CFT Students’ Beliefs about Sexual Orientation and Therapy
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Study Rationale and Purpose
• The AAMFT added sexual orientation to the non-discrimination clause in its code of ethics in 1991.
• In 2005 the Board of the AAMFT adopted a series of official statements affirming same sex relationships.
• The COAMFTE has required programs to include content on sexual orientation in the standard curriculum since 1994.
• Two of the main critiques in the CFT training literature are:
  - Prevalence of heterosexist bias in CFT training
  - Training programs are not providing students with the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully serve the lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) community
• Considering the recent statements by the AAMFT Board inviting members of same sex programs to be informed by a positive view of LGB individuals and relationships, the act of contextualizing human experience in heterotopic terms, thereby discounting the experiences of LGB individuals and their relationships

Instrument – Academic Pathway

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<th>Variable</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>Std. β</th>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>.36</td>
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<td>.02</td>
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<td>Level of LGB Affirmative Training</td>
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Research Questions & Definitions
1. What are CFT students’ assessments of the level of LGB affirmative training they received in their accredited CFT training programs?
2. What is the level of CFT students’ self-reported competency working with LGB clients?
3. To what degree do CFT students’ assessments of the overall level of their LGB affirmative training predict their self-reported competency working with LGB clients?
4. To what degree does the amount of course content on LGB topics predict CFT students’ self-reported competency working with LGB clients?

Affirmative Therapy: an approach to therapy that embraces a positive view of LGB identities and relationships and addresses the negative influences that homophobia and heterosexism have on the lives of LGB clients

Heterosexual bias: the act of conceptualizing human experience in heterotopic terms, thereby discounting the experiences of LGB individuals and their relationships

Heterosexual privilege: the unearned advantages given to heterosexual individuals based solely on their sexual orientation

Sample Description
190 participants; 76.3% Women; 81.1% White; 88.4% identified as heterosexual
62.6% enrolled in a master’s program
Total client contact hours ranged from 0 to 7,500 (M = 385.22, SD = 644.72)
Total number of hours participants worked with LGB clients in their current training programs ranged from 0 to 1,500 (M = 22.34, SD = 114.66)
61.1% had worked with at least one LGB client in their clinical careers

Results - Level of LGB Affirmative Training

- The mean score on the SOCCS was 4.40 (SD = 0.69), with a range of 2.61 to 5.84
- The Awareness sub-scale assesses homophobic attitudes toward LGB clients (M = 5.12, SD = 1.16, with a range of 1.83 to 6.00)
- The Knowledge sub-scale assesses understanding of heterosexism and the discrimination faced by LGB clients (M = 4.23, SD = 0.72, with a range of 2.14 to 6.00)
- The Skills sub-scale assesses skills and experiences working with LGB clients (M = 3.75, SD = 1.00, with a range of 1.00 to 6.00)

Results - Level of Perceived Clinical Competency

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Results - Affirmative Training Predicting Perceived Clinical Competency

- The ATS was a significant predictor of scores on the Awareness sub-scale
- Only gender and sexual orientation were significant at the p < .05 level
- The ATS was not a significant predictor of scores on the Knowledge sub-scale
- Only sexual orientation and level of program were significant predictors at the p < .05 level
- The ATS was a significant predictor of scores on the Skills sub-scale at the p < .001 level

Discussion
- Participants only somewhat agreed they received LGB affirmative training
- 65.5% reported no training on affirmative therapy practices
- These findings appear to support the literature that argues that CFT training programs do not adequately address LGB topics
- Considering the COAMFTE requires CFT programs to include content on sexual orientation in the standard curriculum, it would be interesting to know what CFT faculty consider as content on sexual orientation
- Participants perceive themselves as somewhat competent working with LGB clients
- The fact that students in this study reported low levels of homophobia is encouraging, since several authors argue that helping students develop more positive attitudes toward LGB individuals is an essential first step in preparing therapists to work competently with LGB clients
- The level of affirmative training predicts participants’ overall self-reported clinical competency when working with LGB clients and specifically, self-reported skills related to working with LGB clients
- Literature suggests that CFT training programs need to move beyond simply teaching students about LGB topics (e.g., coming out process) and specifically address LGB affirmative training concepts and practices such as heterosexism and heterosexual privilege
- The amount of course content on affirmative therapy was predictive of students’ overall self-reported clinical competency related to working with LGB clients
- However, the number of weeks that were dedicated to LGB identity development models was not
- These findings challenge the most common training approach (i.e., teaching therapists about LGB identity development) and supports the argument that becoming a LGB affirmative therapist requires an understanding of the realities of homophobia and heterosexism and the influences each has on the lives of therapists and clients alike
- Implications for Clinical Training
- Specific concepts and practices related to affirmative therapy need to be integrated into the curriculum of CFT training programs
- COAMFTE should require programs to not only teach about LGB topics (e.g., models of LGB identity development) and concepts (e.g., homophobia), but that such teaching be informed by a positive view of LGB individuals and relationships
- Teaching methods should be employed that reduce homophobia and heterosexual bias and develop more positive personal beliefs about LGB individuals