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Seventh-Day Adventist and Non- Seventh-Day Adventist Students' Attitudes towards Same-Sex
Marriage and Adoption by Same-Sex Parents

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Abstract

There are various positions on LGB issues including same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex parents. Some stances are positive, while others remain negative. The purpose of this study is to describe attitudes of both Seventh-day Adventist and non- Seventh-Day Adventist students on LGB issues. Two hundred and ninety-five university students from a private and a public university in Southeast Tennessee participated in this study. They completed the *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Attitudes Inventory* (LGBAI) which contains 103 items that measure variables such as religiosity, homonegativity, and attitudes towards same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex parents. Results show that Seventh-Day Adventist students held higher homonegativity towards same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex parents than non- Seventh-Day Adventist students. Specifically, Caucasian male students with conservative views consistently showed more negative attitudes towards LGB issues. There was a positive correlation between attitudes towards same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex parents indicating that 65% of negative attitudes towards same-sex marriage can explain negative attitudes towards adoption by same-sex parents. Major limitations, weaknesses, and implications of these findings as well as an agenda for future research are discussed.

Keywords: attitudes, homonegativity, same-sex marriage, same-sex parents, Seventh-Day Adventist

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Marriage and Adoption by Same-Sex Parents

There are approximately nine million Americans who identify as LGB (Gates, 2011). Same-sex marriage has been a moral debate among individuals in religious belief systems and continues to be since the Supreme Court hearing in June 2015, which legalized gay marriage in all 50 states (Liptak, 2015). One recent example of debate on same-sex marriage was the case of Kim Davis, a Kentucky clerk who refused to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples based on her beliefs (Kaplan & Higdon, 2015). The debate about same-sex marriage remains active because many hold biblical beliefs supporting heterosexual unions (Greene, 2013). Many people believe that marriage symbolizes love and mutuality (Kaschak, 1992; Root, 2001; West, 2005). Hence, marriages that cross social boundaries are seen as disruptive because they challenge the validity and the higher orders of privilege that marriage justifies. Adherents of religious belief systems hold these views about marriage and express negative attitudes toward sexual minorities as a result (American Psychological Association, 2012; Borgman, 2009). What is not known from an empirical point of view are the views that Seventh-Day Adventists, adherents of a religious belief system, hold about sexual orientation issues.

The purpose of this study is to describe attitudes of both Adventist and non-Adventist students on LGB issues including same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex parents. Therefore, the present study will provide empirical research by comparing Seventh-Day Adventist attitudes with non- Seventh-Day Adventist attitudes including a description of conservative and liberal views. The following paragraphs define some of the issues that are faced by LGB individuals, but first a definition of terms in this study has been provided

Definition of Terms

The major variables in this study include attitudes as the dependent variable used to assess university students' perception of same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex parents and religious affiliation, gender, religiosity, and political views as the independent variables.

Terms used throughout this study are defined as follows:

LGB. The acronym used for Lesbian, Bisexual, and Gay individuals. This study uses a shortened acronym for this population to narrow the focus on sexual orientation as opposed to transgender individuals or others who may be defined under the full acronym.

Religiosity. The level of religious activity, dedication, or belief as related to religion as measured by specific items on the *LGB Attitudes Inventory* (Religiosity, n.d.).

Conservative views. Views with traditional values and attitudes as measured by specific items on the *LGB Attitudes Inventory* (Conservative, n.d.).

Homonegativity. An aversion to homosexuality as a way of life as measured by specific items on the *LGB Attitudes Inventory* (Jackle & Wenzelburger, 2015).

Liberal views. Views open to new behavior or opinions as measured by specific items on the *LGB Attitudes Inventory* (Liberal, n.d.).

School policies. Procedures or a course of action adopted by an institution as measured by specific items on the *LGB Attitudes Inventory* (Policies, n.d.).

Literature Relevant to LGB Issues and Policies

There are various theoretical approaches to LGB issues. Scholarly research conceptualizes the relationship between religion and LGB issues through two dimensions: the civil rights dimension of LGB individuals and the moral dimension focusing on attitudes toward LGB (Barringer et al., 2013). This study will focus on the civil rights dimension as it relates to LGB individuals. The American Psychological Association (APA) has developed a set of

policies in accordance with LGB issues: the APA opposes discrimination based on sexual orientation regarding adoption, child custody and visitation, foster care, and reproductive health services; APA supports legal ties of children to same-sex couples; APA supports the legalization of joint adoptions to protect parent-child relationships; APA encourages psychologists to act as advocates to expel all discrimination based on sexual orientation; APA strives to provide resources that inform public policy regarding discrimination of sexual orientation and assist members of psychological associations in territory, division, and state (American Psychological Association [APA], 2002).

Heterosexist bias. In conducting ethical practices, practitioners must understand and assume that they have a heterosexist bias (Brown, 1996). Sexuality is seen as a challenging issue that stirs emotions and mental health professionals are no exception (Greene, 2007). For example, gender has been viewed in western culture as binary indicating that individuals fit within boundaries prescribed through biology. When an individual is mistaken for another sex, a sense of shame comes over her/him (Kaschak, 1992). This sense of shame represents an internalized heterosexism or homophobia (Shidlo & Schroeder, 2002). In this same way, LGB individuals experience shame when they are mistaken as heterosexual. Therefore, mental health professionals and school administrators must be careful not to show bias when working with clients. Biaggio, Orchard, Larson, Petrino, and Mihara (2003) explained that heterosexist bias remains a problem in psychological research and practice. Ethics have been considered a function of social context including a willingness to interrogate cultural values when they are linked to discrimination (Greene, 2004). Therefore, one's beliefs are shaped and influenced by the environment in which she/he lives.

Homonegative attitudes. LGB individuals face prejudice and discrimination daily (American Psychological Association, 2012). Herek (2009) indicated that about 1 in 8 lesbian

and bisexual individuals and approximately 4 in 10 gay men in the United States experience antigay victimization. Victimization is experienced as verbal, physical, and sexual abuse and extreme negative consequences like the loss of a job (DiPlacido, 1998). Furthermore, the consequences of antigay victimization have been largely associated with mental health problems and psychological distress (Cochran, Sullivan, & Mays, 2003). Such discrimination has led to dropout rates from youth as high as 28% as well as a drop in academic performance in comparison to peers (National Education Association [NEA], 2002). Discrimination of sexual minorities is a factor on many college campuses. Teachers and school administrators have been encouraged to help LGB youth by understanding and acknowledging the long-term impact of sexual harassment such as suicidal behavior or school dropout (American Psychological Association, 2012; Boysen, Vogel, Cope, & Hubbard, 2009). Another consequence of prejudice has included the disowning of the LGB child by family members due to familial, ethnic, or cultural norms (Buxton, 2005). The stigma associated with LGB lifestyles has prevented same-sex parents from living a life without prejudice and further forcing adopted children to live in secrecy (Herbstrith, Tobin, Hesson-McInnis, & Schneider, 2013).

Consequences of legislative initiatives. Few legislative debates and policies have explored the effects of legislative discrimination on LGB individuals (Levitt et al., 2009). Thirteen participants who identified as sexual minorities were recruited to explore the impact of legislative initiatives on personal experiences of LGB individuals and how it contributes to minority stress. Participants in the study explained that they felt pressured to participate in activism to fight against legislative initiatives, which gave them a sense of hope, but was also emotionally draining. Withdrawal from activism lead to feelings of guilt, but also decreased fear of being hurt. Today, more activism takes place on social media.

Social media. Questions have been raised regarding the media's influence on attitudes toward same-sex marriage. After the Supreme Court's decision in June 2015 for same-sex marriage as a constitutional right, Facebook launched a rainbow filter for users to apply to their profile pictures to show support for the Supreme Court's decision (Matias, 2015). Matias (2015) reported that over one million people changed their profile pictures in the first few hours of the Supreme Court's decision. The question that was raised among many Facebook users was "is Facebook doing research with its 'Celebrate Pride' feature?" Matias suggested that the social support gained from users through this experiment helped to facilitate acts of courage towards activism for same-sex marriage rights. Even after the Supreme Court's decision, lesbian and gay couples continue to face discrimination through the lack of benefits provided through civil unions.

Same-sex marriage. For decades, sexual minorities have fought for marriage equality. History has defined marriage as an institution for securing wealth, property rights, and other benefits (Coontz, 2005). Now, marriage is an institution based on intimate love and clear gender roles. Conservative individuals have fought against marriage equality for years and have won up until now. Today, there has been some success in shifting attitudes towards gay and lesbian marriage in the last decade (Anderson & Fetner, 2008). In a 2010 United States poll, 42% of men and 50% of women agreed that homosexuals should have the right to marry (General Social Surveys, 2010). Since the June 2015 Supreme Court decision in which more than half showed support for same-sex marriage, state officials have been ordered to remove marriage bans in all 50 states allowing same-sex couples the rights of heterosexual couples (Marriage Equality FAQ, 2015). There still, however, remains Federal lawsuits that continue to enforce marriage bans in all states. The marriage bans reflect some of the difficulties that same-sex couples face including

Social Security and employment benefits (Marriage Equality FAQ, 2015; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2004).

Gender roles. Gender has been an important predictor of attitudes toward LGB individuals (Barringer et al., 2013). Previous studies reveal that men are more likely to hold negative views toward LGB individuals than women (Bowers & Bieschke, 2005; Lim, 2002; Moskowitz, Rieger, & Roloff, 2010). Bowers and Bieschke (2005) reported that male psychologists rated LGB clients as more likely to harm another person than heterosexual clients. The ratings of female psychologists did not differ between LGB and heterosexual clients. There are two explanations for the differences between men and women's attitudes toward homosexuality: traditional gender roles and homophobic attitudes and feelings (Barringer et al., 2013). Matters become even more complicated when a child is brought into the picture. Herbstrith's et al. (2013) study found that men held higher levels of prejudice toward gay male parents in comparison to lesbian and heterosexual parents. Women viewed lesbian parents as more unpleasant than gay parents. Perceptions of gender roles have been an explanation for negative reactions toward LGB parents.

Adoption by same-sex parents. Same-sex parenting has been another topic of contention in society. The 2000 U.S. Census indicated that 33% of lesbian couple households and 22% of gay couple households reported having at least one child living in the home (Paige, 2005). Despite these statistics, there have been three major concerns about same-sex parenting (Patterson, Fulcher, & Wainright, 2002). The concerns were that gay men and lesbians are mentally ill, lesbians are less maternal than heterosexual women, and same-sex relationships leave little time to build a relationship with their children (Paige, 2005). Overall, research has failed to provide evidence to support these claims including the assumption that lesbian and gay adults are not fit as parents (Patterson, 2000). There has not been valid evidence to support

sexual orientation as a cause of psychological impairment (Paige, 2005). Furthermore, research has not shown a marked difference in child rearing approaches between lesbian and heterosexual women (Patterson, 2000).

Children of same-sex parents. Other concerns of same-sex parents relate to the welfare of their children. One concern is that children of same-sex parents will experience more sexual identity confusion than children of heterosexual parents (Paige, 2005). A second concern includes the child's personal development involving psychological and behavioral health. A third concern that has been raised about children of same-sex parents is difficulty in social relationship. Again, social science research has failed to provide substantial evidence for these concerns about children of same-sex parents (Patterson, 2000; Perrin & the Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2002). In a study on child health and well-being in same-sex parenting families, researchers revealed that children in same-sex families had higher scores on measures of behavior, health, and family cohesion indicating positive outcomes (Crouch, Waters, McNair, Power, & Davis, 2014).

Sexual minority stress. LGB individuals continue to face anti-LGB messages and psychological distress to a greater extent now that same-sex marriage has been legalized in all 50 states (Rostosky, Riggle, Horne, & Miller, 2009). Minority stress has been conceptualized to describe the stress that minorities are exposed to due to the stigmatized status of a racial minority group (Slavin, Rainer, McCreary, & Gowda, 1991). From a theoretical perspective, race-based stress fulfills much of the criteria of trauma (Carter, 2007). For example, emotional pain can recur across multiple settings and produce vigilance and avoidance. One distinct difference between racial and sexual minority stressors is that LGB individuals are less able to seek support from their families as a buffer to minority stress (Meyer, 2003). Meyer (2003) included ways that sexual minorities are able to cope with stressors through personal coping strategies and

social support resources such as heterosexual allies. One important coping strategy among LGB individuals is incorporating the LGB identity with other personal identities.

Literature Relevant to Religiosity

Since the 1970's, homosexuality has been a formal debate among Protestant denominations up until the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in 1996, which marked the beginning of denominational social and political activity (Barringer et al., 2013). Some Protestant congregations, such as the United Methodist Church, have accepted LGB individuals into their congregations while more conservative churches remain opposed (Barringer et al., 2013; Cadge, Olson, & Wildeman, 2008). There remains a large variation in views on LGB issues among denominations including same-sex marriage (Burdette, Ellison, Hill, & Glenn, 2009). There are many theories of religion that can explain how one views societal issues. One prominent view commonly used from research to explain religiosity is that of Gordon Allport.

Allport. Allport observed that although many American adults believe in religious traditions, they still hold reservations about the belief in God (Forsyth, 2003, p. 176). These individuals have exhibited behavior more related to psychology than religion. In either case, Allport indicated that individuals have spiritual needs that if not satisfied other sources will fill that need. That is, individuals find spiritual fulfillment beyond religious doctrine. Allport argued against this phenomenon with a term he noted as "religious sentiment." Religious sentiment was described as a "cardinal trait" that ruled an individual's behavior and thoughts. Allport's religious sentiment included values of the utmost importance to the believer and were regarded as the central focus in each system. Religious sentiment is considered mature when it becomes functional and independent (Forsyth, 2003, p. 180). Religious maturity described an individual's assimilation of doctrine.

According to Allport, there are two points that described religious sentiment: subjectivity or response to religion and individual uniqueness. Therefore, religion is used to provide for human needs, which can vary among each individual. The following terms include a list of human needs to which religions give an answer (Forsyth, 2003). First, one's approach to God is connected to human needs. Second, one's temperament accounts for her/his theological principles; for example, the choice of religious ceremony and public or private worship. Third, psychogenic desires and spiritual values are explained as objectivity of objects that are seen as good or beautiful, which come from something outside of humanity. Fourth, the pursuit of meaning is used to explain humanity's search for meaning and destiny. Last, culture and conformity add another layer to the uniqueness of religious sentiment in that one's culture strengthens or weakens an individual's preferences toward religion. In this context, religion is seen as an agent of change that varies among each individual (Forsyth, 2003, p. 178-179).

Extrinsic versus intrinsic. Allport's 1968 work, *The Nature of Prejudice*, revealed that religious individuals tended to be more prejudice than non-religious individuals (Allport, 1968). He suggested that religious individuals were more prejudiced because this behavior provided answers to needs and problems. Allport's studies revealed that prejudice was decreased among individuals who attended church more frequently. Therefore, an extrinsic orientation is assigned to individuals who related to prejudice and used religion as a means to gain something. An intrinsic orientation described an individual who commits and adapts to her/his religious beliefs without secondary gain (Allport & Ross, 1967, p. 434; Forsyth, 2003, p. 183-184; Jackle & Wenzelburger, 2015). For example, many denominations create "moral communities" for their members. The term "moral communities" was coined by Stark (1996) to describe religion as a group identity that influences members' beliefs and behaviors. The effect of this group identity largely depended on the individual's commitment to religious tradition (Barringer et al., 2013).

Other factors that influence members' attitudes toward LGB include religious participation and subjective religiosity.

Religious Participation

In contrast to Allport, other studies indicated that the greater the religious participation, the greater the oppositional attitudes toward LGB (Cochran, Chamlin, Beeghley, & Fenwick, 2004; Sherkat, Powell-Williams, Maddox, & Mattias de Vries, 2011). That is, the "moral community" is strengthened by participation in church activities (Barringer et al., 2013). Subjective strength within a belief system is another factor that can shape attitudes and behaviors. Subjective aspects of religion shape a sense of personal control (Ellison & Burdette, 2012). Therefore, one who embraces institutional teachings may be more likely to hold conservative views as opposed to one who rejects absolute truths of religion and the moral community and emphasizes individual autonomy (Callegher, 2010). Many conservative church views have shown opposition to LGB behaviors.

General religious views. In looking at a comprehensive view of religious attitudes toward LGB individuals, religions such as Islam and Catholicism seem to hold more homonegative positions (Simon, 2008), while Buddhism and Hinduism appear to be less homonegative (Cabezón, 1993). Jackle and Wenzelburger (2015) rated religions from most homonegative to least homonegative with Islam on the end of most homonegative and Atheism on the end of least homonegative. Adding to the degree of homonegativity is the type of motivation of the individual (i.e. extrinsic or intrinsic motivation). Jackle and Wenzelburger examined how the different motivations affect homonegativity in their study and discovered that sociodemographic characteristics largely influence one's homonegativity. For example, men are more opposed to homosexuality than women, older individuals more than younger, married more

than single, etc. Another variable that affects homonegativity is whether or not a country's laws are compliant with civil rights.

Catholic views. The Roman Catholic Church historically has been known to oppose homosexuality (Callegher, 2010). One well-known statement found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992) is "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered...under no circumstances can they be approved" (n. 2358). Callegher (2010) explored the attitudes of 12 young adults on topics of homosexuality, sexual ethics, Catholic teachings, and societal change. Some findings of the study were that none of the respondents were taught about sexual orientation in a classroom setting, but rather through peers. Many participants also noted that they were not as influenced by their parents to attend church as they grew to a certain age. Respondents explained that there were many factors that influenced one's spirituality and moral compass including social media. Most respondents except for one did not have trouble differentiating their views as opposed to the Catholic Church's' views. Callegher discovered that there seems to be a divide between young Catholics and the Catholic Church regarding LGB issues.

Mormon. Another church with sexually restrictive standards is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Grigoriou, 2014). Mormon doctrine dictates that same-sex marriage is incompatible with the "Plan of Salvation." The plan indicates that men and women exist for the purpose of procreation. LGB relationships go against this plan (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 2007, p. 3). Hence, LGB members have been encouraged to remain celibate (Grigoriou, 2014). Grigoriou (2014) indicated that LGB Mormons had fewer mental health problems when they identified as either a Mormon or sexual minority. Some participants revealed negative experiences from social interactions with fellow Mormons and placed higher importance on Mormon identity than sexual identity. Participants also indicated that Mormon

society placed social constraints on LGB members to control for atypical thoughts and behaviors (Malan & Bullough, 2005). The pressure to conform to religious standards reflected more negative outcomes in LGB individuals.

Seventh-day Adventist. The development of the Seventh-Day Adventist church began in 1844 after “the great disappointment” took place where the first pioneers were cast out of their previous churches to start a new journey under the Advent truth (Jordan, 1988; Secretariat, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 2005). According to the Secretariat, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist (2005), the name “Seventh-day Adventist” was chosen in 1860 followed by the organization of the first conference in Michigan. The General Conference has met year after year to discuss various matters of the church to vote on and describe proper rules for different situations in church life. Identified as the remnant church, Seventh-Day Adventists preach and practice the responsibility of abiding by God’s commandments and following a deep faith in Christ’s word (Folkenberg, 2009). The Secretariat, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist (2005) listed the 28 fundamental beliefs which follow the teachings of the Bible as the only creed and define the principles that guide the Adventist faith. The fundamental beliefs constitute the church’s expression and understanding of the scriptures. Revisions to these statements are made at General Conference sessions when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth (Secretariat, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 2005).

Recently, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist met in October 2012 to reaffirm their stance against same-sex marriage and homosexual behavior (Garcia, 2012). They updated their statement to emphasize compassion towards LGB individuals stating “we seek to minister to all men and women in the spirit of Jesus” (Official Statements: Statements, 2016). The North American Division (NAD) stands in full support of the General Conference guidelines

regarding homosexuality and same-sex marriage (Maran, 2015). Maran (2015) reported the Adventist Church in North America seeks to follow Jesus' example by offering "unconditional love and compassion to everyone."

As a Bible-based protestant denomination, the Seventh-Day Adventist church seeks the Word of God as its authority for truth and way of life and seeks to reflect its teaching in all matters of practice including the civil government (Official Statements: Guidelines, 2016). Seventh-Day Adventists believe that sexual intimacy belongs in a marital relationship between a man and woman (Official Statements: Statements, 2016). The Seventh-Day Adventist church has adopted guidelines specifically addressing cultural attitudes regarding homosexual and other alternative sexual practices. These guidelines address homosexual behavior from a biblical and pastoral perspective emphasizing the creation story in which God created humankind in his own image as male and female and then instituted marriage. This heterosexual union is supported throughout scripture as a symbol of the bond between God and humankind. Many Seventh-Day Adventist believers use texts like Genesis 2:24 to support this belief. Genesis 2:24 (NIV) says, "for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." Scripture also points out wrong expressions of sexuality as well as the impact of it on society and urges people to do what is good and healthy (e.g. 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; Matthew 19:1-12; Official Statements: Guidelines, 2016).

Other scriptures point out that sexual acts outside of a heterosexual marriage are forbidden (e.g. Leviticus 18:5-23, 26) and for these reasons Seventh-Day Adventists oppose homosexual practices and relationships (Official Statements: Statements, 2016). One study completed at a Seventh-Day Adventist university compared attitudes toward homosexuality and religious fundamentalism (LaFave, Helm Jr., & Gomez, 2014). The major findings revealed that participants showed higher levels of negative attitudes toward homosexuality along with high

religious fundamentalism, which remains consistent with conservative religions. The Seventh-Day Adventist church follows the ideal of honorable sexual relations within a heterosexual marriage and believes that alterations to this view may be destructive to humanity (Official Statements: Guidelines, 2016).

Hypotheses

Five research hypotheses of this study are as follows:

1. There is a difference in attitudes towards LGB behaviors between Seventh-Day Adventist and non- Seventh-Day Adventist university students.
2. There are gender differences in attitudes toward LGB behaviors among university students.
3. There is an interrelationship between religiosity and attitudes toward same-sex marriage, and adoption by same-sex parents.
4. There are differences in attitudes toward LGB behaviors among students with conservative versus liberal views.
5. There are differences in views of school policies and procedures as helpful towards sexual minorities on campus among Seventh-Day Adventist and non-Seventh-Day Adventist university students.

Each of these hypotheses were tested in its null form.

Method

Participants

The sampling procedure used for this study was a sample of convenience. Professors from a variety of departments were asked to give permission to allow university students to participate in this study. Individual students were the sampling unit for this study. The sample for this study were 295 participants from a religious private university and a public state

university in Southeast Tennessee. The sample came from undergraduate and graduate classes at each university. The population of interest included undergraduate and graduate university students who are at least 18 years of age and come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds including Caucasian, Hispanic, Asian, and Black. Student class standings were both upper and lower class. The sample was gathered from an Seventh-Day Adventist Christian university and a non- Seventh-Day Adventist university located in the Southeast region of Tennessee. The sample size was calculated using a power analysis. The sample size is at least 51 per group with a total sample size of 102 as calculated using G*Power analysis for a two group independent sample t-test (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner & Lang, 2009).

Ethics and Human Relations

The American Psychological Associations (2012) ethical principles and code of conduct guided the treatment of participants in the study. Survey statements could elicit emotionally painful memories, especially with participants who identify as LGB or know someone who is gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Participants were debriefed after completing the survey and offered free counseling services provided at the Summerour Counseling Center (SCC) or the Counseling and Personal Development Center. The university's institutional review boards (IRB) were consulted regarding this risk (See Appendix for copy of IRB form). This study was approved by both IRBs prior to the data collection phase of the study.

Materials

The principal researcher named the instrument used in this study. The instrument that was used is the *LGB Attitudes Inventory* (LGBAI), which is a 103-item survey comprising the *Homosexuality Attitude Scale* (HAS), the *Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men* (ATLG) *Scale*, the *Attitudes towards Gay Men and Lesbians as Adoptive Parents Scale* (APS), the *Revised Intrinsic/Extrinsic Religious Orientation Scale* (I/E-R), and selective demographics (See

Appendix D). A reliability analysis was used for homonegativity items and religiosity items.

Two reliability measures were performed: one for homonegativity between $\alpha = .69$ to $\alpha = .70$ and one for religiosity between $\alpha = .72$ to $\alpha = .74$. Both measures showed moderate reliability.

The *Homosexuality Attitude Scale* (HAS) is a Likert scale that assesses people's biases, stereotypes, and phobias about lesbians and gay men (Kite & Deaux, 1986). The Likert scale ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). This scale has been tested for reliability and has very good internal consistency (alphas $> .92$). The HAS also has good test-retest reliability ($r = .71$). It has been shown to be equally reliable for both lesbian women and gay men. The scale correlates with the Attitudes Toward Feminism (FEM) Scale (Smith, Ferree, & Miller, 1975) and the Attitude Toward Women Scale (Spence & Helmreich, 1978) ($r_s = .50$). It has not been related to agency or communion factors of Personal Attributes Questionnaire (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1974), the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974), or the Self-monitoring (Snyder, 1974), Marlowe-Crown Social Desirability (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960), and Rosenberg Self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965).

Items from the *Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men* (ATLG) Scale will also be used in conjunction with the HAS in order to provide a diverse range of questions related to this study. The ATLG measures heterosexual attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. The original scale included 20 items about gay men and lesbians. The scale uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The ATLG subscales have high levels of internal consistency (alpha $> .85$) with college student samples. Test-retest reliability ($r_s > .80$) has been demonstrated in various forms (Herek, 1988, 1994). Shorter versions of the ATLG had correlations of about $r = .83$, while longer versions had correlations of $r = .90$. The subscales have been reliably correlated with other theoretical constructs such as religiosity, lack of interpersonal contact with gay men and lesbians, traditional family beliefs, and policies that

discriminate against sexual minorities. Higher scores on the ATLG correlated with higher scores on each of these constructs (Herek, 1994, 2009; Herek & Capitano, 1996, 1999a, 1999b).

Items from the *Attitudes towards Gay Men and Lesbians as Adoptive Parents Scale* (APS) will also be used to measure attitudes towards same-sex parenting. The APS includes 12 questions with a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). One example of a question is “male homosexuality is a perversion.” The primary themes included parental factors and child factors (Ryan, 2000).

Fourteen items from the I/E-R were used to measure religiosity in this study. The I/E-R Scale has been standardized on several populations and shows good reliability (Johnston, 2012). It shows high predictive ability because the intrinsic and extrinsic scales have been established as separate structures and therefore have separate reliability measures. The reliability of the intrinsic scales has a Cronbach’s alpha of .83, however the reliability of the extrinsic scales have a slightly lower Cronbach’s alpha of .65. Items from each scale have been combined to produce the LGBAI, which was used to address each of the null hypotheses (See Appendix D).

Design and Procedures

A descriptive-comparative research design using survey methodology guided this study. Quantitative data was used to compare and analyze survey scores from Seventh-Day Adventist and non- Seventh-Day Adventist university students. A brief summary of the study was explained to the participants and each was provided with an informed consent form to be completed and collected before the survey was administered. The researcher provided a script for research assistants to use (See Appendix A). The survey containing each of the instruments above was completed online by each participant. The survey took approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Participants from the religious private university did not receive an incentive for participating. The sampling procedure used for this study was a sample of convenience. Professors from a variety of departments were asked to give permission to allow university students to participate in this study (See Appendix B). Upon receiving permission from professors of each class that was recruited, the principal researcher and research assistants recruited students with the use of a recruiting script and sign-up sheet (See Appendix C). These forms allowed for reliability to be maintained during recruiting. On the sign-up sheet, students provided their name, contact information, and a day and time that they would be available to take the survey online. Students were sent reminders through their preferred way of contact several days before taking the survey and were directed to the location upon which the survey would be administered. Upon arrival, students from the religious private university were given the informed consent form in person to complete prior to taking the survey online. The principal researcher provided debriefing to students who had questions during and after the completion of the survey.

Students from the public state university were also recruited through professors from psychology classes and from a database program called SONA provided online for students to participate in research studies for credit. The survey was provided through a web link attached to the database for students to sign-up and complete at their leisure. Once students completed the survey, an email was sent to the principal researcher alerting her to provide credit for completing the survey. Participants from the public state university were given credit based completion of the survey. All completed surveys from both universities were collected and stored online through a secure account. Informed consent forms were kept separate from the surveys and stored in a manila envelope in a locked office provided by the principal researcher's supervisor.

Data Analysis Methods

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 22 (SPSS 22) was used to analyze scored data from the survey. Descriptive statistics were calculated using the scores from the survey and included the mean and standard deviation. The descriptive statistics were summarized in a table. Each hypothesis was tested in its null form using an independent samples t-test and Pearson's r with an alpha level of .05. A moderately adequate effect size of about 0.5 was calculated using SPSS (Erford, 2015).

Results

The sample for this study were 295 participants from a religious private university and a public state university in Southeast Tennessee. Seventh-Day Adventist students represented religious private university students in this study, while non- Seventh-Day Adventist students signified public state university students. The age range varied from 18 to 51 years of age with an average of 20.78. About 74% of the sample included female participants ($n = 219$). The majority of the sample included 41% of Freshmen ($n = 122$; See Figure 1). Sixty percent of the sample identified as liberal ($n = 177$) and 67% were Non- Seventh-Day Adventist ($n = 198$). The sample size was ethnically diverse and included 65% of Caucasian individuals ($n = 191$). Other ethnic groups represented in the sample were Black, Hispanic, Asian, and mixed or other (See Figure 2).

Hypothesis 1: Religious Private V. Public State and Homonegativity

Data analyzed from 295 participants are described in this report. The first research hypothesis predicted differences in attitudes towards LGB issues among religious private and public state university students. A scale of 65 to 325 represents the range of scores for homonegativity. Religious private university students ($n = 91$, $M = 216.66$, $SD = 51.62$) showed more negative attitudes toward LGB issues, than public state university students ($n = 198$, $M =$

192.81, $SD = 54.23$). Religious private university students scored in the moderately high range compared to public state university students who scored in the moderate range for homonegativity. The null hypothesis was tested using an independent samples t -test and the results show that the difference in negative attitudes between these two groups is statistically significant $t_{(287)} = 3.53, p = .000$ (See Table 1). Thus, public state university students show lower homonegativity than religious private university students.

Hypothesis 2: Gender and Homonegativity

The second research hypothesis predicted gender differences in attitudes towards LGB issues. Men ($M = 218.72, SD = 54.81$) showed more homonegativity toward LGB issues in comparison to women ($n = 219, M = 194.19, SD = 52.71$). Table 1 shows that the independent samples t -test conducted on the differences between men and women ($t_{(293)} = 3.46$) are statistically significant $p = .001$.

Hypothesis 3: Religiosity, Same-sex marriage, and Adoption

The third hypothesis measured the interrelationships among religiosity, same-sex marriage, and adoption by same-sex parents. The average score on religiosity was in the moderate range with a scale of 14 to 70 ($M = 42.78, SD = 6.80$). There was a positive correlation between religiosity and same-sex marriage ($M = 12.13, SD = 3.97$) indicating the higher the religiosity, the more negative attitudes towards same-sex marriage. The average score on attitudes towards same-sex marriage fell in the moderate to low range based on a scale of 5 to 25. This hypothesis was tested in its null form using Pearson's correlational analysis. Although this positive association was statistically significant [$r_{(295)} = .27, p = .000, r^2 = 6\%$] only 6% of the variation in negative attitudes held by participants towards same-sex marriage can be explained by their levels of religiosity.

There was also a slightly higher positive correlation between religiosity and adoption by same-sex parents, $r(295) = .32, p = .000, r^2 = 10\%$, indicating the higher the religiosity, the more negative attitudes held by participants towards adoption by same-sex parents. Pearson's coefficient indicated this relationship was statistically significant with 10% of the variation in negative attitudes towards adoption by same-sex parents being explained by religiosity.

There was an even stronger positive correlation between same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex parents indicating participants who hold negative attitudes towards same-sex marriage also hold negative attitudes towards adoption by same-sex parents $r(295) = .81, p = .000, r^2 = 65\%$. This relationship was statistically significant. Sixty-five percent of the variation in negative attitudes towards same-sex marriage can explain negative attitudes towards adoption by same-sex parents (See Table 2).

Hypothesis 4: Conservative/Liberal Attitudes and Homonegativity

The fourth research hypothesis predicted attitudes towards LGB issues among students identifying as conservative or liberal. The average scores for conservative and liberal students ranged from 65 to 325 indicating that conservative students scored in the moderately high range and liberal students scored in the moderate range of homonegative attitudes. Figure 3 shows the results. Conservative individuals ($n = 114, M = 239.33, SD = 39.19$) reported more negative attitudes toward LGB issues than liberal individuals ($n = 177, M = 175.14, SD = 47.44$). This hypothesis was tested in its null form using an independent samples t -test and the findings were statistically significant $t_{(271.61)} = 12.55, p = .000$.

Hypothesis 5: Religious Private/Public State and School Policy Views

The fifth null hypothesis claimed no difference in religious private and public state university students' views on the helpfulness of school policies towards LGB issues on campus. A scale of 5 to 25 was used to describe participants' views on the helpfulness of school policies

and procedures on LGB issues. The average scores for religious private university students and public state university students showed slightly more positive views towards the helpfulness of school policies and procedures. There was a miniscule difference between religious private participants' ($M = 11.91$, $SD = 2.71$ vs. $M = 11.51$, $SD = 3.06$) and public state participants' views of university policies and procedures as helpful towards LGB issues. As expected, this small difference was not statistically significant $t_{(287)} = 1.08$, $p = .283$. Therefore, these results are inconclusive (See Table 3).

Discussion

The purpose of this descriptive-comparative study was to describe student attitudes toward LGB issues including same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex parents. Following is a description of the results, limitations and weaknesses, implications, and directions for future research.

Hypothesis 1: Religious Private V. Public State and Homonegativity

The first hypothesis predicted differences in attitudes towards LGB issues among religious private and public state students. Religious private students showed more negative attitudes toward LGB issues, than public state students. A reason for this could be because Seventh-Day Adventists practice a biblical understanding of how to approach homosexual behaviors (Seventh-Day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2015). For individuals who describe themselves as less religious and more spiritual, the topic of homosexuality appears to be more accepted, allowing for adjustments in individual belief systems. Many conservative religious denominations may also hold more negative views of LGB issues like Seventh-Day Adventists. Jackle and Wenzelburger's (2015) study seems to support this statement. In their study, they created a ranked order of different religions identified from most conservative to liberal. Each religion was classified to evaluate: what way homosexuality has a negative connotation in the

holy writings, assess how religious leaders defend against the topic of homosexuality, and identify how strong fundamentalism is versus liberal views within each religion. Jackle and Wenzelburger discovered that the most conservative religion was Islam, then Catholicism, and traditional Protestantism. So it seems that the more conservative the religious denomination, the greater its' homonegativity.

Hypothesis 2: Gender and Homonegativity

The second hypothesis predicted differences in attitudes towards LGB issues among gender groups. Men showed more homonegativity toward LGB issues in comparison to women. This finding was not surprising as previous research has predicted this trend among other populations. As stated previously, gender has been an important predictor of homonegativity (Barringer et al., 2013). Barringer's et al. study revealed important insights into the differences between religion, spirituality, gender, and attitudes toward LGB behaviors. Generally, men show less acceptance of LGB behaviors than women, however both men and women who identify as religious are less accepting of LGB behaviors in comparison to individuals who identify as spiritual. It is interesting however that men from the religious private university still showed more negative attitudes towards LGB issues than women.

Hypothesis 3: Religiosity, Same-sex Marriage, and Adoption

The third hypothesis described the interrelationships among religiosity, same-sex marriage, and adoption by same-sex parents. There were several positive correlations among religiosity, same-sex marriage, and adoption by same-sex marriage. A positive correlation was found between religiosity and same-sex marriage indicating the higher the religiosity, the more negative attitudes towards same-sex marriage. Only 6% of the variation in negative attitudes held by participants towards same-sex marriage can be explained by religiosity. There was also a slightly higher positive correlation between religiosity and adoption by same-sex parents

indicating the higher the religiosity, the more negative attitudes towards adoption by same-sex parents. Ten percent of the variation in negative attitudes towards adoption by same-sex parents being explained by religiosity. Although these findings were significant, a small percentage of students' attitudes is explained by religiosity. It is possible that the association between religious fundamentalism and negative attitudes towards same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex parents is greater than spirituality and homonegativity.

The following studies support this interpretation. For example, Gordon Allport explained that religion is used as an agent among individuals to initiate change (Forsyth, 2003). That is, change in the direction of what is seen as good or acceptable according to religious principles. Allport discovered in his studies that religious individuals were more prejudice than non-religious individuals because this behavior provided answers to problems (Allport, 1968). Callegher (2010) emphasized the importance of institutional teachings on individuals who held conservative views and accepted moral truths. This study supports the findings from the previous analysis explaining that the higher the religiosity, the greater the negative attitudes towards same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex parents. However, for the purpose of the present study, religiosity was defined by how much one's religion affects his/her lifestyle and attitudes. That is, how much time one spends in prayer and scripture reading along with how influential religious institutions are for each person.

There was an even higher positive correlation between same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex parents indicating participants who hold negative attitudes towards same-sex marriage will also hold negative attitudes towards adoption by same-sex parents. This was a trend commonly found in the entire sample as well as within group differences. Sixty-five percent of the variation in negative attitudes towards same-sex marriage can explain negative attitudes towards adoption by same-sex parents. This variation is so large that negative attitudes

towards same-sex marriage will more often predict negative attitudes towards adoption by same-sex parents and attitudes are likely to be more negative towards adoption by same-sex parents than same-sex marriage. This finding also reveals students' beliefs about the effect of LGB behaviors on child development signifying a negative effect. However, social science research has not found substantial evidence to support these views (Patterson, 2000).

Hypothesis 4: Conservative/Liberal Attitudes and Homonegativity

The fourth hypothesis predicted attitudes towards LGB issues among conservative and liberal students. Conservative individuals reported more negative attitudes toward LGB issues than liberal individuals. Conservative students may report more negative attitudes toward LGB issues due religious beliefs which dictate moral principles. For conservative individuals, societal change might be difficult to adjust to especially if it goes against religious principles and beliefs. Liberal individuals may experience more ease when adjusting to societal changes. One study opposed this view explaining that Christian and ally identities can be complementary in that when the individual is able to relate to the core of spirituality and emanate a Christ-like character he/she is better able to relate to LGB individuals (Borgman, 2009). The demographics of this study revealed various religious affiliations, and many participants identified more with liberal beliefs indicating what could be a strong relationship between positive attitudes towards LGB issues and political views. That is, the more one participates in religious activities, the more negative attitudes that individual may have towards LGB issues in comparison to individuals who identify as members of a moral community, but do not participate as often (Barringer et al., 2013, Stark, 1996).

Hypothesis 5: Religious private/Public State and School Policy Views

The fifth null hypothesis predicted religious private and public state students' views on the helpfulness of school policies toward LGB issues on each university. There was a minute

difference between religious public participants' and public state participants' views of university policies and procedures as helpful towards LGB issues. The means showed that both religious private and public state university students held slightly more positive views regarding the helpfulness of school policies and procedures for LGB individuals at each university.

However, the results were inconclusive signifying a need for more research on school policies and procedures on LGB issues. The average showed that students from both groups may have held similar views about the helpfulness of school policies, and that the majority of students from each university held less extreme opinions about this topic. That is, the means were positioned so closely to the center that it seems many students did not know whether their school's policies were helpful or not. Therefore, religious private and public state students may show similar views on the helpfulness of school policies due to a lack of knowledge on school policies and procedures for LGB issues.

Today, LGB issues may be more prevalent based on recent legislation. Since the removal of same-sex marriage bans in all 50 states, school policies have been affected dramatically (Marriage Equality FAQ, 2015). For example, Gordon College faced the possibility of losing its accreditation after its' policies were reviewed by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The school's policy prohibited sex outside of heterosexual marriage (Green, 2015). Green reported that many religious organizations which do not support gay marriage or homosexuality could face similar problems ranging from tax exemption to accreditation if policies do in fact affect gay students. Church leaders already have faced the decision of whether or not to perform gay marriages.

Limitations and Critique of the Literature

There were several limitations noted from the present study. Although the principal researcher and research assistants were careful in maintaining reliability of the study with the use

of a script during the data gathering process, unforeseeable alterations were made when necessary to provide adequate information to student concerns, which limited the consistency of information provided during the recruiting phase. After the data gathering phase, items were found missing from several participants limiting the accuracy of survey scores and ultimately important data describing group aggregates. This limitation, however, does not appear to prevent generalizability purposes. Another important limitation is the majority of participants for the sample came from the public state university creating a disproportionate sample which could have created skewed results. The difference in survey recruitment and administration could have affected the outcome of the results in this study creating a false statistical difference. However, many findings in this study indicated that religious private university students, who primarily identified as Seventh-Day Adventist, showed more negative attitudes than public state university students regardless of the disproportionate sample size and seemed to relate more to moral views rather than religiosity.

Another limitation was that students participating in this study came from two universities in Southeast Tennessee. This limitation may affect the generalizability of the study as the views of Seventh-Day Adventist and non- Seventh-Day Adventist students at each university may not fully reflect the views of other Seventh-Day Adventist and non- Seventh-Day Adventist students in the United States. Another limitation was that the Seventh-Day Adventist university included primarily Seventh-Day Adventist students excluding most other religions. A large sample size was provided for this study, however the length of time to complete the survey may have limited more students from participating in the study. Although this study was quantitative in nature, several significant results were confirmed from the data. This being a quantitative study also limits the extent of conclusions drawn from data. Next, social

desirability or political correctness may have influenced participants' answers to survey items limiting the accuracy of student attitudes.

Disadvantages of instrumentation on internal validity was not predicted for this study, however the assumption was that all instruments used in this study held appropriate reliability and validity despite minor changes made to survey questions to better fit the present study. One threat to internal validity included extraneous variables such as cultural background and other values or beliefs not related to religiosity, which may have affected survey scores from participants. The results of this study showed a stronger relationship between conservative views and homonegativity compared to other sociocultural factors. However, more is to be gained from further research. One threat to external validity includes nonresponse bias (Erford, 2015). The disadvantages of survey methodology are low response rates, which could affect generalizability. However, a large sample was utilized in this study and seemed sufficient to provide significant results.

There are many weaknesses in the literature that need to be addressed in this study. The following are not exhaustive. The principal investigator notes that the review of the literature shows adequate diversity in references. Some references did however come from older sources as there appeared to be few articles relevant to specific subjects discussed in this study. There was more focus on religion as a human need rather than divine revelation, which seems to introduce a biased perspective. Part of this study provided examples of discrimination towards the LGB community. Readers with a religious conviction may view these statements as biased due to possible negative connotation. Also, the acronym LGB was used throughout the study as opposed to LGBT, which includes transgender individuals, to help narrow the focus of this study on sexual orientation. These are just a few of the weaknesses identified in this study.

Implications and Importance of the Study

This study could help administrators and counseling professionals in Seventh-Day Adventist communities better understand the challenges faced by LGB individuals in the community (Boysen, et al., 2009; Davis, 2014). Counseling professionals can identify what factors influence negative attitudes toward LGB behaviors. Practicing compassion and support towards LGB individuals can help religious communities bridge the gap between heterosexual and homosexual individuals. Borgman (2009) urges religious organizations to act as a support system for both oppressed individuals and LGB allies. This study serves as a step forward in helping researchers, faculty, and students understand how to address LGB issues relating to LGB rights and the law (Boysen, et al., 2009; Davis, 2014). This study is timely as the church has voted on how to address LGB issues.

Information drawn from this study can be used by administrators, counseling professionals, students, and the community to gain insight about how to approach LGB issues on a religious private and public statue universities. The results from this study provide information about some factors, such as religiosity and political views, that influence attitudes towards the LGB population. However, there is still a lot to learn about LGB issues and how they affect society as a whole. It is important to understand that ultimately each individual brings with her/him a set of stereotypes and biases that are influenced by many factors. As legislation continues to evolve, schools can be better prepared for what issues could be raised by auditors or legislation on policies and procedures that affect LGB students. Ultimately, the results of this study can inform counseling professionals about community challenges related to LGB issues.

The results of this study provided several significant findings that help to describe and compare attitudes towards LGB issues based on social settings, gender, religiosity, and political views. Although the information gained from the results of this study was limited, enough was

provided to add to the literature on this topic and guide future studies. Same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex parents are just a couple of societal changes that have become legal since last year. Future studies may focus on transgender rights and how they affect school settings.

Directions for Future Research

There is limited research on the attitudes of various ethnic groups towards LGB issues. The majority of other findings on ethnic groups in this study were inconclusive and thereby warrant more research to determine societal influences among ethnic minorities. Younger generations may show more support towards LGB issues based on societal trends and recent legislation. It would be interesting to identify how age plays a factor in attitudes towards LGB issues. The present study did not show significant findings on students' views regarding school policies on LGB issues, therefore future research should focus on developing a robust instrument that measures attitudes towards school policies on LGB issues to further guide school procedures. A replication of this study in various geographic locations could better determine Seventh-Day Adventist views worldwide and narrow down specific factors that influence attitudes if different from the present study. Future research may also incorporate attitudes towards transgender behaviors noting the differences if any from attitudes towards LGB behaviors. As mentioned in the literature review, Gordon Allport defined differences between intrinsic and extrinsic religious individuals. The present study focused on a global score for religiosity for purposes of identifying correlations between religious and attitudes towards same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex parents. It would be interesting for future research to incorporate an intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity measure focusing on how one's view of religious practices relate to negative attitudes towards LGB issues in further distinguishing various groups of religious people.

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Tables

Table 1

Religious Affiliation, Gender, and Homonegativity

<u>Variable</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>p</u>
Religious Affiliation						
Seventh-Day Adventist	91	216.66	51.62			
Non- Seventh-Day Adventist	198	192.81	54.23	3.53	287	.000
Gender						
Male	76	218.72	54.81			
Female	219	194.19	52.71	3.46	293	.001

Table 2

Intercorrelations between Religiosity, Same-sex Marriage, Adoption by Same-sex parents

<u>Variable</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
1. Religiosity	--	.27	.32
2. Same-sex marriage	.27	--	.81
3. Adoption	.32	.81	--

* $p = .000$

Table 3

Seventh-Day Adventist and Non- Seventh-Day Adventist Views towards School Policies on LGB Issues

<u>Religious Affiliation</u>	<u><i>n</i></u>	<u><i>M</i></u>	<u><i>SD</i></u>	<u><i>t</i></u>	<u><i>df</i></u>	<u><i>p</i></u>
Seventh-Day Adventist	91	11.91	2.71			
Non- Seventh-Day Adventist	198	11.51	3.06	1.08	287	.283, ns

Figures

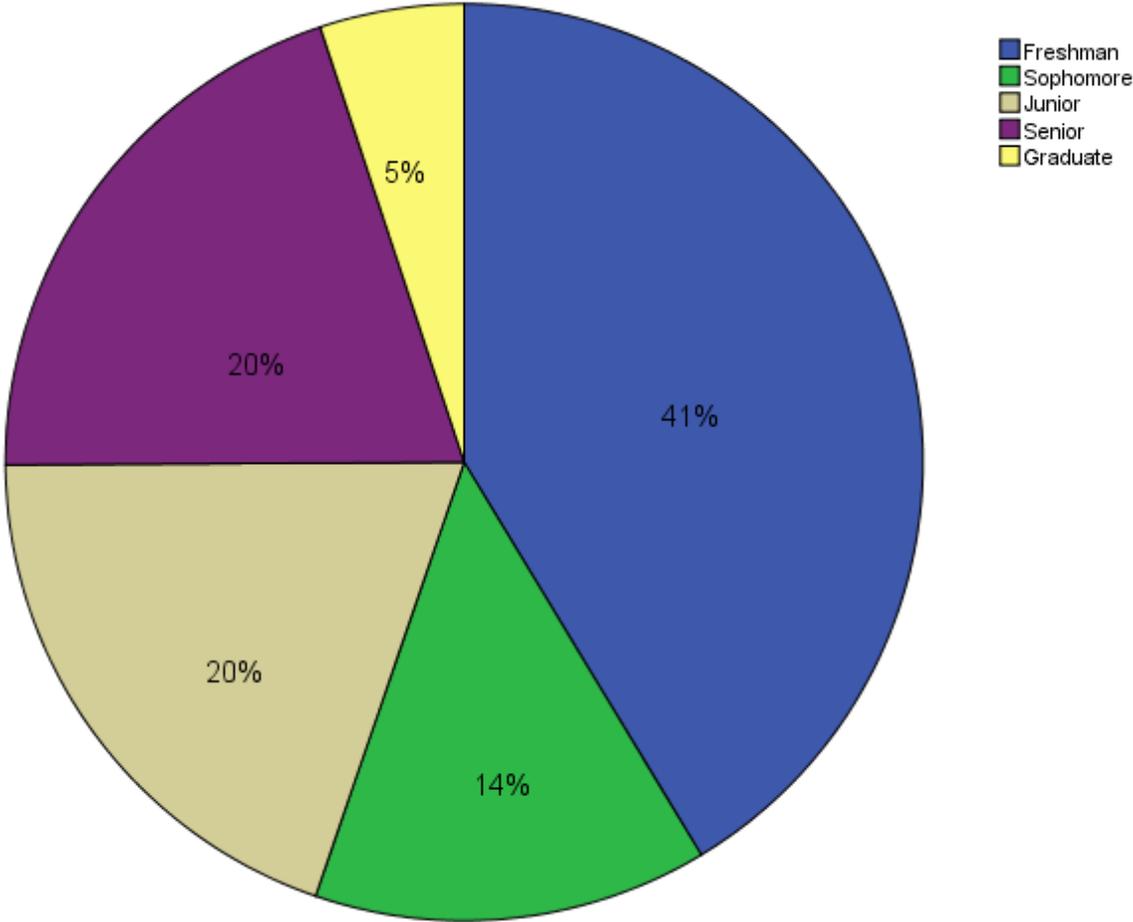


Figure 1. Class Standings Represented in the Sample

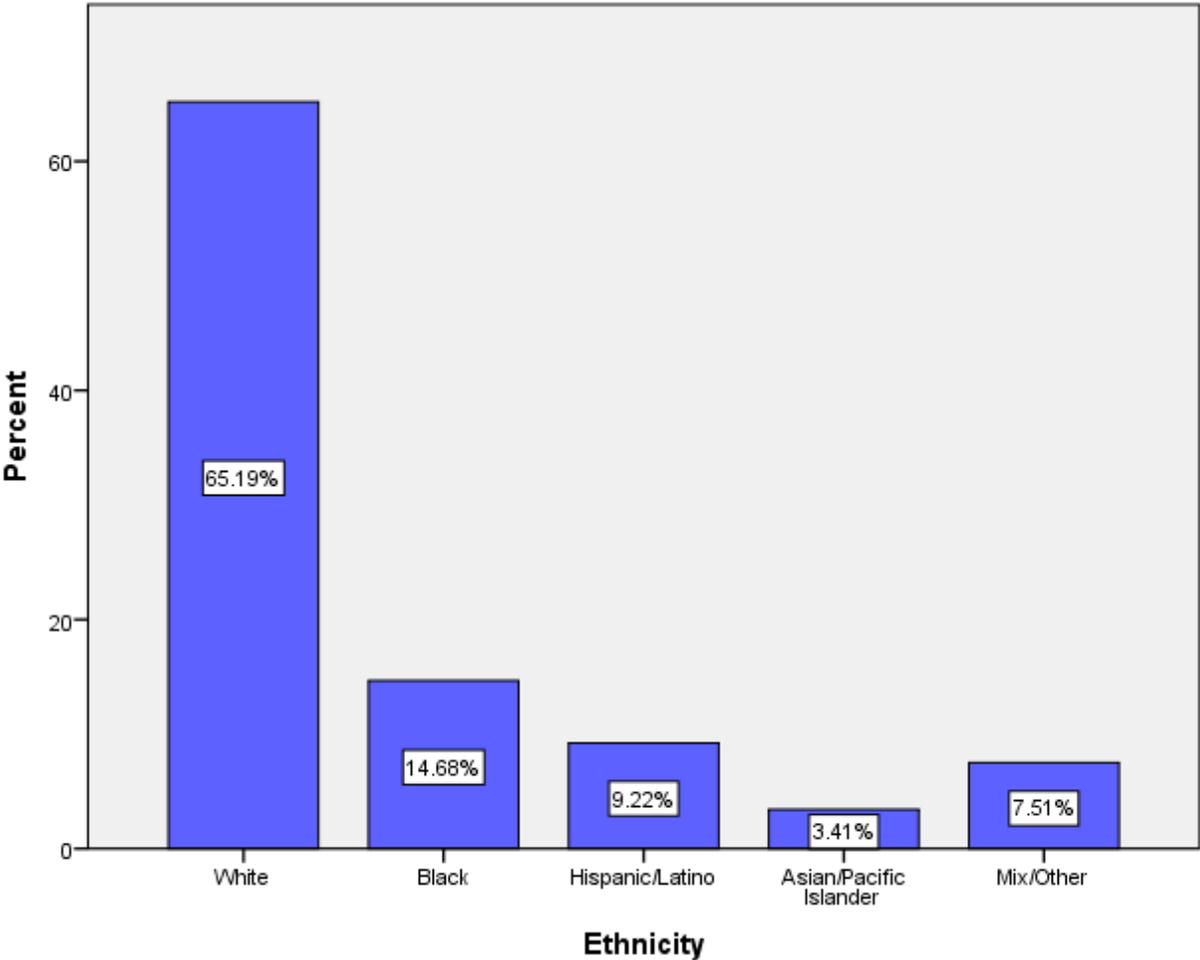


Figure 2. Ethnic Groups Represented in the Sample

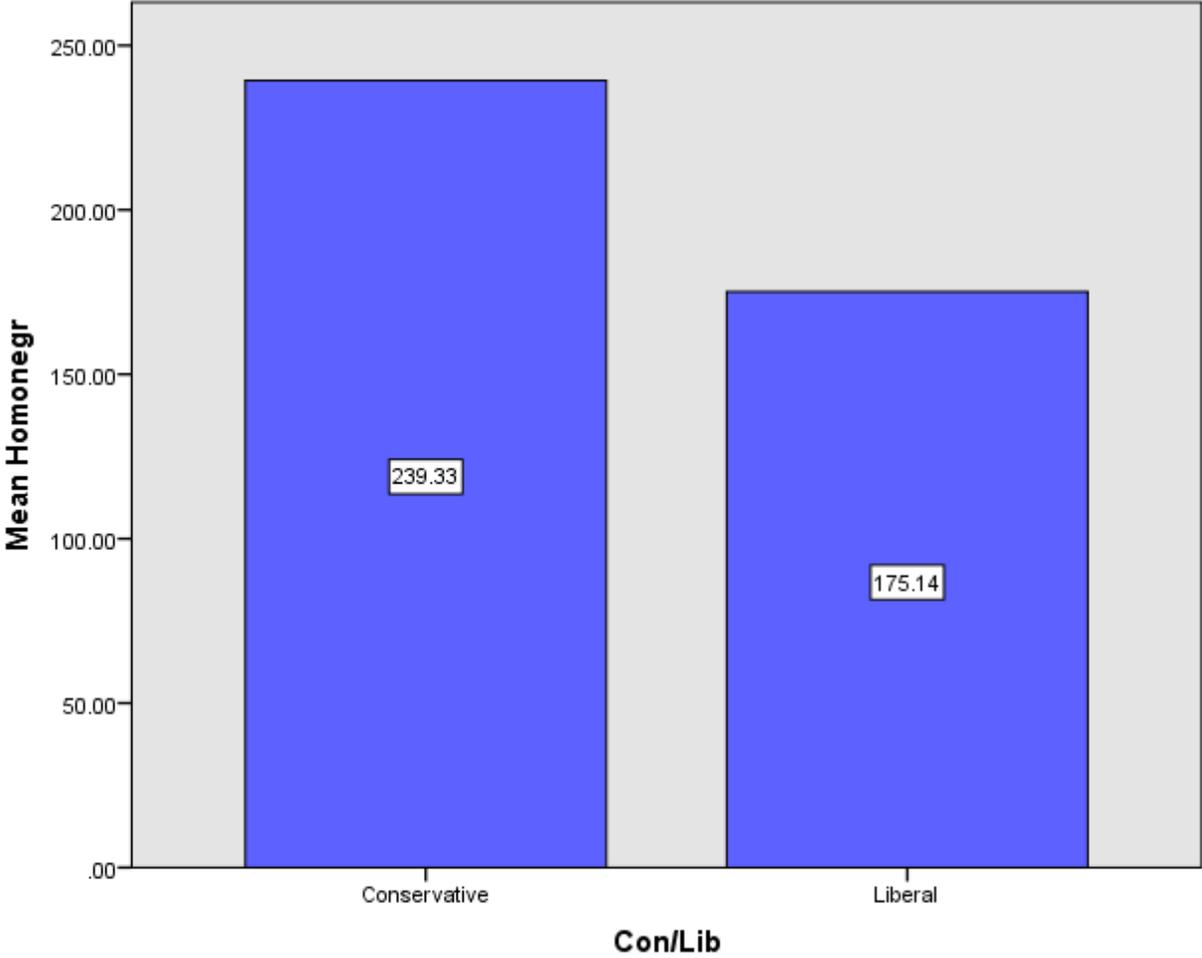


Figure 3. Homonegative Means for Conservative and Liberal Students