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# Police College Students' Attitudes toward Homosexual Persons

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## **Abstract**

According to the results of numerous studies, personal attitudes of professionals who are dealing with homosexual persons affect their eagerness and the quality of their work. Negative attitudes toward homosexual persons may affect the police officers' decisions, which would constitute a violation of the anti-discriminative norms they are obliged to protect. There are two goals of this research project: first, to determine the existence of differences in attitudes towards homosexuals between students of the Police College in Zagreb, Croatia, and students enrolled in other study programs; second, to determine the predictive ability of gender, age, contact with homosexual persons, basic political beliefs, and the importance of religion and attending religious services in explaining attitudes toward lesbians and gay men among Police College students and students of other study programs. The survey was conducted in the academic year 2014/15, among the Police College students, as well as those enrolled in law schools, and programs in social pedagogy, social work, and psychology. Police College students expressed more negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men. Age, contact, and political beliefs are confirmed as statistically significant predictors of attitudes towards lesbians among the Police College students, while gender, contact, political beliefs, and religion are statistically significant for the other students. Among the former group, significant predictors of attitudes toward gay men are gender, age, contact, and political beliefs while gender, political beliefs and religion have been found statistically significant among the other students.

**Keywords:** attitudes, homosexual persons, ATLG scale, students, Police College

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## INTRODUCTION

Historically and cross-culturally, homosexuality has been met with different reactions in societies, and particularly so in the context of the medical and penal definitions. A key characteristic of a great number of contemporary (particularly those that are predominantly traditional) states is a negative position towards homosexuality, and all forms of sexuality that diverge from the heterosexual. These different forms are nowadays referred to by the abbreviation LGBTI, where "L" stands for lesbian, "G" stands for gay (men), "B" refers to bisexual persons, "T" stands for transgender persons, while "I" stands for intersex persons, with specific terms used depending on the group that is referred to.

The attitudes towards homosexual persons have been the topic of research since the second half of the 20th century, particularly due to the interest in the connection between attitudes and behaviors. Negative attitudes towards homosexuals have been found to correlate with "anti-gay" behaviors, though this relationship is moderated by other factors as well (Herek, 2000).

The scholarly literature has been noticeably focusing on several constructs that are sometimes used as synonymous. Thus, at the end of the 1960s, Weinberg introduced the notion of homophobia to demarcate the individual negative attitudes towards homosexuals (Herek, 2000). At around the same time the term heterosexism appeared as well, signifying an ideological system in which homosexuality is deemed inferior to heterosexuality. The term "homophobia" has suffered much criticism, as it was seen to imply that the negative attitudes towards homosexuals could be explained by irrational fears, and that these attitudes are thus a form of individual psychopathology, rather than socially supported prejudice. Herek offered the term of sexual prejudice to describe the negative attitudes towards LGBT behaviors, individuals, and community, due to their non-heterosexual orientation (Herek, 2000, 2009). Just like other prejudice, sexual prejudice is characterized by three key features: first, its base is made up of attitudes (assessments or judgments); second, it is aimed at the social group and the individuals that comprise it; and third, it includes hostility or disapproval. Herek argues that the term "sexual prejudice" is more acceptable than homophobia because it does not make assumptions about the motivation at the base of these negative attitudes.

Other authors (Rosik, 2007) have also contended that pathologizing the set of beliefs and attitudes as phobias, thus discrediting those who hold these beliefs and attitudes, is not in the best scholarly spirit, even if the term "homophobia" may be used in political discourse.

Apart from the term "sexual prejudice", the term homonegativity is sometimes used as a politically neutral one, though the psychologists note that it is not unequivocally defined, as some authors only focus on the cognitive aspects of the concept, while others add the affective aspects to the definition (Etchezahar et al., 2016). Heteronormativity is a term that signifies the way in which heterosexuality is normalized in society, in the sense of a power to define other forms of sexuality as marginal and abnormal in contemporary western society (Jackson, 2003).

## **DETERMINANTS OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS HOMOSEXUALS**

*Gender* is considered one of the most significant predictors of attitudes towards homosexuals. Numerous examples of research show that men tend to have more negative attitudes towards homosexuals, and that their attitudes towards gay men are far more negative than the attitudes towards lesbians (Etchezahar et al., 2016; Cardenas and Barrientos, 2008; Herek, 1994; Yu, Xiao and Xiang, 2011; Miller and Kim, 2012, Mušica et al., 2013). Some authors have noted, however, that the beliefs about gender roles are a more important predictor of negative attitudes towards homosexuals than gender itself is (Parrot, Adams and Zeichner, 2002; Brown and Henriquez, 2008).

The research on the link between age and attitudes towards persons of homosexual orientation is not providing uniform results. For example, Hebl, Law, and King (2010) note that the very young and the elderly have more negative attitudes towards homosexuals than those who are middle-aged. Herek (1994) finds that there is a greater extent of sexual prejudice towards homosexuals among the elderly, while Lyons, DeValve and Garner (2008) do not find a statistically significant relationship between age and attitudes towards homosexuals.

We know that *education* can change one's beliefs and values (Astin, 1977, Chickering, 1970, in Yu, Xiao and Xiang, 2011). Individuals with higher levels of educational attainment are more tolerant towards homosexuals than those with less education are, a finding confirmed in the USA and in other western countries (Herek, 1984; Herek and Capitanio, 1996; Loftus, 2001; Treas, 2002). Apart from the level, the role of the type of education has been attracting more and more scholarly interest. Thus Swank and Raiz (2010), when discussing the acceptance of homosexual persons among social work students, note that even though the program of study aims to eliminate prejudice among students, the ability of higher education to reduce negative attitudes is in that sense still not clear. A particularly interesting group, in terms of their attitudes, are the students in the so called *criminal justice* programs. The researchers who have studied the attitudes of these students have found that they have more unfavorable attitudes towards homosexuals, in comparison with other students (Miller, 2001; Olivero and Murataya, 2001; Ventura et al., 2004; Cannon, 2005; Dantzker and Eisenman, 2007; Miller and Kim, 2012). It thus makes sense to ask why this is the case: are these programs of study attracting those with negative attitudes, or are these attitudes formed during the course of study, and perhaps even more importantly, what is being done during their studies to change this state of affairs.

Some newer research (Owen and Wagner, 2008) indicates that the students in the "criminal justice" programs are displaying more authoritarianism than other students, leading to Bjerregaard and Lord's (2004) fully justified questioning of the value of education in influencing attitudes towards ethics in criminal justice.

Cannon (2005) finds that the significant predictor of attitudes towards gay men is the fact of taking courses that specifically deal with the issues related to homosexuals, with students that had taken these courses showing more positive attitudes towards them. Apart from specific courses and modules, incorporating the issues related to homosexuality into existing courses may improve the attitudes towards homosexuals.

Cannon and Dirks-Linhorst (2006) conducted a survey of the criminal justice programs with regard to the extent that they cover the minority-related issues by interviewing the heads of the relevant departments, as listed on the American Society of Criminology website. Their results show

that the homosexuality-related issues are not fully integrated into the curricula of criminal justice programs, particularly when compared to issues of race or gender.

Miller and McDonald (2011) took a step forward, and conducted a survey of attitudes towards homosexuals among the heads of departments in universities and colleges in the southeast US, selecting this group because of their role in determining desired learning outcomes, course descriptions, types of offered courses, and selection of teaching staff. The results indicate that male heads of departments have more negative attitudes towards homosexuals than their female peers do. More of negative attitudes were found among the older, and white heads of departments. With regard to the type of institution, those in state schools have shown more positive attitudes than those in private schools, as have those in larger schools, compared to the smaller ones.

The data on questions concerning the curriculum have shown that the heads of departments for the most part think that some issues related to homosexuality are also issues relevant for criminal justice, but only a third of them have related that these issues are included in mandatory coursework for their students. Additionally, just over a half of respondents allow the course instructors to decide whether this topic would be included in the course. With regard to elective courses, just under two thirds of respondents stated that they include issues related to homosexuality, with a similar proportion allowing the course instructors to decide whether to include these issues in their course. Among those heads of departments who have stated that issues related to homosexuals are covered in the mandatory and the elective courses, less than a third considered these topics adequately addressed. The results concerning the attitudes of the respondents are particularly interesting, as they show that instructors do not differ from the general population in their attitudes towards homosexuals (with regard to their gender, age, and environment), which in a sense does not support the hypothesis of relevance of educational attainment for a change of attitudes in this area. Quite to the contrary, the instructors who are educating future criminal justice experts would be expected to espouse more positive attitudes towards homosexuals, in comparison with the general population. If the instructors are confirming the negative attitudes, prejudice, and stereotypes that the students are holding, it is only to be expected that their behavior as future experts would be questionable, both professionally and ethically. It should thus come as no surprise that homophobic attitudes are found among police officials (Lyons et al., 2005).

Miller, Forest, and Jurik (2004) were right to conclude that the responsibility for providing knowledge that corrects for the existing myths is placed on the instructors in the criminal justice programs of study. While instructors cannot be fully responsible for altering the students' negative attitudes towards homosexuals, they are responsible for equipping students with the ability to critically consider their own negative attitudes. It is important that the instructional staff make it possible for students to have an education that confronts the myths and stereotypes in the area of criminal justice, including those concerning homosexuality, and the issues that homosexuals face when confronted by the system of criminal law.

Fradella, Owen, and Burke (2009) have concluded that the curricula in criminal justice programs of study are still lagging behind those in other social sciences in terms of inclusion of content on different sexualities, and suggest four different approaches for adequately addressing these issues in the context of criminal law and judiciary, regardless of whether the personnel trained is in the police, the correctional facility careers, or in the probation system. The first approach concerns the so-called "teachable moments", which assumes that the teacher is recognizing situations that can be used to encourage learning and students' development. The second approach concerns integrating the issues of sexual orientation into the mandatory courses, which would require lesser adjustments in the course syllabi. The third approach entails introducing LGBT topics into the existing courses that deal with diversity, while the fourth suggests the development of new, elective courses and modules, which would only tackle the problems of the interconnectedness of sexuality, law, and justice.

Apart from the fact of studying in a criminal justice program, the students enrolled in them are also interesting since they do have different intended careers. The consequences of these different intentions have not been researched, and the results that exist are not unequivocal. Olivero and Murataya (2001) find that only those students that are planning a career in the police force express more unfavorable attitudes towards homosexuals than students in other areas of criminal justice do. This difference, however, was not found by Miller and Kim (2012).

When it comes to the year of study, some have found a greater extent of acceptance of homosexuals among students who are older in class years (Cluse-Tolar et al., 2004; Kriglstein, 2003;

Hewitt and Moore, 2002), while the same hypothesis was not confirmed in other studies (Ryan, 2000; Ben-Ari, 1998).

*Acquaintance and friendship with homosexual persons* often appears as a significant correlate of attitudes towards homosexuals in general. Thus the results of numerous studies confirm that more social contact with homosexuals correlates with greater acceptance (Herek and Glunt, 1993; Herek and Capitanio, 1996; Lyons, DeValve, and Garner, 2008; Brown and Henriquez, 2008; Swank and Raiz, 2010; Miller and Kim, 2012). Miller and Kim (2012) found that personal contact with homosexuals is the strongest predictor of holding a positive attitude towards homosexuals.

*Political ideology* and partisanship have been found to be significant in predicting attitudes towards homosexuals, with conservatives and republicans demonstrating more prejudice (Etchezahar et al., 2016; Harper, 2007; Shackelford and Besser, 2007; Brown and Henriquez, 2008; DeRosa and Kochurka, 2006; Yang, 1998; Miller and Kim, 2012). It has also been found that those displaying higher levels of authoritarianism, and those on the political right express more unfavorable attitudes to those that diverge from their values and way of life (Altemeyer, 1998), and that they perceive them as a threat to the traditional norms and values (Duckitt and Sibley, 2010).

*Religiosity* has been found to correlate with negative attitudes towards homosexual persons, regardless of the measure used in the study (Etchezahar et al., 2016; Basset et al., 2005; Shackelford and Besser, 2007; Cardenas and Barrientos, 2008; Brown and Henriquez, 2008; Swank and Raiz, 2010; Miller and Kim, 2012). The most commonly used measures of religiosity in this context are based on the questions of importance that religion has in one's life and frequency of attendance at religious services. Among those that consider religion as having a great importance in their lives, and those that more frequently attend religious services, holding more of sexual prejudice than others has been found (Herek and Capitanio, 1996).

Rosik (2007) uses a sample of students attending a Christian university in California, and points out that they, in spite of expressing a strongly negative moral evaluation of homosexual behavior, also show some homo-positive attitudes concerning issues of homosexuals' civil rights,

suggesting that there is a potential for concurrent positive and negative attitudes towards homosexuals, even in a population of conservative Christians.

## **THE EXTENT OF VIOLENT VICTIMIZATION OF LGBT PERSONS**

Regardless of the developments in human rights and national implementation of international standards guaranteeing equality and banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, those of an alternative sexual orientation are still discriminated against and victimized. Each instance of violent victimization has negative consequences for the victim, but it is considered that violent victimization of homosexual persons carries with it even more negative consequences. Determining the incidence of violent victimization in general (and particularly when it comes to minority groups) is a challenging task, for which the scholars rely on victimization studies more than on statistical indicators, given the high numbers that are characteristic of official statistics. For this reason, the next section reviews the results of the studies of victimization.

Katz-Weise and Hyde (2012) conducted a meta-analysis of quantitative research published in the English language from 1992 to 2009. After several rounds of selection, they finally analyzed 164 instances of research, with 228 samples and a total of 503 826 respondents. The aim of this paper was to answer the question of prevalence of LGBT victimization, to test for the existence of change in prevalence over time, and to find whether the age and ethnicity in the sample matters for the differences in prevalence of various types of victimization. The analysis of the type of victimization included 186 independent samples (27% were samples of adolescents, 56.7% were of persons of age, while 16.3% included both youths and adults). The results of their analysis of 24 types of victimization show a range from 5% (spitting), to 55% (verbal harassment). Different forms of direct violent victimization include armed assault (14%), robbery (19%), violent property crimes (24%), sexual assault (27%), physical violence (28%), and physical victimization by a family member (33%). General victimization was reported by 43% of the respondents, while that committed by the police was reported by 19%. There were some differences based on gender, with property-related

violence more prevalent in the samples of men overall, while victimization in school was only found in the samples of American men. With regard to the change in the incidence of victimization over time, they found that, on the whole, the year of data collection significantly moderates the incidence of sexual violence by family members, victimization in school and in relationships. In the American sample alone, the time period moderates the incidence of sexual violence, physical victimization by family members, and sexual assault by family members. None of the analyzed forms of victimization have seen a reduction over time.

With the aim of determining the differences in victimization between heterosexual and LGB persons, 65 studies were looked at, or 85 independent samples with a total of 398 403 respondents, 13 553 of which were LGB, and 384 850 were heterosexual. Among these samples, 33.7% comprised adolescents, 51.2% were adult-only samples, and 15.1% included both youths and adults. According to the results, LGB persons were experiencing more victimization than heterosexuals, both on the whole and in the American sample. The difference was only absent in the case of police victimization. In terms of gender, there was more victimization of LGB men, while the analysis of time periods, based on the research year, found that there was no temporal effect on victimization. The American sample alone showed that there were temporal increases of the differences in sexual harassment and victimization in the workplace.

The analysis of differences in victimization with regard to the type of sexual minority, with gay men and lesbians in one group, and bisexual persons in the other, comprised 15 studies, with 16 independent samples, and a total of 4 678 respondents, 3 332 of which were in the former, and 1 346 in the latter group. Lesbians and gays have experienced more discrimination than bisexual persons have, while there were no statistically significant differences in terms of verbal harassment, sexual victimization, verbal harassment by family members, physical victimization by family members, and sexual victimization by family members.

The results of research conducted by the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), indicating that LGBT persons are facing obstacles in consummation of their fundamental rights, are interesting for the European context. Many LGBT persons report on experiences of discrimination in various areas of life, particularly in employment and education. Many have also

reported victimization and harassment, most commonly in public. Croatian respondents were the most likely to report (69%) that the most recent violent incident they experienced was partially or completely caused by their sexual orientation, while the same was true for 46% of Swedish respondents, the lowest proportion in the sample. In terms of the type of violence suffered, the threat of physical violence was the most common (50%), followed by physical assault (29%), threat of physical and sexual violence (11%), physical and sexual assault (3%), sexual assault (3%), and threat of sexual assault (2%). However, the respondents also noted that they rarely report the instances of their own discrimination, victimization, or harassment to the police or other public services. In the year prior to the conducted research, 6% of the respondents were attacked or were threatened with violence, which they partially or completely attribute to their sexual orientation. Apart from these types of victimization, 19% of respondents reported that they were victims of harassment because of their sexual orientation. Further, only one in five serious cases of violence that they experienced in the year before the study was reported to the police. They listed the following as reasons for not reporting these serious incidents to the police: they thought that the police would not do anything about it (43%), they thought that the police are not able to do anything about it (32%), they did not think that the incident was serious enough (30%), they were afraid that the police would react with homophobia (29%), they were embarrassed, uncomfortable, did not want anyone to find out (29%), they were afraid of the perpetrators and repeated victimization (25%), etc.

Research conducted on a Croatian sample of LGBTIQ persons in Zagreb, Rijeka, and Osijek (Pikić and Jugović, 2006) showed that a half of the respondents (N=202) were victims of some type of violence in the 2002-5 period, while 15% experienced physical violence. Those who were assaulted and experienced limitations on their freedom because of their sexual orientation were also, when compared to those who did not suffer any of these, more likely to be anxious, depressed, and have lower self-esteem.

Bosnić, Zegura, and Jelić (2013) conducted a survey of a sample of men and women of homosexual and bisexual orientation, finding that 55% of them have experienced some form of violence, in line with the previous research by Pikić and Jugović (2006).

Existing work has predominantly been focusing on determining the incidence of violent victimization of LGBTI persons by heterosexuals, but there are far fewer instances of research of the forms of victimization that are often examined in the case of heterosexual population, such as violence between partners.

## THE EXPERTS' ATTITUDES

The personal attitudes of experts that are in professional contact with homosexual persons do affect their eagerness and quality of work, as was confirmed in numerous instances of research (Barrett and McWhirter, 2002; Saulnier, 2002; Krieglstein, 2003). The results of conducted research show that social workers who have negative attitudes towards homosexual persons also have difficulty providing competent services and support to their homosexual clients. Similar was found with psychologists, with whom the negative attitudes were found to interfere with effective client assessments and counseling techniques (Swank and Raiz, 2010). Cannon and Dirks-Linhorst (2006) note that the experts in the area of criminal law are as effective in their interactions with the community as it is allowed by the extent of their education, training, and personal attitudes. Negative attitudes towards homosexuals can affect the decisions made in the penal system, which violates the principle of social justice (Bernstein and Kostelac, 2002; Lyons et al., 2005). Thus a state attorney from Philadelphia (Smith, 2002) notes that the LGBT persons are dealt with in an inadequate manner in the criminal process and talks about the inappropriate behaviors of the police, judges, and other court officials, who often mock LGBT persons and treat them with no respect. Apart from the negative attitudes towards the LGBT persons that are part of the process as perpetrators or victims, there are negative attitudes in the institutions towards the officials that are employed there. Thus the LGBT persons working as state attorneys and judges are exposed to discrimination, a hostile working environment, and difficulties in obtaining promotions (Bissau, 2006, in Fradella, Owen, and Burke, 2009).

The police is the first social service that the homosexual persons should be able to turn to in the case of victimization. In the context of police activities, and based on international standards,

the homosexual persons are considered particularly vulnerable and requiring careful treatment. At the moment when victimization is reported, there is a certain conflict of roles that police officers experience - on the one hand, they are to provide assistance to the victim of a crime, but on the other hand, they must check all the facts and evidence (the principle of seeking material truth) that confirm the statements of the person reporting her own victimization, which can engender a sense of distrust in her.

Homosexuals are less willing to report their victimization than other victims of crime are (Williams and Robinson, 2004; Gerstenfeld, 2004; Herek, Cogan, and Gillis, 2003; Bernstein and Kostelac, 2002; Pikić and Jugović, 2006), particularly when the case concerns those crimes that are seeing a low reporting rate even in the heterosexual population (e.g. rape of men, see Javaid, 2015). Some of the reasons they noted were shame, lack of trust in the police, feeling that the police would not take them seriously (Bourne et al., 2010), fear of additional abuse by the service providers (Leonard et al., 2008; Dwyer, 2011), fear of being blamed for what happened to them, fear of their sexual orientation being revealed, as well as fear of the details of their sexual identity and life made known to their environment and the public (Popov et al., 2011). This is particularly the case when the victimization takes place within an intimate relationship, and even more so when the person is not publicly known as a homosexual. The fear of an inadequate response by the police is significantly grounded in the indirect, rather than direct experience (Myers, Forest, and Miller, 2004). Pikić and Jugović (2006) reported that a quarter of LGBT persons who had reported their violent victimization to the police have also experienced some discomfort when doing so.

Miles-Johnson (2013) tested the potential for sexual identity to affect the willingness to report one's own victimization on a sample of 329 persons (147 visitors of a night club frequented by LGBT persons, and 182 respondents in an online survey) from Brisbane (Queensland, Australia). She found that there are statistically significant differences between the LGBTI and heterosexual persons in the willingness to report own victimization to the police: the former group was less likely to do so, and this was correlated with the conviction that homophobia is present in the police force. This conviction of police homophobia is somewhat logical if one considers the claims by LeVay and Baldwin (2012), suggesting that individual-level homophobia is closely connected to the norms and rules in operation in the culture that the individual comes from, and the extent to which the

environment one is in is liberal, or patriarchal and heteronormative. If we bear in mind that the police force is by definition a conservative service in society (as part of the government's executive branch, it implements existing law), with an exceedingly masculinized character (the proportion of women in the force is typically below 20%), supporting gender stereotypes (which is part of what is called the police culture), the logic of convictions and prejudice about homophobia in the police becomes understandable. However, if one takes into account the internationally accepted motto of the police force – to serve and protect – with an assumption of professionalism in the work of police officers, including impartiality, i.e. equality of treatment and education and training for working with particularly vulnerable groups, one should expect the exact opposite, a non-existence of homophobia. Additionally, the contemporary police role in society (as in the models of community policing or problem-oriented policing) is significantly moving away from a solely reactive function, and towards a proactive approach to solving the citizens' problems, and a greater role in maintaining and improving the citizens' quality of life. In this context, a respect for differences is a basic precondition of high-quality police activity (for more, see Bernstein and Wulff, 2014).

The LGBTI persons' non-reporting of suffered victimization has various negative consequences, for the individual and for the society. Apart from individual consequences that can be generally described as affirmation of a vulnerable social status and a failure to satisfy the needs that were formed as a result of victimization, the social consequences can be seen at the level of police organization, as part of the executive and part of politics. In the context of police organization, non-reporting of victimization by the LGBTI persons means a perpetuation of the current state of heteronormativity and perception of LGBTI victimization as a low-incidence problem which does not call for the utilization of special resources, in the sense of consciousness-raising and further specialization of police officials for adequate treatment of these victims. Furthermore, the low levels of reporting contribute to a lack of proper policy-making at the level of police organization, or at the level of coordination of several relevant organizations (policies of combating these types of victimization in a society). Low rates of reporting also result in a small number of convictions, which sends an undesirable message to the society, as it supports the perception of these types of victimization as sporadic. Finally, and for all the reasons stated above, low rates of reporting do not contribute to a perception of the problem that would lead to it being analyzed as a political issue, and thus included in political agenda. Non-reporting of instances of victimization should not be

a justification of societal inactivity in adequately protecting LGBTI persons, as a society's quality is recognized in its ability to care for those that are the most vulnerable, including the LGBTI persons.

When discussing the situation in the US, Lyons, DeValve and Garner (2008) state that, in a historical perspective, there is much tension in the relations between the police and homosexual persons, as illustrated by the case of a raid during a homosexual gathering, and police harassment in 1969. In the context of this relationship, they point out that the recruitment of homosexual persons as police officers is a logical course of action, which was done first by the New York Police Department in 1999, and followed by other police organizations in the US. However, employing police officers of homosexual orientation brought about a range of other problems that testify to the inadequate acceptance of these police officers within the police organization, and to the incongruence of the publicly proclaimed values and policies with the actual police practice. These incongruences further act to justify the convictions about the police force that are held by the victimized persons. It is also interesting to note the Gay Officers Action League (GOAL), founded in New York in 1982, with the aim of resolving the problems that gay police officers were facing. Their three main activities are as follows: 1) to support both active and retired homosexual persons employed in law enforcement agencies; 2) to educate and raise consciousness among the non-LGBT police officers and personnel in the area of LGBT persons' employment and provision of services to the LGBT community; 3) to promote the positive relations between the police and the LGBT community, by means of providing services in the community and education fora, with a special focus on the principles of justice, fairness, and equality. In their research, Lyons, DeValve and Garner (2008) find that police chiefs do admit to their responsibility for accepting homosexuals into police ranks, while holding the conviction that homosexuality is "morally distasteful".

In the last couple of decades, the police officers' attitudes towards homosexual persons have not been the topic of scholarly interest, which is interesting on its own, but one may notice that there is some interest in the attitudes of heterosexual police officers towards their homosexual colleagues (Bernstein and Kostelac, 2002; Lyons, DeValve and Garner, 2008; Miller, Forest and Jurik, 2004; Loftus, 2008; Belkin and McNichol, 2002, Myers, Forest and Miller, 2004), which is probably a consequence of changes in employment policies concerning homosexuals in police organizations.

In the Croatian context, the author is familiar with only one example of research that, along with students of medical schools and the health care sector, includes the cadets of the police school (at high school level of education) and police officers in jobs requiring a high school education (Kozjak Mikić and Petković, 2015). The authors tested the attitudes towards the persons of same-sex orientation among the students and employees in the health care and police sectors (N=990). Their results show that there are differences with regard to the object of the attitudes: when it comes to lesbians, the respondents from the health care sector display a much more positive attitude toward them than those in the police force do. When the object of the attitude are gay men, the attitudes of women are much more positive than attitudes held by men, as are the attitudes of employees compared to the students. The authors have also found that the negative attitudes can also be rather well predicted based on the respondents belief about one's ability to choose one's sexual orientation, the lack of prior contact with homosexual persons, and their religiosity and agreement with the teachings of their faith.

The attitudes of police officials towards persons of homosexual orientation are very important in police activities when homosexual persons have been victimized, as one's personal attitudes can be reflected in the behaviors, even non-verbally, which can cause secondary victimization, and even in situations when the organization on the whole is dedicated to proper implementation of existing law.

In the sense of improvement of police activity in cases of hate crimes over LGBT persons, Juras (2011, 24) notes the following recommendations:

- 1) "Police officers should recommend seeking medical attention to the victim of the hate crime.
- 2) The police officer should treat the victim with due consideration, allowing them enough time to calm down after suffering a hate crime.
- 3) A detailed taking of the hate crime victim's statement should be done following a medical exam, and when the person is no longer in a state of shock.

- 4) It should be clear that the victim is not obliged to tell the police officers about their sexual orientation or details of their sex life, but that the police officials still have a duty to file the complaint based on those circumstances that the victim has listed. The victims of hate crimes are not keen to discuss their sexual orientation, or to detail their sex lives, and the police officials should not force them to.
- 5) The police officer should guarantee the victim's privacy and ensure the level of trust that should be preserved throughout the process.
- 6) Police officers should cooperate with non-governmental organizations that are involved in protecting the victims of hate crimes.
- 7) Police officers should not charge the victims of hate crimes with disturbances of the peace, so that secondary victimization may be avoided.
- 8) Police officers should especially take care of underage victims of hate crimes.
- 9) The reports and charges against the perpetrators should be written to the public prosecutor's office in a way that particularly notes that a hate crime had been committed."

## RESEARCH AIM

This research project has two aims:

- 1) To determine whether there are differences between the attitudes towards homosexuals held by the Police College students, when compared to students in other programs of study.
- 2) To determine the impact of gender, age, contact with homosexuals, basic political orientation, the importance the religion, and taking part in religious services on the attitudes towards lesbians and gay men among the Police College students, and students in other programs of study.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

- 1) Are there differences in the attitudes towards homosexuals between the Police College students and those in other programs of study? In line with the results of international research, more negative attitudes are expected among the Police College students.
- 2) Which ones of the tested variables contribute to the explanation of attitudes towards homosexuals among the Police College and other students? A significant contribution of the variables accounting for gender, age, contact with homosexuals, basic political orientation, the importance of the religion, and taking part in religious services is expected in explaining the attitudes towards lesbians and gay men among the Police College students, and students in other programs of study.

## METHODS

### Sample

The data used in this paper are part of the international project "Student attitudes towards criminality and punishment in homosexuality", administered in Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, California, and Texas. The aim of the project is to determine and compare the attitudes of the students – future experts in the area of criminal justice, police and judiciary – concerning the topics of homosexuality. In the two US states, the sample consists of students in the criminal justice programs, while the Croatian and other European samples comprise the students in the higher education institutions for training police officers, law students, and students in the ancillary professions that may have careers in criminal justice as non-legal experts (future social pedagogues, social workers, and psychologists).

The survey was conducted during the 2014/15 academic year, with Police College students filling in the survey questionnaire manually (pen and paper format), while the other students took part in an online survey. We chose this mode of participation because of unwillingness of Police College students to take part in online surveys. The research project was approved by Ethics Board of the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, at the University of Zagreb. The Police College students were asked to fill in the survey by their professors at the beginning of class, in various courses which included students at all stages of the program. The students in other programs of study were invited to participate in the study via notices on their departmental websites, and via email invitations to the different generations of students, where these listservs existed.

There are 440 students in the total sample, with all Police College students self-identifying as heterosexual, while the 10 homosexual students in the remainder of the sample were excluded from the study, as were the 12 who stated they were bisexual, and one that chose "other" as sexual orientation. The analyzed sample was thus reduced to 417. The sample structure is as follows: a relative majority of the sample is made up of Police College students, at 33.8%, followed by law students (29.7%), psychology students (21.1%), social pedagogy students (13.9%), and social work students (1.4%). The Police College in Zagreb offers a B.A. and an M.A. course, which is predominantly enrolled by police officers, and the College students in our sample were mostly in the B.A. program (61%), while the remaining 39% were in the M.A. program. Among the social pedagogy students, 53.4% were in the B.A. program, with 46.6% were in the M.A. program, while all of the social work students (N=6) were enrolled in a B.A. program. All of these students were enrolled in programs that were only offered at the University of Zagreb. The law students among the respondents were recruited from three universities that offer the integrated (B.A. and M.A. as one continuous course of study) law programs, those in Zagreb, Rijeka, and Osijek. The psychology programs are also offered at these three universities, and of those that took part in the survey, 63.6% were in B.A. programs, while 36.4% were in M.A. courses. The general information about the respondents can be seen in Table 1, where it is clear that women make up two thirds of the sample (though not as much in the Police College subsample), the average age is 25 (as the Police College students tend to be older). Just under half of respondents reported that they have homosexual friends or acquaintances, though this was far more rare among the Police College students. Nearly two thirds of the respondents stated they were politically liberal or moderately liberal, with Police College students more likely to state their political orientation as moderate. Most of the respondents identified as

Catholic, though for the most of them religion did not play a great role in their lives. This was less notable among the Police College students. Most of the students also said that they almost never attend religious services, with the Police College students being more likely to say they attend one a month, and other students more likely to say they attend once a week.

**Table 1: General sample characteristics**

		Total (N=417)	Police College (N=141)	Other students (N=276)
<b>Gender *</b>	M	33,1	73,8	12,3
	F	66,9	26,2	87,7
<b>Age</b>		M=25,19 SD=5,39	M=30 (21-42) SD=4,70	M=22,7 (18-50) SD=3,88
<b>Location</b>			100% Zagreb	34,8% Osijek; 11,2%Rijeka; 5,1% Split; 48,9% Zagreb
<b>Homosexual friends/ acquaintances *</b>	Yes	48,1	20,7	62,0
	No	51,9	79,3	38,0
<b>Basic political beliefs/ orientation *</b>	Extremely liberal	3,1	1,4	4,0
	Liberal	39,7	17,1	51,1
	Moderately liberal	22,6	17,1	25,4
	Moderate	13,7	40,7	0,0
	Moderately conservative	14,9	15,7	14,5
	Conservative	4,8	5,7	4,3
	Extremely conservative	1,2	2,1	0,7
<b>Religion (binary variables)</b>	Catholicism	42,8	41,4	43,5
	Christianity *	46,9	58,6	40,9
<b>Attendance in religious services **</b>	Almost never	47,2	44,4	48,8
	Once a month	21,9	28,9	17,5
	Two to three times a month	10,5	12,6	9,2
	Once a week	17,3	11,9	20,7

\* $p < 0,01$ ; \*\* $p < 0,05$

## Instrument

This research project uses the Herek (1984) Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gays scale, which is considered one of the most important instruments in testing the attitudes towards homosexuals (Moral de la Rubia and Valle de la O., 2013; Barrientos and Cardenas, 2012; Yu, Xiao and Xiang, 2011; Rosik, 2007). The scale consists of 20 items, structured in two sub-scales – 10 of the items measure attitudes towards lesbians (ATL), with items such as “Lesbians simply cannot fit into our society”, and the remaining 10 measure the attitudes towards gay men (ATG), with items such as “I think that homosexual men are disgusting. The attitudes are measured on a five degree Likert scale. Seven of the items are coded in reverse (3 of these are on the attitudes towards lesbians scale, while the other 4 are on the attitudes towards gays scale), and the score on the scale and the sub-scales is calculated by adding up the individual scores. A higher score indicates more negative attitudes towards homosexuals, i.e. a greater extent of prejudice. The results on the scales are not directly comparable. The instrument has been translated and validated in different countries and is displaying good measurement characteristics. Herek (1998) notes that the scale displays high levels of internal reliability, with the Cronbach’s alpha scores reaching 0.85 for the sub-scales, and 0.90 for the scale on the whole, in samples of student population. The high level of internal reliability of the scale was confirmed in this instance of research as well, with Cronbach’s alpha at 0.95 for the whole sample, and 0.93 in the Police College sample. Similarly, the value for the attitudes towards lesbians scale reached a score of 0.88 (0.85 in the Police College sample), and the attitudes towards gay men scale scored 0.94 (0.93 in the Police College sample). The correlation between the two sub-scales is 0.53 ( $p < .01$ ) in the whole sample, and 0.64 ( $p < .01$ ) in the Police College sample.

Apart from the attitudes towards homosexuals scale, the information on sex, age, year of study, personal contact with homosexuals, political orientation, and religiosity (meaning of religion and attendance at religious services) was collected. The extent of personal contact was measured with the question “Are any of your friends or acquaintances homosexual?”, with the affirmative and negative answers offered as the only two options for a response. Political orientation was measured using the question “How would you describe your own basic political orientation/beliefs”, with the answers offered on a 7-point scale (1 – extremely liberal, 2 – liberal, 3 – moderately liberal, 4 – moderate, 5 – moderately conservative, 6 – conservative, 7 – extremely conservative).

The respondents were also asked about the meaning of religion ("To what extent does religion play a role in your life?", 1 – it does not have a role in my life, 2 – not a great role, 3 – quite a role, 4 – a great role), and the frequency of attendance in religious services ("How often do you attend religious services?"; 1 – I am not religious, 2 – almost never, 3 – once a month, 4 – two to three times a month, 5 – once a week, 6 – more than once a week).

Apart from descriptive statistics, the t-test for independent samples and standard regression analysis were used in attaining the aims of the research project.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to get the answers to the research questions, a t-test was conducted on all the items and average results on the scales. The results on each of the scales were added up and the total score was divided by the number of items. For the attitudes towards lesbians (ATL) scale, the scores vary from 1 to 4.90, while the attitudes towards gays (ATG) ranges from 1 to 5, with higher scores signifying more negative attitudes. The results show that there are statistically significant differences between the Police College students and their peers in other study programs, on all analyzed items (Table 2) and scales (Table 3), with Police College students displaying more negative attitudes, as was expected in the above stated hypotheses. This project thus confirms the results of the existing international research that have found more negative attitudes towards homosexuals among the students that see their careers in law enforcement. Of course, in considering these results, one must bear in mind the characteristics of this sample, with the Police College students being predominantly male, older, with some already employed in the police force. A further limitation on the potential for generalization is in the methodological features of the project, as the Police College students were surveyed in the "pen and paper" format, at the beginning of class, and they were not split into smaller groups that would allow for greater privacy in answering the survey questions. Additionally, the other students filled in the questionnaire online, which in a way assumes that they were more sensitive to the issues being researched.

**Table 2: Differences in students' attitudes towards lesbians and gay men (relative frequencies, means, standard deviations, and t-test results on the items).**

Items	N	% responses					M	SD	t-test	
		1	2	3	4	5				
<b>ATL Attitudes towards lesbians</b>										
Lesbians just can't fit into our society.	Police Collage	140	32,9	22,1	34,3	6,4	4,3	2.27	1.118	t=5.20
	Others	276	59,8	22,5	9,8	5,4	2,5	1.68	1.023	p<.01
A woman's homosexuality should not be a cause for job discrimination in any situation.*	Police Collage	141	3,5	3,5	14,9	31,9	46,1	4.13	1.030	t=5.47
	Others	276	4,3	0,4	2,9	8,3	84,1	4.67	.908	p<.01
Female homosexuality is bad for society because it breaks down the natural divisions between the sexes.	Police Collage	141	23,4	22,0	38,3	9,9	6,4	2.54	1.143	t=8.20
	Others	276	68,5	13,0	9,1	7,2	2,2	1.62	1.057	p<.01
State laws against private sexual behavior between consenting adult women should be softened.*	Police Collage	137	13,1	8,0	59,9	15,3	3,6	2.88	.948	t=-5.47
	Others	276	8,3	5,8	39,9	22,8	23,2	3.47	1.155	p<.01
Female homosexuality is a sin.	Police Collage	140	36,4	19,3	27,9	9,3	7,1	2.31	1.253	t=5.36
	Others	276	73,6	7,6	8,0	4,3	6,5	1.63	1.201	p<.01
The growing number of lesbians indicated the decline in morality in this country.	Police Collage	141	30,5	18,4	34,8	9,2	7,1	2.44	1.215	t=7.63
	Others	276	74,3	9,1	10,1	2,9	3,6	1.53	1.032	p<.01
Female homosexuality in itself is no problem unless society makes it a problem.*	Police Collage	140	8,7	9,3	35,7	35,7	13,6	3.42	1.025	t=-3.65
	Others	276	5,1	7,6	18,5	36,6	32,2	3.86	1.116	p<.01
Female homosexuality is a threat to many of our basic social institutions.	Police Collage	141	30,5	24,1	37,6	5,0	2,8	2.26	1.038	t=6.90
	Others	276	70,3	14,1	9,1	5,1	1,4	1.53	.955	p<.01
Female homosexuality is an inferior form of sexuality.	Police Collage	141	27,7	16,3	44,7	8,5	2,8	2.43	1.071	t=8.12
	Others	276	73,6	9,1	11,2	2,5	3,6	1.54	1.032	p<.01
Lesbians are sick.	Police Collage	141	41,8	20,6	29,1	2,1	6,4	2.11	1.169	t=6.74
	Others	276	81,9	6,2	6,9	4,3	0,7	1.36	.847	p<.01

\*reverse coded claims for the purpose of calculating the scale score.

**Table 2: Differences in students' attitudes towards lesbians and gay men (relative frequencies, means, standard deviations, and t-test results on the items).**

Items		N	% responses					M	SD	t-test
			1	2	3	4	5			
			ATG Attitudes towards gay men							
Male homosexual couples should be allowed to adopt children the same as heterosexual couples.*	Police College	141	57,4	16,3	15,6	7,1	3,5	1.83	1.146	t=-11.26
	Others	276	20,3	7,6	23,6	17,8	30,8	3.31	1.486	p<.01
I think male homosexuals are disgusting.	Police College	139	16,5	15,8	38,1	8,6	20,9	3.01	1.324	t=10.58
	Others	276	69,9	10,1	10,9	5,1	4,0	1.63	1.112	p<.01
Gay men should not be allowed to teach in schools.	Police College	141	24,1	27,0	31,9	6,4	10,6	2.52	1.228	t=10.58
	Others	276	86,2	4,7	4,7	1,4	2,9	1.30	.861	p<.01
Male homosexuality is a perversion.	Police College	141	14,9	10,6	35,5	19,1	19,9	3.18	1.291	t=12.45
	Others	276	68,8	10,5	12,3	3,3	5,1	1.65	1.132	p<.01
As in many other species, male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality among humans.*	Police College	140	24,3	16,4	42,9	10,0	6,4	2.58	1.151	t=-10.60
	Others	276	8,7	5,8	15,2	23,2	47,1	3.94	1.281	p<.01
If a man has homosexual feelings, he should do everything he can to overcome them.	Police College	141	14,9	14,2	51,8	7,1	12,1	2.87	1.133	t=10.72
	Others	276	68,5	14,5	8,0	4,0	5,1	1.63	1.116	p<.01
I would not be too upset if I found out that my son is gay.*	Police College	140	42,1	23,6	23,6	8,6	2,1	2.05	1.095	t=-11.39
	Others	276	9,4	17,0	21,4	25,4	26,8	3.43	1.301	p<.01
Homosexual behavior between men is simply wrong.	Police College	141	12,1	10,6	35,5	19,1	22,7	3.30	1.269	t=11.59
	Others	276	64,9	13,8	8,3	5,1	8,0	1.78	1.268	p<.01
The idea of male homosexual marriages seems ridiculous to me.	Police College	140	10,7	10,7	36,4	11,4	30,7	3.41	1.313	t=10.34
	Others	276	61,2	10,9	10,9	6,5	10,5	1.94	1.390	p<.01
Male homosexuality is merely a different kind of lifestyle that should not be condemned.*	Police College	141	16,3	9,9	32,6	27,0	14,2	3.13	1.258	t=-9.90
	Others	276	4,7	4,3	8,7	19,2	63,0	4.32	1.105	p<.01

\*reverse coded claims for the purpose of calculating the scale score.

The mean score on the ATL scale was 2.67 among the Police College students, and 2.28 among other students, suggesting that there is a relatively low level of prejudice towards homosexual women.

When it comes to the ATG scale, the mean score among the Police College students was 2.79, and 2.49 among the students in other programs of study. However, this cannot be interpreted as more negative attitudes towards gay men, as the scores on the two scales are not directly comparable. However, result on the ATG is scale is higher than that reported by Etchezahar et al. (2016), for their sample of Argentine students.

**Table 3: Differences in students' attitudes towards lesbians (ATL) and gays (ATG), with means, standard deviations, and t-test results on the scales.**

Scales	Police college			Other students			t-test
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	
<b>ATL</b>	135	2,67	,624	276	2,28	,529	t=6,18 p<,01
<b>ATG</b>	138	2,79	,424	276	2,49	,345	t=7,165 p<,01

In order to fulfill the second aim of this paper, and due to the often noted joint variation of the attitude correlates, a standard regression analysis has been conducted, assessing the predictive power of each of the respondents' characteristics. Though the focus of this paper has been on the attitudes of the Police College students, the analysis was also conducted on the sample of other programs of study in order to ascertain whether there are any differences in the determinants of attitudes towards homosexuals.

Prior to conducting the regression analysis, the variables' distributions were compared to the normal distribution. The indices of symmetry and flatness, and testing for normality point to a divergence from the normal distribution, and a skew of the variables towards the higher values

on the scales. However, Tabaschnik and Fidell (2007) note that a lack of normal distribution need not be an obstacle to conducting a regression analysis when the variables are skewed in the same direction.

The correlations between the independent and the dependent variables were also tested for, as were the two-way correlations between the predictors alone (Table 4).

In the sample of Police College students, gender was not significantly correlated with the attitudes towards lesbians, and attendance in religious services did not significantly correlate with the attitude towards gay men. Among the students from other programs of study, age was not significantly correlated with the attitudes towards lesbians, nor with the attitudes towards gays. The predictors that were not significantly correlated with the dependent variables in the particular samples were not included in the regression analysis. The regression analyses also did not include the variable measuring the frequency of attendance in religious services, as this variable was highly and significantly correlated (0.762) with the measure of the importance of religion in one's life. Thus, only the latter variable was included.

**Table 4: Correlations between the dependent and independent variables in the Police College sample (above the diagonal line), and in the sample of other students (below the diagonal line).**

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. ATL	–	,638**	,049	-,286**	,259**	,251**	,232**	,263**
2. ATG	,891**	–	,347**	-,267**	,225**	,370**	,194*	,131
3. Sex	,221**	,269**	–	,095	,213*	,142	-,144	-,203*
4. Age	-,089	-,061	,253**	–	,037	-,074	-,178*	-,220*
5. Contact	,218**	,253**	,115	,023	–	,036	,035	,079
6. Politics	,556**	,629**	,174**	-,030	,163**	–	,251**	,172*
7. Religion	,424**	,493**	,000	-,091	,137*	,533**	–	,564**
8. Religious services	,435**	,550**	,103	-,137*	,125	,471**	,762**	–

\* $p < 0,05$ ; \*\* $p < 0,01$

The results of the standard regression analysis (Tables 5 and 6) show that the analyzed variables significantly contribute to the explanation of the variance on the dependent variables of attitudes towards lesbians and attitudes towards gays.

When it comes to the attitudes towards lesbians, the chosen independent variables explain 21.8% of the variance among the Police College students, and 35.6% of the variance among other students. Lower age, lack of personal contact with homosexuals, and more conservative political beliefs are the predictors of negative attitudes towards lesbians among the Police College students. These independent variables have the greatest independent contribution to the explanation of the variance for this dependent variable. The correlation of youth and more negative attitudes towards lesbians confirms the findings of Hebl, Law, and King (2010). The results concerning personal contact and political beliefs and orientations are in line with the results in other research that find that negative attitudes towards homosexuals can be found with those who do not have personal contact (acquaintances, friends) with homosexual (Herek and Glunt, 1993; Herek and Capitano, 1996; Lyons, DeValve and Garner, 2008; Brown and Henriquez, 2008; Swank and Raiz, 2010; Miller and Kim, 2012; Kozjak Mikić and Petković, 2015), and those who express more conservative political beliefs (Etchezahar et al., 2016; Harper, 2007; Shackelford and Besser, 2007; Brown and Henriquez, 2008; DeRosa and Kochurka, 2006; Yang, 1998; Miller and Kim, 2012).

Among the students enrolled in other departments and programs of study, the key findings are that being male, lacking personal contact with homosexuals, conservatism, and a greater importance of religion in one's life are significant predictors of a more negative attitude towards lesbians, with a significant independent contribution in explaining the variance of this dependent variable.

More negative attitudes towards homosexuals among men than among women is a finding that is often reconfirmed in research, and particularly so when it comes to attitudes towards gay men. A greater extent of tolerance towards lesbians is also a common finding. It is interesting to note that there was no difference based on gender in the expressed attitudes towards lesbians (which is why gender was not included in the regression analysis), while this was not the case among other students.

A greater importance of religion in one's life appears as a significant predictor of a negative attitude towards lesbians among the students in other programs, but not among those in Police College.

*Table 5: Results of the standard regression analyses, with attitudes towards lesbians as the DV, in the Police College sample, and in the sample of other students.*

Independent variables	Police College students (N=135)		Students in other study programs (N=276)	
	$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t
<b>Sex</b>			,136	2,740**
<b>Age</b>	-,259	-3,251**		
<b>Contact</b>	,257	3,286**	,109	2,204*
<b>Politics</b>	,190	2,351*	,414	7,049**
<b>Religion</b>	,129	1,569	,188	3,255**
<b>MODEL TOTAL</b>				
<b>R</b>	,467		,364	
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	,218**		354**	

\*  $p < 0,05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0,01$ ;  $\beta$  – standardized regression coefficient; R – coefficient of multiple correlation; R<sup>2</sup> – coefficient of multiple determination.

The results of regression analysis on the dependent variable of attitudes towards gay men that were derived from the sample of Police College students show that the chosen independent variables explain 33.7% of the variance on the dependent variable. Being male, younger, and not having personal contact with homosexuals, as well as more conservative political beliefs, are all statistically significant independent predictors and explain the variance on the attitude towards gays.

The results of the same analysis conducted on the sample of other students show that the analyzed independent variables explain a greater proportion of the variance, 47.9%, on the dependent variable of attitudes towards gays. All of the independent variables show a significant independent contribution to the explanation of the variance in attitudes towards gays. The signs

on the coefficients show that being male, not having personal contact with homosexuals, and conservative political beliefs, as well as a greater importance of religion in one's life, are all predictors of a more negative attitude towards gay men.

Being male is, as noted above (Mušica et al., 2013; Etchezahar et al., 2016; Kozjak Mikić and Petković, 2015), often listed as a predictor of a negative attitude towards gays, which was confirmed in this study as well, with both the Police College and the other students in the sample.

As was the case with the results concerning the attitudes towards lesbians, the meaning of religion in one's life has been confirmed as a significant predictor of a more negative attitude towards gay men among the students in other study programs, but not among Police college students.

On the whole, one may conclude that the initially stated hypothesis is partially confirmed: when it comes to explaining attitudes towards lesbians, the significant predictors are age, contact, and politics (among the Police College students), and sex, contact, politics, and religion (among other students); when explaining attitudes towards gay men, the important predictors are gender, age, contact, and politics (among Police College students), and sex, contact, politics, and religion (among other students). It is interesting to note that religion has not been a significant predictor of attitudes towards gays and lesbians among the Police College students, which was not the case among the students enrolled in other programs.

**Table 6: Results of the standard regression analyses, with attitudes towards gay men as the DV, in the Police College sample, and in the sample of other students.**

Independent variables	Police College sample (N=138)		Other students (N=276)	
	$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t
<b>Sex</b>	,318	4,211**	,175	3,900**
<b>Age</b>	-,261	-3,586**		
<b>Contact</b>	,152	2,080*	,127	2,837**
<b>Politics</b>	,270	3,591**	,452	8,513**
<b>Religion</b>	,120	1,581	,235	4,491**
<b>MODEL TOTAL</b>				
<b>R</b>	,581		,692	
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	,337**		,479**	

\*  $p < 0,05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0,01$ ;  $\beta$  – standardizirani regresijski koeficijent; R – koeficijent multiple korelacije; R<sup>2</sup> – koeficijent multiple determinacije

The results presented in this paper suggest some possible courses of action. As age, contact, and politics are significant predictors of attitudes towards lesbians and gay men, some of these may be addressed as part of educational content. Experts on the matter (e.g. representatives of non-governmental organizations that deal with the protection of human rights of LGBT persons) may be invited to contribute to the courses that deal with human rights and minority protection, as they can further raise consciousness among students of the importance of protection of human rights of persons of a different sexual orientation. The finding that there is a predictive value of political beliefs suggests that there is room for more highlighting of the norm of professionalism in police work, which implies the implementation of the legal norms concerning the protection of the rights of minorities in the society, regardless of one's personal attitudes.

## **RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK**

Just like all research, this one too suffers from certain limitations that should be taken into account when trying to generalize from the results. Though the largest proportion of Police College students are police officers, these data cannot generalize to the entire police force, as these are only those who are in the process of getting their degrees, and are thus not representative. It would be important to conduct a survey of police officers' attitudes towards homosexuals using a representative sample, as this type of survey has never been done in Croatia, and its findings would then be able to shed light on the relevance of education, type of job, and the type of higher education completed by those who have it. The second limitation concerns the topic of the research itself: as this is a sensitive topic, the question of providing socially acceptable answers is presented. Further, surveying the Police College students is, as noted above, realized in the "pen and paper" format, and there were no smaller groups in which the students could have more privacy, leading to a possibility that the students were not completely honest in their answers. Any future research ought to dedicate attention to careful planning of the technical implementation of the survey.

Given the relevance that police officers afford to adequate treatment of homosexuals, it would be advised to analyze the quality and quantity of the content that is addressing the issue of treatment of persons of a different sexual orientation in the various educational formats. Given that the attitudes of the teaching staff could also be influential in the way that these educational contents are chosen and implemented, it would be interesting to conduct a survey of the Police College as a formal educational unit of Croatia's Ministry of the Interior that would address this.

## CONCLUSION

It is globally recognized that the traditional role of the police is being expanded beyond maintaining order and implementing the law, and is touching upon the matters of problem-solving, technological innovation, transnational criminality, and crime prevention strategy (Paterson 2011). The research into the positive effects of higher education on the attitudes of police officers in the 1970s have shown that the police officers with a university education are less authoritarian than those who were educated outside the universities, and that the higher level of education correlated with more flexible value systems of the police officers, which has also been confirmed in more recent work (Lee and Punch, 2004; Hays, Regoli and Hewitt, 2007). This has been shown to be the case particularly in the police officers' attitudes towards minority groups (Parker et al., 1976), and in the sense of more ethical and more professional behavior (Roberg and Bonn, 2004). It has also been established that the education was beneficial regardless of the area, and it was not necessary for it to be in the areas of criminology or criminal justice.

The experts' attitudes towards homosexuals are extremely important as they contribute to a sense of trust in the willingness of the state to implement the policies of non-discrimination and equal treatment for all among those who are of a different sexual orientation. Police officers are particularly important in that sense, as they are the first representatives of the state that a person of a different sexual orientation is coming into contact with, and are thus sometimes the basis of conclusions that are made about the whole system.

The aim of this research, the first of its kind in Croatia, is to open up the topic of importance of the personal attitudes of experts in criminal justice towards homosexuals and all persons of a different sexual orientation. The research has had two aims: 1) to determine whether there is a difference between the attitudes towards homosexuals between the Police College students and the students in other programs of study; and 2) to ascertain the role of gender, age, contact with homosexuals, basic political beliefs/orientations, religion, and attendance in religious services in explaining the attitudes towards lesbians and gay men among the students attending Police College, and those who are studying towards degrees in other areas.

The results suggest the following:

Aim 1:

- The Police College students hold more negative attitudes towards lesbians and gays than other students in the sample.

Aim 2:

- Being younger, not having personal contact with homosexuals, and more conservative political beliefs are significant predictors of a more negative attitude towards lesbians among the Police College students.
- Being male, not having personal contact with homosexuals, more conservative political beliefs, and a greater importance of religion in one's life are all significant predictors of a more negative attitude towards lesbians among students in other programs.
- Being male, not having personal contact with homosexuals, and having more conservative political beliefs are significant predictors of a more negative attitude towards gay men among the Police College students.
- Being male, not having personal contact with homosexuals, more conservative political beliefs, and a greater importance of religion in one's life are all significant predictors of a more negative attitude towards gay men among students in other programs.

These results may be used in further analyses, research, and improving the implementation of existing national policies for police education and activity, all with the aim of bring the motto of the Croatian police force, "Safety and trust", to life. Additionally, these results point to a necessity of conducting further research of attitudes and education on the prevention of discrimination of those who are of a different sexual orientation in the other programs of study (particularly in law schools), as their students become employed as direct policy and law implementing actors.

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