Heterosexism, harassment, discrimination, and coping mechanisms among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning individuals

Claudia A. Arambula
Zapata County CISD

Don Jones
Texas A&M University – Kingsville

Marie-Anne Mundy
Texas A&M University Kingsville

Albert Ruiz
Texas A&M University - Kingsville

ABSTRACT

The equal treatment of minority groups has become an increasingly controversial issue in the United States. Contemporarily, sexual minority groups have become the focus of civil liberties in educational institutions and in workplaces. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) individuals navigate very uncertain conditions when it comes to their school setting and their workplace setting. For most individuals of LGBTQ orientation, their sexuality can make them stand out from the norm, whether they desire to be singled out or not. (Fisher, Komosa-Hawkins, Saldana, Thomas Hsiao, Rauld, & Miller, 2008, Young, 2010). Secondary schools and educational institutions become the backdrop for LGBTQ self-identification (Savin-Williams, 2001). Unfortunately, educational institutions have a marked lack of policy relating to LGBTQ individuals. This circumstance typically follows them to the workplace. A wide array of negative experiences plague individuals of LGBTQ orientation such as discrimination, bullying, and prejudice, and as a consequence, they are at a higher risk for suicide, physical abuse, alcohol, and drug abuse (Chesir-Teran & Hughes, 2009; Savage & Harley, 2009; Morgan, Mancl, Kaffar, & Ferreira, 2011). This quantitative study focused on the existence and prevalence of heterosexist and negative experiences for LGBTQ individuals and what coping mechanisms they utilize to manage their emotional, physical, and psychological well-being. Further, this study looked for a correlation between LGBTQ individuals' negative experiences and their coping mechanisms and found a significant correlation between social support and harassment and rejection. MANOVA statistical tests were conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between individuals' age, income levels, and education levels on the Ways of Coping Questionnaire. Although no significant differences were found, the results indicated that more research is needed with a larger population size in order to more fully analyze the statistical differences.

Keywords: LGBTQ, coping, resiliency, social support, education, income, higher education

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary American society, the LGBTQ population continues to struggle to find a place of equality and fairness. Commonly referred to as individuals of non-heterosexual orientation, they are identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ). These individuals constitute a minimal but constant percentage of our population. In educational institutions, LGBTQ individuals are a constant group of the student population in schools across the nation (Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, & Palmer, 2012). Regardless of their minority status and much like other minority groups like African-Americans, women, and students with disabilities, LGBTQ individuals have the right to a free and appropriate education. LGBTQ students oftentimes stand apart from the general population during the formative years of adolescence when the last thing young adults want to do is stand out (Fisher, Komosa-Hawkins, Saldana, Thomas Hsiao, Rauld, & Miller, 2008; Young, 2010). For adolescents, schools are the setting for most of their socialization; they do most of their growing up during this time. They make friends, lose friends, find themselves, and figure out who they are and what they will stand for. Perhaps most importantly, it is during this time that adolescents begin to explore and acknowledge their sexuality.

Educational institutions are the epicenter of an American adolescent's life. This setting is alive with activity and socialization. High schools are also, generally, the place where students begin to self-identify with LGBTQ orientation (Savin-Williams, 2001; Savage & Schanding, 2013). In high schools, colleges, and universities, normal is considered being heterosexual. Curriculum, events, and policies are designed for heterosexual students (Wickens & Sandlin, 2010; Savage & Schanding, 2013). Therefore, LGBTQ students have to deal with the consequences of being surrounded by a hetero-normative environment that frames their sexuality as an abnormality (Messinger, 2009, Olive 2010; Wickens & Sandlin, 2010). Educational institutions are struggling with the reality of their students' sexual diversity, while also grappling with trying to provide equal treatment for all students.

Despite considerable progressivism in the treatment of minorities in education over the last few decades, there is still much to be done where LGBTQ issues are concerned. Research studies continue to point to the increasing victimization of LGBTQ students occurring in public schools, colleges, and universities. LGBTQ students experience discrimination, bullying, and prejudice in schools and institutions of higher education much more frequently (Chesir-Teran & Hughes, 2009; Savage & Harley, 2009; Young, 2010). Consequently, they are at a higher risk of becoming involved in risky behaviors such as unsafe sexual relations, physical abuse because of their sexuality, suicide, and alcohol and drug abuse (Morgan, Mancl, Kaffar, & Ferreira, 2011).

Moreover, most LGBTQ individuals attend public secondary and post-secondary schools with a marked lack of school policy concerning them. School handbooks often cover LGBTQ bullying and discrimination in a blanket statement under bullying for all students (Savage & Harley, 2009). In addition, from a curriculum and historical perspective, schools have noticeably left out the civil rights struggle of LGBTQ Americans. On the other hand, the roles of other minority and marginalized groups such as African Americans, Asian-Americans, and women have been required topics in some school curricula for years.

Schools further unintentionally discriminate against LGBTQ members in their policies, which are naturally designed to protect equality between genders. Gender is understood as a binary concept: simply male or female. Because gender is treated in policies and laws as being mostly black and white, heterosexism becomes institutionalized. An example of this status quo is

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. This act protects students from sex discrimination in federally funded education programs and protects males and females from discrimination based on sex. However, the protection is limited to harassment based on sex and not on sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation. Title IX has not been interpreted to include discrimination based on sexual orientation. Title IX's protection extends to LGBTQ students only in cases that involve sexual harassment or gender-based harassment if it is sufficiently serious and impedes a student from participating in a school program (Courson & Farris, 2012, Piacenti, 2011). Further, students who bring a Title IX claim against a school district have to establish that the school knew about the harassment, and that there was deliberate indifference by teachers and administrators. They also have to prove that the harassment was severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive, and that the school district had actual knowledge of it. Thus, this population of students is not adequately protected by Title IX, and additional legislation is necessary (Courson & Farris, 2012; Murray, 2011).

The acceptance and disclosure of one's sexuality is a difficult decision to make. Even more difficult is the fact that it is made during the most delicate, formative years of adolescence (Savin-Williams, 2001). There is extensive research that presents a very grim look at the homophobic cultures of secondary and post-secondary schools (D'Augelli, 1992; Draughn, Elkins, & Roy, 2002; Tierney, 1992). In the face of these circumstances, there is evidence that many LGBTQ individuals are able to move on and succeed in life and academics. Because of their sexual orientation, LGBTQ individuals may live through unique experiences that may cause them to use coping mechanisms to internalize certain situations and use them to positively impact their lives. Recognizing coping mechanisms is essential for future research and study of LGBTQ individuals in educational institutions and the workplace.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to examine potential problems and trials that LGBTQ individuals experienced in educational institutions and workplaces and their ability to cope with negative encounters. There are numerous examples of LGBTQ individuals who graduated from high school, continued through college, and received a college degree (Olive, 2012; Kwon, 2013; Benard, 1991). Their lived experiences reflect support and guidance through parents, friends, and most importantly, schools that nurtured their eventual academic success. There are important implications that resulted from this study. First and foremost, the simple recognition of the issues that exist, and that educational institutions, secondary or post-secondary, serving LGBTQ students are not providing adequate services to this population is a crucial first step. In essence, this study provided a description of experiences as perceived by individuals of LGBTQ orientation. It also provided data to analyze and determine the factors that motivated them to effectively cope with negative experiences.

The second area of importance relates to the general mindset of all stakeholders in secondary and post-secondary educational institutions and workplaces in Texas. Texas is a fairly conservative state. Hispanic roots are deep and very traditional. Students who attend public educational institutions are often forced to learn to live in a dichotomy of the culture of the school and the conservative culture of their homes (Sager, Schlimmer, & Hellmann, 2001). To provide an environment that encourages diversity and fosters differences in the next generation is of utmost significance. Historically, changes in society have been shaped by the younger generations. Schools, colleges, and universities provide a ripe environment for the combination

of ideas, people, and energy necessary to make changes in society (Poteat, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009).

A third implication for this study was the identification of the support systems utilized by LGBTQ individuals and their coping mechanisms. There are things in place that helped past successful LGBTQ students beat the odds and persevere. Through these insights, educational institutions can focus on what is currently being done, what is working, and what is not working. They can identify their deficiencies and their strongholds to provide the LGBTQ population with a better, friendlier, and healthier atmosphere (Poteat, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions anchored the study:
1. Is there a significant correlation between the set of variables comprising of harassment and rejection, workplace and school discrimination, other discrimination, and total discrimination scale and the set of variables comprising of the Ways of Coping Scales: confrontive coping, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, escape-avoidance, planful problem-solving, and positive reappraisal and total coping?
2. Are there significant differences among levels of education on the following coping mechanisms: confrontive coping, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, escape-avoidance, planful problem solving and positive reappraisal, and total scale as measured by the Ways of Coping Scales?
3. Are there significant differences among income levels on the following coping mechanisms: confrontive coping, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, escape-avoidance, planful problem solving, and positive reappraisal and total scale as measured by the Ways of Coping Scales?
4. Are there significant differences among age groups on the following coping mechanisms: confrontive coping, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, escape-avoidance, planful problem-solving, and positive reappraisal and total scale as measured by the Ways of Coping Scales?

RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACH

This is a quantitative study that was conducted among LGBTQ individuals in the state of Texas. Quantitative research is described by Creswell (2012) as a method of identifying a research problem based on information on a certain field of the need for clarification about a particular occurrence. Aliaga and Gunderson (2000) define quantitative research as a method of explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data and analyzing it using mathematically based methods. In this study, the researcher sought to examine the experiences of LGBTQ individuals in their educational and workplace setting and the coping strategies that they employed to internalize negative incidents.

This research used a survey design that provided a quantitative description of trends, attitudes, and opinions of the LGBTQ population in the state of Texas by studying a sample of the population. The purpose of the survey research was to analyze LGBTQ experiences in educational and workplace settings in Texas and extract information about both their harassment, rejection and discrimination, and their coping strategies through the completion of surveys. The

purpose was to "generalize from a sample to a population so that inferences could be made about some characteristic, attitude, or behavior of this population" (Babbie, 1990; Creswell, 2009, p 146). A survey design in this case was the most convenient research design because of cost, economy, and the rapid turnaround in data collection. Further, the delicate nature of LGBTQ disclosure called for strict anonymity, and a survey design ensured that. The form of data collection was through a Survey Monkey link that directed participants to the consent form and survey. Survey research was an appropriate design because the focus of this study was sample generalizability and the only means available for developing a representative picture of the attitudes and characteristics of a large population (Schutt, 2011).

Data was collected from listserv members of various LGBTQ organizations in Texas. They were e-mailed a questionnaire through *Survey Monkey* that provided them with a link that ensured anonymity. This form of data collection allowed for questionnaires to be distributed throughout the state and provided a more appropriate sample for generalizability. Members of LGBTQ organizations were invited to participate in this study and to answer two surveys: one focused on discrimination based on their LGBTQ status, and another focused on their coping strategies that they employed while undergoing negative experiences.

SETTING AND SAMPLE

The participants of the study were self-disclosed LGBTQ individuals. The population of this study was composed of LGBTQ members of support organizations in Texas. Internet searches were conducted for LGBTQ groups in Texas. If the organization provided a listserv index, their listservs allowed for web-surveys to be e-mailed to their members. Further, the survey e-mail asked recipients to forward the survey link to other LGBTQ individuals. The sample design for this population was multistate or clustering as names of organizations were first identified, and then the researcher obtained access to individuals and sampled them (Creswell, 2009). The population size was approximately 100 participants depending on the amount of completed surveys.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used to measure LGBTQ individual's experiences and their response to them. The first one was Szymanski's (2009) heterosexist harassment, rejection, and discrimination scale (HHRDS; Appendix B) to measure LGBTQ victimization. This instrument assessed the frequency of heterosexist events in the past year with a 14-item measure on a 6-point Likert-type scale from 1 "never" to 6 "almost all the time." The original measure was written specifically for lesbian participants. Szymanski (2009) later revised the instrument to use only with men. In his doctoral dissertation, Denton (2012) further amended the instrument to use it with the LGB population. For the purpose of this study, this instrument was amended further by replacing all occurrences of *LGB* to *LGBTQ* and removing the "past year" part of each question, only using "in the past" instead. The structure was consistent with the original version. Permission for use of this instrument was granted by the author through e-mail correspondence.

The second instrument used was the Ways of Coping Questionnaire (Appendix C). This was a 50-item questionnaire. Participants indicated how certain they were on a 4-point scale that they used a particular coping strategy (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). Participants were asked to indicate how they cope when they faced negative issues and discrimination in the context of their

LGBTQ sexuality. The responses for this scale were measured from 0-"do not use at all," 1-"use somewhat," 2-"use quite a bit," and 3-"used a great deal." The range of possible scores was 0 to 130. Permission for use of this instrument was granted by the author through e-mail correspondence.

The last instrument was designed to gather socio-demographic information (Appendix D) including biological sex, gender identity, sexual identity, ethnicity, age in years, level of education completed, annual income, and United States state of primary residence.

RESULTS

The sample used for this study included 36 completed surveys from 86 individuals who either belonged to LGBTQ organizational listservs or were given access to the *Survey Monkey* link. The data was collected solely through the use of *SurveyMonkey.com*. The survey consisted of two instruments. The first was the Heterosexist Harassment, Rejection, and Discrimination Scale that followed a Likert scale that ranged from a 1 "never" to 6 "almost all of the time". The second instrument was the Ways of Coping Scale and followed a Likert scale which ranged from 1 "not used" to 4 "used a great deal". Correlation, multivariate analysis of variance, and descriptive data were analyzed using SPSS 22.0. Pearson product correlation was used to compute the correlation coefficients at an alpha level of .05. A correlation coefficient illustrates the general trend a relationship has (Aron, Coups, & Aron, 2011). The closer the coefficient is to 1, the stronger the correlation. A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine the effect of three factors on two dependent variables. A multivariate General Linear Model procedure computed a multivariate effect size index (Green & Salkind, 2011).

This study included 17 (47.2%) males and 19 (52.8%) females. Participants identified their sexual identity in three categories: bisexual, gay, and lesbian; 8 (22.2%) participants identified themselves as bisexual, 13 (36.1%) as gay, and 13 (36.1%) as lesbian. The age range of the participants was between 18 through 69 years old with 15 (41.7%) participants falling in the 18–30 age range, 15 (33.3%) participants falling in the 31–40 age range, and 9 (25%) participants falling in the 41 and above age range. As far as ethnicity was concerned, 2 (5.6%) participants were African-American/African descent/Black, 10 (27.8%) participants were Caucasian/White, 23 (63.9%) participants were Latino(a)/Hispanic, and one person (2.8%) did not answer this question. In regard to levels of education, participants were separated into three categories: Primary and Secondary Education, College or Technical School, and Graduate or Professional School. The first category was Primary and Secondary Education and included five participants (13.9%); the second was College or Technical School and included 14 participants (38.9%); and the last one was Graduate or Professional School and included 17 participants (47.2%). Furthermore, participants were asked to choose a category that best suited their income level. The income level category was separated into three groups: below $29,999, $30,000 – 59,999, and $60,000 and above. Based on income levels, 14 participants (38.9%) belonged in the first group of below $29,999; 7 participants (19.4%) belonged in the second group of $30,000 – 59,999; and 15 participants (41.7%) belonged in the $60,000 and above category. Table 1 illustrates a summary of the demographic data that was collected.

Descriptive Statistics

Two instruments comprised the survey that was used for this study. The first instrument, the Heterosexist Harassment, Rejection, and Discrimination Scale (HHRDS) made up the first part of the survey, items 1 through 14. Table 2 provides a summary of mean, median, and standard deviation for each question. Results showed that question number five, (*M*=2.51, *SD*=1.393) "How many times have you been treated unfairly by strangers because you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning?" had the highest percentage between "sometimes" to "most of the time" (52.9%). It would appear that LGBTQ individuals feel more discrimination when dealing with strangers or people who know very little about them than when they are around people they know and feel comfortable with. Additionally, survey question number 9, (M = 2.62, SD = 1.407) "How many times have you been called a HETEROSEXIST name like dyke, fag, or other derogatory names?" had a high percentage of respondents choosing "sometimes" to "most of the time" (38.9%). It would appear that LGBTQ individuals are frequently exposed to these derogatory terms. Further, these terms may be used during everyday conversations and might have become acceptable terms of speech. Question number three, (M = 2.33, SD = 1.493) "How many times have you heard ANTI-LGBTQ remarks from family members?" had the highest percentage between "sometimes" to "all the time" (50.1%). It would appear that LGBTQ individuals have heard remarks made within their family that makes them feel uncomfortable enough to categorize them as "anti-LGBTQ."

The second instrument was the Ways of Coping questionnaire with 66 items. Table 3 provides a summary of this instrument's mean, median, and standard deviation for each question. Results showed that out of the 66 items analyzed, 18 (27%) items had the highest median of 3.00. Those 18 items were further categorized into positive ways of coping with 7(11%) items and negative ways of coping with 11(17%) items. Question number fourteen (M = 3.11, SD = .894) had the highest mean score, and 69.4% of respondents answered between "used a great deal" or "used quite a bit." Furthermore, of the 18 items with the highest median of 3.00, eight of them were categorized as negative ways of coping with a mean of 2.75 and higher. It would appear that the most common ways of coping for LGBTQ individuals were negative and unhealthy actions. Furthermore, results showed that the lowest scoring item in this questionnaire was item number 22, (M = 2.59, SD = .798) "I got professional help" with the highest percentage (83.4%) scoring between "not used" and "used somewhat" as a preferred way of coping. Based on this high percentage, it appeared that professional help was a very uncommon way of coping for LGBTQ individuals.

The 66 items in the Ways of Coping Questionnaire are grouped into eight scales. Analysis was conducted to determine the mean for each individual scale. Based on the analysis of means for levels of education, the scale "Seeking Social Support" decreased significantly for the three levels of education. Specifically by 2.84 between group one (Primary/Secondary) and group two (College/Technical). The "Seeking Social Support" scale includes reaching out to other people, whether friends, relatives, coworkers or professionals, to talk about problems and discuss possible solutions. It appears that the more educated the participants, the less they sought the opinion or help of others for conflict resolution. Most likely, this occurs because as education increases, confidence in oneself and the decisions one makes also increases. For the scales of "Confrontive Coping", "Distancing", "Self-Controlling", "Escape Avoidance", and "Positive Reappraisal", the means for levels of education mirrored each other between groups, with group two, which is the College/Technical level, scoring consistently higher than both group one and

group three. A possible explanation for this trend can be that LGBTQ individuals with a college or technical degree can occupy positions in a variety of fields and are therefore exposed to more people. Thus, also being exposed to a wide range of views and perspectives on LGBTQ related issues. Alternately, individuals who only have primary and secondary schooling and individuals who have advanced degrees or professional degrees are most likely surrounded by like-minded people in their career or place of work, which increases the probability of working with people with similar ideologies and ideas, including LGBTQ issues.

Based on the analysis of means for income levels, three scales showed an increase across the three groups. "Confrontive Coping", "Accepting Responsibility", and "Planful Problem Solving" scales increased in accordance with an increase in income levels. It appears that the increase in means for these coping scales signals a trend of more deliberate coping mechanisms as respondents' income increases. When faced with LGBTQ related discriminatory experiences, respondents with higher incomes tend to be more methodic in their approach to conflict resolution. They use coping mechanisms that will help them identify the problem, explore the root of the problem even if they have to consider the problem being their own fault. These scales signify a self-awareness that allows them to consider alternatives and a plan of action to attempt to resolve the problem. Contrastingly, there are two scales, "Distancing" and "Positive Reappraisal," that resulted in a steady decrease across all three levels of income. These two scales involve stepping away from the problem and allowing it to resolve itself and focusing on personal growth when faced with difficult situations. The steady decrease in these coping mechanisms can be attributed to the passive nature of each action listed for each. As income increases, individuals may not feel the need to deal with their problems passively. They may choose to do so in a more confrontive manner, which explains why "Confrontive Coping" is one of the scales that increases as income growths.

Based on the analysis of means for age groups, "Planful Problem Solving" and "Self Controlling" increased across all three age groups. This steady increase presents a shift in how individuals deal with problems when faced with negative experiences. As individuals get older, they handle stressful situations in a more slow and deliberate manner. They will take a step back and assess the situation before reacting to it. They refrain from showing too much emotion and they strive to put themselves in the other person's shoes to gain perspective. In essence, they cope with unpleasant experiences in much more positive ways as they get older. Correspondingly, the "Confrontive Coping" scale decreased over all three groups, meaning that as respondents get older they are much less likely to use confrontive coping mechanisms. They become less aggressive and more disciplined in their coping mechanisms.

The lowest scoring scale across the board for all three variables, levels of education, income, and age, was "Accepting Responsibility." This scale involves directing blame for stressful situation on oneself, which can be viewed either positively or negatively. In the questionnaire, the coping mechanisms that comprise this scale seem negative in nature, such as "Criticized or lectured myself" and "Realized I brought the problem on myself." Consequently, more educated, more affluent, and more mature individuals most likely shy away from using these kinds of coping mechanisms. In contrast, "Escape Avoidance" was the scale that was rated the highest across all three variables. It is probable that this scale scored the highest because it is comprised of coping mechanisms that are easier to do and offer instant gratification. For instance, wishful thinking, blocking out negative feelings, making yourself feel better by eating, drinking, smoking or taking drugs, and taking it out on other people are actions that make up this scale. Although offering

instant gratification, most of the coping mechanisms listed here are harmful both physically and emotionally. Yet, they were scored much higher than every other scale.

Inferential Statistics

Using Research Question 1: "Would there be a significant correlation between the set of variables comprising of harassment and rejection, workplace and school discrimination, other discrimination, and total discrimination scale and the set of variables comprising of the Ways of Coping Scales: confrontive coping, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, escape-avoidance, planful problem-solving, and positive reappraisal and total coping," correlation coefficients were computed between the Total Discrimination of the Heterosexist Harassment, Rejection, and Discrimination Scale and Total Coping in Ways of Coping questionnaire. The results of the correlational analyses presented in Table 4 indicated that one out of the eight correlations was statistically significant. The Seeking Social Support scale was significantly and inversely related to harassment and rejection, $r = -.367$, $p = .028$. No other significant relationship was found. Although not significant, the relationship between confrontive coping and harassment and rejection had an absolute value greater than .300, $r = -31$, $p = .066$.

For Research Question 2: "Would there be a significant difference among levels of education on the following coping mechanisms: confrontive coping, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, escape-avoidance, planful problem-solving, and positive reappraisal and total scale as measured by the Ways of Coping Questionnaire," a MANOVA was conducted to compare three levels of education on the dependent variables of the coping scales including confrontive coping, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, escape-avoidance planful problem-solving, positive reappraisal, and total coping, and significance was found among the three levels of education on the dependent measures, Wilks's lambda = .401, $F_{(16,52)} = 1.881$, $p = .044$, $\eta^2 = .367$. However, no significant differences were found when ANOVAS were completed. Although no significant differences were found among education levels on the coping strategies, the multivariate Eta Squared based on Wilks' Lambda was quite strong: .367, 37% of the variance in coping is due to education levels. (See Table 5)

For Research Question 3: "Would there be a significant difference among income levels on the following coping mechanisms: confrontive coping, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, escape-avoidance, planful problem-solving, and positive reappraisal and total scale as measured by the Ways of Coping Questionnaire," a MANOVA was conducted to compare three levels of income on the dependent variables of the coping scales including confrontive coping, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, escape-avoidance planful problem-solving, positive reappraisal, and total coping, and no significant differences were found among the three income levels on the dependent measures, Wilks's lambda = .543, $F_{(16,52)} = 1.161$, $p = .329$, $\eta^2 = .263$. Although no significant differences were found among income levels on the coping strategies, the multivariate Eta Squared based on Wilks' Lambda was quite strong: .263, 26% of the variance in coping is due to income levels. No further tests were completed on this (See Table 5).

For Research Question 4: "Would there be a significant difference among age groups on the following coping mechanisms: confrontive coping, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, escape-avoidance, planful problem-solving, and positive

reappraisal and total scale as measured by the Ways of Coping Questionnaire," a MANOVA was conducted to compare three age levels on the dependent variables of the coping scales including confrontive coping, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, escape-avoidance planful problem-solving, positive reappraisal, and total coping, and no significant differences were found among the three age levels on the dependent measures: Wilks's lambda = .617, $F_{(16,52)}$ = .887, p = .587, η^2 = .214. Although no significant differences were found among income levels on the coping strategies, the multivariate Eta Squared based on Wilks' Lambda was quite strong: .214, 21% of the variance in coping was due to age levels. No further tests were completed on this (See Table 5).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The prevalence of LGBTQ issues being brought to the forefront of America's mainstream media, the rule of law, and educational institutions points to a defining moment in history last seen by the Civil Rights Movement in the sixties and seventies (Mayo, 2013). Every aspect of society has been touched, in one way or another, by LGBTQ matters. Educational institutions, more than any other, have to deal directly with equal rights, equal access, personal autonomy, and appropriate curriculum for LGBTQ individuals. Teachers, administrators, and counselors have to have appropriate knowledge, training, and professional development concerning LGBTQ specific issues and matters. Moreover, school districts have to have policies in place to be able to handle LGBTQ specific situations such as curriculum, bullying, harassment, and support (Savage & Schanding, 2013).
Furthermore, this study reinforces the need for continued support for LGBTQ students in colleges and universities. Because a large percentage of respondents in this study were college graduates or professionals, it is important for leadership in higher education to establish support systems, guidelines, and policies that will help in removing social and academic barriers for LGBTQ students.

Contributions to Practice

This study supports existing research that indicates that heterosexism, discrimination, and harassment exists and needs to be addressed. The most common sense way to address this problem would be through educational institutions, which are where children and youth spend most of their formative years. Schools, colleges, and universities actively provide professional development training to their educators on various issues of importance, from new trends in education to school policies and procedures. Studies like this one reflect a need for more training of school personnel, including district leaders, administrators, teachers, school psychologists and school counselors. Educational institutions need to be well aware and well versed in anti-LGBTQ bias in schools in order to be proactive in creating and maintaining safe and responsive environments for LGBTQ youths, making sure that policies concerning LGBTQ students are in place, board approved, and in student handbooks. As has been stated before, the simple knowledge that policies exist to protect LGBTQ students has been found to curb anti-LGBTQ bias in schools (Savage & Harley, 2009, Graves, 2015, Mayo 2013). This study provided data that identifies areas of concern. Areas to address by school leaders and personnel are anti-LGBTQ harassment, discrimination, and positive coping mechanisms. Teachers and counselors, who are on the frontlines of this matter, would benefit the most from training, professional

development, and established policies on minimizing anti-LGBTQ bias and maximizing social support structures within the school culture. Central office and school administrators, along with a committee of teachers, parents, and/or students, can now develop trainings, manuals and protocols to put in place in their particular school districts.

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APPENDIX

Table 1
Demographic Data

Characteristic		N	Percentage
Gender Identity	Female	19	52.8%
	Male	17	47.2%
Age			
	18 – 30	15	41.7%
	31 – 40	12	33.3%
	41 and above	9	25%
Sexual Identity			
	Bisexual	8	22.2%
	Gay	13	36.1%
	Lesbian	13	36.1%
	Not answered	2	5.6%
Ethnicity			
	African American/ African descent /Black	2	5.6%
	Caucasian/ White	10	27.8%
	Latino(a)/ Hispanic	23	63.9%
	Not answered	1	2.8%
Level of Education			
	Primary/Secondary	5	13.9

Table 1. Continued

Characteristic		N	Percentage
	College/Technical	14	38.9
	Graduate/Professional	17	47.2
Income			
	$29,999 and under	14	38.9
	$30,000 – $59,000	7	19.4
	$60,000 and above	15	41.7

Table 2
Heterosexist Harassment, Rejection, and Discrimination Scale

	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. How many times have you been treated unfairly by teachers or professors because you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning?	**1.00**	**1.56**	**.754**
2. How many times have you been treated unfairly by your employer, boss, or supervisors because you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning?	**1.00**	**1.62**	**.990**
3. How many times have you been treated unfairly by your co-workers, fellow students, or colleagues because you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning?	**2.00**	**1.97**	**1.203**
4. How many times have you been treated unfairly by people in the service jobs (by store clerks, waiters, bartenders, waitresses, bank tellers, mechanics, and others) because you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning?	**2.00**	**2.11**	**1.203**
5. How many times have you been treated unfairly by strangers because you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning?	**3.00**	**2.51**	**1.393**
6. How many times have you been treated unfairly by people in helping jobs (doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, caseworkers, dentists, school counselors, therapists, pediatrics, school principals, gynecologists, and others) because you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning?	**1.00**	**1.59**	**.910**
7. How many times were you denied a raise, a promotion, tenure, a good assignment, a job, or other such thing at work that you deserved because you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning?	**1.00**	**1.46**	**.756**

	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
8. How many times have you been treated unfairly by your family because you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning?	2.00	2.41	1.272
9. How many times have you been called a HETEROSEXIST name like dyke, fag, or other derogatory names?	2.00	2.62	1.407
10. How many times have you been made fun of, picked on, pushed, shoved, hit or threatened with harm because you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning?	2.00	2.26	1.229
11. How many times have you been rejected by family members because you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning?	1.00	1.85	1.182
12. How many times have you been rejected by friends because you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning?	2.00	1.82	1.048
13. How many times have you heard ANTI-LGBTQ remarks from family members?	3.00	2.33	1.493
14. How many times have you been verbally insulted because you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning?	2.00	2.31	1.004

Table 3
Ways of Coping Questionnaire

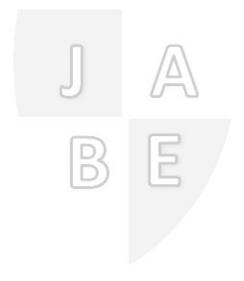|	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Just concentrated on what I had to do next – the next step.	3.00	2.69	.950
2. I tried to analyze the problem in order to understand it better.	3.00	2.69	.950
3. Turned to work or substitute activity to take my mind off things.	3.00	2.90	.852
4. I felt that time would make a difference – the only thing to do was wait.	2.00	2.44	.912
5. Bargained or compromised to get something positive from the situation.	2.00	2.31	.893
6. I did something which I didn't think would work, but at least I was doing something.	2.00	1.95	.868
7. Tried to get the person responsible to change his or her mind.	2.00	1.95	.944
8. Talked to someone to find out more about the situation.	2.00	2.51	.970
9. Criticized or lectured myself.	3.00	2.68	1.093
10. Tried not to burn my bridges, but leave things open somewhat.	2.00	2.46	.913
11. Hoped a miracle would happen.	2.00	2.32	1.210
12. Went along with fate; sometimes I just have bad luck.	2.00	2.21	1.094
13. Went on as if nothing had happened.	2.00	2.46	.989
14. I tried to keep my feelings to myself.	3.00	3.11	.894
15. Looked for the silver lining, so to speak; tried to look on the bright side of things.	2.00	2.50	1.033
16. Slept more than usual.	2.00	2.29	1.037
17. I expressed anger to the person(s) who caused the problem.	2.00	1.97	1.052
18. Accepted sympathy and understanding from someone.	2.00	2.32	.775
19. I told myself things that helped me to feel better.	2.00	2.42	.948
20. I was inspired to do something creative.	2.00	2.18	.926
21. Tried to forget the whole thing.	2.00	2.42	.919
22. I got professional help.	1.00	1.59	.798
23. Changed or grew as a person in a good way.	3.00	2.92	.941
24. I waited to see what would happen before doing anything.	2.00	2.19	.845
25. I apologized or did something to make up.	2.00	1.97	.944
26. I made a plan of action and followed it.	2.00	2.29	.768
27. I accepted the next best thing to what I wanted.	2.00	2.18	.692
28. I let my feelings out somehow.	2.00	2.29	.956
29. Realized I brought the problem on myself.	2.00	1.76	.751
30. I came out of the experience better than when I went in.	2.00	2.26	.828
31. Talked to someone who could do something concrete about the problem.	2.00	1.92	.818

Table 3. continued

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
32. Got away from it for a while; tried to rest or take a vacation.	2.00	2.16	1.027
33. Tried to make myself feel better by eating, drinking, smoking, using drugs or medication, etc.	3.00	2.76	1.149
34. Took a big chance or did something very risky.	2.00	1.87	.963
35. I tried not to act too hastily or follow my first hunch.	2.00	2.29	.984
36. Found new faith.	1.00	1.68	.873
37. Maintained my pride and kept a stiff upper lip.	2.50	2.63	.913
38. Rediscovered what is important in life.	3.00	2.76	1.038
39. Changed something so things would turn out all right.	2.00	2.45	.978
40. Avoided being with people in general.	2.00	2.00	.882
41. Didn't let it get to me; refused to think too much about it.	2.00	2.18	.834
42. I asked a relative or friend I respected for advice.	3.00	2.64	1.112
43. Kept others from knowing how bad things were.	3.00	2.82	1.121
44. Made light of the situation; refused to get too serious about it.	2.00	2.03	.811
45. Talked to someone about how I was feeling.	2.00	2.56	1.119
46. Stood my ground and fought for what I wanted.	2.00	2.46	.942
47. Took it out on other people.	2.00	1.85	.904
48. Drew on my past experiences; I was in a similar situation before.	3.00	2.44	.912
49. I knew what had to be done, so I doubled my efforts to make things work.	2.00	2.46	.884
50. Refused to believe that it had happened.	1.00	2.13	1.218
51. I made a promise to myself that things would be different next time.	2.00	2.31	.977
52. Came up with a couple of different solutions to the problem.	2.00	2.28	.759
53. Accepted it, since nothing could be done.	2.00	2.42	1.004
54. I tried to keep my feelings from interfering with other things too much.	3.00	2.67	.927
55. Wished that I could change what had happened or how I felt.	3.00	2.92	.870
56. I changed something about myself.	2.00	2.26	.891
57. I daydreamed or imagined a better time or place than the one I was in.	2.00	2.62	1.115
58. Wished that the situation would go away or somehow be over with.	3.00	2.85	.844
59. Had fantasies or wishes about how things might turn out.	3.00	2.77	.959
60. I prayed.	3.00	2.61	1.264
61. I prepared myself for the worst.	3.00	2.85	.988
62. I went over in my mind what I would say or do.	3.00	3.00	.889
63. I thought about how a person I admire would handle this situation and used that as a model.	2.00	2.36	1.038
64. I tried to see things from the person's point of view.	2.00	2.51	.885
65. I reminded myself how much worse things could be.	3.00	2.79	.951
66. I jogged or exercised.	2.00	2.36	1.267

Table 4
Correlation Between Coping and Discrimination

	Harassment & Rejection		Workplace & School Discrimination		Other Discrimination	
	r	*p*	*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*
Confrontive coping	-.310	.066	-.219	.198	-.047	.785
Distancing	.101	.558	-.098	.571	-.080	.643
Self-Controlling	.205	.231	-.143	.405	-.264	.119
Seeking social support	-.367*	.028	-.086	.617	.060	.727
Accepting responsibility	-.023	.896	-.129	.453	-.063	.714
Escape-Avoidance	.016	.924	-.218	.202	-.155	.368
Planful problem-solving	-.029	.868	-.007	.966	.141	.141
Positive reappraisal	.045	.796	.107	.533	.175	.308

Note. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5
Multivariate Tests

Group	Wilks's lambda	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Significance	Partial Eta Squared
Education	.401	1.881	16	52	.044	.367
Income	.543	1.161	16	52	.329	.263
Age	.617	.887	16	52	.587	.214