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Christians, lesbians, gays, and bisexuals: examining the roles of uncertainty and religiosity in Christian attitudes toward LGB individuals

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CHRISTIANS, LESBIANS, GAYS, AND BISEXUALS: EXAMINING THE ROLES
OF UNCERTAINTY AND RELIGIOSITY IN CHRISTIAN
ATTITUDES TOWARD LGB
INDIVIDUALS

An Abstract of a Thesis

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Communication Studies

Megan Deanne Wharff Kavanaugh

University of Northern Iowa

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines heterosexual Christian attitudes toward LGB individuals, specifically to determine if there is a relationship between intergroup contact, uncertainty reduction, and supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals among Christian individuals. Participants completed an online survey, which assessed religious beliefs, levels of uncertainty about interactions with LGB individuals, levels of contact with LGB individuals, and attitudes toward LGB individuals. The goal of the research was to identify the current attitudes of heterosexual Christians and the factors that may influence those attitudes.

Findings indicate that participants were unsure, but leaned toward valuing the contributions of LGB individuals in society and believing that sexual orientation is a fixed, biologically based trait. The participants were somewhat aware of LGB discrimination and agreed that discrimination exists. Participants reported relatively low levels of communication apprehension toward LGB individuals. Participants who had more contact with LGB individuals had lower levels of uncertainty and more positive attitudes toward LGB individuals. Conservative participants who hold fundamental Christian beliefs had less contact with LGB individuals, were more uncertain about interactions with LGB individuals, and were the least likely to have positive attitudes toward LGB individuals. Liberal participants who hold relativistic religious beliefs had more contact with LGB individuals, were less uncertain about interactions with LGB individuals, and were likely to have the most positive attitudes toward LGB individuals.

The findings of the research indicate that the Christian participants have a wide variety of perspectives on homosexuality and LGB individuals. Findings were consistent with past research on intergroup contact, religiosity, and attitudes toward LGB individuals. The research offers new insight into the relationship between contact, religiosity and attitudes by adding the element of uncertainty. Theoretical implications indicate the need to further explore the relationship between the Contact Hypothesis and Uncertainty Reduction Theory within the context of attitudes toward members of groups different than one's own groups. Practical implications of the research include the need for education among Christians about the nature of sexual orientation and the need for increased awareness of discrimination that LGB individuals face.

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This Study by: Megan Deanne Wharff Kavanaugh

Entitled: Christians, Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals: Examining the Roles of Uncertainty
and Religiosity in Christian Attitudes Toward LGB Individuals

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the
Degree of Master of Arts

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF TABLES.....	iv
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW	6
CHAPTER 3. METHODS	33
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS	45
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION.....	97
REFERENCES	123
APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT.....	129
APPENDIX B: EMAIL TO GATEKEEPERS	152
APPENDIX C: SOCIAL MEDIA POST.....	153

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1 Initial Coding Categories	43
2 Themes	44
3 Regression Output for Immutability Beliefs	51
4 Regression Output for Intergroup Communication Apprehension	52
5 Regression Output for Stigma by Association Regarding Sexual Identity	54
6 Regression Output for Stigma by Association Regarding Treatment from Others	55
7 Regression Output for Denial of Continued Discrimination	56
8 Regression Output for Awareness of LGBT Discrimination.....	57
9 Regression Output for Value of Gay Progress.....	58
10 Crosstab and Chi Square for Friends or Family and Political Ideology	61
11 Crosstab and Chi Square for Friends or Family and Political Party	62
12 Crosstab and Chi Square for Friends or Family and Religious Stance.....	63
13 Crosstab and Chi Square for Acquaintances and Religious Stance	64
14 ANOVA for Religiosity	66
15 ANOVA for Awareness	67
16 ANOVA for Immutability Beliefs	68
17 ANOVA for Communication Apprehension	69
18 ANOVA for Fundamental Beliefs	70
19 ANOVA for Relativistic Beliefs	71

20 ANOVA for Stigma Regarding Identity72

21 ANOVA for Value of Gay Progress73

22 ANOVA for Denial of Continued Discrimination.....74

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I am a Christian. This has always been a very important part of my identity. It has helped build me into the person I want to be and has been a source of strength through both good and bad times. However, sometimes others make assumptions about me based on my self-identification as a Christian. The assumptions others make about the Christian label have led to situations in which my faith and relationship with God were either questioned by fellow Christians, or were used to make the assumption that I was judgmental of others. The same sex marriage debate, and the resulting questions surrounding sexual orientation, is one specific area in which I have experienced both the questioning of my faith by other Christians, and others' assumptions that I must be judgmental. I firmly support the lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB¹) social equality movements, and I also firmly support marriage equality. I know that many of my fellow Christians agree with me. However, I know that many disagree with me as well.

A division exists in the modern day Christian church over the issue of homosexuality, specifically regarding same sex marriage. I do not agree that homosexuality is a sin resulting in damnation of the soul. I know Christians who agree with me, but sometimes it seems like I know more Christians who disagree with me.

¹ I use several different acronyms to refer to a population of people whose sexual orientation is something other than strictly heterosexual. Although transgender is not a sexual orientation, much of the research includes the transgender identity within their measurements. My measurement does not include questions about transgender individuals, so I chose to default to the LGB acronym. I will move between using the words lesbian, gay, and bisexual, the LGB acronym, and the LGBT acronym to remain loyal to the words or acronym used by whichever study I am discussing.

Each side claims to interpret the Bible correctly and to be more in line with what God wants for the world. As time has gone by, several churches have adopted official stances on homosexuality and same sex marriage. However, not every Christian agrees with the stance their church takes.

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2012b) presented a collection of religious' groups formal stances on same sex marriage, which vary widely. For example, The American Baptist Church USA stated that homosexuality is against the teachings of the Bible (American Baptist Churches USA, 2005). The Offices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (2003) and the Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2009), both affiliated with the Catholic religion, have taken the stance that marriage as God intended it is between one man and one woman. However, The Episcopal Church formalized support for gay and lesbian individuals as children of God and formally agreed to oppose constitutional amendments that would make same sex civil marriage and unions unlawful (General Convention, 2006). The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA; 2009) reported that although the church has not reached consensus on the issue of same sex marriage, they affirm that the church has gained new understanding of homosexuals' needs for committed relationships and the legal issues that surround them. The ELCA also allows gay and lesbian pastors in committed relationships to hold ministry positions (ELCA News Service, 2009). This list is not exhaustive, but it provides insight into the conflicting views of Christian churches today.

I grew up in a Protestant Disciples of Christ church where same sex couples were accepted. However, I have attended churches away from home where homosexuality is still considered to be a sin. Through discussions with my family and friends, and through my experiences within different churches, I have become extremely interested in Christian attitudes about homosexuality and how those attitudes are formed. I am specifically interested in finding out about current Christian attitudes on an individual level. What does each person think about the issue, and does that always coincide with formal church stances? What contributes to supportive attitudes towards lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals? These are questions I want to explore, specifically with regard to a Christian population.

The marriage equality movement has been making progress, as nine states and the District of Columbia have now legalized same sex marriage: Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Washington, Maryland and Vermont (CNN Library, 2012; Human Rights Campaign [HRC], 2012). Iowa, my home state, is one of the states where same sex marriage has been legalized. I was thrilled when Iowa took this stance; however, I know many Christians who felt very differently. On April 3, 2009, the Iowa Supreme Court ruled that the statute limiting civil marriage to one man and one woman violated the state constitution.

We are firmly convinced the exclusion of gay and lesbian people from the institution of civil marriage does not substantially further any important governmental objective. The legislature has excluded a historically disfavored class of persons from a supremely important civil institution without a constitutionally sufficient justification....We have a constitutional duty to ensure equal protection of the law. Faithfulness to that duty requires us to hold Iowa's marriage statute, Iowa Code section 595.2, violates the Iowa Constitution. (Varnum v. Brien, 2009, p. 67)

As the changing state laws illustrate, attitudes toward same sex marriage have been changing in recent years. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (TPFRPL) reported that 48% of Americans polled in 2012 indicated support for same sex marriage, as opposed to 44% who opposed (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2012a). TPFRPL reported that these numbers are up from 2001 poll results when 57% of Americans polled opposed same sex marriage and only 35% favored same sex marriage (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2012a).

Research in the area of heterosexual attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals is well established (Asta & Vacha-Haase, 2012; Borgman, 2009; DiStefano, Croteau, Anderson, Kampa-Kokesch, & Bullard, 2000; Fingerhut, 2011; Goldstein & Davis, 2010; Herek, 2002; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Herek & Glunt, 1993; Liang & Alimo, 2005; Massey, 2009; Russell, 2011; Stotzer, 2009). Much of this research focuses on attitudes of university students. Research about Christian heterosexual attitudes toward LGBT individuals is more rare. Some work has been done in the counseling field (Borgman, 2009). Borgman interviewed Christian psychologists about their processes of integrating their identities as Christians and LGB allies. Literature on hermeneutical perspectives also exists (Maddux, 2001). Maddux reviewed several methods of interpreting the Bible and applied those methods of interpretation to sections of Scripture commonly quoted regarding homosexuality.

The purpose of this study is to assess current Christian attitudes toward LGB individuals. Specifically, I hope to apply the Contact Hypothesis and Uncertainty Reduction Theory, which are further explained in my review of the literature, to Christian

attitudes toward LGB individuals. I want to determine if there is a relationship between intergroup contact, uncertainty reduction, and supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals among Christian individuals. This research is essential for gaining insight into the current attitudes, and possible roots of those attitudes, within the Christian community toward LGB individuals. Through my own experiences, I have met several fellow Christians who do support LGB individuals; however, these voices seem to have been silenced in the wider, dichotomized debate between Christianity and homosexuality.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The Contact Hypothesis, developed by Allport (1979), corresponding work on intergroup contact, and Uncertainty Reduction Theory, developed by Berger and Calabrese (1975), are theories salient to this research. I review these theories and then discuss prominent themes present in current literature about heterosexual attitudes toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. This includes a discussion of factors that have been empirically shown to affect supportive attitudes and LGB ally development, beliefs about sexual orientation (including immutability, fundamentality, and universality), conversion and healing therapies, and the role of religiosity as related to attitudes toward LGB individuals. Following this discussion, I propose four research questions.

Intergroup Contact

The association between interpersonal contact and attitudes toward LGB individuals is well documented in research (Allport, 1979; DiStefano et al., 2000; Fingerhut, 2011; Herek, 2002; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Herek & Glunt, 1993; Massey, 2009; Stotzer, 2009). The Contact Hypothesis according to Allport (1979) reads:

Prejudice...may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports (i.e., by law, custom, or local atmosphere), and if it is of a sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups. (Allport, 1979, p. 281)

While this hypothesis has been challenged and criticized since its inception because of its reliance on contact alone, the hypothesis is in alignment with much of the research specifically focusing on attitudes toward LGB individuals.

In Herek (2002) and Herek and Capitano's (1996) research, participants who reported having contact with a gay or lesbian person or having a gay or lesbian friend or relative had more positive attitudes toward gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals than participants who did not report any contact with or the presence of gay or lesbian friends or relatives, which is consistent with Allport's (1979) Contact Hypothesis (Herek, 2002; Herek & Capitano, 1996). Herek and Glunt (1993) concluded that among their adult, English-speaking, American sample, positive attitudes toward gay men were associated with interpersonal contact (p. 242). Participants who were reported to be highly religious reported less negative attitudes toward gay men if they had contact experiences with gay men. Additionally, Herek and Capitano (1996) discovered that among their probability sample of English-speaking adults, participants' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians became more favorable as the number of relationships with gay men and lesbians increased, if the relationships with gay men and lesbians were described as close, and if participants received disclosure about homosexual orientation directly from gay men and lesbians. The data for Herek (2002), Herek and Capitano (1996), and Herek and Glunt's (1993) research were drawn from national telephone surveys of adults. The research primarily focused on intergroup contact, whereas I will focus on both intergroup contact and religiosity. My research also differs from this existing research, because I will be testing a self-identified Christian population.

Some research has indicated that the relationship between contact and positive attitudes toward LGB individuals may be reciprocal. Not only does contact increase positive attitudes, the presence of positive attitudes increases the likelihood of contact (Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Herek & Glunt, 1993).

The presence of personal relationships with people who identify as LGB has also proven to be influential in the process of becoming an LGB ally (DiStefano et al., 2000). Through these personal relationships, people witness discrimination against LGB individuals, which can motivate an activist mindset. Additionally, personal relationships with LGB individuals allow heterosexual individuals to gain insight into issues unique to the LGB population (DiStefano et al., 2000).

Similarly, Goldstein and Davis (2010) surveyed members of a college gay/straight alliance and discovered that the majority of the participants had been exposed to LGBT discrimination and had LGB friends or acquaintances. The alliance was an organization composed of 126 college students at a small liberal arts college. The members were committed to reducing sexual prejudice and received training as part of their membership.

In a study examining heterosexual college students with supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals, Stotzer (2009) reported that LGB peers played a large part in influencing heterosexual student attitudes toward LGB students. Interestingly, personally meeting an LGB peer was not absolutely necessary in the development of supportive attitudes. Rather, being aware of LGB peers and their stories of difficult experiences elicited empathy from the heterosexual students, which affected attitudes (Stotzer, 2009).

Participants also reported that childhood exposure to LGB adults contributed to the normalization of homosexuality in their minds, which led to the development of supportive attitudes. It is likely that some participants in the present study have known LGB individuals or have heard stories about difficult experiences LGB individuals have had, which may have affected their attitudes toward LGB individuals. It is also possible that some participants in this research may have had childhood exposure to LGB adults, which may have led them to develop supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals.

The existing research discussed generally supports the association between intergroup contact and heterosexual attitudes, which is consistent with Allport's (1979) Contact Hypothesis specifically applied to heterosexual attitudes toward lesbian, gay, and/or bisexual individuals. However, Desforges, Lanicek, Lord, Ratcliff, and Scarberry (1997) noted that Allport's (1979) Contact Hypothesis discussed two different contexts for negative or prejudicial attitudes: negative attitudes toward the individual, and general negative attitudes toward the entire group to which the member belongs.

Desforges and colleagues (1997) examined the effects of the use of either first-person, more individual language or third-person, more general language by confederates, (which participants believed to be homosexual men), on participants' attitudes toward both the confederate and the wider societal group of homosexuals. Before participants were told that the confederates were homosexual, participants' attitudes toward several social categories, including homosexuals, were measured. After learning several things about the confederates, including their homosexual orientation, participants were given a questionnaire assessing personality expectations about the

confederate they were to work with. Participants worked in learning pairs with confederates to study material for an exam they were told would test their memory of the material. After the study session, participants took the same personality questionnaire once more. The researchers discovered that when compared to participants who worked with confederates who use third-person language, the participants who worked with confederates who used first-person language were less likely to generalize their liking for the confederate to the larger group of homosexuals. Thus, although participants liked the confederates, those positive feelings were not associated with a decrease in negative attitudes or prejudice toward homosexuals in general when first-person language was used in the interaction. When third-person language was used, participants were more likely to generalize their liking for the confederate to homosexuals as a whole. These findings are important to note because participants in my research may report contact and supportive attitudes toward close friends or family members who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual, but also report negative feelings toward the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community. This contradiction is important to consider because it reveals the complexity of attitude change. While intergroup contact has been shown to be associated with more positive attitudes toward LGB individuals, other factors must be considered and included in research.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory

Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) was first introduced by Berger and Calabrese (1975). The theory posits that as humans meet other people, they are motivated to reduce uncertainty about the interactional behavior of both the potential

relational partners and themselves. Humans use communication to seek information, which in turn reduces uncertainty about other people. Humans are further motivated to reduce uncertainty when they anticipate future interaction with someone, perceive that someone has something they need or want, or when someone deviates from norms (Berger & Bradac, 1982). As uncertainty is decreased, predictability increases. Two different kinds of uncertainty exist: behavioral and cognitive uncertainty. Behavioral uncertainty involves the uncertainty one feels about the ability to predict or explain behaviors that occur in an interaction. Cognitive uncertainty involves questions one has about both one's own and the other person's beliefs and attitudes (Berger & Bradac, 1982).

In its original form, URT connected uncertainty to relationship development with seven axioms (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). The first axiom stated that during initial interaction, the amount of verbal communication between two strangers increases while the level of uncertainty decreases for both interactants. Also, as uncertainty continues to decrease, the amount of verbal communication continues to increase. The second axiom stated that in an initial interaction situation, as expressions of nonverbal immediacy increase, uncertainty will decrease and vice versa. Axiom three stated that when two interactants experience high uncertainty, information-seeking behaviors increase (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Information-seeking behaviors decrease as uncertainty is reduced. Axiom four stated that the level of intimacy in a relationship increases as uncertainty decreases. Axiom five posited that interactional partners with high levels of uncertainty exhibit high interactional reciprocity. When uncertainty is low, reciprocity levels are also

low. Reciprocity refers to the idea that interactional partners disclose information at similar rates and levels of depth. Axiom six stated that when dissimilarities between interactional partners are present, uncertainty increases. When similarities exist between partners, uncertainty decreases. Axiom seven states that higher uncertainty levels are associated with decreases in feelings of liking one's partner. When uncertainty is lower, feelings of liking one's partner increase. The last axiom stated that when interactants share networks of communication, such as a common group of friends or family, uncertainty is reduced (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). These axioms directly apply to my research questions. I am trying to determine if there is a relationship between contact with LGB individuals and supportive attitudes. It seems that if contact between LGB and heterosexual Christian individuals increases, uncertainty will decrease. I want to determine if that decrease in uncertainty contributes to more supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals.

In a discussion of the evolution of URT, Berger (1987) stated that studies pertaining to URT had demonstrated that "uncertainty levels are important in relationships beyond the initial stages of their formation" (p. 40). I am interested in how uncertainty reduction works in the lives of my participants who have had intergroup contact with LGB individuals that traveled deeper than the initial interaction, who may very well have built relationships with LGB individuals. I am also interested in the participants who have not had these experiences and still have high levels of uncertainty about the LGB community. I want to determine if the participants' attitudes toward LGB individuals are related to their levels of uncertainty about LGB individuals. When high

levels of uncertainty exist for extended periods of time, interactions are continually difficult. Berger (1987) posited that this difficulty may cause interactants to assign negative affect toward the relationship if the domain of the uncertainty is important to the interactants and the relationship. This difficulty could be problematic in the process of relationship development and maintenance for participants who have high levels of uncertainty about LGB individuals. However, I must also note that Berger (1987) mentioned that as uncertainty is reduced, interactional partners may discover unattractive characteristics of one another, which could also lead to the development of a negative affect towards the relationship. For the participants who do not have supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals, reduction of uncertainty in relationships with LGB individuals may contribute to existing nonsupportive attitudes. Once interactants have formed the positive or negative perceptions of the relationship, efforts to reduce uncertainty will be affected. Berger (1987) argued that interactants will continue to make efforts to reduce uncertainty with relational partners they like, while discontinuing the reduction of uncertainty with relational partners they dislike.

An important factor in determining whether or not further reduction of uncertainty is pursued is the interactant's predicted outcome of the interaction and relationship (Sunnafrank, 1986). Sunnafrank (1986) proposed a reformulation of Uncertainty Reduction Theory, stating that, "uncertainty is not the central goal of individuals in beginning relationships, but only an important vehicle for the primary goal of achieving positive relational outcomes" (Sunnafrank, 1986, p. 29). Essentially, Sunnafrank (1986) argued that people utilize uncertainty reduction strategies in order to make predictions

about how positive or negative the formation of a relationship and future interactions with an interactional partner would be. Mottet (2000) applied this concept in an examination of how the discovery of another's sexual orientation affected participants' predicted outcome value during initial interactions. The participants were 284 undergraduate students. The participants were given a questionnaire, which began with a brief scenario describing an initial conversation with a new, male neighbor who was either homosexual or heterosexual. The questionnaire assessed the participants' predicted outcome values for future interaction with the new neighbor. Mottet (2000) concluded that participants whose hypothetical neighbor was homosexual predicted more negative, less satisfying, less rewarding and more uncomfortable future interactions. When predicted outcomes values were negative, participants reported less anticipation that the future would include increased time spent communicating, willingness to communicate, seeking out additional information, and self-disclosing more intimate information. Predicted outcomes are important to consider in the current research; participants may report intergroup contact, but if they predicted negative outcomes from continuing contact, the contact may not have positively affected their attitudes toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals.

Pilkington and Lydon (1997) examined the effect of attitude similarity and dissimilarity on heterosexual males' attraction levels to homosexual and heterosexual targets. The participants were 85 male, heterosexual undergraduate students. Participants were given an attitude assessment and then were presented with targets, both a heterosexual and homosexual male, whose reported attitudes were either similar,

dissimilar, or ambiguous when compared to the participants' attitudes. The researchers concluded that the participants' level of prejudice affected the reported level of attraction to the targets. Low-prejudice participants reported equal levels of attraction toward both heterosexual and homosexual targets whose attitudes were either similar or ambiguous. However, low-prejudice participants reported lower levels of attraction to both heterosexual and homosexual targets who held dissimilar attitudes. When compared with targets whose attitudes were ambiguous (neither similar nor dissimilar), high-prejudice participants reported higher levels of attraction for both homosexual and heterosexual targets whose attitudes were similar. High-prejudice participants also reported being equally unattracted to homosexual targets whose attitudes were ambiguous or dissimilar. For the purposes of my research, it is important to note that prejudice levels, levels of attractiveness and perceived attitude similarity are interconnected.

There are several strategies for dealing with uncertainty, which include seeking information, choosing plan complexity, and hedging (Griffin, 2000). Information can be sought in three different ways: passively, actively, or interactively (Berger, 1987). When using a passive strategy, one observes the interactional partner to see how the person behaves. When using an active strategy, one seeks information by manipulating the environment and observing how the other behaves. Active strategies also include asking someone else for information about the potential interactional partner (Berger, 1987). When using an interactive strategy, one asks the potential relational partner specific questions to gain information (Berger, 1987).

Choosing plan complexity involves making a plan for interacting with the potential relational partner (Griffin, 2000). One can make a plan with a high level of detail and/or a plan with several back-up plans in case the original plan does not work. However, when uncertainty is high, it may be difficult to make a detailed plan, as one may be forced to allow for flexibility within the plan. Too much planning can result in difficulty with the actual interactional communication. Hedging is a strategy that allows both parties to save face in case the interaction does not go on as planned. Hedging includes using humor and using ambiguous language (Griffin, 2000). These methods of reducing uncertainty may be methods the participants in this research who have reduced their uncertainty about LGB individuals have used, particularly the information-gaining strategies.

GLB Ally Motivation and Supportive Attitude Formation

An ally is an individual belonging to a majority group that supports and advocates for individuals in an oppressed group (Washington & Evans, 1991, p. 195). A straight ally is a specific type of ally typified by a heterosexual individual who advocates for the civil rights of the LGBT community (Fingerhut, 2011, p. 2231). Straight allies exist on a continuum of activism; some may challenge heterosexist language, while others may actively work in the community for equality.

Research has uncovered several motivations and several factors that contribute to supportive attitude formation and ally development. In a study examining 66 university students' supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals, participants cited early normalizing experiences, parental influence, exposure to LGB adults, and popular culture

exposure as influences in the development of their supportive attitudes (Stotzer, 2009). Feeling empathy for LGB peers experiencing discrimination and rejection also influenced the development of supportive attitudes. As the participants experienced empathy, they also experienced feelings of resistance toward prejudice and LGB discrimination. Some participants reported feeling empathy and resistance toward both the LGB community and the anti-LGB community. Participants also reported that LGB peers greatly influenced their attitudes. LGB peers aided the participants in normalizing homosexuality and elicited empathy and resistance development. However, Fingerhut (2011) found no association between empathy and heterosexuals' LGBT activist behaviors.

Previous research indicates that heterosexual LGBT allies report a variety of motives that led them to become allies (Russell, 2011). Participants in Russell's (2011) study were selected from a pool of heterosexual visible equality activists. The participants were interviewed about motivations they experienced when deciding to actively stand for LGBT equality. They reported 12 distinct motives, which Russell organized into two types: those based on fundamental principles and those based on personal experiences (Russell, 2011). The motives based on fundamental principles were justice, civil rights, patriotism, religious beliefs, moral principles, and spending privilege. Spending privilege referred to recognition of one's privileged status as a heterosexual and the desire to use that privilege to work toward equality. Motives based on personal experiences included professional roles involving LGBT work, family and other relationships with LGBT individuals, the desire to share the riches of marriage, the

transformation of guilt into action, and anger. Participants also mentioned motivations resulting from the desire to attain some closure on an individual or collective level. Sometimes this involved reclaiming a missed opportunity to stick up for LGBT individuals (Russell, 2011). The allies in this study were not necessarily motivated solely to help other people; they were motivated by the need to act upon their own core principles (Russell, 2011).

Goldstein and Davis (2010) surveyed 126 members of a college gay/straight alliance about their motivation, attitudes, and experiences regarding being an ally. Two major motivations for joining the alliance were advocating for human rights and supporting LGBT friends. Other motivations included learning more about LGBT issues, personal experiences with prejudice, and the desire to impact legislation. Higher levels of LGBT activism were associated with exposure to LGBT discrimination. Almost all of the participants, 97%, reported low levels of communication apprehension involving interactions with LGBT individuals.

Washington and Evans (1991) proposed that the first step in becoming an ally for the LGB community is recognizing heterosexual privilege, which involves the realization that heterosexuals and gay, lesbian, and bisexuals experience the world in different, unequal ways. The authors argued that this realization cannot happen when heterosexuals do not fully understand sexual orientation and have not rejected the notion that sexual orientation is a grounds for discrimination. In discussing the realization of heterosexual privilege, the authors stated, "These feelings do not occur when the person still believes that gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons are sick sinners who either need to

have a good sexual relationship with a person of the other sex or see a psychologist or a spiritual leader so that they can be cured” (Washington & Evans, 1991, p. 196). The authors also discussed four levels of ally development. The first level is awareness, which involves learning about how oneself is both similar and different than LGB individuals. This can be accomplished by self-reflection, communicating with gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals, attending workshops, and reading about LGB issues. The second level discussed is knowledge/education. This involves gaining knowledge about LGB culture and larger societal structures like the legal system that affect the lives of LGB individuals. The third level is skill development, which involves improving communication skills to communicate the knowledge gained through the first two levels. The authors noted that many individuals fail to reach the third level because of fear or lack of resources. The final level is action, which involves sharing the information learned to make a change in society (Washington & Evans, 1991). The authors also discuss factors that may discourage advocacy, which may apply to the participants in the current research. The factors mentioned are: the assumption from other heterosexuals that one is gay, lesbian or bisexual him/herself, social alienation from heterosexuals who believe the cause is unimportant or unacceptable, discrimination from the wider community, exclusionary behavior from gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, and questions about motives from gay, lesbians, and bisexuals. The authors continued with a discussion of benefits of becoming an ally, which included: relationships with gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, awareness of stereotypes about sex roles, and empowering others by being a source of acceptance and support. Washington and Evans’ (1991) discussion of ally

motives, development levels, risks of becoming an ally, and benefits of becoming an ally may apply to the participants in this study.

DiStefano and colleagues (2000) assessed heterosexual student affairs professionals' experiences of being an LGB ally. These participants reported that personal relationships with LGB individuals influenced their processes of becoming LGB allies. These relationships allowed participants to be made aware of LGB discrimination, learn about LGB issues, and examine their own feelings about LGB issues. The participants also reported that their own educational and professional development, personal values, and self-identification with another oppressed group influenced their process of becoming allies. However, DiStefano and colleagues (2000) discovered that the participants did not always act as allies. A belief that actions would be futile, lack of knowledge about LGB issues, personal difficulties with conflict and confrontation, and lack of energy were all cited as reasons for not acting as an ally in certain situations. Participants commonly reported criticizing themselves when they did not engage in ally behavior (DiStefano et al., 2000).

Demographic variables are related to attitudes toward LGBT individuals, specifically gender and educational level. Fingerhut (2011) reported that when compared to heterosexual men, heterosexual women were more likely to identify as allies. Additionally, as education level increased, LGBT activist behaviors increased (Fingerhut, 2011). Altemeyer (2001) reported that among his participants, women were more tolerant of homosexuality when compared to men. Herek and Glunt (1993) found that when compared to women, men were more likely to hold hostile attitudes toward gay

men. Massey (2009) found that when compared to women, heterosexual men reported more aversion toward gay men. Heterosexual men reported less aversion to lesbians than aversion to gay men, and heterosexual women reported more aversion to lesbians than aversion to gay men. Heterosexual women were more likely than heterosexual men to know a gay or lesbian individual (Massey, 2009). Liang and Alimo (2005) conducted a study examining the impact of heterosexual college students' biological sex and pre-college and college interactions with LGB individuals on their attitudes toward LGB individuals. They concluded that women were more likely than men to indicate positive attitudes toward LGB individuals and LGB relationships and to report contact with LGB individuals. The participants who reported high education levels, liberal political perspectives, a young age, and/or identification as a female reported having more contact with lesbians or gay men. In general, contact experiences with lesbians and gay men were related to less negative attitudes in Liang and Alimo's (2005) research, consistent with both the Contact Hypothesis and Uncertainty Reduction Theory. In my research, I expect to find a similar association between participant contact experiences with LGB individuals and less negative attitudes toward LGB individuals.

Sexual Orientation Beliefs

The beliefs one has about sexual orientation can affect the attitudes one has toward LGB individuals. In this study, gaining insight into the beliefs Christians have about the nature of sexual orientation will be beneficial. The participants' beliefs about sexual orientation may lie at the roots of their attitudes toward LGB individuals in general.

Essentialist beliefs about sexual orientation posit that sexual orientation is an objective, fixed, biologically related trait that has been present throughout history and across cultures. (Haslam & Levy, 2006). Immutability, fundamentality, and universality are three dimensions of essentialist beliefs that affect attitudes toward homosexuality. Although essentialist beliefs are largely associated with negative and discriminatory attitudes, research has shown that some essentialist beliefs, specifically regarding sexual orientation, are associated with more positive attitudes toward LGB individuals (Haslam & Levy, 2006).

Immutability, applied to sexual orientation, is a belief that “sexual orientation is fixed across the lifespan” (Hegarty & Pratto, 2001, p. 128). Researchers have found that immutability beliefs are associated with tolerance of lesbian and gay individuals (Haslam & Levy, 2006; Hegarty 2002; Hegarty & Pratto, 2001). Goldstein and Davis (2010) reported that among their sample, high immutability scores, which indicated agreement with immutability beliefs, were related to increased contact with LGB individuals. Fundamentality asserts “that persons can be classified as homosexual and heterosexual and that there are fundamental psychological differences between the members of these two groups” (Hegarty & Pratto, 2001, p. 128). High scores on fundamentality measures have been found to be associated with condemnation of lesbian and gay individuals and prejudice toward those individuals (Haslam & Levy, 2006; Hegarty, 2002; Hegarty & Pratto, 2001). Haslam and Levy (2006) argued that the concept of universality should join immutability and fundamentality as a third dimension of essentialist beliefs regarding homosexuality. Universality involves the belief that homosexuality has been

prevalent throughout history and across cultures (Haslam & Levy, 2006). In Haslam and Levy's research (2006), universality beliefs were negatively correlated with prejudice toward gay and lesbian individuals.

Education about sexual orientation is an important component to take into consideration when assessing attitudes toward LGB individuals. In Borgman's (2009) study of Christian, doctoral-level psychologists, participants reported that an important part of their development as LGB allies was altering their perspectives on sexual orientation. During this process, their thought processes surrounding sexual orientation moved from a focus on sexual behavior to a focus on an "inherent way of affiliating and relating" (Borgman, 2009, p. 513). Participants specifically mentioned learning about the concept of a sexual orientation continuum. The sexual orientation continuum changes the dichotomous perspective on sexual orientation consisting of only straight and homosexual people. Exclusive attraction to the opposite sex exists at one end, while exclusive attraction to the same sex exists at the other end with room in between for other sexual orientations (American Psychological Association, 2008). Borgman's (2009) participants reported that learning about the continuum was related to rejecting dichotomous thinking and gaining more insight into bisexuality. Thus, beliefs in the fundamentality of sexual orientation were called into question.

In a study examining heterosexual college students' supportive, positive, and open attitudes toward LGB individuals, Stotzer (2009) reported that 16.6% of their 68 participants with positive attitudes toward LGB individuals believed that homosexual attraction was an innate characteristic, 10.6% believed same sex attraction was a lifestyle

choice, and 6.1% believed same sex attraction was a natural expression of the continuum of human sexuality. The remaining 66.7% of the participants did not offer this information about their beliefs about sexual orientation. These findings indicate that a variety of beliefs about sexual orientation contribute to reasoning behind supportive attitudes.

Social constructionist and deconstructionist arguments about homosexuality challenge the essentialist beliefs (Stein, 1997). Deconstructionist perspectives highlight the binary nature of the organization of social life, in which the social world is categorized into men or women, black or white, straight or gay. Stein (1997) argued that sexual orientation is much more complex and exists at the fluid intersection of biological, cultural, contextual, individual, interpersonal, and historical factors. Social constructionist perspectives on sexual orientation reject the notion that sexual orientation is a fixed, biological trait. According to the social constructionist perspective, sexual orientation has been, and continues to be conceptualized through human interaction (Haslam & Levy, 2006).

Conversion Therapy

The concept that homosexuality is a mental disorder has been abandoned by major medical and mental health organizations nationwide (APA, 2008). LGB attractions and relationships are now viewed as normal aspects of human life. However, stereotypes still exist that result in discrimination based on sexual orientation.

For example, a body of therapies exists that is aimed at converting the homosexual individual into a heterosexual individual. These are known as conversion

therapies, reparative therapies, sexual reorientation therapy (SRT), ex-gay therapy, and/or religious ministries (APA, 2008; Maccio, 2010; Morrow & Beckstead, 2004). Despite the existence and persistence of these therapies, very little empirical research has proven their effectiveness. Mental health organizations are concerned about the potential danger of these types of therapies (APA, 2008). The American Psychological Association (APA; 2008) asserted that encouraging individuals to engage in conversion therapies may actually reinforce LGB stereotypes and create a negative environment for LGB individuals. This encouragement, and in turn the stereotype reinforcement and creation of a negative environment, may be especially prevalent for LGB individuals in conservative, religious communities. Morrow and Beckstead (2004) asserted that the basic argument put forth by proponents of conversion therapies is that same sex attraction is a chosen trait which is unnatural, indicative of psychopathology, and against the laws of religion. These beliefs are in direct contrast to essentialist beliefs about sexual orientation, which assert that sexual orientation is a fixed, biological trait.

Many of the existing conversion therapies are ministries that are affiliated with religious groups or churches. Exodus International (2012) is a well-known ministry organization. Its mission statement reads as follows, “Mobilizing the body of Christ to minister grace and truth to a world impacted by homosexuality” (Exodus International, 2012). This organization is one example of a Christian organization specifically focused on conversion therapy.

Maccio (2010) examined the relationship between participation in sexual reorientation therapy and negative reactions following disclosure of sexual orientation,

fundamentalist religious values, and levels of social conformity. The study included participants who had engaged in sexual reorientation therapy and participants who had not engaged in sexual reorientation therapy. Maccio (2010) concluded that as religious fundamentalism increased, participants were more likely to engage in sexual reorientation therapy. Additionally, participants who anticipated or experienced negative reactions from family members regarding the participants' sexual orientations were more likely to participate in sexual reorientation therapy.

Although major medical and mental health organizations assert that sexual orientation should not be considered a pathological issue in need of healing or repair, some research has concluded that individuals do report a change in sexual orientation after participating in conversion therapies. Spitzer (2003) sought to determine whether or not participants in some form of reparative therapy were able to change their sexual orientations from homosexual to heterosexual. In order to participate in the study, participants had to report past homosexual attraction and some level of change in sexual orientation after participating in reparative therapy. The majority of the 200 participants, 96%, identified as Christians, and 93% of the participants stated that religion was very important to them. On a scale measuring sexual orientation self identity, a score of 100 represented exclusive same sex attraction while a score of 0 represented exclusive opposite sex attraction. When comparing sexual orientation self identity scored before and after therapy, male participants reported an average change of 68.1, while female participants reported an average change of 73.4. Spitzer concluded that some gay men and lesbians were able to make major changes in their sexual orientations as a result of

therapy. The changes were not about relabeling or resisting homosexuality, rather they included changes in what Spitzer determined to be core components of sexual orientation, such as sexual attraction, arousal, fantasy, yearning, and homosexual feelings. The researcher noted that the self-reporting nature of the study may have affected the results. However, Spitzer argued that the participant reports were credible and few, if any, were false reports. Spitzer asserted that there was no evidence of reparative therapy being harmful in this study, rather the therapy was considered helpful.

Wainberg and colleagues (2003) argued that Spitzer's (2003) main finding was "self-fulfilling." (p. 455). The critics asserted that Spitzer's (2003) sampling method was based on recruiting participants who experienced a change after reparative therapy, making the sample potentially biased toward reporting change, and then Spitzer's conclusion asserted that participants reported a change in sexual orientation after therapy (Wainberg et al., 2003). Overall, Wainberg and colleagues (2003) argued that the methodology of Spitzer's (2003) research was not adequate to produce valid scientific results.

Spitzer (2012) later reassessed the findings from his research in 2003. He explained that the research set out to discover how individuals described the process of changing sexual orientation through reparative therapy. He stated that in the conclusions, the justifications for the assumption that the participants' experiences of a change in sexual orientation were unconvincing. The self-report methodology made it impossible to determine if participants were telling the truth, lying, or deceiving themselves when

they reported changes in sexual orientation. Spitzer (2012) apologized to the gay community for the claims made in the 2003 research.

Religiosity

Research has determined that religiosity, among many other factors, is associated with attitudes toward LGB individuals (Herek, 2002; Russell, 2011). When assessing attitudes toward bisexual individuals, Herek (2002) drew on a national random digit dialing survey of 1,335 people from 1999, to assess attitudes toward bisexual men and women in the United States. Herek found less favorable attitudes towards homosexuals among highly religious respondents when compared with less religious participants. The Pew Research Center reported that of the U. S. adults polled in 2012, 73% of religiously unaffiliated participants supported same sex marriage, while 53% of Catholics and 52% of White mainline Protestants supported same sex marriage. Black Protestants and White evangelical Protestants reported the lowest levels of same sex marriage support, reporting 35% support and 19% support respectively (TPFRPL, 2012).

In contrast, religiosity has been shown to motivate heterosexual participants to publically stand up for LGBT rights (Russell, 2011). In Russell's (2011) study, participants were publically recognizable LGBT allies and several of them reported that their religious beliefs served as a basis for their activism on behalf of individuals who identify as LGBT. If they did not explicitly cite a formal religion, some participants mentioned that spirituality and moral principles served as the basis for their activism.

In a study examining counseling/clinical psychologists' perspectives on resolving an LGB ally identity with a Christian identity, Borgman (2009) concluded that the

exploration of beliefs was an important part of that identity resolution. When participants were interviewed about their Christian and ally identities, they reported that the exclusion and judgment coming from churches toward LGB individuals conflicted with their perceptions of God and Christ. This resulted in participants identifying, reframing, and/or re-visioning what being a Christian required. Participants viewed the Bible through historical and contextual lenses, and focused on interpreting the Bible holistically instead of highlighting small parts of the text on which to base their beliefs.

Asta and Vacha-Haase (2012) discovered that religiosity played a part in ally development for psychology interns and psychologists in their study. Some participants found their religious values to be a source of affirmation for their ally development. These participants reported that this affirmation allowed them to integrate their Christian and LGB ally identities in both personal and professional counseling realms. Other participants reported feelings of conflict between their values and identities. One participant explained how she experienced conflict between her religious beliefs and the field of psychology. She felt that the psychology program was not supportive of religious beliefs, and she was forced to figure out a way to integrate her identity as a Christian and as a psychologist. She reported that her family supported her beliefs, and she found a church that helped her to integrate those identities.

As these conflicting research conclusions illustrate, religious beliefs and prejudicial attitudes have a complicated relationship. One factor that may help explain this relationship is religious fundamentalism. Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992) conceptualized religious fundamentalism as:

...the belief that there is one set of religious teaching that clearly contains the fundamental, basic, intrinsic, essential, inerrant truth about humanity and deity; that this essential truth is fundamentally opposed by forces of evil which must be vigorously fought; that this truth must be followed today according to the fundamental, unchangeable practices of the past; and that those who believe and follow these fundamental teachings have a special relationship with the deity. (p. 118)

Research suggests that Christians who align with groups holding more fundamental doctrines may be more prejudiced toward LGB individuals, as Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992) found that when compared to non-Fundamentalists, Fundamentalists were more likely to be prejudiced toward others and more likely to be hostile toward homosexual individuals. Christian denominations and groups within those denominations vary in the fundamental nature of their doctrine. Additionally, not all Christians adhere strictly to the doctrine of their religious group. The degree to which the participants in the current study subscribe to fundamental Christian beliefs may affect their attitudes toward LGB individuals.

My review of the literature indicates that there may be several factors affecting Christian attitudes toward LGB individuals. Research has shown that intergroup contact is associated with more positive attitudes toward LGB individuals (Herek, 2002; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Herek & Glunt, 1993). Uncertainty Reduction Theory provides foundations for understanding the roles uncertainty plays in intergroup communication (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Research has also indicated that beliefs in the immutability and universality of sexual orientation are associated with more positive attitudes toward LGB individuals (Haslam & Levy, 2006; Hegarty, 2002; Hegarty & Pratto, 2001). Additionally, religiosity has been proven to be associated with both positive and negative

attitudes toward LGB individuals (Asta & Vacha-Haase, 2012; Borgman, 2009; Herek, 2002; Russell, 2011).

Additional factors that contributed to hostile attitudes included low educational level, belonging to a conservative religious denomination, frequent religious service attendance, and politically conservative perspectives (Herek & Glunt, 1993). It is likely that some of the participants in the present research will belong to conservative religious denominations and/or attend religious services frequently. Based on Herek and Glunt's (1993) findings, it is possible that these factors may be associated with negative or hostile attitudes toward LGB individuals among my participants.

Through the research, I hoped to gain more insight into the relationship between religiosity and attitudes toward LGB individuals. To gain that insight, I specifically focused on intergroup contact factors, the role of uncertainty in intergroup contact, religiosity, and knowledge of LGB issues and discrimination. The goal of the research was to discover, among a Christian population, which factors contribute to supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals. I also hoped to determine the degree to which a relationship may exist between the reduction of uncertainty, intergroup contact, and supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals. Finally, I hoped to determine if, in fact, greater religiosity is still related to negative attitudes toward LGB individuals. In order to address these goals, I proposed the following research questions:

1. What are current Christian attitudes toward LGB individuals?
2. What factors contribute to supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals among Christian participants?

3. For Christian participants, is the reduction of uncertainty about LGB individuals and contact with LGB individuals related to supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals?
4. Are fundamentalist and/or relativistic religious perspectives related to attitudes toward LGB individuals?

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Recruitment

I utilized purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling to recruit participants. Purposive sampling occurs when researchers seek out participants who belong to a particular group or possess particular characteristics (Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis, & Piele, 2010). Convenience sampling occurs when researchers nonrandomly recruit participants who are available to the researcher (Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis, & Piele, 2010). Snowball sampling occurs when participants encourage other people they know who also meet the research criteria to participate in the research (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). I purposely recruited participants who self-identified themselves as Christians. The two criteria for participating in the study were being over the age of 18 and identifying as a Christian. I recruited participants through online communication because the survey was online, and it would have been difficult to distribute and access the link via print. I emailed leaders of religious organizations to ask if they would be willing to distribute the survey to their members (see Appendix B for recruiting script). I also indirectly recruited through posting the link to the survey on my personal social media profiles, which included Facebook and Twitter (see Appendix C for recruiting language). I encouraged anyone who took the survey to pass the link along to others who may be interested in participating. The online survey was completed through the survey website, SurveyGizmo. The first screen of the survey asked for the participants' informed consent

(see Appendix A). If they did not give consent, the survey did not appear and they were asked to close the window.

Participants

Although it was not included in the criteria for participation, the research focused on heterosexual Christian attitudes. Therefore, responses from participants who indicated sexual orientations other than straight/heterosexual were removed from the data set before analysis. This yielded 216 participants. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 69 with an average age of 37. The sample included 172 female participants and 44 male participants. The racial and ethnic background of participants was primarily Caucasian (n=211), while 1 participant identified as Hispanic/Latino/a, 1 identified as multiracial, and 2 identified as African American/Black. One of the participants did not report racial and ethnic background. The sample consisted of primarily Protestant/Christians (n=113), while 47 identified as Catholic, 53 as Nondenominational Christian, and 1 participant identifying as other. Two participants did not report religious affiliation. The sample as a whole was highly religious, as indicated by scores on the Religious Commitment Inventory (Worthington et al., 2003). Political ideology was fairly evenly split among the participants, with 55 reporting to be liberal, 84 reporting to be moderate, and 72 reporting to be conservative. There were 5 participants who reported other political ideologies. Likewise, the participants were fairly split among political parties as well, with 69 Republicans, 71 Democrats, 55 Independents, 2 Green Party members, 2 Socialists, 9 Libertarians, and 7 identified other political parties or did not identify with a political party. One participant did not report any information regarding political party. The

majority of participants reported total family incomes of \$60,000 and above, 57 participants reported \$60-\$79,999, and 54 participants reported incomes of \$100,000 or more. There were 74 participants who reported total incomes of less than \$60,000. As a whole, participants were fairly educated, with 172 participants reporting college degrees or higher levels of education. On a scale of 1 to 7 measuring religious fundamentalism, the average score was 4.40. On a scale of 1 to 7 assessing religious relativism, participants scored an average of 3.71. Thus, participants were highly religious with higher scores on religious fundamentalism than religious relativism.

Measures

The survey aimed to assess Christian attitudes about homosexuality and Christian attitudes toward homosexual and bisexual individuals (see Appendix A). As seen in Appendix A, the instrument began with a screen asking for informed consent from the participants. Questions 2-13 request the following demographics: age, biological sex, racial or ethnic background, religious affiliation, frequency of religious service attendance, congruency of religious group stances and personal stances on homosexuality, political ideology, political party identification, total family income, sexual orientation, and highest level of education obtained.

Religiosity

I included a religiosity scale in the instrument since I was assessing a Christian population. In order to answer my 4 research questions, I needed to assess the religiosity of the participants and also how fundamental or relativistic their religious views were.

The religiosity scale I chose to use is the 10-item Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10; Worthington et al., 2003). This scale resulted from a refinement of three earlier versions: a 62-item measurement (Sandage, 1999, as cited in Worthington et al., 2003), a 20-item measurement (McCullough & Worthington, 1995, as cited in Worthington et al., 2003; Morrow, Worthington, & McCullough, 1993, as cited in Worthington et al., 2003), and a 17-item measurement known as RCI-17 (McCullough, Worthington, Maxie, & Rachal, 1997, as cited in Worthington et al., 2003). Worthington and colleagues (2003) conducted six studies to test the validity and reliability of the RCI-10 on secular university students, university students from explicitly Christian colleges, adults from the community, single and married people, Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, people who selected the none option when asked about their religious preference, and clients and therapists from both secular and Christian counseling agencies. The authors indicated that any participant scoring 38 or higher on the RCI-10 could be considered highly religious. The researchers concluded that the reliability and validity findings indicated that the RCI-10 was suitable for research in assessing religiosity, especially research focused on Christians. I reworded 4 of the 10 items in this instrument to avoid appearing biased. For instance, instead of “religious beliefs influence all my dealings in life” (Worthington et al., 2003, p. 87), item 14b in my survey read: “religious beliefs influence very few of my dealings in life.” The items I modified were 14b, 14d, 14f, and 14i.

I also added all 3 items from Kelly’s (1970) scale for religious relativism. I was concerned about confusion regarding what was meant by the concept of church in one of

Kelly's (1970) original items. I attempted to solve this issue by rewording the question containing the word church to read branches of Christianity, as seen in item 15h in my survey. I also added an item to the scale, item 15d, asking participants if all faiths were saying the same thing. I modified the original responses from a 5-point response scale to a 7-point response scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree to match the other items in my survey. I combined Altemeyer and Hunsberger's (2004) religious fundamentalism scale with Kelly's (1970) scale. I used 4 items from Altemeyer and Hunsberger's (2004) scale. I modified the response scale for this measurement from an 8-item response scale to a 7-item response scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. I combined the two scales, alternating between items from the two scales.

Question 14 consisted of the modified RCI-10 measurement, examining religious commitment. Question 15 consisted of the combination of items from Kelly's (1970) religious relativism scale and Altemeyer and Hunsberger's (2004) religious fundamentalism scale.

Attitudes about Homosexuality

I modified Goldstein and Davis' (2010) instrument to measure attitudes about homosexuality. Goldstein and Davis were assessing the views of heterosexual members of a college LGBT ally organization across several dimensions, including motivations for joining the alliance, intergroup contact, awareness of LGBT-based discrimination, stigma by association, intergroup communication apprehension, immutability beliefs, value of gay progress, positive stereotypes, and social activism.

I modified the instrument by including only the parts of the instrument that applied to a wider, specifically Christian population. I only included the demographic questions that I needed from my participants. I took out any questions looking for motivations for joining the alliance, because I was not assessing members of alliances. I removed the questions about positive stereotypes, because I was concerned that the questions about positive stereotypes might reinforce stereotypes of LGBT individuals. I also removed the questions about social activism because they were specifically focused on a campus environment. I modified the wording of several questions and responses, which are discussed in detail below.

Question 16 was the original immutability belief measure from Goldstein and Davis' (2010) survey. This measure was based on Hegarty's (2002) measurement, using a 7-point response scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. For these items, Goldstein and Davis (2010) obtained a coefficient alpha of .62. In general, coefficient alphas of .80 are considered good indicators of reliability (Field, 2009).

Question 17 was the original intergroup communication apprehension measure from Goldstein and Davis' (2010) study. Goldstein and Davis (2010) modified this measure from Neuliep and McCroskey's (1997) Personal Report of Intercultural Communication Apprehension, on a 7-point response scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. For these items, Goldstein and Davis (2010) obtained a coefficient alpha of .86.

Questions 18-23 consisted of modified intergroup contact questions from Goldstein and Davis' (2010) measurement. These questions came from Goldstein and Davis' (2010) adaptation of Herek and Capitano's (1996) intergroup contact measurement. I modified

the wording of the questions regarding intergroup contact. The original instrument asked if participants had any acquaintances who they knew to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual. I asked participants if they had any acquaintances who they knew to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual at the beginning of the relationship, and separately asked if they had any acquaintances who they found out to be lesbian, gay, or bisexual after they had gotten to know each other. The original instrument included separate questions asking if participants had any close friends, extended family members, or immediate family members who they knew to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual. I condensed these questions down to a single question, asking if participants had any close friends or family members who they knew to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual. In the original instrument, Goldstein and Davis (2010) followed up each of these questions by asking how many, with radio button responses of 1, 2, or 3 or more. I also asked how many, but with radio button responses of 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 or more.

Question 32 assessed awareness of LGBT-based discrimination using Goldstein and Davis' (2010) questions. Participants are asked how often they read about, discuss, and observe discrimination faced by gay, lesbian and/or bisexual individuals. They answer on a 7-point response scale ranging from never to very frequently. Question 33 used Goldstein and Davis' (2010) measure for examining stigma by association, measured on a 7-point response scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. For these items, Goldstein and Davis (2010) obtained a coefficient alpha of .86. The items measured stigma by association associated with sexual identity and stigma by association associated with treatment by others.

Questions 34 and 36 assess value of gay progress and denial of continued discrimination, both based on Massey's (2009) methodology, on a 7-point response scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Goldstein and Davis (2010) obtained a .81 coefficient alpha for the items regarding denial of continued discrimination and a coefficient alpha of .87 for the items regarding the value of gay progress. I reworded 7 of the 17 items in this section to avoid bias. Question 35 consisted of Goldstein and Davis' (2010) measure of stigma by association.

Uncertainty Reduction Measures

In order to answer my third research question regarding the relationship between uncertainty reduction and supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals, I needed to assess the participants' experiences with uncertainty reduction in their relationships with homosexuals. I also needed to measure the relationship between participants' tolerance of ambiguity and their attitudes toward LGB individuals. In order to address these needs, I included a tolerance of ambiguity scale and an attributional confidence scale.

I used Herman, Stevens, Bird, Mendenhall, and Oddou's (2010) Tolerance for Ambiguity Scale. I added this measurement to the survey to assess the participants' tolerance of ambiguity. Question 37 consisted of all 12 items of Herman and colleagues' (2010) Tolerance for Ambiguity Scale. The original measure scored the items on a 5-point response scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In my survey, this was modified into a 5-point response scale ranging from not at all true of me to totally true of me.

I also wanted to know how participants' attributional confidence towards homosexual acquaintances, friends, or family members might impact their views towards homosexuality in general. Questions 24-31 asked the participant to think of the gay, lesbian, or bisexual person they knew the best and answer the questions with that relationship in mind. The questions addressed participants' reactions to discovering the person's sexuality and the participants' attributional confidence in the relationship. Questions 28, 29, 30 and 31 are items from Clatterbuck's Attributional Confidence (CL7) Scale (Clatterbuck, 1979). Question 30 combines 2 of Clatterbuck's original items into one question. Clatterbuck (1979) noted that response options for the scale have included a percentage from 0-100 indicating level of confidence, four unit response scales, and nine item response scales. In my instrument, I used 5-point responses scales.

Question 38 was an open essay box asking participants if they wanted to add anything else about their beliefs about religion and homosexuality. The survey ended with a screen thanking participants for their participation.

Operationalization of Variables

Uncertainty Reduction was operationalized through Clatterbuck's Attributional Confidence Scale, the Awareness of LGBT Discrimination scale (Goldstein & Davis, 2010), and the Tolerance for Ambiguity scale (Herman et al., 2010). Intergroup contact was operationalized through the questions asking participants about how many acquaintances and close friends they had who identified as LGB, based on Goldstein and Davis' methodology (2010). Religiosity was operationalized through the Religious Commitment Inventory (Worthington et al., 2003), the Religious Fundamentalism scale

(Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004), and the Religious Relativism scale (Kelly, 1970). Finally, attitudes toward LGB individuals were operationalized through the Immutability Beliefs scale, Intergroup Communication Apprehension scale, Stigma by Association scales, Value of Gay Progress scale, and the Denial of Continued Discrimination Scale, all based on Goldstein and Davis' (2010) instrument.

Analysis

After the survey data was collected, I exported the data into SPSS for statistical analysis. I ran descriptive statistics to address the first research question. I ran correlation tests to determine if intergroup contact was associated with supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals to address research question number two. I also completed a regression analysis to determine which factors were predictors of supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals. Additionally, I ran a t-test to examine differences in attitudes between males and females. I also ran an ANOVA for political ideology to examine differences within and between those groups. I ran a series of correlation tests to address research question three aimed at determining if any manner of reducing uncertainty, such as intergroup contact or awareness of LGB discrimination and issues, was associated with supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals. Finally, to address the last research question, I ran correlation tests to determine if a relationship existed between level of religiosity and attitudes toward LGB individuals.

In order to gain deeper insight into participant attitudes, I analyzed participants' answers to the open-ended question at the end of the survey by utilizing thematic analysis. The question asked if participants wanted to add anything else regarding their

beliefs about religion and homosexuality. I exported the comments into an Excel spreadsheet and read through the comments several times in order to immerse myself in the data. I looked for both recurrence of concepts or phrases and repetition of specific words or phrases in order to identify themes (Keyton, 2006). I formed 28 initial categories, which are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Initial Coding Categories

1. Hate the sin, love the sinner	2. God is the judge, I am to love
3. I am to love everyone, regardless of differences	4. We are all God's children
5. Civil versus moral issue	6. Confusion
7. Homosexuality is not a choice, but acting on it is a choice	8. We are all sinners and all sins are equal
9. We all sin, but Jesus forgives us	10. I am to love, not judge or hate
11. Homosexuality is not a choice and we shouldn't judge what can't be controlled	12. I am to love, regardless of someone's imperfections
13. Homosexuality is wrong, but everyone should be treated equally	14. Homosexuality is wrong, but we are to love them, not hate
15. The Bible is open to interpretation	16. Everyone is flawed; no one is perfect
17. I am unsure, but we shouldn't judge	18. Jesus was an inclusive radical
19. God loves everyone	20. We should welcome people as they are
21. Love is the most important thing	22. It is not okay to advocate for sin, but they should be loved
23. Homosexuality is an extra temptation to deal with	24. There is too much focus on homosexuality; there are more pressing issues
25. Loving someone means giving them the whole truth	26. Sad for the pain Christians have caused
27. The focus should be on the person's relationship with Jesus	28. Discrimination is wrong, but homosexuals shouldn't get preferential treatment either

In order to collapse the categories, I looked for similarities between categories to determine which categories could be joined together into larger themes. I then coded the comments into the remaining categories, which led me to further collapse the overlapping categories and note similarities between comments. Eventually, this process led to seven overarching themes: separation of person and action, judgment, loving, sins and forgiveness, wrong focus, confusion, and civil and moral issues. Two subthemes emerged from the data as distinct conceptual components of larger themes: a sub-theme

entitled God's love emerged as part of the loving theme. and a sub-theme entitled discrimination emerged from the larger theme of civil and moral issues. Table 2 shows which categories were collapsed into the themes. Categories 15 and 18 were eliminated due to lack of strong presence and lack of recurrence of the concept in the data.

Table 2

Themes

Theme	Categories Contained Within Theme
Separation of Person and Action	1, 7
Judgment	2, 10, 11, 17
Loving	2, 3, 4, 10, 12, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25
Sins and Forgiveness	8, 9, 16, 23
Wrong Focus	24, 26, 27
Confusion	6, 17
Civil and Moral Issues	5, 13, 22, 28

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter is organized by research question. I present the statistical findings related to each of the four research questions, beginning with the first research question. The findings are further organized by variable for research questions 2, 3 and 4. After the findings for each research question are presented, the results of the thematic analysis of participant comments about their beliefs on religion and homosexuality are presented.

Research Question 1

To answer research question one, “What are current Christian attitudes toward LGB individuals?”, descriptive statistics were run on the data. Participants scored an average of 4.56 with a standard deviation of 1.82 on the Value of Gay Progress measure, with the scores ranging from 1 to 7. The closer the score to 7, the higher the value of gay progress. Massey (2009) conceptualized Value of Gay Progress as “the belief that gay people make a unique and valuable contribution to society” (p. 155). Therefore, although the participants had viewpoints ranging from one end of the spectrum to the other, the average score indicated that the sample was unsure but positively skewed about how valuable gay progress is to society.

On the Denial of Continued Discrimination scale, the participants’ average score on a scale of 1 to 7 was 3.18, with a standard deviation of 1.06. Scores ranged from 1.22 to 6.78. The closer the score is to 7, the higher the denial of continued discrimination, i.e., the more likely it is that the person believes there is little to no discrimination against

the LGBT community. As a whole, this sample of Christians somewhat believes that discrimination towards gay people still occurs.

Participants' scores on the Intergroup Communication Apprehension measure ranged from 1 to 5.25, with an average of 1.99. The standard deviation was 0.86. The closer the score to 7, the higher the communication apprehension towards gay men and lesbians. This means that participants were not likely to report feeling anxious or nervous when interacting with a gay man or a lesbian.

On the Immutability Beliefs measure, participants scored an average of 4.63, with a range of 1 to 7 and a standard deviation of 1.55. The closer the score to 7, the higher the immutability beliefs that homosexuality is a fixed trait. This indicates that participants were unsure, but slightly lean towards believing that sexual orientation is something that is fixed rather than changeable.

The participants scored an average of 3.77 on the measure of Awareness of LGBT discrimination with a range from 1 to 7 and a standard deviation of 1.12. The closer the score to 7, the higher the awareness of LGBT discrimination. Therefore, this sample reported between rarely and occasionally reading about, discussing, and observing discrimination against gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals, not being deeply aware of such discrimination.

On the items assessing stigma by association regarding sexual identity, participants scored 3.98 on average with a range from 1 to 6.75 (from a possible 1-7 range) and a standard deviation of 1.26. The closer the score to 7, the higher the stigma by association is regarding sexual identity. Perception of this stigma indicates that

participants are concerned about how their own sexual orientation will be perceived if they associate with LGB individuals. This score indicates that participants were unsure about how association with LGB individuals would affect others' perceptions of the participants' sexual orientations.

On the items assessing stigma by association regarding treatment from others, participants scored an average of 3.49 with a range of 1 to 7 and a standard deviation of 0.88. The stigma indicates that participants are concerned about how other heterosexuals will treat them based upon their association with LGB individuals. The closer the score to 7, the higher the stigma by association is regarding treatment from others. This score shows that the sample in this study somewhat disagreed with concern about how stigma by association with gay, lesbian and bisexuals may affect the way other heterosexuals treat the participants.

Overall, this sample of Christians were unsure, but slightly tended towards positively valuing gay progress in society. The sample as a whole did not report experiencing communication apprehension when interacting with gay or lesbian individuals. Participants rarely to occasionally read about, discussed, or directly observed instances of discrimination toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals and were unsure if others' perceptions of their sexual orientations were affected by association with gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals. Participants somewhat disagreed about perceiving a stigma by association with LGB individuals regarding treatment from other heterosexuals. This means as a whole, the participants did not perceive that association with LGB individuals would cause other heterosexuals to treat them

differently because of their association. Participants somewhat agreed that gay and lesbian individuals face continued discrimination. Participants were unsure, but very slightly leaning toward believing that sexual orientation is a fixed, biological trait.

Research Question 2

In order to answer the second research question, “What factors contribute to supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals among Christian participants?”, I ran a stepwise multiple regression analysis in order to determine which variables predicted the attitudinal variables: immutability beliefs, intergroup communication apprehension, stigma by association regarding sexual orientation, stigma by association regarding treatment from others, denial of continued discrimination, awareness of LGBT discrimination, and value of gay progress. These variables were conceptualized as dependent variables because they are operationalizations of several different attitudes toward LGB individuals. I ran separate regressions with each of the above variables as the dependent variable. In each regression analysis, the following variables were entered as independent variables (with the dependent variable itself removed from this list): religiosity, fundamentalist religious beliefs, relativistic religious beliefs, immutability beliefs, intergroup communication apprehension, stigma regarding sexual identity, stigma regarding treatment from others, value of gay progress, denial of continued discrimination, number of LGB acquaintances whose sexual orientation was known at the beginning of the relationship, number of LGB acquaintances whose sexual orientation was discovered during the course of the relationship, number of LGB close friends and

family members, attributional confidence, awareness of LGBT discrimination, and tolerance of ambiguity.

I also ran an independent samples t-test for biological sex in order to determine if attitude differences existed between males and females. Chi square tests were run in order to determine if any associations existed between religious affiliation, political ideology, and the presence or absence of LGB acquaintances, close friends, and/or family members. Several ANOVAs were run in order to identify differences in attitudes by political ideology. Finally, several correlation tests were run in order to determine if relationships existed between and within the attitudinal variables, the variables measuring uncertainty and intergroup contact, and the variables measuring religiosity. The correlations are reported by variable, and once a correlation was listed, it was not listed again. For example, the correlation between immutability beliefs and value of gay progress was reported in the section about immutability beliefs and not repeated in the value of gay progress section.

Immutability Beliefs

Immutability beliefs were positively associated with value of gay progress, $r = .824$, $p = .000$, indicating that as immutability beliefs increased, the extent to which participants valued gay progress increased as well. Immutability beliefs were also positively associated with awareness of LGBT discrimination, $r = .338$, $p = .000$, indicating that as immutability beliefs increased, awareness of discrimination increased as well. Immutability beliefs were negatively associated with religious service attendance, $r = -.364$, $p = .000$, indicating that as religious service attendance increased,

immutability beliefs decreased. Immutability beliefs were also negatively associated with intergroup communication apprehension, $r = -.360, p = .000$, indicating that as immutability beliefs increased, anxiety and nervous feelings while interacting with LGB individuals decreased. Immutability beliefs were negatively associated with stigma by association regarding sexual identity, $r = -.449, p = .000$, and with stigma by association regarding treatment from other heterosexuals, $r = -.191, p = .006$. This indicates that as beliefs that sexual orientation is a fixed biological trait increased, participant perceptions of stigma by association decreased. Immutability beliefs were negatively associated with denial of continued discrimination, $r = -.572, p = .000$, indicating that as immutability beliefs increased, participants were less likely to deny that LGB individuals continue to be discriminated against.

The best predictors for immutability beliefs, based on the stepwise regression analysis run, were value of gay progress and relativistic religious beliefs, $R^2 = .694, p = .000$, with these two variables predicting 69.4% of the variability in a person's immutability beliefs or beliefs that a person's sexual orientation is fixed and unchanging. Table 3 shows the results from the regression.

Table 3

Regression Output for Immutability Beliefs

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.827 ^a	.685	.683	.87045	.685	358.329	1	165	.000	
2	.833 ^b	.694	.690	.86078	.009	4.726	1	164	.031	1.720

a. Predictors: (Constant), ValueofGayProgress

b. Predictors: (Constant), ValueofGayProgress, Relativistic

c. Dependent Variable: ImmutabilityBeliefs

Intergroup Communication Apprehension

Intergroup communication was positively associated with religious service attendance, $r = .242$, $p = .000$, indicating that as religious service attendance increased, intergroup communication apprehension increased. Intergroup communication apprehension was positively associated with stigma by association regarding sexual identity, $r = .386$, $p = .000$, and with stigma by association regarding treatment from other heterosexuals, $r = .286$, $p = .000$, thus indicating that as participant perceptions of stigmas by association increased, so did intergroup communication apprehension. Intergroup communication apprehension was positively associated with denial of continued discrimination, $r = .233$, $p = .001$, indicating that as denial of continued discrimination increased, so did intergroup communication apprehension. Intergroup communication apprehension was negatively associated with value of gay progress, indicating that as the belief in the value of gay progress decreased, intergroup communication apprehension increased, $r = -.412$, $p = .000$. Intergroup communication apprehension was negatively associated with awareness of LGBT discrimination, $r = -.256$, $p = .000$, indicating that as

awareness of discrimination decreased, intergroup communication apprehension increased.

A stepwise regression analysis showed that the best predictors for intergroup communication apprehension were stigma by association regarding sexual orientation, stigma by association regarding treatment from others, and value of gay progress, $R^2 = .253$, $p = .000$. However, only 25.3% of the variability in intergroup communication apprehension is predicted by these three variables. Table 4 shows the results from the regression.

Table 4

Regression Output for Intergroup Communication Apprehension

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.410 ^a	.168	.163	.73415	.168	33.385	1	165	.000	
2	.460 ^b	.212	.202	.71684	.044	9.068	1	164	.003	
3	.503 ^c	.253	.240	.69979	.042	9.084	1	163	.003	1.924

a. Predictors: (Constant), StigmaByAssociationIdentity

b. Predictors: (Constant), StigmaByAssociationIdentity, StigmaByAssociationOthers

c. Predictors: (Constant), StigmaByAssociationIdentity, StigmaByAssociationOthers, ValueofGayProgress

d. Dependent Variable: IntergroupCommApp

Stigma by Association

Regarding sexual identity. Stigma by association regarding sexual identity was positively related to religious service attendance, $r = .142$, $p = .040$, indicating that as religious service attendance increased, so did perception of the stigma. This stigma was negatively associated with the highest level of education obtained, $r = -.137$, $p = .048$,

indicating that as the level of formal education increases, perception of the stigma by association regarding your own sexual identity decreases. Stigma by association regarding sexual identity was positively associated with stigma by association regarding treatment from other heterosexuals, $r = .268, p = .000$, indicating that the two stigmas by association increased together or decreased together. Stigma by association regarding sexual identity was positively associated with denial of continued discrimination, $r = .357, p = .000$, indicating that as a person's denial of continued discrimination against LGBT persons increases, their perception of the stigma by association regarding their own sexual identity also increases. Stigma by association regarding one's own sexual identity was negatively related to value of gay progress, $r = -.556, p = .000$, indicating that as one's belief in the value of gay progress increases, perception of the stigma of association regarding his/her own sexual identity decreases. Stigma by association regarding sexual identity was also negatively related to awareness of LGBT discrimination, $r = -.374, p = .000$, indicating that as awareness of LGBT discrimination decreases, perception of the stigma by association regarding your own sexual identity increases. Stigma by association regarding sexual identity was positively associated with religious fundamentalism, $r = .543, p = .000$, indicating that as religious fundamentalism increased, perception of the stigma also increased. Stigma by association was negatively related with tolerance of ambiguity, $r = -.322, p = .000$, indicating that as tolerance of ambiguity increased, perception of the stigma decreased.

The best predictors for stigma by association regarding sexual identity were fundamentalist religious beliefs, intergroup communication apprehension, and tolerance

of ambiguity, $R^2 = .392$, $p = .000$, with 39.2% of the variability in the stigma predicted by these three variables. Table 5 shows the results from the stepwise regression.

Table 5

Regression Output for Stigma by Association Regarding Sexual Identity

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.521 ^a	.272	.267	1.07052	.272	61.551	1	165	.000	
2	.592 ^b	.350	.342	1.01450	.078	19.724	1	164	.000	
3	.626 ^c	.392	.381	.98397	.042	11.335	1	163	.001	2.067

a. Predictors: (Constant), Fundamental

b. Predictors: (Constant), Fundamental, IntergroupCommApp

c. Predictors: (Constant), Fundamental, IntergroupCommApp, ToleranceofAmbiguity

d. Dependent Variable: StigmaByAssociationIdentity

Regarding treatment of others. Value of gay progress was negatively associated with stigma by association regarding treatment from others, $r = -.179$, $p = .010$, indicating that as belief in the value of gay progress increased, the stigma decreased. Stigma by association regarding treatment from others was positively related to intergroup communication apprehension, $r = .286$, $p = .000$, indicating that as intergroup communication apprehension increased, perception of the stigma increased as well.

The only significant predictor for stigma by association regarding treatment from other heterosexuals was intergroup communication apprehension, $R^2 = .092$, $p = .000$, with only 9% of the variability in stigma by association regarding treatment from other heterosexuals predicted by intergroup communication apprehension. Table 6 shows the results from the stepwise regression.

Table 6

Regression Output for Stigma by Association Regarding Treatment from Others

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.303 ^a	.092	.086	.83993	.092	16.629	1	165	.000	1.795

a. Predictors: (Constant), IntergroupCommApp
b. Dependent Variable: StigmaByAssociationOthers

Denial of Continued Discrimination

Denial of continued discrimination was positively associated with frequency of religious service attendance, $r = .251$, $p = .000$, indicating that as frequency of religious service attendance increased, denial of continued discrimination also increased. Denial of continued discrimination was negatively associated with highest level of education obtained, $r = -.265$, $p = .000$, indicating that the highest level of education obtained increased, denial of continued discrimination decreased. Denial of continued discrimination was negatively associated with value of gay progress, $r = -.693$, $p = .000$, indicating that as value of gay progress increased, denial of continued discrimination decreased. Denial of continued discrimination was negatively associated with awareness of LGBT discrimination, $r = -.455$, $p = .000$, indicating that as awareness of LGBT discrimination increased, denial of continued discrimination decreased.

The best predictors of denial of continued discrimination were value of gay progress, awareness of LGBT discrimination, and stigma by association regarding treatment by others, $R^2 = .544$, $p = .000$, with 54.4% of the variability in denial of

continued discrimination predicted by those 3 variables. The regression is shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Regression Output for Denial of Continued Discrimination

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.707 ^a	.500	.497	.77117	.500	165.052	1	165	.000	
2	.729 ^b	.531	.525	.74921	.031	10.813	1	164	.001	
3	.737 ^c	.544	.535	.74126	.013	4.537	1	163	.035	1.724

a. Predictors: (Constant), ValueofGayProgress

b. Predictors: (Constant), ValueofGayProgress, AwarenessofLGBTDisc

c. Predictors: (Constant), ValueofGayProgress, AwarenessofLGBTDisc, StigmaByAssociationOthers

d. Dependent Variable: DenialofCtdDisc

Awareness of LGBT Discrimination

Awareness of LGBT discrimination was positively associated with value of gay progress, $r = .432$, $p = .000$, indicating that as value of gay progress increased, so did awareness of LGBT discrimination. Awareness of LGBT discrimination was negatively associated with age, $r = -.173$, $p = .012$, indicating that as age increased, awareness decreased. Awareness of discrimination was also negatively related to frequency of religious service attendance, $r = -.180$, $p = .009$, indicating that as attendance at religious services increased, awareness decreased. Awareness of LGBT discrimination was negatively associated with total family income, $r = -.178$, $p = .010$. Therefore, as total family income increased, awareness of LGBT discrimination decreased.

The best predictors for awareness of LGBT discrimination were attributional confidence, denial of continued discrimination, and tolerance of ambiguity, $R^2 = .334$, $p = .000$, but only 33.4% of the variability in awareness of LGBT discrimination was predicted by those 3 variables. Table 8 shows the results from the regression.

Table 8

Regression Output for Awareness of LGBT Discrimination

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.444 ^a	.197	.192	1.00712	.197	40.444	1	165	.000	
2	.559 ^b	.312	.304	.93477	.115	27.528	1	164	.000	
3	.578 ^c	.334	.322	.92238	.022	5.436	1	163	.021	1.920

a. Predictors: (Constant), AttributionalConfidence

b. Predictors: (Constant), AttributionalConfidence, DenialofCtdDisc

c. Predictors: (Constant), AttributionalConfidence, DenialofCtdDisc, ToleranceofAmbiguity

d. Dependent Variable: AwarenessofLGBTDisc

Value of Gay Progress

Value of gay progress was positively associated with highest level of education obtained, $r = .218$, $p = .002$, indicating that as level of education increased, so did value of gay progress. Value of gay progress was negatively associated with age, $r = -.141$, $p = .043$, indicating that as age increased, value of gay progress decreased. Value of gay progress was also negatively associated with religious service attendance, $r = -.428$, $p = .000$, indicating that as frequency of religious service attendance increased, value of gay progress decreased.

The significant predictor variables for value of gay progress were: immutability beliefs, denial of continued discrimination, religious fundamentalism, religious relativism, tolerance of ambiguity, stigma by association regarding sexual identity, and religiosity, in that order, $R^2 = .839$, $p = .000$. Table 9 shows the results from the regression, with 83.9% of the variability in value of gay progress predicted by those 7 variables. Immutability beliefs was the best individual predictor of value of gay progress, $R^2 = .685$, $p < .001$, predicting 68.5% of the variability in value of gay progress.

Table 9

Regression Output for Value of Gay Progress

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.827 ^a	.685	.683	1.01409	.685	358.329	1	165	.000	
2	.876 ^b	.768	.765	.87329	.083	58.494	1	164	.000	
3	.901 ^c	.811	.807	.79010	.043	37.353	1	163	.000	
4	.905 ^d	.819	.814	.77598	.008	6.989	1	162	.009	
5	.910 ^e	.829	.823	.75694	.010	9.251	1	161	.003	
6	.913 ^f	.834	.827	.74831	.005	4.734	1	160	.031	
7	.916 ^g	.839	.832	.73888	.005	5.110	1	159	.025	2.013

a. Predictors: (Constant), ImmutabilityBeliefs

b. Predictors: (Constant), ImmutabilityBeliefs, DenialofCtdDisc

c. Predictors: (Constant), ImmutabilityBeliefs, DenialofCtdDisc, Fundamental

d. Predictors: (Constant), ImmutabilityBeliefs, DenialofCtdDisc, Fundamental, Relativistic

e. Predictors: (Constant), ImmutabilityBeliefs, DenialofCtdDisc, Fundamental, Relativistic, ToleranceofAmbiguity

f. Predictors: (Constant), ImmutabilityBeliefs, DenialofCtdDisc, Fundamental, Relativistic, ToleranceofAmbiguity, StigmaByAssociationIdentity

g. Predictors: (Constant), ImmutabilityBeliefs, DenialofCtdDisc, Fundamental, Relativistic, ToleranceofAmbiguity, StigmaByAssociationIdentity, Religiosity

h. Dependent Variable: ValueofGayProgress

Biological Sex

I ran an independent samples t-test comparing mean scores of males and females on several variables in order to determine if attitudes were different based on sex. The variables included in the test were: religiosity, attributional confidence, awareness of LGBT discrimination, tolerance of ambiguity, immutability beliefs, intergroup communication apprehension, religious fundamentalism, religious relativism, stigma by association regarding sexual identity, stigma by association regarding treatment by others, value of gay progress, and denial of continued discrimination. The results indicated a significant difference between males ($M = 3.08$, $SE = .126$) and females ($M = 3.37$, $SE = .068$) on attributional confidence, $t(204) = 1.932$, $p = .05$. This indicates that women were more confident in their abilities to predict and explain the behaviors of LGB individuals. The effect size was small, $d = 0.337$. A significant difference also existed between males ($M = 3.32$, $SE = .179$) and females ($M = 3.88$, $SE = .083$) on awareness of LGBT discrimination, $t(211) = 2.959$, $p = .003$. This means that females were more aware of LGBT discrimination. The effect size was medium, $d = 0.509$. Another significant difference was found between males ($M = 4.195$, $SE = 0.264$) and females ($M = 4.736$, $SE = 0.114$) on immutability beliefs, $t(212) = 2.036$, $p = .043$. This indicates that females were more likely to believe that sexual orientation was a fixed, biological trait. The effect size was small, $d = .350$. A significant difference was found between men ($M = 3.149$, $SE = 0.255$) and women ($M = 3.848$, $SE = 0.127$) on religious relativism, $t(210) = 2.448$, $p = .015$. This indicates that women had more relativistic religious views than men. The effect size was small, $d = 0.422$.

Descriptive statistics indicate that 71.8% (N = 122) of women reported having LGB close friends or family members, while only 56.8% (N = 25) of men reported LGB close friends or family members. However, 88.4% (N = 152) of women reported having LGB acquaintances who they found to be LGB after they had gotten to know them, while 84.1% (N = 37) of men reported the same. When participants were asked if they had any LGB acquaintances whose sexual orientation they were aware of at the beginning of the relationship, 89% (N = 153) of women answered “yes” while 84.1% (N = 37) of men said “yes.” Therefore, while small differences exist (4.2% and 4.9%) between men and women regarding the number of LGB acquaintances, a larger difference (15%) exists between the reported number of LGB close friends of family members. However, chi-square tests revealed no significant difference between males and females on the presence or absence of LGB acquaintances or LGB close friends or family members.

Political and Religious Ideology

Several chi-square tests were run in order to determine if the presence or absence of LGB acquaintances and close friends/family members was related to political ideology or religious affiliation. Chi-square tests indicated no significant association between the presence or absence of LGB acquaintances and close friends/family members and religious affiliation. A chi-square test of independence was calculated to compare political ideology and the presence or absence of LGB close friends/family members. A significant association was found with a Pearson chi-square of 18.150, $p = .000$. 81.82% of liberals had LGB close friends and/or family members, while 76.19% of moderates

and 50% of conservatives had LGB close friends and/or family members. Table 10 shows the results of the chi-square.

Table 10

Crosstab and Chi Square for Friends or Family and Political Ideology

Do you have any close friends or family members who you know to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual? * What is your political ideology?

Count		Crosstab				Total
		What is your political ideology?				
		Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Other (please specify)	
Do you have any close friends or family members who you know to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual?	No	10	20	35	2	67
	Yes	45	64	35	3	147
Total		55	84	70	5	214

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.150 ^a	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	17.885	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	14.603	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	214		

a. 2 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.57.

Similarly, a significant interaction was found between the presence or absence of LGB close friends and family members and political party with a Pearson Chi-Square of 19.287, $p = .004$. Table 11 shows the results of the chi-square. 54.41% of Republicans reported having LGB close friends or family members, while 85.91% of Democrats and 64.81 of Independents reported having LGB close friends or family members.

Table 11

Crosstab and Chi Square for Friends or Family and Political Party

Do you have any close friends or family members who you know to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual? * Which political party best represents your views?

Crosstab

Count		Which political party best represents your views?						Total	
		Republican	Democratic	Independent	Green Party	Socialist	Libertarian		Other (please specify)
Do you have any close friends or family members who you know to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual?	No	31	10	19	0	0	4	2	66
	Yes	37	61	35	2	2	5	5	147
Total		68	71	54	2	2	9	7	213

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19.287 ^a	6	.004
Likelihood Ratio	21.440	6	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	.477	1	.490
N of Valid Cases	213		

7 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .62.

Another significant interaction existed between the presence or absence of LGB close friends or family members and participants' agreement or disagreement with their religious groups' stances on homosexuality with a Pearson Chi-Square of 10.661, $p = .014$. Table 12 shows the results from the chi-square. Of participants who agreed with their religious group's stance on homosexuality, 57.14% had LGB close friends or family members, while 77.78% of participants who disagreed with their religious group's stance on homosexuality, and 77.78% of participants who did not know if they agreed with their religious group's stance had LGB close friends or family members.

Table 12

Crosstab and Chi Square for Friends or Family and Religious Stance

Do you have any close friends or family members who you know to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual? * If you are religiously affiliated, is your stance on homosexuality the same stance taken by your religious group?

Crosstab

Count		If you are religiously affiliated, is your stance on homosexuality the same stance taken by your religious group?				Total
		Yes	No	I dont know	I am not religiously affiliated	
Do you have any close friends or family members who you know to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual?	No	36	16	10	5	67
	Yes	48	56	35	6	145
Total		84	72	45	11	212

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.661 ^a	3	.014
Likelihood Ratio	10.673	3	.014
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.030	1	.082
N of Valid Cases	212		

a. 1 cells (12.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.48.

Similarly, a significant interaction was found between the presence or absence of LGB acquaintances who participants knew to be LGB from the beginning of the relationship and participants' alignment with their religious groups' stances on homosexuality, with a Pearson Chi-Square of 8.154, $p = .043$. Of participants who agreed with their religious group's stance, 80.23% reported having LGB acquaintances who they knew to be LGB from the beginning of the relationship. Of participants who did not agree with their religious group's stance on homosexuality, 94.4% reported having LGB acquaintances whose sexual orientation was known from the beginning of the relationship. 91.11% of

participants who did not know if they agreed with their religious group's stance on homosexuality reported having LGB acquaintances whose sexual orientation was known from the beginning of the relationship. Table 13 shows the results of the chi-square.

Table 13

Crosstab and Chi Square for Acquaintances and Religious Stance

Do you have any acquaintances (not close friends or family members) who you knew to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual from the beginning of your relationship with them? * If you are religiously affiliated, is your stance on homosexuality the same stance taken by your religious group?

Crosstab

Count		If you are religiously affiliated, is your stance on homosexuality the same stance taken by your religious group?				Total
		Yes	No	I dont know	I am not religiously affiliated	
Do you have any acquaintances (not close friends or family members) who you knew to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual from the beginning of your relationship with them?	No	17	4	4	1	26
	Yes	69	68	41	10	188
Total		86	72	45	11	214

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.154 ^a	3	.043
Likelihood Ratio	8.208	3	.042
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.065	1	.044
N of Valid Cases	214		

a. 1 cells (12.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.34.

The participants' agreement or disagreement with their religious groups' stances on homosexuality significantly interacted with the presence or absence of LGB acquaintances. More participants who disagreed or were unsure if they agreed with their religious group's stance on homosexuality knew LGB individuals than participants who agreed with their religious group's stance. This means that the presence or absence of LGB acquaintances, close friends, and family was associated with participants' agreement or disagreement with stances on homosexuality taken by their religious groups. It is also possible that the presence or absence of LGB acquaintances, close friends, or family affected agreement or disagreement with religious group stance. There were no significant interactions found between religious affiliation and the presence or absence of LGB acquaintances or close friends and family members.

Political ideology, political party, and agreement or disagreement with religious group stances on homosexuality significantly interacted with the presence or absence of LGB close friends or family members. Fewer conservatives reported the presence of LGB close friends or family members when compared with moderates and liberals. Fewer Republicans reported the presence of LGB close friends or family members when compared to Independents and Democrats. Thus, the presence or absence of LGB close friends or family members was affected by a participant's political ideology, political party, and agreement or disagreement with stances on homosexuality taken by his or her religious group. Fewer participants who agreed with their religious group's stance on homosexuality had LGB acquaintances whose sexual orientation was known at the beginning of the relationship when compared to participants who disagreed or were

unsure if they agreed with their religious group's stance. The presence or absence of LGB acquaintances, close friends, or family members was not dependent upon religious affiliation.

Several one-way ANOVAs were run for political ideology in order to determine if attitudes differed according to political ideology. A significant difference between political ideologies was found for religiosity, $F(3, 203) = 12.354, p = .001$. Table 14 shows the post-hoc test results from the ANOVA. A significant difference was found between liberals and conservatives for religiosity, with conservatives reporting higher religiosity

Table 14

ANOVA for Religiosity

Tukey HSD^{a,b}

What is your political ideology?	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Liberal	49	34.6531	
Moderate	83	38.0964	38.0964
Other (please specify)	5	40.8000	40.8000
Conservative	70		42.8429
Sig.		.089	.267

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 16.211.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

A significant difference was found between political ideologies for awareness of LGBT discrimination, $F(3, 209) = 13.340, p = .000$. Table 15 shows the post-hoc test results from the ANOVA. A significant difference was found between conservative and

liberals for awareness of LGBT discrimination, with liberals reporting more awareness of discrimination than conservatives.

Table 15

ANOVA for Awareness

Tukey HSD^{a,b}

What is your political ideology?	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Conservative	70	3.1905	
Moderate	84	3.8611	3.8611
Other (please specify)	5	3.9333	3.9333
Liberal	54		4.3519
Sig.		.171	.526

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 16.346.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

A significant difference between political ideologies was found for immutability beliefs, $F(3, 210) = 54.782, p = .000$. Table 16 shows the post-hoc test results of the ANOVA. A significant difference was found between conservatives and moderates, with conservatives scoring lower on Immutability Beliefs than moderates. A significant difference was found between conservatives and liberals as well, with conservatives scoring lower on Immutability Beliefs than liberals.

Table 16

ANOVA for Immutability Beliefs

Tukey HSD^{a,b}

What is your political ideology?	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Conservative	72	3.3278	
Other (please specify)	5	3.8400	
Moderate	84		4.9643
Liberal	53		5.9434
Sig.		.597	.083

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 16.349.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

A significant difference was found between political ideologies for intergroup communication apprehension, $F(3, 209) = 15.049, p = .000$. Table 17 shows the post-hoc test results from the ANOVA. A significant difference exists between liberals and conservatives, with conservatives reporting higher Intergroup Communication Apprehension than liberals.

Table 17

ANOVA for Communication Apprehension

Tukey HSD^{a,b}

What is your political ideology?	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Liberal	54	1.4583	
Other (please specify)	5	1.8250	1.8250
Moderate	84	1.9330	1.9330
Conservative	70		2.4054
Sig.		.308	.150

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 16.346.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

A significant difference was found between political ideologies for religious fundamentalism, $F(3, 210) = 57.463, p = .000$. Table 18 shows the post-hoc test results of the ANOVA. A significant difference exists between moderates and liberals, with moderates scoring higher on fundamental religious beliefs. A significant difference exists between liberals and conservatives as well, with liberals reporting lower fundamental religious beliefs. A significant difference between moderates and conservatives exists as well, with conservatives scoring higher on fundamental religious beliefs.

Table 18

ANOVA for Fundamental Beliefs

Tukey HSD^{a,b}

What is your political ideology?	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05		
		1	2	3
Liberal	53	2.7500		
Moderate	84		4.2113	
Other (please specify)	5		4.8500	4.8500
Conservative	72			5.7917
Sig.		1.000	.492	.162

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 16.349.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

A significant difference was found between political ideologies for religious relativism, $F(3, 208) = 31.870, p = .000$. Table 19 shows the post-hoc test results of the ANOVA. A significant difference was found between conservatives and moderates, with moderates scoring higher on relativistic religious beliefs. A significant difference was also found between conservatives and liberals, with liberals scoring higher on relativistic religious beliefs.

Table 19

ANOVA for Relativistic Beliefs

Tukey HSD^{a,b}

What is your political ideology?	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05		
		1	2	3
Conservative	72	2.5000		
Other (please specify)	5	3.1000	3.1000	
Moderate	84		4.0804	4.0804
Liberal	51			4.8676
Sig.		.612	.191	.377

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 16.300.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

A significant difference was found between political ideologies for stigma by association regarding sexual identity, $F(3, 207) = 19.578, p = .000$. Table 20 shows the post-hoc test results of the ANOVA. A significant difference was found between liberals and conservatives, with conservatives scoring higher on stigma by association regarding sexual identity.

Table 20

ANOVA for Stigma Regarding Identity

Tukey HSD^{a,b}

What is your political ideology?	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Liberal	53	3.1651	
Moderate	84	3.8780	3.8780
Other (please specify)	5		4.3500
Conservative	69		4.7174
Sig.		.271	.147

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 16.309.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

A significant difference was found between political ideologies for value of gay progress, $F(3, 204) = 113.335$, $p = .000$. Specifically, a significant difference was found between conservatives and moderates, with moderates scoring higher on Value of Gay Progress. Another difference was found between moderates with liberals, with liberals scoring higher on Value of Gay Progress. A difference also exists between conservatives and liberals, with liberals scoring higher on Value of Gay Progress. Table 21 shows the post-hoc test results from the ANOVA.

Table 21

ANOVA for Value of Gay Progress

Tukey HSD^{a,b}

What is your political ideology?	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05			
		1	2	3	4
Conservative	69	2.6431			
Other (please specify)	5		4.0000		
Moderate	82			5.1418	
Liberal	52				6.2212
Sig.		1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 16.266.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

A significant difference was found between political ideologies for denial of continued discrimination, $F(3, 205) = 41.611, p = .000$. The post-hoc test results of the ANOVA are shown in Table 22. Specifically, a difference was found between conservatives and liberals, with conservatives scoring higher on Denial of Continued Discrimination. A significant difference was also found between conservatives and moderates, with moderates scoring lower on denial.

Table 22

ANOVA for Denial of Continued Discrimination

Tukey HSD^{a,b}

What is your political ideology?	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Liberal	53	2.4382	
Other (please specify)	5	2.8667	
Moderate	80	2.9264	
Conservative	71		4.0501
Sig.		.351	1.000

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 16.296.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

Research Question 3

In order to answer the third research question, “For Christian participants, is the reduction of uncertainty about LGB individuals and contact with LGB individuals related to supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals?”, several correlation tests were run to determine which attitudinal variables were associated with intergroup contact, attributional confidence, tolerance of ambiguity, and awareness of LGBT discrimination.

Intergroup Contact

Participants reported the number of gay, lesbian, and bisexual acquaintances, both those whose sexual orientation was known by participants at the beginning of the relationship and those whose sexual orientation was discovered by participants after the relationship had formed. Both were positively correlated with attributional confidence, $r = .390$ and $r = .256$ respectively, $p = .000$, indicating that as the number of gay, lesbian or

bisexual acquaintances increased, so did confidence in the ability to predict and explain the acquaintance's behavior.

Both of these were also significantly related to awareness of LGBT discrimination, $r = .339$ and $r = .247$ respectively, $p = .000$, indicating that as the number of LGB acquaintances increased, awareness of discrimination against LGBT individuals also increased. Both were also positively related to participants' tolerance of ambiguity, $r = .321$, $p = .000$, and $r = .218$, $p = .002$ respectively, indicating that as the number of LGB acquaintances increased, participants were more likely to report more tolerance of ambiguity. Tolerance of ambiguity refers to an ability to handle uncertainty in an interaction. Both were additionally positively related to value of gay progress, $r = .217$, $p = .002$ and $r = .202$, $p = .003$ respectively. Both were significantly and negatively related to denial of continued discrimination, $r = -.159$, $p = .024$ and $r = -.234$, $p = .001$ respectively, indicating that as the number of LGB acquaintances increased, denial of continued discrimination against LGB individuals decreased. Immutability beliefs were positively correlated with both, $r = .193$, $p = .005$ and $r = .189$, $p = .006$ respectively, indicating that as the number of LGB acquaintances increased, beliefs that sexual orientation is fixed and biologically based increased as well.

The number of participants who had acquaintances whose sexual orientation was known at the beginning of the relationship was significantly and negatively correlated with intergroup communication apprehension, $r = -.256$, $p = .000$, indicating that as the number of acquaintances whose sexual orientation was known at the beginning of the relationship increased, feelings of anxiety or nervousness when interacting with gay men

or lesbians decreased. Stigma by association regarding sexual identity was also negatively related to the number of acquaintances whose sexual orientation was known at the beginning of the relationship, $r = -.231, p = .001$. This indicates that as the number of acquaintances increased, participants' alignment with statements indicating stigma by association regarding sexual identity decreased. Stigma by association regarding treatment from others was also negatively associated with the number of LGB acquaintances whose sexual orientation was known at the beginning of the relationship, $r = -.223, p = .001$. This correlation indicates that as the number of acquaintances whose sexual orientation is known from the beginning of the relationship increases, participants' alignment with statements indicating stigma by association regarding treatment from other heterosexuals decreased. Stigma by association regarding sexual identity was negatively correlated with the number of acquaintances whose sexual orientation was discovered after the relationship had developed, $r = -.166, p = .016$, thus indicating that as the number of LGB acquaintances whose sexual orientation was discovered by participants after the relationship had formed increased, participants' alignment with statements indicating stigma by association regarding their own sexual identity decreased. The number of LGB acquaintances whose sexual orientation was made known after the relationship was formed was positively related to the highest level of education obtained, $r = .161, p = .018$. This indicates that as the level of education increased, the number of acquaintances whose sexual orientation was discovered after the relationship was formed increased.

The number of LGB close friends or family members participants reported was significantly related to attributional confidence, $r = .372$ and awareness of LGBT discrimination, $r = .313$, $p = .000$, indicating that as the number of LGB close friends or family members increased, awareness of discrimination against LGBT individuals and participants' confidence in their ability to predict and explain the friends' or family members' actions and behaviors also increased. The number of close friends or family members was also significantly related to immutability beliefs, $r = .352$, and intergroup communication apprehension, $r = -.311$, $p = .000$. As the number of LGB close friends or family members increased, immutability beliefs increased while intergroup communication apprehension decreased. Additionally, the number of close friends or family members was correlated with both stigma by association regarding sexual identity, $r = -.301$, $p = .000$ and stigma by association regarding treatment from others, $r = -.192$, $p = .005$. This means that as the number of LGB close friends and family members increased, participants' perceptions of stigma by association decreased. The number of LGB family members or close friends was significantly, positively correlated with value of gay progress, $r = .354$, $p = .000$, indicating that as the number of LGB family members or close friends increased, beliefs in the value of gay progress increased as well. The number of LGB family members and close friends was negatively related to denial of continued discrimination, $r = -.277$, $p = .000$, indicating that as the number of LGB family members and close friends increased, denial of discrimination decreased. The number of LGB close friends or family members was negatively associated with frequency of religious service attendance, $r = -.140$, $p = .042$, indicating that as religious

service attendance increased, the number of LGB close friends or family members decreased. The number of LGB close friends and family members was positively related to the highest level of education obtained, $r = .201, p = .003$, indicating that as the level of education increased, the number of LGB close friends and family members increased as well.

Attributional Confidence

Attributional confidence refers to the confidence participants have in their abilities to accurately predict and explain the actions and behaviors of LGB individuals. Attributional confidence was significantly related to tolerance of ambiguity, $r = .247, p = .000$, indicating that as participants felt more confident about predicting and explaining an LGB individual's behavior, the participants reported higher ability to tolerate ambiguity. Attributional confidence was also significantly correlated with value of gay progress, $r = .299, p = .002$. Thus, as participants were more confident in their abilities to predict and explain an LGB individual's behavior and actions, participants were more likely to see the contributions of gay progress as valuable to society. Attributional confidence was negatively and significantly related to denial of continued discrimination, $r = -.255, p = .000$. This indicates that as participants were more confident in their abilities to predict and explain an LGB individual's actions and behavior, they were less likely to deny the existence of discrimination against LGB individuals. Attributional confidence was negatively related to intergroup communication apprehension, $r = -.253, p = .000$, indicating that as attributional confidence increased, participants' feelings of apprehension during interactions with LGB individuals decreased. Additionally,

attributional confidence was positively related to immutability beliefs, $r = .262, p = .000$, indicating that as attributional confidence increased, beliefs that homosexuality is fixed and unchangeable increased. Attributional confidence was negatively related to stigma by association regarding sexual identity, $r = -.297, p = .000$ and stigma by association regarding treatment from others, $r = -.211, p = .002$. Thus, as attributional confidence increased, participants' perceptions of stigma by association decreased. Additionally, attributional confidence was positively related to awareness of LGBT discrimination, $r = .454, p = .000$, indicating that as participants were more confident in predicting behaviors, awareness of discrimination increased. Attributional confidence was also significantly related to frequency of religious service attendance, $r = -.172, p = .014$, indicating that as religious service attendance increased, attributional confidence decreased.

Tolerance of Ambiguity

Tolerance of ambiguity refers to participants' ability to handle ambiguity and is a measure of uncertainty. Tolerance of ambiguity was significantly related to awareness of LGBT discrimination, $r = .341, p = .000$, indicating that as a participant's ability to handle ambiguity increased, awareness of discrimination against LGBT individuals increased. Tolerance of ambiguity was negatively and significantly correlated with intergroup communication apprehension, $r = -.352, p = .000$, indicating that as participants' abilities to handle ambiguity increased, feelings of nervousness and anxiety when communicating with a gay man or lesbian decreased. Tolerance of ambiguity was related to value of gay progress, $r = .306, p = .000$, indicating that as a participant's

tolerance of ambiguity increased, their beliefs in the value of gay progress increased. Denial of continued discrimination was negatively related to tolerance of ambiguity, $r = -.304, p = .000$. This correlation indicates that as participants' tolerance of ambiguity increased, their denial of continued discrimination decreased. Tolerance of ambiguity was positively related to immutability beliefs, $r = .149, p = .035$, thus indicating that as tolerance of ambiguity increased, their beliefs that homosexuality is fixed and unchanging increased as well. Additionally, tolerance of ambiguity was negatively associated with stigma by association regarding sexual identity, $r = -.322, p = .000$ and with stigma by association regarding treatment from others, $r = -.161, p = .023$. These relationships indicate that as tolerance of ambiguity increases, concerns about stigma by association for both sexual identity and treatment from others decrease.

Awareness of LGBT Discrimination

Awareness of LGBT discrimination and attributional confidence were positively correlated, $r = .454, p = .000$, thus indicating that as participants' awareness of LGBT discrimination increased, participants' confidence in their abilities to accurately predict and explain behaviors of LGB acquaintances, friends, or family members increased. For other correlations, see the discussion of awareness of LGBT discrimination above in the reported results of research question two.

Research Question 4

In order to answer the fourth research question, "Are fundamentalist and/or relativistic religious perspectives related to attitudes toward LGB individuals?", several

correlations were run in order to determine the relationships between religiosity, religious fundamentalism, religious relativism and the attitudinal variables.

Religiosity

Religiosity was measured using the RCI-10 (Worthington et al., 2003). The instrument contained questions items such as: “My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life,” and “It is important to me to spend periods of time in private religious thought and reflection.” Religiosity was positively correlated to frequency of religious service attendance, $r = .708$, $p = .000$, indicating that as the frequency of religious service attendance increased, religiosity also increased. Religiosity was positively correlated with age, $r = .207$, $p = .003$ indicating that as age increased, religiosity increased as well. Frequency of religious service attendance was positively correlated with religious fundamentalism, $r = .448$, $p = .000$, indicating that as the frequency of religious service attendance increased, fundamental religious perspectives increased. Frequency of religious service attendance was negatively correlated with religious relativism, $r = -.398$, $p = .000$, indicating that relativistic views about religion decreased as religious service attendance increased. Religiosity and religious fundamentalism were positively correlated, $r = .604$, $p = .000$, indicating that as religiosity increased, religious fundamentalism increased as well. Religiosity and religious relativism were negatively correlated, $r = -.515$, $p = .000$, indicating that as religiosity increased, religious relativism decreased. Religious relativism was negatively correlated with religious fundamentalism, $r = -.663$, $p = .000$, indicating that as relativistic perspectives on religion increased, fundamental perspectives on religion decreased and vice versa.

Religiosity and immutability beliefs were negatively correlated, $r = -.433, p = .000$, indicating that as religiosity increased, the belief that sexual orientation was fixed and biologically based decreased. Religiosity was negatively correlated with attributional confidence, $r = -.151, p = .033$, indicating that as religiosity increased, participants' confidence in their abilities to accurately predict and interpret the behaviors of LGB acquaintances, friends, or family decreased. Religiosity was negatively correlated with awareness of LGBT discrimination, $r = -.183, p = .009$, thus indicating that as religiosity increased, awareness of LGBT discrimination decreased. Religiosity was positively related to denial of continued discrimination, $r = .280, p = .000$, indicating that as religiosity increased, denial of continued discrimination also increased. Religiosity was positively correlated with intergroup communication apprehension, $r = .142, p = .043$, indicating that as religiosity increased, intergroup communication apprehension toward LGB individuals increased as well. Religiosity was negatively correlated with beliefs in the value of gay progress, $r = -.515, p = .000$, indicating that as religiosity increased, participants were less likely to see contributions of LGB individuals as valuable to society. Religiosity and stigma by association regarding sexual identity were positively related, $r = .224, p = .001$, indicating that as religiosity increased, participants' perceptions that association with LGB individuals would affect perceptions about the participants' own sexual orientations increased. Religiosity was negatively correlated with the number of LGB close friends or family members, $r = -.162, p = .02$, indicating that as religiosity increased, the number of LGB close friends or family decreased.

Religious Fundamentalism

Religious fundamentalism was measured by assessing participants' agreement or disagreement with statements like: "In the Bible, God has given humanity as complete, unfailing guide to happiness and salvation, which must be totally followed." Religious fundamentalism was negatively associated with the number of acquaintances who participants knew to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual at the beginning of the relationship, $r = -.256, p = .000$. Religious fundamentalism was also negatively associated with the number of acquaintances who participants learned of their sexual orientation after the relationship had formed, $r = -.224, p = .001$. Additionally, the number of close friends or family members who participants knew to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual was negatively associated with religious fundamentalism, $r = -.321, p = .000$. These three correlations indicate that as fundamental religious perspectives increased, the number of LGB people the participants knew decreased.

Religious fundamentalism was positively associated with denial of continued discrimination, $r = .501, p = .000$, indicating that as fundamental religious perspectives increased, denial of continued discrimination increased. Religious fundamentalism was positively associated with intergroup communication apprehension, $r = .314, p = .000$, indicating that as religious fundamentalism increased, reports of anxious or nervous feelings while interacting with gay men and lesbians increased. Religious fundamentalism was also positively associated with stigma by association regarding sexual identity, $r = .543, p = .000$, indicating that as fundamental religious views increased, perceptions of stigma by association regarding the sexual orientation of the

participants increased. Religious fundamentalism was positively related to stigma by association regarding treatment from others, indicating that as fundamental religious perspectives increased, perceptions of stigma by association regarding treatment from other heterosexuals increased, $r = .177, p = .01$.

Religious fundamentalism was negatively associated with the value of gay progress, $r = -.772, p = .000$, indicating that as fundamental religious views increased, the likelihood of seeing gay progress as valuable to society decreased. Religious fundamentalism was negatively associated with immutability beliefs, $r = -.700, p = .000$, indicating that as religious fundamentalism increased, beliefs that sexual orientation is a fixed trait decreased. Religious fundamentalism was negatively associated with attributional confidence, $r = -.290, p = .000$, indicating that as religious fundamentalism increased, participants' confidence in their abilities to accurately interpret and predict the behavior of an LGB acquaintance, friend, or close family member decreased. Religious fundamentalism was negatively associated with awareness of LGBT discrimination, $r = -.369, p = .000$, indicating that as religious fundamentalism increased, awareness of LGBT discrimination decreased.

Religious Relativism

Religious relativism was measured by assessing participants' agreement or disagreement with statements such as: "When you get right down to it, all faiths are saying the same thing, just using different words." It was significantly correlated with the amount of close friends or family members participants knew to be gay, lesbian, or

bisexual, $.219, p = .001$, indicating that as relativistic religious views increased, the number of LGB close friends or family members increased.

Religious relativism was positively related to the value of gay progress, $r = .667, p = .000$, indicating that as relativistic religious beliefs increased, the likelihood of viewing gay progress as valuable to society increased as well. Relativistic religious beliefs were also positively related to immutability beliefs, $r = .619, p = .000$, indicating that as religious relativism increased, beliefs that sexual orientation is a fixed, biological trait increased. Religious relativism was positively associated with attributional confidence, $r = .287, p = .000$, indicating that as religious relativism increased, participants' confidence in abilities to correctly interpret and predict the behaviors of an LGB acquaintance, friend, or family member increased. Religious relativism was positively associated with awareness of LGBT discrimination, $r = .216, p = .002$, indicating that as relativistic religious beliefs increased, awareness of LGBT discrimination also increased.

Religious relativism was negatively related to denial of continued discrimination, $r = -.396, p = .000$, indicating that as religious relativism increased, denial of continued discrimination decreased. Religious relativism was negatively associated with intergroup communication apprehension, indicating that as relativistic religious beliefs increased, feelings of anxiety or nervousness when interacting with a gay man or a lesbian decreased, $r = -.237, p = .001$. Religious relativism was negatively related to stigma by association regarding sexual identity, $r = -.271, p = .000$, and stigma by association regarding treatment from others, $r = -.146, p = .035$. These relationships indicate that as

religious relativism increased, perceptions of stigma by association regarding both the sexual orientation of the participants and treatment from other heterosexuals decreased.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis of 62 comments from participants who chose to respond to the final question of the survey prompting them to share anything else they wanted to about their beliefs on religion and homosexuality yielded seven overarching themes and two sub-themes regarding beliefs about religion and homosexuality. The seven main themes were: separation of person and action, judgment, loving, sins and forgiveness, wrong focus, confusion, and civil and moral issues. The theme entitled loving had a sub-theme entitled God's love. The theme entitled civil and moral issues had a sub-theme entitled discrimination.

Separation of Person and Action

Participants often cited the well-known adage, "love the sinner, hate the sin" or some variation of this idea. Some participants argued that identifying as homosexual is not the problem; acting on homosexual impulses is sinful. One participant wrote, "...we are to LOVE the people, even if we hate the sin." Another wrote, "I love the person, but not the act." Participants stated that you could love someone without agreeing with them or embracing their lifestyle and beliefs. One participant acknowledged that he/she too was a sinner, writing, "LOVE THE SINNER (JUST LIKE ME) HATE THE SIN." The participant wrote his/her response in all capital letters, so to maintain the emphasis in the original comment, I retained the capitalization.

Another stated, "...there is a big difference between homosexual acts and people who experience same sex attraction." Some of these participants explicitly stated that homosexuality was a not a choice; however, they noted that choosing to engage in homosexual actions was a choice. "I don't think people consciously choose homosexuality, but I do believe they have a choice whether or not to feed those desires. Like the desire to over eat or the lack of desire to work." Overall, this theme illustrated that some participants were not as concerned about a homosexual sexual orientation as they were about acting on a homosexual sexual orientation.

Judgment

Several participants talked about the concept of judgment and who was qualified to judge a person. Many participants did not believe it was their right to judge someone else for their actions and behaviors. One participant even included a reflection about what Jesus would do in the same situation. "I'm much more qualified to show respect, kindness, appreciation, and love to people (gay or otherwise) than I am to judge them. And, I guess that's what I think Jesus would do, too."

Several participants combined the concepts of judgment and love and talked about God having the role as a judge, while humans are called to love one another. "Only God can judge. We are to love." One participant talked about how judgment could deter others from God:

God has called us to bring EVERYONE unto Him, and being a judgmental person does nothing good for the advancement of God's Kingdom. I do not agree with homosexuality in any way shape or form, but it is not my responsibility on this earth to tell people, or force people to live like I want them to.

Another participant believed that “religion is a personal matter between an individual and his/her God, and really no one else’s business,” which led the participant to conclude that humans should not judge other humans. Participants were varied in their views about homosexuality, but tended to agree that judgment was not their place in the issue. This is further discussed in the next theme entitled Loving.

Loving

Participants overwhelmingly mentioned loving other people when commenting on their beliefs about religion and homosexuality. Participants with all different views about homosexuality talked about love in their responses. One participant wrote, “Jesus told us to love on others, and that’s it, not to discriminate or hate against, but to share love, and so that’s what I do.” Similarly, another wrote, “...we’re called on to love our neighbor as ourselves regardless of any imperfection our neighbor may have.” Another participant discussed loving and her beliefs, “I think that Christians are called to love. I do not believe that homosexuality is right. That said, my actions need to be right in return. Threats and ugly treatment of people is NOT right.” Thus, this participant believed that loving actions were the correct response even though he/she believed homosexuality is wrong. Many participants echoed these comments and talked about their responsibility to love and the example God set forth for them to love everyone, which is discussed below in the God’s love subtheme of this theme.

A few participants who saw homosexuality as wrong or sinful, stated that truly loving someone included discussing homosexuality:

As a Christian, I follow the word of God as truth and know that sometimes my ways are not God’s ways. I believe that the best way to love someone is sharing

that truth. There are many scriptures that show God does not approve of homosexuality....If someone doesn't believe in the Bible then they will not use it to guide their life and cannot be expected to follow, but we are starting to see many people who pick out the verses they will use for their agenda and leave out the parts that don't fit what they want. Goes back to what is the best way to love someone. Give them the whole truth.

Most of the participants who mentioned loving did not mention truth like this participant did. However, in this participant's eyes, loving someone means sharing God's truth with them.

God's Love. A sub-theme of Loving was present in the comments that called upon the example of love set by God and Jesus and how that should guide human action. Essentially, participants argued that God loves everyone and everyone is a child of God, regardless of sexual orientation or any other identity claimed. One participant who did believe that homosexuality was a sin asserted, "I love gay people, or just plain people. We're all God's children." Another participant brought Jesus into his/her response, "I believe Jesus loved everyone, therefore, so must I." Other participants talked about God and Jesus as examples of showing love for everyone. One participant showed confusion about God's love and the love humans show,

God loves all people equally. He makes no distinctions, so by what right do Christians make distinctions? I don't get that kind of thinking and never have. I don't have to agree with a person to love and respect that person. That, unfortunately is an attitude quickly vanishing in our country on all issues.

This participant expresses a discrepancy between the love God shows all people and the love humans show to people. Another participant put it simply, "I support gay rights because I believe God loves everyone." Similarly, another participant stated, "I find it

very hard to believe that if God is a true loving God, which I believe He/She is, that He/She would not accept and love all peoples and want a relationship with them.”

Thus, regardless of whether or not participants viewed homosexuality as a sin, several called upon the Christian notion that God loves everyone and all people are His children, believing that this should serve as an example for human action.

Sins and Forgiveness

Many of the participants called upon the Christian concepts of sins and forgiveness in their comments. Participants often stated that homosexuality was only one type of sin and that it was no worse than any other type of sin. Several participants also stated that no one is free of sin and no one is perfect, but Jesus forgives the sins of humans. One participant wrote,

I don't see how my church is unwilling to welcome homosexual members into the congregation while, at the same time, welcoming divorced members. That's not to say I'd turn anyone away from church, gay, straight, married, divorced; everyone should be welcome to have the chance to learn the word of God. What I'm saying is, the Bible says all sins are equal, and if the church sees homosexuality as a sin, they should also see divorce as a one, since there is so much discussion on why divorce is wrong in the Bible.

Another participant stated that “We are all sinners and fall short of His glory- that is why we need Jesus as our Lord and Savior.” Another participant talked about the sins each person suffers with and how those affect reactions to homosexuality:

I believe it is easier to judge the sins that don't tempt us than to look at our own sin. I believe the reason we see so much religious judgment on this issue is because we are not personally tempted. We don't see the same judgment towards sexual sin that we ourselves are tempted by or have even committed.

This participant was making the claim that homosexuality is focused on because it is not a sin that all Christians understand and experience. Several participants listed many sins

the Bible discusses and stated that homosexuality was no worse than any of the other sins discussed.

Wrong Focus

A few of the participants argued that churches and/or Christians have the wrong focus when looking at homosexuality. One participant argued, “The church should focus on spreading the word of God, not picking and choosing who ‘gets’ to come to their church.” Another participant stated, “Jesus had a lot to say about inclusivity, but nothing to say about homosexuality.” The statement implies that the participant focuses on Jesus’ inclusiveness in the Bible and disagrees with the idea that Jesus spoke about homosexuality. Finally, one participant stated that the focus should be on a person’s relationship with Jesus and not on his or her sexual orientation. “I think that right and wrong isn’t the true issue at heart here. As a Christian, I am way more concerned with their attitude and their belief when it comes to Jesus than their sexuality.” The participant goes on to explain her/his hope that Christians can be known for not just the perspective that homosexuality is wrong, but for revealing Jesus to other people.

Confusion

Some participants expressed confusion about where to stand or about how to act based on their beliefs about homosexuality and religion. Sometimes the participants knew where they stood, but they still were not completely sure or still struggling with the issue.

Some stated the Bible explicitly stated homosexuality was a sin, but could not decide what God wanted them to do or think about the current debate. One participant wrote,

I am a confused and searching Christian. I first go to Christ for my beliefs, but that is not always a source of clarity. I want to glorify and follow him, but in this issue, I am unsure of what stance to take in order to do that. My instinct is to love and embrace the gay community; and to love them is absolutely right. But I have an inkling that perhaps, despite confusing wording in scripture, it really is against God's wishes (for our own good) to be homosexual.

This participant goes on to say that if homosexuality is against God's wishes, that loving the gay community is essential, but lying to them is not helpful. The participant's confusion is clear, and other participants indicated confusion as well. One participant noted, "I'm not sure how God would like us to handle LGBTQ relationships because of creating Adam and Eve..." Another simply said, "I am very unsure of my feelings about gay marriage." These participants indicated a lack of assuredness about how they felt, or how God would want them to feel about homosexuality and same sex marriage.

A few participants simply stated that they did not have an answer. One participant stated, "The 'gay' thing is an issue I don't have an answer for, so I take it to my heavenly Papa and leave it on His lap because He is big enough to take care of it." This response ties back to the earlier theme of letting God do the judging, rather than humans.

Civil and Moral Issues

Many of the comments participants made revolved around civil or moral issues about homosexuality. Participants had several different perspectives about whether or not this was a moral issue, a civil issue, or an issue of both morality and civility. Some

seemed to value morality over civility, some valued civility over morality, and some were able to integrate the two.

Participants discussed the moral implications of civil rights and the limits on civil rights that exist for homosexuals. One participant stated, “I believe homosexuality is a moral issue and NOT a civil rights issue. There is a very big difference between the two.” The participant went on to talk about how people should be equal in society, but that does not mean that immorality should be accepted in any society. Another participant thought differently, “I think it’s absurd to think that two people standing side by side, one of which is straight and one is gay, should have different rights. I don’t understand how such discrimination is not immediately recognized and rebuked.” For this participant, a focus on the civil rights issue was foregrounded. The use of words like “absurd” and “rebuked” imply that the participant may associate these civil rights with morality.

A few participants expressed frustration with the movements for equality, some because they felt that the movements were promoting immorality, and some because they felt that homosexuals were seeking preferential or better treatment than everyone else. “I’m also a little annoyed that homosexuals seem to claim they want to be treated the same as everyone else but really want to be treated better.” This same participant stated that he/she did not mind that same sex marriage was legalized in some places, he/she just did not approve of same sex marriage within the context of his/her religion. This illustrates a separation of issues of the church and religion and issues of civil rights in this participant’s mind.

A few participants talked about civil rights issues in conjunction with their religious beliefs and church association. One participant asserted that he/she could not attend a church that spoke against homosexuality and valued being involved with social issues more than belonging to a certain church. Another had found a faith community, which includes Christians that support the LGBT community. For this participant, social justice was combined with involvement in the church.

I have become significantly more active in my church, spiritual growth, and social justice. I look forward to working on marriage equality issues for the GLBT community starting this year. I hope to be part of the group of compassionate Christian Unitarian Universalists who seek to affirm the rights and dignity of all people.

Discrimination. A sub-theme of civil and moral issues emerged from the comments, which I titled discrimination. This sub-theme was constructed from participant responses invoking the civil rights of all people, specifically the right one has to live without being discriminated against. Participants argued that no one should face discrimination regardless of who they are. Some participants talked about their beliefs that homosexuality was sinful, but went on to say that was no cause for discriminating against another person. “I am a person of strong faith and believe that homosexuality is wrong and against the Bible....All people regardless of sexual orientation, religious beliefs, race/culture/ethnicity, or political standings, should be treated equally and with kindness.”

Others did not mention what they believed about homosexuality, but just stated that it was always wrong to discriminate. “I believe that regardless of the morality of homosexuality, gay men and women should be treated equally in all aspects of civic and

public life.” Interestingly, this participant did not include religious life as part of the response. Another participant stated, “I look forward to the day where one’s sexual orientation does not bear any weight on their value to society.” Another participant turned to God as an example, “God doesn’t discriminate, why should we?” Again, participants had varying views on homosexuality, but were virtually all in agreement that discrimination was never okay.

There were a few participants who noted that while discrimination was not okay, preferential treatment was also not okay. “I do not support discrimination, but I also think that one group does not deserve ‘preferential’ treatment over others because of their lifestyle.” Another participant discussed legal concerns,

I believe every individual should be treated with love and respect but no one should expect their personal, sexual, or religious beliefs to be mandated by law to be obeyed by others....If gays/lesbians/etc. truly are just an “alternate lifestyle” then go ahead and live that way, without fanfare: but do not “force” that way of life on others. No more than they would want my view of life “forced” on them.

These participants were both concerned about LGB individuals getting special treatment or more freedom than others. However, like those above, they did not agree with discrimination against anyone.

These seven themes and two sub-themes give deeper insight into the attitudes these participants have toward LGB individuals and the beliefs that may affect or form those attitudes. They help bring the numbers from the statistical analysis to life. In general, the themes centered around the call from God to love others and refrain from judging or discriminating against others, regardless of beliefs about homosexuality. Themes also drew in forgiveness for sins and the equality of all sins, questioning why

there was such a strong focus on homosexuality. Comments included statements indicating beliefs about homosexuality as a sin and statements indicating beliefs that homosexuality is not a sin. However, participants were in general agreement that everyone should be loved and should not face discrimination.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to discover current Christian attitudes toward LGB individuals, factors that led Christian individuals to hold supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals, if the reduction of uncertainty in any manner was related to supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals among Christians, and if a relationship between fundamentalist and/or relativistic religious perspectives and attitudes toward LGB individuals existed. Although the results of the research were not surprising, they were extremely consistent with past research on contact, religiosity, political ideology, and attitudes toward LGB individuals. Additionally, the Contact Hypothesis and Uncertainty Reduction Theory did help to explain participant attitudes. The results have many practical applications for persons who are working to fight discrimination and improve attitudes toward LGB individuals. The results also have theoretical implications involving the connection between Uncertainty Reduction Theory and the Contact Hypothesis. Overall, the results suggest that Christian attitudes on this issue are complex and varied. There is not one, overarching Christian perspective on this issue, rather Christian individuals have several different perspectives on homosexuality which can be understood through examining beliefs about sexual orientation and the level of fundamentalism in one's beliefs.

Overall Attitudes

As a whole, this sample of Christians was unsure but slightly leaned toward valuing contributions of LGB individuals to society. Participants somewhat agreed that

LGB people are still discriminated against. However, participants reported only rarely or occasionally reading, discussing, and observing discrimination against LGB individuals.

Intergroup communication apprehension levels were relatively low among the sample, which indicates that participants were not likely to feel anxiety or nervousness when interacting with LGB individuals. Participants were unsure about whether or not other perceptions of their own sexual orientation were affected by association with LGB individuals. Participants somewhat disagreed that the way other heterosexuals treated them was affected by their association with LGB individuals.

Participants as a whole were also unsure, but slightly slanted toward believing that sexual orientation is a biologically-based trait that does not change across one's lifetime. Participants' immutability beliefs significantly predicted participants' beliefs in the value of gay progress, indicating that beliefs about sexual orientation being fixed affected the extent to which participants saw gay and lesbian individuals as valuable to society. This is important to note because immutability beliefs have been shown to be associated with more tolerant and positive attitudes toward LGB individuals (Haslam & Levy, 2006; Hegarty, 2002; Hegarty & Pratto, 2001). These findings were replicated in the current research; as immutability beliefs increased, beliefs in the value of gay progress increased and the following variables decreased: intergroup communication apprehension, stigma by association regarding sexual identity, stigma by association regarding treatment by others, and denial of continued discrimination. Thus, participants who believed that sexual orientation was fixed and unchangeable valued gay and lesbian individuals' contributions to society, were less likely to report anxiety or nervousness

when communicating with an LGB individuals, were less likely to perceive the existence of stigmas by association with LGB individuals, and were less likely to deny that LGB individuals are still discriminated against. Those who reported believing in the immutable nature of sexual orientation held more supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals than those who reported low levels of belief in the immutability of sexual orientation.

Predictors of immutability beliefs included religious relativism and value of gay progress; specifically, those who highly valued gay progress and had high levels of relativistic religious beliefs also had high immutability beliefs. This is consistent with previous research, which has concluded that beliefs in the fixedness of sexual orientation are associated with more tolerant attitudes toward LGB individuals (Haslam & Levy, 2006; Hegarty, 2002; Hegarty & Pratto, 2001). However, in their open-ended comments, both participants who saw sexual orientation as immutable, and those who did not see it that way, stated that it was not their responsibility to judge others, but to love them. The question then becomes, how do people with intolerant or negative attitudes toward LGB individuals refrain from judging LGB individuals and love them instead? Since beliefs about the nature of sexual orientation are tied to attitudes toward LGB individuals, those beliefs may also affect behavior toward LGB individuals.

The themes of participant comments help to further reveal participant attitudes and what may lead to those attitudes. Overall, it is clear that the Christians who answered the open-ended question in this study do not believe that homosexuals should be discriminated against, but should be loved. However, some Christians, particularly those

with more fundamentalist beliefs, are less likely to be aware of LGB discrimination and are more likely to deny that discrimination still exists. One participant expressed that he/she was unsure how to answer some of the questions:

Some of these questions are misleading like the one that says are gays still too discriminated against too much, if I say yes, it makes it sound like I think we should be easier on sin choice, and if I say no, then it sounds like I don't care about the person...two separate things...hate the sin, not the sinner.

This participant was equating acknowledging discrimination with condoning sin, which may be something many of the participants struggle with. This may be a key to understanding the connection between Christian attitudes and behaviors toward LGB individuals. How does a Christian behave when she/he believes homosexuality to be a sin but also wants to treat LGB individuals with equality? Do Christians who believe homosexuality is okay from a religious standpoint treat LGB individuals more equally than those Christians who don't believe this way? Examining the attitudes of Christians is useful, but future research should focus on actual observable behaviors to determine what kinds of behaviors different attitudes contribute to.

In a study examining female, heterosexual Christian college students' helping behaviors toward both sexually promiscuous and celibate heterosexual and sexually promiscuous and celibate homosexual targets, Mak and Tsang (2008) concluded that intrinsically religious participants helped gay sexually promiscuous and straight sexually promiscuous targets equally. Participants with high intrinsic religiousness provided slightly less help to sexually promiscuous targets than celibate targets, regardless of sexual orientation. The study examined actual behaviors instead of relying on self-report, indicating that the participants treated the targets equally based on sexual orientation, but

helped celibate heterosexuals and homosexuals more than those who were sexually promiscuous. Thus, being gay did not affect how participants helped targets; rather, sexual promiscuity affected helping behaviors. Participants distinguished between the targets and their behaviors; they did not exhibit prejudicial behaviors based on sexual orientation. This study suggests that it may be possible for Christians to “separate the sin from the sinner” as the participants in the current study noted they should do. Mak and Tsang (2008) note, however, that homosexuality would still be considered a violation of the Christian worldview, which has societal implications for LGB individuals and affects how the LGB identity is viewed.

The Impact of Fundamentalism and Relativism

Those with higher fundamentalist religious beliefs reported lower immutability beliefs, indicating that those with fundamentalist religious beliefs did not believe that sexual orientation was a fixed, biologically based trait. Overall, participants who had higher scores on fundamental religious beliefs held less supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals. They were less aware of discrimination against LGB individuals and were more likely to deny that continued discrimination against LGB individuals still occurred. These findings are consistent with Altemeyer and Hunsberger’s (1992) assertion that Fundamentalists were more likely to be prejudiced and more likely to be hostile toward homosexuals.

As participants’ fundamentalist religious beliefs increased, their belief in the value of gay progress decreased. However, as participants’ relativistic religious beliefs increased, their belief in the value of gay progress increased. This is important because

the value of gay progress measure may have been the measure most directly focused on attitudes. The measure included questions about whether or not one would encourage their children to explore their sexuality if the children thought they might be gay or lesbian. It also asked participants about whether or not they thought the advances made by the gay and lesbian civil rights movement were harmful or enhancing to society. The extent to which participants valued the contributions of gay and lesbian individuals to society was affected by the combination of many different variables: immutability beliefs, denial of continued discrimination, religious fundamentalism, religious relativism, tolerance of ambiguity, stigma by association regarding sexual identity, and religiosity. Thus, consistent with the correlation results found in this study, religious fundamentalism and relativism helped predict the extent to which a participant valued gay progress.

Participants who scored higher in fundamentalism were also more uncertain than those with relativistic religious beliefs about interactions with LGB individuals. They were more uncertain because they had fewer LGB acquaintances, close friends, and family members; in addition, they were less confident (and therefore more uncertain) about their abilities to predict and interpret LGB behaviors and were also less aware of LGB discrimination. While it is unlikely that the number of family members would vary between participants based upon religious beliefs, it is quite likely that family members are less likely to reveal their sexual orientation to the participants who have more fundamental religious beliefs. However, because friends are often freely chosen, it makes sense that those with more negative attitudes toward LGB individuals would have

fewer LGB close friends. Participants were asked about close friends and family members in the same survey question; therefore, it was not possible to find differences between the number of close friends and the number of family members.

These findings are consistent with the Contact Hypothesis. Those with less contact did have more negative attitudes toward LGB individuals (Allport, 1979). This is logical because those with more fundamental religious beliefs generally held more negative, nonsupportive attitudes toward LGB individuals, which would present a barrier in the formation and/or maintenance of relationships with LGB individuals for both parties.

There were no significant interactions found between the number of LGB acquaintances, close friends, and family members and religious affiliation. This may be due to the fact that a variety of perspectives regarding homosexuality exist within Christianity and participants did not always align with formal stances taken by their religious groups. An interaction did exist between a participant's agreement with his or her religious group's stance on homosexuality and the presence of LGB acquaintances or family members. Of those who agreed with their religious group's stance on homosexuality, 19.8% reported not having any LGB acquaintances whose sexual orientations were known to the participants at the beginning of the relationship. Of those who did not agree with their religious group's stance on homosexuality, only 5.8% reported not having any LGB acquaintances whose sexual orientations were known at the beginning of the relationship. Of the participants who agreed with their religious group's stance on homosexuality, 42.8% reported no LGB close friends or family members. Of

those who did not agree with their religious group's stance, 22.2% reported no LGB close friends or family members. Thus, alignment with formal stances may have prevented awareness of the sexual orientation of acquaintances, close friends, and family members. Alignment with stances may also have affected the extent to which relationships were pursued with those whose sexual orientation was LGB for participants who agreed with formal religious stances if these stances were against homosexuality.

It is likely that many of these formal religious stances were anti-homosexuality since several large religious groups still hold stances of this type; however, accepting religious stances toward homosexuality exist, so we cannot be entirely sure. Interestingly, no significant interaction was found between alignment with religious group stance on homosexuality and LGB acquaintances whose sexual orientation was discovered after the relationship had already been formed. Perhaps LGB individuals are disclosing their sexual orientations earlier in relationships, or people are more aware of the sexual orientation of those around them before they develop relationships with people.

The Impact of Biological Sex

When male and female scores on all of the variables were compared, small but significant differences were found for attributional confidence, immutability beliefs, and religious relativism. A significant moderate difference was found between males and females for awareness of LGBT discrimination. Females were more aware of LGBT discrimination, were more confident in their abilities to predict and explain behaviors of LGB individuals, were more likely to see sexual orientation as a fixed and biological

trait, and held more relativistic religious beliefs. Thus, men reported more uncertainty than women in this arena, specifically about discrimination against LGB individuals and their abilities to predict and explain the behaviors of LGB individuals. The only difference found for attitudinal variables between men and women was on immutability beliefs. Men were less likely to believe that sexual orientation was fixed. Females were more likely than men to report relativistic religious beliefs, which are associated with more positive attitudes toward LGB individuals. However, men and women did not significantly differ on any attitudinal variables except immutability beliefs. Females were more likely than males to believe that sexual orientation is a fixed trait.

Past research has shown that men, when compared to women, are less likely to identify as allies to the LGBT community (Fingerhut, 2011), are less tolerant of homosexuality (Altemeyer, 2001), have more aversion toward gay men (Massey, 2009), and were more likely to hold hostile attitudes toward gay men (Herek & Glunt, 1993). Due to these past findings, I expected to find significant differences among men and women specifically on value of gay progress and intergroup communication apprehension. However, these differences were not found in the present research, which is encouraging. There were significantly more women than men participating in the study, which could have affected these results. It is also possible that the men sampled had more positive attitudes toward LGB individuals when compared with the male samples from past research. Another possibility is that men with Christian religious beliefs are less likely to hold hostile attitudes toward gay men and instead are likely to feel uncertain about interacting with LGB individuals.

One other difference between men and women was discovered. Consistent with Massey's (2009) conclusion that men were less likely to know a gay or lesbian individual, a discrepancy was found in the present research between the number of LGB close friends or family members between men and women, with 71.8% of women and 56.8% of men reporting having an LGB close friend or family member. This finding may help explain why the men in the study reported lower levels of confidence in predicting and explaining behaviors of LGB individuals and less awareness of discrimination. If men know fewer LGB individuals, then it makes sense that their uncertainty would be higher. No significant association was found between biological sex and the presence or absence of LGB close friends and family members. This difference between males and females may be due to the previous research findings above, which indicate that men are less tolerant and have less positive attitudes toward LGB individuals than women. Since more men seem to hold those negative attitudes, it makes sense that women would have more close friends who identify as LGB. However, it should be noted that the question asked of participants did not distinguish between close friends and family members, so we can't be sure if participants were saying that they had LGB close friends or LGB family members. While the number of close friends could certainly be affected by attitudes toward LGB individuals, the number of family members would be the same regardless of the participants' attitudes.

However, attitudes toward LGB individuals could affect a participant's knowledge about the sexual orientation of family members or close friends. For example, if it was known that the participant held negative attitude towards LGB

individuals, it is possible that an LGB family member or friend would never disclose his or her sexual orientation for fear of rejection. Another explanation for the differences found between men and women may be the association between the social conceptions of masculinity and homophobia. Kimmel (2004) argued that men are afraid of other men; that homophobia comes from not only an irrational fear of homosexuals, but a fear that one does not measure up to society's definition of a "real man" and therefore could be perceived as gay (p. 88). Kimmel (2004) further argued that this fear could cause men to be silent in the presence of discrimination against sexual minorities. This fear and pressure to subscribe to society's definition of masculinity could provide a deeper understanding of why the male participants in the study indicated more uncertainty about interactions with LGB individuals and less contact with LGB individuals.

The Impact of Political Ideology

The presence or absence of LGB close friends and family members significantly interacted with political ideology. Conservatives were split evenly, 50% reported the presence of LGB close friends or family members while 50% reported no LGB close friends or family members. However, only 18.2% of liberals and 31.2% of moderates reported no LGB close friends or family members. Thus, like those with fundamental religious beliefs, conservatives were less likely to have LGB family members or to have formed close friendships with LGB individuals. Again, because participants were asked about the number of family members and close friends together, it is impossible to separate the reports of close friends and the reports of family members. Herek and Capitanio (1996) concluded that conservatives had more negative attitudes toward gay

men than moderates or liberals, regardless of whether or not contact with gay men had occurred.

A significant interaction also exists between political party and the presence or absence of LGB close friends and family members, with 45.6% of Republicans, 14.1% of Democrats, and 35.2% of Independents reporting no LGB close friends or family members. Like the conservatives, Republicans and those with fundamental religious beliefs were less likely to have LGB family members or to have formed close friendships with LGB individuals. Herek and Capitanio (1996) found that Republicans had more negative attitudes toward gay men than Independents and Democrats, regardless of whether or not contact with gay men had occurred. Consistent with the current research, Herek and Glunt (1993) found a significant interaction between political ideology and contact with a gay or lesbian individual. The researchers concluded that conservatives' attitudes did not significantly differ based on contact, while liberals' and moderates' attitudes were less negative when they reported having contact with a gay or lesbian person. They also concluded conservatives and Republicans had more negative attitudes toward gay men when compared to liberals and Democrats, and moderates and Independents. All groups reported less negative attitudes when they had contact with gay or lesbian individuals (Herek & Glunt, 1993).

Relationships existed between participants' religious beliefs and political ideologies. Liberals reported lower religiosity and lower religious fundamentalism than conservatives. Moderates also reported lower religious fundamentalism. Thus the conservatives reported the highest fundamentalist religious beliefs. Similarly, in a study

assessing the relationships between political perspectives and religious perspectives, Punyanunt-Carter, Corrigan, Wrench, and McCroskey (2010) concluded that Republicans reported higher levels of religious fundamentalism when compared to Democrats.

Liberals and moderates reported higher immutability beliefs than conservatives. Haslam and Levy (2006) concluded that conservatives tend to have higher prejudice toward gay and lesbian individuals because they tend to view sexual orientation as mutable. This finding was replicated in the current study, as conservatives scored lower on immutability beliefs than moderates and liberals. Recall that immutability beliefs played a big part in predicting the value of gay progress. Thus, those who do not see sexual orientation as fixed are less likely to support the movements for equality. Conservatives were less likely than moderates and liberals to value gay progress, with liberals scoring highest on value of gay progress. Liberals were most likely to value gay progress. These beliefs are often reflected in political party platforms and political rhetoric.

Overall, uncertainty, intergroup contact, political ideology and party affiliation, and religiosity (specifically fundamental or relativistic beliefs), combine to affect heterosexual Christian attitudes toward LGB individuals. Religious fundamentalists and conservatives are likely to have the least positive attitudes toward LGB individuals, less contact with LGB individuals, and more uncertainty about interacting with LGB individuals. Religious relativists and liberals are likely to have the most positive attitudes toward LGB individuals, more contact with LGB individuals, and less uncertainty about interactions with LGB individuals.

Limitations and Future Research

The current research relied on self-report of attitudes, which may not always be a completely accurate report of attitudes actually held. I tried to limit the influence of social desirability by using an anonymous online survey, but it may still have affected responses. Another limitation is the ambiguity of measuring general attitudes toward a group of people. Several dimensions comprise attitudes and the current research tried to include many of those dimensions; however, some may have been missed. For example, one participant commented that she/he didn't understand why the survey didn't explicitly ask if participants believed that homosexuality is a sin or not, which is a good point.

It would have been useful to separate the questions asking participants about LGB close friends and family members. This would have allowed a better assessment of intergroup contact, because close friends are usually chosen, while family members are not. Also, the response scales for the tolerance of ambiguity scale may have been challenging for participants to respond to. The original was a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Herman et al., 2010). I modified the scale to a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all true of me" to "totally true of me." However, participants were not given any options between the left end of the scale reading not at all true of me and the point directly next to it: slightly true of me. It would have been helpful to expand the scale to a 7-item to include more distinctions between those two points on the scale. The same is true of Worthington and colleagues' (2003) Religious Commitment Inventory measuring religiosity. It may have been helpful to expand the original 5-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all true of me" to "totally

true of me,” in order to create more possible responses between not at all and somewhat true of me.

One other important thing to acknowledge is that immutability beliefs seem to be a strong predictor of attitudes toward LGB individuals overall. However, this does not mean that immutability beliefs are necessarily the best perspective or the preferred perspective on sexual orientation. Stein (1997) and Haslam and Levy (2006) discussed deconstructionist and social constructionist perspectives on sexual orientation that reject the notion that sexual orientation is a fixed trait. Future research would benefit from focusing on distinctions between these differing perspectives and whether or not they affect attitudes toward LGB individuals.

This research intentionally focused only on participant attitudes toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals. Some may ask why transgender individuals, individuals who are questioning their sexual orientation, and other individuals were excluded from the study. The decision was made to focus exclusively on sexual orientation, thus attitudes toward transgender individuals were not involved in the research questions. Attitudes toward those questioning their sexual orientation may have been very different from attitudes regarding those who identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual among this population. Thus, attitudes toward those questioning were beyond the scope of this study. It is very important to include these individuals in future research, focusing on attitudes toward those individuals as well as gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals.

The research questions were focused on heterosexual Christian attitudes toward LGB individuals, but I failed to include the criterion of heterosexuality in recruitment for the participation. Some participants commented about this and one in particular expressed concern about awareness that LGB Christians existed. It is very important to examine the perspectives of Christian LGB individuals, but it was beyond the scope of this study. It is important for future researchers to acknowledge all viewpoints.

The current research has provided insight into how immutability beliefs, religious beliefs, uncertainty, intergroup contact and attitudes toward LGB individuals affect one another. The findings of the research indicate that examining people's beliefs about sexual orientation may be an important part in understanding and working to change attitudes. Reducing uncertainty through education and contact may also facilitate attitude change. Future research may utilize these results to qualitatively examine attitudes of those with differing religious beliefs and how beliefs about sexual orientation are formed. This is important work, because negative attitudes play a part in behaviors towards other people. Religious beliefs may lead some to hold negative attitudes toward others; however, as many participants agreed, attitudes toward LGB behavior do not condone the mistreatment that can occur as a result of negative attitudes.

One finding that was unexpected was the negative relationship between total family income and awareness of discrimination. Although the correlation was weak, as family income increased, awareness of discrimination increased. Future research should try to determine the factors at work in this relationship. Perhaps the privilege of higher family income serves as a blinder to discrimination.

Future research should also focus on the relationships between positive and negative attitudes toward LGB individuals and actual behaviors toward LGB individuals, because it is the behavior that reveals how others are treated. Even participants who believed homosexuality is a sin talked about how they were called to love others and that judging other was not their place. They also claimed that no one should be discriminated against or face inequality. However, many participants held negative attitudes toward LGB individuals, had low awareness of LGB discrimination, and denied that continued discrimination existed. Future research should examine how the combination of these thoughts and attitudes play out in actual, observable behavior.

Theoretical Implications

In summary, uncertainty, intergroup contact, political ideology and party affiliation, and religiosity (specifically fundamental or relativistic beliefs) together affect attitudes. These findings are not surprising, but it is clear that uncertainty about LGB individuals' behaviors, uncertainty about discrimination that LGB individuals face, uncertainty about interacting with LGB individuals, and one's ability to handle uncertainty and ambiguity in a given situation may be important factors in the development of these attitudes. It is also clear that one's level of contact with LGB individuals plays a role in one's uncertainty and one's attitudes toward LGB individuals.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory predicts that uncertainty is reduced as relationships are developed (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). It is logical that the participants with more fundamentalist leanings had more uncertainty about interactions with LGB individuals, because they had not developed as many relationships with LGB persons. This

uncertainty may have played a part in preventing them from feeling comfortable developing relationships with LGB persons. It is also possible that they reported more uncertainty because they have fewer relationships. It is unclear which comes first.

Overall, those with fundamental religious beliefs had fewer LGB acquaintances, close friends, and family members than other participants, and therefore less contact with LGB individuals. Additionally, participants with fundamental religious beliefs reported more negative, nonsupportive attitudes toward LGB individuals. This finding is consistent with Allport's (1979) Contact Hypothesis, Herek (2002), and Herek and Capitanio's (1996) research, which concluded that contact with LGB individuals and/or the presence of LGB friends or family members was related to more positive attitudes toward LGB individuals.

The number of LGB acquaintances, close friends, and family members increased as uncertainty decreased. Therefore, uncertainty was reduced as contact with LGB individuals increased. Uncertainty was measured by looking at confidence in one's ability to accurately predict, interpret, and/or explain the behaviors of LGB individuals, one's ability to tolerate ambiguity, and awareness of LGBT discrimination. As the number of LGB individuals known increased, participants became more aware of discrimination against LGB individuals, were more tolerant of ambiguity in general, and were more confident in their abilities to predict and explain the behaviors of LGB individuals. Uncertainty Reduction Theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) posited that as uncertainty decreases, liking tends to increase. Thus, for the participants, less uncertainty may have led to increased levels of liking, which facilitates relational development. It is

also possible that higher levels of liking led to more uncertainty reduction behaviors, which also facilitates relational development. Those whose uncertainty was high may have been less likely to form relationships because they lacked those feelings of liking.

Participants with higher religiosity and fundamental religious beliefs reported lower awareness of discrimination and less confidence in their abilities to predict and explain the behavior of LGB individuals. They also reported having fewer LGB close friends and family. This uncertainty may be a factor that contributes to their more negative attitudes toward LGB individuals. Uncertainty for these participants was higher than for other participants, especially those with relativistic religious beliefs. The participants with higher levels of relativistic religious beliefs reported less uncertainty and more LGB close friends and family members. Thus, the lower uncertainty may have led to their more positive attitudes toward LGB individuals.

These findings suggest the need to further examine the possible relationship between Uncertainty Reduction Theory and the Contact Hypothesis. The findings of the current study suggest that uncertainty is reduced as the number of contacts with others who are different than one's self increases. Although decreasing uncertainty within the context of a relationship has been widely discussed regarding Uncertainty Reduction Theory, this research concludes that the sheer number of members known from groups different than one's own can decrease uncertainty. Allport's (1979) Contact Hypothesis asserted that equal status, cooperative contact between individuals of different groups could lead to decreased prejudice between groups. It is logical that uncertainty would be reduced through equal status, cooperative contact. Thus, the reduction of uncertainty

may also play a role in decreasing prejudice or increasing supportive attitudes toward a group or members of a group. In the current study, participants with most contact and the least uncertainty had the most positive, supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals. It is clear that uncertainty and contact play an important role in attitudes. Thus, it is important for future research and theorists to consider the connection between contact, uncertainty, and attitudes when examining attitudes toward members of groups different than one's own groups.

Practical Implications

Ally groups or those who are interested in ally training, specifically among Christian populations, should include education about the nature of sexual orientation, as well as opportunities for equal, cooperative contact with LGB individuals. This can help reduce uncertainty about how LGB people behave in interactions and also reduce intergroup communication apprehension towards LGB people. All persons need exposure and education about the discrimination that still takes place against LGB individuals in society, as well as education about the benefits of differing viewpoints and worldviews, in order to better handle ambiguity in their lives. It is difficult to change a person's political party affiliation, political ideology, or religion; however, reducing uncertainty about LGB individuals and increasing contact with LGB individuals may lead to small changes in attitudes, which could create a safer, more supportive culture.

When interacting within Christian populations, one will face the interpretation of the Bible some people hold, which classifies homosexuality as a sin. However, based on the results of the study, it is apparent that even if participants view homosexuality as sin,

they feel they are called to love, to treat people equally, and to refrain from judging them. The participants overwhelmingly stated that they are called to love everyone. For a few, loving meant sharing with others the belief that homosexuality is a sin. Such behaviors are important for religious groups and churches to consider. One participant noted that Christians should focus on a person's relationship with Jesus, not their sexual orientation, which may help churches be more welcoming and accepting of LGB individuals, even if they see homosexuality as a sin. The overarching point made in the participant comments is that Christians are called to love everyone regardless of differences or disagreements. If churches focused on this, they could avoid further alienating LGB individuals and discourage discrimination based on sexual orientation.

One of the sub-themes of participant comments revolved around discrimination, with many participants stating that no one should be discriminated against. However, awareness of discrimination is important to consider, because if participants are not aware of discrimination, then they cannot do anything about the discrimination that occurs. Therefore, education about LGB discrimination, especially on an interpersonal level, becomes imperative for these populations. Christians are generally taught to help those who suffer, and perhaps if they were more aware of the suffering caused by discrimination against LGB individuals, some of their attitudes would change. Stotzer (2009) reported that one factor in the development of supportive attitudes among participants was experiencing empathy for LGB peers who faced discrimination or rejection. Similarly, Goldstein and Davis (2010) reported that learning about LGB issues and exposure to LGB discrimination were related to higher levels of LGB activism.

Therefore, if Christians are aware of discrimination faced by LGB acquaintances, friends, and/or family members, that awareness may lead to more supportive attitudes.

Research has also found that religious beliefs can contribute to pro-LGB activism because of the focus on justice (Russell, 2011). This does not mean that Christians must sacrifice all of their beliefs, but many Christians are taught to love one another, and so it could change their perspective on how to treat LGB individuals, as the participant comments illustrated. Several participants stated that regardless of whether or not homosexuality was right or wrong, sinful or not, everyone deserves equal treatment and love. If Christians are able to recognize the hurtful experiences LGB individuals have, they will be more aware of the unequal treatment present in society based on sexual orientation. If churches help their members become aware of this discrimination, then Christians may recognize the injustice LGB individuals suffer, regardless of beliefs about sexual orientation. Awareness of discrimination seems like it might be the key to adjusting attitudes of those with fundamental religious viewpoints or negative attitudes toward LGB individuals.

There are several things Christians could do when they desire to decrease their uncertainty about sexual orientation and LGB individuals. First of all, learning about the nature of sexual orientation is important, even if a person ends up disagreeing with what they learn. Second, becoming aware of discrimination faced by LGB individuals is important as well. There are centers on many college campuses that could help people access information about lesbian, gay, and bisexual students. Additionally, many communities have events centered around LGB issues, and getting involved or attending

these events can help people gain access to information and meet new people who may have different beliefs. For Christians, there are many religious groups that support LGB equality who could provide information and support for those who are confused about what they believe or want to learn more about LGB individuals. These include The Episcopal Church and the United Church of Christ.

Contact with LGB individuals also seems to improve attitudes toward LGB people because it helps people reduce their uncertainty about their abilities to predict and explain LGB individuals' behaviors and increase their awareness of LGBT discrimination. Contact with LGB individuals is also associated with higher ability to tolerate ambiguity and be comfortable with the uncertainty. It is possible that these variables increase contact with LGB individuals as well; however, it is difficult to determine which comes first.

This research provides powerful contributions to the body of knowledge about attitudes toward LGB individuals. The level of consistency between the results of this research and past research on the topic is extremely high. This helps to confirm existing knowledge and replicate findings about religiosity and attitudes toward LGB individuals. The research comes from the perspective of communication theory, which adds to the body of knowledge by highlighting the relationships between intergroup contact, uncertainty reduction, and supportive attitudes toward LGB individuals. As contact increases, uncertainty decreases, which contributes to more positive attitudes. The practical applications of the research are extremely important in the effort to combat the LGB discrimination present in society. Perhaps most importantly, the research illustrates

that there are a range of Christian perspectives on this topic, there is not one overarching Christian perspective dictating what Christians believe. Rather, there is fluidity and movement within Christianity on this issue.

Personal Reflections and Conclusion

Attitudes are changing, even among religious groups and Christians. This research has led me to think a lot about those whose attitudes are not changing. Many people firmly believe that homosexuality is a sin and that many churches and Christians are supporting a sinful lifestyle. However, so many participants made comments about loving everyone and treating everyone equally. They also acknowledged that no one is perfect and everyone sins, but Jesus forgives. It makes me wonder why homosexuality is the issue of focus when so many other things considered to be sins are as pervasive in society. Perhaps sexual orientation is focused on because it is visible, and Christians who see homosexuality as a sin believe that LGB people would resist their sexual orientation if they wanted a relationship with Jesus. Even participants who explicitly stated that homosexuality was wrong said in the same breath that they are to love everyone. So my question is, how do you love and treat someone equally when homosexuality is considered a sin and is focused on and condemned so strongly by Christians? I would argue that if Christians are made more aware of the discrimination faced by LGB individuals, their attitudes toward homosexuality may not change, but their ability to look beyond sexual orientation and see a person, a “child of God” as participants noted, would be heightened, and perhaps they would focus less on the homosexuality and more on the person as a human being with many characteristics and attributes.

This research was challenging for me because it involved my own identities as an LGB ally and as a Christian. I was questioned about my motives in doing the research. One participant was concerned that I was going to twist the results and use the study to condemn homosexuality because of my Christian perspective. After the survey was launched, someone close to me accused me of loving sin and not loving Jesus. I was constantly forced to go back to my beliefs and the source of those beliefs, as my faith and position were questioned by others. I even questioned myself. The road has been full of competing ideas, doubts, fear, questions, confusion, accusations, and for me, lots of prayer.

I grew up in a family that taught me about the discrimination faced by LGB individuals. They also taught me that homosexuality was not a choice and was just a different way of living. I recall a conversation with my Grandpa in my later teenage years where we were talking about marriage, and he told me he wanted me to marry someone that made me happy- whether that was a man or a woman. I also grew up in a church where a gay couple were members and were loved and accepted. They were involved in the case that eventually led to the legalization of same sex marriage in Iowa. When marriage was legalized, my pastor performed their wedding ceremony and my mom was their wedding designer. These experiences led me to develop into a person strongly invested in Christianity and a person strongly invested in equality for LGB individuals. As my personal experience shows, knowing God, learning about God's unconditional love, learning about homosexuality, being exposed to discrimination, and knowing LGB individuals throughout my life made me the person I am today. Similarly,

my results suggest that education about sexual orientation, contact with LGB individuals, and awareness of discrimination toward LGB individuals can lead to more supportive, positive attitudes among Christians.

My hope is that this research lets Christian allies know they are not alone and adds a voice to the falsely dichotomized debate between religion and homosexuality. I hope it encourages others to refrain from judgment long enough to come to understand and know their LGB acquaintances, friends, and family members as humans.

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APPENDIX A
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Page One

Hello! This survey is a part of research I am completing for a Master's thesis as part of my degree program at the University of Northern Iowa. The purpose of my research is to gain insight into the attitudes of people who identify as Christians toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. Anyone who is over the age of 18 and identifies as a Christian is eligible to participate in the research. If you meet these 2 criteria and are willing to participate, you can take this survey and once you have done so, your participation is complete. The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes. The survey is anonymous. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties. If at any time you become uncomfortable, or wish to exit the survey, simply click out of the survey. You are by no means required to finish all of the survey if you do not wish to do so. Participation is completely voluntary. Participating in this survey may pose minimal risk due to the nature of the questions. You will be asked about your religious beliefs and your attitudes toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals, which may make you uncomfortable if you do not usually share these things with others. Again, at any time, if you become emotionally distressed or wish to stop participating, you are welcome to exit the survey. Keep in mind that the survey is anonymous. One benefit of this survey is that it provides you with the opportunity to state your beliefs and viewpoints. It will also help give insight into current attitudes of those who identify as Christian toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals and what contributes to those attitudes. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at: Megan Wharff wharff.megan@gmail.com or my faculty advisor at: April Chatham-Carpenter chatham@uni.edu If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact Anita Gordon at: anita.gordon@uni.edu or 319-273-6148.

1) Clicking on "Yes" below means that you are giving your informed consent to participate and that you identify as a Christian and are over 18 years of age. If you are under 18 years of age, do not identify as a Christian, or would like to decline, please click "No" and feel free to exit the survey.*

Yes

No

Page 2

2) What is your age?

3) What is your biological sex?

Female

Male

Other

4) What is your racial or ethnic background?

African American/Black

American Indian

Asian/Pacific Islander

Caucasian

Hispanic/Latino/a

Multiracial

Other (please specify): _____

5) What is your religious affiliation?

- Catholic
- Nondenominational Christian
- Protestant/Christian
- Other (please specify): _____

6) How often do you generally attend religious services?

- never
- a few times/year or less
- 1-3 times/month
- weekly or more often

7) If you are religiously affiliated, does your religious group hold a formal stance on homosexuality?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- I am not religiously affiliated

8) If you are religiously affiliated, is your stance on homosexuality the same stance taken by your religious group?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- I am not religiously affiliated

9) What is your political ideology?

- Liberal
- Moderate
- Conservative
- Other (please specify): _____

10) Which political party best represents your views?

- Republican
- Democratic
- Independent
- Green Party
- Socialist
- Libertarian
- Other (please specify): _____

11) In which of these groups does your total family income fall (from all sources)?

- \$0-\$19,999
- \$20-\$39,999
- \$40-\$59,999
- \$60-\$79,999
- \$80-\$99,999
- \$100,000+

12) Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

- Bisexual
- Gay/Lesbian/Homosexual
- Straight/Heterosexual
- Other (please specify): _____

13) What is your highest level of education attained?

- 8th grade or lower
 Some high school
 Received High School Diploma
 Some College
 Received College Degree
 Received Advanced Degree (Master's, Professional, PhD etc.)
-

New Page**14) Indicate the extent to which each statement is true or not true of you.**

	not at all true of me	somewhat true of me	moderately true of me	mostly true of me	totally true of me
My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I spend little time trying to grow in understanding of my faith.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important to me to spend periods of time in private religious thought and reflection.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Religious beliefs influence very few of my dealings in life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Religion is especially important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I rarely read books and magazines about my faith.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy working in the activities of my religious organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy spending time with others of my religious affiliation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am uninformed about my local religious group and have little influence in its decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I make financial contributions to my religious organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

New Page

18) Do you have any acquaintances (not close friends or family members) who you knew to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual from the beginning of your relationship with them?

- No
- Yes

19) How many?

- Zero
- One
- Two
- Three
- Four
- Five
- Six or more

New Page

20) Do you have any acquaintances (not close friends or family members) who you found to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual after you'd gotten to know them?

- No
- Yes

21) How many?

- Zero
 - One
 - Two
 - Three
 - Four
 - Five
 - Six or more
-

New Page**22) Do you have any close friends or family members who you know to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual?**

- No
- Yes

23) How many?

- Zero
 - One
 - Two
 - Three
 - Four
 - Five
 - Six or more
-

New Page

Select one gay, lesbian, or bisexual person who you know the best (it may only be an acquaintance), and answer the following questions about your relationship with him or her.

24) Did you know when you met the person that he/she was gay, lesbian, or bisexual? (If answering "Yes" to this question, skip to question 28 below.)

- No
- Yes

25) If not, how long was it before you found out?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5+ years

26) How surprised were you when you found out that he/she was gay, lesbian, or bisexual?

- Completely Unsurprised
- Fairly unsurprised
- Slightly surprised
- Moderately Surprised
- Extremely surprised

27) When you found out that the person was lesbian, gay, or bisexual, how did you react initially? (Please describe). Did your reaction change after some time had passed? If so, how did it change?

28) How well do you know the person you were thinking about in #24 above?

- Not well
- Slightly well
- Moderately well
- Well
- Extremely well

29) For the person you were thinking about in question #24 above, how confident are you in your general ability to predict how he/she will behave?

- Not confident at all
- Slightly confident
- Moderately confident
- Confident
- Extremely Confident

30) How well can you predict his/her attitudes and feelings? (For the person you were thinking about in #24 above).

- Not well
- Slightly well
- Moderately well
- Well
- Extremely well

31) How much can you empathize with (share) the way he/she feels about him/herself? (For the person you were thinking about in #24 above.)

- Not at all
 - Very little
 - Somewhat
 - Moderately
 - Very Much
-

New Page

32) How often do you:

Read about discrimination faced by gay, lesbian, and/or bisexual individuals?

- never
- very rarely
- rarely
- occasionally
- somewhat frequently
- frequently
- very frequently

Discuss experiences of discrimination with gay, lesbian, and/or bisexual individuals?

- never
- very rarely
- rarely
- occasionally
- somewhat frequently
- frequently
- very frequently

Society has reached the point where gay people and straight people have equal opportunities for advancement. () () () () () () ()

It is uncommon to see gay men and lesbians treated in a homophobic manner on television. (the word homophobic refers to an irrational fear of or discrimination toward homosexual individuals) () () () () () () ()

Discrimination against gay men and lesbians is still a problem in the United States. () () () () () () ()

New Page

37) Please indicate the extent to which each statement is true of you.

	not at all true of me	slightly true of me	moderately true of me	mostly true of me	totally true of me
I avoid settings where people don't share my values.	()	()	()	()	()

I can enjoy being with people whose values are very different from mine.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to live in a foreign country for a while.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like to surround myself with things that are familiar to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think that the sooner we all acquire similar values and ideals the better.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can be comfortable with nearly all kinds of people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If given a chance, I would rather visit a foreign country than a vacation at home.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I think that a good teacher is one who makes you wonder about your way of looking at things. () () () () ()

I think that a good job is one where what is to be done and how it is to be done are always clear. () () () () ()

I think that a person who leads an even, regular life in which few surprises or unexpected happenings arise really has a lot to be grateful for. () () () () ()

I think that what we are used to is always preferable to what is unfamiliar. () () () () ()

I like parties where I know most of the people more than ones where all or most people are complete strangers. () () () () ()

New Page

38) Is there anything else you would like to add on your beliefs about religion and homosexuality?

Thank You!

Thank you for taking my survey! Your response is very important to my research!

APPENDIX B

EMAIL TO GATEKEEPERS

Hello,

My name is Megan Wharff and I am a current graduate student at the University of Northern Iowa. I am currently completing research for my Master's thesis and am examining Christian attitudes toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. If you are aware of anyone that may be interested in participating in the research, would be willing to pass this link to my survey along?

The link is: (insert link here)

The survey is anonymous.

I greatly appreciate your time and consideration.

Please feel free to contact me at this email if you have any questions.

Regards,
Megan Wharff

APPENDIX C

SOCIAL MEDIA POST

I am working on research for my thesis about Christian attitudes toward gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals. If you are over the age of 18 and identify yourself as a Christian, please click on this link and consider taking my survey to participate in the research! Thanks for your consideration! The survey is anonymous. (insert survey link)