on a password protected server.

Participants, students enrolled in a psychology class, were informed about the study through an email containing a link to the survey. The body of the email explained that the survey was anonymous, informed the students that the survey was being offered as a psychology activity credit, and provided the instructions for taking the survey. Further instructions were also found before each section of the survey. The survey was also found on the psychology activity website along with the information above. As previously stated, an incentive was provided to participants in any psychology class through the promise of partial fulfillment of class credit for

their participation. Participation in this study was completely voluntary as these individuals were given other options for fulfilling this requirement. Further, these individuals' responses could not be identified when they received their class credit.

Results

Out of the total 582 individuals who participated in the study, 54 individuals demonstrated either confusion about their sexual identity or proclaimed a homosexual identity. Individuals were included in the final sample based on their responses to certain items. If the individuals responded that they did not experience any same-sex attraction on a scale of one to ten (one representing no attraction and ten representing strong attraction), they were immediately eliminated from the sample. If the individuals rated their same-sex attraction with a value of 3 or higher, they were immediately included in the sample. However, if the individual rated his same-sex attraction with the value of a 2, he must have also experienced one or more of the milestone event items and responded true to 4 or more of the stage model items. After screening the data for these requirements, the sample was reduced to 54 individuals.

From the original sample of 582 individuals, 443 were female and 139 were male. From the 54 individuals included in the final sample, 41 were female and 13 were male. Therefore, 9.3% of individuals demonstrated same-sex attraction (female=9.3% and male=9.4%).

Due to the smaller sample size, the intended factor analysis could not be conducted. However, reliability analysis was conducted on the remaining participants in order to refine the Sexual Identity Survey developed for this population. Two subscales were distinguished from the data and then appropriately labeled: Sexual Identity Confusion and Sexual Identity Decision. The complete final survey containing the items remaining after reliability analysis can be found in

Appendix B. The version of the survey found in Appendix B will be used by Student Care for the previously mentioned purposes.

Reliability analysis was conducted on the subscales, and items remained in the scale if their item-total correlation was .3 or greater. For each scale, the item with the lowest item-total correlation was systematically eliminated until all of the item-total correlations were greater than 0.30. The Sexual Identity Confusion Subscale is represented by items 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 15. The Sexual Identity Decision Subscale is represented by items 3, 4, 5, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, and 19. The Sexual Identity Confusion subscale contained eight items ($\alpha=.833$, $N=46$), while the Sexual Identity Decision subscale contained 11 items ($\alpha=.829$, $N=41$). The total Sexual Identity Survey contains 19 items with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .849 ($N=40$). Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of each subscale. Tables 2 and 3 present the item-total correlations for both subscales.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for the Sexual Identity Survey (SIS) Subscales

| Subscale | <u>M</u> | <u>SD</u> | <u>N</u> |
|---------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Sexual Identity Confusion | 14.20 | 2.136 | 46 |
| Sexual Identity Decision | 20.49 | 2.237 | 41 |

A Pearson's r correlation was used to measure the strength of the association between the subscales. This analysis showed the correlation ($r=.33$, $N_{\text{confusion}}=46$, $N_{\text{decision}}=40$) between subscales. As expected, the two subscales found in Appendix B were moderately positively correlated. Further, the subscales were shown to be significantly different ($p=.038$).

Table 2

Item-total Correlations for the Sexual Identity Confusion Subscale

| Item | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|
| 1. I get very confused when I try to figure out my sexual orientation. | -- | | | | | | | |
| 2. I don't want people to know that I may be homosexual, although I'm not sure if I am homosexual or not. | .36 | -- | | | | | | |
| 3. I keep changing my mind about my sexual orientation. | .42 | .45 | -- | | | | | |
| 4. I have disclosed to one or two people (very few) that I have homosexual feelings, although I'm not sure I'm homosexual. | .22 | .44 | .33 | -- | | | | |
| 5. I dread having to deal with the fact that I may be homosexual. | .43 | .51 | .42 | .48 | -- | | | |
| 6. I have homosexual thoughts and feelings but I doubt that I'm homosexual. | .24 | .47 | .25 | .41 | .37 | -- | | |
| 7. I doubt that I am homosexual, but still am confused about who I am sexually. | .54 | .6 | .47 | .39 | .54 | .44 | -- | |
| 8. I'm not totally sure what my sexual orientation is. | .16 | .45 | .64 | .33 | .42 | .25 | .47 | -- |

Table 3

Item-total Correlations for the Sexual Identity Decision Subscale

| Items | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|----|
| 1. I keep careful control over who knows about my homosexual romantic relationships. | -- | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. I generally feel comfortable being the only homosexual person in a group of heterosexuals. | .11 | -- | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. I prefer to keep my homosexual romantic relationships rather private. | .61 | .17 | -- | | | | | | | | |
| 4. I am definitely homosexual but do not share that knowledge with most people. | .22 | .48 | .26 | -- | | | | | | | |
| 5. My homosexuality is a valid private identity, that I do not want made public. | .55 | .46 | .4 | .32 | -- | | | | | | |
| 6. I am not as angry about society's treatment of homosexuals because even though I've told everyone about my gayness they have responded well. | .31 | .31 | .37 | .7 | .46 | -- | | | | | |
| 7. I am not about to stay hidden as homosexual for anyone. | .46 | .17 | .17 | .48 | .25 | .31 | -- | | | | |
| 8. I have not told most of the people at work that I am definitely homosexual. | .29 | .67 | .12 | .32 | .53 | .17 | .05 | -- | | | |
| 9. I do not want most heterosexuals to know that I am definitely homosexual | .36 | .38 | .45 | -.06 | .57 | .26 | .13 | .38 | -- | | |
| 10. Even though I am definitely homosexual I have not told my family. | .19 | .54 | .04 | .56 | .1 | .37 | .54 | .33 | -.11 | -- | |
| 11. I live a homosexual lifestyle at home while at work/school I do not want others to know about my life | .31 | .31 | .37 | .7 | .46 | .47 | .69 | .17 | .26 | .37 | -- |

Discussion

The limited number of usable cases did not allow for the first hypothesis to be tested by factor analysis. Regardless, the data did delineate two clear stages of identity development: Sexual Identity Confusion and Sexual Identity Decision. These became the two subscales for the finalized measure.

Therefore, the purpose of the study was still fulfilled because a tested and revised measure of assessing the homosexual identity development of the individual was produced. This measure will be used in the Student Care office for pre- and post-test measures of the individual. This will aid in the initial assessment of the individual's position in the homosexual identity formation process, and will also serve as a way to mark progress after treatment.

This final assessment was created through the systematic elimination of items with no variance or an item-total correlation of less than 0.30. The subscales were developed by analyzing the face validity of each of the items with the consideration of the needs of the Liberty University's Student Care office. The two subscales represent the two general categories of individuals struggling with same-sex attraction in the data. For treatment purposes, it is important to distinguish between these two stages of development. Also, it is important to note that the milestone event items were not included in the final assessment, but were instead used for exclusionary purposes to refine the final participant group.

The second hypothesis was not supported by the data. More females reported same-sex attractions than did males, but more females responded over all. When the percentages of responses are considered, slightly more males than females reported same-sex attraction, but this is not a significant difference. The third hypothesis was supported because approximately 10% of

the individuals demonstrated either confusion about their sexual identity or a proclaimed homosexual identity.

Limitations

The major limitation of this study was the lack of individuals who demonstrated either confusion about their sexual identity or a proclaimed homosexual identity. Another limitation was that the external validity of this study may be low because of the small final sample and the specificity of the population. Another limitation of this study was the self-report nature which may present biased or untruthful responses.

Current Use

The primary purpose of this study was to develop an appropriate measure that the Liberty University Student Care office could use for the intake and assessment process of their counseling methods. The final assessment, which can be found in Appendix B, is currently being used in this capacity at the Liberty University Student Care office. An individual completes the standard intake form which branches to the Sexual Identity Survey if the individual indicates that he has been experiencing same-sex attractions. At this point, it has not yet been used in a post-counseling situation because Student Care has not been implementing the survey for enough time. However, it is designed for Student Care to use as an intake procedure and a post-test on the students seeking counseling experiencing same-sex attractions.

For Future Study

The areas for future study include testing the hypotheses that were unable to be fully evaluated because of the limited amount of data. Floyd (2002) addresses the empirical support for the overlapping of stage model theories and milestone events, but does not mention the combination of stage model theories and milestone events in the same survey. Research needs to

be conducted to test the two theories together. The results from this research should be used to build an appropriate integrated theoretical model for this population. This would benefit Student Care by giving them a comprehensive framework applicable to this population with which to consider each individual struggling with same-sex attraction.

Replication of the findings of this study may be necessary due to the limited amount of data. After collecting more data in this population, reliability analysis should be re-calculated for the purpose of revision of the assessment. Also, this assessment may be taken to other populations for analysis.

References

- Bartoli, E., & Gillem, A. R. (2008). Continuing to depolarize the debate on sexual orientation and identity and the therapeutic process. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 39*(2), 202-209.
- Bassett, R. L., Nikkelen-Kuyper, M. V., Johnson, D., & Miller, A., Carter, A., & Grimm, J. P. (2005). Being a good neighbor: Can students come to value homosexual persons? *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 33*(1), 17-26.
- Benoit, M. (2005). Conflict between religious commitment and same-sex attraction: Possibilities for a virtuous response. *Ethics & Behavior, 15*(4), 309-325.
- Brady, S & Busse W. J. (1984). The gay identity questionnaire: A brief measure of homosexual identity formation. *Journal of Homosexuality, 26*, 2-22.
- Cass, V. C. (1979). Homosexual identity formation: A theoretical model. *Journal of Homosexuality, 4*, 219-235.
- Cass, V. C. (1984). Homosexual identity formation: Testing a theoretical model. *Journal of Sex Research, 20*, 143-167.
- Dickson, N., Paul, C., & Herbison, P. (2003). Same-sex attraction in a birth cohort: Prevalence and persistence in early adulthood. *Social Science & Medicine, 56*, 1607-1615.
- Ellis, L., Robb, B., & Burke, D. (2005). Sexual orientation in United States and Canadian college student. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 34*(5), 569-581.
- Floyd, F. J., & Stein, T. S. (2002) Sexual orientation identity formation among gay, lesbian, and bisexual youths: Multiple patterns of milestone experiences. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 12*(2), 167-191.

- Gagnon, R. A. (2005). Scriptural perspectives on homosexuality and sexual identity. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 24*(4), 293-303.
- Getz, C., & Kirkley, E. (2006). Shaking up the status quo: Challenging intolerance of the lesbian, gay and bisexual community at a private Roman Catholic university. *College Student Journal, 40*(4), 857-869.
- Griffiths, B., Dixon, C., Stanley, G., & Weiland, R. (2001) Religious orientation and attitudes towards homosexuality: A functional analysis. *Australian Journal of Psychology 53*(1), 12-17.
- Hegna, K., & Larsen, C. J. (2007). Straightening out the queer? Same-sex experience and attraction among young people in Norway. *Culture, Health & Sexuality, 9*(1), 15-30.
- Lance, L. M. (2008) Social inequality on the college campus: A consideration of homosexuality. *College Student Journal 42*(3), 789 – 794.
- Mark, H. K., & Tsang, J. (2008). Separating the "sinner" from the "sin": Religious orientation and prejudiced behavior toward sexual orientation and promiscuous sex. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 47*(3), 379-392.
- Marszalek, J. F., Cashwell, C. S., Dunn, M. S., & Jones, K. H. (2004). Comparing gay identity development theory to cognitive development: An empirical study. *Journal of Homosexuality, 48*(1), 103-123.
- McDonald, G. J. (1982) Individual differences in the coming out process for gay men: Implications for theoretical models. *Journal of Homosexuality. 8*(1), 47-60.
- McMinn, L. G. (2005). Sexual identity concerns for Christian young adults: Practical considerations for being a supportive presence and compassionate companion. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 24*(4), 368-377.

- Mohr, J. (2005). Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual identity scale. Unpublished instrument, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA.
- Mohr, J. J. & Fassinger, R. E. (2000). Measuring dimensions of lesbian and gay male experience. *Journal of Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling, 33*, 66-90.
- Peterson, T. L. & Gerrity, D. A. (2006). Internalized homophobia, lesbian identity development, and self-esteem in undergraduate women. *Journal of Homosexual, 50*, 49-75.
- Rodriguez, E. M., & Ouellette, S. C. (2000). Gay and lesbian Christians: Homosexual and religious identity integration in the members and participants of a gay-positive church. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 39*(3), 333-347.
- Sophie, J. (1986). A critical examination of stage theories of lesbian identity development. *Journal of Homosexuality, 12*(2), 39-50.
- Throckmorton, W. & Yarhouse, M. A. (2006). Sexual identity therapy: Practice guidelines for managing sexual identity conflicts. <http://www.sexualidentityblogspot.com/>.
- Thumma, S. (1991). Negotiating a religious identity: The case of the gay evangelical. *Sociological Analysis, 52*(4), 333-347.
- Troiden, R. R. (1979). Becoming homosexual: A model of gay identity acquisition. *Psychiatry, 42*, 362-371.
- Troiden, R. R. (1989). The formation of homosexual identities. *Gay and Lesbian Youth, 17*(1), 43-73.
- Waldo, C. R. (1998). Out of campus: Sexual orientation and academic climate in a university context. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 26*(5), 745-774.

Wu, K. K., Leung, E. Y., & Leung, A. Y. (2008). A survey on same-sex attraction in secondary school adolescents: Prevalence and psychosocial factors. *Hong Kong J Psychiatry, 18*, 15-22.

Yarhouse, M. A. (2001). Sexual identity development: The influence of valiative frameworks on identity synthesis. *Psychotherapy, 38*, 331 - 341.

Yarhouse, M. A., & Burkett, L. A. (2002). An inclusive response to LGB and conservative religious persons: The case of same-sex attraction and behavior. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 33*(3), 235-241.

Yarhouse, M. A., & Tan, E. S. (2005). Addressing religious conflicts in adolescents who experience sexual identity confusion. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 36*(5), 530-536.

Appendix A

Sexual Identity Survey

Please choose the answer choice which best describes you.

1. Are you Male or Female?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Other
2. What is your age?
 - a. Under 18
 - b. 18
 - c. 19
 - d. 20
 - e. 21
 - f. 22
 - g. 23
 - h. 24 or older
3. What is your race?
 - a. African American
 - b. Asian
 - c. Caucasian
 - d. Hispanic
 - e. Mixed
 - f. Native American
 - g. Other: _____
 - h. Pacific Islander
4. Which best describes you?
 - a. Freshman (1st Year)
 - b. Sophomore (2nd Year)
 - c. Junior (3rd Year)
 - d. Senior (4th Year)
 - e. Other
5. What is your marital status?
 - a. Single
 - b. Dating
 - c. Committed Dating
 - d. Engaged
 - e. Married
 - f. Divorced
 - g. Widowed
 - h. Separated
 - i. Cohabiting
 - j. Other
6. What is your parent's marital status?
 - a. Single

- b. Dating
 - c. Committed Dating
 - d. Married
 - e. Divorced
 - f. Widowed
 - g. Separated
 - h. Cohabiting
 - i. Other
7. What is your church denomination?
- a. Baptist
 - b. Pentecostal
 - c. Presbyterian
 - d. Independent
 - e. Anglican/Episcopal
 - f. Methodist
 - g. Catholic
 - h. Non-denominational
 - i. Non-Churched
 - j. Other

On a scale of 1 to 10 rate the degree of your attraction with 1 representing no attraction and 10 representing strong attraction.

8. Rate the degree of attraction you experience to the opposite-sex

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| No heterosexual attraction | | | | | | | | | Strong heterosexual attraction |

9. Rate the degree of attraction you experience to the same-sex

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| No homosexual attraction | | | | | | | | | Strong homosexual attraction |

If the following experiences were true of you, at what age did you experience the following? If this was not true for you, please indicate by selecting “not applicable”. For each of the items that you indicate as applicable to you, briefly describe what you remember about the event.

10. Awareness of same-sex feelings: ____ years old – *Explain:*
11. Confusion about same-sex feelings: ____ years old [or “not applicable”] – *Explain:*
12. Intimately/romantically kissed by someone of the same-sex: ____ years old [or “not applicable”] – *Explain:*
13. Been fondled (breasts or genitals) by someone of the same-sex (without orgasm): ____ years old [or “not applicable”] – *Explain:*
14. Fondled (breasts or genitals) someone of the same-sex (without orgasm): ____ years old [or “not applicable”] – *Explain:*

15. Same-sex sexual behavior (to orgasm): ____ years old [or “not applicable”] – *Explain:*
16. Initial attribution that “I am gay/lesbian/bisexual”: ____ years old [or “not applicable”] – *Explain:*
17. Took on the label of “gay”: ____ years old [or “not applicable”] – *Explain:*
18. First same-sex relationship: ____ years old [or “not applicable”] – *Explain:*
19. Intimately/romantically kissed by someone of the opposite-sex: ____ years old [or “not applicable”] – *Explain:*
20. Been fondled (breasts or genitals) by someone of the opposite-sex (without orgasm): ____ years old [or “not applicable”] – *Explain:*
21. Fondled (breasts or genitals) someone of the opposite-sex (without orgasm): ____ years old [or “not applicable”] – *Explain:*
22. Opposite-sex sexual behavior (to orgasm): ____ years old [or “not applicable”] – *Explain:*
23. First opposite-sex relationship: ____ years old [or “not applicable”] – *Explain:*

Please choose the answer choice which best describes you.

24. How would you describe your public sexual identity (how others think of you):
 heterosexual homosexual bisexual gay lesbian other
25. How would you describe your private sexual identity (how you think of yourself):
 heterosexual homosexual bisexual gay lesbian other

In this context, the term homosexuality does not necessarily imply any association with a specific group of people, but simply refers to same-sex attraction with either male or female. Please answer the following either True or False as it applies to you.

26. I have little desire to be around most heterosexuals.
27. I don't act like most homosexuals do, so I doubt that I'm homosexual.
28. I keep careful control over who knows about my homosexual romantic relationships.
29. I get very confused when I try to figure out my sexual orientation.
30. I don't want people to know that I may be homosexual, although I'm not sure if I am homosexual or not.
31. Getting in touch with homosexuals is something I feel I need to do, even though I'm not sure I want to.
32. I generally feel comfortable being the only homosexual person in a group of heterosexuals.
33. The topic of homosexuality does not relate to me personally.
34. I cannot imagine sharing my homosexual feelings with anyone.
35. I keep changing my mind about my sexual orientation.
36. I look down on heterosexuals.
37. I prefer to keep my homosexual romantic relationships rather private.
38. I am definitely homosexual but do not share that knowledge with most people.
39. My sexual orientation is a very personal and private matter.
40. Most heterosexuals are not credible sources of help for me.
41. I have disclosed to one or two people (very few) that I have homosexual feelings, although I'm not sure I'm homosexual.

42. My homosexuality is a valid private identity, that I do not want made public.
43. More than likely I'm homosexual, although I'm not positive about it yet.
44. I am proud and open with everyone about being homosexual but it isn't the major focus of my life.
45. I dread having to deal with the fact that I may be homosexual.
46. I am openly homosexual and fully integrated in to heterosexual society.
47. I frequently confront people about their irrational homophobic (fear of homosexuality) feelings.
48. I probably am heterosexual or non-sexual.
49. I am experimenting with homosexuality, because I don't know what my sexual preference is.
50. I have homosexual thoughts and feelings but I doubt that I'm homosexual.
51. I am not as angry about society's treatment of homosexuals because even though I've told everyone about my gayness they have responded well.
52. I may be homosexual and I am upset at the thought of it.
53. I am very proud to be homosexual and make it known to everyone around me.
54. I don't think that I'm homosexual.
55. I don't have much contact with heterosexual and can't say that I miss it.
56. I doubt that I am homosexual, but still am confused about who I am sexually.
57. I'm not totally sure what my sexual orientation is.
58. I am not about to stay hidden as homosexual for anyone.
59. I probably am sexually attracted to men and women.
60. I am not bothered if others judge me because of my sexual orientation.
61. I have not told most of the people at work that I am definitely homosexual.
62. I'm probably homosexual but I'm not sure yet.
63. I don't feel as if I'm heterosexual or homosexual.
64. I don't mind if homosexuals know that I have homosexual thoughts and feelings, but I don't want any others to know.
65. I do not want most heterosexuals to know that I am definitely homosexual.
66. I can't decide what my sexual orientation is.
67. I am openly a homosexual around other homosexuals and heterosexual and it doesn't seem to have alienated me from heterosexual society.
68. I live a homosexual lifestyle at home while at work/school I do not want others to know about my lifestyle.
69. Even though I definitely homosexual I have not told my family.
70. I'm probably homosexual, even though I maintain a heterosexual image in both my personal and public life.
71. I accept but would not say I am proud of the fact that I am definitely homosexual.

Appendix B

Sexual Identity Survey

In this context, the term homosexuality does not necessarily imply any association with a specific group of people, but simply refers to same-sex attraction with either male or female. Please answer the following either True or False as it applies to you.

1. _____ I'm not totally sure what my sexual orientation is.
2. _____ I have homosexual thoughts and feelings, but I doubt that I'm homosexual.
3. _____ I am not as angry about society's treatment of homosexuals because even though I've told everyone about my gayness they have responded well.
4. _____ My homosexuality is a valid private identity that I do not want made public.
5. _____ I have not told most of the people at work that I am definitely homosexual.
6. _____ I doubt that I am homosexual, but still am confused about who I am sexually.
7. _____ I keep changing my mind about my sexual orientation.
8. _____ I have disclosed to one or two people (very few) that I have homosexual feelings, although I'm not sure I'm homosexual.
9. _____ I dread having to deal with the fact that I may be homosexual.
10. _____ I generally feel comfortable being the only homosexual person in a group of heterosexuals.
11. _____ I get very confused when I try to figure out my sexual orientation.
12. _____ Even though I am definitely homosexual, I have not told my family.
13. _____ I prefer to keep my homosexual romantic relationships rather private.
14. _____ I am not about to stay hidden as homosexual for anyone.
15. _____ I don't want people to know that I may be homosexual, although I'm not sure if I am homosexual or not.
16. _____ I am definitely homosexual, but do not share that knowledge with most people.
17. _____ I do not want most heterosexuals to know that I am definitely homosexual.
18. _____ I live a homosexual lifestyle at home, while at work/school I do not want others to know about my lifestyle.
19. _____ I keep careful control over who knows about my homosexual romantic relationships.