

Changing Social Attitudes in the United States: Increasing Acceptance of Homosexuals

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INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In the past thirty years, homosexuality has become a controversial topic in the United States. Documentation form of homosexuality dates back to at least the Greco-Roman period, but is seen as a new form of prejudice when compared to racism and sexism (Fone 2000:7). We have begun to see the very beginning of the battle for gays and lesbians. Since the 1950's, and more so since the rebellion at the Stonewall Inn in New York in 1969, the U.S. has experienced a growing gay and lesbian rights movement (Fone 2000). The Stonewall Inn is a gay bar in New York City. On June 27, 1969, New York police raided the Inn expecting patrons to leave, but instead they fought back, barricading themselves inside. People began to shout back, and crowds outside of the Stonewall Inn grew larger. Some arrests were made, which caused the crowd to physically fight back at the police, breaking into a riot. People continued to riot for three days after the police raided the Inn (Fone 2000). In response to the Stonewall Riots, "liberation produced a new gay culture which took root in the form of protest and political activism, but also influenced education, religion, entertainment, the media, and material culture in what was called the homosexualization of America" (Fone 2000:11). Despite the growing gay and lesbian liberation movement, homophobia "stands as the last acceptable prejudice" (Fone 2000:411). Anti-gay sentiment is found in religion, government, the military, media, and even the Supreme Court. These contradictory statements bring one to question if Americans have yet accepted homosexuality. Have gays and lesbians been 'liberated' as Fone states, or are these claims false? Do the majority of Americans still possess anti-homosexual attitudes?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Homosexuality was not even a word within our vocabulary until 1868, when a German-Hungarian Journalist, Karl Maria Kertbeny used it in a letter written to Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, a sexologist. He used the term *Homosexualitat* (sexual desire between persons of the same sex) as a contrast to *Normalsexualitat*, normal sexuality, or the sexual practices of the majority of people. "The term posited differing, indeed opposing, categories of sexuality but unfortunately reinforced a growing psychiatric tendency to define homosexuality as abnormal" (Fone 2000:4). The word heterosexuality did not come into popular use until the 1920s and the term homosexuality did not come into popular use until the 1930s. According to Fone (2000), "since then, 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual' have been fixed in medical terminology and public opinion as identifying two separate and definitively different kinds of sexuality, and two different and separate kinds of sexual actor" (5).

The contrasting meanings of homosexual and heterosexual have been the cause of on going mistreatment of gays and lesbians. In the beginning of the Twentieth Century, homosexuality entered the medical world. Homosexuality was no longer an inversion of sexuality it became a perversion. Those who were homosexuals were labeled as insane and became the object of state-sponsored persecution of involuntary incarceration, shock therapy, and drugs that lasted into the 1950s (Fone 2000:10). The idea was to 'cure' them of their sickness. "By the 1960s, 82 percent of American men and 58 percent of American women surveyed believed that only Communists and atheists were more dangerous than homosexuals" (Fone 2000:10). By the 1950s homosexuals began to revolt against their mistreatment and persecution of the medical institutions, and then finally in 1969, the Stonewall Riots.

Jeni Loftus (2001) feels that "since the Stonewall riots... [Lesbians and gays] have gained social acceptance among certain subgroups of the population while facing increased hostility from others" (163). Loftus (2001) tested for the acceptance of homosexuals among Americans using the General Social Survey data from 1973 to 1998. The two hypotheses she tested were that the change in attitudes towards homosexuality and the change in demographics could be related, and the changes in attitudes towards homosexuality are embedded in larger cultural ideological shifts. She suggested that the "changing demographics cannot account for changes in attitudes towards homosexuals", implying that there are other factors at hand, such as general attitude changes that are a part of a

“larger cultural ideological shift” (2001:163). Loftus (2001) used age, education, race, religion, sex, type of community lived at age 16, and region for her tested demographics to prove her hypothesis. Her results concluded that “Americans’ attitudes regarding the morality of homosexuality became slightly more liberal from 1973 to 1976, became increasingly conservative through 1990, and have become more liberal since 1990” (2001:778). Loftus (2001) also concluded that about one-third of the change in attitudes towards homosexuality was due to changing demographics, specifically levels of education. She also noted that “Women have become more liberal in almost every year, especially recently. They became slightly more conservative in their attitudes from 1973 to 1991, while men have become relatively more conservative” (2001:772).

Herek (1984) conducted research based on previous studies to find reasoning for changes in attitudes toward homosexuals. Herek (1984) found in previous studies that those who have negative attitudes towards homosexuals have negative attitudes for various reasons. These reasons include never having personal contact with homosexuals, being less likely to report having engaged in homosexual behavior, and being more likely to have resided in areas where negative attitudes are the norm. Also being older and less educated, and more likely to express traditional, restrictive attitudes about sex roles are included in reasoning for negative attitudes toward homosexuals. Those who are more likely religious, attend church more frequently, and subscribe to a conservative religious ideology, and are less permissive sexually or have more guilt or negativity about sexuality are also more like to have negative attitudes about homosexuality (Herek 1984:6). Herek (1984) stated that the negative attitudes towards homosexuals and homosexuality could be changed to positive attitudes through education on homosexuality or general human sexuality. Negative attitudes toward homosexuals can also be changed to positive attitudes by having a positive interaction with various homosexuals along with supportive family members or close friends with positive attitudes toward homosexuality, or even with close friends and family members who have disclosed their homosexuality (1984:13-14).

Unlike Herek’s study (1984), Yang (1997) analyzed data to show the changes in attitudes towards homosexuality, rather than focusing on explanations of negative attitudes toward homosexuals. His analysis of questions from the General Social Survey consistently showed that from 1973 to 1991, seventy percent of respondents believed homosexual relations between two adults of the same sex were wrong (Yang 1997:478). After years of stable responses that homosexual actions between same sex adults were “always wrong”, there was a drop in rates of disapproval in the 1990s. Responses to a question about homosexual sex relations between two adults showed a twenty percent drop in disapproval between 1978 and 1999 (Yang 1997:478). Yang (1997) also found strong evidence of dramatic liberalization in peoples’ attitudes towards homosexuals’ civil liberties. “Between 1973 and 1996, there was a 20-point increase in respondents who believed that an admitted homosexual should be allowed to make a speech in their community” (481). Approval rates were consistently above 70 percent since the late 1980s. In the late 1980s, Yang (1997) found that “there was an even split between those who felt that fear of AIDS was causing unfair discrimination against all homosexuals and those who did not” and a stable majority felt that “AIDS set off a wave of antigay bigotry, as opposed to sympathy for homosexuals” (482). In addition, in a later study, the majority of respondents’ felt “not much” or “no” sympathy for those people who have contracted AIDS from homosexual activity (Yang 1997:482).

Social distance may be a reason for respondents to feel no sympathy for those who have contracted AIDS from homosexual activity or for homosexuals in general. Social distance was defined as “perceptions about the level of dissimilarity between self and others. Perceived dissimilarity is derived from a broad range of behavior, psychological, cultural, social, and geographical characteristics” (Schieman 1998:266). Schieman conducted research of AIDS susceptibility, social distance and homophobia. He used a questionnaire designed to measure demographic and psychosocial variables. Schieman (1998) found that men reported significantly higher levels of homophobia and social distance (271). Schieman (1998) also found gender differences in the effects of social distance and homophobia on perceived susceptibility. Social distance was negatively associated with perceived susceptibility to HIV for women and homophobia had little effect on feelings of susceptibility. Findings show that for men, on the other hand, homophobia was also negatively associated with perceived susceptibility, but feel they were not at risk of HIV due to their heterosexual activity, hence showing a link between the homosexual stereotypes of AIDS and HIV (Schieman, 1998:275). Schieman (1998) stated that “these notions reflect other ideas that draw parallels between homophobia and social distance, including evidence that extremely negative stereotypes and deeply embedded prejudices against gays and drug users have permitted detachment from the disease and the people with AIDS (i.e., greater social distance)” (275).

Scott (1998) stated that “with regard to sexual behavior, risk has taken on a new and deadly meaning with the spread of AIDS” and that it would not be surprising to see a “backlash against the greater freedoms associated with the sexual revolution” (816). Scott (1998) conducted a cross-national study comparison of attitudes in Britain and the United States using the General Social Survey and British Social Attitudes survey to find changes in sexual

attitudes through the 1990s (815). She examined the changes in men and women's attitudes toward sexual behavior and changing attitudes about pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex, and homosexual relations (818). Scott (1998) claimed that the primary reason why attitudes are important is not that they are indicators of behavior, but rather because they help constitute the climate of opinion, against which behavior is judged. She also stated that attitudes are important because attitudinal shifts and value trends are consistent with behavioral trends due to the idea that people like consistency within their lives and struggle for it, so they are more likely to bring their attitudes into their everyday lives (819). For attitudes toward sexual relations among adults of the same sex, Scott (1998) found that women possess a more liberal stance, particularly women of younger ages (827). She noted that both men and women were more conservative in the 1980s than in the 1970s, a result of the AIDS scare, but then return to liberal attitudes (827). In concern with testing religion and religiosity as variables of discrimination, results showed the United States had traditional attitudes (74 percent disapprove of homosexuality) (834). As a final note, Scott (1998) stated that within her study she found a clear differentiation in people's attitudes toward homosexuality (838). She also claimed that there are two important aspects of attitudes to sexual morality; the changes have not been as revolutionary as is often claimed, and that it is wrong to discount the influence that the organized churches still exert (840).

Rather than studying changes in men and women's attitudes towards sexual behavior, Herek (1984) analyzed attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. Herek (1984) found that there was no significant difference between males and females and their attitudes toward lesbians and gay men (32.5 percent for males and 34.9 percent for females in response to lesbians for a Condemnation-Tolerance factor for the total common variance, and 35.1 percent for males and 37 percent for female response to gay men)(46).

On a different scale, Black and Stevenson (1984) conducted research investigating the relationship between self-reported sex-role characteristics and attitudes toward homosexuality. Their results showed that 73 percent of males reported that "homosexual" for them referred to males and were less accepting of homosexuals than those who referred to the term as both sexes. For females, 37 percent reported that "homosexual" referred to males and 62 percent of females reported that "homosexual" referred to both sexes (Black and Stevenson 1984:87). Results also showed that females with more "instrumental" (masculine) characteristics were more accepting, while males with more "expressive" (feminine) characteristics were more rejecting of homosexuals (Black and Stevenson 1984:89).

Another similar study focusing on behaviors and attitudes was conducted by Haynes and Oziel (1976). However, Haynes and Oziel tested the relationship of race, religion, region of residence, and personal homosexual experiences. Homosexual experience was defined as "physical contact involving some form of sustained genital stimulation" (Haynes and Oziel 1976:285). There were three differently worded items on the questionnaire that assessed whether the student had engaged in any homosexual activity. The percentages of males who reported homosexual activity on the three questions were 14 percent, 12 percent, and 17 percent. For females, 6 percent, 6 percent, and 11 percent reported having a homosexual experience. (Haynes and Oziel 1976:285). Results showed that "those who were actively engaged in homosexual contacts were more tolerant of sexual behavior sometimes considered deviant in terms of current social mores" (Haynes and Oziel 1976:285-286). However, race, religion, and region of residence were not significant in attitudes or sexual experiences (Haynes and Oziel 1976:283).

Levitt and Klassen (1974) did not conduct research on sexual behavior, but rather conducted research based on findings from the 1970 National Survey by the Institute for Sex Research. The survey was based on a four-year investigation supported by the National Institute of Mental Health and on interviews with a nationwide sample of 30,018 Americans during 1970 (29). Seventy-eight percent of respondents said that sex acts between two persons of the same sex when they have no special affection for each other is always wrong, and 70.2 percent said it was always wrong even if they love each other. A very small percentage (5.6 and 11.4) of respondents had said that it was not at all wrong for both items (Levitt and Klassen 1974:31). Results reported by Levitt and Klassen (1974) showed that "bias against homosexuals extends beyond mere moral disapproval" (30). Not only did respondents disapprove of homosexuals, but they also "would bar the homosexual from employment in certain significant professions and occupations" (Levitt and Klassen 1974:31). Seventy-five percent would deny a homosexual the right to be a minister, a schoolteacher, or a judge, and 67% would bar a homosexual from medical and governmental positions. Rather, they would permit a homosexual to engage in a profession in the arts or in an artistic occupation, but not of any pertaining to authority or of influence (32). Levitt and Klassen (1974) concluded that the public distrusts homosexuals in "positions of public responsibility, particularly when this explicitly involves moral leadership" (32). Personal responses showed that approximately 66 percent of the American adult population found homosexuality "very much obscene and vulgar" (Levitt and Klassen 1974:32). Not only do respondents find them vulgar and obscene, but also as "different from the rest of us" (35), and 62 percent said that half of the homosexual population can be "cured" stating that homosexuality is a sickness (Levitt and Klassen 1974:38).

Levitt and Klassen's (1974) report of findings of the National Survey by the Institute for Sex Research showed the prevalence of attitudes and perceptions of homosexuality, and the relationship between demographics of the American public and their attitudes toward homosexuality. Their research is very significant to this research in that it shows American adults attitudes at the earlier years of the research I have conducted here. It is important to see the results before this time to show what changes have occurred in attitudes toward homosexuals, which is a main point in conducting this research.

Each of the previous studies mentioned relate to the research conducted here. They show trends in attitudes over time, give general explanations for negative attitudes, as well as explanations for gender differences in negative attitudes toward homosexuals. The previous studies also show attitude differences about gay men vs. lesbians, and the effect AIDS has had on attitudes toward homosexuals.

HYPOTHESES

I predict that heterosexist attitudinal changes are in part due to a larger cultural ideological change as discussed previously by Loftus (2001) in her study of attitudes toward homosexuality. She claimed that the changes in attitudes towards homosexuals could not be fully accounted for by the changes in demographics. However, the changes in attitudes towards homosexuals may be a result of changes in other attitudes, therefore resulting in a cultural ideological shift (763).

Education and religion should have the greatest impact on attitudes toward homosexuality. Education will have a positive effect on heterosexist attitudes leading to results that are more liberal. According to Loftus (2001), "Changes in the demographics of the population account for about one-third of the change in attitudes toward homosexuality, specifically, increasing levels of education" (778). Religious affiliation should have a more negative effect on heterosexist attitudes leading to results that are more conservative. I predict that religion will have this affect because most organized religions contain stereotypes and an unwillingness to accept homosexuality within their denomination, mentioned by Herek (1984).

Attitudes toward women and blacks will become more liberal over time, as well as attitudes toward homosexuals, as a result of a cultural ideological shift.

I also hypothesize that gender will affect attitudes greatly. Women are more likely to be liberal in general, and men will have conservative attitudes towards homosexuals, proved by Loftus (2001).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of this research was to examine attitudes toward homosexuality from 1972 to 2000. The data in this study were from the General Social Survey (GSS) of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. The Survey began in 1972 as an annual, random survey of topics of general interest to sociologists. In 1992, the GSS changed to a biennial survey (Schutt, 1999:234). I analyzed attitudinal changes from 1972 through 2000.

The dependent variables were measures of citizen attitudes toward homosexuality. Questions used as a means of testing attitudes toward homosexuality were "If an admitted homosexual wanted to speak in your community, should he be allowed to speak?" "if an admitted homosexual wanted to teach in a college or university, should he be allowed or not allowed?", and "If people in your community suggested that a book written by an admitted homosexual in favor of homosexuality should be taken out of your public library, would you be in favor in removing the book?" (Questions 80a, b, and c).

Demographic characteristics of the U.S. population including, gender, race, education (highest degree), age, and religion were used as independent variables. Other variables tested were attitudes toward women, (the variable used to test the relationship between attitudes of homosexuals and attitudes toward women was respondents' answers to "would you vote for a woman for president?") and attitudes toward blacks (question tested was "would you vote for a black for president?"). Attitudes toward women and blacks were tested through crosstabulations. All variables were tested through crosstabulations with the three questions mentioned above.

RESULTS

Demographics used to analyze attitudes toward homosexuals were gender, race, highest degree, and religious affiliation. Other variables that were used to find attitudinal changes were attitudes toward women, attitudes toward blacks, and whether respondents' affiliate themselves as liberal, moderate, or conservative. Demographic frequencies were run for each year to show variation and trends from 1972 through 2000.

Overall, there were fewer male respondents, than female respondents. In 1972, males encompassed 53.3 percent, and then dropped to 46.6 percent in 1973. Male percentages continue to drop slightly every year, ending at 43.6 percent in 2000.

Race stayed steady through 1972 through 2000. Respondents' race was broken down into three categories; Black, white, and "other". Each category was very steady, whites being the larger percentage of respondents' race. In 1972, 83.6 percent of respondent were white, 16.2 percent were Black, and .02 percent were other. In 2000, the percentage of respondents who were white was 79.4, those who were Black was 15.3 percent, and 5.2 percent for those who responded as "other". The percentage of those who reported as being "other" was the only race whose percentages of respondents had increased.

The percentages of those who have a high school, junior college, bachelors and graduate degree increased. Frequency results show that in 1972, the percentage of those with a high school degree as their highest degree was 48.4 percent. By 2000, the percentage increased to 53.6. In addition, in 1972 the percent of junior college was 1.3, increasing to 7.4 percent. Those who reported bachelor's degree as their highest degree was at 8.8 percent in 1972 increasing to 15.5 percent in 2000. Lastly, graduate degree percentage was at 4.4 in 1972, increasing to 7.8 percent. Most interestingly, percentages of those who report having little high school from 1972 to 2000 dramatically dropped from 37.1 to 15.7. Overall, those reported having a high school degree as their highest degree has the highest percentages than any other degrees reported. These percentages indicate that less people are dropping out of high school, continuing on to graduate from high school and achieve higher educational degrees.

Religious preference demographic frequencies showed a large variation of percentages. Percentages of Catholics was the most steady of the five categories tested, (Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, none, and other) with little variation, except for in 1982 and 1987, where there are slight declines. Protestants percentage is very unstable, at times declining ten percent. In 1990, sixty-three percent of Protestants decreased to 54.1 percent. Protestant percentages had also increased in 1985 through 1987, from 62.5 percent to 69.2 percent. Overall, percentages of Protestants are declining, with 64.1 percent in 1972, and 54.1 percent in 2000. However, among all five religious preferences tested, Protestants have the highest percentages. Jewish and those who identified with "other" religious preferences have had consistent percentages through 1972 and 2000. However, those who responded with "None" as a religious preference show there was an increase from 5.2 percent in 1972 to 14.1 percent in 2000. Jewish and "other" religious preferences were the least percentages of those responded.

Other frequencies tested were attitudes toward women (would the respondent vote for a woman for President?), attitudes toward Blacks (would the respondent vote for a Black for President), and whether the respondent identified themselves with liberal, moderate, or conservative. In addition, a frequency was run for attitudes toward homosexuals (percentage of those who would 'allow a homosexual to speak in the community', percentages of those who would 'allow a homosexual to teach in a college or university', and those who 'would not remove a book written by a homosexual in favor of homosexuality from a library').

Percentages of those who would vote for a woman for President and a Black for President were very similar in frequency (Charts A and B). In 1972, 73.6 percent would vote for a woman for President, and 73.8 percent would vote for a Black for President. The percent slowly increase throughout, with a larger increase in 1977 to 1982 for both frequencies. In 1977, 79.3 percent would vote for a woman for President and 77.6 percent would vote for a Black for President. Then in 1982, percentages increased to 86.1 for those who would vote for a woman for President and 89.8 percent for those who would vote for a Black for President.

The percentage of respondents reported to be liberal, moderate or conservative is quite different from the consistently increasing percentages of those who would vote for a woman for President and those who would vote for a Black for President. Percentages of Liberal, Moderate, or conservative are not steady, are not stable, and do not follow any kind of pattern what so ever. However, the percentages do show that between 1974 and 1980, there were steady percentages for the three. The percentage of respondents who reported to be Liberal was 30.5 in 1974, those who reported as moderates was 40 percent, and those who reported as Conservative was 29 percent. Liberals decreased to 25.5 percent in 1980, moderates percentages also decreased to 38.3 in 1979, but conservatives increased to 33.7 in 1980. The increase of conservatives may maybe a result of the reaction to the AIDS epidemic, but this does not explain the radical changes in percentages of all three between 1981 and 2000.

Results showed that respondents' general attitudes towards homosexuality slowly became more favorable through 1973 through 2000, shown in Chart C. In 1973 sixty-three percent said that they would allow an admitted homosexual to speak in their community, 49 percent would allow them to teach in a college or university, and 55 percent would not remove a book written by an admitted homosexual in favor of homosexuality within a public library. In 2000, results showed that 83 percent would allow a homosexual to speak, 79.3 percent would allow them to speak, and 73.5 percent would not remove a book from the library written by a homosexual in favor of homosexuality. Between the years 1988 and 1989, there was a larger increase than between other years. For those who would allow a homosexual to speak increased from 72.6 to 78.4 percent, 59.5 to 66.6 percent for those who would allow a homosexual to speak, and 62.7 to 66.2 percent for those who would not remove a book written by a homosexual.

Crosstabulations were run between demographics and attitudes toward homosexuals. This testing was performed to show relationships between demographics and attitudes toward homosexuals. The crosstabulations were compiled for 1980, 1985, 1990, 1996, and 2000 to show any trends in attitudes toward homosexuals. The findings of the following were interpreted as: the greater the percentage or as percentages increase, attitudes become more liberal or acceptance of homosexuals is greater. Percentages, Chi square values, degrees of freedom, and P values found in the crosstabulations can be seen in various tables shown in appendices. In relation to the tables and graphs, each table a., b., or c., correspond to the graph a., b., or c.

There was a slight difference between males' and females' attitudes toward homosexuals. Males had a slightly higher percentage overall through 1980 and 2000 (see Graph 1). In 1980, 68.1 percent of males reported they would allow a homosexual to speak, 55.2 percent would allow a homosexual to teach, and 59.6 percent would not remove a book written by a homosexual in favor of homosexuality from the library (see table 1). While females in 1980 reported 67.9 percent would allow a homosexual to speak, 58.2 percent would allow a homosexual to teach, and 59.4 percent would not remove a book written by a homosexual from the library. Even though, males remained to have a more liberal attitude than females through 1980 to 2000, both male and female percentages increased to favorable attitudes toward homosexuals. In 2000, results show that 83.5 percent of males reported they would allow a homosexual to speak, and 82.7 percent of females reported they would allow a homosexual to speak. The most conservative between the three measurements of attitudes toward homosexuals was not removing a book written by a homosexual from the library. In 2000, 75.4 percent of males and 71.9 percent of females reported they would not remove a book written by a homosexual in favor of homosexuality from a public library. However, the percentages of those who would not remove a book written by a homosexual remained liberal. The only measurement of homosexuality where females were more liberal than males (in 2000) was allowing a homosexual to teach. Females reported that 80.4 percent would allow a homosexual to teach, while males reported 78 percent. Taken as a whole, attitudes toward homosexuals increased for both males and females from 1980 to 2000. Percentages of males and females who would allow a homosexual to speak, teach, and would not remove a book by a homosexual from a library are very similar in comparison.

Race has a significant difference of attitudes toward homosexuals. In 1980, those who identified with 'other' had a much more liberal attitude than blacks or whites in allowing a homosexual to teach and not removing a book written by a homosexual in favor of homosexuality from a library at 70 percent (Graph 2). In 2000, 84.1 percent of whites would allow a homosexual to speak. The difference in percentage is minuscule compared to "other" (84 percent), and slightly higher than blacks (76.7 percent) (Table 2). We also see this trend for those who would not remove a book written by a homosexual in favor of homosexuality from a library, where whites reported 74.9 percent, "other" at 72.3 percent, and blacks at 66 percent. Overall, it would appear that whites and "other" have a more liberal attitude toward homosexuals than blacks. Yet in comparing graphs 2a., b., and c., attitudes toward homosexuals from 1980 and 2000 have grown more acceptable.

In terms of respondents' highest degree achieved, results show a significant difference in those with more education and attitudes toward homosexuals. In 1980, those who have a bachelor's or graduate degree reported to have a more liberal attitude (Graph 3). Eighty-nine percent with a bachelor's degree would allow a homosexual to speak, and 88.7 percent with a graduate degree as their highest degree would allow a homosexual to speak. Eighty percent of those with a graduate degree, 79.5 percent of those with a bachelor's degree would allow a homosexual to teach, and 85.9 percent of those with a graduate degree and 85.9 percent of those with a bachelor's degree would not remove a book by a homosexual in favor of homosexuality from a library (Table 3). Those who have the least amount of education (little high school, high school) have a more conservative attitude toward homosexuals. Those reported to have little high school in 1980, showed that 44.1 percent would allow a homosexual to speak, 32.5 percent would allow a homosexual to teach, and 32.2 percent would not remove a book written by a homosexual from a library. This is a huge difference between education and reported attitudes toward homosexuals. In 2000, we see the same pattern. Those with a bachelor's degree reported 95.1 percent and 93.8 percent with a graduate degree

would allow a homosexual to speak. For allowing a homosexual to teach, 91.5 percent was reported for those with a bachelor's degree, and 88.8 percent with a graduate degree. Percentages of those with graduate and bachelor's degrees did not increase from 1980, but decreased for those who would not remove a book written by a homosexual from the library at 85.3 and 85.1 percent. These percentages are still very much more liberal than those who have little high school. Sixty-seven percent of little high school would allow a homosexual to speak, 57.3 percent would allow a homosexual to teach, and 59 percent would not remove a book written by a homosexual from the library. These results show that attitudes toward homosexuals in general have become more liberal through 1980 and 2000. They also show that the more education, the more liberal attitudes toward homosexuals become.

Religious affiliation showed significant percentages in attitudes toward homosexuals. Those who do not identify with a religious affiliation, or "none", show they have the most favorable attitudes toward homosexuals in 1980 (Graph 4). Eighty-eight percent of the respondents that identified with "none" would allow a homosexual to speak, 83.7 percent would allow a homosexual to teach, and 83.3 percent would not remove a book written by a homosexual in favor of homosexuality from a library (Table 4). Those who have a more negative attitude (in 1980) toward homosexuals are Protestants. Results show that 61.9 percent of Protestant would allow a homosexual to speak, nearly half of Protestant would allow a homosexual to teach, and slightly over half would not remove a book written by a homosexual from a library. However, in 2000, results show that those who identify as Jewish have a more favorable attitude toward homosexuals. Ninety-eight percent of Jews would allow a homosexual to speak, 95.7 would allow a homosexual to teach and 93.5 percent would not remove a book written by a homosexual from the library. Protestants in 2000, still encompassed the least favorable attitude toward homosexuals with percentages at 78.3 percent allowing a homosexual to speak, 73.2 percent allowing a homosexual to teach, and 66.2 percent would not remove a book written by a homosexual from a library. Overall, attitudes toward homosexuals had become more favorable through 1980 and 2000, with those who identify as Jewish being the most favorable and Protestants as being the least favorable. However, those who identified with no religious affiliation, or "none" did not show any significant increases or decreases overall.

Respondents who said they would vote for a woman for President showed a general increase from 1974 to 2000 (Graph 5a.). In 1974, 71.2 percent reported they would allow a homosexual to speak, 59.2 percent would allow a homosexual to teach and 62.2 percent would not remove a book written by a homosexual from the library (Table 5a.). In 1996, results showed that those who would vote for a woman for Presidents' attitudes increase favorably towards homosexuals by 15 to 20 percent. Eighty-five percent said they would allow a homosexual to speak, 80.1 percent would allow a homosexual to teach, and 73.4 percent would not remove a book by a homosexual from the library.

In concern to those who would **not** vote for a woman for President, results show that in 1974 percentages are similar to those who said they would vote for a woman president (Graph 5b.). Fifty eight percent would not allow a homosexual to speak, 71.5 percent would not allow a homosexual to teach, and 63 percent would remove a book written by a homosexual in favor of homosexuality from a library (Table 5b.). However, in 1996 we see a decrease in negative attitudes toward homosexuals. Forty-five percent would not allow a homosexual to speak, 54.2 percent would not allow a homosexual to teach, and 56 percent would remove a book written by a homosexual from a library. Results show that those who would not vote for a woman for Presidents' negative attitudes decrease from 1974 to 1996. This indicates that as they decrease, positive attitudes increase. These results also show that those who have a general negative attitude toward woman and homosexuals have decreased from 1974 to 2000, giving evidence of a cultural ideological shift.

For those who would vote for a Black for Presidents attitudes and those who would not vote for a Black Presidents' attitudes toward homosexuals (Graph 6a.), we see very similar results as those who would or would not vote for a woman for President. In 1974, seventy-one percent of those who would vote for a Black for President reported they would allow a homosexual to speak, 59.6 percent of those would allow a homosexual to teach, and 62.4 percent would not remove a book by a homosexual from the library (Table 6a.). Results show once again a fifteen to twenty percent increase in positive attitudes toward homosexuals for 1996. Eighty-seven percent would allow a homosexual to speak, 81 percent would allow a homosexual to teach, and 73.4 percent would not remove a book by a homosexual from the library.

Attitudes of respondents who would **not** vote for a Black for President decrease in 1974 to 1996 (Graph 6b.), much like those who would not vote for a woman for President. In 1974, Sixty-two percent of those who would not vote for a Black for President would also not allow a homosexual to speak, 76.2 percent would not allow a homosexual to teach, and 67.5 percent would remove a book by a homosexual from the library (Table 6b.). In 1996 results show a decrease in negative attitudes toward homosexuals of those who would not vote for a Black for President. Only 35.1 percent would not allow a homosexual to speak, 47.2 percent would not allow a homosexual to teach, and 54.1 percent would remove a book written by a homosexual from a library. Once again, results show that

for respondents who would not vote for a Black for Presidents' negative attitudes toward homosexuals decrease, indicating that positive attitudes toward Blacks and homosexuals increase. These results give evidence to a cultural ideological shift, similar to those who would or would not vote for a woman for President.

Table 7 and Graph 7, show the similarities in attitudes toward homosexuals for those who would vote for a woman for President and those who would vote for a Black for President. In 1974 the percentages of those who would vote for a woman for president in those who would vote for a Black for president are almost identical. For each question asked concerning attitudes toward homosexuals, the results vary only by tenths of a percent. In concern for allowing a homosexual to speak, 71.2 percent would vote for a woman for President and 71.6 percent would vote for a Black for President. Comparing those who would allow a homosexual to teach, 59.2 percent would vote for a woman for President, and 59.6 percent would vote for a Black for President. Respondents who would not remove a book by a homosexual from the library said 62.2 percent would vote for a woman for President and 62.4 percent would vote for a Black for President. The results in comparison between 1974 and 1996 vary slightly by a few percentages. Then again in 1996 results showed that the percentages between respondents who would vote for a woman and a black for President become almost identical. For those who said they would allow a homosexual to speak, 85 percent would vote for a woman for President, and 86.9 percent would vote for a Black for President. Respondents who would allow a homosexual to teach said that 80.1 percent would vote for a woman for President and 81.1 percent would vote for a Black for President. And for respondents who said they would not remove a book by a homosexual from the library and would vote for a woman for President and for a Black for President are exactly the same at 73.4 percent. Graphing the results for attitudes toward homosexuals for respondents' who would vote for a woman for President and who would vote for a Black for President were necessary to show the similarities in percentages and in attitudes toward homosexuals. These results show a correlation between positive attitudes toward homosexuals and the positive attitudes toward woman and Blacks, indicating people's attitudes becoming more liberal in general. Hence, giving further evidence to a cultural ideological shift in the general acceptance of homosexuals, women, and Blacks from 1974 to 1996.

Liberals, moderates and conservatives showed a very distinct pattern of increasingly positive attitudes toward homosexuals through 1980 and 2000. Results were very predictable in 1980, in which liberals possessed more favorable attitudes toward homosexuals than moderates or conservatives (Graph 8). Approximately seventy-eight percent of liberals reported that they would allow a homosexual to speak, 68.4 percent would allow a homosexual to teach, and 71.3 percent would not remove a book written by a homosexual in favor of homosexuality from a public library (Table 8). Conservatives in 1980 obtained the most unfavorable attitude toward homosexuals. Sixty-five percent reported they would allow a homosexual to speak, 48 percent would allow a homosexual to teach, and 55.7 percent would not remove a book written by a homosexual from a library. In 2000, results showed an increase in positive attitudes toward homosexuals. Liberals had encompassed the most favorable percentage, 90 percent, who would allow a homosexual to speak. For allowing a homosexual to teach and not removing a book written by a homosexual, liberals had the highest percentages at 87.5 percent and 82.1 percent. Moderates attitudes toward homosexuals then dropped to a least favorable attitude; 79.9 percent would allow a homosexual to teach, and even lower, 73 percent would not remove a book written by a homosexual from a library. Conservatives reported to have the most unfavorable toward homosexuals; 79.7 percent would allow a homosexual to speak, 72.9 percent would allow a homosexual to teach, and 69 percent would not remove a book written by a homosexual from a library. Overall, liberals encompassed the most favorable attitudes toward homosexuals, while conservatives had the most unfavorable attitude between 1980 and 2000. The results showed that respondents are pretty true to what they identify with as being conservative, moderate, or liberal, in the sense that liberals are the most accepting toward homosexuals and conservatives the least accepting. However, from 1980 to 2000, each has increased to be more accepting of homosexuals.

These findings show that there has been a general increase in favorable attitudes between 1972 and 2000. Due to these changes in attitudes through out the majority of demographics and other variables tested here, I would suggest that there was a cultural ideological shift, as proposed by Loftus (2001).

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to show advances in attitudes towards homosexuals through 1972 and 2000 with the use of demographics (gender, race, highest degree, and religion), frequencies of these demographics and other variables, such as attitudes toward women and Blacks, and respondents' who identified with liberal, moderate, and conservative.

Gender showed that there was little significance between differences in attitudes toward homosexuals, with males being slightly more liberal than females, which is different from previous studies and from my hypothesis.

However, the sample size representing males is significantly smaller throughout the study, with males being approximately 40 percent of the sample, but is representative of the general population. This may have an impact on results. Race showed that whites were slightly more favorable toward homosexuals than Blacks and those who identified with "other". However, those who identified with "other" sample size was fairly small (numbers vary between 7 respondents to 82 respondents) giving reason for the strange graphing patterns (Table 2). The same is for the representative sample for Black in comparison to the sample size of White. A more equal representation of race could give better and more accurate results. Religion showed overall, Jews are more favorable, while Protestants were unfavorable toward homosexuals. However, in Graph 4a. and 4c., the percentages vary so much due to the small sample sizes for those who identify as Jewish. Results for those who identified with liberal showed to be favorable toward homosexuals, more so than those who identified as moderates. Those who reported as conservative showed to be less favorable toward homosexuals.

Highest degree of education showed amazing results. Those with little high school showed to have a very negative attitude toward homosexuals, and those who have bachelors and graduate degrees are very favorable of homosexuals. This was proved in previous studies. However, the numbers of those who are achieving high school diplomas, receiving bachelors and graduate degrees are increasing in correspondence with favorable attitudes toward homosexuals.

Overall, percentages of those who would not remove a book written by a homosexual in favor of homosexuality tended to have lower percentages than those who would allow a homosexual to speak or teach. Wording of the question could cause the lower percentages of those who reported they would not remove a book written by a homosexual. The other two questions asked about homosexuals only implies if you would allow a homosexual to speak in the community or teach in a college or university, but this question seems to imply if you are in favor of homosexuality. The question asks about a book written by a homosexual, and then adds "in favor of homosexuality". This changes the meaning of the question, which obviously changes respondents' answers.

The major difference this study has from others is the measurement of attitudes toward women and Blacks in correspondence with attitudes toward homosexuals. Results show that attitudes toward woman and attitudes toward blacks have become much more favorable, in that percentages have increased from 1974 in favor of a woman or minority (Black) in a powerful position (i.e. President). Even attitudes for those who reported that they would not vote for a woman or a minority (Black) have become more favorable to homosexuals. Because attitudes towards women and minorities in a "power position" have become favorable, it is fair to say that allowing a homosexual in a power position, such as President, would also be favorable. Due to limitations in survey questions, I was not able to cross-examine responses to voting for a homosexual for president, or in some sort of position in power.

The favorable attitudes toward women and minorities in a powerful position and the increase in favorable attitudes toward homosexuals indicate that there was a cultural ideological shift from 1974 to 2000.

However, I do feel that if the present date (1994) were to be included in further studies, attitudes toward homosexuals would be less accepting due to the controversy over gay marriages in the media and government.

Generally, if crosstabulations would have been conducted for every year and for a greater span of time, historical reasoning or events for years with surprising drops or increases in percentages of attitudes toward homosexuals would have been beneficial to further explain the differing percentages.

For future studies, I would recommend that other researchers should include variables pertaining to homosexuals in the position of power to compare results with those of women and minorities in power. I would also recommend that variables pertaining to mass media (i.e. television) should be examined in terms of attitudes toward homosexuals.

Attitudes towards homosexuals could also be cross-examined with attitudes toward minorities or women to further explain attitudinal changes found here.

The General Social Survey data did not include the same questions every year the survey was given, which led to limitations to years that were tested.

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An extensive **APPENDIX** of data tables and graphs from this study is available upon request from the Student Author or Faculty Sponsor, Dr. Miller, Department of Sociology/Archeology, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. —ed.