

ABSTRACT

Religion, Sexuality, and Gender: An Individual and Organizational Analysis

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Homosexuality has been the object of much debate, research, and political struggle over the last 40 years. Since the Stonewall riots of 1969 the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender movement (LGBT) continues to grow and occupy a much larger portion of the social consciousness in the United States. Religion is commonly viewed as a “brake” slowing down the liberalization of attitudes. The influence of gender and especially traditional gender attitudes are also significant. While the effect of religion or gender on attitudes toward homosexuality and the inequality gays and lesbians experience is documented, little research investigates the intersection of religion, sexuality, and gender. Drawing on multiple data sets at the individual and organizational levels, the four analyses in this project demonstrate the influence of religion and gender on attitudes toward homosexuality and the full inclusion of gays and lesbians into American life. Specifically, this study considers 1) the relationship between gender ideology and attitudes toward homosexuality, 2) attribution theory and attitudes toward same-sex unions, 3) the determinants of congregational responses to gays and lesbians, and 4) the relationship between gender inequality and the inequality experienced by gays

and lesbians within American congregations. The findings for each study are discussed, and implications and suggestions for future research are also considered.

Religion, Sexuality, and Gender: An Individual and Organizational Analysis

by

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A Dissertation

Approved by the Department of Sociology

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Accepted by the Graduate School
May 2012

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Individual authorship is largely a myth, for all knowledge production is thoroughly socially embedded. This dissertation is no different. I would like to first thank Kevin Dougherty for guiding me throughout the completion of this project and my entire graduate career by providing countless improvements to my work and unceasing encouragement. I am also indebted to Paul Froese, Carson Mencken, and Charles Tolbert. Paul is one of the most generous people I have ever met and always pushed me to think bigger. I thank Carson and Dr. Tolbert for (literally) teaching me everything I know in the realm of quantitative methods and for providing me the skills to continue to expand my tool-kit. I am also grateful to Wade Rowatt for providing a fresh viewpoint on both my master's thesis and this dissertation.

Outside of my committee, I would like to thank my colleagues. I am most appreciative of Scott Draper. Scott was a constant encouragement, insightful critic, and true friend to me during our tenure here at Baylor. I am also thankful to the graduate students that came before and after: Clay Polson, Buster Smith, Joseph Baker, Jared Meier, Jeremy Rhodes, Ashley Palmer, Sam Stroope, Shanna Granstra, Paul Castronova, Aaron Franzen, Jenna Griebel, Lindsay Morrow, Brandon Martinez, Joshua Tom, Todd Ferguson, and Britta Andercheck. I appreciate the investment each made into our friendship and my scholarship. I thank Chris Bader for taking me under his wing during his time at Baylor and for showing me that I can cut it as an academic. I am thankful to

the entire faculty and staff of the Baylor sociology department and their contribution to my education. I single out Sharon Tate for her willingness to put up with my endless requests and interruptions. The statistical analyses used in Chapter 4 were made possible through a training seminar supported by grants from the Baylor University Graduate School and the Department of Sociology. I appreciate their support and willingness to encourage my training.

To my parents, Tom and Deb Van Abeele and Kim and Cathy Whitehead: thank you from the bottom of my heart. The support, love, and encouragement you give so freely is truly indispensable. Thank you for believing in Kelly and me. I also thank my siblings: Monica and Shawn Hoover, Chandra and Alex Dean, Sarah and Brian Bennett, and Jill Van Abeele.

Most of all, I am thankful to my family. I am convinced that I would not have made it to this point had it not been for the unwavering support of my spouse, Kelly. I thank you for partnering with me in this life. Your constant friendship, love, and laughter make everything I do worth doing. You laugh when I say this, but you deserve to be recognized for this accomplishment just as much as I do. Finally, I thank my two little ones, Joel and Natalie.

DEDICATION

For Kelly

For always loving, supporting, and believing

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Religion and Attitudes toward Homosexuality in the United States

Homosexuality has been the object of much debate, research, and political struggle over the last 40 years. Since the Stonewall riots of 1969 the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender movement (LGBT) continues to grow and occupy a much larger portion of the social consciousness in the United States. This is partly due to the elevation of LGBT issues to the forefront of conservative religious movements like the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition (Fetner, 2008). While battles between the conservative Religious Right and gay and lesbian activist camps were fought at the local, state, and federal levels of government, the attitudes of the general public underwent dramatic change. The growing visibility of gays and lesbians led to ever increasing numbers of studies aimed at investigating how Americans felt toward gay men and lesbians, what demographic and social indicators predicted those attitudes, and how those attitudes were evolving. Most generally, Americans' attitudes toward the civil rights that should be afforded lesbians and gays grew steadily more favorable from the 1970s through the 1990s (Loftus, 2001) and through the first decade of the twenty-first century (Sherkat et al., 2011). Americans' views of the morality of homosexuality is also more favorable, but only since the early 1990s (Andersen and Fetner, 2008; Loftus, 2001; Wilcox and Wolpert, 2000).

While attitudes toward homosexuality are more favorable now than ever before, a sizable portion of society maintains a disapproving view of lesbians and gay men. A

wealth of research focuses on demographic, ideological, and sociological predictors associated with negative views toward gays and lesbians. Religion is one such predictor. In fact, some identify religion as a “brake” that is slowing down the liberalization of attitudes toward homosexuality in the culture at large (Treas, 2002). At the individual level religion is commonly operationalized in three different ways: religious belief, religious behavior, and religious affiliation. Individuals with traditional religious beliefs tend to hold more negative views of gay men and lesbians (Burdette, Ellison, and Hill, 2005; Cochran and Beeghley, 1991; Ellison, Acevedo, and Ramos-Wada, 2011; Froese, Bader, and Smith, 2008; Jelen and Wilcox, 1991; Laythe et al., 2002; Laythe, Finkel, and Kirkpatrick, 2001; Malcomson et al., 2006; Rowatt et al., 2006; Rowatt et al., 2009, Sherkat, de Vries, and Creek, 2010; Sherkat et al., 2011; Tsang and Rowatt, 2007). For example, those who believe the Bible should be interpreted literally are less likely to report positive attitudes toward lesbians and gays. Other religious beliefs, like the extent to which God is actively engaged in the world or judgmental of it, are also associated with attitudes toward homosexuality (Bader and Froese, 2005; Froese and Bader, 2007; 2008; 2010; Whitehead, 2010).

In addition to beliefs, prior studies find that individuals who practice their religion regularly are more likely to hold negative views of homosexuality (Andersen and Fetner, 2008; Beatty and Walter, 1984; Cochran and Beeghley, 1991; Ellison et al., 2011; Finlay and Walther, 2003; Herek and Capitanio, 1995; Olson, Cadge, and Harrison, 2006; Sherkat et al., 2010; Treas, 2002; Whitehead, 2010). Consistent worship service attendance, daily prayer or meditation, or regular scripture reading are common measures of religious behavior. Finally, the religious tradition with which individuals or

organizations affiliate is strongly associated with attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Evangelical Protestants and Black Protestants are less favorable toward homosexuality compared to Mainline Protestants or Catholics (Andersen and Fetner, 2008; Cochran and Beeghley, 1991; Ellison et al., 2011; Finlay and Walther, 2003; Gay and Ellison, 1993; Greeley and Hout, 2006; Herek, 1988; Hill, Moulton, and Burdette, 2004; Koch and Curry, 2000; Loftus, 2001; McVeigh and Diaz, 2009; Olson and Cadge, 2002; Olson et al., 2006; Sherkat et al., 2010; Sherkat et al., 2011; Smith et al., 1998; Whitehead, 2010; Wood and Bartkowski, 2004).

Other research focuses on religion and homosexuality at the organizational level. A collection of studies at the denominational level highlight changes in denominational stances toward homosexuality (Beuttler, 1999; Burgess, 1999; Cadge, 2002; Kapinus, Kraus, and Flowers, 2010; Koch and Curry, 2000; Rogers, 1999; Scheitle, Merino, and Moore, 2010; Van Geest, 2007a; 2007b; Wellman, 1999; Wood and Bloch, 1995). Other works attempt to bridge the denomination/congregation divide by showing how each level of religious organization can influence the other (Cadge, Day, and Wildeman, 2007; Cadge, Olson, and Wildeman, 2008). Clergy stances toward homosexuality are another important part of this strain of research. These studies find that, for the most part, clergy avoid discussing homosexuality for fear of conflict that might divide the congregation (Cadge and Wildeman, 2008; Comstock, 2001; Djupe, Olson, and Gilbert, 2006; Olson and Cadge, 2002).

Religion, Gender, and Sexuality

Along with a general liberalization in attitudes toward gays and lesbians, Americans' views on gender and the "proper" roles for men and women have changed as

well. A strict division of labor for men and women is no longer the dominant view (Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004). However, for some groups, especially religious groups, a conservative gender ideology still endures (Gallagher, 2003). While these views influence real-life outcomes such as educational attainment and career trajectory, many conservative religious individuals exhibit loose-coupling between their stated gender ideology and the practical application of these beliefs. This is referred to as symbolic traditionalism and pragmatic egalitarianism (Gallagher, 2003; Gallagher and Smith, 1999). Evangelicals, for instance, talk about their view of proper gender roles as strictly complementarian with clearly defined roles for men and women. In practice, however, their marriages and relationships are much more egalitarian with a good deal of sharing concerning authority and decision-making. While some religious individuals' actions may be more egalitarian, the fact that they still maintain complementarian attitudes, and reference religious reasons for doing so, underlies the influence of religion on gender ideology.

Religion is classified as an exposure-based explanation of a person's gender ideology (Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004; Davis and Greenstein, 2009). Particular religious affiliations, frequent worship service attendance, and conservative religious beliefs are all associated with a more traditional gender ideology. Conservative Protestant denominations support more traditional roles for men and women (Bang et al., 2005; Bartkowski, 2001; Denton, 2004; Gallagher, 2003; Gallagher and Smith, 1999). Apart from religious affiliation, more frequent religious service attendance influences gender role views (Ammons and Edgell, 2007; Hertel and Hughes, 1987; Petersen and Donnenwerth, 1998). The regular interaction with like-minded individuals helps to

maintain the traditional gender-role beliefs (Abouchedid and Nasser, 2007; Davidman, 1991; Read, 2003). Studies also show that certain religious beliefs are vital to preserving conservative gender attitudes. Individuals who view God as a “he” or hold their holy scriptures in high regard are more likely to hold complementarian views (Chaves, 1997; Davidman, 1991; Denton, 2004; Hoffmann and Bartkowski, 2008; Pevey, Williams, and Ellison, 1996; Read, 2003; Whitehead, 2012). Religious organizations are also structured to favor men over women (Adams, 2007; Cadge, 2004; Manville, 1997; Stewart-Thomas, 2010). While some religious organizations explicitly state their opposition to equal opportunities for both sexes, even those that aspire to gender equality still exhibit degrees of inequality that is attributed to the gendered nature of organizations (Fobes, 2001). The lack of opportunities for clergywomen brings this state of affairs into sharpest relief (Adams, 2007; Chaves, 1997; Olson, Crawford, and Deckman, 2005; Stewart-Thomas, 2010; Sullins, 2000).

Apart from the influence conservative gender attitudes have on gender roles, a significant body of research outlines how a conservative gender ideology affects views toward homosexuality. Without a doubt, gender is one of the most consistent predictors of attitudes toward homosexuality where men are more unfavorable than women, (Embrick et al., 2007; Herek, 1986; 1988; 2002; Whitley and Ægisdóttir, 2000), but gender ideology is the most common explanation of this gender difference because men tend to hold more traditional gender views (Kerns and Fine, 1994; Kite and Whitley, 1996; 1998). However, any individual, either male or female, with a more traditional gender ideology will be less favorable toward homosexuality.

Past studies on religion and homosexuality, or religion and gender, or gender and sexuality highlight the opportunity for research at the intersection of religion, sexuality, and gender. Each is intimately intertwined with the other. Despite the abundance of research concerning religion, gender, and homosexuality, little if any explores the intersection of all three thus leaving specific gaps within the literature. First, while the connection between gender traditionalism and attitudes toward homosexuality at the individual level is established (Herek, 1986; 1988; 2002; Kerns and Fine, 1994; Kite and Whitley, 1996; 1998; Whitley, 1987; 2001; Whitley and Ægisdóttir, 2000), different measures of gender traditionalism, especially ones that are distinctly religious, are necessary to further specify its link to views of gay men and lesbians. Second, recent work investigates attribution theory, religious and political conservatism, and attitudes toward homosexuality (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2005; 2008; Whitehead, 2010; Wilcox and Norrandar, 2002; Wilcox and Wolpert, 2000; Wood and Bartkowski, 2004). These studies are limited methodologically by not being able to account for both the direct and indirect effects of politics and religion. Third, to date there is little known at a national level about the extent to which congregations are open and welcoming toward gay men and lesbians. Prior research relied on regional convenience samples of congregations. Finally, the relationship between gender traditionalism and acceptance of lesbians and gay men at the organizational level is under-studied as well.

Research Agenda

Examining responses to gays and lesbians at both the individual and organizational levels, I aim to provide four assessments of the religious response to homosexuality, the resulting inequality lesbians and gay men experience, and the

intersection of gender with these issues. Individually each analysis will join in the various conversations taking place across the literature. Taken together my work highlights a number of significant issues. First, religion continues to be relevant in the United States. Whether or not American religion is declining, as some researchers suggest, religious organizations and the religious beliefs, behaviors, and affiliations of Americans continue to influence their views on important social issues. A number of these social issues, like homosexuality, include questions of equal access to rights enjoyed by most Americans. Second, while attitudes toward homosexuality are more favorable now than ever before a sizable portion of the population maintains an oppositional stance toward gay men and lesbians. Religion continues to be a reason why opposition persists (Treas, 2002). Gender traditionalism plays an important role in sustaining opposition as well. Third, the most prevalent form of voluntary association in America, the religious congregation, is still not open to the full inclusion of lesbians and gay men or to equal leadership opportunities for women. Continuing to investigate the intersection of religion, sexuality, and gender is vital because of the inequality religion can at times encourage for both dimensions. Finally, my work also draws attention to what the future might hold concerning attitudes toward homosexuality in the United States. While opposition will undoubtedly persist, continued liberalization is also very likely. This will lead to changes in how those who hold negative views of gay men and lesbians understand and support their position. Religious individuals and organizations will be forced to confront the push toward equality in the wider population.

Each of the following chapters identifies and investigates a specific intersection of religion, sexuality, and gender. Utilizing a variety of quantitative techniques and data

sources I explore: 1) the relationship between gender ideology and attitudes toward homosexuality, 2) attribution theory and attitudes toward same-sex unions, 3) the determinants of congregational responses to gays and lesbians, and 4) the relationship between gender inequality and the inequality experienced by gays and lesbians within American congregations.

In chapter two, I examine the relationship between gender traditionalism and attitudes toward homosexuality. Gender traditionalists are typically invested in maintaining conventional male-female relations because they are believed to be the foundation of a stable society. According to this view, gay men and lesbians are a severe threat capable of undermining this foundation because of their lack of adherence to traditional patterns of gender behavior. I operationalize gender traditionalism using two different measures: traditional gender-role attitudes and masculine images of God. This study contributes to the literature by providing a multivariate test of the influence of gender traditionalism using a more representative sample of the United States than before. Previous studies relied heavily on convenience samples of college students. Likewise, the data set allows for the inclusion of a greater range of socio-demographic and religion controls not available in previous studies. Finally, the masculine image of God measure is novel to the study of attitudes toward homosexuality and breaks new ground on the measurement of gender traditionalist religious beliefs.

Chapter three addresses the growing body of research focused on attribution theory and attitudes toward homosexuality, specifically attitudes toward same-sex unions. In past research religious and political conservatism are found to be consistently associated with same-sex union attitudes as well as beliefs about the cause of

homosexuality. A handful of studies also find that, unsurprisingly, attributions of the cause of homosexuality are strongly linked to people's stances concerning equal rights for lesbians and gay men. These findings raise a number of empirical questions that have yet to be addressed: Does religious and political conservatism influence attitudes toward same-sex unions *indirectly* through attribution beliefs? Are the combined direct and indirect effects of political and religious conservatism greater than the effects of attribution beliefs or other demographic variables? Are attribution beliefs merely used by individuals to provide further support to their previously held beliefs? This analysis provides an essential test of the utility of attribution theory regarding attitudes toward same-sex unions. It also contributes to the study of religion, politics, attribution beliefs, and attitudes toward homosexuality by using a more rigorous methodological technique.

The fourth chapter moves the unit of analysis from the individual to the organization. Specifically, I analyze the most ubiquitous religious organization, the congregation. The extent to which religious congregations include lesbians and gays in congregational life is vital to the wider debate over homosexuality because congregations consistently influence more Americans than any other voluntary social institution. To date little is known at the national level concerning the extent to which congregations accept gay men and lesbians into their midst. Building on past research at the organizational and individual levels, this chapter investigates the influence that religious tradition, theological and political ideology, and the various structural and demographic traits of each congregation have on their acceptance of lesbians and gay men. This chapter contributes to existing literature by providing the first nationally representative analysis of congregational responses to gay men and lesbians. It also serves to highlight

the relationship between various congregational characteristics and the level of acceptance offered to lesbians and gay men. Finally, it provides a starting point of sorts for future studies of congregational responses to homosexuality.

Chapter five begins this work by analyzing the intersection of gender inequality and the inequality experienced by lesbians and gay men in congregations. Building upon Acker's (1990; 2006) theory of gendered organizations and inequality regimes, I investigate the extent to which inequality in gender and sexuality are linked within religious congregations. Specifically, using a nationally representative sample of congregations in the United States, I analyze whether a congregation's stance toward allowing women to serve as head clergy person is significantly associated with their acceptance of gays and lesbians as members or leaders within the congregation. While a handful of studies utilize the gendered organizations framework in the study of gender inequality within religious congregations (Adams, 2007; Cadge, 2004; Manville, 1997; Stewart-Thomas, 2010), no study has examined the relationship between these two dimensions of inequality within religious congregations. This research extends existing literature in three ways. First, it provides support for the utility of the theory of gendered organizations and especially the concept of inequality regimes for investigating dimensions of inequality in addition to gender. Second, it provides evidence of the intersection of gender and sexuality within religious congregations, thereby contributing to the growing dialogue on congregational responses to homosexuality. Finally, these findings propose a number of avenues for future research regarding gender, sexuality, and organizations.

The final chapter serves to highlight the conclusions that can be drawn from each analysis and this dissertation as a whole. It will also outline possible areas for future research that extend the work featured here. Finally, I offer thoughts on the relationship between religion, gender, and attitudes toward homosexuality, and what the future may hold.

CHAPTER TWO

Gender Traditionalism and Attitudes toward Homosexuality

Introduction

It is now no secret that in the general population attitudes toward homosexuality are more favorable than in the past (Andersen and Fetner, 2008; Loftus, 2001; Sherkat et al., 2011). The Stonewall riots in 1969 and the rise of the Religious Right through the 1980s thrust homosexuality into the public discourse, the political sphere, and the consciousness of millions of Americans (Fetner, 2008). Recent political struggles over the rights of gay men and lesbians showcase the ongoing salience of this issue. The issue of marriage in California is an example. In 2008, same-sex marriage was legal in the state for five months until overturned by controversial ballot measure Proposition 8. The fight over Proposition 8 is far from over and many expect that it will find its way to the Supreme Court.

Due to the ongoing and very public nature of the fight over equality for lesbians and gay men, attitudes toward homosexuality continue to warrant investigation. Discovering what is associated with more favorable attitudes toward homosexuality allows researchers to predict which groups are more likely to favor equality for lesbians and gay men. In addition, it enables researchers to estimate how and to what extent attitudes toward homosexuality might shift in the future. For example, differences between age cohorts concerning attitudes toward homosexuality have received a fair amount of attention (Andersen and Fetner, 2008; Loftus, 2001; Powell et al., 2010;

Sherkat et al., 2011; Treas, 2002). These studies show that younger cohorts are generally more favorable of equality for gay men and lesbians. These studies predict that as younger cohorts continue to replace older ones attitudes toward homosexuality should grow more favorable on the whole.

The current study seeks to provide insight into another predictor of attitudes toward homosexuality that may be associated with future shifts. Using a national random sample of American adults, I investigate the level to which gender traditionalism is associated with negative attitudes toward homosexuality. Operationalizing gender traditionalism using two separate measures, one of which is novel to the literature, I find considerable evidence that those individuals who hold traditional gender beliefs are much more likely to frown on homosexuality. This finding is important considering that attitudes toward gender equality continue to liberalize (Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004). These changes could serve as another avenue through which attitudes toward homosexuality grow more favorable.

Gender, Gender Beliefs, and Attitudes toward Homosexuality

One of the most consistent predictors of attitudes toward homosexuality is gender. Men are less favorable toward lesbians and gay men while women are generally more favorable (Embrick et al., 2007; Finlay and Walther, 2003; Herek, 1986, 1988, 2002; Herek and Capitano, 1999; Kerns and Fine, 1994; Kite and Deaux, 1987; Kite and Whitley, 1996, 1998; LaMar and Kite, 1998; Loftus, 2001; Moskowitz et al., 2010; Whitley and Ægisdóttir, 2000). Some studies find however that gender differences depend upon the specific aspect of homosexuality being studied. For example, when considering the civil rights that should be afforded lesbians and gays, Davies (2004)

found no gender differences (see also Kite and Whitley, 1996). A small number of studies find no gender difference concerning homosexuality generally (Cotten-Huston and Waite, 2000; Kirkpatrick, 1993). Despite variations in previous findings, no study has found women to harbor more unfavorable attitudes toward gays and lesbians compared to males. Differences by gender are important because they can influence the actions taken by men and women on issues pertinent to gay men and lesbians (e.g. Deckman et al., 2008).

A common explanation for gender differences regarding homosexuality is that beliefs about gender mediate the difference (Herek, 1986; Kerns and Fine, 1994; Kite and Whitley, 1996, 1998; Law, 1988; Whitley, 1987, 2001; Whitley and Ægisdóttir, 2000). Individuals (both men and women) holding more traditional gender beliefs are generally unfavorable toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) persons (Herek, 1988; Herek and Capitano, 1999; Kerns and Fine, 1994; Kite and Whitley, 1996, 1998; LaMar and Kite, 1998; Marsiglio, 1993; Sakalli, 2002b; Sirin, McCreary, and Mahalik, 2004; Whitley, 1987, 2001; Whitley and Ægisdóttir, 2000). Gender traditionalists view gay men and lesbians negatively because they are believed to exhibit traits commonly associated with the opposite sex. Gay men are viewed as less masculine and more feminine while lesbians are believed to be less feminine and more masculine (Blashill and Powlishta, 2009; Kite and Deaux, 1987; Martin, 1990; Sirin et al., 2004; Whitley, 2001; Wong et al., 1999). This form of stereotyping, labeled the Gender Belief System Perspective, anticipates others will fit into a relatively stable set of roles and traits where people are either fully masculine or feminine. Therefore, homosexuality poses an

especially strong threat and gay men and lesbians are viewed negatively (Kite and Whitley, 1996, 1998; Whitley and Ægisdóttir, 2000).

The violation of traditional gender beliefs elicits a negative reaction for a number of reasons. First, traditional gender beliefs are intimately tied to other traditional values commonly held in high regard in the United States. The traditional, nuclear family is one such value (Brewer and Wilcox, 2005; Brumbaugh et al., 2008; Burdette, Ellison, and Hill, 2005; Hill, Moulton, and Burdette, 2004; Law, 1988; Wald, Button, and Rienzo, 1996). A marked division of labor and authority between the sexes is often present within the idea of the “traditional family” (Wald et al., 1996). Individuals with a traditional view of marriage deem it the foundation of a stable society where altruistic norms and civic skills are instilled in the next generation (Eskridge and Spedale, 2006). Because homosexuality is an alternative to the traditional understanding of family, proponents of traditional marriage view same-sex relationships as a severe threat to the institution of marriage and thus a threat to a functioning, stable social order (Hill et al., 2004; McVeigh and Diaz, 2009; Wald et al., 1996). Individuals’ feelings about the vulnerability of heterosexual marriage is an extremely important predictor of attitudes toward homosexuality generally, and same-sex marriage in particular (Brumbaugh et al., 2008). Procreation is also considered a central aspect of traditional views of marriage (Burdette et al., 2005). Because gay men and lesbians cannot procreate their unions are considered something altogether different from traditional marriage. Ideas about what constitutes a family are shifting in the United States however (Powell et al., 2010).

A second violation of traditional gender beliefs emerges from the idea that men are relinquishing the advantaged status of being male (Herek, 2002; Herek and Capitano,

1999; Kite and Whitley, 1998; LaMar and Kite, 1998). The male role is generally perceived as one of higher status in American society compared to the female role (Bem, 1993) and so attempts to abandon that status must not be tolerated (Herek, 1986). Men usually are less tolerant of other men who they perceive as having “given up” the advantageous male role (Herek, 1986, 2002; Kite and Whitley, 1996, 1998). While past research has focused on the more negative reaction males receive, for some groups, women abdicating their female role might be just as intolerable. Some conservative Christian groups idealize women in traditional female roles (Gallagher, 2003). This form of benevolent sexism places women on a pedestal, recognizes men’s dependence on them, and believes that men are not “complete” until each has a woman. This type of sexism is predictive of more negative attitudes toward homosexuality as well (Sakalli, 2002b).

The belief that the United States maintains a covenant relationship with God is a third explanation of why the perceived violations of gender traditionalism by gay men and lesbians elicit negative reactions from some individuals (Burdette et al., 2005). Many believe that America was founded under God’s direction and blessing and that God’s protection and blessing can be lost if America strays too far from the morals upon which it was founded (Bellah, 1975; Wald and Calhoun-Brown, 2007). Abandoning traditional gender beliefs leads to the breakdown of the traditional family. This in turn results in societal disintegration which will cause God to cease blessing the United States and let it fail. The possible fall of America due to its failure to live up to its side of the covenant is commonly compared to the fall of Rome (e.g. Murphy, 2007). In sum, gender traditionalism is consistently found to be associated with unfavorable attitudes

toward gays and lesbians because violation of gender traditionalist beliefs are believed to lead to the undermining of the traditional family, the forsaking of the social status associated with each gender, and the United States losing God's blessing.

Operationalizing Gender Traditionalism

Past research operationalized gender traditionalism in two primary ways. Many researchers created an index using questions that measure the level to which respondents believe proper roles for men and women should be sharply differentiated (Davis and Greenstein, 2009). Variations of the traditional gender-role beliefs index are widely used to examine what influences these beliefs – gender (Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004), education (Cunningham et al., 2005), labor force participation (Davis and Greenstein, 2009), and religion (Bang et al., 2005) – and to examine what these beliefs influence – employment and family trade-offs (Ammons and Edgell, 2007), marital quality (Wilcox and Nock, 2006), marital decision making (Zvonkovic, Greaves, Schmiege, and Hall, 1996), marital stability (Davis and Greenstein, 2004), perceived equity in household labor (Braun et al., 2008), and housework patterns (Presser, 1994). Scores of past studies utilize a traditional gender-role beliefs index when predicting attitudes toward homosexuality (Herek, 1988; Herek and Capitanio, 1999; Kerns and Fine, 1994; Kite and Whitley, 1996, 1998; LaMar and Kite, 1998; Marsiglio, 1993; Sakalli, 2002b; Sirin et al., 2004; Whitley, 1987, 2001). These studies find that traditional gender-role beliefs are associated with negative attitudes toward homosexuality.

However, each of these past studies is limited by two issues. First, many utilize convenience samples of college students. While studies using these samples provide an important starting point, it is necessary to utilize larger and more representative samples

of the United States. Second, a limited number of variables characterize past studies.

This study will build upon and extend those past findings using a national sample and a more complete set of independent variables. Replicating past research, the first hypothesis is:

H1: Higher scores on the traditional gender-role beliefs index will be significantly associated with more unfavorable views toward homosexuality.

Another method of operationalizing traditional gender beliefs is to measure the extent to which respondents believe God is masculine. Images of God are valuable in research because they allow for observation of individuals' underlying philosophical and moral worldviews which they may have difficulty verbalizing (Froese and Bader, 2010, p. 147). They let researchers appreciate to a fuller extent what is undergirding and perhaps motivating people's beliefs, attitudes, and actions. God, however conceptualized, operates as an "ultimate generalized other" that becomes not only an object of contemplation but also interaction (Berger, 1969; Froese and Bader, 2010). As Froese and Bader point out, people often ask themselves, "What will God think? How would God respond to this? Which path does God want me to follow?" (2010, pp. 9-10). Knowing the form this "ultimate generalized other" takes provides insight into why and how people answer those questions the way that they do. Images of God have proven useful in predicting attitudes on a range of other issues including capital punishment (Bader et al., 2010; Unnever, Bartkowski, and Cullen, 2010), absolutist sex attitudes (Froese and Bader, 2008, 2010), abortion (Unnever, Bartkowski, and Cullen, 2010), trust (Mencken, Bader, and Embry, 2009), environmental spending (Greeley, 1993), desire for racial solidarity (Calhoun-Brown, 1999), and volunteerism (Ozorak, 2003).

When that “ultimate generalized other” is perceived to be masculine, the legitimation of certain social institutions, like proper roles for men and women, takes on added significance. Those who perceive God to be masculine are signaling an underlying belief that there is a gendered nature to all of reality and that there are strict roles into which men and women must fit (Gallagher, 2003). A masculine image of God is strongly associated with more traditional gender-role beliefs (Whitehead, 2012). This relationship between a masculine image of God and traditional gender-role beliefs indicates that both should be significantly associated with attitudes toward homosexuality. Other images of God have proven useful when predicting attitudes toward homosexuality as well. Viewing God as active in the world or as judgmental toward humanity is associated with unfavorable attitudes toward homosexuality as well as extending civil rights to gay men and lesbians (Froese and Bader, 2008, 2010; Froese et al., 2008; Whitehead, 2010). However, the association between a gendered image of God and attitudes toward homosexuality has yet to be investigated. The second hypothesis predicts that:

H2: Viewing God as a “he” will be significantly associated with more unfavorable views toward homosexuality.

Prior research demonstrates how traditional gender beliefs exhibit mediating effects in addition to their direct effects. Differences between men and women are attributed to differences in their beliefs about gender (Herek, 1988; Kerns and Fine, 1994; Kite and Whitley, 1996, 1998; Law, 1988; Whitley, 1987, 2001; Whitley and Ægisdóttir, 2000). In the same way both measures of traditional gender beliefs could partially mediate the relationship between attitudes toward homosexuality and other demographic variables. Gender, marital status, education level, political views, and age are all significantly associated with gender beliefs (Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004; Brooks and

Bolzendahl, 2004; Ciabattari, 2001; Corrigan and Konrad, 2007; Cunningham et al., 2005; Davis and Greenstein, 2009; Myers and Booth, 2002). Therefore, their relationship to attitudes toward homosexuality may be partially explained by their relationship with gender beliefs. For example, the association between political conservatism and attitudes toward homosexuality would be partially mediated by the differences in gender beliefs between political conservatives and political liberals. Likewise, a similar relationship among traditional gender belief measures, attitudes toward homosexuality and measures of religious belief, behavior, and affiliation could exist. The traditional gender-role beliefs index and the masculine image of God measure could partially mediate the association between religion variables and attitudes toward homosexuality. Prior research demonstrates greater levels of gender traditionalism for those who are religiously active, adhere to traditional religious beliefs, and who affiliate with conservative Protestant traditions (Ammons and Edgell, 2007; Bang, Hall, Anderson, and Willingham, 2005; Denton, 2004; Gay, Ellison, and Powers, 1996; Heaton and Cornwall, 1989; Hoffman and Bartkowski, 2008; Read and Bartkowski, 2000). The third hypothesis predicts the possible mediating effect of the two measures of traditional gender beliefs:

H3: Both measures of gender traditionalism will partially mediate the relationship between demographic and religious characteristics and attitudes toward homosexuality.

Data

Data for this study are drawn from the second wave (2007) of the Baylor Religion Survey (BRS). The 2007 BRS is a random, national sample of 1,648 U.S. citizens administered by the Gallup Organization. The survey utilized a mixed-mode sampling

design consisting of two phases. A total of 3,500 individuals were screened (1,000 in phase 1 + 2,500 in phase 2) with 2,460 possible respondents (624 from phase 1 + 1,836 from phase 2). A total of 1,648 questionnaires were returned resulting in a response rate of 47% (1,648/3,500) among all individuals screened and a response rate of 67% (1,648/2,460) for those who agreed to receive a mailed survey. This response rate is within the normal parameters for random-digit dialing samples (see Froese and Bader, 2010). Additionally, the first wave of the BRS compare favorably to similar items on the General Social Survey (Bader, Mencken, and Froese, 2007). The 2007 BRS compares favorably to the 2008 GSS as well. These results are available from the author upon request. The 2007 BRS is advantageous for this study because it contains measures relating to attitudes toward homosexuality, gender traditionalism, and masculine images of God in addition to a breadth of socio-demographic and religion variables known to influence attitudes toward homosexuality.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable used in this investigation is an index created from four questions asking for respondents' level of agreement (1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree) to the following statements: "Homosexuals should be allowed to marry," "Homosexuals should be allowed civil unions," "People are born as either homosexual or heterosexual," and "People choose to be homosexuals."¹ Each measure loaded onto one factor with all loading scores above 0.75. The alpha reliability coefficient for the index is 0.85. The attitudes toward homosexuality index ranges from a minimum score of 4 to a maximum score of 20. The mean for the index is 12.12 and the standard deviation is 4.88

¹This last statement was recoded to correspond in direction to the first three statements.

(see Table 2.1). Higher scores on the index correspond to more conservative attitudes regarding homosexuality. This index was effectively utilized in past analyses of attitudes toward homosexuality (Rowatt et al., 2009).²

Independent Variables of Interest

The first independent variable of interest is an index measuring respondents' attitudes toward the proper roles for women and men in society. The index is comprised of four items that ask for respondents' level of agreement (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) to the following statements: "Most men are better suited emotionally for politics than most women," "A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works," "It is God's will that women care for children," and "A husband should earn a larger salary than his wife." These items are widely used when constructing gender ideology indexes (see Davis and Greenstein, 2009). The alpha reliability coefficient for the index is 0.74. The gender-role traditionalism index ranges from 4 to 20. The mean value for the index is 10.05 with a standard deviation of 3.76 (see Table 2.1). Higher scores on the index equate to more traditional gender-role beliefs.

²One weakness of the measures used is that they ask for respondents' attitudes toward "homosexuals" rather than delineating between attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Attitudes toward gay men and lesbians are usually conflated when asking for responses to "homosexuality" leading the stronger negative reaction toward gay men to overwhelm the sometimes less negative reaction toward lesbians. This results in more negative reactions to homosexuality generally compared to attitudes toward lesbians (Herek, 2002; Kite and Whitley, 1996, 1998; Sirin et al., 2004; Moskowitz et al., 2010). While appeals to measure attitudes toward gay men and lesbians separately is common in psychological studies utilizing convenience samples of college students (e.g. Herek, 2002; Kite and Whitley, 1996, 1998; Whitley, 2009), Herek (2002) points out that public rhetoric commonly utilizes "homosexuality" without distinguishing between gay men and lesbians. Furthermore, many opposing movements condemn homosexuality for both men and women while the gay movement desires equality for gay men and lesbians. Therefore, in the public discourse lesbians and gay men share a "common characteristic that makes them members of a distinct quasi-ethnic group with its own culture and political concerns" (Herek, 2002, p. 42). This suggests that while the present scale cannot distinguish between attitudes toward lesbians and gay men, it does tap into the broader set of attitudes maintained by a majority of the public.

Table 2.1
Descriptive Statistics for Gender Traditionalism and Homosexuality Analyses

Variable	Description	Mean or %	SD
Negative Attitudes toward Homosexuality ($\alpha = 0.85$)	Summed index, 4 = Favorable to 20 = Unfavorable	12.12	4.88
Traditional Gender-Role Beliefs Index ($\alpha = 0.74$)	Summed index, 4 = Egalitarian to 20 = Conservative	10.05	3.76
View God as a “he”	1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree	3.44	1.30
Age	Age in years, 18 to 96	47.35	16.82
Female	1 = Female	53.0%	---
Income	1 = \$10,000 or less to 7 = \$150,000 or more	4.31	1.54
Education	1 = 8 th grade or less, 7 = postgraduate work/degree	4.29	1.53
Politically Conservative	1 = Liberal to 7 = Conservative	4.38	1.63
White	1 = White	97.1%	---
South	1 = South	32.4%	---
Married	1 = Married	65.5%	---
Biblical Literalist	1 = Biblical literalist	22.1%	---
Religious Practice Index ($\alpha = 0.84$)	Standardized and summed index -4 = least involved to 4 = most involved	0.00	2.64
Evangelical Protestant†	1 = Evangelical Protestant	33.1%	---
Black Protestant	1 = Black Protestant	4.8%	---
Mainline Protestant	1 = Mainline Protestant	20.7%	---
Catholic	1 = Catholic	22.1%	---
Jewish	1 = Jewish	1.9%	---
Other	1 = Other	6.1%	---
No Religion	1 = No Religion	11.3%	---

The second independent variable of interest is the level to which individuals view God as masculine or not. Respondents to the survey were asked for their level of agreement (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) with the statement: “Based on your personal understanding, what do you think God is like: A ‘He.’” The mean is 3.44 with a standard deviation of 1.30 (see Table 2.1).

Control Variables

Building upon past research analyzing attitudes toward homosexuality, the study includes a host of socio-demographic and religion variables. Demographic variables are age (in years), gender (1 = Female), income (1 = \$10,000 or less to 7 = \$150,000 or more), education (1 = 8th grade or less to 7 = postgraduate work/degree), political ideology (1 = Extremely Liberal to 7 = Extremely Conservative), race (1 = White), region (1 = South), and marital status (1 = Married). Each exhibited a significant association with attitudes toward homosexuality in past research (Andersen and Fetner, 2008; Brumbaugh et al., 2008; Ellison and Musick, 1993; Finlay and Walther, 2003; Hill et al., 2004; Loftus, 2001; McVeigh and Diaz, 2009; Sherkat et al., 2010; Sherkat et al., 2011; Treas, 2002).

Religious affiliation, belief, and behavior are additional control variables associated with individuals' attitudes toward homosexuality in previous studies. Those who identify with an Evangelical or Black Protestant denomination are usually the most unfavorable toward homosexuality with Catholic, Mainline Protestant, and Jewish individuals reporting more favorable attitudes (Andersen and Fetner, 2008; Finlay and Walther, 2003; Hill et al., 2004; Loftus, 2001; Sherkat et al., 2010; Sherkat et al., 2011; Whitehead, 2010; Whitley, 2009). Religious affiliation is measured using the RELTRAD typology which categorizes individuals into seven religious traditions: Evangelical Protestant, Mainline Protestant, Catholic, Jew, Black Protestant, other, and no religion (Steenland et al., 2000).³ Evangelical Protestants will serve as the contrast category because they consistently hold the most unfavorable attitudes toward homosexuality.

³For details about religious tradition coding in the Baylor Religion Survey, see Dougherty, Johnson and Polson (2007).

Individuals who hold traditional religious beliefs are typically unfavorable toward gays and lesbians (Burdette et al., 2005; Froese et al., 2008; Hill et al., 2004; Rowatt et al., 2009; Sherkat et al., 2010; Sherkat et al., 2011; Whitley, 2009). A common measure of traditional religious beliefs is whether the respondent interprets the Bible in a literal manner. A question in the 2007 BRS asked, “Which one statement comes closest to your personal beliefs about the Bible?” Possible responses were “The Bible means exactly what it says. It should be taken literally, word-for-word, on all subjects;” “The Bible is perfectly true, but it should not be taken literally, word-for-word. We must interpret its meaning;” “The Bible contains some human error;” and “The Bible is an ancient book of history and legends.” This measure was dichotomized so that those answering that the Bible should be read literally, word-for-word were coded as a one with all other responses coded as a zero.

Finally, individuals who exhibit higher levels of religious practice are likely to hold unfavorable views of homosexuality (Andersen and Fetner, 2008; Burdette et al., 2005; Finlay and Walther, 2003; Hill et al., 2004; Loftus, 2001; Sherkat et al., 2010; Treas, 2002; Whitehead, 2010; Whitley, 2009). To measure religious behavior I created an index that combines religious service attendance, frequency of prayer/meditation, and frequency of reading sacred scriptures. The items for attendance and scripture reading range from 1=Never to 9=Several times a week. The item measuring prayer frequency ranges from 1=Never to 6=Several times a day. Factor analysis revealed that these measures of religious behavior load onto the same factor, with factor loadings all above 0.85. Each measure was standardized and then summed due to unit measurement differences across questions. The alpha reliability coefficient for the index is 0.84. A

benefit of the index is that it measures multiple forms of religious practice rather than only focusing on frequency of attendance which for different traditions can vary in meaning.

Methodology

Analysis will begin with a bivariate investigation of the relationship between the two independent variables of interest and the dependent variable. I then move to multivariate analyses of these relationships to ensure that the bivariate associations are not spurious. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression is utilized.⁴ Multivariate analysis proceeds in four steps. The first model includes all of the socio-demographic and religion controls found in past research concerning attitudes toward homosexuality. Model 2 includes the traditional gender-role beliefs index without the masculine image of God measure. Conversely, model 3 includes the masculine image of God measure while excluding the traditional gender-role beliefs index. Model 4 presents the full model, with both traditional gender-role beliefs index and masculine image of God measure included.⁵ Moving from model 1 to model 4 allows examination of possible mediating effects for each measure of gender traditionalism. Three conditions must be satisfied in order to demonstrate mediation (Agresti and Finlay, 1997; Baron and Kenny, 1986). First, significant relationships between attitudes toward homosexuality and the various demographic and religion variables must be present. Second, these variables must be

⁴I analyzed error residuals for each model to ensure OLS regression was producing legitimate results. These analyses confirm that OLS regression is suitable. The mean of the residuals is equal to zero, the residuals are normally distributed, and the residuals are not correlated with any of the independent variables.

⁵Multicollinearity is a common concern when a large number of religion variables are included in a regression model. Variance inflation scores for the independent variables never exceeded 1.9 in any model. Therefore, multicollinearity does not appear to adversely affect the results.

significantly associated with both measures of gender traditionalism. Finally, the coefficients of the demographic and religion measures must be reduced once the gender traditionalism measures are included. This analysis is able to test the first and third conditions and prior research clearly demonstrates the second.

Results

Figure 2.1 displays the relationship between viewing God as masculine and the negative attitudes toward homosexuality index. Individuals who view God as a “He” are

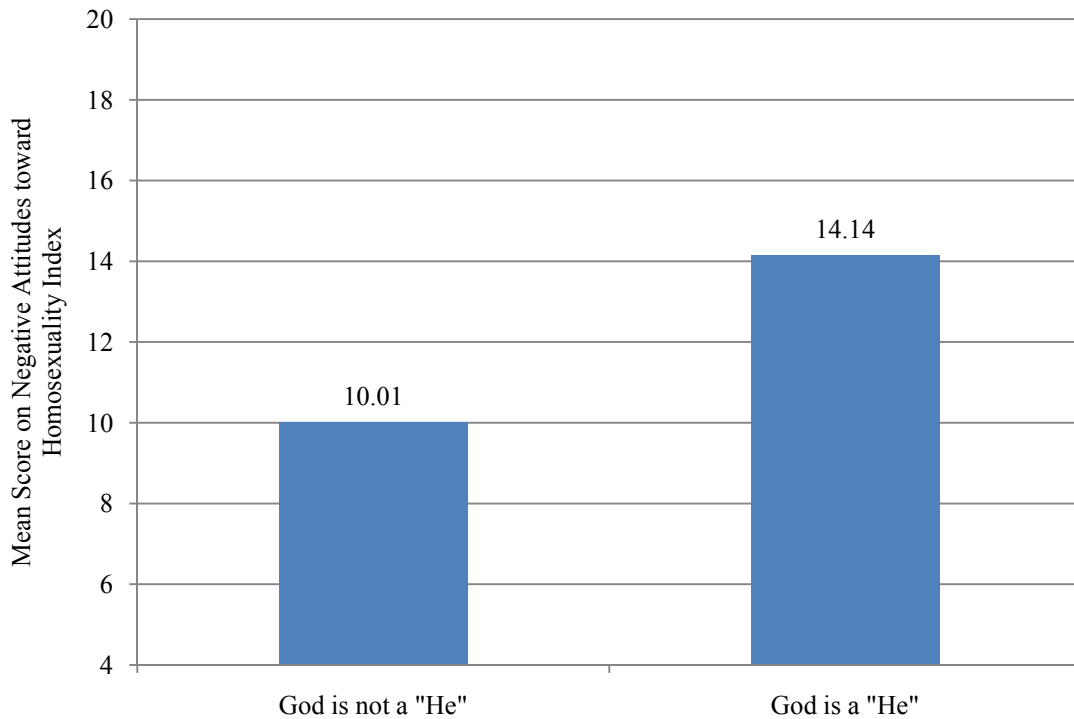


Figure 2.1. Difference of Means on Negative Attitudes toward Homosexuality Index by Masculine Image of God

much more likely to report unfavorable attitudes toward homosexuality (mean score of 14.14) compared to those who do not view God as a “He” (mean score of 10.01).

Turning to the other independent variable of interest, Figure 2.2 shows that traditional gender-role beliefs are associated with attitudes toward homosexuality. The line follows the changes in the mean score on the homosexuality index for each possible score on the traditional gender-role beliefs index. Those with more conservative gender beliefs are more likely to exhibit unfavorable attitudes toward homosexuality. Conversely, individuals with low scores on the traditional gender-role beliefs index are more likely to hold more liberal views concerning homosexuality. Each of these

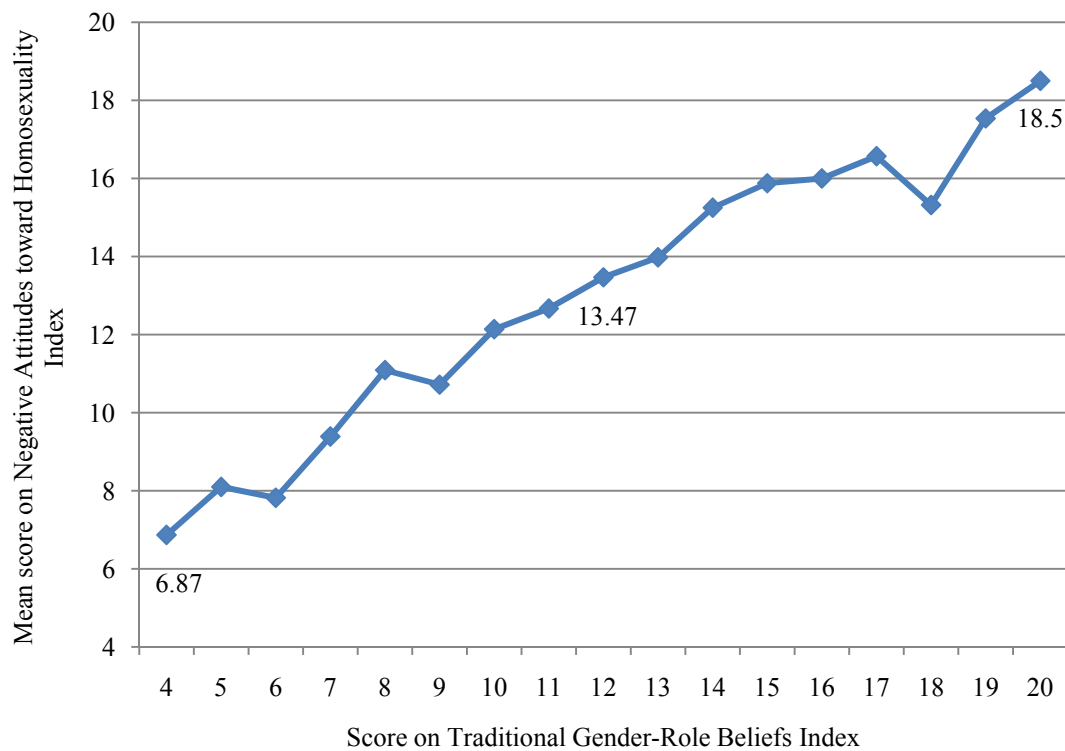


Figure 2.2. Mean Score on Negative Attitudes toward Homosexuality Index by Traditional Gender-Role Beliefs Index

bivariate analyses suggests strong associations between attitudes toward homosexuality and gender traditionalism.

Table 2.2 contains the results for multivariate regression models.⁶ Model 1 contains all of the socio-demographic and control variables. Consistent with past research on this topic, I find more favorable views toward gay men and lesbians among women, those with higher levels of income and education, political liberals, and unmarried individuals. Age, race, and region all fail to achieve a significant association with the attitudes toward homosexuality index. Regarding the religion controls I find that biblical literalists and those who frequently practice their religion tend toward unfavorable views toward homosexuality. Mainline Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and those who report no affiliation are all more favorable toward homosexuality than are Evangelical Protestants.⁷

Model 2 includes the traditional gender-role beliefs index. Net of all controls, the traditional gender-role beliefs index is strongly associated with attitudes toward homosexuality. In fact, the standardized coefficient for the index is second only to the political conservatism measure. Individuals with more traditional gender-role beliefs report less favorable attitudes toward homosexuality. Compared to model 1 we find that the effects of income disappear. Evangelical Protestants still hold more unfavorable views compared to Mainline Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and the unaffiliated.

⁶Analyses were conducted on missing data to ensure that excluded respondents do not differ significantly on the dependent measure compared to those respondents retained in the analysis. I found no significant differences.

⁷There are also significant differences between the “Other” category and Evangelical Protestants in this model and subsequent models. Because the “Other” group is a catch-all category designed to limit the extent of missing data in the model while maintaining the conceptual clarity of other religious tradition categories, I will abstain from drawing substantive conclusions as to what a significant effect for “Other” might mean.

Table 2.2.
*OLS Regression Analysis of Negative Attitudes toward Homosexuality Index
on Gender Traditionalism and Masculine Images of God*

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
<i>Religion Controls</i>								
Biblical Literalist	0.17***	0.28	0.13***	0.28	0.14***	0.29	0.12***	0.29
Religious Practice	0.27***	0.05	0.22***	0.05	0.23***	0.05	0.20***	0.05
RELTRAD†								
Black Protestant	-0.01	1.05	-0.01	1.05	-0.01	1.08	-0.01	1.07
Mainline Protestant	-0.09***	0.28	-0.08***	0.28	-0.09***	0.29	-0.08**	0.28
Catholic	-0.07**	0.28	-0.07**	0.27	-0.07**	0.29	-0.07**	0.28
Jewish	-0.05*	0.65	-0.04*	0.64	-0.05*	0.72	-0.03	0.72
Other	-0.07**	0.41	-0.07**	0.40	-0.06**	0.42	-0.06**	0.41
No Religion	-0.09***	0.38	-0.06*	0.37	-0.05*	0.42	-0.03	0.42
<i>Demographic Controls</i>								
Age	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.02	0.01
Female	-0.16***	0.19	-0.12***	0.19	-0.17***	0.20	-0.13***	0.20
Income	-0.06*	0.08	-0.03	0.07	-0.06**	0.08	-0.04	0.08
Education	-0.09***	0.07	-0.08***	0.06	-0.06**	0.07	-0.05*	0.07
Politically Conservative	0.36***	0.07	0.30***	0.07	0.33***	0.07	0.27***	0.07
White	0.02	0.68	0.01	0.67	0.03	0.74	0.03	0.73
South	0.03	0.21	0.01	0.21	0.04	0.22	0.02	0.22
Married	0.06**	0.22	0.05**	0.22	0.06**	0.23	0.06**	0.23
<i>Gender Traditionalism</i>								
Trad. Gender-Role Beliefs Index	---	---	0.24***	0.03	---	---	0.24***	0.03
God is a "he"	---	---	---	---	0.16***	0.09	0.11***	0.09
Intercept	9.49***	0.89	6.68***	0.91	7.35***	0.98	5.14***	0.99
N	1,300		1,275		1,177		1,156	
Adjusted R ²	0.54		0.57		0.55		0.58	

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001; two-tailed significance tests

β = Standardized Coefficient

SE = Standard Error

† Evangelical Protestant is contrast category

Accounting for traditional gender-role beliefs reduces the standardized coefficient of the difference between the unaffiliated and Evangelical Protestants to a larger extent than the differences between Evangelicals and the other traditions. Women and those with higher individuals tend to be unfavorable toward homosexuality. Biblical literalists and those who frequently practice their religion are more negatively disposed toward homosexuality. Controlling for gender-role beliefs alters the influence of the control variables. The standardized coefficients for biblical literalism and religious practice both decrease. The effects of gender, education, and political views also change when controlling for the gender-role beliefs index. These findings suggest that gender traditionalism, as measured by the traditional gender-role beliefs index, partially mediates demographic and religious influences on attitudes toward homosexuality due to the coefficients in model 2 decreasing in size (see Baron and Kenny, 1986).

Model 3 includes the masculine image of God measure without the gender-role beliefs index. Net of all other effects, viewing God as a “he” is significantly associated with unfavorable attitudes toward homosexuality.⁸ The standardized coefficient is on par with the coefficients for biblical literalism and gender. Compared to model 1, the same variables are significantly associated with the dependent variable. Females and those with higher levels of income and education are more favorable toward homosexuality

⁸Additional analyses were performed to ensure that the significant association between the masculine image of God variable and attitudes toward homosexuality was due to the gendered nature of this measure and not because it was merely controlling for belief in any sort of image of God. Past studies show that viewing God as active in the world or judgmental of it were significantly associated with more negative attitudes toward homosexuality (Froese and Bader, 2008, 2010; Froese et al., 2008; Whitehead, 2010). When either or both of these other two images of God were included in the models with the masculine image of God variable, the masculine image of God measure remained significant with little change to its standardized coefficient; other images of God were non-significant. This suggests that when considering attitudes toward homosexuality, it is the perceived gendered nature of God that truly matters above and beyond God’s perceived level of activity in the world or God’s perceived level of judgment of the world.

while politically conservative and married individuals are less favorable. Biblical literalists and religiously active individuals are less favorable toward homosexuality while Mainline Protestants, Catholics, Jewish, and the unaffiliated are all more favorable than Evangelical Protestants. Including the image of God measure partially mediates the effect of biblical literalism, religious practice, political conservatism, and education. Model 3 also shows that controlling for a masculine image of God accentuates the effects of being female. Compared to model 1, the standardized coefficient of being married does not change when controlling for a masculine image of God.

Model 4 displays the full model, with the traditional gender-role beliefs index and the masculine image of God measure included. Both are significantly associated with the dependent variable. Individuals with more traditional gender-role beliefs and masculine images of God exhibit unfavorable attitudes toward homosexuality. The standardized coefficient for image of God decreases by one quarter when traditional gender-role beliefs are taken into account however. This indicates that traditional gender-role beliefs partially mediate the effect of holding a masculine image of God (see Baron and Kenney, 1986). Equally noteworthy, the standardized coefficient for the traditional gender-role beliefs index does not budge when controlling for masculine images of God. Regarding demographic controls, females and those with higher levels of education tend to hold more favorable views toward homosexuality while married and politically conservative individuals are less favorable. Likewise, biblical literalists and religiously active individuals embrace more negative views of homosexuality. Mainline Protestants and Catholics tend to be more favorable toward homosexuality compared to Evangelical Protestants. Different from models 1 through 3, the differences between Evangelical

Protestants and the unaffiliated are not significant. As before, controlling for masculine images of God and traditional gender-role beliefs attenuates the effects of the demographic and religion measures. Compared to model 1, the standardized coefficient for biblical literalist declines by 29 percent, religious practice decreases by 26 percent, income falls 33 percent and fails to reach statistical significance, education wanes 44 percent, and political conservatism declines by one quarter. The difference between the unaffiliated and Evangelical Protestants is diminished by over two thirds. The standardized coefficient for female returns to a level near model 2 after increasing in model 3, decreasing almost 20 percent. Compared to model 1, the standardized coefficient of being married does not change.

Discussion

The results reported in table 2.2 demonstrate that gender traditionalism corresponds to more unfavorable views toward homosexuality. In support of hypothesis 1, higher scores on the traditional gender-role beliefs index are associated with negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. This finding is in line with past research, but builds upon and extends that research through utilizing a more representative sample of the United States as well as controlling for a host of other important variables neglected in prior studies. Those with traditional gender-role beliefs regard gay men and lesbians as violating those gender roles and deserving of sanctions (Kite and Whitley, 1996, 1998; Whitley and Ægisdóttir, 2000). Hypothesis 2 is also supported; viewing God as a “he” is linked to negative attitudes toward homosexuality. While a novel outcome in its own right, this result gives further credence to accounting for individuals’ beliefs about what God is like--be it active, angry, or masculine--when considering moral attitudes.

Individuals who view God as masculine are signaling a belief in an underlying gendered reality that influences their perceptions of the proper ordering of that reality (Froese and Bader, 2010; Gallagher, 2003). Belief in a masculine God could be an integral part of the metanarrative that religion provides individuals (Smith, 2003). A masculine, ultimate generalized other serves to influence individuals as an object of not only contemplation but also interaction (Berger, 1969; Froese and Bader, 2010). Therefore, traditional beliefs about gender, operationalized as either an index of gender-role beliefs or a masculine image of God, are strongly associated with individuals' views toward homosexuality. Gay men and lesbians are perceived as violating what many believe are the proper ways in which men and women should express themselves in society (Blashill and Powlishta, 2009; Kite and Whitley, 1996, 1998; Whitley and Ægisdóttir, 2000).

The effects of gender, education, political views, religious belief, behavior, and affiliation follow expectations drawn from past literature investigating attitudes toward homosexuality. What is novel in this study is how those measures change when accounting for traditional gender beliefs, as predicted in hypothesis 3. The effects of income, education, biblical literalism, religious practice, and conservative political views are all partially mediated by both measures of gender traditionalism. Thus, the association these variables have with attitudes toward homosexuality can partially be explained by their association with gender traditionalism. The standardized coefficient of being female also declines when both measures of gender traditionalism are accounted for in the final model. In line with past research, it appears that gender traditionalism tends to mediate the differences in attitudes between men and women (Kerns and Fine,

1994; Kite and Whitley, 1996, 1998; Whitley, 1987, 2001; Whitley and Ægisdóttir, 2000).

The results also suggest that the traditional gender-role beliefs index is conceptually closer to attitudes concerning homosexuality than is the perceived gender of God. This finding is a further methodological contribution of this analysis. When both are included in the final model, the index partially mediates the effect of viewing God as a “he” while showing no change in its own standardized effect. This result is likely due to two reasons. Statistically, indexes are usually more powerful predictors compared to measures utilizing single questions. Second, since the questions are asking about actual day-to-day behaviors, the conceptual leap from gender-role beliefs to attitudes toward homosexuality is smaller than from the somewhat abstract idea of the perceived masculinity of God. These two measures are also strongly associated with one another ($r=0.445$, $p<.001$). In fact, a masculine image of God is one of the strongest predictors of traditional gender-role beliefs, net of all other effects (Whitehead, 2012). The effect of a masculine image of God on attitudes toward homosexuality may therefore be partially due to its association with traditional gender-role beliefs. Nevertheless, even when controlling for traditional gender-role beliefs, a masculine image of God maintains a significant association with attitudes toward homosexuality. Hence, both measures appear useful for operationalizing gender traditionalism. While overlapping somewhat, each measure does assess a distinct aspect of the underlying concept.

One of the most consistent findings across all of the models is the effect of being married on attitudes toward homosexuality. Married individuals consistently exhibit less favorable views toward homosexuality compared to the unmarried. The standardized

coefficient, though somewhat small compared to other variables in each model, changes very little. Even when both measures of gender traditionalism are included in the final model, being married is still significantly associated with negative views concerning homosexuality. Individuals with stakes in conformity and a vested interest in maintaining the status quo, which past theorists assume married individuals have, are less likely to favor any changes that might provide an alternative to their current situation (Brumbaugh et al., 2008; Burdette et al., 2005; Hill et al., 2004; McVeigh and Diaz, 2009; Powell et al., 2010; Wald et al., 1996). Marriage also could operate as a type of plausibility structure where more traditional beliefs become solidified and the lived practice of being married takes on added significance (Berger, 1969). The consistent effect of being married indicates the importance of taking into account gendered practices in addition to gendered beliefs.

Several limitations of this study must be mentioned. First, due to the cross-sectional nature of the data I cannot determine causal direction. It may be that individuals' attitudes toward homosexuality change their views toward God's perceived gender and the proper roles for men and women in society. Nevertheless, past research supports the theoretical progression identified in this study. For most individuals, gender and religious socialization tend to occur much earlier than homosexuality attitudes. In fact, as discussed earlier, much of the support for either negative or positive views of homosexuality flow out of particular gender or religious (or non-religious) attitudes. Second, the questions used in the construction of the dependent variable conflate attitudes toward gay men and lesbians by asking for responses concerning "homosexuals." Past studies find that attitudes toward gay men and lesbians can vary. As discussed previously

(see footnote 2) however, the public rhetoric usually references “homosexuality” without distinguishing between lesbians and gay men. Therefore, this scale does tap into the broader set of attitudes maintained by the wider public.

Conclusion

These results affirm the relationship between gender traditionalism and unfavorable attitudes toward homosexuality. Conceptualized using two different measures, gender traditionalism is related to attitudes concerning gay men and lesbians. Individuals with traditional beliefs about the proper roles for men and women are more likely to hold unfavorable views toward gay men and lesbians. Likewise, more masculine images of God correspond to more negative attitudes concerning homosexuality. Future studies intent on investigating attitudes toward homosexuality should account for respondents’ gender traditionalism. Gender beliefs signal if people believe there are characteristics for men and women that are distinct and should be kept so. They can also signal the degree to which individuals consider the “traditional” (i.e. heterosexual) family as essential for society. Traditional attitudes concerning gender are intimately tied to attitudes regarding a number of other moral issues. In fact, this analysis shows that gender traditionalism partially mediates the relationship between many of the demographic and religious variables utilized in past research. More rigorous tests of gender traditionalism as a mediating variable are needed. Future studies could benefit from using path analysis or structural equation modeling to test for mediation.

There is also room for future research to continue to break new ground on how to operationalize gender traditionalism. This study shows that masculine images of God are a useful mode of operationalizing the underlying construct of gender traditionalism,

beyond the more common traditional gender-role beliefs index. New data may allow researchers to move beyond either of these two measures to account for a distinct portion of this concept.

Finally, due to the intimate association between gender traditionalism and attitudes toward homosexuality, this study implies that as one set of beliefs liberalizes, so may the other. This bodes well for those interested in the equality of non-heterosexual individuals. Views toward the “proper” roles for women continue to liberalize (Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004). In many ways the gradual liberalization of attitudes toward homosexuality mirrors the liberalization of attitudes toward gender equality over the last 30 years (Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004; Loftus, 2001). Thus, changes in gender beliefs may operate as another avenue through which attitudes toward homosexuality grow more favorable. Concerning masculine images of God in particular, shifts in the perceived masculinity of God will have some bearing on individuals’ gender traditionalism and attitudes toward homosexuality.

CHAPTER THREE

Politics, Religion, Attribution Theory, and Attitudes toward Same-Sex Unions

Introduction

Whether gays and lesbians should be allowed to participate in American society continues to dominate public discourse. Participating in the social institution of marriage is arguably the most salient issue due to the legal protections and social significance afforded by marriage in the United States. Politicians use their adopted stance on the issue of gay marriage to drum up support. In the months leading up to the 2012 presidential primaries a number of hopefuls for the Republican party nomination signed pledges endorsing the definition of marriage between a man and a woman (Stolberg, 2011). A growing number of celebrities and professional athletes have also weighed in on the issue of same-sex unions (Branch, 2011). Religious leaders, both conservative and progressive, add their views on whether gays and lesbians should have a legal right to marry in the United States (Berger, 2011; Freedman, 2011). With the almost omnipresent nature of the issue in popular culture and an increasing number of states beginning to address the legality of same-sex unions, continued investigation of what shapes individuals' stances toward same-sex unions is necessary.

Recent research reveals that attitudes toward same-sex unions are influenced by a number of sources. Predictably, political views and religious beliefs are powerful predictors of an individuals' view of same-sex unions (Hill, Moulton, and Burdette, 2004; Sherkat et al., 2011). However, a growing number of studies suggest that how

individuals perceive the cause of homosexuality is an important mediator of political and religious influences (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2005; 2008; Tygart, 2000; Whitehead, 2010; Wilcox and Norrande, 2002; Wilcox and Wolpert, 2000; Wood and Bartkowski, 2004). First, political views and religious beliefs influence individuals' attribution of the cause of homosexuality. Then, in separate models, those attributions influence individuals' views toward same-sex unions even when controlling for political and religious influences. While the association between politics, religion, and same-sex unions never disappears, it is reduced with the inclusion of attribution beliefs. Furthermore, attribution beliefs are the strongest predictors in the model. This suggests that political and religious beliefs influence the attribution beliefs individuals maintain, which then sway their views toward same-sex unions. While intuitive, none of the studies examining attribution beliefs and same-sex union attitudes have tested this proposed relationship due to methodological limitations. The present analysis aims to provide such a test. Using a recent, national survey of American adults and simultaneous equation path analysis, this study advances the current literature on attitudes toward same-sex unions and attribution theory in a number of directions. The importance of attribution beliefs finds strong support. Shifts in these beliefs will affect attitudes toward same-sex unions. However, these analyses also demonstrate that attribution beliefs are socially embedded. Therefore, despite changes in someone's attribution beliefs, or evidence that might make certain attribution beliefs untenable, attitudes toward same-sex unions could remain stable.

Religion, Politics, and Attitudes toward Same-Sex Unions

Recent literature on the relationship between religion and attitudes toward homosexuality focuses specifically on the right of lesbians and gays to marry or obtain civil unions. This research highlights religious belief, behavior, and affiliation as important predictors of an individuals' level of acceptance of same-sex rights. Religious belief, such as a literal view of the Bible, is associated with non-approving stances regarding same-sex rights (Burdette et al., 2005; Sherkat et al., 2011; Whitehead, 2010). Biblical literalism is always one of the most powerful predictors of attitudes toward same-sex unions. Individuals who frequently attend religious services or who consistently engage in private religious devotions such as prayer or scripture reading are less likely to be favorable toward same-sex unions (Brumbaugh et al., 2008; Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2005; 2008; Olson et al., 2006; Sherkat et al., 2011; Whitehead, 2010). Finally, Evangelical and Black Protestant denominations are less accepting of same-sex marriage or civil unions than Mainline Protestants, Jews, and the unaffiliated (Olson et al., 2006; Sherkat, de Vries, and Creek, 2010; Sherkat et al., 2011). In general, religious conservatism is consistently associated with various attitudes toward lesbians and gays and their civil rights.

Political views and affiliations are robustly associated with attitudes toward same-sex unions. Individuals who identify as politically liberal are time and again more favorable toward gays and lesbians having the right to marry or obtain civil unions (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008; Herek and Capitanio, 1995; Hill et al., 2004; Loftus, 2001; Sherkat et al., 2010; Sherkat et al., 2011; Tygart, 2000). Conversely, more conservative political views associate with less support for same-sex unions. Net of a

variety of other effects, political conservatism is one of the most prominent predictors of attitudes toward same-sex unions. The political parties with which individuals identify are also predictive of attitudes toward same-sex unions. Closer affiliation with the Democratic party is associated with support for gays and lesbians right to marry (Sherkat et al., 2011).

Attribution Theory and Attitudes toward Homosexuality

Beliefs about the cause, or etiology, of homosexuality are crucial when predicting attitudes toward same-sex civil rights. Central to this argument is whether or not gays and lesbians can “control” their orientation. Attribution theory was first proposed by Austrian psychologist Fritz Heider (1944; 1958). He theorized that individuals seek to explain the behaviors of those around them and they do this in an attempt to predict and control their environment. In their efforts to accomplish this people primarily attribute others’ behavior to either internal or external causes. Weiner (1979; 1985) furthered attribution theory by emphasizing the concept of controllability. When certain behaviors are labeled “controllable” the person exhibiting the behavior can be held personally responsible. If a behavior is viewed as “uncontrollable” the person exhibiting the behavior is less likely to be held accountable. If the behavior in question is stigmatized in some way and considered controllable, those exhibiting the behavior are much more likely to be viewed negatively. A number of studies find support for attribution theory when investigating attitudes toward poverty (Griffin and Oheneba-Sakyi, 1993; Zucker and Weiner, 1993), obesity (Crocker, Cornwell, and Major, 1993; DeJong, 1980), and when comparing stigmas commonly classified as uncontrollable (Alzheimer’s) versus controllable (AIDS) (Weiner, Perry, and Magnusson, 1988).

Studies investigating attitudes toward gays and lesbians provide additional support for attribution theory (Aguero, Block and Byrne, 1984; Herek, 2002; Herek and Capitanio, 1995; Sakalli, 2002a; VanderStoep and Green, 1988; Whitely, 1990). Individuals who attribute homosexuality to a source outside personal control are more likely to hold favorable views of lesbians and gays. However, individuals who believe lesbians and gays choose their orientation are less likely to be favorable. In light of this research some suggest that an individual's belief about the cause of homosexuality is the single most important predictor of attitudes toward gays and lesbians (Herek and Capitanio, 1995, p. 95). Recent work investigating attitudes toward same-sex unions continues to apply attribution theory. Support for same-sex marriage and civil unions is much more likely if homosexuality is believed to be the result of natural or biological forces outside the individuals' locus of control (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2005; 2008; Tygart, 2000; Wilcox and Norrandar, 2002; Wood and Bartkowski, 2004). Conversely, support for same-sex unions is less likely if individuals believe homosexuality is the result of a choice (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008; Whitehead, 2010; Wilcox and Wolpert, 2000; Wood and Bartkowski, 2004). In each of these studies individuals' beliefs about the etiology of homosexuality are consistently the strongest predictors of attitudes toward same-sex unions even while controlling for demographic, political, and religion measures.

Religion, Politics, and Attributions of the Cause of Homosexuality

Due to the power of etiological beliefs, researchers investigated who is most likely to view homosexuality as a choice or due to natural forces. Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2008) found that religious behavior and affiliation are associated with the belief

that homosexuality is the result of genetics. Evangelical Protestants and those who identify themselves as “born again” are much less likely to believe genetics influence sexual orientation. Individuals who attend religious services at higher rates are also less likely to credit a natural explanation. Their analysis showed that political conservatism likewise predicts an aversion toward biological explanations of homosexuality. Focusing instead on who is more likely to believe gays and lesbians choose their sexual orientation, one study found that biblical literalism was associated with attribution beliefs along with religious behavior and affiliation (Whitehead, 2010). Evangelical Protestants were most likely to believe that homosexuality is the result of a choice compared to other religious traditions and individuals who attend religious services at higher rates were more likely to believe lesbians and gays can control their orientation. Regarding political views, individuals who identify as politically conservative were more likely to believe that gays and lesbians choose their sexual orientation. In both of these studies, religious and political conservatism were the most robust predictors of particular attribution views concerning the cause of homosexuality.

Toward a Structural Model

Attribution theory and the current literature detailed above imply a particular relationship between attribution beliefs and attitudes toward same-sex unions. The results of past studies demonstrate that religion, politics, and various other predictors are associated with attribution beliefs but also with same-sex union attitudes. This suggests that attribution beliefs may operate as a mediating variable, especially for religious and political conservatism. Attribution theory also proposes this relationship: individuals acquire a particular view of the origin of a stigmatized status and this influences their

feelings about the morality or rights of the stigmatized. Again, attribution theory focuses on how individuals attribute the cause of a behavior, such as whether it is internal or external to the person and also whether the individual has any level of control concerning their situation. But from where do the explanations for whether a behavior or status is internal or external, controllable or not, come? As Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2008, p. 307) state, “individuals rely heavily on ideology [and] religion . . . to form beliefs.” In many cases religious and political ideology function as sources of moral authority that dictate which beliefs are deemed acceptable (Wuthnow, 1987). These sources would be especially important regarding attitudes toward gay rights and beliefs about whether same-sex attraction is due to internal or external factors, and whether those elements are controllable. In this case, political and religious conservatism are prior to attribution beliefs. Put another way, attribution beliefs are useful to certain individuals because they serve as part of the explanation why their religious or political beliefs either support or oppose homosexuality.

This leads to the first hypotheses:

H1a: Attribution beliefs mediate the relationship between political conservatism and attitudes toward same-sex unions.

H1b: Attribution beliefs mediate the relationship between religious conservatism and attitudes toward same-sex unions.

Figure 1 displays these hypothesized relationships. By mediate I refer to the relational sequence between political and religious conservatism leading to particular styles of attribution which collectively produces a particular set of outcomes. Essentially, the hypothesized model fitting the underlying structure of the data and significant paths leading to and emitting from the mediating variable will provide support for each

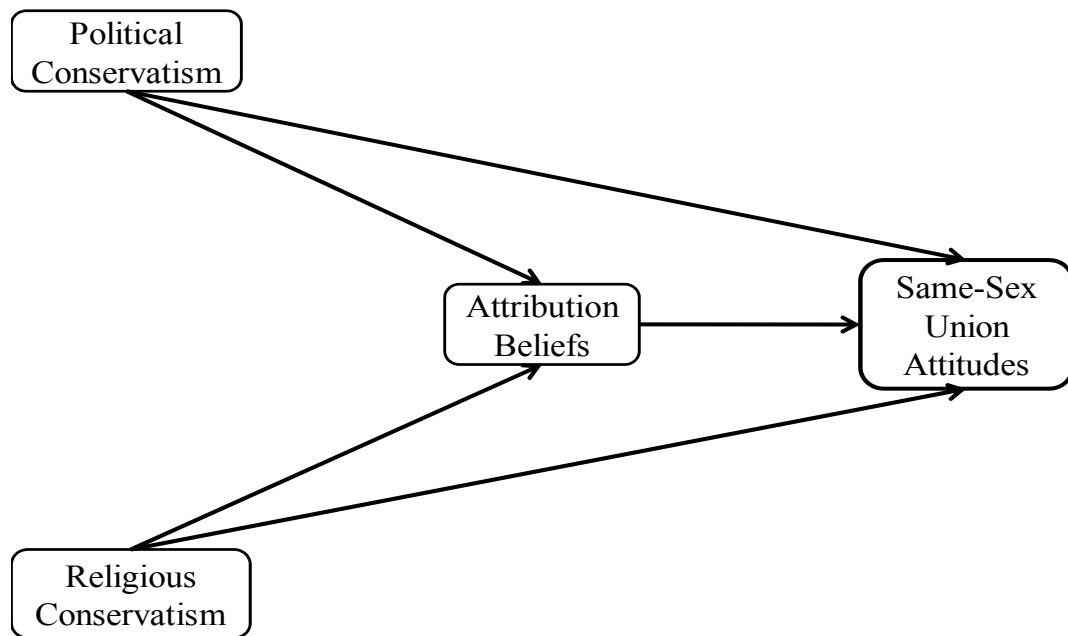


Figure 3.1. Hypothesized Path Model for Selected Covariates

hypothesis. Past analyses were unable to formally test this assumption due to methodological limitations. Every past analysis of attribution beliefs, religion, politics, and attitudes toward same-sex rights utilizes either ordinary least squares regression or logistic regression. However, regression models are unable to account for the relationships between the independent variables and the structure of those relationships. One of the key assumptions of regression is that all of the independent variables included in a model are independent. This assumption is clearly violated in past analyses of attribution theory, and multicollinearity among the independent variables is tolerated. In addition, while past regression analyses can tell us that attribution beliefs have a significant net effect, they do not test whether attribution beliefs mediate the influence of political and religious conservatism. These methodological limitations necessitate a more precise modeling technique to determine if the theorized relationship exists.

Past research demonstrates that attribution beliefs are without fail the strongest predictor of same-sex union attitudes. However, while religious and political conservatism are two important predictors of attribution beliefs they also maintain significant and robust associations with attitudes toward same-sex unions even when controlling for attribution beliefs (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008; Whitehead, 2010). One explanation is that political and religious ideologies are foundationally important in the study of attitudes toward moral issues (Hunter, 1992; Putnam and Campbell, 2010; Wuthnow, 1987). As discussed above, religious and political sources of moral authority are primary to attribution beliefs. This suggests that the total effect of political conservatism, the sum of its direct effect on same-sex union attitudes and its indirect effect mediated through attribution beliefs, may exceed the direct effect of attribution beliefs on same-sex union attitudes. The same can be said for religious conservatism. The sum of its direct effect on same-sex union attitudes and its indirect effect mediated through attribution beliefs may exceed the direct effect of attribution beliefs. To put it slightly differently, the foundational influence of political and religious conservatism as sources of moral authority may overshadow the effect of attribution beliefs because these sources of moral authority are vital to the formation of those particular attribution beliefs.

Yet, in past studies, the possible indirect effects of political and religious conservatism on attribution beliefs are completely ignored. This results in only being able to determine their “net” effect. Single regression equations that set in opposition the net effects of a variety of variables could lead to misguided conclusions about the importance of each (Blalock, 1961). Scheitle and Hahn (2011) provide an example of this by showing that the indirect effects of Evangelical Protestantism on state-level

policies are quite strong even though a direct effect is non-existent. Therefore, moving beyond quantitative models of partial correlations and in the direction of causal assessments of both direct and indirect effects in simultaneous equations will allow for a more accurate analysis of the relationships between religion, politics, attribution beliefs, and attitudes toward same-sex unions. This leads to a second and third hypothesis:

H2: The total effect of political conservatism will exceed the total effect of attribution beliefs.

H3: The total effect of religious conservatism will exceed the total effect of attribution beliefs.

The structure of the interrelationships of the independent variables in figure 3.1 allow for the testing of each hypothesis.

The methodological limitations of past research have theoretical implications as well. A robust quantitative technique permits a valuable test of attribution theory concerning attitudes toward same-sex unions. Such tests of attribution theory could be replicated with other stigmatized behaviors and social statuses. Testing causal relationships as suggested in this analysis would also allow for attribution theory to be increasingly refined as it applies to the issue of homosexuality.

Beyond these methodological and theoretical gains, a number of substantive implications exist. If religion or political views prove to have the largest total effect on same-sex union attitudes a growing acceptance of a natural explanation of homosexuality could lead to increased hostility toward gays and lesbians. As Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2008, p. 308) point out, “the next step may not be tolerance but intervention. If the homosexual gene can be altered or manipulated in some way, the notion that homosexuality can be ‘cured’ will surely be considered.” This prediction is supported by

the fact that the possibility of a natural explanation for homosexuality tends to only further polarize previously held beliefs (Boysen and Vogel, 2007). Individuals with positive views of gays and lesbians accept biological explanations as a persuasive reason to accept homosexuality as a legitimate sexual orientation while those already holding negative views toward lesbians and gays actually become more critical of them once the possibility of a biological explanation is introduced. Boysen and Vogel (2007, p. 755) state that “learning about biological explanations of homosexual behavior is interpreted through the lens of preexisting attitudes.” In this sense, politics and religion may be driving certain attribution beliefs. As another study points out, “It is possible that certain views toward attribution are co-opted, in a sense, by . . . individuals to provide supplementary support to their previously held beliefs” (Whitehead, 2010, p. 76). Therefore, if direct and indirect effects of religion and politics on attitudes toward same-sex unions are greater than beliefs about the cause of homosexuality, a further polarization of positions could result if the scientific community ever coalesces around a natural explanation. Individuals with certain political or religious beliefs would merely jettison their chosen attribution belief and find novel ways to support and maintain previous stances.

However, if political conservatism and religion exhibit a marginal effect on attribution beliefs and a small total effect on same-sex union attitudes, the increased acceptance of a biological explanation within the scientific community could reframe the entire issue of same-sex unions (Olson et al., 2006). This reframing of the issue would lead to greater acceptance of same-sex marriage and civil unions in larger proportions of

the population. In this case individuals' attribution beliefs would be at the crux of their support or opposition to same-sex unions.

Therefore, attribution theory will either provide the crucial mechanism through which attitudes toward same-sex unions are constructed or attribution beliefs will function as an important but secondary piece of the overall puzzle. Prior modeling techniques focusing only on "net" effects are unable to correctly account for the interrelated nature of attribution beliefs, religion, and politics. They are also unable to test for the mediating role of attribution beliefs implied in attribution theory. The present analysis aims to fill this gap by providing a more precise test of attribution theory and attitudes toward same-sex unions.

Data

Data for this study are taken from Wave III of the Baylor Religion Survey (BRS) fielded in 2010 by the Gallup Organization. The BRS is a national random sample of English-speaking, non-institutionalized American adults that assesses religious affiliation, beliefs, and behaviors. The survey utilized a mixed-mode sampling design consisting of two phases. Both phases resulted in a total of 3,500 individuals screened and 2,556 possible respondents. A total of 1,714 questionnaires were returned resulting in a response rate of 49% [1,714/3,500] among all individuals screened and a response rate of 67% [1,714/2,556] for those who agreed to receive a mailed survey. Previous BRS data compare favorably to other national surveys (Bader, Mencken, and Froese, 2007).

The 2010 BRS is ideal for the existing research question because of its recency and because it contains a number of questions pertaining to religion, political views,

attitudes toward the cause of homosexuality, and support for same-sex unions. The combination of these variables is not found in any other large, national survey.

Dependent Variables

Dependent variables in this study concern attitudes toward same-sex unions. Depending on the state, if unions are made available to same-sex couples at all they will either be civil unions or marriage. While civil unions provide same-sex couples with some legal benefits, the list of legal protections for marriage is much more extensive. The first dependent variable concerns the degree to which respondents support same-sex civil unions. The question in the BRS asks, “Please describe how you feel about homosexuality for the following statements: Homosexuals should be allowed civil unions.” Possible responses range from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree.” The second dependent variable asks about same-sex marriage: “Homosexuals should be allowed to legally marry.” Possible responses again range from “Strongly Agree to “Strongly Disagree.” Both measures were dichotomized (1 = Strongly Agree and Agree). Table 3.1 displays that over 65 percent of respondents support same-sex civil unions while 47 percent support same-sex marriage.

Mediating Variables

The mediating variables relate to respondents’ beliefs about the cause of homosexuality. One measures whether individuals believe homosexuality results from natural causes. It asks: “Please describe how you feel about homosexuality for the following statements: People are born either as homosexual or heterosexual.” Possible responses range from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree.” The other measure of

Table 3.1
Descriptive Statistics for Attribution Theory Analyses

Variables	Description	Mean or %	Standard Deviation
Support Same-Sex Marriage	1 = Strongly Agree, Agree	47.04	---
Support Same-Sex Civil Unions	1 = Strongly Agree, Agree	65.39	---
Homosexuality Genetic	1 = Strongly Agree, Agree	57.32	---
Homosexuality a Choice	1 = Strongly Agree, Agree	40.65	---
Age	In years	49.20	17.09
Female	1= Female	53.58	---
Married	1 = Married	61.58	---
Black	1 = Black	10.82	---
Education	1 = 8 th grade or less to 7 = Postgrad degree	4.51	1.60
South	1 = South	36.43	---
Political Conservatism	1 = Extremely Liberal to 7 = Extremely Conservative	4.43	1.67
Biblical Literalism	1 = Book of History and Legends to 4 = Literal	2.54	1.13
Attendance	1 = Never to 9 = Several times a week	4.70	2.99
Evangelical Protestant†	1 = Evangelical Protestant	30.75	---
Black Protestant	1 = Black Protestant	2.72	---
Mainline Protestant	1 = Mainline Protestant	23.39	---
Catholic	1 = Catholic	22.79	---
Jewish	1 = Jewish	1.93	---
Other	1 = Other	6.05	---
No Affiliation	1 = No Affiliation	12.37	---

attribution beliefs asks if sexual orientation is a personal choice: “People choose to be homosexuals.” Possible responses again range from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree.” Both measures were dichotomized (1 = Strongly Agree and Agree). Table 3.1 reveals that over 57 percent of the sample agrees that homosexuality is genetic while almost 41 percent agree that gays or lesbians choose their sexual orientation.

I utilize both measures of attitudes toward same-sex unions and both measures of attribution beliefs available in the BRS (2010) for two reasons. First, past analyses use

these as separate variables; including each allows for comparisons between the present study and past work. Second, by utilizing combinations of each dependent and mediating variable I can ensure that the hypothesized relationships between religious and political conservatism, attribution beliefs, and attitudes toward same-sex unions are persistent and are not dependent upon the type of attribution belief (nature or choice) or the type of same-sex union (marriage or civil unions) included in the model. Finally, I dichotomize these measures because the substantive difference between supporting versus opposing same-sex unions for each attribution belief is essential, not the differences between agreeing or strongly agreeing. This coding strategy is commonly used in past research on this topic as well (Olson et al., 2006; Sakalli, 2002a; Sherkat et al., 2010; Sherkat et al., 2011; Tygart, 2000; Whitehead, 2010).

Independent Variables

The independent variables of interest include measures of both political and religious conservatism. Each were strongly associated with both attribution beliefs and attitudes toward same-sex unions in past research (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008; Whitehead, 2010). The question used to measure political conservatism asks respondents, “How would you describe yourself politically?” Possible responses were “Extremely Liberal,” “Liberal,” “Leaning Liberal,” “Moderate,” “Leaning Conservative,” “Conservative,” and “Extremely Conservative.” Higher values correspond to more conservative political views (1 = Extremely Liberal to 7 = Extremely Conservative).

To measure religious conservatism I rely on a measure of religious belief as well as religious affiliation. Regarding religious belief, I utilize a question asking respondents for their view of the Bible: “Which one statement comes closest to your personal beliefs

about the Bible?” Responses included, “The Bible means exactly what it says. It should be taken literally, word-for-word, on all subjects,” “The Bible is perfectly true, but it should not be taken literally, word-for-word. We must interpret its meaning,” “The Bible contains some human error,” and “The Bible is an ancient book of history and legends.” Respondents who answered “I don’t know” were counted as missing. Higher values correspond to more literal views of the Bible and greater religious conservatism. I account for religious affiliation using a typology of religious traditions (Steensland et al., 2000; Dougherty et al. 2007). Categories include Evangelical Protestant, Black Protestant, Mainline Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Other, and No affiliation. Evangelical Protestant serves as the contrast category. In both quantitative and qualitative studies of homosexuality Evangelical Protestants exhibit the most religiously conservative attitudes (Fetner, 2008; Moon, 2004; Olson et al., 2006; Sherkat, de Vries, and Creek, 2010; Sherkat et al., 2011).

Control Variables

A number of control variables are included in the analyses. Age (in years), race (1 = Black), and education (1 = 8th grade or less to 7 = Postgraduate work/Degree) were significantly associated with attribution beliefs and same-sex union attitudes in past research and so each measure is allowed to predict both the attribution and same-sex union variables. Gender (1 = Female) and religious affiliation were found to have significant associations with attribution beliefs but not same-sex union attitudes in past research once attribution beliefs were included in the model. Therefore, these measures are allowed to predict the attribution measure but not the same-sex union measure. Finally, marital status (1 = married) and region (1 = South) were found to have

significant associations with attitudes toward same-sex unions but not attribution beliefs in prior studies. So, these measures were not allowed to predict attribution beliefs but were permitted to predict same-sex union attitudes.

A final religion measure is included. Religious behavior is determined using religious worship service attendance. The response categories included, “Several times a week,” “Weekly,” “About weekly,” “2-3 times a month,” “Once a month,” “Several times a year,” “Once or twice a year,” “Less than once a year,” or “Never.” Higher values correspond to more frequent worship service attendance (1 = Never to 9 = Several times a week). Prior studies suggest that worship service attendance is significantly associated with both attribution beliefs and same-sex union attitudes. Consequently, this measure is allowed to predict both attribution beliefs and same-sex union attitudes. It could be argued that religious behavior is a marker of religious conservatism and so it should be included with religious belief and affiliation in the measurement of religious conservatism in this study. However, political ideology and religious conservatism as I have defined it here operate as sources of moral authority and each can be more directly compared to attribution beliefs in how they influence individuals. Frequent attendance, in and of itself, is not a source of moral authority for individuals. It is where they attend and the view of the scriptures common to that group that operate as a source of authority. For this reason, I do not treat religious behavior as a particular marker of religious conservatism to be compared with political conservatism and attribution beliefs. Rather, I include it as a control to ensure the effects of biblical literalism and religious affiliation are not spurious.

Methodology

Analyses are conducted using Mplus 6.11 to estimate the simultaneous equation path models (Muthén and Muthén, 1998-2010). Structural equation and path modeling offer methodological improvements over standard regression techniques by accounting for the interrelationships between all of the exogenous variables as well as assessing their direct, indirect, and joint effects (Schumacker and Lomax, 2010). This allows for investigation beyond “net” effects presented in past analyses. The proposed mediating role of attribution beliefs can also be tested. Because both endogenous variables are binary, a robust weighted least square parameter estimator is most appropriate (WLSMV) (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2010). WLSMV uses the diagonal of the weight matrix in the estimation while the standard errors and the mean and variance adjusted chi-square test statistic utilize a full weight matrix (Muthén and Muthén, 1998-2010).

I utilize multiple imputation (MI) using Bayesian analysis to correct for missing data (Enders, 2010; Rubin, 1987, 1996; Schafer, 1997). This procedure produced five data sets and parameter estimates were averaged over the set of analyses. The standard errors were computed using the average of the standard errors over the set of analyses and the between analysis parameter estimate variation (Muthén and Muthén, 1998-2010; Rubin, 1987; Schafer, 1997). In order to test the first hypothesis, I make use of multiple assessments of overall model fit. The chi-square statistic indicates whether the model-implied covariance matrix differs significantly from the observed matrix. A significant chi-square signifies an ill-fitting model. Because the chi-square can be influenced by larger sample sizes, I utilize additional fit indicators. Two baseline comparison indices, the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and the root mean

square error of approximation (RMSEA) provide further confirmation of model fit. Due to my interest in comparing the total effects across measures I report standardized coefficients.¹ These will allow for evaluations of the final two hypotheses.

Results

Tables 3.2 and 3.3 display the results of four simultaneous equation path models.

Each model includes one combination of attribution belief and type of same-sex union.

Table 3.2 focuses upon same-sex marriage. Model 1, occupying the first two columns in table 3.2, estimates the relationship between believing homosexuality is a choice and same-sex marriage. The structure of the path model fits the data. The chi-square statistic is not significant ($p = 0.822$). Furthermore, the CFI and TLI are both at or very near their ideal value of 1.0 and the RMSEA is less than .05. This suggests good overall model fit (Jöreskog, 1993; Schumacker and Lomax, 2010). In the first column of model 1 I find that age and education are negatively associated with believing homosexuality is a choice. Women do not believe sexuality is a choice to the degree that men do.

Identifying as black and higher levels of attendance and biblical literalism are positively associated with believing homosexuality is a choice. Political conservatism is positively associated as well. There are no significant differences between Evangelical Protestants and all other religious traditions including the unaffiliated. The second column of model 1 shows that believing homosexuality is a choice is negatively associated with support for same-sex marriage. Age, biblical literalism, political conservatism, and worship service

¹The standardized results were calculated using the STDYX command in Mplus. STDYX uses the variance of both the dependent and independent variables in its calculation. According to Long (1997), the standardized coefficients for dichotomous variables necessitate a different calculation than standardized coefficients for continuous variables. These should use only the variance of the dependent variable (STDY in Mplus) and are interpreted as the change in the dependent variable in dependent variable standard deviation units when the independent variable changes from zero to one (Muthén and Muthén, 2010).

Table 3.2
Parameter Estimates of Selected Variables for Support of Same-Sex Marriage

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Choice	Marriage	Born	Marriage
Choice		-0.357*** (-0.568)		
Born				0.494*** (0.727)
Political Conservatism	0.238*** (0.323)	-0.334*** (-0.352)	-0.203*** (-0.282)	-0.340*** (-0.344)
Biblical Literalism	0.244*** (0.218)	-0.304*** (-0.211)	-0.274*** (-0.250)	-0.276*** (-0.183)
Age	-0.006** (-0.085)	-0.013*** (-0.133)	0.007** (0.091)	-0.014*** (-0.143)
Female	-0.284*** (-0.231)		0.209** (0.175)	
Married		-0.154 (-0.097)		-0.161 (-0.097)
Black	0.296 (0.162)	-0.183 (-0.079)	-0.376* (-0.211)	-0.118 (-0.048)
Education	-0.086*** (-0.114)	0.083** (0.085)	0.040 (0.054)	0.099*** (0.098)
South		-0.155 (-0.098)		-0.162 (-0.098)
Attendance	0.057*** (0.138)	-0.042* (-0.079)	-0.068*** (-0.170)	-0.032 (-0.068)
Mainline Protestant	-0.110 (-0.090)		0.097 (0.081)	
Black Protestant	0.188 (0.150)		-0.110 (-0.091)	
Catholic	-0.109 (-0.089)		0.109 (0.091)	
Jewish	0.049 (0.040)		-0.058 (-0.047)	
Other	0.130 (0.104)		-0.114 (-0.096)	
None	-0.053 (-0.043)		-0.229 (-0.195)	
χ^2 /d.f.		5.138/9		7.214/9
p-value		0.822		0.615
CFI		1.000		1.000
TLI		1.023		1.010
RMSEA		0.000		0.000

Source: BRS (2010); N = 1714

Standardized coefficients in parentheses

*p≤.05; **p≤.01; ***p≤.001

attendance are negatively associated as well. However, higher education is positively associated with support for same-sex marriage.

Model 2 estimates the relationship between believing sexual orientation is genetic and support for same-sex marriage. The covariance matrix implied by this model structure does not differ significantly from the observed matrix suggesting good overall model fit. The chi-square statistic is not significant ($p = 0.615$) and the CFI, TLI, and RMSEA are all at or very near their ideal values providing additional support. The results show that age is associated with believing sexuality is present at birth. Women tend to believe this more so than men while blacks ascribe to this view less frequently than whites. However, political conservatism, biblical literalism, and worship service attendance are negatively associated with believing homosexuality is the result of genetics. Again, there are no significant differences between Evangelical Protestants and the other religious traditions and the unaffiliated. The second column of model 2 reveals that believing homosexuality is innate is positively associated with same-sex marriage. Increasing levels of education is positively associated with same-sex marriage. Biblical literalism, political conservatism, and age are negatively associated with support for same-sex marriage.

Table 3.3 focuses on attitudes toward same-sex civil unions. Model 1 assesses the relationship between believing homosexuality results from a choice and support of same-sex civil unions. The model fit statistics indicate a good overall fit. The chi-square is not significant ($p = 0.166$) and the CFI, TLI, and RMSEA are all near their ideal values. Again we see that age and education are negatively associated with believing homosexuality is a choice. Women are less likely than men to consider homosexuality

Table 3.3
Parameter Estimates of Selected Variables for Support of Same-Sex Civil Unions

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Choice	Civil Unions	Born	Civil Unions
Choice		-0.401*** (-0.694)		
Born				0.501*** (0.814)
Political Conservatism	0.238*** (0.324)	-0.230*** (-0.265)	-0.203*** (-0.282)	-0.237*** (-0.265)
Biblical Literalism	0.244*** (0.219)	-0.232*** (-0.176)	-0.274*** (-0.251)	-0.205*** (-0.151)
Age	-0.006** (-0.085)	-0.007** (-0.076)	0.007** (0.092)	-0.008*** (-0.084)
Female	-0.228** (-0.187)		0.150* (0.126)	
Married		0.038 (0.027)		0.040 (0.027)
Black	0.296 (0.162)	-0.005 (-0.003)	-0.376* (-0.211)	0.061 (0.028)
Education	-0.086*** (-0.115)	0.120*** (0.135)	0.040 (0.054)	0.140*** (0.154)
South		-0.177* (-0.124)		-0.184* (-0.124)
Attendance	0.057*** (0.139)	-0.031* (-0.065)	-0.068*** (-0.171)	-0.022 (-0.044)
Mainline Protestant	-0.091 (-0.074)		0.076 (0.065)	
Black Protestant	0.289 (0.235)		-0.229 (-0.189)	
Catholic	-0.076 (-0.063)		0.069 (0.058)	
Jewish	0.093 (0.079)		-0.098 (-0.087)	
Other	0.184 (0.152)		-0.170 (-0.144)	
None	-0.010 (-0.007)		-0.276 (-0.234)	
χ^2 /d.f.		12.937/9		12.869/9
p-value		0.166		0.169
CFI		0.992		0.992
TLI		0.973		0.974
RMSEA		0.014		0.014

Source: BRS (2010); N = 1714

Standardized coefficients in parentheses

*p≤.05; **p≤.01; ***p≤.001

the result of a choice. Political conservatism, biblical literalism, and religious service attendance are positively associated with believing gays and lesbians choose their orientation. Once more, religious affiliation is not significantly associated with attribution beliefs. In the second column of model 1 we see that believing homosexuality is a choice is negatively associated with support for same-sex civil unions. Age, being from the south, political conservatism, biblical literalism, and attendance are also negatively associated. Education is positively associated with support for same-sex civil unions.

Model 2 in table 3.3 estimates the relationship between believing homosexuality is genetic and same-sex civil unions. Assessing model fit we find that the model-implied structure is not significantly different from what is found in the data again indicating good overall model fit. The chi-square statistic is not significant ($p = 0.169$) and the CFI, TLI, and RMSEA all provide additional support for a good overall model fit. Age is positively associated with believing gays and lesbians are born with a particular sexual orientation. Women are more likely to agree with this attribution belief as well. However, blacks are less likely to ascribe to this view than whites. Biblical literalism, political conservatism, and religious service attendance are all negatively associated with believing homosexuality is innate. Yet again, Evangelical Protestants are not significantly different from any other religious tradition concerning attribution beliefs. Turning to the final column in table 3.3 we find that believing homosexuality is innate is strongly and positively associated with support of same-sex civil unions. Education is positively associated while age, political conservatism, and biblical literalism are negatively associated with support for civil unions, as is being from the South.

Table 3.4
Total, Direct, and Indirect Standardized Effects

<i>Marriage</i>	Total	Direct	Indirect	Total	Direct	Indirect
Born	---	---		0.727	0.727	
Choice	-0.568	-0.568		---	---	
Political Conservatism	-0.487	-0.352	-0.135	-0.549	-0.344	-0.205
Biblical Literalism	-0.335	-0.211	-0.124	-0.365	-0.183	-0.182
<i>Civil Unions</i>						
Born	---	---		0.814	0.814	
Choice	-0.694	-0.694		---	---	
Political Conservatism	-0.490	-0.265	-0.225	-0.495	-0.265	-0.230
Biblical Literalism	-0.328	-0.176	-0.152	-0.355	-0.151	-0.204

Due to our interest in the direct, indirect, and total effect sizes rather than just “net” effects, table 3.4 provides the standardized total effects for the variables of interest to this study: attribution beliefs and political and religious conservatism. The upper left portion of the table contains the standardized results from the model examining attitudes toward same-sex marriage and attributing the cause of homosexuality to choice. The upper right portion turns to the model investigating the effect of a genetic attribution explanation and same-sex marriage views. The bottom portion of the table examines attitudes toward same-sex unions with the standardized results from the choice attribution model reported on the left with the standardized results from the nature attribution model reported on the right. While religious conservatism is measured through biblical literalism and religious affiliation, only the standardized results of biblical literalism are displayed because of the non-significance of religious affiliation in all four models. Consistently, across all four models, attribution beliefs have the largest total effect on attitudes toward same-sex unions. Political conservatism exhibits the next largest total

effect size across all of the models. Biblical literalism is the third largest in total effect for each of the four models.

Discussion

Results from the four simultaneous equation path models provide consistent support for the first hypothesis. Attribution beliefs appear to operate as a mediating variable when examining attitudes toward same-sex unions. The chi-square test statistic is not significant in each model and the CFI, TLI, and RMSEA are all close to their ideal values. This suggests that the hypothesized model does not differ significantly from the observed data. While past research was unable to model the mediating role of attribution beliefs and could only hint at this relationship, simultaneous equation path analysis offers a more precise test of attribution theory. It appears that individuals acquire a particular view of the origin of a stigmatized status and this influences their feelings about the morality or rights of the stigmatized (Heider, 1944, 1958; Weiner, 1979, 1985).

In addition to the support for the mediating role of attribution beliefs, the results demonstrate these beliefs exhibit the largest standardized effects across each model. Regardless of whether attribution beliefs are operationalized using the choice or nature measures, or if same-sex marriage or civil unions are being examined, how people define the cause of homosexuality is the strongest predictor of their feelings toward gay rights (Herek and Capitano, 1995). Prior research expressed the importance of attribution beliefs in comparison to other measures, especially political and religious conservatism, but was unable to account for their indirect effects (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2005, 2008; Herek and Capitano, 1995; Tygart, 2000; Whitehead, 2010; Wilcox and Norrande, 2002; Wood and Bartkowski, 2004). The present analysis reveals that even

when accounting for the indirect effects of religious and political conservatism, among other measures, attribution beliefs are still the strongest in the model. This would suggest that attribution beliefs are a crucial mechanism through which attitudes toward same-sex unions are constructed. Changes in individuals' attribution beliefs could do much to change their level of support for same-sex unions.

Hypotheses 2 and 3, therefore, fail to receive support. The total effects of political conservatism and religious conservatism fail to exceed the total effect of attribution beliefs. While both measures are strongly associated with attribution beliefs and attitudes toward same-sex unions, neither surpasses the total effect of attribution beliefs. Political conservatism comes close to achieving the largest standardized total effect when predicting attitudes toward same-sex marriage with the choice measure as the mediating variable. The standardized effect for attribution belief in that model was -0.568 compared to the standardized total effect of political conservatism of -0.487. In each of the other models the differences in effect size are much larger. When comparing the standardized total effects of political and religious conservatism we find that how individuals' identify themselves politically is more strongly associated with attitudes toward both attribution beliefs and same-sex unions across all models.

A number of additional findings in line with past research are worth noting. First, higher levels of education result in more favorable views toward same-sex unions and an unwillingness to view homosexuality as a choice (Ohlander, Batalova, and Treas, 2005). Higher levels of religious service attendance have the opposite effect. Interestingly, age has countervailing effects. Older adults favor the idea that homosexuality is innate rather than a choice, but also tend to oppose same-sex marriage and civil unions. Overall,

increasing age has a negative association with attitudes toward same-sex unions. In line with previous research, women are more likely to view homosexuality as innate rather than a choice. Past analyses show that when controlling for attribution beliefs gender is not significantly associated with attitudes toward same-sex unions (Whitehead, 2010). The indirect effect of gender, however, is still important and receives support in this study. The institution of marriage does not appear to have an influence on individuals' views of gay marriage or same-sex civil unions. This is somewhat surprising given that married individuals are believed to be interested in defending the label of marriage and the status quo (Brumbaugh et al., 2008; Burdette et al., 2005; Hill et al., 2004; McVeigh and Diaz, 2009; Powell et al., 2010; Wald et al., 1996). Finally, religious tradition is not significantly associated with attribution beliefs, net of all other effects. This is contrary to recent studies where Evangelical Protestants were significantly different from other religious traditions regarding attribution beliefs (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008; Whitehead, 2010). Most likely, the differences in political views, education, religious behaviors, and religious beliefs account for the differences across religious traditions.

Several limitations of the present study should be mentioned. First, while the fit statistics provide support that the hypothesized model tested in this analysis is a valid and good-fitting model, they do not in any sense “prove” that this model is the *only* correct model (Schumacker and Lomax, 2010). Other model forms may fit the data as well. It is possible that for many individuals beliefs about the morality of homosexuality and same-sex unions are determined due to political and religious influences and these are primary in causal order to attribution beliefs. In this sense, individuals are either for or against gay marriage and to provide support for those beliefs, they view homosexuality as either

innate or a choice. Most likely, the causal explanation identified in figure 3.1 and the other possible explanation outlined in this section both exist in reality. For example, some individuals may come to know of a family member who is gay and they realize that this person did not choose their orientation; they were always “this way”. This then leads them to amend their views of equality for lesbians and gays. For others, their political or religious backgrounds have defined homosexuality as immoral and same-sex unions as wrong. These individuals then utilize attribution explanations to justify why their stance on gay marriage is valid. Both causal orders are present in qualitative research (see Moon, 2004) and could realistically be applied quantitatively. While the present study highlights the causal order identified in past quantitative research on the topic and in attribution theory, a different explanation is also defensible.

Second, the data utilized is cross-sectional. Even when utilizing path analysis, this precludes any possibility of determining causation. An ideal test of attribution theory would be able to incorporate changes in the attribution beliefs of individuals over time and confirm if those changes encouraged shifts in attitudes toward same-sex unions. This would also allow researchers to test the two possible causal orders discussed above. Finally, a number of studies point to the differences in attitudes toward gays versus lesbians and encourage delineating between the two when investigating public perception toward homosexuality (Herek, 2002; Kite and Whitley, 1996, 1998; Whitley, 2009). This distinction is not possible utilizing the measures available in this study. Despite this limitation, Herek (2002) points out that public rhetoric commonly utilizes “homosexuality” without distinguishing between gay men and lesbians. He argues that in the public discourse lesbians and gay men share a “common characteristic that makes

them members of a distinct quasi-ethnic group with its own culture and political concerns” (Herek 2002, p. 42). This suggests that while the questions employed in this analysis cannot distinguish between attitudes toward lesbians and gay men, they do tap into the broader set of attitudes maintained by a majority of the public.

Conclusion

Using a recent, national survey of American adults and a more precise modeling technique, the present study provides support for attribution theory. More often than not, individuals construct opinions concerning the origin and controllability of a stigmatized status that significantly influences their attitudes toward persons in that group. It is important to recognize that attribution beliefs are indeed socially embedded. Political, religious, educational, and demographic influences shape attribution beliefs. So claims that only attribution beliefs make a difference are unwarranted. Changes in the political, religious, or educational composition of the United States could serve to shift attribution beliefs as well as attitudes toward same-sex unions. Nevertheless, future analyses of attitudes toward gays and lesbians or same-sex unions should include the attribution beliefs of individuals in addition to the standard collection of explanatory variables. Continued attempts to model the interrelationships utilizing structural equation or path modeling will hopefully continue as well. Such tests will confirm or challenge the results presented here and will provide necessary further evaluations of attribution theory.

Substantively, the findings from this study suggest that changes in attribution beliefs lead to changes in attitudes toward same-sex unions. Clearly, beliefs about same-sex unions and attribution explanations are closely tied and changes in one sphere will coincide with changes in the other. In fact, the association between attribution beliefs

and same-sex union attitudes is greater than the total effects of political ideology and religious conservatism. Therefore, if a natural explanation for homosexuality is widely accepted, the entire issue of the legality of same-sex unions may be reframed (Olson et al., 2006). Individuals who already support same-sex unions would now possess additional support for why gays and lesbians should be allowed to marry. Most likely, the discovery of a natural explanation for homosexuality would encourage a change in same-sex union attitudes among those individuals who occupy the middle ground in the debate. Individuals who are not strongly conservative either politically or religiously would be the first to amend their views. Due to the direct effects of political and religious conservatism on attitudes toward same-sex unions, a wider acceptance of a natural explanation for homosexuality would lead to the further marginalization of religiously and politically conservative individuals who oppose same-sex unions. The justification of their chosen stance would have to be modified in such a way as to account for the uncontrollability of homosexuality. It would no doubt become much more difficult to maintain such a stance in the midst of a culture that does not pinpoint responsibility for sexual orientation on gays or lesbians. In this way, attribution beliefs are persistently important to the overall discussion about homosexuality. Each side in the debate about equality for gays and lesbians is forced to reconcile their stance in response to the different possible attributions of homosexuality, whether those attributions provide direct support for their stance on gay rights or not.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Acceptance of Gays and Lesbians in American Congregations

Introduction

The extent to which gays and lesbians are permitted to participate in social life is fiercely contested. For example, the battle in California over Proposition 8 which began in late 2008 continues over three years later. Gay and lesbians' right to serve in the military is now recognized after almost 18 years of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell". Included in these discussions is the level to which, or even if, religious organizations should embrace lesbians or gays in their midst. Questions concerning the ordination of gays and lesbians and the blessing of same-sex unions by religious organizations repeatedly arise. In 2010 the highest governing body of the Presbyterian Church (USA) approved a proposed change allowing local congregations and presbyteries the right to ordain gay and lesbian ministers. It was then ratified by a majority of presbyteries and became law in May of 2011. Even more generally, whether religious organizations will accept lesbians and gays as equal members is debated. These questions and debates are even more influential when considering that the most pervasive form of religious organization, the congregation, consistently influences more Americans than any other voluntary social organization (Ammerman, 1997; Chaves, 2004; Putnam, 2000). Therefore, if and to what extent religious congregations accept gays and lesbians will communicate a great deal about the level of acceptance of this growing and socially relevant minority in American society.

Homosexuality is an especially contentious issue for religious groups because it acts as a prism through which many issues pertinent to religious organizations reflect and refract (Cadge, 2002). These central questions involve scripture (How should it be read and interpreted?), creation (Did God create homosexuality?), marriage and child-rearing (Is marriage and parenthood only between a man and a woman?), the church (Who can be involved or lead?), and the church's mission (What type of stance should the church take toward gays and lesbians?) (Cadge, 2002, p. 265). Therefore, the stance a congregation adopts regarding homosexuality, whether formally or informally constructed, becomes a stance on a host of other issues essential to its belief system. The conversations occurring within congregations are of no small importance either; for some, full equality for gays and lesbians in the wider culture cannot be truly achieved until they are treated with complete impartiality in the religious sphere (Anderson, 1997). It is beyond the scope of this study to arbitrate whether the equality of lesbians and gays in the American religious context and the wider culture more generally is inevitable or even possible. Rather, this study aims to provide insight into how a significant social setting, the religious congregation, is navigating this salient issue. It will present evidence of where religious congregations stand on the issue and what these stances might mean for gays and lesbians in America.

To date, there is little known at a national level about the extent to which congregations are open and welcoming toward gays and lesbians. A number of studies utilize denominations, small samples of congregations, or clergy as units of analysis (e.g. Van Geest, 2007a; Cadge, Day, and Wildeman, 2007; Olson and Cadge, 2002). The absence of a nationally representative sample of congregations leaves some questions

unanswered. How many congregations allow for lesbians and gays to become members or even leaders? How many congregations officially welcome gays and lesbians into their midst? What types of congregations are more likely to allow for the full participation of lesbians and gays? Utilizing a nationally representative sample of religious congregations in America, this research contributes to the study of religious organizations and their responses to homosexuality by investigating the extent to which gays and lesbians are allowed to participate in congregations as well as the organizational correlates of more accepting congregations.

Religion, Congregations, and Homosexuality

The amount of research concerning religious organizations and the issue of homosexuality grew in the last decade and a half. A host of studies focused on the national debates about homosexuality at the denominational level (Beuttler, 1999; Burgess, 1999; Cadge, 2002; Kapinus, Kraus, and Flowers, 2010; Koch and Curry, 2000; Rogers, 1999; Scheitle, Merino, and Moore, 2010; Van Geest, 2007a, 2007b; Wellman, 1999; Wood and Bloch, 1995). This line of research traces the change in denominational stances toward gays and lesbians and their inclusion in congregational life. It describes how the issue of homosexuality is framed by different denominations, depending upon what the issue might mean for that particular religious organization. Researchers have also traced the diffusion of certain denominational programs concerned with being “Open and Affirming” and the changing understanding of that designation by the congregations that adopt the label. Another strand of research works to bridge denominations and congregations (Cadge, Day, and Wildeman, 2007; Cadge, Olson, and Wildeman, 2008). These studies show that congregations within denominations that provided structured

material or processes for the congregations to work through concerning the issue of homosexuality experienced less conflict. Essentially, denominations influence congregations within their fold, but not to the extent that some might assume. Congregations, in many instances, chart their own course. Thus, stances toward gays and lesbians can differ between congregations within the same religious tradition (Cadge, Day, and Wildeman, 2007; Cadge, Olson, and Wildeman, 2008).

In addition to congregational and denominational studies, the clergy and their responses to homosexuality also received attention (Cadge and Wildeman, 2008; Comstock, 2001; Djupe, Olson, and Gilbert, 2006; Olson and Cadge, 2002). For the most part clergy are hesitant to raise the issue of homosexuality due to fear of conflict. Such conflict might serve to alienate portions of the congregation leading them to leave (Olson and Cadge, 2002). This research points out that there are also distinct differences between clergy of different religious traditions as well as between clergy within the same religious tradition. Finally, a number of ethnographic studies of various congregations point out the different processes that influence a congregation's response to or the form of the conflict over homosexuality (Ammerman, 1997, 2005; Becker, 1999; Hartman, 1996; Lukenbill, 1998; Moon, 2004; Shokeid, 2002; Tamney, 2002; Warner, 1995).

The scarcity of nationally representative data on religious congregations places limits on the degree to which researchers can investigate the organizational correlates of congregational stances toward gay men and lesbians. For example, we do not know the overall degree to which religious congregations are open toward lesbians and gays in general. Nevertheless, previous research on denominations, regional samples of

congregations, and clergy can provide some insight into factors that may prove important in predicting congregational stances.

First, religious tradition should be strongly associated with certain stances toward gays and lesbians. Mainline Protestant congregations and Catholic parishes are more likely to be welcoming of lesbians and gay men than Evangelical and Black Protestant congregations (Ammerman, 2005; Button, Rienzo, and Wald, 1997; Gay and Ellison, 1993; Van Geest, 2007b). Mainline Protestants and Catholics are closer to the center of American religion and are therefore more likely to reflect the beliefs and attitudes of the wider culture (Roof and McKinney, 1987). The increasing acceptance of lesbians and gays in the United States is well established (Loftus, 2001). Catholics, while more conservative on some issues, tend to accept gays and lesbians because of their desire to include disparate groups within the fold (Button et al., 1997). Evidence of the influence of religious tradition at the individual level is also well-established (Cochran and Beeghley, 1991; Greeley and Hout, 2006; Loftus, 2001; Hertel and Hughes, 1987; Olson, Cadge, and Harrison, 2006).

Beyond religious tradition, the theological and political ideologies of a congregation are significant and both should influence the extent to which congregations are willing to involve lesbians and gay men in congregational life (Ammerman, 1997; Becker, 1999). Theological ideologies can be particularly predictive (Ammerman, 1997; Becker, 1999; Button et al., 1997; Ellingson et al., 2001; Wellman, 1999). By identifying as theologically conservative, moderate, or liberal, religious organizations are making a statement about where the congregation stands relative to the perceived norm. The increasing salience of theological ideologies and the subsequent rearranging along those

lines led to what some considered a restructuring of American religion (Roof and McKinney, 1987; Wuthnow, 1988). The influence of theological ideology on attitudes toward lesbians and gays exists at the individual level as well. Individuals who identify as more theologically traditional or conservative tend to be less favorable toward homosexuality (Burdette, Ellison, and Hill, 2005; Froese, Bader, and Smith, 2008). Theologically traditional individuals and congregations are more likely to interpret their sacred scriptures in a more literal fashion. This leads them to apply passages interpreted as denouncements of homosexuality to the present context.

The political ideology of a congregation is also associated with its stance on homosexuality (Becker, 1999; Wald, Button, and Rienzo, 1996; Wald, Owen, and Hill, 1988). Congregations that align themselves as politically liberal are more inclined to be favorable toward gays and lesbians compared to politically conservative or moderate congregations. Political liberalism in the United States has become a marker of those groups or individuals who aspire to equality for all individuals. In this way, congregations who identify as such are making a statement concerning their level of tolerance. The effect of political ideology on attitudes toward gay and lesbian persons is strongly supported at the individual level as well (Hill, Moulton, and Burdette, 2004; Sherkat et al., 2010). Prior research suggests the following concerning congregational stances toward gays and lesbians:

H1: Mainline Protestant congregations and Catholic parishes will be more likely to allow the full inclusion of lesbians and gays into congregational life than Evangelical and Black Protestant congregations

H2: Theologically liberal congregations will be more likely to allow the full inclusion of gays and lesbians into congregational life than theologically moderate or conservative congregations.

H3: Politically liberal congregations will be more likely to allow the full inclusion of lesbians and gay men into congregational life than politically moderate or conservative congregations.

Beyond religious tradition and theological and political ideology, a number of studies highlight the importance of demographic and structural differences when investigating congregational positions on moral issues (Ammerman, 1997; Becker, 1999; Hartman, 1996). The education level of the clergy might influence congregational stances toward lesbians and gays. Historical accounts of organized religion in the United States reveal a widespread assumption that clergy who obtain higher levels of education tend to move toward a more critical interpretation of sacred scriptures and more engagement with secular society (Finke and Stark, 2006). Subsequent research demonstrates that the professionalization of clergy does influence views on how congregations should relate to the cultural context within which they find themselves (Finke and Dougherty, 2002; Finke and Stark, 2006; Stark and Finke, 2000). The liberalizing effect of education should also exert an effect on congregational stances toward gays and lesbians through the education level of congregants. At the individual level, higher levels of education are positively associated with more favorable views toward lesbians and gay men (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008; Herek and Capitanio, 1995; Loftus, 2001). Increasing education tends to liberalize cultural views, reduce levels of religious orthodoxy, and encourage a cultural broadening that places individuals in more diverse networks. These all lead to greater levels of tolerance toward out-groups (Davis and Robinson, 1996; Hunter, 1992).

The percentage of females in a congregation ought to also influence its propensity toward allowing gays and lesbians to take part in congregational life. That females are

more favorable toward lesbians and gay men is established in previous research (Finlay and Walther, 2003; Herek, 1988, 2002; Herek and Capitano, 1995; LaMar and Kite, 1998; Loftus, 2001). Likewise, the age structure of a congregation should influence the level to which lesbians and gays are permitted to be involved. Older individuals tend to be less favorable toward lesbians and gays (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008; LaMar and Kite, 1998; Loftus, 2001; Rowatt et al., 2009). The region within which a congregation is located may also be important due to the propensity of individuals residing in the South to hold less favorable views of gays and lesbians compared to the other regions of the country (Ammerman, 1997; Herek, 1988; Sherkat et al., 2010). Beyond the effect of regional religious culture, “cultural homogeneity” and limited interaction with “minority sociopolitical views” and “alternative lifestyles” within the South also lead to such regional differences (Ellison and Musick, 1993, p. 389). The community context within which a congregation resides may play a role too. Those residing in mostly urban areas are usually more favorable regarding gays and lesbians (Loftus, 2001). In fact, case studies of a handful of congregations responding to lesbians and gays in their midst tended to be located in more urban areas. Their response to homosexuality became more salient because of the higher concentration of lesbians and gays residing in those urban areas (Ammerman, 1997). Previous research generates the following expectations concerning the inclusion of gays and lesbians in congregational life:

H4: Congregations whose senior clergy has an advanced degree will be more likely to allow the full inclusion of lesbians and gays into congregational life.

H5: Congregations with a higher percentage of college-educated congregants will be more likely to allow the full inclusion of gay men and lesbians into congregational life.

- H6: Congregations with a higher percentage of female congregants will be more likely to allow the full inclusion of lesbians and gays into congregational life.*
- H7: Congregations with a higher percentage of young people will be more likely to allow the full inclusion of gays and lesbians into congregational life.*
- H8: Congregations located in the South will be less likely to allow the full inclusion of lesbians and gays into congregational life compared to congregations in the East, Midwest, or West.*
- H9: Congregations located in urban areas will be more likely to allow the full inclusion of gays and lesbians into congregational life compared to congregations in non-urban areas.*

Data

To test these hypotheses this study draws on data from the second wave (2006-2007) of the National Congregations Study (NCS-II). The NCS-II is a nationally representative sample of 1,506 congregations in the United States that essentially replicates the 1998 NCS (Chaves and Anderson, 2008). A portion of the sample was generated using the 2006 General Social Survey (Davis, Smith, and Marsden, 2007). Respondents to the 2006 GSS who said they attend religious services at least once a year were asked to name their congregation. The NCS-II also contains a panel component that draws a stratified random sample of 326 congregations that appeared in the 1998 NCS. In sum, data from 1,506 congregations was gathered with 252 from the panel sample, 1,250 that were newly nominated, and four that were both in the panel and also newly nominated. The surveys were completed using a 45-minute interview with one key informant from the congregation.¹ These interviews were completed in both English and

¹Over 80 percent of key informant interviews were with clergy or congregational staff. The remaining interviews were with non-staff congregational leaders (Chaves and Anderson 2008). There are several well-documented weaknesses concerning the key informant survey methodology. These include

Spanish. The overall response rate for the sample was 78 percent.² The data are made available at the Association of Religion Data Archives (www.theARDA.com).

The NCS-II is ideal for this study because it is the only nationally representative sample of congregations available that asks questions concerning congregational stances toward lesbians and gays.³ It also contains questions on the demographic make-up, structure, organizational activities, and programming of each congregation. These data allow for a level of generalizability that will extend past findings concerning which types of congregations accept gays and lesbians and the level to which they do so.

Dependent Variables

The three dependent variables used in this analysis measure the extent to which congregations are open to lesbians and gays. The first focuses upon whether congregations would allow gay men and lesbians to become members. The question asks, “Would the following types of people be permitted to be full-fledged members of your congregation: An openly gay or lesbian couple in a committed relationship?” The

the propensity of key informants to overestimate the similarity of opinions within an organization, the key informant may not know what is actually taking place within the congregation, or the key informant may be simply reporting what the congregation’s ideal stance would be. Researchers should keep these weaknesses in mind and interpret the results of this study cautiously (Frenk et al., 2011; Schwadel and Dougherty, 2010). However, while such loose coupling between what the key informant is reporting and what is actually taking place within the congregation may exist, there is evidence for the reliability of the key informant strategy, especially concerning the NCS (see Beyerlein and Chaves, 2003; Chaves et al., 1999; Frenk et al., 2011). Furthermore, while the key informant methodology utilized in the NCS-II is not without weakness, the NCS-II is still a significant source of information concerning the stances American congregations take concerning the inclusion of gays and lesbians. While not perfect, the NCS-II provides at least an indication of congregational responses to homosexuality at the national level.

²See Chaves and Anderson (2008) for a complete description of the NCS-II.

³The 2001 US Congregational Life Survey is also nationally representative and contains one question on the congregational survey pertaining to homosexuality that asks, “Does your congregation or denomination have any special rules or prohibitions regarding the following? Homosexual behavior.” The question wording inhibits straightforward interpretation however because we do not know if the rules and prohibitions the respondent is alluding to emanate from the denomination or congregation, or both. The questions contained in the NCS (2006-2007) are more straightforward concerning the congregation’s stance and indicate exactly how and the extent to which the congregation prohibits homosexuality.

second question goes a step further by asking if gay and lesbian couples would be allowed leadership positions within the congregation. It asks, “Regarding leadership, if they were otherwise qualified, would the following types of people be permitted to hold all of the volunteer leadership positions open to other members: An openly gay or lesbian couple in a committed relationship?” Possible responses for both questions were either “yes” (coded 1) or “no” (coded 0). The final dependent variable accounts for the presence of a formal welcome statement toward gays and lesbians adopted by the congregation. In many cases such a statement could be only symbolic, but in others it may actually alter the culture of a congregation leading it to be more accepting of gays and lesbians (Becker, 1999; Button et al., 1997; Scheitle et al., 2010). A formal declaration by the congregation is in many ways even more symbolic than allowing gays and lesbians to be members or leaders. Congregations in the NCS-II could respond “yes” (coded 1) or “no” (coded 0) concerning whether they have adopted such a statement.

Independent Variables

To measure religious tradition, a series of dichotomous variables was created according to the RELTRAD typology (Steensland et al., 2000). Congregations were coded as Evangelical Protestant, Mainline Protestant, Black Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, or Other.⁴ Mainline Protestant congregations serve as the contrast category in multivariate analyses.

A measure of both religious and political ideology is included in the analysis. Concerning religious ideology the NCS-II asks, “*Theologically speaking*, would your congregation be considered more on the conservative side, more on the liberal side, or

⁴The Jewish category was later combined with the Other category due to such a small number of synagogues present in the NCS-II.

right in the middle?” For the political ideology measure it asks, “*Politically speaking*, would your congregation be considered more on the conservative side, more on the liberal side, or right in the middle?” Possible responses for both questions were “More on the conservative side” (1), “Right in the middle” (2), or “More on the liberal side” (3). Dummy variables were created for each response. Liberal congregations serve as the contrast category in multivariate analyses for both religious and political ideology variables.

A number of congregational characteristics are also employed in the analysis. A measure of the educational attainment of the senior clergy is included. This measure is dichotomous where 1 = senior clergy has graduated from a seminary or theological school. The percent of the congregation that is female, the percent under 35 years of age, and the percent with a BA degree are all included in the analysis. Congregations in the South are used as the contrast category compared to congregations in the East, Midwest, and West and urban versus non-urban is used to account for size of place. The size of the congregation and the year the congregation was founded are incorporated in the models as controls. The log of the size variable is used in all analyses due to the skewed distribution of congregations on that variable.

Methodology

I begin by presenting descriptive statistics to provide a picture of how U.S. congregations respond to homosexuality. I will provide both the percent of congregations that allow gays and lesbians to become members and leaders as well as the

percent of attenders that reside within those congregations.⁵ Both of these viewpoints are substantively interesting. I then present bivariate analyses of the independent variables and whether congregations allow those in same-sex relationships to be members or leaders. Finally, I move on to multivariate analyses to determine which congregational characteristics are most predictive of more open stances toward gays and lesbians. With the exception of the region and religious tradition measures, all other variables included in the model had cases with missing information.⁶ I used multiple imputation (MI) to account for the missing data (Rubin, 1987, 1996).⁷ Due to the coding of both dependent variables, binary logistic regression is utilized in the multivariate models. I report standardized coefficients in order to compare effects across the various measures $[B_{yx}^* = b_{yx}(s_x/s_y)]$ (Pampel, 2000).⁸

⁵Two weights are employed in the descriptive and bivariate analyses of the NCS-II data. Because the NCS-II is a probability-proportional-to-size sample, the percentage of attenders within various congregations is obtained by using a weight that accounts for the fact that some congregations were nominated by more than one person. To obtain the percent of congregations with various characteristics, a weight is utilized that weighs congregations inversely proportional to their size. See Chaves and Anderson (2008) for details.

⁶Of the 1,506 congregations in the NCS (2006-2007), 21 percent were missing on at least one variable included in the model, leaving under 1,200 congregations with usable data. Subsequent analyses performed on those congregations remaining after listwise deletion revealed that they were significantly more likely to allow those in same-sex relationships to become leaders compared to the missing congregations. There was no significant difference concerning allowing lesbians and gay men to become members however. This difference necessitated the use of multiple imputation.

⁷The MI procedure generates five imputations using multiple Markov Chains based on all variables included in each model, resulting in an overall N of 7,530 (1,506 X 5). The results reported in each table are from the MIANALYZE procedure in SAS. This procedure combines all of the results from each of the five imputations resulting in overall estimates, standard errors, and significance levels. The Proportional Reduction in Error (PRE) reported in Table 4.4 for each model is the average of the PRE for each individual iteration.

⁸I follow Pampel's (2000) assumption that the standard deviation of $\text{logit}(y) = 1.8138$.

Table 4.1
*Acceptance of Gays and Lesbians in Committed Relationships into Congregational Life
 (MI Data)*

	% of Congregations that	% of Attenders in Congregations that
<i>Gays and Lesbians in Committed Relationships</i>		
Allowed to be Members	37.4	48.9
Allowed to be Leaders	18.6	22.4
Congregation Adopted a Formal Statement of Welcoming	5.7	8.3

Results

Table 4.1 displays the extent to which gays and lesbians in committed relationships are accepted in congregations in the United States. The first column provides a look at how many congregations exhibit these characteristics. The second column tells us what percentage of regular attenders are found within these congregations. Therefore, we can determine not only if a congregational stance is widespread at the organizational level but also if it is influencing a large percentage of regular attenders.⁹ Only 37.4 percent of congregations in the United States allow gays and lesbians in committed relationships to become members with a smaller percentage of congregations, 18.7, allowing those individuals to hold leadership positions. An even smaller percentage of congregations have adopted formal statements of welcoming (5.7 percent). Table 4.1 also shows that almost 50 percent of regular attenders are in congregations where same-sex couples would be allowed to become members. However, only 22.5 percent of regular attenders are in congregations where gay and lesbian couples

⁹Interpreting the differences between the two is fairly straightforward: if the percentage in the percent attender column is larger than the percentage in the percent congregations column, larger congregations are more likely to exhibit the characteristic in question; conversely, if the percentage in the percent congregations column is larger than the percent attender column the congregations exhibiting the characteristic tend to be smaller.

are allowed to lead in some way. A little over eight percent (8.3) of regular attenders are in a congregation with a welcome statement. These differences in percentages for congregations versus attenders indicate that larger congregations are more accommodating of gays and lesbians. It is interesting to note that allowing lesbians and gays to lead is accepted much less frequently than allowing them to become members. Table 4.1 clearly demonstrates that on the whole, congregations in the United States are decidedly against the full inclusion of gay and lesbian couples into congregational life.

Tables 4.2 and 4.3 display the bivariate relationships between the level of acceptance of lesbian and gay couples in congregations and each of the independent variables included in the analysis.¹⁰ Table 4.2 includes all of the categorical or dichotomous variables and the data is weighted to obtain the percentage of congregations that exhibit each characteristic.¹¹ Table 4.3 displays the bivariate analyses for the continuous measures and utilizes the same weight employed in Table 4.2. These analyses provide a first look into which congregations are more likely to allow gay and lesbian couples to be members and leaders.

Unsurprisingly, religious tradition is highly predictive of whether a congregation is inclusive of same-sex couples. Only 15.2 percent of Evangelical Protestant congregations allow gay and lesbian couples to become members compared to 67.3

¹⁰The results for the bivariate analyses found in Tables 4.2 and 4.3 utilize the percent congregation weight described in footnote 5. Results using the percent attender weight are not displayed because the focus of this investigation concerns religious organizations first and foremost. Results that employ the percent attender weight are available from the author upon request.

¹¹Chi-square tests for significance were performed using unweighted data. The weight utilized in Tables 4.2 and 4.3 for the percentages and means displayed weighs the data inversely proportional to congregation size and it is inappropriate to calculate chi-square tests on data weighted in this fashion. However, tests for significance can be performed when weighing the data to account for duplicate nominations which produces the percentage of attenders results discussed in footnote 5. These tests produced identical results to the unweighted data.

Table 4.2
Level of Acceptance of Gays and Lesbians into Congregational Life by Categorical Measures (MI Data)

	% of Congregations that Allow Gays and Lesbians to be		% of Congregations with a Welcome Statement
	Members	Leaders	
<i>Religious Tradition</i>			
Evangelical Protestant	15.2	3.8	3.9
Mainline Protestant	67.3	52.6	14.0
Black Protestant	44.2	9.5	1.8
Catholic	74.1	39.4	5.3
Other	45.2	34.8	7.7
<i>Religious Ideology</i>			
Conservative	26.2	11.6	3.7
Moderate	49.5	21.9	3.5
Liberal	82.4	63.4	29.8
<i>Political Ideology</i>			
Conservative	26.5	8.2	4.0
Moderate	47.8	27.4	3.3
Liberal	78.2	60.9	30.9
<i>Organizational Characteristics</i>			
Sr. Clergy Seminary	43.9	27.5	6.6
Sr. Clergy No Seminary	29.8	4.1	4.1
<i>Region/Community Characteristics</i>			
East	59.3	44.4	14.1
Midwest	29.1	18.5	5.4
West	41.0	26.2	6.2
South	34.8	9.6	3.7
Urban	40.8	23.3	5.4
Non-Urban	34.8	14.5	5.9

Source: NCS 2006-2007

All results presented in this table are statistically significant at $p < .05$ based on a Chi-Square test.

Note: See footnotes 10 and 11 for explanation of significance tests and weighting of data

percent of Mainline Protestant congregations, 44.2 percent of Black Protestant congregations, and 74 percent of Catholic congregations. Similarly, only 3.8 percent of Evangelical Protestant congregations allow lesbians and gays in committed relationships to lead. The percentage of Black Protestant congregations that grant lesbians and gays leadership positions aligns closely to the number of Evangelical Protestant congregations

with only 9.5 percent doing so. This is a precipitous drop from the percentage of Black Protestant congregations that are willing to include individuals in same-sex relationships as members. With 52.6 percent of congregations allowing lesbians and gays leadership positions, Mainline Protestants are the most inclusive religious tradition. Catholic parishes allow those in same-sex relationships to lead at a level much closer to Mainline Protestants compared to Evangelical or Black Protestants. Compared to the percentage of Catholic parishes that allow individuals in committed same-sex relationships to become members however, there is a noteworthy drop in the percentage of Catholic parishes allowing these individuals to be leaders. The difference among religious traditions persists when looking at the adoption of a welcome statement. Over 14 percent of Mainline Protestant congregations report having a welcome statement, while only 5 percent of Catholic parishes, 4 percent of Evangelical Protestant congregations, and not quite 2 percent of Black Protestant congregations report the same.

Congregations that identify as liberal in their religious and political ideologies are much more likely to adopt a welcome statement as well as allow individuals in same-sex relationships to become members or leaders. Over 80 percent of theologically liberal congregations allow gays and lesbians to become members, 60 percent allow them to lead, and almost 30 percent have welcome statements. Conversely, conservative (26.2, 11.6, 3.7) or moderate (49.5, 21.9, 3.5) congregations are much less likely to include lesbians and gays in congregational life or formally welcome them. The results for political ideology are almost identical to theological ideology. A much greater percentage of liberal congregations allow those in same-sex relationships to be members

(78.2) and leaders (60.9) and adopt welcome statements (30.9) compared to the moderate (47.8, 27.4, 3.3) and conservative (26.5, 8.2, 4.0) congregations.

The liberalizing effect of an advanced degree for the senior clergy of a congregation is visible as well with almost 44 percent of congregations in this group allowing lesbians and gays to be members compared to only 30 percent in congregations where the clergy does not hold an advanced degree. The differences are even more obvious when comparing the two groups on allowing those in same-sex relationships to hold leadership positions. While over a quarter of congregations with senior clergy who hold an advanced degree allow gays and lesbians in committed relationships to lead, only 4.1 percent of congregations whose senior clergy has no advanced degree do so. Regarding welcome statements the differences by clergy education are similar but not quite so dramatic. Approximately 7 percent of congregations with seminary trained clergy have welcome statements compared to 4 percent for the rest. Congregations in the East tend to be the most open toward allowing individuals in same-sex relationships to become members and lead and adopt welcome statements. Congregations in the West are the next most open followed by congregations in the Midwest. Congregations in the South are the most opposed toward the inclusion of lesbian and gay couples with only 35 percent allowing them to become members and only 10 percent allowing them to lead. Only 3.7 percent of congregations in the South report having a welcome statement. Regarding community characteristics, congregations in urban areas are much more likely to allow lesbians and gays to become members and lead compared to congregations in non-urban areas. Conversely, slightly fewer urban congregations have formal welcome statements (5.4) than non-urban congregations (5.9).

Table 4.3
Difference of Means of Continuous Demographic Measures (MI Data)

<i>Variables</i>	Congregational Response toward Gays and Lesbians Being Members		Congregational Response toward Gays and Lesbians Being Leaders		Congregational Welcome Statement	
	Allow	Do not allow	Allow	Do not allow	Yes	No
Percent with Bachelors	35.15***	23.24	43.76***	24.01	46.96***	26.95
Percent under 35	21.73***	27.23	17.03***	27.05	19.53***	25.58
Percent female	63.19	62.87	64.99**	62.53	62.87	62.96
Congregation Size (log)	4.20***	3.97	4.23**	4.01	4.50***	4.03
Year Founded	1916***	1941	1909***	1937	1907***	1933

Source: NCS 2006-2007

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

Note: See footnotes 10 and 11 for explanation of significance tests and weighting of data

Turning to Table 4.3 we find that congregational demographic measures are significantly associated with their openness toward those in same-sex relationships. Congregations that allow gay men and lesbians in committed relationships to be members and leaders and have welcome statements tend to have more individuals with bachelor's degrees. Thus, as congregations' mean educational attainment level increases, their propensity to more fully include those with a partner of the same sex in congregational life increases as well.

Somewhat surprisingly, as the percentage of the congregation that is under 35 increases, congregations are more likely to exclude gays and lesbians in committed relationships from membership and leadership roles and not have a welcome statement. This relationship is a bit counterintuitive because younger cohorts are usually more accepting of homosexuality. One explanation could be that Evangelical and Black Protestant congregations tend to be younger than other religious traditions and also more conservative. This possible interpretation will be tested in the multivariate analyses that

follow. Congregations that report having a welcome statement and allow lesbian and gay couples to be members and leaders are usually larger and founded earlier. Finally, congregations that permit gay men and lesbians to lead tend to have a higher percentage of females. This relationship does not hold true when considering congregations that have welcome statements or who allow those in same-sex relationships to be members, however.

Using these bivariate relationships as a guide, I move on to a multivariate analysis of congregational stances toward lesbians and gays. Table 4.4 presents results of logistic regression analyses. Unsurprisingly, religious tradition is highly predictive of permitting those with partners of the same sex to become members, lead within the church, and adopting a welcome statement. Both Evangelical and Black Protestants are much less likely to incorporate lesbians and gays into congregational life compared to Mainline Protestants. Catholic congregations, though, are no more or less likely than Mainline Protestant congregations to consent to gay men and lesbians being members. Differences between Mainline and Catholic congregations do arise concerning allowing lesbians and gays to hold leadership positions or adopting a formal statement of welcoming, with Catholics being less likely to do so. These results affirm the first hypothesis and closely align with previous research. Theologically conservative and moderate congregations are much less likely to include those in same-sex relationships in congregational life than theologically liberal congregations. They are also less likely to adopt a welcome statement. Therefore, hypothesis 2 finds support. Regarding political ideology, conservative and moderate congregations are each less likely than liberal congregations

Table 4.4
Logistic Regression of Congregational Stances toward Allowing Gays and Lesbians in Committed Relationships being Members or Leaders or Adopting a Formal Welcome Statement (MI Data)

	Members		Leaders		Welcome Statement	
	β	Odds Ratio	β	Odds Ratio	β	Odds Ratio
<i>Religious Tradition</i>						
Evangelical Protestant	-0.59***	0.12	-0.77***	0.06	-0.20*	0.48
Black Protestant	-0.20***	0.43	-0.56***	0.10	-0.27*	0.32
Catholic	-0.01	---	-0.08**	0.53	-0.14**	0.36
Other	-0.17***	0.31	-0.09	---	-0.07	---
Mainline Protestant (contrast)						
<i>Religious Ideology</i>						
Conservative	-0.41***	0.22	-0.36***	0.26	-0.31**	0.32
Moderate	-0.21*	0.44	-0.20*	0.46	-0.20*	0.45
Liberal (contrast)						
<i>Political Ideology</i>						
Conservative	-0.34***	0.26	-0.49***	0.16	-0.37***	0.26
Moderate	-0.25**	0.38	-0.32***	0.30	-0.34***	0.28
Liberal (contrast)						
<i>Congregational Characteristics</i>						
Senior Clergy Seminary Grad	0.06	---	0.26**	2.67	-0.15	---
Percent with Bachelors	0.10*	1.01	0.12*	1.01	0.11	---
Percent female	0.13**	1.02	0.10	---	0.02	---
Percent under 35	-0.04	---	-0.10	---	-0.01	---
Congregation Size (log)	0.09*	1.15	-0.09	---	0.14*	1.26
Year Founded	-0.07	---	-0.05	---	-0.14*	0.99
<i>Region/Community Characteristics</i>						
East	0.00	---	0.01	---	0.00	---
Midwest	-0.05	---	0.12*	1.67	-0.01	---
West	-0.04	---	0.09*	1.61	0.04	---
South (contrast)						
Urban	0.00	---	0.09	---	-0.01	---
Constant	5.26		3.60		7.65	
PRE	0.29		0.35		0.17	
N	1506		1506		1506	

Source: NCS 2006-2007
 *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001
 β = Standardized Coefficient

to adopt a welcome statement or to tolerate lesbians and gays becoming members or leaders, supporting hypothesis 3.

Turning to the effects of various congregational characteristics, congregations whose senior clergy holds an advanced degree are no more likely to accept gay men and lesbians in committed relationships as members or to adopt a welcome statement. However, these congregations are more likely to allow those in same-sex partnerships to lead within the congregation, regardless of religious tradition or the theological and political ideology of the congregation. This finding is in partial agreement with the prediction of hypothesis 4. Congregations with a greater percentage of individuals with a bachelor's degree are more likely to allow lesbians and gay men to be both members and leaders, but no more likely to adopt a welcome statement. This provides limited support for the fifth hypothesis. Supporting hypothesis 6 to a degree, a higher percentage of females is positively associated with allowing those in committed same-sex relationships to become members but is not significantly associated with allowing them to lead or adopting a welcome statement. An increase in the percentage of congregants under 35 years of age is not associated with any of the dependent variables. This finding opposes the prediction made in hypothesis 7. This is most likely due to controlling the effects of religious tradition. Evangelical and Black Protestant congregations are usually younger regarding congregant's mean age and much more conservative than Mainline congregations.

Concerning whether or not congregations adopt a welcome statement or allow lesbian and gay couples to become members, no region of the country is significantly different from the South. Conversely, congregations in the Midwest and West are each

more likely to consent to gays and lesbians having the right to lead compared to congregations in the South. These findings offer limited confirmation of hypothesis 8. Contrary to the ninth hypothesis, net of all the other effects in the model, whether a congregation is in an urban location has no bearing on its propensity to allow lesbians and gays to become members or lead or adopt a formal welcome statement.

Congregation size is significantly and positively associated with whether those in same-sex relationships are permitted to be members and if the congregation has a formal welcome statement, but size is not associated with letting lesbians and gays lead. When the congregation was founded is not significantly associated with either of the first two measures of congregational openness toward homosexuality but younger congregations are more likely to adopt a welcome statement.

Discussion

These results demonstrate that a host of congregational features are important when considering congregational responses toward the full inclusion of gay men and lesbians. Accounting for a congregation's religious tradition is essential. Evangelical and Black Protestant congregations are much less likely to adopt a welcome statement or allow gays and lesbians in committed relationships to become members or lead compared to Mainline Protestant congregations. This suggests that for Evangelical and Black Protestant religious organizations the issue of homosexuality serves as a boundary marker that operates to designate those who are "in" the group from those who are not. These clear boundaries encourage internal vitality and commitment to the group (Smith et al., 1998). Finding that Evangelicals are less likely to accept lesbians and gays compared to Mainline congregations confirms past research. The Black Protestant case is interesting

considering that this religious tradition usually aligns with Evangelicals on moral issues but concerning issues of social justice they side more so with Mainline Protestants (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990). Because Black Protestants are much less likely than Mainline Protestants to allow gays and lesbians in committed relationships to become members or lead within the congregation or adopt a welcome statement, the issue of including lesbians and gays in congregational life for this religious tradition seems to fall more closely to a moral issue rather than a civil rights or social justice concern. The opposition of Black Protestant congregations to homosexuality may also influence African-Americans' stance toward same-sex unions. African-Americans' higher levels of opposition toward same-sex unions can be traced to their greater levels of religious involvement (Sherkat, de Vries, Creek, 2010).

It is also important to recognize that there are no significant differences between Catholic parishes and Mainline congregations in their acceptance of those in same-sex relationships as members. This is somewhat surprising considering the Catholic Church's rather traditional stance toward other divisive issues like abortion. Button and colleagues (1997) explain the church's stance by pointing to Catholicism's strong emphasis on social justice. Likewise, Catholic interpretation of scripture concerning homosexuality distinguishes between orientation and behavior. In this way, some Catholic parishes work to enable gays and lesbians to live within the fold while not endorsing homosexuality per se (Ammerman, 1997). The inclusion of gay men into Catholic life is also documented in Ammerman's (1997) case study of St. Matthew's parish. When the focus centers on allowing individuals with partners of the same sex leadership positions or adopting a formal statement of welcoming, however, Catholic

parishes are less likely to consent. There appears to be a limit to the level of involvement allowed lesbians and gays when comparing Catholic parishes to Mainline congregations. Despite the powerful and predictably influential effect of religious tradition on a congregation's position concerning homosexuality, many congregations within the same religious tradition take different stances on the issue (Ammerman, 2005). The results from the present investigation support this assertion: the theological and political ideology, demographic composition, and location of a congregation are all significantly associated with its acceptance of gays and lesbians in committed relationships beyond the effects of religious tradition.

Theological and political ideologies are essential. If a congregation identifies itself as theologically or politically liberal, it will be much more likely to accept homosexuality than a moderate or conservative congregation, no matter the religious tradition. For instance, a congregation could identify with the Catholic or Mainline Protestant traditions but the theological and political ideology of that congregation might lead it to stake out a position concerning homosexuality that is more similar to Evangelical or Black Protestant congregations. Furthermore, knowing a congregation's political ideology is important because it can influence the political views of congregants (Wald et al., 1988). It should be noted though that while congregations can act as political communities they do not necessarily engage in politics beyond a few particular forms of political action, depending on the religious tradition of which they are a part (Chaves, 2004). Returning to the bivariate analyses, it is interesting how the percent of congregations in each political and religious ideological category closely mirror each other. The percentages for politically liberal, moderate, and conservative congregations

are almost identical to those for theologically liberal, moderate, and conservative congregations. This suggests that homosexuality, as an issue pertinent to congregations, may be tightly coupled to both the political and theological leanings of a congregation. In this way the acceptance and inclusion of gays and lesbians is not only a political issue or religious issue for congregations but both. Future research could investigate the extent to which this is true and provide a greater understanding of the mechanisms through which each form of ideology functions.

The results of this investigation also demonstrate that the demographic composition of a congregation is significantly associated with the level of acceptance of homosexuality. Prior research at the individual level on the liberalizing effect of education concerning attitudes toward gays and lesbians finds further confirmation here. Congregations that have more individuals with bachelor's degrees are more likely to allow same-sex couples to become involved in congregational life at all levels. This is an important extension of individual level findings concerning the liberalizing effect of education. Higher mean levels of education seem to create contextual effects that influence entire groups (Stroope, 2011). In this way, it is not only what an individual's level of education might be, but also those around the individual that create the group's stance. It is significant, however, that congregations with many highly educated individuals are not any more likely to adopt a formal statement of welcoming, all else being equal.

Congregations with clergy who attended theological school or seminary are more likely to allow lesbians and gays in committed relationships to become leaders, but there are no differences in the propensity of the group to adopt a formal statement of

welcoming or allow gays and lesbians to become members. Thus, the professionalization of the clergy is associated with a degree of agreement with societal norms not seen in untrained clergy (Finke and Dougherty, 2002). Beyond education effects, the gender breakdown of a congregation can influence whether those in same-sex relationships are accepted as members. Congregations with higher percentages of females are more likely to welcome same-sex couples into their midst. A higher percentage of females does not translate into adopting a welcome statement or allowing lesbians and gays to lead within the congregation however. These results both confirm and confound findings at the individual level showing gender differences in the level of acceptance of homosexuality. They also align with what was found concerning education levels of the congregation. The aggregation of individuals can create differences in the stances taken at the organizational level. The final demographic measure, percent of the congregation under 35, does not exhibit a significant association to the dependent variable in any model. Again, this is most likely due to controlling for the differences across religious traditions.

Finally, the location of a congregation can influence its stance toward homosexuality. Congregations in the Midwest and West are all more likely to allow same-sex couples to lead compared to congregations in the south. While a somewhat crude measure, the significant relationships between regions provide an impetus for further research focused on how location and place influence a congregation (Ammerman, 1997). Interestingly though, net of all other effects, congregations in urban areas are no different from those in suburban or rural areas.

Conclusion

Using a nationally representative sample of congregations in the United States the purpose of this study was to extend what is currently known concerning the responses of religious organizations to homosexuality. I find that the theological and political ideology, demographic composition, location, and religious tradition of a congregation are all important when examining if gay men and lesbians in committed relationships will be accepted or actively welcomed into a religious congregation. The results from this study reinforce many of the findings in previous work investigating the acceptance of homosexuality within congregations while providing a much needed extension of these lines of research by adding a greater level of generalizability. Original findings from this analysis also demonstrate how some individual level predictors can influence entire organizations when aggregated. While a large quantitative study such as this helps to establish what is likely to be found and provides a level of breadth on a topic, future research should continue to investigate these and other congregational characteristics to further determine exactly how various features of a congregation influence its level of acceptance of gays and lesbians. In this sense, more qualitative research performed within congregations is necessary to continue to flesh out what is found in large, nationally representative surveys, complementing their breadth with depth.

For the most part, religious congregations in the United States are not open to the full inclusion of gays and lesbians into congregational life. If the widespread acceptance of homosexuality in religious congregations is a harbinger of the acceptance of gays and lesbians in the culture at large we can conclude that American society is still widely opposed to homosexuality. Likewise, if it is true that gay men and lesbians in committed

relationships will gain true equality in American culture only when they are fully accepted in the religious sphere (Anderson, 1997), actually achieving full equality does not appear to be on the immediate horizon. It is possible, however, that the acceptance of homosexuality within congregations will follow the acceptance of other groups who were excluded in the past. For example, divorcees were at times excluded from full inclusion into a religious body but changing societal norms bumped the levels of acceptance toward this group up. Religious groups responded by beginning to include them at much higher levels (Rogers, 1999). Therefore, it would not be surprising if in 10, 20, or 30 years the acceptance of lesbians and gays into congregational life undergoes the same change. Attitudes toward homosexuality are growing more favorable in the wider culture, (see Loftus, 2001), and this will undoubtedly influence the stances of religious organizations. Congregations will be forced to respond. In colloquial terms, the rising tide may lift all boats. Due to the cross-sectional nature of this sample, there is no way to know if congregational stances toward lesbians and gays are indeed growing more inclusive or exclusive. There is a panel component to the 2006-2007 NCS, but the dependent measures used in this study were not included on the first wave of the survey. Hopefully future iterations of the National Congregations Study will include the same questions employed in Wave II and used in this analysis to provide second and third data points. Researchers will then be able to investigate the either growing or declining acceptance of homosexuality into congregational life.

While it is possible that a growing number of religious organizations may come to include same-sex couples to a greater extent in congregational life, many congregations will undoubtedly hold steadfast to their non-acceptance of lesbians and gays. Individuals

who are opposed to homosexuality may begin to even self-select into congregations that align with their beliefs (Putnam and Campbell, 2010). Rejecting the direction in which the wider culture is moving might serve as a useful boundary marker for such gatherings (Smith et al., 1998). Lesbians and gay men may provide a valuable out-group for these congregations because they rarely cross paths with these individuals generating few negative consequences for maintaining an oppositional stance (Wellman, 1999).

Unwelcoming congregations could be influenced to move toward a more accepting stance however. First, congregations may be forced to take a more nuanced position if there is interaction with gays and lesbians on a more consistent basis among the individuals that make up the congregation (Allport, 1954). The changing ecology surrounding a congregation could make this possibility a reality. Same-sex couples might become a more prevalent feature of the community in which the congregation resides. A community could also begin to attract highly educated individuals because of new job opportunities and the constituency of the congregation might change influencing its demographic composition. Qualitative studies of communities in flux support these possibilities (Ammerman, 1997). Second, if the acceptance of homosexuality is in some way redefined as more of a social justice issue rather than strictly a moral issue, groups that are currently unfavorable toward gays and lesbians, like Black Protestant congregations, may be more inclined to embrace them and the significance of homosexuality as a boundary marker may decline. Also, oppositional congregations may over time be led by clergy with higher levels of education than before. All of these factors could nudge unwelcoming congregations toward a more accepting stance of gay men and lesbians. Classic church-sect theory predicts this type of change. As religious

groups increase in size and group members become more wealthy or educated, they tend to become less strict and begin to accommodate themselves to the culture within which they are located (Stark and Finke, 2000).

Whatever the future may hold concerning the extent to which religious organizations in the United States will include lesbians and gays into congregational life, the importance of continuing to investigate the topic should be noted. Congregations are the most pervasive public gathering place in our culture and involve more people than any other voluntary organization (Ammerman, 1997; Chaves, 2004; Putnam, 2000). The level to which congregations systematically reject or accept a growing and politically relevant minority population provides a unique perspective on the present state of American culture more generally.

CHAPTER FIVE

Gender and Sexuality within Religious Congregations

Introduction

The full acceptance of gay men and lesbians into American society continues to be an extremely contentious issue. While significant progress toward equality for non-heterosexual individuals has been made in certain social arenas, such as employment, the degree to which they should be accepted in other spheres remains up for debate. Battles over the right of gays and lesbians to marry, obtain civil unions, or adopt same-sex partners all across the United States and it is no secret that religious individuals and religious organizations are principal actors in the unfolding drama (Fetner, 2008). While individuals' attitudes toward homosexuality have received the bulk of researchers' attention, the actions of religious organizations toward homosexuality are beginning to gain notice. Discovering which congregations oppose or accept gays and lesbians as well as the processes that underlie these stances is important for the following reason: Religious congregations consistently influence more Americans than any other voluntary social organizational form and remain the most significant organizational form of American religion (Chaves, 2004; Chaves and Anderson, 2008; Putnam and Campbell, 2010). Furthermore, congregations serve as a potent network that is routinely exploited by right-wing political groups (Fetner, 2008). Therefore, continued investigation into congregational responses to homosexuality is essential to understand the acceptance of gays and lesbians in broader society.

The inequality faced by women in religious organizations over the past 100 years bears some resemblance to the circumstances of gays and lesbians in more recent days (Chaves, 1997). Both groups either experience or have experienced systematic inequalities concerning full inclusion into congregational life. This suggests that inequality present along one dimension is possibly linked to inequality in the other. Congregations that have liberalized in their stance toward women may be on the road toward liberalization of their stance toward homosexuality. The connection between gender and sexuality within congregations has been overlooked, even though this relationship is strongly supported at the individual level. In many studies one of the most consistent predictors of attitudes toward homosexuality is gender; women unfailingly exhibit more favorable attitudes than men (Herek, 2002; Kite and Whitley, 1996, 1998). Due to the strong association between gender and sexuality at the individual level, the intersection of gender and sexuality at the organizational level deserves further investigation.

Building upon Acker's (1990, 2006) theory of gendered organizations and inequality regimes, I investigate the extent to which inequality in gender and sexuality are linked within religious congregations. Specifically, using a nationally representative sample of congregations in the United States, I analyze whether a congregation's stance toward allowing women to serve as head clergy person is significantly associated with their acceptance of gays and lesbians as members or leaders within the congregation. While a handful of studies utilize the gendered organizations framework in the study of gender inequality within religious congregations (Adams, 2007; Cadge, 2004; Manville, 1997; Stewart-Thomas, 2010), no study has examined the relationship between these two

dimensions of inequality within religious congregations. This research extends existing literature in three ways. First, it provides support for the utility of the theory of gendered organizations and especially the concept of inequality regimes for investigating dimensions of inequality in addition to gender. Second, it provides evidence of the intersection of gender and sexuality within religious congregations, thereby contributing to the growing dialogue on congregational responses to homosexuality. Finally, these findings propose a number of avenues for future research regarding gender, sexuality, and organizations.

Gendered Organizations Theory and Inequality Regimes

In the 1970s and 1980s numerous studies analyzed the inequality women experienced within organizations. However, it was after Acker (1990) provided the first formulation of a theory of gendered organizations that the field experienced a “paradigm shift” (Britton and Logan, 2008, p. 107). This new framework moved gender from the individual to the organization and sparked an explosion of studies focused on gender, work, and organizations. In describing her theory of gendered organizations, Acker wrote that “to say an organization, or any other analytic unit, is gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine” (Acker, 1990, p. 146). The essence of this theory is that organizations are built upon assumptions about gender that underlie much of what they do that in many instances reproduce gendered inequalities (Britton and Logan, 2008). Usually, it is through organizational logic, as seen in the work rules and practices that take place within an organization, that organizations are gendered (Britton, 1997). The

social processes that take place within organizations enact a gendering of roles, images, identities, inequalities, responsibilities, interactions, and symbols. The framework of gendered organizations has been useful in analyzing the varying effects of gender within a host of areas, such as veterinary medicine (Irvine and Vermilya, 2010), nursing (Williams, 1995), social movement organizations (Ward, 2004), and prisons (Britton, 1997).

Building upon the idea of gendered organizations, theorists began to recognize that organizations can be stratified along other dimensions too (Acker, 2006; Britton and Logan, 2008). In this way, organizations can be “‘raced’ or ‘sexualized’ or ‘classed’” (Britton and Logan, 2008, p. 110). Realizing this, Acker (2006) proposed that all organizations have “inequality regimes.” Inequality regimes are “loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations” (Acker, 2006, p. 443).¹ Organizations can differ in the extent to which inequalities are present and how acute they are. The idea of inequality regimes gives precedence to intersectionality in the analysis of discrimination in organizations. Intersectionality proposes that various dimensions of inequality intersect and create a context where to separate them analytically is to do injustice to the nature of reality (Collins, 1990, 2004; Glenn, 1999). Intersectionality recognizes that it is through the identification of various differences that those with power can justify the stratified arrangements of an organization. The intersection of inequalities also highlights the creation of “a mythical norm” that in the United States is “white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure” (Lorde, 1984,

¹Acker (2006, p. 443) defines inequality as “systematic disparities between participants in power and control over goals, resources, and outcomes.”

p. 116). In gendered organizations theory the “ideal worker” needed to fulfill the “job” equates to the concept of the “mythical norm.” So, the ideal worker is usually not only male, but white and heterosexual as well. Therefore, it is essential to keep multiple dimensions of inequality at the heart of organizational analysis (Britton and Logan, 2008).

When discussing inequality regimes Acker (2006) gives precedence to race and class as the most prominent dimensions alongside gender. In her estimation the most important “other” category beyond race, class, and gender is sexual preference. Heterosexuality is assumed in many organizational processes and practices. Thus, homosexuality (or any other non-heterosexual orientation) can be disruptive to organizing processes because it “flouts the assumptions of heterosexuality” (Acker, 2006, p. 445). Again, the ideal worker is assumed to be heterosexual. While recognizing the importance of sexuality as a dimension of inequality present within organizations, Acker believes this difference is not as systematically entrenched within organizational processes. Britton and Logan (2008) take issue with this conception of inequality regimes. As they point out, sexuality is equally embedded within organizational processes. In their view “a more complete notion of inequality regimes would be one that gave equal weight to race, class, gender, *and* sexuality as aspects of organizational structure and bases for inequalities among workers” (Britton and Logan, 2008, p. 113, italics in original). Furthermore, recognizing the intersection of gender and sexuality at the organizational level is necessary considering the vast amount of research that supports the interrelated nature of the two dimensions at the individual level (Herek, 1988, 2002; Kerns and Fine,

1994; Kite and Whitley, 1996, 1998). Gender, and especially gender ideology, is consistently associated with attitudes toward non-heterosexuality.

Religious Congregations as Gendered Organizations . . .

Researchers interested in the gendering of religious organizations are beginning to utilize Acker's framework (Adams, 2007; Cadge, 2004; Manville, 1997; Stewart-Thomas, 2010). Despite the so-called feminization of religious organizations--where women compose the bulk of religious participants (Miller and Hoffman, 1995), tend to exhibit higher levels of religious activity compared to men (Bush, 2010), hold stronger religious beliefs than men (Hoffman and Bartkowski, 2008), and affiliate more readily than men (Roth and Kroll, 2007)--evidence indicates that religious organizations are still gendered masculine in the United States (Adams, 2007; Cadge, 2004; Konieczny and Chaves, 2000; Stewart-Thomas, 2010). The disparity between the feminization of an organization and the gendering of that organization is a key insight from the gendered organizations framework. The gender composition of an organization and the gender typing of that organization are allowed to vary independently (Britton, 2000). This also can apply to entire occupations. Therefore, despite many religious organizations being contexts within which women outnumber men, they are still masculine in their gender typing. This is most obvious concerning leadership within religious organizations (Adams, 2007; Cadge, 2004; Chaves, 1997; Sullins, 2000). Acker (1990) writes how organizations tend to abstract the idea of the "job" and begin to define an ideal worker that fits the "job." More often than not, though, the ideal worker is male. This process is usually substructural and the gendered nature of the "job" is not recognized (see Fobes, 2001 for an example). It is only within the last 50 years that a significant number of

denominational bodies began to formally allow women to inhabit the role of head clergy (Chaves, 1997). Despite these changes numerous denominational bodies and congregations continue to make a symbolic statement to the organizational field by systematically limiting the access of women to head clergy positions (Chaves, 1997).

Beyond outright restrictions barring women from becoming head clergy, the gendered nature of religious organizations influences clergywomen in other ways as well. Because being a female head clergyperson can be interpreted as a political statement in itself, female clergy are limited in the issues they can address (Olson, Crawford, and Deckman, 2005; Stewart-Thomas, 2010). Female clergy also advance more slowly than men (Adams, 2007; Sullins, 2000), wait longer to gain employment (Chang 1997), are limited to certain ministries (Fobes, 2004; Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang, 1998), and are paid less than men (Nesbitt, 1997). Female clergy also report experiencing the “second shift” – shouldering a majority of the household and child-rearing responsibilities in addition to their full-time employment – that employed men, by and large, avoid (Hochschild and Machung, 2003; Olson et al., 2005).

Evidence of the gendering of religious organizations exists in their symbols as well. Icons or other artwork usually depict men as the example of true religious commitment or enlightenment (Cadge, 2004). Religious organizations also can be gendered through discourse. For instance, in many Protestant organizations scriptural passages from the Bible are offered as proof that women should not have access to the same positions of authority as men (see Adams, 2007 for a fine summary; also Piper and Grudem, 2006). Most importantly, gender hierarchies are openly and clearly recognized within many religious organizations. This differentiates religious organizations from

other organizations in that many religious organizations never “profess to be gender neutral” (Stewart-Thomas, 2010). In fact, many explicitly state their opposition to allowing women access to leadership positions, especially the position of head clergy. Furthermore, even those religious organizations that aspire to gender equality regarding leadership still perpetuate a gendered structure (Cadge, 2004; Fobes, 2001). Therefore, the gendered nature of religious organizations is most visible regarding allowing women to serve as head clergy.

. . . and Inequality Regimes

As discussed previously, the gendered organizations framework proposes that organizations can be typed by sexuality as well as gender. Following this theory, religious organizations may contain inequality regimes where stratification by sexuality is coterminous with gender inequality. A growing body of research is beginning to outline the reaction of religious organizations to homosexuality generally. At the denominational level in the United States, denominations are busy contemplating, debating, and framing the issue of homosexuality for their respective congregations (Beuttler, 1999; Burgess, 1999; Cadge, 2002; Koch and Curry, 2000; Rogers, 1999; Scheitle, Merino, and Moore, 2010; Van Geest, 2007a; Wellman, 1999). Other research outlines the relationship between denominations and congregations and how each influences the other (Cadge, Day, and Wildeman, 2007; Cadge, Olson, and Wildeman, 2008). Denominations influence how congregations plan their response to homosexuality. Many times though congregations still decide for themselves how they will react to lesbians and gays in their midst.

Also receiving consideration are clergy responses to homosexuality (Cadge and Wildeman, 2008; Comstock, 2001; Djupe, Olson, and Gilbert, 2006; Olson and Cadge, 2002; Olson et al., 2005). Most clergy, especially in mainline denominations, are hesitant to broach the subject for fear that conflict might arise that will tear the congregation apart. Clergywomen are especially cautious (Olson et al., 2005). In order to protect their legitimacy as clergy, many women in head clergy positions avoid taking action concerning gay rights, especially if they perceive their congregation as being either ambivalent or opposed to the idea (Deckman, Crawford, and Olson, 2008; Olson et al., 2005). Nevertheless, clergywomen are more likely than their male counterparts to at least speak out for gay rights. This gender difference is attributed to the possibility that clergywomen draw a cognitive connection between the struggle for gay rights and the earlier movement for gender equality, especially women's ordination (Deckman et al., 2008).

While past research investigated congregational responses to homosexuality and the gendered nature of religious congregations no study has explored the extent to which these two dimensions of inequality – gender and sexuality – intersect. Religious organizations are theorized to have inequality regimes that are not only typed by gender but also by sexuality. This implies that the degree to which a religious organization is stratified by gender correlates with the degree of inequality experienced by those not conforming to the “ideal” sexuality. Specifically, congregations with a liberal stance toward clergywomen should be more willing to accept gays and lesbians into congregational life. Therefore, I hypothesize that religious congregations that allow women to be head clergy will be more likely to accept lesbians and gays as members and

leaders. The goal of this study is to unite and extend these literatures by exploring whether religious organizations indeed have inequality regimes. Such an analysis is necessary to investigate the extent to which the concept of inequality regimes is useful in the study of organizations and specifically religious organizations. This study also takes seriously the implications of gendered and sexualized inequality regimes. Inequality along one dimension may lead to inequality along another, but the opposite may also be true. Reduced inequality in one sphere may encourage reduced inequality in another.

Data

This study draws on data from the second wave (2006-2007) of the National Congregations Study (NCS-II). The NCS-II is a nationally representative sample of 1,506 congregations in the United States that effectively replicates the 1998 NCS (Chaves and Anderson, 2008). Using hypernetwork sampling, a portion of the final sample was generated from the 2006 General Social Survey (Davis, Smith, and Marsden, 2007). Respondents to the 2006 GSS who said they attend religious services at least once a year were asked to name their congregation. The NCS-II also contains a panel component that draws a stratified random sample of 326 congregations that appeared in the 1998 NCS. In sum, data from 1,506 congregations was gathered with 252 from the panel sample, 1,250 that were newly nominated, and four that were both in the panel and also newly nominated. The surveys were completed using a 45-minute interview with one key informant from each congregation². Interviews were completed in both English

²Over 80 percent of key informant interviews were with clergy or congregational staff. The remaining interviews were with non-staff congregational leaders (Chaves and Anderson, 2008). There are several well-documented weaknesses regarding key informant survey methodology. Key informants tend to overestimate the similarity of opinions within an organization, they may not know what is actually taking place within the congregation, or they may be simply reporting what the congregation's ideal stance would

and Spanish. The overall response rate for the sample was 78 percent.³ NCS-II data are available at the Association of Religion Data Archives (www.theARDA.com).

The NCS-II is ideal for this study because it is the only nationally representative sample of congregations available that provides measures of congregational stances toward gays and lesbians and clergywomen. It also contains questions on the demographic make-up, structure, organizational activities, and programming of each congregation. These data allow for a robust depiction of inequality regimes along the dimensions of gender and sexuality within religious congregations.

Dependent Variables

The two dependent variables used in this analysis measure the extent to which congregations are open to gays and lesbians in committed relationships. The first focuses upon whether congregations would allow gays and lesbians to become members. The question asks, “Would the following types of people be permitted to be full-fledged members of your congregation: An openly gay or lesbian couple in a committed relationship?” The second question goes a step further by asking if gay and lesbian couples would be allowed leadership positions within the congregation. It asks, “Regarding leadership, if they were otherwise qualified, would the following types of people be permitted to hold all of the volunteer leadership positions open to other

be. These weaknesses should be kept in mind when interpreting the results of this study (Frenk et al., 2011; Schwadel and Dougherty, 2010). Despite these concerns, there is evidence for the reliability of the key informant strategy, especially concerning the NCS (see Beyerlein and Chaves, 2003; Chaves et al., 1999; Frenk et al., 2011). Therefore, while the key informant methodology utilized in the NCS-II is not perfect, the NCS-II is still a significant source of information concerning the intersection of gender and sexuality within American congregations. While not faultless, the NCS-II provides at least an indication of the gendered nature of congregations and the inequality regimes within them.

³See Chaves and Anderson (2008) for a complete description of the NCS-II.

members: An openly gay or lesbian couple in a committed relationship?” Possible responses for both questions were either “yes” (coded 1) and “no” (coded 0).

Independent Variables

The independent variable of interest measures whether each congregation officially allows women to inhabit the role of head clergy. The question included in the survey asks, “If they are otherwise qualified, are women in your congregation permitted to: Be the head clergyperson or primary religious leader of your congregation?” Possible responses were either “yes” (coded 1) or “no” (coded 0). This particular question regarding women and leadership within the congregation is utilized because of its symbolic significance in the religious field (Chaves, 1997) and its straightforward interpretation. The NCS-II contains other questions concerning women and leadership that ask if women are allowed to preach in the main service, sit on the governing board, volunteer in all positions within the church, or teach a class that has men in it. While interesting, each of these measures can be interpreted in different ways and, for the most part, a majority of congregations affirm women participating in all of these functions.⁴ In fact, many religious congregations make use of the large contingent of women to ensure programs are adequately staffed (Fobes, 2004). The symbolic nature of the head clergy position sets it apart from these other possible leadership roles.

This analysis could also utilize whether a woman actually serves as the head clergy for a congregation. This method of operationalizing the gender typing of a congregation has been employed in past research (Adams, 2007; Konieczny and Chaves, 2000; Stewart-Thomas, 2010). However, because the dependent variables ask about the *stance* that a

⁴Over 80 percent of congregations allow women to serve on the governing body or teach a class with men in it, over 70 percent allow women to hold all volunteer positions, and 65 percent allow women to preach in the main service (See NCS-II; weighted results).

congregation takes concerning gays and lesbians, knowing the *stance* a congregation takes concerning head clergywomen is more consistent conceptually. If there were data available to investigate the relationship between gender and sexuality in congregations using the actual number of gays and lesbians accepted as members or leaders, utilizing the actual gender of the head clergyperson would be ideal. In this analysis though, knowing whether a congregation allows women to serve as the head clergyperson provides the clearest measure of gender typing within congregations that is consistent with the nature of the dependent variables. Both dependent variables and the independent variable of interest assess the systematic disparities between participants in power and control over goals, resources, and outcomes (Acker, 2006, p. 443).

Control Variables

A host of relevant control variables are utilized in the multivariate analysis portion of this study to ensure the relationship between gender and sexuality at the organizational level is robust. To measure religious tradition, I created a series of dichotomous variables according to the RELTRAD typology (Steensland et al., 2000). Congregations were coded as Evangelical Protestant, Mainline Protestant, Black Protestant, Catholic, or Other.⁵ Mainline Protestant congregations serve as the contrast category in multivariate analyses. I account for congregations' self-reported theological and political ideology in the analysis. Concerning religious ideology the NCS-II asks, "*Theologically speaking*, would your congregation be considered more on the conservative side, more on the liberal side, or right in the middle?" For the political ideology measure it asks, "*Politically speaking*, would your congregation be considered more on the conservative side, more on the liberal side, or right in the middle?" Possible responses ranged from "More on the liberal side" (coded 1), "Right in the middle"

⁵Jewish synagogues were combined with the Other category due to the small number of synagogues present in NCS-II data.

(coded 2), and “More on the conservative side” (coded 3). I incorporate a measure of the educational attainment of the senior clergy. This measure is dichotomous (1 = senior clergy has graduated from a seminary or theological school). The analysis also controls for a number of congregational demographics such as percent of the congregation that is female, percent under 35 years of age, and percent that has earned a bachelor’s degree. The size of each congregation represents the number of adults, 18 and older, who regularly participate in the religious life of the congregation. A log transformation is used due to substantial positive skew in this variable. Congregation founding date is also used. Finally, the analysis accounts for region of the country by comparing congregations in the south versus all other regions and size of place by comparing congregations in urban settings versus suburban or rural areas.

Methodology

I first provide descriptive statistics displaying the percent of congregations in the United States that allow female head clergy and gays and lesbians as members or leaders.⁶ Next I test for bivariate relationships between allowing women to be head clergy and the acceptance of gays and lesbians as either members or leaders. Finally, I conduct multivariate analyses. Due to the coding of the dependent variables, I use binary logistic regression. All of the variables included in the final models except religious tradition and region had missing information.⁷ I utilized multiple imputation (MI) to

⁶Two weights are available in NCS-II data. I utilize the weight that provides the view from the average congregation. This weight weighs congregations inversely proportional to their size. See Chaves and Anderson (2008) for details.

⁷Over 20 percent of the 1,506 congregations in the NCS-II were missing on at least one variable included in the model, leaving under 1,200 congregations with usable data. Additional analyses of those congregations demonstrated that they were significantly more likely to allow those in same-sex relationships to become leaders compared to the missing congregations. There was no significant difference concerning allowing lesbians and gays to become members however. This disparity necessitated the use of multiple imputation.

correct for missing data (Rubin, 1987, 1996).⁸ To allow for the interpretation of substantive significance alongside statistical significance I estimate standardized coefficients for the logistic regression models [$B_{yx}^* = b_{yx}(s_x/s_y)$] (Pampel, 2000).⁹

Results

Table 5.1 displays the percent of congregations in the United States that exhibit each characteristic listed. Only 37.43 percent of congregations accept gays and lesbians in committed relationships as members. Even fewer congregations, 18.63 percent, accept lesbians and gays as leaders. Close to half of all congregations, 46.68 percent, allow women to be head clergy. It is necessary to note however that a much smaller percentage of congregations (8 percent) actually have women serving as head clergy (Chaves and Anderson, 2008).

Figure 5.1 presents the bivariate relationship between sexuality and gender within religious congregations. The graph compares the percent of congregations that accept gays and lesbians as either members or leaders based upon whether congregations allow or do not allow women to be head clergy. A relationship is clearly evident. Less than 26 percent of congregations that do not allow women to be head clergy allow lesbians and gays as members. Conversely, over 50 percent of the congregations that allow women to be head clergy accept lesbians and gays as members. This difference is statistically significant ($p < .001$). Similarly, only 7 percent of congregations that do not allow women

⁸The MI procedure generates five imputations using multiple Markov Chains based on all variables included in each model, resulting in an overall N of 7,530 (1,506 X 5). The results in Table 5.1 and Figure 5.2 use the MI dataset. The results reported in Tables 5.2 and 5.3 are from the MIANALYZE procedure in SAS. This procedure combines all of the results from each of the five imputations resulting in overall estimates, standard errors, and significance levels. The Proportional Reduction in Error (PRE) reported in Tables 5.2 and 5.3 for each model is the average of the PRE for each individual iteration.

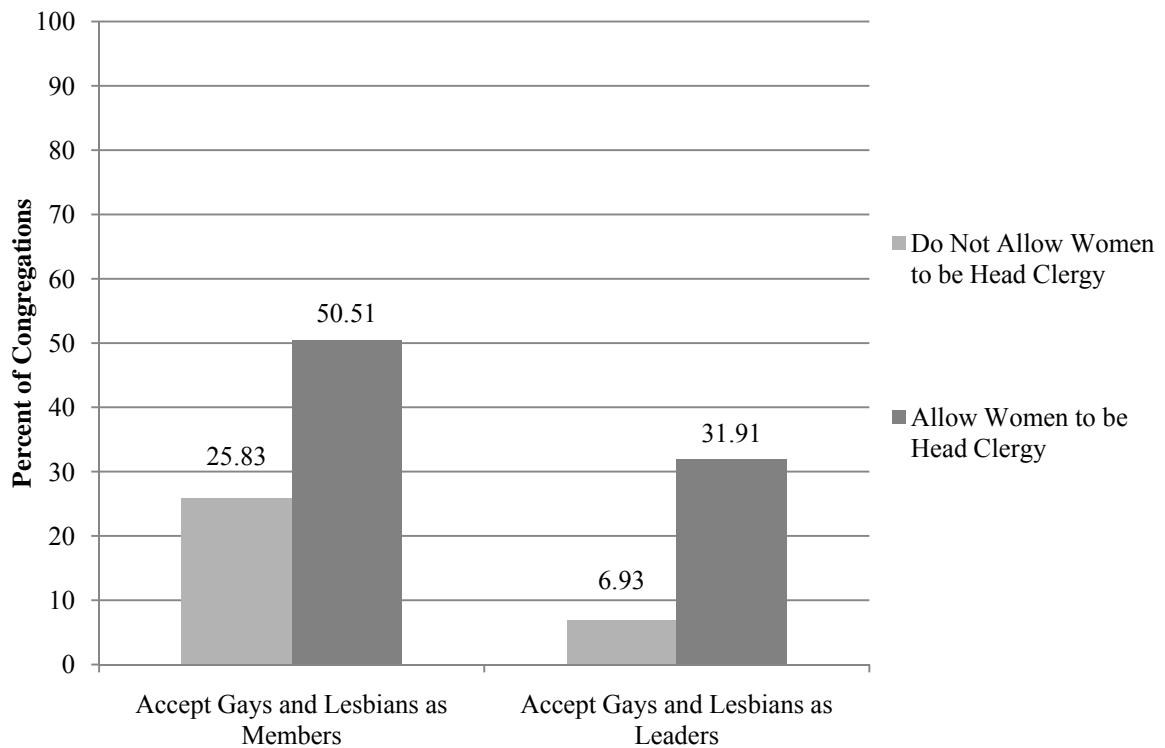
⁹I follow Pampel's (2000) assumption that the standard deviation of $\text{logit}(y) = 1.8138$.

Table 5.1
Descriptive Statistics for Gender and Homosexuality Congregational Analysis (MI Data)

Variables	Description	Mean or % of Congregations	Standard Deviation
Accept Lesbians and Gays as Members	1 = Accept	37.43	---
Accept Lesbians and Gays as Leaders	1 = Accept	18.63	---
Allow Women to be Head Clergy	1 = Allow	46.68	---
Evangelical Protestant	1 = Evangelical Protestant	44.83	---
Black Protestant	1 = Black Protestant	23.35	---
Catholic	1 = Catholic	6.00	---
Other	1 = Other	6.99	---
Mainline Protestant (contrast)	1 = Mainline Protestant	18.82	---
Conservative Religious Ideology	1 = Liberal to 3 = Conservative	2.55	0.63
Conservative Political Ideology	1 = Liberal to 3 = Conservative	2.50	0.63
Senior Clergy Seminary Grad	1 = Senior Clergy Graduated from Seminary	62.33	---
Percent with Bachelors		28.40	25.10
Percent female		62.97	13.99
Percent under 35		25.28	18.00
Congregation Size (log)	Number of Adults that Regularly Participate	4.05	1.12
Year Founded		1931.64	53.83
South	1 = South	47.72	---
Urban	1 = Urban	44.13	---

Source: NCS 2006-2007; weighted data

to be head clergy accept gays and lesbians as leaders. Yet, almost 32 percent of congregations that allow women to be head clergy accept lesbians and gays as leaders. This difference is statistically significant as well ($p < .001$). These bivariate relationships suggest that there is a strong connection between gender and sexuality within congregations. Inequality along one dimension (gender) does seem to be associated with inequality along another dimension (sexuality).



Source: NCS 2006-2007
 All differences significant ($p < .001$)

Figure 5.1: Congregations' Acceptance of Gays and Lesbians as Members or Leaders by Allowing Women to be Head Clergy (MI Data)

Tables 5.2 and 5.3 contain results from multivariate analyses. Each table reports standardized coefficients as well as odds ratios for each measure. In both tables model 1 contains only control variables and model 2 adds the independent variable of interest.

Table 5.2 focuses on the dependent variable of accepting gays and lesbians in committed relationships as members. In model 1 Evangelical Protestant congregations, Black Protestant congregations, and congregations in the Other category are all less likely to accept gays and lesbians as members compared to Mainline Protestant congregations.¹⁰

¹⁰Because the "Other" group is a catch-all category designed to limit the number of missing data in the over-all model while simultaneously maintaining the conceptual clarity of the other religious tradition

Table 5.2
*Logistic Regression of Congregational Stances toward Accepting Gays and Lesbians in
 Committed Relationships as Members (MI Data)*

	Model 1		Model 2	
	β	Odds Ratio	β	Odds Ratio
Evangelical Protestant	-0.59***	0.12	-0.50***	0.16
Black Protestant	-0.20***	0.43	-0.11	---
Catholic	-0.01	---	0.07	---
Other	-0.15***	0.34	-0.09*	0.52
Mainline Protestant (contrast)				
Conservative Religious Ideology	-0.26***	0.48	-0.23***	0.51
Conservative Political Ideology	-0.16**	0.63	-0.14**	0.67
Senior Clergy Seminary Grad	0.05	---	0.05	---
Percent with Bachelors	0.10*	1.01	0.10*	1.01
Percent female	0.13**	1.02	0.13*	1.02
Percent under 35	-0.04	---	-0.05	---
Congregation Size (log)	0.08*	1.13	0.08	---
Year Founded	-0.07	---	-0.07	---
South	0.04	---	0.04	---
Urban	0.01	---	0.002	---
Allow Women to be Head Clergy	---	---	0.18***	1.95
Constant	6.23*		5.27	
PRE	0.29		0.30	
N	1506		1506	

Source: NCS 2006-2007

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

β = Standardized Coefficient

There is no significant difference between Catholic parishes and Mainline congregations.

Congregations that identify as more conservative theologically and politically are less likely to accept gays and lesbians as members. Larger congregations and those with a higher proportion of people with a bachelor's degree or a higher proportion of women are more likely to accept lesbians and gays as members.

categories, I will abstain from drawing substantive conclusions both here and throughout the rest of this study as to what any significant effects might mean.

Model 2 demonstrates that there is a significant relationship between a congregation's acceptance of gays and lesbians and whether they allow women to be head clergy. Congregations that allow women to be head clergy are more likely to accept gays and lesbians as members compared to those congregations that do not allow women to serve as head clergy. In fact, the odds are almost two times greater. The standardized coefficient also implies that whether a congregation allows women to be head clergy is one of the strongest predictors in the model. Compared to model 1 conservative religious and political ideologies maintain a similar association. The percent female and percent of congregants with a bachelor's degree maintain a similar association as well. Evangelical Protestant congregations are still less likely than Mainline Protestant congregations to accept lesbians. However, after controlling for a congregation's stance toward allowing women to serve as head clergy, there are no significant differences between Black and Mainline Protestants. There are still no significant differences between Catholic parishes and Mainline Protestant congregations. With the inclusion of the female clergy measure the congregation size measure fails to achieve statistical significance. In both models, education of the clergy, percent of the congregation under 35, congregation age, region, and urban setting are not significantly associated with a congregation's stance toward lesbians and gays.

Table 5.3 focuses on the second dependent variable concerning accepting gays and lesbians in committed relationships as leaders. In model 1 Evangelical and Black Protestant congregations as well as Catholic parishes are all less likely than Mainline Protestant congregations to accept lesbians and gays as leaders. Congregations that identify as more conservative theologically or politically are less likely to accept gays

Table 5.3
*Logistic Regression of Congregational Stances toward Accepting Gays and Lesbians in
 Committed Relationships as Leaders (MI Data)*

	Model 1		Model 2	
	β	Odds Ratio	β	Odds Ratio
Evangelical Protestant	-0.76***	0.06	-0.63***	0.10
Black Protestant	-0.56***	0.09	-0.46***	0.14
Catholic	-0.09**	0.51	0.04	---
Other	0.08	---	0.00	---
Mainline Protestant (contrast)				
Conservative Religious Ideology	-0.25***	0.49	-0.22***	0.53
Conservative Political Ideology	-0.28***	0.45	-0.25***	0.49
Senior Clergy Seminary Grad	0.25**	2.57	0.25**	2.56
Percent with Bachelors	0.13*	1.01	0.12*	1.01
Percent female	0.10	---	0.08	---
Percent under 35	-0.10	---	-0.10	---
Congregation Size (log)	-0.08	---	-0.08	---
Year Founded	-0.03	---	-0.02	---
South	-0.13**	0.63	-0.12*	0.65
Urban	0.08	---	0.08	---
Allow Women to be Head Clergy	---	---	0.31***	3.13
Constant	4.25		2.14	
PRE	0.35		0.36	
N	1506		1506	

Source: NCS 2006-2007

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

β = Standardized Coefficient

and lesbians. The same is true for those congregations located in the south. Conversely, congregations with a higher proportion of congregants with a bachelor's degree and whose head clergy has a seminary degree are all more likely to accept gays and lesbians as leaders.

In model 2 those congregations that allow women to serve as head clergy are much more likely to accept lesbians and gays as leaders compared to those congregations that do not allow women to lead. The odds of accepting gays and lesbians as leaders are

over three times greater for congregations that allow for female head clergy than for those congregations that do not. The standardized coefficient suggests that a congregation's stance on allowing clergywomen is again one of the strongest predictors in the model. Similar to model 1 Evangelical and Black Protestant congregations are both much less likely to accept gays and lesbians as leaders compared to Mainline Protestant congregations. Catholic parishes fail to differ statistically from Mainline Protestant congregations though. As in model 1, congregations identifying as more conservative either theologically or politically and congregations located in the south are all less likely to accept lesbians and gays as leaders. Those congregations with seminary-trained head clergy and with more congregants with bachelor's degrees are more likely to accept gays and lesbians as leaders. Percent female, percent of congregants under 35, congregation size, congregation age, and urban setting are not statistically significant in either model.

Discussion

These analyses provide support for viewing religious congregations as stratified by both gender and sexuality. Congregations, like other organizations, tend to structurally perpetuate an idea of the "ideal" worker (or in the case of religious organizations, worshipper) that differentiates between those who exhibit a certain set of characteristics from those who do not. Furthermore, the association between a congregation's stance toward allowing women to be head clergy and their stance toward gays and lesbians demonstrates that these two dimensions of inequality, gender and sexuality, do intersect and covary. While knowledge that religious congregations are stratified by either gender or sexuality is established in past literature, the extent to which these two dimensions of inequality intersect and are given equal weight as embedded

organizational processes is new. This study indicates that religious congregations have inequality regimes where multiple dimensions of inequality are significantly associated. Congregations contain “loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain” inequalities based on sexuality and gender (Acker, 2006, p. 443). These findings take on added import when considering that religious congregations influence more Americans than any other voluntary social organization (Ammerman, 1997; Chaves, 2004; Putnam and Campbell, 2010).

Even more broadly, this study provides support for the suggestion that organizations encompass inequality regimes that result in stratification on multiple dimensions. As Acker (2006) and others have stated, organizations can be composed of assumptions about gender and sexuality that create unequal outcomes for certain groups of people. The present analysis confirms the premise that the intersection of these dimensions of inequality is significant. In other words, the disadvantage experienced by one group correlates with the inequality experienced by another. The experiences of various disadvantaged groups are not mutually exclusive, occurring in a vacuum. Rather, different dimensions of inequality intersect creating a complex web of organizational processes and practices. While some might find pervasive inequality within certain organizations along multiple dimensions as cause for concern, the converse could also be true; increased equality along one dimension could lead to increases in equality along others.¹¹ For these reasons, further research should continue to explore inequality regimes. A number of possible directions are readily apparent. First, religious

¹¹Additional analyses of the NCS-II show that 66 percent of congregations with female head clergy allowed gays and lesbians in committed relationships to be members and over 51 percent of female-led congregations allowed lesbians and gays to be leaders. Only 35 percent of male-led congregations allowed lesbians and gays to be members and 16 percent of male-led congregations allowed gays and lesbians to be leaders. The differences are statistically significant ($p < .001$). Results available upon request.

congregations must receive more attention utilizing other dimensions of inequality beyond gender and sexuality. Second, and more broadly, the intersection of gender and sexuality should be analyzed in other types of organizations. Third, future work should investigate if organizational change along intersecting dimensions of inequality is indeed possible. While more quantitative examinations like the present study will be useful in providing broad assessments of certain types of organizations, qualitative research focused on the intersection of multiple dimensions of inequality within organizations is extremely important. Qualitative research is vital to the study of inequality regimes to uncover how dimensions of inequality intersect and the implications this has for individuals from those groups as they inhabit the organization. Such work has already been done (see Ward, 2004, for one example), but more is needed.

This analysis points to other significant characteristics of religious congregations that influence the acceptance of gays and lesbians in addition to the gendered nature of the organization. Judging by the standardized coefficients in all of the models, differences between Evangelical Protestant and Mainline Protestant congregations are consistently the strongest effects in the model. Differences between Black Protestant and Mainline Protestant congregations are significant as well, but not as clear cut as Evangelicals, especially regarding gays and lesbians being accepted as members. The theological and political ideology that each congregation identifies with is also vital. Interestingly, when predicting congregational stances toward lesbians and gays leading, how a congregation defines itself politically has a stronger effect than how it defines itself theologically. Further investigation into whether the issue of homosexuality may be more of a political rather than theological issue for congregations is warranted.

Another noteworthy result concerns the gender composition of a congregation and its stance on lesbians and gays. I find that the degree to which women dominate the gender make-up of a congregation influences whether a congregation accepts lesbians and gays as members. This again denotes a relationship between gender and sexuality within religious organizations, specifically that the feminization of an organization can influence other dimensions of inequality at some level. Still, the non-significant association between percent female and accepting lesbians and gays as leaders underscores the importance of distinguishing between the feminization of an organization and gender-typing of that organization. As past research points out the sex composition of an organization is not synonymous with the gender typing of that organization (Britton, 2000; Irvine and Vermilya, 2010). If the feminization of a congregation did in fact equate to a more gender-egalitarian organization one could expect a greater degree of acceptance of gays and lesbians. However, the increased feminization of a congregation varies in its association with the acceptance of gays and lesbians. Thus, the disparity between gender-typing and gender composition present in past studies receives further support here.

Despite providing evidence of the association between inequalities along the dimensions of gender and sexuality within religious congregations, this study is limited in several respects. First, these data are cross-sectional and preclude any attempt at determining causal direction. This is not as much of an issue concerning the main finding of the study that gender and sexuality are significantly associated. Still, it is impossible to discern from this analysis whether or not changes in the level of equality along one dimension do in fact encourage changes in equality along another dimension. As discussed previously, further qualitative research is necessary to decipher exactly how inequality regimes operate and to

investigate the experiences of individuals that inhabit those organizations. Quantitative, longitudinal data would also be ideal when analyzing inequality regimes. This would permit tests of causal order between dimensions of inequality. At this point I can only propose this might be the case. Second, this analysis is focused on the stances of congregations toward both clergywomen and gays and lesbians. I am unable to directly measure or compare the actual experiences of clergywomen or gays and lesbians within these congregations. Furthermore, I am unable to account for the actual level to which gays and lesbians are allowed to participate. There could be instances of “loose coupling” where the actual practices of the organization do not directly reflect their formal stance (Weick, 1976).

Conclusion

Utilizing Acker’s (1990, 2006) gendered theory of organizations and inequality regimes, this study investigated whether inequality along the dimensions of gender and sexuality were associated within a specific type of organization, the religious congregation. I found that these two dimensions of inequality are strongly and significantly related which suggests that religious congregations contain inequality regimes. These findings encourage continued investigations of religious congregations as well as the utilization of the concept of inequality regimes in analyses of other organizational forms in the United States.

Religious congregations are a unique breed of organization because many stratify by gender and sexuality explicitly. The barriers faced by women and non-heterosexual individuals are not as hidden as in other organizational forms. Rather, many women, gays, and lesbians are aware of the inequality they will face due to their gender or sexual orientation. This creates another level of complexity when trying to disentangle whether

the inequality is perpetuated due to organizational processes occurring at the substructural level or if the outspoken nature of many religious congregations' stances on gender and sexuality work to create the structural processes that perpetuate inequality. Most likely, it is a recursive combination of the two. Undoubtedly, when a congregation makes their opposition to female leaders or non-heterosexual individuals explicit structural arrangements will reflect this fact. It is also true that certain assumptions undergirding the congregation can continue to exert an effect. This is most clearly seen when those congregations that explicitly advertise their egalitarian values can be found to be gendered or sexualized in some way. As Fobes (2001) discovered, a congregation that was explicitly open toward having a woman serve as head clergyperson fell prey to assumptions about gender that systematically discriminated against a woman filling that position. Regarding homosexuality, Ammerman (1997) provides examples where some open and affirming congregations may formally allow lesbians and gays to become members or leaders but underlying assumptions of the congregation continued to limit them (see Moon, 2004, as well). It is crucial that examinations of religious congregations recognize not only the explicit stances of a congregation but understand that stratification on various dimensions of inequality can occur substructurally as well. Certainly, these two processes occur simultaneously and influence one another. Researchers must continue to look below the surface in congregations to separate inequality that is due to the outspoken views of that organization from the substructural gendered or sexualized assumptions that can be inherent to organizations. To conflate the two may result in missing a portion of the story.

Finally, these findings allude to the possibility for change. While this study cannot provide direct confirmation, the fact that two dimensions of inequality are linked hints that as one dimension moves toward greater equality, it could influence the other dimension. In this sense inequality regimes could become more equal across various dimensions simply by focusing on creating equality in one. Regarding religious congregations, greater numbers of female clergy, or greater numbers of congregations that allow for women to be head clergy, could lead to a greater level of acceptance of gays and lesbians as members or leaders. The converse could also be true. Those congregations that desire to systematically limit women or non-heterosexual individuals from positions of membership or leadership could promote the maintenance of a regime by encouraging inequality for either group. By continuing to deny women the right to be head clergy despite the growing trend of gender equality in society, they can ensure that non-heterosexual individuals will be excluded from congregational life as well.¹²

¹²An example of this stance is Piper and Grudem's (2006) work *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. See especially pages 75 – 76.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

This final chapter highlights some conclusions that can be drawn from the dissertation as a whole. Possible directions for future research will also be discussed. Throughout, I offer thoughts on what the future may hold concerning religion, gender, and attitudes toward homosexuality among the American public.

First, each analysis shows that the religious beliefs, behaviors, and affiliations of Americans influence their views of proper gender roles and attitudes toward homosexuality. This is contrary to claims of the declining effect of religion in the modern world. Even at the organizational level there is evidence that distinct differences still exist between various religious traditions and different theologies. If religious authority was truly declining we would expect to see these differences disappear. Rather, there is much diversity within the institutional field of congregations even now. With a vast majority of Americans still affiliating with religious traditions and even greater numbers maintaining various religious beliefs and behaviors, we can expect that religion will continue to affect attitudes toward homosexuality and gender into the future. Likewise, congregations are still the most ubiquitous form of voluntary association in America and so their influence on attitudes toward proper gender roles and the full inclusion of gays and lesbians into society will not diminish in the near future.

Second, portions of each study point to the importance of accounting for gender and views of gender roles when investigating attitudes toward homosexuality. At the individual level gender is consistently predictive of sexuality attitudes. Women are more

favorable than men of gays and lesbians. At the organizational level we see that congregations with more women are more likely to allow for lesbians and gays to be members. Beyond the effect of gender itself, views of the proper roles for men and women in society or organizations also influence attitudes toward homosexuality. Believing God is a “he” or that women should stay home with children are closely associated with less favorable views of lesbians and gays. Likewise, congregations that do not believe women should occupy the head clergy position are less likely to include gays and lesbians in their congregation. The close association between gender, gender attitudes, and attitudes toward sexuality suggest that shifts in one dimension will influence the other. As views of the proper roles for men and women continue to liberalize, we can expect similar shifts in the acceptance of homosexuality. Within congregations, moves toward allowing women to hold the top leadership position will most likely result in shifts toward greater acceptance of lesbians and gays. Similarly, greater numbers of women in a congregation may also nudge the organization toward a more inclusive stance. Therefore, if women continue to outnumber men in America’s congregations or this grows more pronounced, a greater acceptance of lesbians and gays within some congregations may result.

As a whole, these analyses point to the possibility that religion, gender, and attitudes toward sexuality exist in a kind of feedback loop. Alterations in one sphere will result in adjustments in another. If religious belief or behavior wanes in the United States or individuals disaffiliate in growing numbers, we can expect more favorable views toward homosexuality and more egalitarian beliefs about gender roles. If Americans’ beliefs about gender continue to become more egalitarian, greater acceptance of

homosexuality will likely result as well as decreasing levels of religious beliefs that contradict gender egalitarianism, less attendance at religious organizations that hold traditional gender views, and non-affiliation with religious traditions that oppose such gender egalitarianism. Likewise, continued liberalization of attitudes toward homosexuality could also prompt liberalization of attitudes toward gender roles and less religious belief, behavior, and affiliation with organizations that oppose the liberalization of attitudes toward sexuality. While these analyses cannot prove this relationship, the close association of these dimensions suggests it and future research will hopefully be able to further illuminate these relationships. Most likely, neither religion, nor gender beliefs, nor sexuality attitudes operate as a first cause in all cases. Shifts in religious belief may occur first for some, while changes in gender views and sexuality attitudes may occur first for others. Even so, future research should attempt to parse out whether shifts in one dimension tend to occur first for most individuals in the United States.

To do so, longitudinal data with a panel component on religion, gender views, and attitudes toward homosexuality would be ideal when charting out the intersection of these dimensions. Researchers would then be able to investigate whether changes in one dimension portend changes in the others. This could be both at the individual and organizational level. Hierarchical data would also provide a much-needed view of whether organizational characteristics, as discussed in chapters four and five, actually influence individual level beliefs as studied in chapters two and three. Ultimately, the perfect data set would be both longitudinal and hierarchical allowing researchers to chart out the truly contextual nature of attitudes toward gender and sexuality with religion at the individual and organizational levels over time. However, repeated cross-sections of

the American population utilizing identical measures and survey techniques would provide a longitudinal data set that would allow for the dissection of age, period, and cohort effects as well as population-level changes in attitudes toward gender roles, homosexuality, and religious beliefs, behavior, and affiliations (Yang and Land, 2006, 2008). Repeated cross-sections of organizations, especially religious congregations, could be used in the same way as a longitudinal data set that would provide the information necessary to track changes over time. In the future I plan on applying this type of quantitative analysis to those data sources that qualify as repeated cross-sectional surveys.

Future research in this area must also focus on new areas as shifts in the culture continue to take place. As the federal government and various states continue to wrestle with what stance to take on gay rights issues, it will be important for researchers to closely monitor what is taking place at the individual and organizational levels. For instance, with the legalization of gay marriage in the state of New York, how are residents reacting? How are religious organizations navigating this legal change? Are there distinct differences between individuals and organizations in New York City and those in other parts of the state? What is the economic impact of the legalization of gay marriage on the state as a whole? The repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” provides another example of a recent legal change at the federal level that could have a number of implications at the individual level. How are soldiers, both gay and straight, responding to the repeal of DADT? Are incidents of intolerance toward gays and lesbians increasing or decreasing now that gay soldiers do not have to hide their orientation? How are military chaplains of various faiths responding to this change? How does their faith

tradition influence their stance and ministry to gay or lesbian soldiers? It is essential that future research continue to respond to the dramatic shifts in legal stances toward gay rights beginning to take place at the state and federal levels of government.

Quantitative research, like the analyses composing this dissertation, is useful for identifying relationships with a great deal of breadth. However, I must make the necessary call for continued qualitative research as well. Qualitative research can at times provide a depth of understanding that is impossible using survey research. It would also provide an opportunity for theory building that could then be tested with subsequent quantitative research. The results from qualitative studies can be used to refine and improve survey instruments which would improve the quality of the survey data. I encourage researchers to specifically focus on identifying the intersection of religion, gender, and sexuality at the individual and organizational levels. Specifically, in a future research project I plan on spending time in religious congregations to identify the organizational processes that influence a congregation's stance toward the inclusion of lesbians and gays. I also hope to investigate the "loose coupling" of official congregational stances and the day-to-day activities of the organization. Such a study would also allow for the integration of multiple levels of analysis. This is needed when investigating the influence of individuals on organizational processes as well as how individuals are influenced by the organizational context that surrounds them.

Most researchers of attitudes toward homosexuality agree that the battle for gay rights is largely over. At this point in the history of the United States it is merely a matter of time before lesbians and gays enjoy equal rights with heterosexual individuals in all spheres of public life, including marriage. What is and will continue to be fascinating is

how religious individuals and organizations respond to the increased acceptance of homosexuality in the culture. Undoubtedly, many religious individuals may come to accommodate a belief that gays and lesbians should be treated equally. We can be even more confident that certain religious individuals and organizations will maintain oppositional views toward lesbians and gays. What will be truly interesting, however, is how each of these groups comes to explain the shifts or maintenance of their particular stance. How does each group provide support for their belief and to what sources of moral authority do they appeal? Is there evidence of changing sources of moral authority? Thoroughly understanding this process will provide insight into other arenas of social inequality present in the United States.

We can also expect that homosexuality will continue to be useful as a political issue well into the future. While the majority of the American public has liberalized in their views of gay rights and the morality of lesbians and gays, local, state, and national laws still exist that limit the rights of lesbians and gays. Therefore, we can expect continued conflict over whether these laws should stay in place or be overturned. The time-lag that exists between changing public opinion and the laws that are supposed to represent what a majority view as the “good” for society make such conflict a reality. With the relative failure of the conservative religious movements of the 1980s to make lasting changes to the laws that govern the United States regarding homosexuality and abortion, it will be interesting to see how religious groups pursue their goals in the future. It may be that we see an increase in local or state level laws that limit gay marriage or adoption by same-sex couples because of the difficulties of passing such legislation at the federal level. Some evidence of this change in strategy exists when looking at changes in

laws concerning abortion. While *Roe vs. Wade* has not been overturned, a great deal of limitations on abortion have been and continue to be instituted through the support of conservative religious groups. This strategic incrementalism serves to limit abortion with the hopes that one day it will be completely outlawed. Actually, legislators on both sides of the aisle use incremental strategies at similar levels (Ainsworth and Hall, 2011). Something similar could possibly take place concerning the rights of lesbians and gays to marry or adopt children.

Like all research, the end of this project resulted in additional questions. Each chapter of this dissertation responds to a particular gap in the literature but in doing so it makes room for subsequent research. I plan on executing some of this work but I hope that my efforts will spur on other researchers to investigate similar areas.

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