

AN ASSESSMENT OF UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE  
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD  
GAY MEN AND LESBIANS

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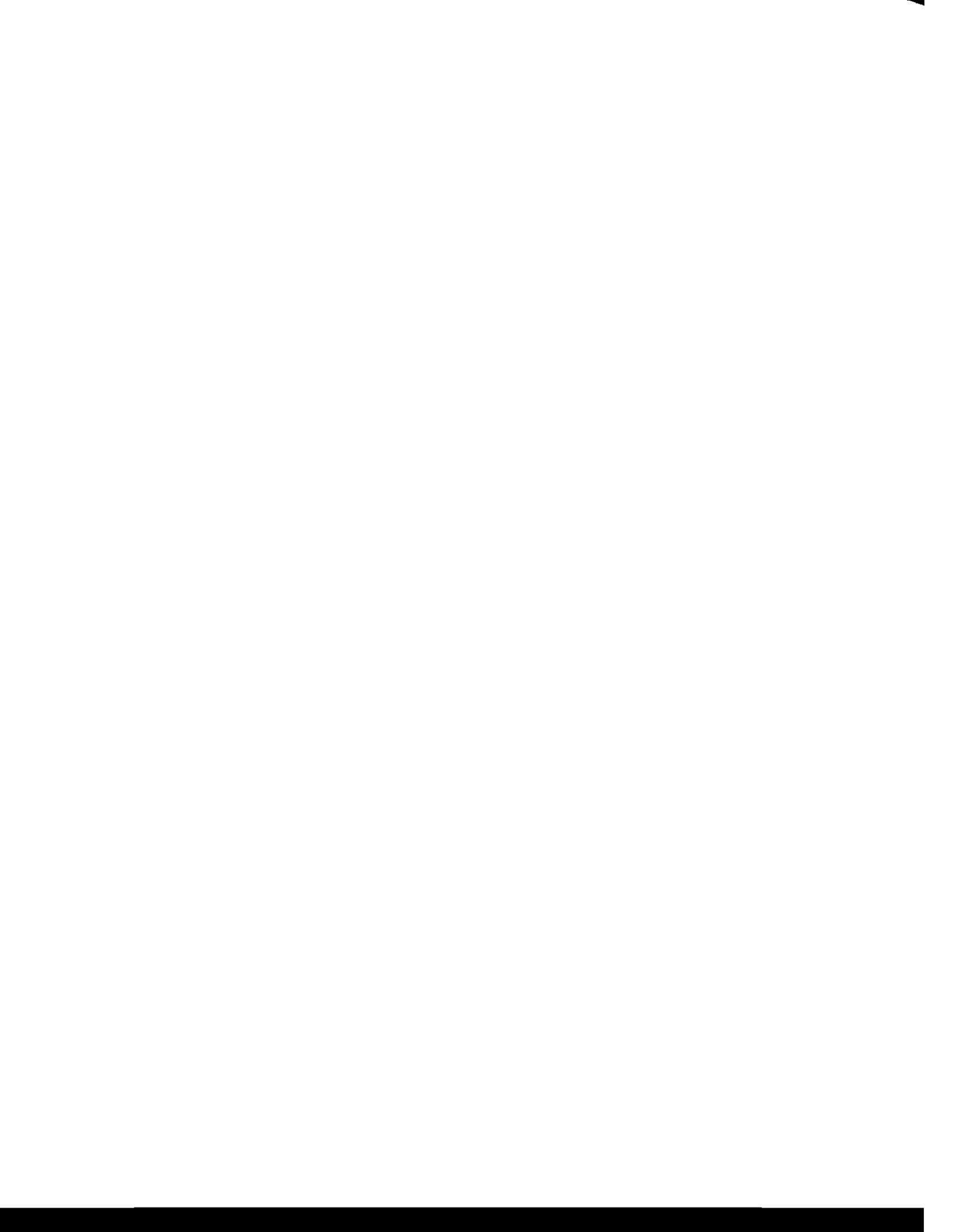
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## Abstract

NICHOLS, A.C. An assessment of University of Wisconsin-La Crosse undergraduate students' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Master of Science in Education, College Student Personnel, May 1998, 102 pp. (A. Korschgen)

This survey assessment provided a baseline study about attitudes UW-L undergraduates have toward gay men and lesbians, and consisted of five parts eliciting both qualitative and quantitative data. Hypotheses were tested for a comparison of group means for independent samples, using t-tests and analysis of variances (ANOVAs). A content analysis created in 1987 by Gregory Herek was built upon in this study by founding a new category of influence on attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. This new category is known as the "Indirect Experiential-Schematic" psychological function. The sample for this study (n = 1,180) reflected 15% of the undergraduate student population at UW-L. Results indicate that contact with gay, lesbian, and bisexual people, students' major field of study, age, gender, race/ethnicity, residency (on or off campus living), class (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior), exposure to material about homosexuality, and knowledge of GLB harassment or physical assault at UW-L are all influential variables affecting these undergraduate students' attitudes toward gay men and

lesbians. Three themes from interviews emerged illustrating the sharply contrasting differences in the daily lives of GLB students in comparison to heterosexual students. They were, (1) individuals who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual have a unique array of stressors with which they must deal, namely fear, (2) they are less involved on campus, which leaves them more isolated and alone and, (3) they are less likely than heterosexual students to seek professional help for their stressors. The opposite appears to be true for heterosexual students.

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Last but not least, I give thanks to God for my life. Life is a continuous journey of self-discovery. And through the discovery of who and why people are who they are, we can come to understand the environments in which we live and breathe. This project helped me understand people in the environment of one microcosm of a community--that of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

This project evolved with controversy, criticism, and examination by many. I hope those who need to read it, read it, because this project reflects a need for change not only by it's quantitative data, but by the oral and written data provided by many students and professionals at UW-L.

Best of luck to UW-L, from 1998 forward, in creating a safe, sound, and supportive environment for gay, lesbian, and

bisexual students, faculty, and staff in the years to come, on the verge of a growing, hopeful and more enlightened people of a new millennium. Keep striving to make a difference.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the queer youth in the La Crosse community who have touched my life with their courage, energy and hope. They know who they are! They are fierce. They are fabulous. And they are making history. Keep up the awesome standards by which you live and you will make a cultural transformation. Activism and being "out" will change the world. You are already making progress.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother. She always told me to write because she liked my writing. She told me I was a fighter and admired me because I stood up for what I believed in, and she always supported me by her words of encouragement. Because of her, I am strong and I am striving to attain my goals. Mom taught me to find something I love doing and make it my occupation. I found it in this study. Thank you mom for all you have given me. I will try to make the world a better place for everyone. I love you.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Nationwide studies on campus climates suggest an omnipresence of negative behaviors toward gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered (GLBT) persons. According to Croteau and von Destinon (1994) "hatred, prejudice, and discrimination toward lesbian, gay and bisexual people, commonly referred to as homophobia, is pervasive on college and university campuses" (p.40). Institutions of higher education are responsible for providing an environment free of harassment and discrimination and for creating and maintaining environments conducive to learning in order for students to pursue their educational goals.

In general, Americans with higher education are more positive than those with less education (Marszalek and Goree, 1995). Even so, most studies focused on the perceptions of undergraduate students who were gay, lesbian, or bisexual and have revealed widespread prejudice, violence, harassment, discrimination, heterosexist practices, and hatred toward gay, lesbian and bisexual (GLB) students, faculty, and administrators (Rankin, 1994). Attitudes about GLB people appear to be influenced by an array of variables such as: education, religion, gender, values, defensive feelings,

stereotypes, homophobia, a lack of knowledge, and limited or no contact with this population (Herek, 1994).

In 1973, "homosexuality" was removed as a diagnostic category from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Maylon, 1981). This did not immediately change people's attitudes about homosexuals (Rothblum, 1994). Problems continue to exist with respect to people's attitudes toward "gay" people and social norms maintain the expression of heterosexism in major social institutions. Research indicates that faculty and administrators in institutions of higher education significantly influence campus affairs. They also influence development, maintenance, and modification of student attitudes (Rankin, 1994). Therefore, they have the capability of significantly impacting the campus climate.

Certain indicators exist within the environment at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UW-L) that characterize an intolerant campus climate for GLB people. Evidence such as homophobic bathroom graffiti, antigay messages on campus sidewalks during National Coming Out Day, and negative experiences of faculty, staff, and students past and present suggest the campus climate is hostile for GLB persons. This hostility results in negative experiences and consequences for GLB persons such as harassment, hatred, discrimination, and violence.

#### Need for the Study

Preliminary evidence suggests there is a negative environment for gay men and lesbians at UW-L. The need for

this study was to better determine the existing campus climate for gay men and lesbians. A real or perceived unsupportive or unsafe environment for GLB people can be potentially damaging psychologically, emotionally, and developmentally. For these reasons, an assessment of UW-L undergraduate attitudes toward gay men and lesbians was needed.

Therefore, this study was designed to assess the climate at UW-L for gay men and lesbians by examining attitudes that UW-L undergraduate students had toward gay men and lesbians. Additionally, the climate of the institution was examined by survey items assessing (1) the level of perceived support by students, faculty, and staff for gay men and lesbians, (2) the level of perceived safety of the environment for gay men and lesbians to be open about their sexual orientation to others, and (3) what type of social interaction students have experienced with gay men and lesbians. Finally, background characteristics were included to examine the roles demographic data played, if any, in influencing students' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. The results of this study are intended to be useful for proposing research-based recommendations to improve the campus climate, produce qualitative and quantitative data to describe the campus and the students' perceptions of the environment, to gain insight from students' experiences on this campus, to reduce heterosexism and homophobia, and finally to use the data to

strategically plan and implement ways of improving the campus climate not only for GLB people, but for all individuals at UW-L.

### Objective

The objective of this study was to assess UW-L undergraduate students' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians and to provide insight into *their* perceptions of the campus climate for gay men and lesbians. Since student attitudes affect the campus climate, this study was expected to gauge the campus climate to determine whether or not UW-L students' attitudes reflected an environment that is perhaps welcoming, tolerant, intolerant, or aggressively violent.

### Hypotheses

The hypotheses of this study were:

1. Males hold more negative attitudes toward homosexuals than females (Herek, 1988; Kite, 1984; Whitley, 1988).
2. Heterosexuals hold more negative attitudes toward homosexuals of their own sex (Kite, 1984; Whitley, 1988).
3. Because people with more formal (postsecondary) education hold more positive attitudes toward homosexuals, (Hudson & Ricketts, 1980; Klassen, Williams, & Levitt, 1989; Marszalek & Goree, 1995) seniors will hold more positive attitudes than freshmen students.

Combined with education, age may also be an influential attitudinal factor when combined with educational attainment on attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Age in itself may or may not be an isolated influential factor

4. The more contact a heterosexual person has had with gay men and/or lesbians, the more positive attitudes they will hold about gay men and lesbians because contact is a variable which tends to diminish the effect of stereotypes about "gay" people (D'Augelli & Rose, 1990; Fiske & Taylor, 1984; Herek, 1990, 1994; Rankin, 1994; Whitley, 1990).

#### Assumptions

The assumptions of this study were:

1. Students have an impact on the campus climate (Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Peterson & Spencer, 1990; Rankin 1994; Tierney, 1988).

2. How students feel (attitudes) toward gay men and lesbians will affect the campus climate as it pertains to gay men and lesbians (Rankin, 1994).

#### Limitation

The limitation of this study was:

1. The results of this study are based on responses of UW-L undergraduate students in the random sample and their attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. To the extent that UW-L undergraduate student attitudes in this study may differ from undergraduate students at other institutions in the nation, the results may not be generalizable beyond UW-L.

#### Definition of Terms

The following terms were used in this study:

Attitude - A disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to the self, others, or the environment (Schreier, 1995).

Belief - An assumption about self, others, and environment that an individual possesses and considers important (Schreier, 1995).

Coming Out - Disclosure of one's sexual orientation to other individuals. No longer hiding one's gay, lesbian, or bisexual orientation.

Culture - The integrated system of learned behaviors and patterns characteristic of members of any given society. It is the total way of life of particular groups of people learned and transmitted from generation to generation (Kohls, 1984).

Environment - An institution's people, processes, and structures. Aspects of the environment include perceptions, expectations, satisfactions, and dissatisfactions (Baird & Hartnett, 1980).

Environmental Assessment - A process used to identify aspects of the environment which are negative, those which facilitate development, and those which can be redesigned to improve the environment. The data collected from environmental assessment is intended to be used for planning and implementing environmental change (Aulepp & Delworth, 1978).

Gay Man - A man who forms his primary loving and sexual relationships with other men; a man who has continuing affectional, emotional, romantic, and/or erotic preference for someone of the same sex (D'Emilio, 1989; Rankin, 1994; Weeks, 1981).

Heterosexism - A belief in the inherent superiority of demonstrating love only toward members of the opposite sex

and therefore a belief in the right to dominate others and set societal standards and norms (Schreier, 1995), anti-gay/lesbian prejudice (Rankin, 1994).

Homophobia - Illogical fears and discomforts with people who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual, which often leads to intolerance, bigotry, and violence against those not behaving within heterosexual norms. They are negative attitudes with an affective component (Schreier, 1995).

Lesbian - A woman who forms her primary loving and sexual relationships with other women; a woman who has a continuing affectional, emotional, romantic, and/or erotic preference for someone of the same sex (D'Emilio, 1989; Kitzinger, 1987; Rankin, 1994).

CHAPTER II  
REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH  
Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of nationwide campus climate studies, as well as focusing specifically on UW-L. It was the purpose of this study to assess undergraduates' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians at UW-L in order to determine the level of support and safety of the campus climate for gay men and lesbians. It was also the purpose of this study to identify and understand the "psychological functions" operative in students' attitudes by using a qualitative measure of factors to identify attitudinal influences or "psychological functions." Certain factors characterize specific "functions" related to positive and negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Studies reveal widespread antigay prejudice nationwide (Herek, 1984, 1986, 1991; Herek & Glunt, 1993; Kite, 1994; Rankin, 1994).

Overview of Nationwide Campus Climate Studies

Nationwide studies on the campus climate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) persons suggest an omnipresence of prejudice, violence, harassment, discrimination, and hatred toward LGBT students, faculty, and administrators (D'Augelli, 1989; D'Augelli, 1990; D'Emilio,

1990; Herek, 1994; Herek & Berrill, 1990; Rankin, 1994, 1998).

Themes emerged from 30 campus climate reports between 1984 and 1995. These themes included invisibility/ostracism, isolation/self-concealment, and university consequences of heterosexism and heterosexist attitudes. Consequences of heterosexist attitudes include things like a professor's fear of losing tenure for being adviser to an LGBT association, and a student athlete's fear of taking a dance course for fear of being assumed to be gay. Additional consequences of heterosexism and a fear of being "out" as a homosexual or bisexual person on a college campus is explained by a LGB staff member at UC-Boulder, 1991, 'I would feel better about myself if I could be more supportive to students and colleagues. Living a dual life is painful.' Additionally, a faculty member at the University of Minnesota stated 'I regret that I can't be more 'out' in order to be a role model for gay students' (as cited in Rankin, 1998).

These themes and experiences are a result of "institutionalized heterosexism" defined as "the norms which assume and reward presumed heterosexuality, condone or even cause the victimization of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people" (Rankin, 1998).

The aforementioned experiences reflect unsafe and unsupportive heterosexist climates for students, faculty, and staff in different institutions in the United States. Heterosexism does not seem to be an isolated practice. In

fact, it is also occurring at UW-L. An example of such heterosexist assumptions and practices is easily seen in Trowbridge Hall, an all women's residence hall on the UW-L campus. A residence hall slogan was printed on t-shirts that read "Looking for a few good men." This slogan makes an assumption that "women" are looking for "men," overlooking the possibility that there may be lesbians or bisexual women living in that environment who became subjected to the heterosexist assumption.

Approximately 10 to 15% of the population is either gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Fassinger, 1991; Fischer, 1972; Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953). Since sexual orientation is not a visible characteristic like race or some disabilities, educators and others may not think they know anyone who is gay, or even realize they have a gay or lesbian student in their classroom. College may provide, according to Chickering and Reisser (1993), "the first exposure to openly gay individuals, and with it, the chance to further entrench stereotypes or to develop new tolerance and respect" (p.186). According to Marso (1991) "The attitudes of other students on campus can have an incredible effect on gay and lesbian students and their level of comfort on campus" (pp. 7-8). Marso noted that resident assistants (RA's), are in positions where they could make a difference for gay and lesbian students who live in residence halls. D'Augelli (1989) found that prospective resident assistants had high levels of

negative attitudes, and lacked knowledge about gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues.

Negatively held attitudes and beliefs about gay, lesbian, and bisexual people may result in destructive behaviors in the form of homophobic comments, verbal, or physical violence, or a lack of attention to this special "sexual minority" groups' needs. Traditionally-aged students at the university level are still in an "at risk" population for this type of victimization.

The significance of the risk is supported by statistical evidence. A review of violence inflicted on gay men and lesbians on college campuses found that 55 to 72% of survey respondents reported verbal or physical abuse (D'Augelli, 1992). Physical threats of violence were reported at 25% in many campus surveys. A sample of 160 gay and lesbian college students found that 64% of their abusers were their roommates and other students, whereas 23% of the reported incidences involved faculty, staff, and administrators (D'Augelli, 1992). Such violence and harassment is rarely reported.

According to D'Augelli and Rose (1990) gay and lesbian college students did not report abuse because (a) they did not expect action to be taken on their behalf, and (b) they feared reporting victimization would jeopardize their personal safety. In fact, "more than one third changed their daily routines to avoid harassment" (p. 485). This fear of harassment often results in gay, lesbian, and bisexual students remaining "closeted" to protect themselves.

Remafedi (1987) reported white male gay and bisexual college students were not completely open about their homosexuality because they feared harassment. Many gay professionals stay in the closet because they fear discrimination (Friskopp & Silverstein, 1995). Faculty and staff often remain closeted fearing rejection of tenure, promotion, or job loss.

According to research by Kourany (1987), speculations by psychiatrists stated the most frequent causes of suicide among lesbian, bisexual, and gay male adolescents are feelings of disenfranchisement, social isolation, rejection from family or peers, and self-revulsion. Also, the Report of the Secretary's Task Force on Youth Suicide, (Gibson, 1989), documented the leading cause of death for gay male, lesbian and bisexual youths as suicide. According to the Report (Gibson, 1989) the stressors these youth experience lead to problems they simply cannot deal with effectively in order to save themselves.

Gay youth face extreme physical and verbal abuse, rejection and isolation from family and peers. They often feel totally alone and socially withdrawn out of fear of adverse consequences. As a result of these pressures, lesbian and gay youth are more vulnerable than other youth to psychosocial problems including substance abuse, chronic depression, school failure, early relationship conflicts, being forced to leave their families and having to survive on their own prematurely. Each

of these problems presents a risk factor for suicidal feelings and behavior among gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual youth (p. 3-110).

Suicide attempts, according to empirical documentation are in the range of 20 to 40% for gay, lesbian, and bisexual youths (Savin-Williams, 1994). Gibson (1989) reported that "the suicide attempt rate for gay youth is more than 3 times higher than that of heterosexual youth" (p. 3-111). According to the Center for Population Options (1992) fact sheet, "gay, lesbian and bisexual youths face an increased risk of medical and psychosocial problems, caused not by their sexual orientation, but by society's extremely negative reaction to it" (p.1).

Gay youth tend to face rejection, isolation, verbal harassment, and physical violence. Consequently they are at considerable risk to psychosocial problems such as substance abuse, depression, relationship conflicts, and failure in school (Gibson, 1989).

The youth suicide problem is due to society's discrimination and stigmatizing of homosexuals. Society fails to realize the impact it has on gay and lesbian youth. Gay youth who accept their orientation and are open about their sexuality have to find their place where they belong within the "confines of the traditional social structure available to them" (p. 3-121). Not all gay and lesbian youth who accept their sexual orientation find a place where they are comfortable enough to be open about it. Their mere quest for

identity has a profound effect on their development (Savin-Williams, 1990).

Historical Perspective at the University of  
Wisconsin-La Crosse

A series of events in the history of UW-L since 1992 indicates an unfriendly environment exists for gay men and lesbians. Jay Scott, a former Coordinator for Student Activities and Centers, provided a historical perspective that also provided evidence of an unfriendly climate for gay men and lesbians at UW-L.

For example, during the fall semester of 1992, the Student Association Vice President mailed out a letter to student organization representatives which openly criticized homosexuals. The Campus Ministry received a copy of the letter and brought it to the attention of the University. The letter had been printed on UW-L letterhead (J. Scott, personal communication, November 3, 1997). Further, correspondence by the Vice President stated that he was trying to establish a "legislative network" on campus. The purpose of the network was "to circulate petitions on issues being brought before the United States Congress and Wisconsin Legislature." The petitions, he wrote, "will be forwarded to our representatives in their respective offices" (G. Fisher, personal communication, [memo] 1992).

The petition Mr. Fisher circulated was addressed to former Third District Congressman Steve Gunderson who is now

an openly gay man, but was closeted at the time. The petition stated the following:

The purpose of this petition is to register our opinion and desire to you as your constituents. We ask you to vote against H.R. 1430. This bill, which elevates homosexuality to the status of a civil right, is a mockery of America's traditional family values and the institution of marriage. The strength of traditional marriages and family life has made this country great (personal communication, [petition], October 18, 1992).

Consequently, the Student Association deemed the letter and petition inappropriate and the case went to a full senate meeting on November 4, 1992 in which the Vice President survived a motion "to apologize, relinquish his legislative affairs seat [with the United Council], and serve a suspension for the remainder of fall semester" (L. Ringgenberg, personal communication [memo], November 6, 1992).

The Director of Student Activities and Centers sent a letter to student organization leaders and advisers explaining the "correspondence and petition threatens the rights of gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals...the information in this correspondence has been offensive to many students, faculty, and staff." In the same letter, it is stated that on November 4, 1992 "a motion to impeach Mr. Fisher failed to receive the required 2/3 votes. A motion

requesting his resignation was approved" (L. Ringgenberg, personal communication [memo], November 10, 1998).

Even though the Vice President survived the motion, the individual sent a letter to the Student Association and Student Senate explaining his personal reasons for not voluntarily resigning, some of which were expressed as "Diversity is the promotion of free thought and expression without fear of repudiation. I intend to address the tolerance issue. I feel I can best do this by remaining in office" (G. Fisher, personal communication [memo], November 10, 1992).

The Chancellor also addressed the actions of the Student Association Vice President in a memo sent to student organization leaders and advisors. She explained that "In recognition of recent events questioning the rights of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual members of our community, I want to reaffirm my commitment to creating a community where all people have the opportunity to attain their educational goals." She also stated that "UW-La Crosse is an educational institution that belongs to all people of this state. The civil rights of all individuals, by conscience and law, are to be upheld by the State and the University" (J. Kuipers, personal communication [memo], November 10, 1992).

Later, during the 1993-1994 academic year, Jay Scott received a letter from a few Resident Assistants (RA's) who lived in the residence halls. This was a time when there were a significant number of RA's who were part of the Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. Some of these RA's

belonging to religious groups raised concerns about dealing with GLB issues (L. Ringgenberg, personal communication, March 27, 1998). The content of the letter, according to Scott, was about gay people and their belief that gay people should not be allowed to live in residence halls on campus. This letter was forwarded to the Director of the Office of Residence Life who decided to send a letter to his staff with the message that if they, as staff members of the University as RA's, could not uphold the laws of the state of Wisconsin (concerning public accommodation in housing) they may have to resign because their behavior was unacceptable as an RA (Jay Scott, personal communication, November 3, 1997).

These oppositional responses to GLB organizations and Committees is not unique to UW-L. At UW-Madison, three Christian law students challenged the University with the premise that they should not have to support student organizations which had political agendas with which they disagreed. The two GLB groups and 16 other organizations were among those they did not want to support. This case was brought to court as the Southworth v. Grebe (1996) case. The judge ruled in favor of the plaintiffs which permitted students within the entire UW-System the option of asking for refunds from their allocated segregated fees that supported organizations individual students did not want to associate with by funding them. The Board of Regents decided to appeal the court's decision, which currently awaits action. The implications of the court's decision are such that it upsets the democratic process by which funds are allocated by

elected student body representatives, a premise upon which this country was founded--democracy (M. Miyamoto, personal communication, November 10, 1997).

In November of 1992, as a result of the events that had occurred on the UW-L campus a few concerned members of the campus community submitted a notice to the Campus Connection newsletter announcing a meeting to discuss (GLB) issues. At this meeting, people discussed the history of the University as it related to a GLB student organization. There had been a GLB student organization in the past at different times in the University's history. This small group of people, a student, staff, and faculty representative decided to meet with the Chancellor. After discussion and mention that there were no "out" faculty members at the time, the Chancellor appointed a GLB Task Force (GLBTF) for GLB Concerns. The Chancellor recognized the need to appoint a GLB Task Force. This resulted in a report to the University community in 1993 which discussed problems with equity, policy, and recommendations for change at UW-L which would provide a more inclusive, supportive environment for GLB people at UW-L. The GLBTF conducted a series of open hearings which were lightly attended and interviews with key people at the University. As a result of these efforts, the GLB Concerns Report (prepared by Sailer and Scott) was created and presented to the University community in 1993. This report contained recommendations for change in many areas of the campus community.

According to the report, it was "born out of need" after recognizing three critical trends: (1) the silence of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students, faculty, and staff, (2) new state legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and (3) the Chancellor's assignment to the GLBTF to provide recommendations "that would assist gay, lesbian, and bisexual, faculty, staff, and students in finding a campus environment that allows them to attain their personal and educational goals" (pp. 1-4).

The recommendations proposed improvements in 13 areas of concern. These areas are: (1) human diversity, (2) curriculum, research, and scholarship, (3) gay, lesbian, and bisexual concerns, (4) publications, (5) student development, (6) health services, (7) student activities and centers, (8) student life, (9) residence life, (10) counseling and testing center, (11) minority affairs, (12) career services, and (13) training and networking (pp. 13-32).

Since university faculty and administrators are responsible for these areas, they are therefore in prime positions to improve the campus climate for gay, lesbian, and bisexual faculty and staff, which may impact attitudes (heterosexual) students have toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. The underlying philosophy was that change and a safe environment was not the responsibility of students alone to act as catalysts in the environment, but faculty, staff, and the institution as a whole community needed to be involved.

Additionally, the GLBTF was coexisting with a soon-to-be-recognized GLB Student Organization. This recognition, however, did not come without opposition. When the group sought approval from the student organization committee, members abstained from voting. The reasoning behind the abstentions was allegedly because the committee did not have time to read the by-laws. The committee called for an adjournment to allow committee members to read the by-laws and make an educated voting decision. At that point there was still some disagreement whether or not the GLB Student Organization should be recognized. The Director of Student Activities and Centers intervened to remind committee members that it was unconstitutional to not allow people to affiliate, unless they discriminated against other students, which was not true in this case. Ultimately, the GLB Student Organization was granted recognition by the committee as a bona fide student organization (J. Scott, personal communication, November 3, 1997).

Once the GLB Student Organization was officially recognized, students, faculty, and staff recommended that a GLB Equity Committee be formed. This joint committee at the University, would be inclusive of students, faculty, and staff and provide unity in organization. The GLB Equity Committee was formed in 1993. Due to much visibility by the GLBTF, the newly formed GLB Student Organization, and GLB Equity Committee, GLB issues at UW-L were often at the forefront of discussion.

In accordance with the recommendations outlined by the GLBTF, the University was to create a Diversity Resource Center (DRC). The DRC was not called the GLB Resource Center because some people felt that would detract students who were not "out", from using the center. The reason the Center did not have a primary emphasis on GLB issues was because of its location in Student Activities and Centers. The primary audience and users of such a "center" would be students and student organizations. No other office on campus was addressing GLB concerns at that time, so these issues became paramount within the missions and goals of the DRC (J. Scott, personal communication, November 3, 1997).

More recent incidents also indicate an ongoing expression of hate and intolerance toward GLB individuals and issues on the UW-L campus. During the spring semester of 1997, Dr. Mel White, a gay Christian, pastor and seminary professor (also former ghost writer for Pat Robinson, Jerry Falwell, Billy Graham, and Ollie North) was a guest lecturer at UW-L as part of the UW-L Lectures and Concerts Series. Posters advertising his speaking engagement were defaced with the word "fag".

Additionally, antigay graffiti on bathroom walls across campus is prevalent. The following examples of such graffiti illustrate violence and disgust toward gay men:

"Die Faggots"

"Friday 9/27 to 10/2/96 Leave date and time for a Hot Blow Job So I can be here with my deer rifle to take you both out"

"[Name] likes it up the ass! [heart symbol] (For fags)"

"Fags are like old pairs of bell bottoms, when they come out of the closet everyone can tell they're abominations"

"We don't need faggots"

"[Name] is the biggest cock-sucking faggot in La Crosse"

"[Name] is a fag, why can't you find a woman?"

Additionally, in October 1997 shortly before the October 11th celebration of National Coming Out Day, the GLB Student Organization on campus chalked gay positive messages on sidewalks indicating gay pride and a celebration of coming out of the closet, to raise awareness on campus about this day as well as awareness and publicity for the organization. Many messages were crossed out or altered. The Racquet, the student newspaper on campus, printed these antigay chalked messages in the newspaper on October 23, 1997 in a letter to the editor by Megan Craig, a peer educator in the Diversity Resource Center of Student Activities and Centers. These are some examples of the chalkings which appeared on the

sidewalks and in the campus newspaper (Craig, M. (1997, October) Students Respond to Anti-Chalkings [sic] [Letter to the editor] The Racquet, p. 3.:

"The only reason you got 1 day was so some politician could get your gullible votes."

So be sure you're back in the closet on the 12th."  
[National Coming Out Day is October 11th].

"Gay is a learned behavior--therefore a choice--just like a crime, both lack morals and destroy society."

"Gay is not [normal]--nobody cares--you would have more respect and rights if you would keep it to yourselves and shut up."

"Silence will protect you--more than you can imagine."

"Gay men are dung."

"Bi-Pride" (chalked by GLB students) followed by  
"Obviously you are confused, and in need of education."

"I hate queers."

These chalkings further amplify evidence of a hostile environment toward gay men, lesbians, and bisexual people.

In the early fall of 1997 at a Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Equity Committee (GLBEC) meeting, comprised of faculty, staff, and students, Committee members discussed experiences they had on campus that made them feel that it was not comfortable for them to be open about their sexuality, either as a gay, lesbian, or bisexual person, or as an ally.

"I don't feel safe coming out in residence halls."

"When I came out to the chair of my department, I was told it doesn't matter, then I was told the equivalent of the military 'we don't ask, don't tell.'"

"I've had a total of four, offensive, and very ambiguous hate messages written on my marker board in my two years living in residence halls."

"Being told my first year at UW-L there was no GLB group on campus and one couldn't be formed 'cause it was too dangerous.'"

"Negative experience with a professor making derogatory comments in class while speaking about a study. Example: 'All gays have AIDS.'"

"A male, gay student was told [by a chemistry professor] that gay men cannot be scientists, 'genetically impossible.'"

"While working at the Fall Leadership Workshop [1997], I wore a National Coming Out Day label [on National Coming Out Day]. I did not receive harassment, but others who work with them were accused of being lesbians and verbally attacked."

Comments found written on campus such as graffiti or antigay chalkings provided evidence of a climate hostile toward gay men and lesbians. The statements by the GLBEC members also indicated that the climate at UW-L was not supportive of gay men and lesbians. Fear by this group was prevalent, as well as reports of harassing incidents happening to them by other students, faculty members, and administrators. Incidentally, students are not the only homophobic people in the UW-L campus environment.

The aforementioned reports indicative of a hostile or unsupportive environment for gay men and lesbians seem clear. Yet, the presence of a support group on campus seemed to alleviate the feeling of isolation for one student. The student explained her feelings after a GLB Student Organization meeting on campus. "I was really glad to meet others in the GLB [student organization meeting], I was really feeling isolated on campus". She continued saying "I really have strived to be open with others, and I have not

had much of a problem. I am not saying that I am scared, but I am still waiting for my tires to get slashed, or to be called names" (anonymous personal communication, September 6, 1997).

#### Student Affairs Practitioners and GLB Issues

Croteau and Lark (1995) conducted a qualitative study which described the necessity for student affairs professionals' training related to sexual orientation issues. Kuh and Andreas (1991) and others (e.g., Kuh, Bean, Bradley, & Coomes, 1986), suggest using qualitative research methods to study practices of student affairs professionals. The lack of research in this area as it pertains to biased and exemplary practices of student affairs professionals concerning lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues is noted by the authors.

Croteau and Lark (1995) modeled their research design on "an investigation of psychotherapy practice with lesbian women and gay men" conducted by Garnets, Hancock, Cochran, Goodchilds, and Peplau (1991), in which psychologists were asked to describe in writing incidents and practices in psychotherapy which were biased or sensitive toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual clients. Croteau and Lark used a purposeful sampling method by sending 408 surveys to members of the American College Personnel Association's (ACPA) Standing Committee on Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Awareness. Data returned from 66% of the sample indicated that the mean number of years the respondents were employed in Student

Affairs positions was 8.64. "Forty-two percent reported working in residence life, 18% worked in counseling or psychological services, 12% in multiple student affairs functional areas, 8% in student activities, 6% in student affairs administration", and the remainder in other student affairs areas (p.474). The results of this study indicated that 95% of the respondents reported high work involvement with sexual orientation concerns. Ten themes emerged from this study, and were explained in terms of "biased" or "exemplary" practices by student affairs professionals.

Examples of exemplary practice in student affairs was expressed "as sensitivity to 'the special stresses' and to the 'oppressed and marginalized' aspects of the lives of lesbian, gay and bisexual students" (p. 477). Examples of biased practice by student affairs professionals was described "as people not being sensitive or giving only 'lip service' to appear politically correct" (p. 477).

Two of the most frequently mentioned needs according to Croteau and Lark (1995) concerned the 'developmental process' of coming out and student affairs professionals' application of knowledge in helping these students through this difficult time, by affirming them and giving them access to resources and support. Another situation concerned residence life issues for lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals, whose roommates wanted room changes based solely on their knowledge that their roommate was gay or lesbian. Exemplary practice involved the refusal to allow a roommate of a gay or lesbian student to move, and to work with the heterosexual student to

help him or her confront his or her fears on the roommate issue. The intervention in this case was seen as "educative."

Biased examples were seen in student affairs professionals who held misinformation about gays and lesbians. The most frequent form of misinformation revolved around the idea of "conversion" to heterosexuality; that it was possible and needed. A respondent reported a counselor's hope 'to develop a relationship' with a gay client and help him to be 'satisfied with heterosexuality.' Other examples of biased practice by student affairs professionals were their suggestions that gay, lesbian and bisexual students were going through a "phase" or just "needed to date persons of the other sex" (Croteau & Lark, 1995, p. 477). Further credibility to the qualitative analysis was due to feedback from other professionals during an ACPA conference presentation.

Finally, graduate training in student affairs programs appears to poorly prepare graduates to work with GLB people (Talbot, 1992). Graduate students lacked comfort, skill, and knowledge about working with gay, lesbian, and bisexual people.

#### UW-L Graduate Student Training in College Student Personnel

At UW-L, graduate students in the College Student Personnel (CSP) Program receive training on the gay, lesbian and bisexual constituent group and other minority groups in a required course called "College Students and Their Environments." Homosexual identity models are presented and discussed in "Human and Student Development: Theory and

Practice." The special needs of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people in career counseling and outreach services to this group and other minority groups is discussed in "Current Theories and Applications of Career Development." Students currently in the CSP Program indicated this was a student initiated concept to incorporate more of these issues pertaining to gay, lesbian, and bisexual people into the CSP curriculum over the past few years as they had previously been ignored (S. Hinkel, personal communication, Feb. 10, 1997).

Psychological Functions and Attitudes Toward Gay Men and Lesbians

Heterosexuals' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians cannot be explained by a single factor at this point. Herek (1986) proposed a theoretical formula to explain heterosexuals' individual attitudes toward lesbians and gay men according to their psychological functions. Herek (1987) identified three different "functions" by using original essays written by 205 students.

Each function contains characteristics which describe certain factors that contribute to individuals' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Thus, attitudes individuals exhibit about gay men and lesbians may be characterized by one or more functions. In Greene and Herek (1994) they are:

1. Experiential-Schematic Function: "descriptors of specific past experiences that provided the basis for a

cognitive schema associated with current attitudes toward lesbians and gay men in general" (Greene & Herek, 1994, p. 222).

2. Defensive Function: "statements suggesting personal anxieties and insecurities associated with gender or sexuality that are exacerbated by homosexual persons" (Greene & Herek, 1994, p. 222).

3. Self-Expressive Function: "assertions of attitudes toward lesbians and gay men based on personal values important to self-concept and relations with others" (Greene & Herek, 1994, p. 222).

Herek (in Greene & Herek, 1994) found manifestations of other characteristics displayed within each function. For example, individuals' attitudes were not solely influenced by one function in particular. In many cases, characteristics of two or three of these functions were actually present.

#### Attitude Measurement Scale

Research on attitudes toward GLB persons has been conducted in many ways. One way is to use Herek's Attitude Toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLGM) scale which was established as a "reliable and valid instrument for assessing heterosexuals' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men" (Greene, 1994, p. 223). The ATLGM is a standard in the field. Herek recommends researchers use short forms of the ATLGM, the Attitudes Toward Lesbians-Short scale (ATL-S) and the Attitudes Toward Gay Men-Short scale (ATG-S) for brief and effective measures. When both short form scales, the ATL-S, and the ATG-S are used in the same study, researchers may

draw direct comparisons between attitudes toward gay men and lesbians if used in parallel form.

#### Conceptual Framework of Scale

The ATLGM as used in this study reflects the reformist paradigm, which is most popular today. The reformist view differs from other views, according to Herek (in Greene & Herek, 1994) because it "adopted a strategy of minority group politics and so fostered the notion of lesbians and gay men as members of a (relatively) well-defined group with its own needs, goals, and interests that deserve legitimation within the larger society" (p. 224). The liberationist paradigm explained the notion of "heterosexual psychological homophobia" requiring confrontation with one's own sexuality and rejection of one's own homoerotic desires (Greene & Herek, 1994).

This paradigm shift in research to understand heterosexuals' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men requires use of the ATLGM with an understanding of "cultural context", meaning it was used to "indicate that the psychological processes underlying heterosexuals' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men are similar to racial, ethnic and religious attitudes" (Greene & Herek, 1994, p. 225).

In a recently published study by Engstrom and Sedlacek (1997), Herek's ATLGM scale was criticized for lending itself to politically correct responses. Engstrom and Sedlacek (1997) felt it was important to assess attitudes individuals have toward gay men and lesbians, and to assess the types of situations which are difficult for heterosexual students

which in turn elicit prejudicial attitudes. Their study "demonstrated the importance of examining specific situations by gender to more fully understand the scope and context of prejudicial attitudes" (p. 573). Engstrom and Sedlacek (1997) emphasize the need for qualitative studies which contribute to understanding students' discomfort with gay men and lesbians in specific situations in order to further understand the development of heterosexist attitudes and the relationship between heterosexism and sexism (1997).

Herek's scale was used in this study in conjunction with open-ended questions to better understand the psychological functions and contexts influencing individual's attitudes, rather than the scope and context of prejudicial attitudes.

#### Reasons for Further Study

The pervasive problems gay, lesbian, and bisexual people often face from their adolescent years, throughout college and thereafter, suggests an immediate need to continue assessing areas such as college campuses to determine the climate for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. Since students are major contributors to the campus climate, their attitudes toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual people should be explored. Rankin (1994) studied the perceptions of heterosexual faculty and administrators toward gay men and lesbians at the Pennsylvania State University. Rankin recommends that campus climate studies should be initiated at other institutions. One barrier to such studies being conducted is that researchers interested in this area of study may add potential risks to their careers if they conduct such

research. Therefore, many professionals avoid this topic area. Since a study has never been conducted at UW-L about the attitudes undergraduate students have toward gay men and lesbians, this study was conducted. It may serve as a starting point for future assessments and provide insightful groundwork for programmatic strategies the institution may employ and also serve as a research-based catalyst.

## Chapter III

### RESEARCH INSTRUMENTATION AND PROCEDURES

#### Introduction

A survey was designed to assess the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse undergraduate students' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians using a stratified random sample of UW-L undergraduate students. University of Wisconsin-La Crosse undergraduate students' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians had never been assessed. Therefore, this study was designed as an in-depth baseline study to assess the climate UW-L provided for gay men and lesbians by designing the survey around one central research question: What are the attitudes UW-L undergraduate students have toward gay men and lesbians?

#### Survey Instrument

The survey instrument used in this study consisted of three pages of questions and took respondents approximately 10-12 minutes to complete. (A complete copy of the survey is provided in Appendix A). The survey instrument used in this study consisted of five parts.

#### Part One

Part one consisted of 10 questions designed to measure attitudes. The Attitudes Toward Lesbians-Short form (ATL-S) and Attitudes Toward Gay Men-Short form (ATG-S) instruments were used as the primary means of assessment of UW-L

undergraduates' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men in this study. The instrument was developed by Herek (1988).

Permission was granted to use the instrument, with specific advice by Herek regarding paralleling the ATG-S with the ATL-S for comparison of attitudes students have between gay men and lesbians (G. Herek, personal communication, Feb. 7, 1997; Greene & Herek, 1994, p. 226). The ATG-S and the ATL-S combined consisted of 10 questions used to assess the attitudes the respondents had toward gay men and lesbians. This constituted part one of the survey.

#### Part Two

Part two of the survey instrument consisted of eight questions designed to assess the climate for gay men and lesbians. The questions were designed to gauge perceptions students had about other people on campus, and the perceived level of safety for gay men and lesbians to be "out" on campus. These questions were written in order to gauge the perceived level of support of gay men and lesbians by: (1) other students, (2) professors, and (3) staff and administrators. Two final questions in this section assessed perceptions students had about the safety for gay men and lesbians to be "out", or open about their sexuality on the UW-L campus.

#### Part Three

Part three consisted of four questions designed to find out whether or not students had personal or vicarious knowledge of verbal harassment or physical abuse of a person because of his or her presumed or actual homosexuality. The

next questions asked students whether or not they had been exposed to any material on homosexuality either in the classroom or elsewhere at UW-L. If they indicated yes, they were asked to explain where this exposure occurred.

#### Part Four

Part four asked four additional questions of the respondents. These four questions were used to elicit qualitative responses in order to produce richer data and provide a deeper understanding of students' attitudes. These qualitative data reflected possible roots to students' attitudes, gave insight into their reasoning, and helped to identify the psychological functions influencing students' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. The questions were, "Do you feel UW-L would be a better place if gay men were not allowed on this campus? Please explain." The same question was asked again, with "gay men," replaced by the word "lesbians". The last two questions were designed to find out what students thought had most influenced their attitudes about gay men and lesbians, with both questions separated again, by "gay men" and "lesbians".

#### Part Five

Part five requested "background information" from students to indicate their gender, age, current class status (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior), type of residency (off campus or residence hall), and major--divided into six general categories. These categories were the College of Business Administration (CBA), the College of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (HPER), the College of

Liberal Studies (CLS), the School of Arts and Communication, the School of Education (both housed in CLS during the time of data collection), and the College of Science and Allied Health (CSAH). Additional background information such as their racial/ethnic background and sexual orientation was requested.

The final four questions of the survey asked the respondent if they personally knew anyone who identified as a gay male. If they indicated yes, they were asked to describe their relationship(s) with the person(s). The same questions were asked again, this time directed at personally knowing anyone who identified as a lesbian. They were asked to define their relationship(s) with that person. The options for identifying the relationship(s) included: friend, immediate family member, relative, partner, and other.

#### Additional Survey Options

The end of the survey left the respondent with the option for a confidential interview about the issues discussed in the survey. If they were interested, they could contact the researcher at the researcher's office phone number at the Office of Residence Life, or they could send an e-mail to the researcher requesting an interview. If the respondent requested an interview, a date, time, and place were agreed upon. Interviews were tape recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed for data which may have been useful in depicting the campus climate as it pertained to gay men and lesbians.

### Site of Investigation

The site at which this assessment of UW-L undergraduate attitudes toward gay men and lesbians took place was both on and off the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse campus, a mid-sized, four-year public institution located in West Central Wisconsin. The University is located in the city of La Crosse with a population of approximately 52,000 people. The UW-L population is comprised of approximately 7,700 undergraduate students and 500 graduate students.

### Population of the Study

The sample size drawn from the population of UW-L undergraduate students consisted of 2,700 students. This reflected 35% of the total undergraduate student population at UW-L at the time the sample was drawn. The sample was a computer generated random sample, stratified by gender and residence, to reflect the current statistics of the undergraduate population at UW-L. For the purpose of this study, one-third of the surveys were distributed by mail to the sample living on campus in UW-L residence halls, and two-thirds of the surveys were mailed to students residing off campus. The sample was purposefully larger than usual to elicit responses from the gay, lesbian, and bisexual student population for comparison with the heterosexual student population at UW-L.

### Survey Method

First, the survey was drafted and finalized. Next, a cover letter and promise of anonymity were composed (see Appendix B). An application to use human subjects in research

was completed with a narrative description of the research project. This, along with the cover letter and promise of anonymity were reviewed by the UW-L Institutional Review Board (IRB). The project was granted approval by the IRB after minor revisions to the survey were reviewed by the IRB.

The cover letter explained the purpose of the survey and the study, and the opportunity to participate in a raffle, which was built into the methodology as an incentive to participate in the research. Each individual in the sample received a red raffle ticket perforated in the middle, with a number on each end of the ticket (Appendix C). It was explained to each student that completion of the survey and return of half of the red raffle ticket in the postage paid envelope provided, would automatically enter them into a raffle for \$100 in cash. The winning number, as it was explained, was posted in the campus newspaper, The Racquet, on a specific date, and at the Information Counter in Cartwright Center, a location frequented by students.

#### Interview Procedure

The interview procedure followed the model of qualitative interviewing as described in Rubin and Rubin (1995) which "emphasizes the relativism of culture, the active participation of the interviewer, and the importance of giving the interviewee voice" (p. 31). This technique is, as explained by Rubin and Rubin, "most closely related to interpretive approach toward social knowledge" (p. 31). Interviews were to be audio-taped with permission from the interviewee, transcribed, and analyzed for recurring themes.

The interview design was iterative, in that it was able to be revamped depending on emerging themes, concentration on certain themes as they arose, and the analysis and testing processes which took place in order to understand and theorize the data collected from interviews.

Once themes were integrated and no further ideas, themes, or questions arose, the interviewing process was terminated. This, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967) is called "theoretical saturation", the point at which to terminate the interviewing process (as cited in Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.46).

#### Analysis Procedure

This survey used in this study contained questions soliciting both quantitative and qualitative responses. Due to this combination, data analysis is presented in two separate sets.

#### Quantitative Analysis Procedures

The quantitative data obtained in the surveys were first assigned numbers for a coding procedure. The first 10 questions comprising the ATG-S and ATL-S were coded with the higher numbers indicating a higher score on the homophobia scale. Two questions from each set had to be inverted for the purposes of scoring consistency.

The major hypotheses involved the comparison of group means for independent samples; therefore, t-tests and analysis of variances (ANOVAs) were used. Analyses of variance were used for any analysis which involved more than one independent variable and/or for which interaction effects

were explored. Paired-sample t-tests were used when comparing means within a given group (e.g., female respondents' scores on attitudes toward gay men vs. their attitudes toward lesbians). The data were then entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program for data analysis.

#### Qualitative Analysis Procedures

Qualitative data obtained were categorized according to Herek's (1986) content analysis methodology which identifies the psychological "functions" operative in students' most significant self-reported influences of their attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. The categorical functions are the experiential-schematic, defensive, and self-expressive functions (A description of the content analysis used was discussed in Chapter II).

First, the interrater reliability was established by training an undergraduate honors psychology student/research assistant on the categorization methodology established to analyze the data. After the training, both the primary researcher and the research assistant independently coded 60 surveys in accordance with the content analysis methodology. The cumulative interrater reliability rate was .96 for all categories.

Once the interrater reliability rate was established, the primary researcher continued to identify and tabulate 300 surveys into the proper categories. Herek (1987) identified three categories, whereas this study, conducted 10 years later, produced four usable categories for codification purposes. Herek was contacted via electronic mail (e-mail) to

discuss the additional category which was identified by the researcher and the research assistant as the "indirect experiential-schematic psychological function", or simply, those influences that were vicariously experiential. There was mutual agreement that at least one additional category was justified based on the content analysis of the data.

Herek's e-mail stated "At the time I did my research (back in the early 1980's), the presence of gay and lesbian figures in the media was pretty minimal." "I don't recall a specific category under which this [indirect experiences] would fit." Herek did state he believed that "there is something qualitatively different about direct contact and 'indirect' contact." He agreed a new category might need to be created. This study did in fact create the new, (fourth) category.

Next, the data were coded and categorized and each column of functions was tabulated and quantified for further analysis. Three hundred surveys were coded, representing 25% of the surveys received.

Chapter IV  
RESULTS, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the results of the survey sent out to 2,700 UW-L undergraduate students which provided a baseline measure of undergraduate attitudes regarding GLB issues at UW-L.

Because this study was conducted in accordance with naturalistic research procedures, additional questions and data which arose during the composition of this report were included and compiled in the findings of this study in order to capture the status quo at UW-L from spring 1997 through spring 1998. This additional data further depicts the environment at this institution as it pertains to the safety, support, and perceived climate at UW-L for gay, lesbian, and bisexual students, faculty, and staff.

Results--Descriptive Analysis

There were 2,700 surveys sent out to UW-L undergraduate students. One-thousand, one hundred and eighty (1,180) surveys were returned, which totaled a 43.7% response rate. The final sample reflected 15% of the undergraduate population at UW-L during the 1997 spring semester.

Restatement of the hypotheses and discussion about each of the hypothesized variables affecting students' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians will be discussed individually.

The variables include gender, same-gender homophobia, education, age, contact, and race/ethnicity. Analysis of the data included only heterosexual responses due to the low number of gay, lesbian, and bisexual respondents. Originally homosexual and bisexual people's responses were intended to be included for comparison purposes with heterosexuals, but the numbers were too low to run these comparisons.

Anecdotal information suggested strongly that many people who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual who received the survey did not respond to the survey for a variety of reasons. These reasons included, as one person reported later, "I felt paranoid, that someone knew or thought I was gay and sent this thing [survey] to me to confirm that" (lesbian student, personal communication November 7, 1997). Additionally, there were perceptions that "the researcher was some basher who wanted to know who was gay" (lesbian student, personal communication, November 7, 1997). Finally, other anecdotal information suggests that gay male and lesbian students did not respond to the survey because they felt their opinions toward gay men and lesbians [literally themselves] would be obvious [positive attitudes].

### Results

As the hypotheses stated in Chapter I suggest, certain variables affect attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Analyses of the data collected for this study support each of these findings, with few exceptions. The hypothesized results and additional findings are discussed in this chapter.

Gender

It was hypothesized that males hold more negative attitudes toward homosexuals than females. The findings of this study support this hypothesis. Males scored significantly higher on the Attitudes Toward Gay Men-Short form (ATG-S) than females. This finding was significant, indicating males are more homophobic than females. Scores on the Attitudes Toward Lesbians-Short form (ATL-S) were also significant (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Gender Comparison of Heterosexuals' Attitudes Toward Gay Men and Lesbians

<u>Attitudes Toward Gay Men</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
Males	347	12.41	1.63		
				8.26	.000
Females	778	11.57	1.46		

<u>Attitudes Toward Lesbians</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
Males	346	11.97	1.55		
				3.43	.001
Females	777	11.64	1.48		

Note. The higher the mean score is, the greater the degree of negative attitudes held.

### Gender Effects on Homophobia

It was hypothesized that heterosexuals hold more negative attitudes toward homosexuals of their own sex. This hypothesis is supported by the results represented in Table 1. Heterosexual males hold more homophobic attitudes toward gay men ( $M = 12.41$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ ),  $t(346) = 8.26$ ,  $p < .001$  than toward lesbians ( $M = 11.97$ ),  $t(345) = 3.43$ ,  $p < .001$ . There was no significant difference for females to hold more homophobic attitudes toward lesbians ( $M = 11.64$ ) than toward gay men ( $M = 11.57$ ). However, men are more homophobic than women. Men hold more negative attitudes toward gay men and toward lesbians (see Table 1).

### Education

It was hypothesized that because people with more formal (postsecondary) education hold more positive attitudes toward homosexuals, seniors will hold more positive attitudes toward gay men and lesbians than will freshman. On the ATL-S, the range between freshman and seniors was 12.18 to 11.56 for group mean scores (higher scores indicate more homophobic attitudes). On the ATL-S, juniors scored slightly lower than seniors. On the ATG-S, the range was 12.25 to 11.66, with a decline in the mean score from freshman to seniors.

Additional analyses provide more support for this finding. Attitudes toward gay men are significantly correlated to education.  $F(3, 1120) = 9.29$ ,  $p < .000$ . Attitudes toward lesbians are also significantly correlated to education.  $F(3, 1118) = 9.95$ ,  $p < .000$ . (see Tables 5 and 6 under the subheading "Class").

### Age

It was explained that age may be an influential factor when combined with educational attainment although age in itself may not be an influential factor affecting attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Thus, age was not originally hypothesized by itself. This study compared traditionally-aged undergraduate students at UW-L with nontraditionally aged undergraduate students at UW-L. This difference was determined by examining a significant break in ages at 25 years of age. The two age groups compared in this study are 18 to 25 and 26 to 59, which encompassed the range of ages represented by the data for this study.

Although age differences appeared to have an impact on attitudes toward gay men and lesbians, this variable alone did not appear to be a statistically significant factor influencing attitudes toward gay men and/or lesbians (see Table 2).

Table 2.

Heterosexuals' Age Group Comparisons with Attitudes Toward  
Gay Men and Lesbians

	<u>Attitudes Toward Gay Men</u>	<u>Attitudes Toward Lesbians</u>
	Group Mean	Group Mean
Age		
18-25	11.82	11.72
26-59	11.59	11.50

Note. The higher the mean score is, the greater the degree of negative attitudes held.

Contact

It was hypothesized that the more contact a person has had with gay men and/or lesbians, the more positive attitudes they will hold about gay men and lesbians. This "contact" variable dominates the literature as one of the prime factors influencing people's attitudes toward homosexuals in general. Here at UW-L, the same appears to be true. Those who reported contact with a gay male or lesbian indicated significantly less homophobic attitudes toward gay men and lesbians (see Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3.  
Heterosexual Respondents' Contact with a Gay Man

	n	M	SD	t	p
<u>Know a Gay Male</u>					
<u>Attitudes Toward Gay Men</u>					
Yes	667	11.56	1.53		
				-6.99	.000
No	457	12.21	1.52		
<u>Attitudes Toward Lesbians</u>					
Yes	664	11.52	1.50		
				-6.06	.000
No	458	12.07	1.47		

Note. The higher the mean score is, the greater the degree of negative attitudes held

Table 4.  
Heterosexual Respondents' Contact with a Lesbian

	n	M	SD	t	p
<u>Know a Lesbian</u>					
<u>Attitudes Toward Gay Men</u>					
Yes	585	11.63	1.60		
				- 4.49	.000
No	539	12.05	1.49		
<u>Attitudes Toward Lesbians</u>					
Yes	584	11.55	1.56		
				-4.39	.001
No	538	11.95	1.43		

Note. The higher the mean score is, the greater the degree of negative attitudes held.

#### Race/Ethnicity

It was hypothesized that race and ethnicity may influence students' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Reports in the literature are inconclusive. Some state no difference exists, some state that differences exist within certain ethnic groups, while others state that further research is needed. Since minority groups were under represented in the data collected for this study, two groups were created. They are labeled "White" and "Non-White". Though it is recognized that differences between minority

groups may exist, the data provided in this study did not lend itself to analysis beyond the scope of these two general categories.

The mean score for Non-Whites was consistently higher than Whites, indicating a more homophobic attitude as a group, toward gay men and lesbians. (see Tables 5 and 6 under the subheading Race/Ethnicity for this information).

Tables 5 and 6 show that people who report having had contact with gay men and/or lesbians hold more positive attitudes toward gay and lesbians than those who report having had no contact with gay men or lesbians. Contact was a significant factor even when six other variables were taken into account. Six of the major variables were explored with the breakdown by category for attitudes towards gay men (see Table 5) and attitudes toward lesbians (see Table 6). These variables were (1) gender, (2) race/ethnicity, (3) class, (4) age, (5) residency, and (6) college/school.

Variables which appeared to be significant as a group on the ATG-S were gender, class, residency and major. Variables which appeared to be significant as a group on the ATL-S were gender, race/ethnicity, class, residency, and major. The race/ethnicity variable was the only one that differed between the ATG-S and the ATL-S. It was significant on the ATL-S, but not on the ATG-S. Age was the only variable which was neither significant on the ATL-S nor the ATG-S.

For each variable in Tables 5 and 6, the mean score per category is shown, as is the F-value for the ANOVA runs. Finally, for each variable an interaction with contact was

explored. Interaction effects between contact and group variables appeared to be significant on the ATG-S in only one category. This category was "major". Interaction effects between contact and group variables were not significant on the ATL-S in any of the categories explored (see Tables 5 and 6).

Table 5.

Breakdown of ATG-S by Selected Demographic Groups

<u>Demographic Group</u>	<u>Group Mean</u>	<u>Contact Yes/No</u>	<u>F Contact</u>	<u>F (ANOVA)</u>	
				<u>F Group</u>	<u>Contact x Group<sup>^</sup></u>
<b>Entire Sample</b>					
(n=1124)	11.83	11.57/12.22	34.63***		
<b>Gender</b>					
Female (n=778)	11.57	11.39/11.90	34.63***	60.17***	n.s.
Male (n=346)	12.42	12.10/12.72			
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>					
White (n=1062)	11.84	11.58/12.21	45.42***	n.s.	n.s.
Non-White (n=24)	12.33	11.83/12.83			
<b>Class</b>					
Freshman (n=226)	12.26	11.99/12.48	39.37***	6.47***	n.s.
Sophomore (n=226)	11.93	11.74/12.20			
Junior (n=251)	11.62	11.43/11.96			
Senior (n=416)	11.66	11.40/12.17			
<b>Age</b>					
18-25 (n=1041)	11.83	11.56/12.21	44.74***	n.s.	n.s.
26-59 (n=30)	11.67	11.65/11.70			
<b>Residency</b>					
Off campus (n=683)	11.70	11.45/12.12	47.74***	9.31**	n.s.
On campus (n=440)	12.04	11.79/12.33			

Note: Higher ATG-S scores indicate more negative attitudes toward gay men.\*p < .05.;\*\*.01;\*\*\*.001.

<sup>^</sup> = interaction term for demographic grouping by contact (yes or no).

Table 5. (continued)

Breakdown of ATG-S by Selected Demographic Groups


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<u>Demographic Group</u>	<u>Group Mean</u>	<u>Contact Yes/No</u>	<u>F Contact</u>	<u>F(ANOVA)</u>	
				<u>F Group</u>	<u>Contact x Group<sup>^</sup></u>
College/School					
Arts & Comm (n=24)	11.38	11.20/11.67	41.10***	4.10***	2.40*
CLS (n=214)	11.49	11.46/11.55			
Education (n=164)	11.71	11.54/11.98			
CSAH (n=264)	11.75	11.34/12.33			
HPER (n=180)	12.03	11.68/12.58			
CBA (n=186)	12.11	11.85/12.43			

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Note: Higher ATG-S scores indicate more negative attitudes toward gay men.\*p < .05.;\*\*.01;\*\*\*.001.

<sup>^</sup> = interaction term for demographic grouping by contact (yes or no).

Table 6.

Breakdown of ATL-S by Selected Demographic Groups

<u>Demographic Group</u>	<u>Group Mean</u>	<u>Contact Yes/No</u>	<u>F(ANOVA)</u>		
			<u>F Contact</u>	<u>F Group</u>	<u>Contact x Group<sup>^</sup></u>
<b>Gender</b>					
Female (n=776)	11.64	11.50/11.83	16.27***	8.79**	n.s.
Male (n=346)	11.98	11.74/12.16			
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>					
White (n=1061)	11.74	11.55/11.94	19.57***	6.46**	n.s.
Non-White (n=23)	12.52	12.08/13.10			
<b>Class</b>					
Freshman (n=225)	12.18	11.92/12.36	12.76***	7.96***	n.s.
Sophomore (n=226)	11.85	11.85/11.85			
Junior (n=250)	11.57	11.38/11.78			
Senior (n=416)	11.56	11.41/11.81			
<b>Age</b>					
18-25 (n=1040)	11.73	11.55/11.93	16.29***	n.s.	n.s.
26-59 (n=30)	11.57	11.58/11.55			
<b>Residency</b>					
Off campus (n=681)	11.60	11.42/11.86	14.25***	11.09***	n.s.
On campus (n=440)	11.97	11.85/12.05			

Note. Higher ATL-S scores indicate more negative attitudes toward lesbians. \*p < .05.; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001.

<sup>^</sup> = interaction term for demographic grouping by contact (yes or no).

Table 6. (continued)

Breakdown of ATL-S by Selected Demographic Groups

<u>Demographic Group</u>	<u>Group Mean</u>	<u>Contact Yes/No</u>	<u>F Contact</u>	<u>F(ANOVA)</u>	
				<u>F Contact</u>	<u>Contact x Group<sup>^</sup></u>
College/School					
Arts & Comm (n=24)	11.54	11.33/11.77	13.60***	2.28*	n.s.
CLS (n=214)	11.54	11.32/11.83			
Education (n=164)	11.57	11.42/11.77			
CSAH (n=264)	11.67	11.42/11.91			
CBA (n=186)	11.89	11.83/12.95			
HPER (n=178)	11.96	11.88/12.05			

Note. Higher ATL-S scores indicate more negative attitudes toward lesbians. \*p < .05.; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001.

<sup>^</sup> = interaction term for demographic grouping by contact (yes or no).

Support and Safety of Campus Environment at UW-L

Students were asked to respond to several questions regarding the perceived levels of support of gay men and lesbians at UW-L by professors, staff and administrators, and other students. Student responses indicated what their perceptions were as to who were the most supportive people on campus for gay men and lesbians. Students reported that they perceived other students to be the least supportive of gay men and lesbians. Professors were ranked in the middle, next to students, while staff and administrators were ranked as the most supportive of gay men and lesbians.

Table 7

Heterosexual UW-L Undergraduate Students' Perceived Levels of Support for Gay Men.

Survey Item	<u>Gay Men</u>				
Scale: 1 = strongly agree    3 = somewhat disagree    5 = don't 2 = somewhat agree    4 = strongly disagree    know					
	1	2	3	4	5
11. Students at UW-L are supportive of gay men	% 1.1 (n) 13	27.3 312	43.8 500	26.7 305	1.1 12
13. Professors at UW-L are supportive of gay men	% 3.6 (n) 40	51.7 578	35.0 391	6.3 70	3.4 38
15. Staff and administrators at UW-L are supportive of gay men	% 5.4 (n) 61	56.3 631	29.6 331	5.4 61	3.2 36
17. Overall UW-L is a safe environ for gay men to be open about their sexuality	% 2.7 (n) 31	33.5 379	43.2 489	20.5 232	.2 2

Table 8  
Heterosexual UW-L Undergraduate Students' Perceived Levels of Support for Lesbians

Survey Item	<u>Lesbians</u>				
Scale: 1 = strongly agree    3 = somewhat disagree    5 = don't 2 = somewhat agree      4 = strongly disagree        know					
	1	2	3	4	5
11. Students at UW-L are supportive of lesbians	% 1.7 (n) 19	36.5 417	47.3 540	13.5 154	1.1 12
13. Professors at UW-L are supportive of lesbians	% 4.5 (n) 50	56.3 629	32.1 358	3.8 42	3.4 38
15. Staff and administrators at UW-L are supportive of lesbians	% 6.2 (n) 69	58.9 659	27.9 312	3.8 43	3.2 36
17. Overall UW-L is a safe environ for lesbians to be open about their sexuality	% 4.3 (n) 49	42.4 480	42.4 481	10.5 119	.2 2

### Analysis Results--Qualitative Survey Data

Question 25 in part four of the survey asked students to provide their own analysis, as to what most influenced their attitudes about *gay men*. The question read "What do you think has most influenced your attitudes about gay men?" Question 26 asked students the same question, but they were asked to explain what most influenced their attitudes about *lesbians*.

Written responses were analyzed using Herek's (1986) content analysis format discussed in the latter part of Chapter II. During the establishment of an interrater reliability rate (.96), it was discovered that a new category had to be formed because the content some of the responses did not fit into any of the other three categories used in the original content analysis Herek published in 1986.

### Qualitative Content Analysis

This fourth "function" was established and labeled the "Indirect Experiential-Schematic" function. Characteristics of this fourth function related to *indirect* forms of "contact" or learning about gay men and lesbians vicariously. Vicarious experiences that fit into this categorical function were items such as the media, newspapers, magazines, pornography, TV, educational measures and experiences, friends telling someone else about their "gay" friends, acquaintances, coworkers and so forth. The underlying difference was that there was not *direct* contact, but there was vicarious or "indirect-experiential" contact. The extent to which the respondent perceived the indirect learning experience(s) to be a true representation of gay men and

lesbians is unknown, but it does depict what the respondent felt most influenced their attitudes toward gay men and lesbians.

This Indirect Experiential-Schematic function was identified 98 times in 300 surveys analyzed, with respect to gay men. Therefore, it appears that approximately 32% of the survey respondents felt that a dominant function/factor influencing their attitudes toward gay men was of an indirect-experiential schematic nature. Approximately 41% of the time the vicarious experiential learning about gay men had a *positive* influence on the respondent's attitude toward gay men. Only 14% of the time the experience was *negative*, while 45% of the time, responses were conveyed as having had an indirect experience, but it gave a nondirectional response as to how the experience influenced their attitudes.

The Indirect Experiential-Schematic function was identified 100 times in 300 surveys pertaining to lesbians, approximately 33% of the time. Fifty percent of the time this function was identified as having a *positive* influence on the respondent's attitude toward lesbians, 9% of the time it had a *negative* influence, and 41% of the time, the response was nondirectional.

The finding of this fourth "function" operative in influencing students' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians suggests a significantly increasing "infiltration" of gay characters and content in the media, literature, education, and discussion between people and/or groups. The most prevalent event in the media during the collection of surveys

is possibly the publicizing of the sitcom personality Ellen Degeneres who came out of the closet on April 30th, 1997 on nationwide television. This may be considered a historical event which had the potential to greatly influence the data collected for this study.

Many surveys analyzed contained more than one "function" indicating having an influence on their attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. An example of a positive Indirect Experiential-Schematic response is reflected in the response to the question "What do you think has most influenced your attitudes about gay men?"

"Residence hall programs, panel discussions and textbook issues have been extremely helpful, otherwise my attitudes would be corrupt by societal views [same response for question pertaining to lesbians]" (female, junior, 21 years old).

"T.V. shows, like personal interest stories. You can't really judge until you know the person in the situation. Plus I have friends who know gays-- they're people too. Their [gay men and lesbians'] personality doesn't change because of their sexual preference"(female, freshman, 19 years old).

"I don't' know many gay men--honestly most of my attitudes are a result from movies, t.v.--which portray

gay men as very feminine, even though that is not always true" (female, junior, 21 years old).

"Most of what I know about homosexuals is from watching T.V. I don't believe it is wrong, but I'm not comfortable around lesbians" (female, junior, 20 years old).

#### Value/Self-Expressive Function

The Value/Self-Expressive function was identified 179 times in 300 surveys pertaining to *lesbians*. Thirty-five percent of the time the influence of values or self-expression was positive, 8% of the time it was negative, and 17% of the time the response was nondirectional.

As the question pertained to *gay men*, the Value/Self-Expressive function appeared in 179 of 300 cases. This constitutes 59% of the surveys. Fifty-seven percent of the time responses were positive, 14% of the time the responses were negative, and 52% of the responses were nondirectional.

Examples of negative attitudinal influences is reflected in the narrative responses to the question "What do you think has most influenced your attitudes about gay men?"

"My upbringing. I grew up to understand that being gay is not normal, strange and odd. If you're gay, there's something wrong with you [same for lesbians]" (male, freshman, 18 years old).

"Friends laugh at them [gay men and lesbians]. I don't want to disagree" (male, senior, 21 years old).

"My parents strong religious background which tells us that gay and lesbian activity is against God's law. God would have made another man for Adam instead of Eve if he wanted us to be gay" (male, junior, 20 years old).

Positive expressions of the Value/Self-Expressive function are also recognizable in some of the surveys in response to what the respondent felt most influenced their attitudes toward gay men and lesbians.

"My parents [influenced me the most]. I was always taught to keep an open mind. I've thought ever since I was young that you are born gay and no one makes themselves gay. Most of my friends attitudes about homosexuality are negative and it really bothers me. I would really benefit from having a homosexual friend" (female, sophomore, 19 years old).

"I am an open minded person, and my attitudes have developed from my beliefs and values. Freedom of choice is very important to me" (female, senior, 23 years old).

"I've always thought that a person has little choice in deciding their [gay men and lesbians] sexuality. I don't know many people who would choose a lifestyle which they were harassed. I feel all people are equal

and should be treated that way. I am in no place to judge anyone" (female, senior, 21 years old).

#### Experiential-Schematic Function

The Experiential-Schematic function (indicating direct contact) was identified 90 times in 300 surveys comprising 30% of the sample analyzed. This function is categorized according to actual "contact" with a gay man or lesbian.

Eighty-five percent of the time this contact experience with a *gay man* had a positive influence on respondent's attitudes toward gay men. Only 2% of the time did contact have a negative influence and 13% of the time, the respondents indicated a nondirectional response.

The Experiential-Schematic function was identified in 90 of 300 cases pertaining to *lesbians*. Eighty percent of the time the experience reported by the respondent had a positive impact on their attitudes toward lesbians, 2% of the time it had a negative impact, and 11% of the time the effect was nondirectional.

An example of a positive Experiential-Schematic response is reflected in the following narrative.

"In high school I was involved in an AIDS Awareness group and got to know several gay men and they were just like everyone else, in most cases the men were nicer than most other people I know" (female, sophomore, 20 years old).

"I know some lesbians and see that their sexuality doesn't affect their personality" (female, senior, 21 years old).

"Personal experiences [most affected my attitudes]. My favorite aunt is a lesbian and I have several friends who are...I know and am friends with many gay/bisexual men which has changed my attitudes about gay men" (female, senior, 22 years old).

"I have friends that are lesbians, that has influenced my attitudes the most" (female, junior, 21 years old).

Of the 2% of negative Experiential-Schematic "contact" most of the responses drew comparisons between the AIDS epidemic and homosexuality. Other respondents described a same-sex incest situation that occurred at some point in their childhood. They described the incest as a homosexual "act" that they felt was sick.

The positive Experiential-Schematic responses appear to be significant since they are self-reported, actual experiences of contact with gay men and lesbians the respondents know. The positive influence indicated in the data for this study is consistent with empirical findings in the literature reviewed for this study. The more contact a heterosexual person has with a known gay man or lesbian, the more positive their attitudes are toward gay men and lesbians.

### Defensive Function

The Defensive function was only identified in 4% of the 300 cases analyzed. Examples of a defensive reaction to the question are listed.

"The thought of a man's penis going into a dark, hairy butthole makes me sick. Just the thought makes me feel like I'm going to vomit" (male, senior, 24 years old).

Being female, I don't want another girl hitting on me, so I'm more disgusted by women who are gay...I don't approve of their behavior, but it's their choice though I do admit that I wish they would keep things private. Public displays of affection by homosexuals makes me sick, but I feel if it's out of sight it's alright (female, senior, 22 years old).

The nature of these responses are defensive because there is no reasoning behind the statement, other than negative, defensive thoughts of disgust.

An example of a defensive response is illustrated in the following statement:

"homosexualism are very dangerous. It is very serious problem [sic]. We should help people who are gay or lesbians"(male, senior, 34 years old).

Additional examples of the defensive function are found in many other surveys.

"I find their sexual actions disgusting and I don't feel I need to be told about them" (female, freshman, 18 years old).

"Logical thinking and or which reasons that we are born either male or female, and because of our body make-up we should not participate in perverse activity! + and - add up to neutral. + and + is imbalanced. Humans are not born to like their own sex" (male, freshman, 19 years old).

As one can see through the responses by these undergraduate students, their beliefs and values, direct and indirect experiences, as well as unfounded fears and speculations about gay men and lesbians influence their attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Most respondents were explicit in their responses, although a fair amount of individuals did leave this part of the survey blank, or responded "I don't know".

Another area of the survey in part IV asked the question "Do you feel UW-L would be a better place if gay men were not allowed on this campus? Please explain:" Many respondents challenged this question with capital letters and exclamation points explaining what a stupid question they thought this was. One response explains this explicitly.

"No! Kind of outrageous questions. Any even somewhat politically correct person will answer no, no matter how they feel" (female, senior, 21 years old).

Yet, another respondent seemed to have mixed emotions about the question, dependent upon whether the person was a gay male, or a lesbian, illustrating another end of the spectrum of students' voices on campus.

"Yes [gay men should not be allowed on this campus] because gay men are an embarrassment to this country and everything that it stands for. I also feel people would feel more comfortable in a gay free society....some lesbian activity is all right because I feel women need to be one with themselves. Some [lesbian] activity on this campus would be all right, if they kept it under the table" (male, junior, 21 years old).

As one can see, the various functions of this content analysis identify quite different psychological characteristics affecting attitudes undergraduate students have toward gay men and lesbians, whether they are positive, negative, or directionally unidentifiable.

#### Post-Hoc Analyses/Attitudinal Findings

Along with the hypothesized variables that affected attitudes toward gay men and lesbians, three additional variables proved to be of interest. These additional variables were, (1) exposure to material about homosexuals

either in their classroom or elsewhere at UW-L, (2) students' major (field of study) and, (3) personal knowledge of someone being harassed or physically assaulted because of his or her presumed or actual homosexuality.

Students Reported Exposure to Material about Homosexuality at UW-L

Students who reported being exposed to material about homosexuality either in the classroom or elsewhere at UW-L were less homophobic than those who had not been exposed to material about homosexuality (see Table 9).

Table 9.

Heterosexual Respondents' Exposure to Material at UW-L about Homosexuals

<u>Exposure to Material</u>	<u>Attitudes Toward Gay Men</u>				
	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
Yes	769	11.67	1.51		
No	354	12.15	1.62	- 4.83	.000
<u>Exposure to Material</u>	<u>Attitudes Toward Lesbians</u>				
	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
Yes	768	11.63	1.48		
No	353	11.99	1.56	- 3.69	.000

Note. The higher the mean score is, the greater the degree of negative attitudes held.

### Major

Student's majors were broken down into six general categories. The categories included:(1) the College of Business Administration, (2) the College of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, (3) the College of Liberal Studies (excluding students with majors in the School of Education and the School of Arts and Communication, as these two categories comprised two other separate categories), (4) the School of Arts and Communication, (5) the School of Education, and (6) the College of Science and Allied Health.

Ranked from least homophobic to most homophobic, according to their responses on the ATG-S were students with majors in (1) the School of Arts and Communication, (2) the College of Liberal Studies, (3) the School of Education, (4) the College of Science and Allied Health, (5) College of Health, Physical Education and Recreation and (6) the College of Business Administration.

According to their responses on the ATL-S (and not the ATG-S), students majoring in the School of Arts and Communication and the College of Liberal Studies were tied as the least homophobic. The other difference between the ATG-S and the ATL-S was that students majoring in the College of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation were ranked as the most homophobic, whereas students in the College of Business Administration ranked as the second most homophobic. The reverse was true on the ATG-S. (see Tables 5 and 6 for statistical significance information).

Personal Knowledge of GLB Harassment or Physical Assault  
at UW-L

Students who reported having personal knowledge of someone being harassed or physically assaulted because of his or her presumed or actual homosexuality were less homophobic than those who reported having no personal knowledge of this sort [ATL-S]  $F(1, 1138) = 6.48, p < .01$ , [ATG-S]  $F(1, 1142) = 9.88, p < .01$ . At UW-L, 11.9% of the students reported having personal knowledge of someone being harassed or physically assaulted because of his or her presumed or actual homosexuality, while 88.1% reported having no knowledge of this sort ( $n = 1,180$ ). One hundred and forty-one (141) students reported having personal knowledge of the aforementioned harassment or physical assault of actual or presumed homosexuals at UW-L. Vicarious knowledge of someone being harassed or physically assaulted because of his or her presumed or actual homosexuality was much higher. There were 333 students who responded affirmatively, that they had vicarious knowledge of this sort. This constituted 28.3% of the respondents.

As of December 1, 1997 after these data were collected, one "anti-gay" report was documented at UW-L which was an anti-gay chalking incident that appeared on the sidewalk during the fall 1997 semester during which time this study was being written. This one report was filed with the Protective Services Office on campus. The Offices of Student Life and Affirmative Action had no reports on file. One counselor at the Counseling and Testing Center on campus at

UW-L offered to discuss the question of how many reports they had by clients about harassment or physical assault due to someone's presumed or actual homosexuality. The counselor was unable to identify any reports or this type of activity. The counselor also iterated the practice of client confidentiality, which may have impeded others from offering information about harassment or assault that may have been dealt with by counselors in the Counseling and Testing Center. Due to the client confidentiality ethic and practice, there may well be knowledge of harassment or assault reports such as those sought after, but the information is protected by rights of privilege and confidentiality which must be respected.

#### Interviews

There were 11 requests for personal interviews. The researcher was contacted either by phone or electronic mail. There were seven female students and four male students who requested interviews. One woman identified herself as bisexual, five identified themselves as lesbians, and the remaining woman identified herself as a straight ally of GLB people. Of the four males who requested interviews, three males identified as "gay", and one male identified himself as straight, and expressed curiosity about the study.

Due to the time lines involved for interviewing student interview volunteers at the end of the spring 1997 semester, there was not enough time to interview all volunteers. Unfortunately, only 6 interviews were conducted. Of the 6 individuals who were interviewed, there was one bisexual

woman, one heterosexual woman, one lesbian, one heterosexual male and two gay men. Because most individuals indicated a relatively strong request for anonymity, despite their desire to cooperate in the interview process, data from these interviews will not be discussed in detail to alleviate any possibility that the interviewee could be identified by discussion about the content of the interviews.

In the absence of specific detail, however three common themes emerged from this small sample of interviews. These themes were: (1) All but one GLB individual reported that they were not involved on campus with clubs or organizations primarily because of their sexual orientation and the fear of not being accepted because of it, (2) all GLB individuals felt it was necessary to stay in the closet and not disclose their sexual orientation in many situations, including in the classroom, in residence halls, in Greek organizations, at work on campus and in their daily lives for fear of harassment or violence being inflicted upon them, and (3) the two heterosexual interviewees had distinctly contrasting experiences on campus in comparison to their GLB counterparts. These three major themes are reflective of the isolation, fear, and lack of outreach services/resources common in the daily lives of GLB individuals nationwide. The main differences between GLB individuals and heterosexual individuals were the absence of many fears. For example, the fear of disclosing their sexual orientation, fear of becoming involved in groups on campus because of their sexual orientation, fear of being "out" as a heterosexual. Both

heterosexuals who were interviewed expressed no fear in any of these aforementioned situations. Additionally, when asked if they felt there was someone on campus with whom they could discuss stressors in their daily life with, both heterosexual students responded affirmatively, while each of the gay, lesbian, or bisexual interviewees responded that there was either no one they would talk to, or that maybe they would take a chance and talk to an advisor or professor they trusted. Consistently, GLB interviewees indicated they would probably deal with their daily stressors on their own by dealing with it individually or talking with another gay, lesbian, or bisexual friend. Surprisingly they did not express that they would speak with a counselor on campus, while the heterosexual students indicated that if they did have a lot of stress in their lives they would not hesitate to speak with a counselor at the University.

These experiences illustrate the sharply contrasting differences between the daily lives GLB students and heterosexual students. Individuals who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual have a unique array of stressors with which they must deal, namely fear. They are less involved on campus, which leaves them more isolated and alone, and they are less likely than heterosexual students to seek professional help for their stressors. The opposite appears to be true for heterosexual students.

## Chapter V

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall there is a problem with the climate at UW-L for gay men and lesbians. This problem is reflected by the data presented and discussed in Chapter IV. The need for this study was amplified by a the history of events on the UW-L campus affecting GLB students, faculty, and staff. The study was conducted to assess attitudes UW-L undergraduate students had toward gay men and lesbians in order to determine the level of support and safety of the campus climate for gay men and lesbians. The motivation for this study was based on nationwide studies revealing widespread antigay prejudice, as well as violence, harassment, and aggression toward gay men, lesbians, and bisexual people, as identified throughout the review of related research on nationwide studies and campus climate studies in the United States.

#### Conclusions

This chapter will draw conclusions from data collected and analyzed for this report and provide recommendations for change at UW-L in order to make this campus climate safer and more supportive for gay men, lesbians, bisexual people, and their allies.

First, the high response rate of 43.7% for this study was not expected. It is probable that the good response rate was due to the \$100 cash raffle incentive built into the methodology of this study, however this did not seem to be the case 100% of the time. Many surveys were returned without the raffle ticket entry. Still, there seemed to be a high interest to express personal views about attitudes toward homosexuality, levels of support and safety for homosexuals on campus, and to report individual experiences and influences with respect to one's attitudes toward homosexuality.

With respect to the question raised in Engstrom and Sedlacek (1997) about the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLGM) scale lending itself to "politically correct" responses, I tend to disagree with this notion. Short forms of the ATLGM (the ATG-S and the ATL-S) were used in this study and the respondents did not seem to provide politically correct responses. Higher levels of homophobic responses were present in the hypothesized directions. If these high levels of homophobia are politically correct responses, as suggested, then one should expect even higher levels of homophobia to be present, in the absence of politically correct responses. However, based on the data drawn from this study, politically correct responses did not seem to be the norm. Students expressed their opinions and described some of their experiences and arguments about homosexuals in great length.

For example, male homophobia was significantly higher than females in this study. As discussed earlier, males are generally a more homophobic gender than females. This is likely due to the strict gender role conformity and gender expression expectations our society imposes upon individuals. Gender role conformity is less stringent for women in American society. Women's roles have expanded and women have become more assertive over the years. Further, androgyny has become more acceptable. Additionally, women's relationships with other women tend to be more intimate than male to male relationships. Men's roles have also changed in society in recent years, but not to the degree that women's roles have. Women's roles seem to have become more flexible. Men who tend to exhibit more feminine characteristics are seen as weak, sensitive, and more in touch with their emotions. These men are often harassed because they are assumed to be gay. The "sissy" image of gay men is still portrayed in the media and the stereotypes continue to exist in our culture. As women adopt more masculine traits, however, they are not as severely criticized for stepping outside of the boundaries of their gender roles. Women seem to be criticized and stereotyped less for androgynous dress or activities.

Finally, with respect to lesbians and gay men, lesbians are more accepted in American culture than gay men. Men report finding lesbians and lesbian sexual activity arousing and stimulating, while both women and men tend to find gay males and gay males' sexual activity appalling and

disgusting. Attitudes heterosexuals have toward gay men, in sum, appear to be less favorable than heterosexuals' attitudes toward lesbians.

Age and educational attainment also had an impact on attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. The age group for 26-59 year old students in comparison to 18-25 year old students exhibited less homophobic attitudes. Comparatively, students with more education tended to exhibit less homophobic attitudes. It is assumed that older students have attained a higher level of education and therefore have been exposed to more experiences, people, and viewpoints, and are therefore less homophobic.

Contact or social interaction with gay men and lesbians not only seems to significantly reduce homophobic attitudes toward homosexuals of the same gender, but this contact experience seems to induce less homophobic attitudes toward opposite gender homosexuals. For example, males who have reported contact with a lesbian, hold lower homophobic attitudes toward lesbians and gay men, than males who report no contact with homosexual persons. Because of this, it appears that contact with homosexuals is a crucial factor in reducing levels of homophobic attitudes in the heterosexual population. This has great implications for gay men and lesbians and the need for gay men and lesbians to be open and "out" about their sexual orientation. Yet, fear is still a barrier as anti-gay legislation continues to be presented in various states, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is still legal in numerous states, and the

potential risks for individuals to come out may continue to outweigh the benefits. As unfortunate as this is, institutions of higher education can still be on the cutting edge of providing safe and supportive climates for the gay men, lesbians, and bisexual people in the campus environment.

Therefore, support of gay men and lesbians in institutions of higher education is one area which should continue to be studied.

In this study, perceived levels of support and safety were assessed. Students perceived other students to be the most homophobic members of the campus community, then professors, and lastly, staff and administrators. How accurate are these perceptions? Considering students have more contact with other students, see their professors one to three times per week in most courses, and rarely interact with staff and administrators, it is difficult to determine the accuracy of these perceptions. Understandably, students are often in close proximity with other students, moreso than with professors, staff, or administrators. Therefore, as students form their peer groups, they also seem to make friendships with people similar to themselves and adopt similar values and beliefs systems. In many cases, these values and beliefs are racist, sexist, and homophobic. It is easy to understand why students would rate their peers unfavorably with respect to low levels of support for gay men and lesbians. Regarding professors, staff, and administrators, it is difficult to know how accurate these perceptions are or upon what these perceptions are based.

Questions eliciting qualitative responses as to why students rated these individuals the way they did would be an additional benefit as they would provide a deeper understanding of students' perceptions and the influences of these perceptions.

Students' perceptions of safety for gay men and lesbians coincided with the findings about gender, students' perceptions about support for gay men and lesbians, and attitudes individuals have toward gay men and lesbians. Students perceived the environment at UW-L to be safer for lesbians than for gay men. Again, this is likely due to the extreme negative attitudes toward gay men in comparison to the less extreme attitudes toward lesbians.

One particular finding of interest in this study was that 141 students, nearly 12% of the entire sample reported having personal knowledge of harassment or physical assault directed toward someone because of the person's presumed or actual homosexual orientation. Yet there is still only one formal report of this nature documented at UW-L. It seems to be unlikely that gay, lesbian, and bisexual students will submit a formal report about this type of harassment or assault for the common fear of further victimization until safe avenues for reporting are made visible. I believe it is much easier for GLB students to change their routines, as indicated in the literature, than to report a crime committed against them. This fear, as the interviews documented in this study suggested, is also a barrier in obtaining professional help to deal with stress. Clearly the experiences of

heterosexual students are much different than those of GLB students. Therefore GLB students have different needs which should be addressed by the institution.

A rather interesting finding in this study were the results about the relation between students attitudes toward gay men and lesbians and their major field of study. This was the only demographic variable that was consistently significant on the ATG-S. Students whose majors fall into the School of Arts and Communication, the School of Education and other areas of the College of Liberal Studies exhibited significantly lower levels of homophobic attitudes than students whose majors are in the College of Science and Allied Health, the College of Business Administration and the College of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation. This results in the question of whether or not students majoring in the humanities become less homophobic and more open-minded as a result of their broad range of studies, or whether students who are already less homophobic and more open-minded are attracted to a broad range of studies and majors in the humanities, or College of Liberal Studies. This is another question that should be explored further.

Additionally, students who are exposed to educational material about homosexuality had less homophobic attitudes than students who had not been exposed to educational material. This reinforces the idea that homophobia is a learned behavior that can be unlearned, through education and exposure to accurate information about homosexuals. This finding also supports the idea that indirect means of

educating students about homosexuality is successful in undermining negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians.

Therefore, it should not be surprising that the content analysis of the qualitative data in this study produced a new "fourth" category which should be referred to as the Indirect Experiential-Schematic psychological function. It has already been acknowledged that direct social interaction or "contact" has a significant influential effect on students' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Thus, it seems logical that indirect "contact" would have some kind of influential effect on students' attitudes also. The results of this study indicate this appears not only to be the case, but this indirect contact appears to have a significant positive effect on students' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Experiential means of gaining information about homosexuals seems to have the greatest influence on attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. This finding suggests that it is not impossible to change students' negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians and amplifies the power of education in our society.

However, there does seem to be a dominant theme within the Value/Self-Expressive function that may impede positive responses to direct or indirect experiences with homosexuality. This theme consists of students' values about religion, their understanding and interpretation of the Bible, and their relationship with "God". Because values and beliefs are often an extension of one's family's values and beliefs, homophobic attitudes stemming from religious beliefs

and/or familial influence are likely to be the most difficult attitudes to change. Not only is it beneficial for these individuals to change so that they are able to understand where and how their values and beliefs were formed, but also for them to be able to work successfully with a wide range of people and personalities from diverse backgrounds and lifestyles.

#### Recommendations for Change

This section will provide recommendations for change nationwide, and specifically at UW-L. Since this study focused on the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of UW-L students, most recommendations for change are specific to this institution.

First, there is a need for developing heterosexuals' understanding of sexual minorities as they either will at some point in their lives, or possibly already have encountered a working experience or working relationship with someone who is gay, lesbian, or bisexual. They will need this understanding to function harmoniously within their prospective career environments.

Because contact with gay men and lesbians, whether direct or indirect, appears to have a significant impact on students' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians in the positive sense, more programming efforts, class panel discussions, and addition of GLB course material and other direct and/or indirect exposure to gay related themes should be incorporated into the classroom. This can be accomplished through reading assignments, lectures, films, discussion, and

report writing. It is not impossible to find an inlet for a GLB issue or theme in any course on this campus, or others. For example, when an issue arises in the media or in the campus newspaper, there is an opportunity for discussion if professors permitted 10 minutes at the beginning of their classes for incorporation of current issues. Most often, a professor would have to bring a GLB topic into the classroom, because students may not do it, for fear of being perceived as gay, lesbian or bisexual themselves, and they may receive backlash from other students for their presumed or actual homosexuality. This is why it is easier and less complicated to incorporate if professors assume personal responsibility for this, and provide a safe classroom for discussion on GLB issues, or any other issue that may still be considered taboo for some people.

Another recommendation for UW-L is to implement a realistically safe method of receiving and processing reports by gay men, lesbians, bisexual people, and those who have been or are being verbally harassed or physically assaulted because of their presumed or actual homosexual or bisexual orientation. A safe space for reporting this information is necessary because, as the review of related research indicated, most students will not file reports for a variety of reasons, namely fear. This fear may be alleviated slightly by the emergence of visible allies on campus, however allies seem to be most visible on campus by the presence of a "safe space" card on individuals' office doors. The safe space card displays the pink triangle, a familiar symbol of support and

solidarity within the GLB community. This nonverbal message is not enough, nor is it convincingly supportive on campus. The mere display of a symbol is far from an institutionalized commitment to combating heterosexism and homophobia.

Proactive support, programming, and resources for GLB people in comparison to a pink triangle on an office door would likely be more effective. Therefore the effectiveness of this "safe space" ally program on campuses should be evaluated.

Because of the contrasting experiences of GLB students on campus who participated in the interview process and the experiences of their heterosexual counterparts, there is a need for services supporting students on campus, such as the Counseling and Testing Center. Student services centers on campus should conduct outreach and become more visible, vocal allies to GLB students. Prior to conducting outreach, staff members should be trained and sensitized to GLB issues if they are not already.

Additionally, a new review of the recommendations by the GLBTF outlined in the 1993 GLB Concerns Report would be beneficial to the University. The University of Wisconsin - La Crosse will take these recommendations seriously if the institution is truly committed to making the University a better place for gay men, lesbians, and bisexual people, whether they are students, faculty, or staff at UW-L. During the composition of this report over a one-year period, this researcher found few recommendations from the 1993 GLB Concerns Report that were actually implemented. Making the University a better, safer, more supportive place for gay

men, lesbians, bisexual people, and their allies will take more than recommendations for change, it will take a University wide commitment to change.

Senior administrators and faculty should set this example by being assertive and supportive of gay, lesbian, bisexual people, and their allies if they are genuinely concerned about these people and committed to equity.

On the other hand, students have made "diversity" issues remarkably visible since this researcher came to UW-L in September of 1996. Students may well be the ones setting the example and dictating the climate for the University community. If this is true, administrators should support students' needs. Administrators must listen to students in order to find out what their current needs really are, and the administrators are the people who must decide how best to meet these ever changing needs. One of these needs at UW-L is support for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people and their allies.

Moreover, the creation of a physical "safe space" at UW-L for gay men, lesbians, and bisexual people would be of great benefit to the campus community, just as the Multicultural Student Center and the Women's Studies Resource Center have proven to benefit the campus by their existence. The existence of these two centers sends many messages, including the central one that UW-L supports multicultural students and women. The existence of a "GLB Center" would undoubtedly send the message that UW-L also supports gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. This should benefit the

University community as the other two centers have proven to benefit the entire University community by supporting these other facets of the minority population at UW-L and support the University commitment to valuing diversity.

It is recommended that UW-L create a GLB center along with a full-time coordinator position. This combination must assist in building a bridge across the student, faculty, and staff population comprising the GLB community and also strive to build bridges with other diverse groups on campus to combine diversity programming efforts creating joint awareness and education in a cost-effective manner.

This Center could easily model the GLB centers of other institutions such as the University of California-Los Angeles, the University of Michigan, or the University of Minnesota. Not only do these centers attract GLB students for admission purposes, they also send a clear message to current and prospective students, faculty, and staff that the commitment to supporting these individuals and their allies is truly institutionalized.

A "Center" should provide information, resources, outreach, referrals, a meeting space for the Straights and Gays for Equality (SAGE) student organization, the GLB Equity Committee, and provide support to GLB people and their allies. It should also provide educational materials for students writing papers or conducting research on multicultural issues--because "gay" is not to be defined improperly as only "white", as discussed earlier. Instead, "gay" is a form of multiculturalism. Gay people are White,

African-American, European-American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and so forth. Sexual orientation transcends the bounds of ethnicity, heritage, or skin color. Support and organizational efforts such as those mentioned should be implemented by a coordinator with specific responsibilities to the GLB population on campus, their allies, and the greater campus community.

The coordination of this center should be such that it intersects these cross-cultural observations with an understanding that "homosexuality" itself is understood and defined differently between and within various cultures. For example, Western and Non-Western cultures differ greatly in their perceptions of homosexuality. Coordination of a GLB Center must take into account the realization of these cross-cultural differences and the unique experiences and perceptions of people of many cultures.

In addition to culture, a coordinator should realize the many existing theoretical constructs that affect people's attitudes toward homosexuals. According to the social constructionist view of homosexuality, certain variables affect sexual orientation. This is not the view that homosexuality is an innate characteristic. Social constructionist views affect people's attitudes toward homosexuality and homosexual people. This seems to be manifested in people's beliefs and values systems.

Therefore, a coordinator of a GLB center would not only have to understand these variables contributing to heterosexuals' attitudes toward homosexuals, but also

understand the variables affecting cross-cultural and inter-cultural attitudes toward homosexuals.

If the University creates a GLB Center, the coordinator should be responsible for planning and coordination of educational workshops, panels, training, and research and development of programs for the University. Additionally, it is recommended that this coordinator would be responsible for advising Straights and Gays for Equality (S.A.G.E.), convening the GLB Equity Committee, and writing reports required of, or deemed appropriate for the Committee. Moreover, a coordinator should be able to assess and respond to the needs of GLB students and serve as a primary resource and referral point for them.

A select few administrators or rotating students should not be responsible for the efforts of creating this safe space and the responsibilities inherent to a bona fide "coordinator" position of a GLB center on campus. A full-time coordinator is necessary because students are too often pulled away from their education as they assume responsibility for awareness and work on GLB issues on campus. I agree it is important for students to raise awareness and become involved, however, the work should not fall upon a select few individuals just because they are "out" on their campus. Those students who are most involved are often times those most in need of the support. Faculty and administrative efforts are also hampered by a commitment to the responsibilities inherent to their respective positions.

For a comparison of this physical safe space idea in the form of a GLB center, one should examine the network of support the community provides through the Gay Alliance for La Crosse Area Youth (GALAXY). GALAXY provides support and educational information for gay youth in the community, mainly high school students. The question is, what will these youth have when/if they choose to attend UW-L in the future? Where will their network exist within the campus community when they are accustomed to having a coordinator and support network in La Crosse, but not on campus? These prospective students may search for other, outwardly supportive universities and colleges with "out" faculty, staff, students, and administrators, and a center where they can meet and obtain information and educational materials, as well as socialize and recognize their true identities, instead of hiding from themselves, in turn hindering their own development in other aspects of their lives. In sum, a center would foster healthy development for GLB people, their allies, and those interested in the resources a GLB center could provide to the campus community, further fostering the community's development.

Without institutionalized support of the aforementioned recommendations and turning these and former recommendations into actions, support of the GLB community will continue to be unstable, disorganized, and it will continue to use and abuse students, faculty, and staff currently trying to keep

the GLB community safe, alive, and educative. This in itself is a major responsibility UW-L should manage for its students, faculty, and staff.

Institutionalizing such efforts will also make UW-L a more attractive institution to individuals whose values reflect those of a nondiscriminatory, highly inclusive nature. These are the individuals UW-L should attempt to recruit to campus whether they are our students or prospective faculty members. With the approach of a high turnover of faculty in upcoming years, support of GLB issues at UW-L will attract people with values reflecting the values of the institution itself.

Homophobia, racism, sexism, and other "isms" in our lives speak in terms of injustices and call for equity. The challenge for UW-L and other institutions in the nation and in the world, is to examine injustices and provide equity to all human beings.

Finally, meeting the needs of the GLB population whether this means our students, colleagues, or friends is imperative in the humanistic sense. Every individual within the UW-L community and society at large deserves respect and equitable treatment and the opportunity to explore and fully develop their true potentials. The efforts to meet these potentials must be supported by the institution and the community, grassroots organizers and scholars, the governmental bodies, and the people they represent. Change, as it is brought forward by those most in need of it, will need support. It can no longer continue to be oppressed by those with the most

power and privilege in our institution, or in our communities. Equity is balance, and balance in any bureaucracy, community, organization, or institution represents true harmony. Equity is clearly one sign of a healthy institution; inequity is not.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for future research at UW-L include conducting a study on faculty, staff, and administrators' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. It would also be interesting to find out what courses currently being taught at UW-L actually implement GLB issues and themes into their course work and discussions. Additionally, it would be beneficial to know what perceptions faculty, staff, and administrators have regarding the safety and support of GLB people at UW-L for comparison with student perceptions of the campus climate.

Further, an examination of other minority populations should be explored in greater numbers to find out what variables effect nonwhite populations' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians in addition to further exploring any differences that may exist between white and nonwhite populations.

Additionally, further investigation of the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLGM) scale which was criticized for lending itself to politically correct responses should be explored more critically within a variety of populations.

Furthermore, an assessment of the "safe space" ally program is recommended. How do those who display the safe space ally cards create the safe space they claim to represent? How effective are these cards in creating the perception that the environment in someone's office is truly supportive? What expectations do GLB people have of their self-proclaimed allies? What do allies perceive their role to be on campus and how do they act out this role? Are safe space allies the people GLB students, faculty, and staff perceive them to be?

Finally, it would be interesting to elaborate on the newly created category discovered by this study which built upon Herek's (1986) content analysis, the "Indirect Experiential-Schematic" function in order to find out specifically, what TV programs, which characters, what magazines, and what type of other indirect experiences most influence people's attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. More specific responses may provide deeper insight into this fairly new phenomenon.

In sum, recommendations for future research include an examination of what are effective strategies to incorporate GLB issues into the classroom; what attitudinal differences may exist between white and nonwhite populations; further exploration of the type of responses the ATLGM may elicit; an evaluation of the safe space ally program on campus, a comparison of the GLB ally's perceived role and influence on the environment and the expectations of allies by GLB people, and finally, further exploration of the characteristics of

the Indirect Experiential-Schematic psychological function which influences people's attitudes toward gay men and lesbians.

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APPENDIXES

Survey: Attitudes Toward Gay Men and Lesbians

APPENDIX A

# ATTITUDES SCALE TOWARD GAY MEN AND LESBIANS

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You have been randomly selected from all undergraduate students at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse to participate in a research project. I am conducting this study for my master's thesis to fulfill part of my graduation requirements for the College Student Personnel graduate program.

This is a study on attitudes undergraduate students have about gay and lesbian people. Your responses to the questionnaire are important. Please note, there are no "right" or "wrong" answers.

If you are willing to participate in a *confidential interview* about these issues, whether you identify as a heterosexual, gay male, lesbian, or a bisexual person, or if you have any questions, please contact the researcher, Angela C. Nichols. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Angela C. Nichols  
Office of Residence Life, 213 Wilder Hall  
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse  
La Crosse, WI 54601  
(608) 785-8075  
e-mail: nicho\_ac@students.uwlax.edu

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## PROMISE OF ANONYMITY

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The purpose of this research is to find out what undergraduate students at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse think about gay men and lesbians. I recognize that some people may find this topic sensitive, and for others, it may be easier to think about. Whatever the case may be for you personally, you are in no way obligated to complete the questionnaire if you find yourself uncomfortable with the subject matter. Participation is voluntary.

By completing the questionnaire and returning it, you imply consent to the use of the information provided, in published or unpublished reports such as my thesis, or any other publications for which the data may be useful.

No associations will be made between the data and the individual from which the data was obtained. The return envelope has a number on it, which will not in any way associate you with the questionnaire. It is merely a postal routing number. All return envelopes have the exact same number on them.

If you volunteer to be interviewed, your name will not be associated with any information you provide.

**ANYONE WHO COMPLETES AND RETURNS THE QUESTIONNAIRE IS AUTOMATICALLY ELIGIBLE FOR A \$100 CASH PRIZE.** If you volunteer to participate in this research, don't forget to return half of your raffle ticket with the questionnaire in the postage-paid, return envelope provided. Keep your half of the ticket in a safe place until the winning number is drawn. The winning ticket **number** will be drawn April 15, 1997 and will be announced in *The Racquet*, the campus newspaper, shortly thereafter and be posted at the Information Counter in Cartwright Center, with instructions on how to claim your cash prize. Even as a potential "winner" of the raffle for the \$100 cash prize, you will remain anonymous and there will be no association with your questionnaire.

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PLEASE TURN THE PAGE TO BEGIN THE  
ATTITUDES SCALE TOWARD GAY MEN AND LESBIANS

## ATTITUDES SCALE TOWARD GAY MEN AND LESBIANS

**PART 1:** Please respond to the following statements by circling the number on a scale of 1 to 4 which best describes how you feel about each statement. *There are no right or wrong answers.*

	1	2	3	4
	STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
	STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
<b>Please respond to the following statements about gay men:</b>				
1. Homosexual behavior between two men is just plain wrong.	1	2	3	4
2. Male homosexuality is merely a different kind of lifestyle that should <i>not</i> be condemned.	1	2	3	4
3. I think male homosexuals are disgusting.	1	2	3	4
4. Male homosexuality is a perversion.	1	2	3	4
5. Male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in men.	1	2	3	4
<b>Please respond to the following statements about lesbians:</b>				
6. Homosexual behavior between two women is just plain wrong.	1	2	3	4
7. Female homosexuality is merely a different kind of lifestyle that should <i>not</i> be condemned.	1	2	3	4
8. I think lesbians are disgusting.	1	2	3	4
9. Female homosexuality is a perversion.	1	2	3	4
10. Female homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in women.	1	2	3	4

**PART 2:** Please respond to the following statements as they pertain to the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UW-L):

	STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
11. <i>Students</i> at UW-L are supportive of <i>lesbians</i> .	1	2	3	4
12. <i>Students</i> at UW-L are supportive of <i>gay men</i> .	1	2	3	4
13. <i>Professors</i> at UW-L are supportive of <i>lesbians</i> .	1	2	3	4
14. <i>Professors</i> at UW-L are supportive of <i>gay men</i> .	1	2	3	4
15. <i>Staff and administrators</i> at UW-L are supportive of <i>lesbians</i> .	1	2	3	4
16. <i>Staff and administrators</i> at UW-L are supportive of <i>gay men</i> .	1	2	3	4
17. Overall, UW-L is a safe environment for <i>lesbians</i> to be open about their sexuality.	1	2	3	4
18. Overall, UW-L is a safe environment for <i>gay men</i> to be open about their sexuality.	1	2	3	4

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**PART 3: Please respond to the following questions as they pertain to the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UW-L): circle YES or NO**

- |   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| 19. Do you <i>personally know</i> anyone at UW-L who was harassed or physically assaulted because of his or her presumed or actual homosexuality?       | YES | NO |
| 20. Have you <i>heard from others</i> that someone at UW-L was harassed or physically assaulted because of his or her presumed or actual homosexuality? | YES | NO |
| 21. Have you been exposed to any material about homosexuals either in the classroom or elsewhere at UW-L?   | YES | NO |
| 22. If yes, please explain where this exposure occurred (i.e. residence hall program, panel discussion, in a textbook, etc.):                           |     |    |

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**PART 4: Please respond to the following open-ended questions.**

23. Do you feel UW-L would be a better place if *gay men* were not allowed on this campus?  
Please explain:
24. Do you feel UW-L would be a better place if *lesbians* were not allowed on this campus?  
Please explain:

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**PLEASE GO TO THE BACK PAGE.**

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25. What do you think has most influenced your attitudes about *gay men*? Please explain:

26. What do you think has most influenced your attitudes about *lesbians*? Please explain:

---

**PART 5: Please provide the following background information about yourself.**

27. Gender: (check one)

Male       Female

28. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

29. Current class status: (check one)

Freshman       Junior  
 Sophomore       Senior

30. Indicate your type of residence: (check one)

Off Campus       Residence Hall

31. Major(s):

\_\_\_\_\_

32. Racial/ethnic background: (check one)

Asian       Black  
 White       Native American  
 Hispanic  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

33. Please indicate your sexual orientation:  
(check one)

Gay Male       Heterosexual  
 Lesbian       Bisexual

34. Do you personally know anyone who identifies as *gay male*? (check one)

Yes       No

35. If yes, how would you describe your relationship(s) with the person(s)?  
(You may check more than one)

Friend  
 Immediate family member  
 Relative  
 Partner  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

36. Do you personally know anyone who identifies as a *lesbian*? (check one)

Yes       No

37. If yes, how would you describe your relationship(s) with the person(s)?  
(You may check more than one)

Friend  
 Immediate family member  
 Relative  
 Partner  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

---

If you identify as a heterosexual, gay male, lesbian, or bisexual and you are willing to participate in a confidential interview about these issues, please contact the researcher, Angela C. Nichols at e-mail: nichc\_ac@students.uwlax.edu or in the Office of Residence Life, 213 Wilder Hall, 785-8075

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**THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE ATTITUDES SCALE TOWARD GAY MEN AND LESBIANS**  
Please return this completed questionnaire in the postage-paid, return envelope with half of your red raffle ticket to be entered in the \$100 cash prize drawing.

Cover Letter and Promise of Anonymity

APPENDIX B

# \$ Congratulations \$

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You have been randomly selected from all undergraduate students at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse to participate in a research project. I am conducting this study for my master's thesis to fulfill part of my graduation requirements for the College Student Personnel graduate program. This is a study on attitudes undergraduate students have about gay and lesbian people. Your responses to the survey are important, and you will be eligible for a *CASH REWARD* for your participation.

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THE ENCLOSED QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE POSTAGE-PAID RETURN ENVELOPE BY APRIL 4th WITH HALF OF YOUR RED RAFFLE TICKET TO BE AUTOMATICALLY ENTERED IN A RAFFLE FOR \$100 CASH PRIZE

The winning ticket *NUMBER* will be drawn April 15, 1997 and will be announced in *The Racquet*, the campus newspaper, shortly thereafter. It will also be posted at the information desk in Cartwright Center, with information on how to claim your winnings! You will remain anonymous.

You are also welcome to participate in a confidential interview regarding these issues whether you identify as a heterosexual, a gay male, lesbian or bisexual. The interview opportunity is voluntary. Your return of this questionnaire implies consent to participate in the research--the interview option, however, is your choice.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in an interview, please contact me at:

Angela C. Nichols  
Residence Life, 213 Wilder Hall  
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse  
La Crosse, WI 54601  
(608) 785-8075

nicho\_ac@students.uwla:.edu

Your participation is greatly appreciated!

---

# PROMISE OF ANONYMITY

---

The purpose of this research is to find out what students think about gay and lesbian people. I recognize that some people may find this topic sensitive, and for others, it may be easier to think about. Whatever the case may be for you personally, you are in no way obligated to complete the survey if you find yourself uncomfortable with the subject matter. Participation is voluntary. However, by completing the survey and returning it, you imply consent to use the information you provide, in published or unpublished reports such as my thesis project, or any other publications for which the data may be useful. Again, participation is voluntary and anonymous, as no codification procedures are being used in this particular research. The same promise exists for those volunteering to be interviewed--the data obtained in any interview will remain confidential and no associations will be made between the data and the individual from which the data was obtained.

If you do volunteer to participate, don't forget to turn in half of your raffle ticket and keep it in a safe place until the winning number is drawn. If your number is drawn, you will win \$100 in cash which you will receive immediately after identifying yourself as the individual with the winning ticket.

Even as a potential "winner" of the raffle for the \$100 cash prize, you will remain anonymous and there will be no association with your survey or raffle ticket. Anyone who completes and returns the survey with half of their ticket is automatically eligible for the cash prize.

If you have any questions about this survey, I would be happy to answer them. Just write or call me at

608/785-8106

Angela C. Nichols  
213 Wilder Hall  
University of Wisconsin La Crosse  
La Crosse, WI 54601

Raffle Ticket Example

APPENDIX C

**0001**

**RETURN  
THIS HALF  
WITH SURVEY  
TO BE  
ELIGIBLE FOR  
\$100 DRAWING  
APRIL 15th!**

**\$100 RAFFLE**

**KEEP  
THIS HALF  
FOR  
VERIFICATION  
IF YOU HAVE  
THE WINNING  
TICKET!**

**0001**