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Attitudes of Students in Serbia Towards Lesbians and Gay Men: the Research Results¹

Abstract

In 2018 Serbia took part in the Comparative Study of Student Attitudes towards Punitiveness and Gay and Lesbian Issues that encompasses ten European and non-European countries. The data was collected with the use of the standardised questionnaire, while respondents were students who could work in the criminal justice system. In Serbia, the survey was conducted on a sample of 188 students of the third and fourth year of the undergraduate studies at three faculties in Belgrade: the Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation and the Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Psychology (University of Belgrade) and the Faculty of Law (University Union). The questionnaire included three scales of attitudes: towards lesbians and gay men, towards crime and towards criminal sanctions. The aim of the chapter is to present a part of the survey findings concerning students' attitudes towards lesbians and gay men. The Herek (1998) Scale of Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men was used in the survey. It consisted of 20 different statements, ten about gay men and ten about lesbians, to which respondents indicated their level of agreement or disagreement on a 5-point Likert-type scale. The paper starts with an overview of the available so far research on the students' attitudes towards lesbians and gay men. This is followed with a brief overview of the survey methodology. Afterwards, the survey findings on students' attitudes towards lesbians and gay men and contributing factors are presented and discussed. In the final part, the main

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conclusions are pointed out, as well as recommendations related to the necessity of raising awareness about the rights of persons of different sexual orientation in the field of higher education and the importance of sensitizing future professionals who could work in the criminal justice system.

Keywords: attitudes, students, lesbians, gay men, research, Serbia.

Introduction

Sexual orientation towards persons of the same sex has been stigmatized as a psychopathology, illness or deviance in many countries and cultures. While in many countries homosexual acts are legal, in others they are illegal and criminalized (Carroll, 2016), with punishments ranging from fines, forced labour and long term imprisonment to the death penalty. Even when homosexual acts are not criminalized, obstacles to enjoy fundamental rights, different treatment, discrimination in various areas of life (in education, employment, healthcare, social services) and different forms of victimization (violence, hate crime, harassment) on the grounds of sexual orientation are still evident (Carpenter 2007; Herek, Chopp and Strohl, 2007; Institute of Medicine, 2011; Isaković and Lazar, 2016; FRA, 2014).² Although evident improvements have been made globally, with endeavours of the governments, state institutions and civil society organizations to enforce the respect of human rights of persons of different sexual orientation and to advance the equality of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex persons (Moral de la Rubia, Vale le da O, 2013; FRA, 2018), negative attitudes towards homosexuality, known as homophobia, homonegativity and sexual prejudice, are still prevalent in many cultures.

The empirical study of negative attitudes towards homosexuality began in the early 1970s, just after psychologist Weinberg introduced the concept of *homophobia* to the American public, which he defined as “the dread of being in close quarters with

² For example, in the USA gay men have lower income than heterosexual men (Carpenter 2007; Herek, Chopp and Strohl, 2007), while institutional policies create disparities in health care between heterosexuals, on one hand, and lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, on the other (Institute of Medicine, 2011).

homosexuals - and in the case of homosexuals themselves, self-loathing" (Weinberg, 1972: 4), thus, emphasizing "discomfort and fear heterosexuals can experience in the presence of lesbian and gay people" (Lingiardi, Falanga and D'Augelli, 2005: 81). However, using the term *homophobia* to describe negative attitudes towards homosexuality was criticised by the academics: negative attitudes may not always result from fear and, therefore, homophobia, except in extreme cases, does not fit clinical definitions of phobia (Rye and Meaney, 2010: 158). In 1980, Hudson and Ricketts suggested the term *homonegativity* as a more general term that describes negative cognitive, affective, and behavioural reactions to homosexuality (Roderick et al., 1998: 80). Finally, Herek suggested the term *sexual prejudice* that, in accordance with the contemporary definitions of prejudices³, includes prejudicial attitudes towards lesbians, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals, and encouraged the research on sexual prejudices within the existing literature on prejudices in general (Herek, 1984a, 2000, 2004).

Negative attitudes and prejudices towards homosexuality contribute to maintaining of intolerance towards individuals with a homosexual orientation. During the last few decades, negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men have become an important research topic in psychology and social sciences. Early research was focused on the component of deviance of homosexuality, showing that heterosexuals would readily agree with a statement such as "homosexuality is a mental illness" (Leitner and Cado, 1982; Kite and Deaux, 1987; Kite, 1994). Moreover, heterosexuals who hold traditional gender roles have more negative attitudes towards homosexuals and homosexuality in general (Laner, M. R. and Laner, R. H, 1980), and tend to perceive individuals with a homosexual orientation as deviant (Krulowitz and Nash, 1980). Later research has shifted the focus to the factors associated with attitudes towards homosexuality, while the most evaluated correlates are demographic variables, such as gender, age, educational level, study program, etc.

³ The term "prejudice" is often simply defined as a negative attitude toward members of a particular social group (Herek, 2006; Dovidio et al., 2010; Herek and McLemore, 2013).

Attitudes of professionals who come or who are likely to come in contact with persons of same sex orientation, including those working in the criminal justice system (police, judiciary, prisons, etc.) may affect the quality of their work and impact their professional decisions (Kovčo-Vukadin, 2015). Thus, instead of protecting human rights, they may violate them and discriminate against individuals on the ground of their sexual orientation. In 2018 Serbia took part in the Comparative Study of Student Attitudes towards Punitiveness and Gay and Lesbian Issues that encompassed ten European and non-European countries. The study was conducted on a sample of 188 students of the third and fourth year of the undergraduate studies at three faculties in Belgrade, encompassing those who could work in the criminal justice system. The aim of this chapter is to present a part of the survey findings concerning students' attitudes towards lesbians and gay men. The paper starts with an overview of the so far research on the given topic. This is followed with a brief overview of the present study methodology. Afterwards, the survey findings on students' attitudes towards lesbians and gay men and contributing factors are presented and discussed. In the final part, we point out to main conclusions and recommendations.

Demographic Variables as Factors Associated with Attitudes Towards Homosexuality: An Overview of the Available Research Findings

Gender is considered to be one of the important factors contributing to negative attitudes towards individuals with homosexual orientation. The results of numerous studies indicate that women are generally more tolerant towards homosexuality, while men hold more negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men than women. Additionally, attitudes towards gay men are significantly more negative than attitudes towards lesbians (e.g. Herek, 1988, 1994; King and Black, 1999; Cardenas and Barrientos, 2008; Yu, Xiao and Xiang, 2011; Miler and Kim, 2012; Huić, Jugović and Kamenov, 2015; Etchezahar et al., 2016). Gender differences in sexual prejudices are often

explained with the cultural construct of masculinity and femininity that lead to different cultural expectations for men and women (Herek and McLemore, 2013: 221). Masculinity is often conceptualized as a status that must be achieved, so men are more likely than women to feel compelled to conform to gender role expectations and thereby avoid losing the acceptance of their same-sex heterosexual peers (Franklin 2000; Theodore and Basow 2000; Glick et al. 2007).

Many recent studies mentioned age as a predictor of negative attitudes towards persons with homosexual orientation, but the results are not unambiguous. For example, Hebl, Law and King (2010) stated that young people and older people hold more negative attitudes towards homosexuals in comparison to the middle-aged individuals, while other studies have shown that older adults have a higher prejudice level (Herek, 2000; Herek and McLemore, 2013). On the contrary, the results of the research conducted by Lyons, DeValve and Garner (2008) did not confirm statistically significant correlation between age and attitudes towards persons with homosexual orientation.

It is known that education changes person's attitudes and values (Yu, Xiao and Xiang, 2011), so it is not surprising that higher educated individuals are more tolerant towards persons with homosexual orientation than those of lower education (Herek, 1984b; Herek and Capitano, 1996; Loftus, 2001; Grapes, 2006). Additionally, the study program impacts attitudes as well. Thus, students of the so-called criminal justice program hold more negative attitudes towards persons with homosexual orientation than other students (Olivero and Murataia, 2001; Cannon, 2005; Dantzker and Eisenman, 2007; Miller and Kim, 2012).⁴ Similarly, a survey conducted on a sample of Canadian students has shown the differences in attitudes towards persons with homosexual orientation depending on the study program of the respondents. Namely, students studying arts and social sciences had more positive attitudes towards homosexuals than students studying economics and natural sciences (Schellenberg, Hirt and Sears, 1999). These findings have not

⁴ For a detailed review of the research related to the attitudes of the students of the criminal justice programs please see Kovčo-Vukadin, 2015.

been confirmed in a survey conducted on a sample of Chinese students; on the contrary, this survey has shown that students of natural sciences have more positive attitudes towards homosexuals than students of humanities (Cao, Wang and Gao, 2010).

Many studies have investigated and documented the attitudes towards lesbians and gay men of particular groups of professionals, such as psychologists and mental health professionals (e.g. Annesley and Coyle, 1995), social workers (e.g. Berkman and Zinberg, 1997; Swank and Raiz, 2010), medical trainees and professionals (e.g. Klamen, Grossman and Kopacz, 1999; Moral de la Rubia and Valle de la O, 2014), criminal justice trainees and professionals (e.g. Cannon and Dirks-Linhorst, 2006). Personal attitudes of professionals who are in professional contact with persons with homosexual orientation affect their readiness to react and quality of work, which has been confirmed in numerous research (e.g. Barrett and McWhirter, 2002; Krieglstein, 2003). For example, studies have shown that social workers who hold negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men have difficulty in providing quality support to homosexual clients (e.g. Barrett and McWhirter, 2002; Krieglstein, 2003) and that psychologist's homophobic feelings seem to interfere with his/her effective assessments of clients and the choice of appropriate treatment goals or counselling techniques (O'Hare, Williams and Ezoviski, 1996; Berkman and Zinberg, 1997; Ryan, 2000). Likewise, negative attitudes of criminal justice professionals towards persons with homosexual orientation can influence their decisions, which violates the principles of social justice (Lions et al., 2005).

Studies also support the idea that people with homosexual relatives or friends hold more favourable attitudes towards persons with homosexual orientation (Herek, 1988; Herek and Capitano, 1996; O'Hare, Williams and Ezoviski, 1996; Oles, Black and Cramer, 1999; Barrett and McWhirter, 2002; Newman, Dannenfelser and Benishek, 2002; Krieglstein, 2003; Snively et al., 2004; Swank and Raiz, 2010), while those without these contacts hold more prejudiced attitudes (Lingiardi, Falanga, and Augelli, 2005). Moreover, Miller and Kim found that personal contact with persons with homosexual orientation is the

strongest predictor of favourable attitudes towards them (Miller and Kim, 2012).

Certain ideological beliefs seem to be linked with hostility towards lesbians and gay men. People with a higher level of authoritarianism reverence the traditional values and condemn non-conformists. Accordingly, they perceive homosexuality as a violation of traditional gender roles (Schulte, 2002; Green, 2005) and as a threat to traditional norms and values (Duckitt and Siblei, 2010). Consequently, they hold more negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men. Political affiliation and membership in political parties seem to be significant in predicting attitudes towards homosexuals in a way that Conservatives and Republicans show higher levels of sexual prejudice (Shackelford and Besser, 2007; Brown and Henriquez, 2008; Miller and Kim, 2012; Etchezahar et al., 2016).

Despite the variability in measurement, religiosity has been found to be a strong predictor of sexual prejudices, even when it is tested by a simple global assessment of the importance of faith in the life of an individual (Herek, 1987, 1988; Jugović and Ančić, 2013; Huić, Jugović and Kamenov, 2015). Religious individuals hold more negative attitudes than non-religious individuals, although religions differ significantly in the extent to which they systematically condemn homosexuality (Adamczyk and Pitt, 2009). In relation to that, persons to whom faith is important in life and who often attend religious services also have more negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men (Jugović and Ančić, 2013). When it comes to college students, Christian ideology has been found to be the strongest predictor of homophobic attitudes (Snively et al., 2004). Additionally, religious fundamentalism is strongly correlated with sexual prejudice (Ryan, 2000; Krieglstein, 2003; Whitley, 2009).

According to Rye and Meaney (2010: 158), the scientific study of attitudes towards homosexuality is "the best route to the development of more positive attitudes toward homosexuality". Therefore, empirical findings could provide an understanding of the reason why people hold negative attitudes towards homosexuality and how best to achieve a positive attitude change.

Methodology of the Present Study

In 2018 Serbia took part in the Comparative Study of Student Attitudes towards Punitiveness and Gay and Lesbian Issues. The survey was conducted during the winter semester 2018/2019, on a convenience sample of 188 students of the third and fourth year of basic academic studies at three faculties in Belgrade: the Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation (FASPER)⁵ and Faculty of Philosophy - the Department of Psychology (University of Belgrade) and the Faculty of Law (Union University). Thus, respondents were students who could be employed in the criminal justice system (as legal and non-legal professionals).

Objective, Research Questions and Hypothesis

The general objective of the present study is two-fold: first, to determine the contribution of certain demographic variables, including sex, age, study program, sexual orientation, contacts with persons of homosexual orientation, political affiliations, the significance of religion and attendance at religious services, to students' attitudes towards lesbians and gay men, and second, to determine the difference in attitudes towards lesbians and gay men between law students, on the one hand, and students of prevention and treatment of behavioural disorders (PTBD) and psychology (the so called "auxiliary professions"), on the other.

Given the objectives, there are two hypothesis and, consequently, two main research questions:

1. Which of the examined variables contribute to more negative attitudes of students towards lesbians and gay men? Bearing in mind findings from previous studies, the contribution of sex, age, sexual orientation, contacts with

⁵ A sub-sample from FASPER included students studying the Special education and rehabilitation study program, module Prevention and Treatment of Behavioural Disorders (PTBD).

- homosexuals, political and religious affiliations and attendance at religious ceremonies was expected.
2. There are differences in attitudes towards lesbians and gay men among law students on the one hand, and PTBD and psychology students, on the other.

Sample

The survey was conducted on a convenience sample of 188 students of the third and fourth year of basic academic studies at three faculties in Belgrade (Table 1). There was slightly more students of psychology (37.2%) and PTBD (35.1%) than law students (27.7%) in the sample, with 78.2% (147) of female and 21.8% (41) of male students. Such gender structure of the sample is in accordance with the gender structure of the student population studying at these three faculties. The value of the mean for the age was 22 years, with most of the participants aged between 20 and 25 years, which is expected with regards to the year of study. Students identifying themselves as heterosexuals comprised the majority of the sample (92%), with 5.9% identifying themselves as bisexual and 2.1% as persons with fluid sexuality. Slightly more than half of the participants have homosexuals for friends⁶ or know persons with homosexual orientation.

As for the political affiliation, half of the respondents opted for liberal or moderately liberal, while 10.6% of them identified themselves as a worshipper of a moderately conservative or conservative political option. Most of the participants reported their religious affiliation as Orthodox (71.3%), while more than a quarter of them defined themselves as atheists. In this regard, slightly more than a half of the respondents almost never attended religious ceremonies (52.7%), which is not surprising given that 68.8% of the respondents stated that the religion is not important for them.

⁶ More precisely, they know they have friends who identify themselves as homosexuals. This is important to note, given the fact that 15.4% of students from the sample do not know if any of their friends is of homosexual orientation.

Table 1. *The sample characteristics*

	n	Per cent
Sex	Male	41 21.8
	Female	147 78.2
Age M=22.25 SD=4.28	20-25	172 91.5
	26-30	9 4.8
	31-35	7 3.7
Study program	Law	52 27.7
	PTBD	66 35.1
	Psychology	70 37.2
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	173 92.0
	Bisexual	11 5.9
	Other - fluid sexuality	4 2.1
Homosexual friends/acquaintances	Yes	101 53.7
	No	58 30.9
	I don't know	29 15.4
	Extreme liberal	4 2.1

Political affiliation	Liberal	56	29.8
	Moderately liberal	39	20.7
	Moderately	50	26.6
	Moderately conservative	14	7.4
	Conservative	6	3.2
	Other - apolitical	19	10.2
	Orthodox	134	71.3
Religion	Catholic	1	0.5
	Muslim	1	0.5
	Atheist	52	27.7
	Not religious	37	19.7
	Almost never	99	52.7
Religious Services	Once a month	27	14.4
	Two, three times a month	8	4.3
	Once a week	2	1.1
	More often than once a week	1	0.5
	Other - two times a year	14	7.3

Instrument

The data was collected with the use of the standardised questionnaire. The questionnaire used in the present study included a socio-demographic questionnaire and three scales of attitudes: towards lesbians and gay men, towards crime and towards criminal sanctions.

A thirteen-item demographic questionnaire was used to collect information concerning sex, age, faculty/study program, nationality/ethnicity, sexual orientation, personal contact with homosexuals (homosexual friends/acquaintances), political affiliations and religiousness (importance of religion and attendance at religious ceremonies). The data on the sex, age, sexual orientation, contacts with homosexuals, political affiliations and religiousness were analysed as independent variables in the present study.

In order to evaluate students' attitudes towards lesbians and gay men, the Herek's *Attitudes towards lesbians and gay men scale* (ATLG) was used: it is a 20-item scale designed to capture negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men (Herek, 1984b; Herek, and Glunt, 1993; Herek and Capitanio, 1996). It was originally developed from the 64 items, but only 20 items (statements) with the highest item-total correlations were included in the ATLG scale (Kyes and Tumbelaka, 1994; Stoeber and Morera, 2007). The original ATLG scale consists of two subscales: the *Attitudes towards lesbians* - ATL with 10 statements that evaluate attitudes towards lesbians (items L1 to L10), and the *Attitudes towards gay men* - ATG with 10 statements that evaluate attitudes towards homosexual men - (items G1 to G10) (Herek, 1988, 1994). Each statement on the ATLG is rated on the 5-point Likert-type scale, where the respondents show their level of agreement or disagreement (from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"). Herek's ATLG scale is intended to capture the attitudinal aspect of homonegativity (Herek, 1984b; Rye and Meaney, 2010). The result is counted for each sub-scale and for the scale in total (results for each sub-scale are added and then divided with a number of items). A higher score indicates greater prejudice towards homosexuals, while a lower score indicates favourable attitudes towards homosexuals. Results on subscales are not directly

comparable. In the Serbian translation, we used the term “homosexual women” to refer to lesbians and “homosexual men” to refer to gay men. Seven items (four from the ATG subscale and three from the ATL subscale) are coded reversely.

In the original study, the ATLG scale reveals high internal consistency, with Cronbach alpha .90 (for the ATL subscale $\alpha = .77$ and for the ATG subscale $\alpha = .89$) (Herek, 1988). Additionally, a good external validity of the ATLG was confirmed, with convergent validity with the Index of Homophobia and the Modern Homonegativity⁷ (Rye and Meaney, 2010). High reliability of the ATLG scale was confirmed in the present study as well. The reliability with levels obtained for the overall ATLG scale was .91, for the subscale measuring attitudes towards lesbians (ATL) $\alpha = .88$ and for the subscale measuring attitudes towards gay men (ATG) $\alpha = .96$. The ATLG scale has been translated and adapted into Dutch (Van de Meerendonk, Eisinga and Felling, 2003), Turkish (Gelbal and Duyan, 2006), Spanish (Bauermeister et al., 2007) and Chinese (Yu, Xiao and Xiang, 2011). To our knowledge, the ATLG scale has not been used in Serbia yet. For the purpose of this study, the original ATLG scale was translated into Croatian and then adapted into Serbian.

Data Collection

The data was collected using a paper-and-pencil method. After getting approval from the deans of the given faculties and professors teaching particular courses, having clearly explained the objectives of this research to the professors and participants, and having obtained the informed consent of the participants, the ATLG scale was applied in the classrooms. The anonymity of respondents was assured. Furthermore, participants were informed that the data derived from this research would be only used for scientific purposes.

⁷ For more information about the forms of homonegativity known as *oldfashioned homonegativity* and *modern homonegativity* please see: Morrison, M.A. and Morrison, T.G., 2002.

Data Analysis

The data was processed in SPSS 20. First, descriptive statistics for every item were calculated, followed by the analyses of the scale's reliability. Additionally, an independent-samples t-test, correlation, analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA) and linear regression were used for data analyses.⁸ The adjustment to the normality of the ATL and the ATG score and analyzed predictors was contrasted through the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (K-S Z).

Research Results

Demographic Variables as Factors Associated with Respondents' Attitudes Towards Lesbians and Gay Men

The research suggested that female students ($n=147$, $M=2.49$, $SD=.743$) reported lower prejudice levels towards lesbians than male students ($n=41$, $M=2.64$, $SD=.632$, $t_{(188)} = -1.13$). Additionally, female students ($M=2.61$, $SD=.667$) reported lower prejudice levels towards gay men than male students ($M=2.78$, $SD=.453$, $t_{(188)} = -1.53$). Despite established differences regarding prejudice levels towards lesbians and gay men between female and male students, those differences were not significant ($p>.05$).

In order to examine the impact of other demographic characteristics on respondents' attitudes towards lesbians and gay men, an analysis of variance was performed. The differences of means for ATL and ATG sub-scales were statistically significant related to the study program, between respondents of heterosexual orientation and those who defined themselves as non-heterosexuals (bisexuals and fluid sexual orientation), and between those who have homosexual friends and those who have not (Table 2). Additionally, the differences of means for ATL and ATG sub-scales were statistically significant between respondents of conservative political affiliation and those with more liberal political orientation, and between students who attend religious

⁸ In regression, five-point responses were transformed into three-point responses, with 1=agree (answers "totally agree" and "mostly agree"), 2=neither agree nor disagree and 3=disagree (answers "totally disagree" and "mostly disagree").

services often (once or more times a week or month) and those who do not (almost never) (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of means by One-way ANOVA - demographic variables (total sample)

	ATL (N=188)			ATG (N=188)		
	M	SD	F (eta squared)	M	SD	F (eta squared)
Age			.797 (<.01)			.552 (<.01)
20-25	2.50	.729		2.64	.645	
26-30	2.78	.655		2.73	.444	
>30	2.69	.604		2.77	.377	
Study program			16.011*** (.04)			11.242*** (.03)
Law	2.91	.917		2.97	.989	
PTBD	2.55	.595		2.60	.397	
Psychology	2.22	.497		2.46	.291	
Sexual orientation			6.699*** (.02)			19.702*** (.03)
Heterosexual	2.53	.697		2.62	.431	
Bisexual	2.06	.266		2.48	.183	
Fluid sexuality	2.20	.290		2.60	.443	
Homosexual friends			4.311* (.01)			3.774* (.01)
Yes	2.38	.590		2.55	.333	
No	2.68	.831		2.72	.508	
I don't know	2.70	.819		2.88	.972	
Political affiliation			8.608*** (.02)			3.114** (.01)
Extreme liberal	1.93	.150		2.42	.350	
Liberal	2.27	.493		2.53	.366	
Moderately liberal	2.33	.584		2.55	.370	
Moderately conservative	2.62	.759		2.68	.483	
Conservative	2.93	.706		2.82	.317	
Apolitical	3.30	.642		3.10	.632	
	2.40	.630		2.48	.319	
Religion			.771 (<.01)			.622 (<.01)
Orthodox	2.63	.746		2.69	.706	
Atheist	2.22	.592		2.58	.377	
Catholic, Muslim	2.40	.531		2.60	.325	
Religious services			5.381*** (.02)			2.299* (.01)
Almost never	2.35	.527		2.57	.363	
Monthly	2.76	.707		2.71	.475	
Weekly	3.11	.679		3.08	.404	
Two times a year	3.25	1.262		3.14	1.824	

***p<.001 **p<.01 *p<.05

The results presented in Table 2 show that heterosexuals, students studying at the Law school and respondents who do not have homosexual friends or acquaintances show lower acceptance of lesbians and gay men, with higher prejudice levels towards gay men than towards lesbians. Conservatives and more religious respondents show lower acceptance of lesbians and gay men, too, but with a bit higher prejudice levels towards lesbians than towards gay men. However, despite the significance, the real differences between means of attitudes towards lesbians and gay men are small, which is confirmed with eta-squared. The effect size varies between .01 and 0.4⁹ (Table 2).

Differences in Attitudes Towards Lesbians and Gay Men Between Law Students and PTBD and Psychology Students

Since available studies suggest that study program impacts attitudes on lesbians and gay men, we wanted to see if there are some differences between law students, who could work as legal professionals in the criminal justice system, on one side, and PTBD and psychology students, who could be involved in the criminal justice system as non-legal professionals ("auxiliary professions"), on the other. In doing so, t-test for independent samples was applied on average results on the sub-scales and the ATLG scale in total. For the ATL sub-scale, the results ranged between 1 and 4.70, and for the ATG sub-scale from 1 to 5. As suggested by data in Table 3, significant differences in attitudes towards lesbians and gay men between law students and PTBD and psychology students were established.

Mean scores for the ATLG scale in total, as well as for the ATL and ATG sub-scales, show relatively low prejudice level among students of all three faculties (Table 3). However, law students have significantly more negative attitudes towards lesbians than PTBD and psychology students ($t_{(188)}=3.92, p<.001, 95\% CI[.26-.80]$). In addition, law students have significantly more negative attitudes towards gay men than PTBD and psychology students ($t_{(188)}=3.16,$

⁹ For more information about the effect size for ANOVA please see in: Cohen, 1988, Fan, 2001 and Grissom and Kim, 2005

$p < .01$, 95% CI [.16-.72]). The effect size of the difference, both in terms of the scale in total and sub-scales, expressed by Cohen's d ($d = .07$), indicates a medium effect (Cohen, 1988).

Table 3. Differences in attitudes towards lesbians (ATL) and gay men (ATG) between law students and students of PTBD and psychology

Scale	Law school			PTBD and Psychology			t-test
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	
ATLG	52	2.94	.841	136	2.45	.383	4.02***
ATL	52	2.91	.917	136	2.38	.569	3.92***
ATG	52	2.97	.989	136	2.53	.353	3.16**

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$

Significant differences in attitudes between law students and PTBD and psychology students were found on most of the analysed statements in sub-scales (Table 4 and 5), meaning that law students have higher prejudices than PTBD and psychology students. Namely, law students were significantly more likely than PTBD and psychology students to endorse seven statements that indicate rejection towards lesbians: four items that indicate open rejection (L3, L5, L9 and L10), and three items that indicate subtle rejection¹⁰ (items L2, L6, L8) (Table 4).

Law students were also significantly more likely than PTBD and psychology students to endorse nine statements against gay men: all five that indicate open rejection towards homosexual men (items G2, G3, G4, G6, and G10), and four out of five that indicate subtle rejection towards homosexual men (items G1, G5, G8, and G9) (Table 5).

¹⁰ For more information about items of the ATLG scale that indicate open and subtle rejection towards lesbians and gay men please see: Moral de la Rubia and Valle de la O, 2013.

Table 4. Differences in attitudes towards lesbians - comparison of means for claims from ATL

Statements	Study Program	n
L1: Lesbians just can't fit into our society.	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136
L2: A woman's homosexuality should not be a cause for job discrimination in any situation. ¹	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136
L3: Female homosexuality is bad for society because it breaks down the natural divisions between the sexes.	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136
L4: State laws against private sexual behaviour between consenting adult women should be abolished. ¹	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136
L5: Female homosexuality is a sin.	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136
L6: The growing number of lesbians indicates a decline in Serbian morals.	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136
L7: Female homosexuality in itself is no problem unless society makes it a problem. ¹	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136
L8: Female homosexuality is a threat to many of our basic social institutions.	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136
L9: Female homosexuality is an inferior form of sexuality.	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136
L10: Lesbians are sick.	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136

¹ Reverse scored

Law - law students, PTBD - students of Prevention and Treatment of Behavioural Disorders module, Psy - students of psychology

Attitudes towards lesbians Per cent of responses					M	SD	SE	t-test
1	2	3	4	5				
38.5	28.8	23.1	5.8	3.8	2.08	1.100	.153	t=1.61
64.3	25.7	2.9	7.1	0.0	1.53	.863	.103	
5.8	1.9	19.2	15.4	57.7	4.17	1.167	.162	t=-3.32**
0.0	1.4	2.9	5.7	90.0	4.84	.528	.063	
28.8	19.2	11.5	25.0	15.4	2.79	1.486	.206	t=3.56***
65.7	20.0	2.9	7.1	4.3	1.64	1.117	.133	
15.4	13.5	36.5	13.5	5.8	3.73	2.498	.346	t=.89
8.6	1.4	61.4	8.6	17.1	3.41	1.419	.170	
42.3	17.3	13.5	11.5	11.5	2.56	1.924	.267	t=3.69***
85.7	4.3	4.3	1.4	4.3	1.34	.961	.115	
42.3	15.4	17.3	13.5	7.7	2.52	1.873	.260	t=3.01**
80.0	11.4	4.3	1.4	2.9	1.36	.869	.104	
1.9	5.8	25.0	38.5	25.0	4.02	1.379	.191	t=1.42
2.9	1.4	22.9	55.7	17.1	3.83	.834	.100	
38.5	17.3	19.2	15.4	5.8	2.56	1.830	.254	t=2.94**
68.6	18.6	7.1	4.3	1.4	1.51	.913	.109	
44.2	17.3	23.1	9.6	0.0	2.38	1.952	.271	t=2.55*
82.9	5.7	7.1	1.4	2.9	1.36	.901	.108	
51.9	13.5	15.4	7.7	7.7	2.29	1.882	.261	t=4.06***
85.7	4.3	2.9	4.3	2.9	1.34	.946	.113	

***p<.001, **p<.01

Table 5. Differences in attitudes towards gay - comparison of means for claims from ATG

Statements	Study Program	n
G1: Male homosexual couples should be allowed to adopt children the same as heterosexual couples. ¹	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136
G2: I think male homosexuals are disgusting.	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136
G3: Male homosexuals should not be allowed to teach school.	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136
G4: Male homosexuality is a perversion.	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136
G5: Male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in men. ¹	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136
G6: If a man has homosexual feelings, he should do everything he can to overcome them.	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136
G7: I would not be too upset if I learned that my son was a homosexual. ¹	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136
G8: Sex between two men is just plain wrong.	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136
G9: The idea of male homosexual marriages seems ridiculous to me.	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136
G10: Male homosexuality is merely a different kind of lifestyle that should not be condemned. ¹	Law PTBD+Psy	52 136

¹ Reverse scored

Law - law students, PTBD - students of Prevention and

Treatment of Behavioural Disorders module, Psy - students of psychology

Attitudes towards gay men Per cent of responses					M	SD	SE	t-test
1	2	3	4	5				
42.3 8.6	13.5 5.7	23.1 14.3	11.3 1.4	5.8 40.0	2.48 3.89	1.831 1.246	.254 .149	t=-3.22**
21.2 70.0	9.6 21.4	25.0 4.3	19.2 0.0	23.1 4.3	3.25 1.47	1.655 .928	.230 .111	t=6.21***
42.3 90.0	19.2 5.7	17.3 2.9	7.7 0.0	9.6 1.4	2.46 1.17	1.873 .619	.260 .073	t=3.62***
28.8 71.4	9.6 10.0	32.7 10.0	9.6 2.9	13.5 5.7	3.04 1.61	2.009 1.146	.279 .137	t=4.75***
15.4 2.9	19.2 7.1	23.1 21.4	23.1 21.4	17.3 47.1	3.19 4.03	1.560 1.116	.216 .133	t=-2.42**
26.9 77.1	15.4 10.0	32.7 7.1	11.5 2.9	7.7 2.9	2.92 1.44	1.949 .958	.270 .114	t=4.20***
30.8 8.6	23.1 7.1	25.0 30.0	5.8 27.1	11.5 27.1	2.67 3.57	1.823 1.211	.253 .145	t=-1.91
21.2 75.7	17.3 11.4	32.7 4.3	3.8 2.9	23.1 5.7	3.02 1.51	1.651 1.100	.229 .131	t=5.49***
15.4 65.7	21.2 21.4	17.3 8.6	19.2 0.0	25.0 4.3	3.29 1.56	1.637 .973	.227 .116	t=5.01***
17.3 2.9	11.5 2.9	25.0 12.9	15.4 21.4	28.8 60.0	3.38 4.33	1.647 1.003	.228 .120	t=- 3.06**

***p<.001, **p<.01

In order to find out if there are differences in the two sub-samples of students related to the correlation of certain predictors (demographic variables) and respondents' attitudes towards lesbians and gay men additional analysis was performed.¹¹ The data suggested that in the sub-sample of law students, there is no correlation between sex, age, sexual orientation and contact with homosexual friends, as predictors, and attitudes towards lesbians, as the dependent variable. Additionally, there is no correlation between sex, age, contact with homosexual friends and the importance of religion, on one hand, and attitudes towards gay men, on the other (Table 6). Correlation between other predictors and attitudes towards lesbians and gay men is weak, with the exception of the correlation between sexual orientation and attitudes towards gay men, which is moderate ($r=.54$).¹²

Similarly to law students, in the sub-sample of PTBD and psychology students there is no correlation between sex, age, sexual orientation, contact with homosexual friends and religion, on one hand, and attitudes towards lesbians, on the other. As for the attitudes towards gay men, there is no correlation with sex, age, contact with homosexual friends, political affiliation, religion and religious services. Correlation between other predictors and attitudes towards lesbians and gay men is very weak or weak (Table 6). Predictors that do not correlate with dependent variables are not included in regression analyses in both sub-samples.

¹¹ The regression analysis was preceded by a check of the normal distribution of predictor variables and average values of the scores on both subscales, as well as Pearson's correlations between predictors and dependent variables. The values of skewness, kurtosis and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for all predictors indicate a statistically significant deviation from the normal distribution (positioning the participants on the positive part of the scale). Additionally, results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test show that distribution of a mean score for the ATL sub-scale ($K-S Z=1.90$, $p<.01$) and the ATG sub-scale ($K-S Z=2.34$, $p<.001$), likewise, significantly deviates from a normal distribution. However, according to Tabachnick and Fidell (2012) disturbed normality of distribution does not have to be an obstacle for the regression analyses if asymmetry distribution is in one direction.

¹² For more information about the strength of relationship in Pearson correlation please see: Moore, Notz and Flinger, 2013.

Table 6. Pearson's correlation between predictors and dependent variables on a sub-sample of law students (above the diagonal) and sub-sample of PTBD and psychology students (below the diagonal)

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
ATL	-	.56***	-.17	-.07	.23	-.01	.36***	.28*	.41**
ATG	.42***	-	-.01	-.09	.54***	.18	.36**	-.09	.40**
Sex	.13	.08	-	.14	.14	.01	.08	.16	-.27
Age	-.07	-.01	.21*	-	-.15	.15	-.07	.04	-.08
Sexual orientation	.07	.17*	-.05	-.02	-	.06	.20	.05	.30*
Homosex. friends	-.05	-.10	-.11	-.12	.19*	-	-.04	.16	.08
Political affiliation	.46***	.14	-.03	-.07	.09	.07	-	-.16	.31*
Religion	.15	.10	.07	-.06	.09	.08	.08	-	-.18
Religious ceremonies	.33***	-.01	-.03	-.02	.01	-.05	.10	-.29***	-

***p<.001, **p.01, *p<.05

Results of the linear regression (Tables 7 and 8) show that two sub-scales highly correlate in both sub-samples, even more than in some of the previous research (e.g. Rye and Meaney, 2010), and that analyzed predictor variables significantly contribute to the explanation of variance of dependent variables (attitudes towards lesbians and gay men). In relation to the attitudes towards lesbians, selected predictor variables explain 28.6% of the variance in the sub-sample of law students and 39.5% of the variance in the sub-sample of PTBD and psychology students. However, none of the analyzed predictor variables does not predict more negative attitudes towards lesbians in the sub-sample of law students (Table 7). On the other hand, more conservative political affiliation and more frequent attendance at religious ceremonies are predictors of more negative attitudes towards lesbians in the sub-sample of PTBD and psychology students, with a significant independent contribution to the explanation of variance for this dependent variable (Table 7).

Table 7. Linear regression for ATL on a sub-sample of law students and a sub-sample of PTBD and psychology students

Predictors	Students of Law school (n=52)			Students of PTBD and Psychology (n=136)		
	B	β	t	B	β	t
Political orientation	.118	.244	1.87	1.229	.424	5.70***
Religion	.217	.168	1.18			
Religious ceremonies	.116	.230	1.59	1.006	.270	3.50***
MODEL SUMMARY						
R	.535			.539		
R ²	.286**			.395***		

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, B - unstandardized coefficient, β - standardized coefficient, R - coefficient of multiple regression, R² - coefficient of determination

Table 8. Linear regression for ATG on a sub-sample of law students and a sub-sample of PTBD and psychology students

Predictors	Students of Law school (n=52)			Students of PTBD and Psychology (n=136)		
	B	β	t	B	β	t
Sexual orientation	.267	.435	3.66***	.726	.176	2.05*
Political orientation	.107	.205	1.72			
Religious ceremonies	.123	.207	1.69			
MODEL SUMMARY						
R	.625			.344		
R ²	.391***			.159*		

*** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$, B - unstandardized coefficient, β - standardized coefficient, R - coefficient of multiple regression, R² - coefficient of determination

In relation to the attitudes towards gay men, selected predictor variables explain 39.1% of the variance in the sub-sample of law students and 15.9% in the sub-sample of PTBD and psychology students. Among three predictor variables that were included in the regression model, only heterosexual orientation is a significant predictor of more negative attitudes towards gay men in both sub-samples, with a significant independent contribution to the explanation of variance for this dependent variable (Table 8).

Discussion and Conclusions

From the presented results it can be concluded that the first hypothesis was confirmed partially, while the second one was confirmed in the present study. In line with the previous studies (Berkman and Zinberg, 1997; Schellenberg, Hirt and Sears, 1999; Roper and Halloran, 2007) the findings of the present study showed that respondents hold significantly more negative attitudes towards gay men than towards lesbians, which can be explained by the greater social stigmatization for male homosexuality than for lesbianism (Moral de la Rubia and Valle de la O, 2013). The contribution of sex, age, sexual orientation, contacts with homosexuals, political and religious affiliations and more frequent attendance at religious services was expected. Many studies have reported that people are significantly more likely to hold prejudices towards homosexuals if they are males (D'Augelli, 1989; Chng and Moore, 1991; Seltzer, 1992; Donnelly et al., 1997; Klamen, Grossman, and Kopacz, 1999; Schellenberg, Hirt and Sears, 1999; Kozjak Mikić and Petković, 2015; Etchezahar et al., 2016). Recent studies also found that having few lesbian or gay friends or acquaintances is a strong predictor of positive attitudes towards homosexuals (Herek and Glunt, 1993; Herek and Capitanio, 1996; Lyons, et al. 2005; Brown and Henriquez, 2008; Swank and Raiz, 2010; Miller and Kim, 2012; Kovčo-Vukadin, 2015). Some of these findings were confirmed in the present study.

Although gender differences in attitudes towards lesbians and gay men are not significant, the research suggested that females seem to be more tolerant towards homosexuals. The ATL

and ATG sub-scales did not have correlation with age, which could be the result of a limited age range of the present sample (20 to 35), similarly as in the study conducted by Moral de la Rubia and Valle de la O (2013). Other studies, based on the broader age range of the sample have shown that older adults have a higher prejudice level, which could be a result of their more conservative perspective on the social life (Herek, 2000; Herek and McLemore, 2013). Contacts with homosexuals, measured through having homosexuals for friends or acquaintances proved to be a predictor of more favourable attitudes towards lesbians and gay men.

Study program is one of the main predictors of holding more negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men: law students have significantly higher prejudice levels towards lesbians and gay men than PTBD and psychology students. This could be the result of differences in curriculums used at these faculties. The PTBD and psychology students study for the so-called "auxiliary professions", and due to the curriculum they are more sensitive to differences, including differences grounded on sexual orientation.¹³ The present study also showed that for an explanation of more negative attitudes towards lesbians conservative political affiliation and more frequent attendance at religious ceremonies are significant predictors. This was proved for the total sample and the sub-sample of PTBD and psychology students. The finding that conservative political ideology contributes to more negative attitudes towards lesbians is consistent with recent studies that point out political ideology and affiliation to the parties as important predictors of attitudes towards homosexuals in a way that Conservatives and Republicans show higher prejudice levels (Yang, 1998; Shackelford and Besser, 2007; Brown and Henriquez, 2008; Miller and Kim, 2012; Etchezahar et al., 2016), as well as people with a higher level of authoritarianism, and those of the right-wing political orientation (Altemeyer, 1998). Additionally, the finding about religiousness (expressed through the higher frequency of attendance at religious ceremonies) as a predictor for higher prejudice levels towards lesbians (both on the total sample and the

¹³ For example, students of the fourth year of basic academic studies at the PTBD module received a lecture about the specifics of the position of homosexuals in prisons, from renowned national expert in this field.

sub-sample of of PTBD and psychology students) is in line with many studies that point out religiousness as a strong predictor of negative attitudes towards individuals with homosexual orientation (Seltzer, 1992; Herek, 1994; Herek and Capitano, 1996; Berkman and Zinberg, 1997; Basset et al., 2005; Shackelford and Besser, 2007; Cardenas and Barrientos, 2008; Brown and Henriquez, 2008; Swank and Raiz, 2010; Etchezahar et al., 2016).

Finally, the results showed that, in both sub-samples, only heterosexual orientation is a significant predictor of more negative attitudes towards gay men, which is in line with other studies and the original concept of the ATLG scale (Herek, 1984b, 1988, 2000; Moral de la Rubia and Valle de la O, 2013). According to Herek, negative attitudes towards homosexuality have a psychological and socio-cultural basis, which contribute to the fact that heterosexual individuals project feelings towards sexual minorities in the form of negative attitudes that constitute sexual prejudices (Herek, 2009; Etchezahar, et al., 2016).

The present study has some limitations. First, the study recruited a convenience sample of undergraduate students from only three faculties. For that reason, it is not possible to make generalized conclusions. Second, the use of self-report measures is a shortcoming because people significantly differ in their ability to be aware of their own internal states. Additionally, the topic of the research is the so-called sensitive topic, so, although participants were told that the survey is anonymous, there is still a risk of giving socially desirable answers. Participants may not be willing to show their attitudes publicly due to their apprehension under evaluation circumstances (Cardenas and Barrientos, 2008; Delgado and Castro, 2012).

However, the empirical study of attitudes towards homosexuality is a way to understand the reason for the prevalence of such attitudes and how to change them (Moreno et al. 2015). Therefore, it is necessary to further develop the present research and expand the diversity of participants, focusing on students at other faculties that educate students who could work in the criminal justice system (e.g. police studies) and professionals in the criminal justice system as well. Larger sample sizes (e.g. general population) and the use of objective measures of homonegativity (e.g. behavioral

indicators) may increase the reliability of the findings. Development of attitude change interventions is encouraged in order to prevent discrimination and victimization of persons with homosexual orientation due to the negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men in many contexts. Therefore, it seems relevant to first explore the content of different study programs in terms of focusing on the position, rights and treatment of persons with different sexual orientation, and second, to introduce themes related to human rights of persons of different sexual orientation and adequate relationship towards them that will promote acceptance of sexual diversity in students, particularly those that could work in the criminal justice system, but in other systems as well (social welfare system, healthcare system, education, etc.). Keeping in mind the present study and the results of other studies that having lesbian or gay friends or acquaintances is a strong predictor of positive attitudes towards homosexuals, we may argue that Allport's *contact hypothesis* theory seems to be a relevant framework for reducing prejudice towards lesbians and gay men (Allport, 1954; Herek, 1997), and it should serve as a basis for developing and implementing awareness raising interventions.

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**STAVOVI STUDENATA U SRBIJI O
LEZBEJKAMA I GEJ MUŠKARCIMA:
REZULTATI ISTRAŽIVANJA**

Sažetak

Srbija je 2018. godine uključena u Komparativnu studiju o stavovima studenata prema kažnjavanju i prema lezbejkama i gej muškarcima, koja je uključila deset evropskih i van evropskih država. Podaci su prikupljeni putem ankete, primenom standardizovanog upitnika na uzorku studenata koji se školuju za rad u krivično-pravnom sistemu. Istraživanje je sprovedeno na uzorku od 188 studenata i studentkinja treće i četvrte godine tri fakulteta u Beogradu: Fakulteta za specijalnu edukaciju i rehabilitaciju, Filozofskog fakulteta, Odeljenja za psihologiju (Univerzitet u Beogradu) i Pravnom fakultetu (Univerzitet Union). Upitnik je obuhvatio tri skale za ispitivanje stavova: prema lezbejkama i gej muškarcima, prema kriminalitetu i prema kažnjavanju. Cilj ovog poglavlja je prikaz i analiza dela nalaza

istraživanja koji se odnose na stavove ispitanih studenata prema lezbejkama i gej muškarcima. U istraživanju je korišćena Herekova (1998) skala stavova prema lezbejkama i gej muškarcima. Ona je obuhvatila 20 različitih tvdnji, deset o gej muškarcima i deset o lezbejkama, za koje su ispitanici zamoljeni da navedu stepen slaganja na petostepenoj skali Likertovog tipa. U radu se polazi od pregleda nalaza dosadašnjih istraživanja na ovu temu. Nakon toga je dat prikaz metodološkog okvira istraživanja, a potom prikaz i analiza rezultata istraživanja, pri čemu je poseban fokus na faktorima koji doprinose predrasudama ispitanika prema lezbejkama i gej muškarcima. U završnom delu su izneti glavni zaključci, kao i preporuke usmerene na neophodnost rada na podizanju svesti o pravima osoba drugačije seksualne orijentacije u oblasti visokog obrazovanja i značaju senzibilizacije budućih stručnjaka koji mogu da rade u krivičnopravnom sistemu.

Ključne reči: stavovi, studenti, lezbejke, gej muškarci, istraživanje, Srbija