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### How Religious Characteristics Are Related to Attitudes toward GLB Individuals and GLB Rights

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# **How Religious Characteristics Are Related to Attitudes toward GLB Individuals and GLB Rights**

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*Two studies conducted in the United States investigated whether individuals' religious characteristics (e.g., orthodoxy, evangelism, literal interpretism, quest, extrinsic religiosity) affect their attitudes toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) individuals and GLB rights (marriage, adoption, sexual behavior). Orthodoxy, literal interpretism, evangelism, and extrinsic religiosity were all related to less support for GLB rights and less positive attitudes toward GLB individuals. Quest was not related to any measure. Results highlight the complexity of attitudes; for instance, a religious characteristic might predict attitude toward one right, but might not predict attitudes toward other rights. Findings further show what is known about how religious characteristics relate to support for GLB individuals and GLB rights.*

**KEYWORDS** *religion, attitudes, religious characteristics, GLB rights, orthodoxy, literal interpretism, evangelism, extrinsic religiosity, religious quest*

## INTRODUCTION

Gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) rights have emerged as some of the most debated political and social issues of the past decade. These issues have caught the attention of religious groups; for instance, many religious groups have an official stance on same-sex marriage (see Bornstein & Miller, 2009). Religious groups have also been active in trying to influence votes on such

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issues. For instance, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) were active in promoting California's Proposition 8, which altered the state constitution to define marriage as between a man and a woman (e.g., the Mormons even had a website promoting Proposition 8 ban on gay marriage).

Research indicates that religious and demographic variables explain much of the variance in attitudes toward GLB individuals and GLB rights—even more variance than attitudes toward marriage and family (see Becker & Todd, this issue). While many studies (e.g., Ford, Brignall, VanValey, & Macaluso, 2009) have investigated the relationships between some religious characteristics and prejudice toward GLB individuals, the relationships between other religious characteristics (like those studied in this research) and attitudes toward GLB rights is largely unexplored. The purpose of this study is to investigate how religious characteristics (i.e., orthodoxy, literal interpretation, extrinsic religiosity, evangelism, questism) are related to attitudes toward GLB individuals and support for laws regulating same-sex marriage, same-sex adoption, and sexual behavior between same-sex partners. This study is framed in the Christian context because the United States (where this study was conducted) is a nation where a majority of citizens identify as Christian.

## GLB RIGHTS

GLB individuals have struggled to achieve legal protections that would allow them to get married, adopt children, and engage in sexual behavior. These issues have been decided by courts, legislatures, and voters across the country.

### Same-Sex Marriage

Same-sex marriage has been a highly debated issue for decades. Although the first major legal battle over same-sex marriage was in the 1970s, it was not until the 1990s that GLB individuals began having success in gaining equal rights. In 1999, the Vermont Supreme Court ruled that denying same-sex couples the right to marriage, or a similar legal relationship, was a violation of the state's Constitution (*Baker v. State*, 1999). The next year, the Vermont legislature invented the notion of "civil unions," which are legally recognized relationships equivalent to marriage in all ways except name. In 2003, the Massachusetts Supreme Court granted GLB individuals the right to marriage (*Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*, 2003), marking the first time GLB couples were given the right to marry. Other states followed suit. As of 2013, nine states (California, Iowa, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, Vermont, Maryland, and Maine) and Washington, DC, recognize

same-sex marriage. Importantly, in June 2013, the Supreme Court of the United States struck down the Defense of Marriage Act, which forbade the federal government from recognizing same-sex marriage.

Although this issue is driven by court opinions and policymakers, public opinion also plays an important part in shaping the legal landscape. For instance, California voters essentially overruled a 2008 California Supreme Court ruling which had held that the law which banned same-sex marriage violated the constitution. This court ruling allowed same-sex marriage in the state; however, opponents were able to place Proposition 8 on the November 2008 ballot. Voters passed the proposition, which amended the constitution to ban same-sex marriage. More recently, in November 2009, Maine voters rejected a bill that would have allowed same-sex marriage, although the bill had the support of lawmakers and the governor (Dwyer, 2009). In contrast, Maryland and Maine were the first states to legalize same-sex marriage by popular vote, during the November 2012 election. These examples highlight the volatile nature of the GLB rights debate and the importance of community sentiment.

### Same-Sex Adoption

GLB individuals have also faced legal challenges when trying to adopt children. Several states have laws that prevent GLB individuals from adopting children, either by explicitly specifying that GLB individuals cannot adopt, or specifying that non-married people cannot adopt (Miller, 2009). The most public case was that of *Lofton v. Secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services (SDCFS)* (2004). Lofton and his longtime partner had been foster parents to a special-needs child (and several other special-needs children). A Florida law (Fla. Stat. Ch. 63.042(3)) specifically forbade GLB individuals from adopting; thus, the couple's adoption request was denied. The Florida Supreme Court upheld the law, and the United States Supreme Court declined to hear the case (*Lofton v. SDCFS*, 2005). A judge ruled that the law was unconstitutional in 2008, and an appeals court in Florida upheld the ruling in 2010.

This issue has also been affected by voters; in 2008 Arkansas voters approved "Act 1," a ban on adoption by non-married individuals.<sup>1</sup> This act, which was largely promoted by individuals wishing to limit GLB rights, was effective at doing so because GLB individuals are not allowed to marry in that state. As with same-sex marriage, the rights of GLB individuals to adopt children are still being debated in multiple states.

### Same-Sex Sexual Behavior

One legal issue affecting GLB individuals that is more settled is the right to engage in adult, consensual, private same-sex sexual behavior. The U.S.

Supreme Court in *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003) determined that a Texas law prohibiting sodomy violated the constitutional right to privacy. Even though GLB individuals now have legal protection against prosecution for engaging in sexual activity, many people are opposed to such behavior—just as many are opposed to same-sex marriage and adoption. The fact that the Supreme Court has weighed in on this issue is a critical element that differentiates this issue from same-sex marriage and adoption. A person's private attitudes about sexual behavior are still relevant to study—even though there is no way for people to influence this issue. In contrast, marriage and adoption are issues that are often determined by the public, either by voting on laws or through electing legislators.

### CHARACTERISTICS RELATED TO SUPPORT FOR GLB INDIVIDUALS AND GLB RIGHTS

This study investigates the relationship between attitudes toward GLB individuals and GLB rights and five religious characteristics: orthodoxy, literal interpretism, evangelism, extrinsic religiosity, and questism. Often, these religious characteristics are more consistent predictors of attitudes and decisions than religious affiliation (Allport & Ross, 1967; Miller, Maskaly, Peoples, & Sigillo, 2013; Sigillo, Miller, & Weiser, 2012). This could be in part because a person who belongs to a religious organization might not follow all of its teachings (see, e.g., Droogers, 2005). Furthermore, within an organization individuals might vary in these traits; these variations are of interest here. This study expands on such findings by testing whether more specific religious *characteristics* are related to support for GLB rights.

Ultimately, these studies will reveal whether religious characteristics are related to attitudes toward GLB individuals and support for/opposition to same-sex marriage, adoption, and sexual behavior.<sup>2</sup> The measures used in this study are Christian-focused, and thus most of the literature review concerning these measures is also Christian-focused.

One nonreligious characteristic is tested, largely as a control variable. Contact with GLB individuals is likely an important predictor of attitudes toward GLB individuals and GLB rights. Having contact with someone who is GLB is likely to shape one's general attitudes toward LGB individuals and their rights (Castro-Convers, 2005; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Lemm, 2006).

Past studies have investigated the relationships between GLB rights and a variety of religious variables including religiosity (frequency of religious service attendance), syncretism, and religious tradition (e.g., Woodford, Levy, & Walls, 2013). This past research provides a foundation for the current research and provides evidence that religious characteristics are likely related to support for GLB rights. The literature review that follows, however, is

constrained to only the religious characteristics that are under study in the current research.

### Orthodoxy

Christian orthodoxy is an individual's level of acceptance of the central beliefs of Christianity (Ford et al., 2009).<sup>3</sup> Herek (1987) found that orthodoxy scores were positively related to prejudice toward GLB individuals. More recently, a meta-analysis confirmed that orthodoxy is negatively related to attitudes toward GLB individuals (Whitley, 2009). More recently, a study found that orthodoxy was positively related to support for a doctor who refused to provide a lesbian with in vitro fertilization procedures to help her become a mother (Sigillo et al., 2012). This relationship is not always straightforward, however. Ford and colleagues (2009) found that orthodox beliefs are related to internal motivation to appear to be without prejudice toward GLB individuals, but only when controlling for other demographics. A second study demonstrated that orthodoxy was related to positive attitudes toward GLB individuals (on the Heterosexuals' Attitudes Toward Homosexuals scale), but not toward same-sex behavior (Ford et al., 2009). These findings indicate that individuals who are high in orthodoxy want to appear to be unbiased ("Because of my personal values, I believe that using stereotypes... is wrong") but still respond with negative attitudes toward GLB individuals' *behavior*. Findings of various studies might also differ because they used different measures of orthodoxy and different measures of attitudes. Furthermore, only some controlled for other variables. While most studies generally find that orthodoxy is negatively related to attitudes toward LGB individuals or sexual behavior between same-sex partners, no study we are aware of tests the relationship between orthodoxy and support for LGB rights.<sup>4</sup>

### Literal Interpretism

In general, literal interpretism is the belief that "the Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word" (Young, 1992, p. 82). Researchers have measured literalism using this question or similar one-item measures (Burdette, Ellison, & Hill, 2005; Miller, 2006; Young, 1992), a four-item scale (Grasmick, Cochran, Bursik, & Kimpel, 1993), and a three-item scale (Leiber & Woodrick, 1997). Such measures have also been used as a proxy for a measure of religious fundamentalism (Grasmick, Bursik, & Kimpel, 1991), as a belief in a literal interpretation of the Bible is an integral part of the belief structure of fundamentalism.

People who translate the Bible literally generally oppose same-sex sexual behavior because of a host of biblical passages that, if taken literally, suggest that same-sex behavior is sinful, immoral, or unnatural (see

generally Burdette et al., 2005; Ford et al., 2009).<sup>5</sup> Having a tendency to translate these passages in a literal and absolute manner is related to having less positive attitudes toward GLB individuals (Burdette et al., 2005). Literalism was strongly related to restricting the civil liberties of GLB individuals (i.e., not allowing a GLB individual to speak in the community or teach at a college; removing a library book that supported same-sex sexual behavior; Burdette et al., 2005). This supports more general findings that people who translate the Bible literally (combined with other measures of theological conservatism) are on average less tolerant of groups, including GLB individuals, than those who hold other views of the Bible (Ellison & Musick, 1993). Whitehead (2010) found that those who interpret the Bible literally are less supportive of same-sex marriage.

Similarly, measures of fundamentalism are positively correlated with anti-GLB attitudes (Fulton, Gorsuch, & Maynard, 1999; Kirkpatrick, 1993; Whitley, 2009) and desire to socially distance oneself from GLB individuals (Fulton et al., 1999). No study could be found that linked literal interpretation or fundamentalism to GLB rights relating to sexual behavior or adoption.

### Extrinsic Religiosity

Extrinsic religion is the degree to which individuals practice religion for self-serving reasons.<sup>6</sup> There are two categories of extrinsic religiosity: social and personal (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989). The personal component measures the degree to which individuals practice religion to gain personal benefits, such as peace, anxiety reduction, or personal satisfaction. The social component is the degree to which individuals practice religion to meet people or make friends. People high in extrinsic religiosity might be prejudiced against those who are not in their social in-group. An early meta-analysis confirmed that extrinsic religiosity and prejudice were positively related (Donahue, 1985). More recently, Wilkinson (2004) found that extrinsic religiosity was positively related to homophobia—and more importantly, was associated with less support for GLB civil rights. Even so, more recent scholarship found that extrinsic orientation was not related to attitudes toward GLB individuals (Whitley, 2009). In sum, extrinsic religiosity either is not related or is positively related to prejudice. While studies such as these indicate that one's extrinsic orientation might affect attitudes toward GLB individuals, none of these measure attitudes toward the specific legal rights investigated in the current study (e.g., adoption).

### Evangelism

Evangelism is the act of trying to convert other individuals to Christianity (Young, 1992); those scoring high in evangelism have a strong desire (i.e.,

are motivated) to act on their external environment (i.e., converting others). A common measure of evangelism is: “Have you ever tried to encourage someone to believe in Jesus Christ or to accept Jesus Christ as his or her savior?” (Young, 1992). Only one study, that we could find, has addressed the relationship among evangelism and prejudice, attitudes toward GLB individuals, or support for GLB rights. Those high in evangelism were more supportive of a doctor’s refusal to provide a lesbian with in vitro fertilization procedures to help her become a mother (Sigillo et al., 2012). Although the relationship between GLB rights and evangelism is not well established, those high in evangelism might be less supportive.

### Questism

Questism is a religious characteristic associated with “an open-ended, questioning approach to religion” (Batson, Eidelman, Higley, & Russell, 2001, p. 40) affected by social influence (Ventis, 1995). Individuals on a religious quest are motivated to seek out answers to life and religion, but realize that they might never find the answers. People on a quest have the desire to seek answers about religion in the external world (i.e., during their quest). This open-minded orientation might indicate that individuals on a quest are more accepting of others who are different, since the “truth” is not clear. Thus, questism might conflict with literal interpretism—as interpretists believe the Bible is the literal word of God, which they accept as the unquestioned truth. A meta-analysis found that those higher in quest had more positive attitudes toward GLB individuals (Whitley, 2009). Furthermore, quest is likely associated with a lower support for activities that discriminate against GLB individuals. Individuals scoring high on the quest scale are less likely to help someone further anti-GLB activities than individuals scoring low; however, they were equally likely to help someone who merely had anti-GLB sentiments (Batson et al., 2001). Thus, quest might be related more to attitudes about *activities* that discriminate, and less about *people* who discriminate. As laws are also “activities” that discriminate (e.g., prevent same-sex marriage) quest might relate to attitudes toward GLB rights.

### Contact

One nonreligious variable—contact with friends who are openly GLB—was also measured and used as a control variable. Contact (e.g., having GLB friends) is a significant predictor of attitudes toward GLB individuals (e.g., Castro-Convers, 2005; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Lemm, 2006). Specifically, the more contact a person has (especially meaningful, close relationships) with GLB individuals or lesbians, the more positive attitudes the person



will have toward GLB individuals in general. Because this factor has been consistently a strong predictor in previous studies, it is also included here to control for its effects (i.e., asking whether participants have any friends who are openly GLB).

## OVERVIEW OF STUDIES

Past studies investigated how religious characteristics relate to measures of prejudice or attitudes toward GLB individuals. The current studies replicate previous research on attitudes toward GLB individuals and expand on this literature by investigating whether these religious characteristics are related to support for GLB individuals' legal rights. There is a widely held belief that it is common for someone to have one attitude toward GLB individuals and another toward the practice of same-sex sexual behavior (Ford et al., 2009), and some of the past research has confirmed this is true (Batson et al., 2001). It is possible that individuals might have attitudes toward rights granted to GLB individuals that either differ from or are similar to their attitudes toward GLB individuals or same-sex sexual behavior. As noted by Loftus (2001), attitudes toward civil rights for GLB individuals are not always the same as attitudes toward sexual behavior among same-sex partners; thus it is important to study a variety of outcome measures.

Based on the extant research, several hypotheses are offered. It is predicted that literalists and individuals who score high on the orthodoxy scale or low on the quest scale will have less positive attitudes toward GLB individuals and lower support for GLB rights. No predictions are made for evangelism or extrinsic religiosity because of lack of previous studies or mixed findings of previous studies, respectively. In order to test these hypotheses, participants completed all the religious measures, the Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLG) Scale, the contact measure, and measures of support for legalizing same-sex marriage; Study 2 also includes measures of support for same-sex adoption rights, regulation of sexual behavior between same-sex partners, and a ban on same-sex marriage.

## STUDY 1 METHOD

### Participants

A combined 252 community members and undergraduate students completed Study 1. Twenty-four participants were excluded because they indicated that they were gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Thus, 228 participants (77% female; 78% student) were included in the analyses, though the numbers in the analyses were lower due to missing data on some outcome variables. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 70 ( $M = 25.4$ ;  $Mdn = 22$ ) and

were white (68%), Hispanic-American (15%), African-American (9%), Asian-American (6%), and Native American (2%). Participants identified as Catholic (32%), religious but no particular faith (32%), Protestant (19%), agnostic (5%), atheist (4%), or Jewish (4%).

### Procedure and Materials

Student participants received credit in their social science classes at a public midsized university near the west coast in the United States. Community members were recruited through online e-mail lists (e.g., through snowball sampling) and blogs and discussion forums (e.g., Craigslist.com) believed to be unrelated to politics, religion, etc., to reduce sampling bias that might result if, for example, blogs about politics were used. All participants completed the study online via a surveymonkey.com survey. Data were collected as part of a multi-part study; however, all data presented in this article are original, unpublished, and unrelated to data from the other parts of the study. Participants were asked to pretend that they were at a community meeting in which individuals were debating the legality of same-sex marriage.<sup>7</sup> The approximately 150-word summary described statements made by others in the meeting (see Appendix). Participants voted for or against an initiative that would legalize same-sex marriage and then completed demographics measures (including religious measures).

### Dependent Variables

The first dependent variable in Study 1 was participants' vote for or against the proposed initiative that would legalize same-sex marriage (0 = pro same-sex marriage; 1 = anti same-sex marriage). The second dependent variable was the 10-item Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLG) Scale. The ATLG Scale, which was developed by Herek (1984), is designed to measure heterosexuals' affective responses toward lesbians and gay men. In completing the scale, participants were asked to rate statements about lesbians and gay men on a 7-point, Likert-format scale, ranging from strongly disagree (reflecting strong positive attitudes) to strongly agree (reflecting strong negative attitudes). Scores on the ATLG Scale range from 10 to 70.

### Independent Variables

Five measures of religious characteristics were used. All scale variables were averaged into one scale score for each measure. No issues with multicollinearity were detected; all variance inflation factor statistics were below 10 and all tolerance statistics were above .01. Putney and Middleton's (1961)

orthodoxy scale contained six questions (e.g., “I believe there is a Divine plan and purpose for every living person and thing”) rated on a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The internal reliability typically has a Cronbach’s alpha between 0.91 and 0.92; for this study the alpha was .89. The literal interpretism measure, taken from Young (1992), asked, “Do you believe that the Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word?” Participants answered no ( = 0) or yes ( = 1).

Gorsuch and McPherson’s (1989) extrinsic scale combined three extrinsic-personal items (e.g., “I pray mainly to gain relief and protection”) and three extrinsic-social items (e.g., “I go to church because it helps me to make friends”), all rated on a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Reliability for the extrinsic subscale has been shown to have a Cronbach’s alpha of .58, but was found to be more reliable among this sample (Cronbach’s alpha = .80).

Batson and Schoenrade’s (1991) 12-Item Quest Scale includes 12 items (“For me, doubting is an important part of what it means to be religious”) rated on a Likert scale of 1 (disagree) to 9 (agree). The internal reliability of this scale has a Cronbach’s alpha between 0.75 and 0.82, which was similar to the reliability in the current study (Cronbach’s alpha = .79).

Finally, the evangelism question, developed by Young (1992), asked, “Have you ever tried to encourage someone to believe in Jesus Christ or to accept Jesus Christ as his or her savior?” Participants answered no ( = 0) or yes ( = 1).

### Control Variable

Of the many demographic and experiential factors that impact judgments and attitudes about GLB individuals, only contact (i.e., having a GLB friend who is openly gay) was a strong and consistent predictor of judgments and attitudes in past studies (e.g., Castro-Convers, 2005; Lemm, 2006). Thus, contact was controlled for in the analyses by entering the variable into the regression model. Participants responded no ( = 0) or yes ( = 1) to the question, “Do you have any friends who are openly gay, lesbian, or bisexual?”

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To test the relative effects of the independent variables on support for same-sex marriage, one logistic regression model regressed the same-sex marriage initiative variable on the independent and the control variables. Next, a linear regression model was conducted with the same independent and control variables and the ATLG Scale as the dependent variable. See Table 1.

**TABLE 1** Unstandardized Coefficients and Odds Ratio Scores from Regression Models in Study 1

	Model 1 (Marriage Initiative)		Model 2 (ATLG)
	Unstandardized Coefficients	Odds Ratios	Unstandardized Coefficients
<i>Control Variables</i>			
Contact (gay friend)	-1.12**	.33	-10.05**
<i>Religious Beliefs</i>			
Extrinsic Religiosity	-.13	.88	-.589
Orthodoxy	.55*	1.74	3.29**
Evangelism	1.11*	3.05	5.86**
Literal Interpretism	.59	1.81	9.01**
Quest	-.02	.98	-.12
Cox and Snell $R^2$	.24		—
Nagelkerke $R^2$	.34		—
<i>N</i>	187		175

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

### Support for Legalizing Same-Sex Marriage

Results from the logistic regression indicated that the overall model for the same-sex marriage variable was significant in the omnibus test of coefficients ( $\chi^2(5, 186) = 51.30; p < .01$ ), and it correctly predicted 77.5% of cases ( $-2 \text{ Log Likelihood} = 184.87$ ). As predicted by the literature, those who reported having an openly GLB friend were more likely to support the initiative that would legalize same-sex marriage than those who did not have an openly GLB friend (Wald (1, 186) = 8.11;  $p < .01$ ). Those high in evangelism were also less likely to vote for the initiative (47%) compared to their counterparts (81%; Wald (1, 186) = 6.49;  $p < .02$ ). Orthodoxy also emerged as a significant predictor of attitudes toward same-sex marriage in the expected direction (Wald (1, 186) = 5.09;  $p < .03$ ). However, none of the other religious variables significantly predicted votes.

### Attitudes toward GLB Individuals (ATLG Scale)

Results from the linear regression analysis also suggested that religious characteristics are related to ATLG scores. The overall model was statistically significant ( $R^2 = .46; F(5, 174) = 23.82; p < .01$ ). Having an openly GLB friend was related to more positive attitudes about GLB individuals (i.e., lower scores on the ATLG Scale;  $t(1, 174) = -5.34; p < .01$ ). Greater levels of orthodoxy were related to more negative attitudes ( $t(1, 174) = 3.04; p < .01$ ). Those high in evangelism had significantly more negative attitudes toward GLB individuals ( $M = 38.23; SD = 15.24$ ), as compared to those low in evangelism ( $M = 24.63; SD = 12.4; t(1, 174) = 2.65; p = .01$ ). Finally,

those who believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible (i.e., literalists) expressed more negative attitudes toward GLB individuals ( $M = 43.12$ ;  $SD = 14.34$ ) than non-literalists ( $M = 24.72$ ;  $SD = 11.64$ ;  $t(1, 174) = 3.51$ ;  $p < .01$ ).

In general, results support the idea that some religious characteristics are related to attitudes toward GLB individuals and support for same-sex marriage. Specifically, those high in evangelism and those scoring high on orthodoxy had less positive attitudes toward GLB individuals and were less likely to vote for the same-sex marriage initiative. People who interpret the Bible literally had more negative attitudes toward GLB individuals. A second study was designed to further investigate the relationships between religious characteristics and attitudes toward GLB individuals and support for various GLB rights, including laws giving GLB individuals the right to adopt children, laws regulating sexual behavior between GLB individuals, and a ban on same-sex marriage.

## STUDY 2 METHOD

### Participants

A combined 199 undergraduate students and community members completed Study 2. Nineteen gay, lesbian, or bisexual participants were excluded. Thus, 180 participants (83% female; 76% student) were included in the analyses, but the final analyses had fewer participants due to missing data on some outcome variables. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 57 ( $M = 25.56$ ;  $Mdn = 20$ ) and were white (78%), Asian-American (8%), Hispanic-American (8%), or African-American (6%). Participants identified as religious but no particular faith (30%), Catholic (29%), Protestant (17%), agnostic (9%), Jewish (7%), or atheist (6%).

### Procedure and Materials

Data were collected as part of a multi-part study; however, all data presented in this article is original, unpublished, and unrelated to the other parts of the study.<sup>8</sup> Participants imagined that they were Supreme Court justices voting in three cases involving GLB rights issues: legalizing same-sex marriage (0 = pro same-sex marriage; 1 = anti same-sex marriage), granting GLB individuals the right to adopt (0 = pro adoption rights; 1 = anti-adoption rights), and the regulation of sex between GLB individuals (1 = pro regulation; 0 = anti regulation). In each scenario, which Finkel and Duff (1991) refer to as the “ninth justice” paradigm, the other deciding justices were ostensibly divided on the issue (4 versus 4) and the participant was asked to provide the deciding vote. Participants were then presented with a fourth scenario in which they were asked to act as a legislator by voting on a federal marriage amendment that would define marriage as the union of one man and one

woman (0 = anti ban; 1 = pro ban). Participants indicated their vote on each issue, and completed the same measures as in Study 1.

### Variables

Acting as justices, participants voted on three laws related to GLB rights: legalization of same-sex marriage, legalization of same-sex adoption, and restrictions on same-sex sexual behavior. They also voted for or against a ban on same-sex marriage in their role as a legislator. The ATLG Scale was also included. The religious measures were identical to those in Study 1 and had similar internal reliabilities. Cronbach's alphas were calculated for the extrinsic (.79), orthodoxy (.87), and quest (.78) scales. As in Study 1, contact (i.e., whether or not participants had an openly GLB friend) was a control variable. No issues with multicollinearity were detected; all variance inflation factor statistics were below 10 and all tolerance statistics were above .01.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Four logistic regressions were conducted on the dichotomous dependent variables and the control variable to determine if religious characteristics significantly predicted support for each of the GLB rights. A linear regression model was conducted, with the ATLG Scale regressed on the independent and control variables.

### Support for Legalizing Same-Sex Marriage

Similar to Study 1, logistic regression analyses revealed that the overall model for same-sex marriage was a good fit ( $\chi^2(5, 137) = 67.16; p < .01$ ; 83.3% of cases predicted;  $-2 \text{ Log Likelihood} = 104.06$ ) with contact (i.e., having an openly GLB friend) emerging as a strong predictor of opposition (Wald (1, 137) = 5.23;  $p < .03$ ). As predicted, increases in orthodoxy translated into greater likelihood that a participant would vote against same-sex marriage (Wald (1, 137) = 9.75;  $p < .01$ ). Those high in evangelism were also less likely to vote for same-sex marriage (38% supported same-sex marriage) than those low in evangelism (87% supported same-sex marriage; Wald (1, 137) = 5.59;  $p < .02$ ) (see Table 2).

### Support for Adoption Rights of GLB Individuals

Religious characteristics also predicted support for same-sex adoption rights. The model was significant in the omnibus test of coefficients ( $\chi^2(5, 136) = 37.41; p < .01$ ), and it correctly predicted 89.8% of cases ( $-2 \text{ Log Likelihood}$

**TABLE 2** Unstandardized Coefficients and Odds Ratio Scores from Logistic Regression in Study 2

	Model 1 (Marriage)		Model 2 (Adoption)		Model 2 (Sex Regulation)		Model 4 (Marriage Ban)		Model 5 (ATLG)	
	Unstandardized Coefficients	Odds Ratios	Unstandardized Coefficients	Odds Ratios	Unstandardized Coefficients	Odds Ratios	Unstandardized Coefficients	Odds Ratios	Unstandardized Coefficients	Odds Ratios
<i>Control Variables</i>										
Contact (gay friend)	-1.30*	.27	-1.59**	.20	-1.04	.35	-1.29*	.28	-11.48**	
<i>Religious Beliefs</i>										
Extrinsic Religiosity	-.91	.40	-.78	.46	1.90*	6.69	-.37	.69	.63	
Orthodoxy	1.14**	3.11	.62	1.86	1.44*	4.21	1.33**	3.79	5.15**	
Evangelism	1.61*	4.98	1.116	3.02	-.80	.45	1.67*	5.33	6.22*	
Literal Interpretism	.53	1.69	.99	2.71	.62	1.85	1.24*	3.45	2.80	
Quest	-.27	.76	.38	1.47	-.27	.77	.23	1.26	-1.10	
Cox and Snell $R^2$	.39	—	.24	—	.21	—	.46	—	—	
Nagelkerke $R^2$	.54	—	.39	—	.40	—	.64	—	—	
<i>N</i>	138	—	137	—	138	—	138	—	129	

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

= 92.77). Once again, contact was a significant predictor of opposition (Wald (1, 136) = 8.14;  $p < .01$ ); however, none of the religious variables were significant predictors in the model. Analyses of the specific religious variables revealed that orthodoxy was marginally related to opposition (Wald (1, 136) = 2.88;  $p = .09$ ), such that higher orthodoxy scores led to less support for same-sex adoption. Furthermore, literal interpretation was not predictive of opposition (Wald (1, 136) = 2.37;  $p = .12$ ), but demonstrated the non-significant relationship that literalists expressed less support for same-sex adoption (58%) than non-literalists (90%).

### Support for Legal Regulation of Sex among GLB Individuals

The logistic regression of the regulation of sex between same-sex partners variable revealed that the overall model predicted 91.3% of cases ( $-2$  Log Likelihood = 70.01) and was significant in the omnibus test of coefficients ( $\chi^2$  (5, 137) = 33.00;  $p < .01$ ). Contact did not predict judgments, though the results were in the expected direction (Wald (1, 137) = 2.49;  $p = .11$ ). Orthodoxy (Wald (1, 137) = 5.36;  $p < .03$ ) and extrinsic religiosity (Wald (1, 137) = 6.20;  $p < .02$ ) were both predictors of opposition. Consistent with other results, increases on both of the scales predicted support for regulation of sexual behavior.

### Support for a Ban on Same-Sex Marriage

Religious variables predict support for a ban on same-sex marriage. The overall model was a good fit ( $\chi^2$  (5, 137) = 84.13;  $p < .01$ ; 87% of cases predicted;  $-2$  Log Likelihood = 87.10), with contact as a significant predictor of opposition (Wald (1, 137) = 3.95;  $p < .05$ ). Increases in orthodoxy increased the odds of voting for the marriage ban (Wald (1, 137) = 10.64;  $p < .01$ ). Those high in evangelism were significantly more likely to vote for a ban (67%) as compared to their counterparts (9%; Wald (1, 141) = 5.74;  $p < .02$ ) and literalists were more likely to vote for the ban (71%) than non-literalists (17%; Wald (1, 137) = 3.89;  $p < .05$ ).

### Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLG) Scale

As in Study 1, linear regression analysis suggested that some religious characteristics are predictors of attitudes toward GLB individuals. The overall model was statistically significant ( $R^2 = .59$ ;  $F$  (5, 128) = 29.42;  $p < .01$ ). Contact was a significant predictor of attitudes about GLB individuals ( $t$  (1, 128) =  $-5.80$ ;  $p < .01$ ). As in Study 1, high scores on the orthodoxy scale were associated with higher scores on the ATLG Scale (i.e., more bias



toward GLB individuals;  $t(1, 128) = 4.67$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Similarly, those high in evangelism had more negative attitudes ( $M = 37.21$ ;  $SD = 13.95$ ) than their counterparts ( $M = 20.26$ ,  $SD = 10.18$ ;  $t(1, 128) = 2.50$ ;  $p < .02$ ).

Study 2 sought to replicate the findings of Study 1 and investigate a wider variety of laws regarding GLB rights. Orthodoxy and evangelism were related to negative attitudes toward GLB individuals and lower support for same-sex marriage. Orthodoxy was marginally related to less support for allowing GLB individuals to adopt children, while orthodoxy and extrinsic religiosity were related to greater support for restrictions on sexual behavior. Finally, orthodoxy, evangelism, and literalism were all related to more support for a ban on same-sex marriage. As with Study 1, most religious characteristics predicted support for GLB rights and attitudes toward GLB individuals.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

Past research indicates that religion is a significant predictor of support for GLB rights (e.g., Schwartz, 2010). While such research investigates broad measures of religion (e.g., attendance), the goal of this research was to investigate relationships between *specific* Christian-focused religious characteristics and attitudes toward GLB individuals and GLB rights. Regression models were significant for all seven dependent variables, supporting past research finding that religion is an important predictor of attitudes (see Becker & Todd, this issue). Each religious variable, except quest, was a significant predictor in at least one model. All significant findings were in the predicted direction.

### Contact

Although intended to be a control variable, it is notable that contact (i.e., having a friend who is openly GLB) was a predictor of support for all seven models. In these models, participants who had an openly GLB friend were more supportive of GLB rights and had more positive attitudes toward GLB individuals. This finding confirms previous literature (e.g., Castro-Convers, 2005).

### Orthodoxy

Orthodoxy was a predictor of support in six of the seven models. In these models, high scores were related to less support for GLB rights and more negative attitudes toward GLB individuals. Although the previous literature is a bit mixed (depending on the analysis used and the context of the study), these findings generally comport with previous studies finding that those

high on orthodoxy are more prejudiced against GLB individuals (Whitley, 2009).

### Literal Interpretism

Literal interpretism was a predictor in the models for the marriage ban (Study 2), and the ATLG (Study 1). Literalists were consistently less supportive of GLB rights and had more negative attitudes toward GLB individuals; this generally supports past research (e.g., Burdette et al., 2005). Apparently, literal interpretism is a better predictor of banning marriage than legalizing it. Another unexpected finding is that literalism only predicted ATLG scores in one study. Future research should clarify such speculative findings.

### Evangelism

Evangelism was a significant predictor in the models for legalizing same-sex marriage (both studies), ATLG (both studies), and the marriage ban. In these models, those high in evangelism were less supportive of GLB rights and had more negative attitudes toward GLB individuals on the ATLG. Although more research is clearly needed, it is possible that those who evangelize view GLB individuals as sinners who need to be converted—and allowing them to marry would only discourage them from finding Jesus. This speculation is clearly a research question to be answered by future study. It is interesting that evangelism has a special relationship with GLB rights toward marriage—as it was not a predictor of the other rights (sexual behavior and adoption). Future research is needed to determine why.

### Extrinsic Religiosity

Extrinsic religiosity was a predictor in only one model: higher scores were related to more support for restricting sexual behavior between same-sex partners. This finding comports with previous studies finding that extrinsic religiosity was positively related to homophobia and restricting the civil rights of GLB individuals (e.g., Wilkinson, 2004). It is interesting, though, that the only model this variable predicted was the restriction of sexual behavior; more research is clearly needed to explain this.

### Questism

Quest scores did not predict support on any of the models in either study. This is somewhat surprising considering that a meta-analysis found quest to be positively related to attitudes toward GLB individuals (Whitley, 2009)

and a previous study found that individuals high in quest were less likely to help a person who intended on partaking in discriminatory activities (Batson et al., 2001). Because laws (at least the law banning same-sex marriage and restricting sexual behavior between same-sex partners) are essentially discriminatory actions, it was expected that those high in quest would be less supportive of laws that restrict GLB rights. Clearly, more research is needed to clarify the conditions under which questism predicts attitudes toward GLB individuals and support for GLB rights.

### Implications and Limitations

The findings here have implications for the study of religion, attitudes, and community sentiment within a U.S. sample. The study's first implication is for the study of religious characteristics. Orthodoxy was the religious characteristic with the most robust findings, while quest was the characteristic with the fewest (none) relationships to the measures of attitudes toward GLB individuals and GLB rights. Results indicate the importance of studying a variety of religious measures, rather than studying just one or studying them individually. Investigating combinations of religious factors is often more informative than investigating only one (Wilkinson, 2004). Further evidence for this suggestion is found in the literature—sometimes a religious characteristic is only related to attitudes toward GLB individuals when controlling for one or more other characteristics. Previous researchers have indicated that the relationship between prejudice against GLB individuals and religious characteristics is quite complex (Ford et al., 2009). The findings of this study support this contention and further it by revealing that the relationship between religious characteristics and support for GLB *rights* is also complex.

Another indication of the complexity of attitude structures is in the finding that a characteristic that predicted support for one GLB right is not necessarily related to attitudes toward other rights or toward GLB individuals in general. For instance, extrinsic religiosity was related to increased support for restricting sexual behavior, but was not related to ATLG scores. In contrast, evangelism, orthodoxy, and literal interpretism were related to negative attitudes toward GLB rights *and* scores on the ATLG Scale. Furthermore, none of the characteristics were predictors in all models. For instance, evangelism was a predictor in all three models relating to same-sex marriage; however, it was not related to support for adoption or sexual behavior. Future research can attempt to parse out the reasons that religious characteristics only inconsistently predict attitudes and support for GLB rights. These examples illustrate the complexity of attitudes toward GLB individuals and GLB rights. As such, one should not quickly assume that just because someone has a certain religious characteristic they will have a certain attitude toward GLB individuals or that they will support/oppose all GLB rights equally (see also Moon, 2004).

This research confirms what researchers have long known: sentiment is complex (Finkel, 1995). Thus, researchers should ask a variety of questions and use a variety of religious measures. Specificity and diversity are the keys: a researcher should ask a multitude of specific questions in order to get the most accurate response from participants. Assessing an attitude at different times using different measures is important; doing so can help researchers determine what factors (e.g., question wording or a respondent's mood) affect attitudes.

When considering these results, it is important to note some limitations of these studies. First, the study lacks consequentiality. Asking someone to indicate whether they would vote for an initiative is not the same as measuring whether they *actually* voted for the initiative. Participants might put more thought into a real vote compared to a hypothetical vote made as part of a study. This issue is even larger for Study 2, as it asked participants to imagine being a judge or a legislator—a task that might be difficult to do. Even so, religion might actually play a larger role in a real vote than the hypothetical vote made in this study, assuming that many people will consult their religious beliefs more if they spend more time thinking about the issue.

A second limitation involves the sample. Although the sample included a number of community members to aid in generalizability, most of the participants were students in the United States. Students and community members differ in numerous ways, including age, education, and general life experiences. These factors are likely to affect decisions, such as the decision whether to vote in support of a certain law. These two limitations are present, to some extent, in mock jury research utilizing student samples; however, some researchers have indicated that these are not major concerns (e.g., Bornstein, 1999; Bornstein & McCabe, 2005). Specifically, student mock jurors make similar decisions as real jurors or community samples. They also tend to take the decision task seriously, even though the consequences of the decision are negligible. This indicates that participants' decisions might be similar to those that would be made if the sample was entirely community participants, or if the decisions had real impact. Even so, there is a possibility that characteristics of the procedure and sample might impact the findings.

A related limitation is that the sample was entirely a U.S. sample. Thus, this study can say nothing as to the relationships between religious characteristics and sentiment toward these issues in other countries. Religion and religious beliefs differ across countries, as do beliefs and laws about these issues. As such, these results would not necessarily be expected to generalize to other countries. A replication of this study using samples from a variety of locations all over the globe would not only reveal whether results are generalizable, it would also be an interesting cross-cultural comparison.

Another limitation concerns the framing and measures. The study was framed in a Christian context using Christian-focused measures (e.g., asking

about one's beliefs in Christianity or Jesus). Importantly, results might differ if the study was conducted in a country that was comprised of a lower proportion of Christians. As the United States is largely a Christian nation, these measures are appropriate for this sample of mostly Christians. However, it could be argued that these measures might not be appropriate for samples that are non-Christian, or for any particular non-Christian participant. We conceptualize the study as one that investigates how Christian beliefs (or the lack thereof) are related to attitudes toward GLB rights and GLB individuals. And, for that purpose, the measures are useful. Nevertheless, the study's measures might not be appropriate for use outside of the United States. We encourage researchers to use this study as a starting point for conducting similar studies but using a variety of Christian and non-Christian-focused measures.

In addition, future studies should use other measures of attitudes, such as the Modern Homonegativity Scale (Morrison & Morrison, 2002) in order to see if results remain when using different measures of bias and prejudice. This scale has somewhat more evenly distributed data (Rye & Meaney, 2010) and is a more recently developed scale than the ATLG (Herek, 1984) or the Index of Homophobia (Hudson & Ricketts, 1980). While all three of these widely used scales have good psychometric properties (Rye & Meaney, 2010), the Modern Homonegativity Scale measures a more subtle form of prejudice than the ATLG, thus reducing the possibility of response bias related to social desirability. Specifically, in current day, individuals are less willing to overtly express prejudice than they were in the 1980s when the other scales were developed (see generally Rye & Meaney, 2010). The ATLG often has a skew toward positive attitudes, perhaps because it assesses more overt expressions of bias. In contrast, the Modern Homonegativity Scale measures less overt attitudes and expression of attitudes (including questions more relevant to the study of GLB rights). This is perhaps a better measure of attitudes, as individuals are often hesitant to overtly express prejudice toward GLB individuals, but may be more willing to express negative attitudes in a less explicit way (e.g., items such as "The notion of universities providing students with undergraduate degrees in Gay and Lesbian Studies is ridiculous").

Another limitation related to the measures is that most (e.g., the ATLG Scale, support of same-sex marriage) only assessed attitudes toward GLB individuals and did not include attitudes toward bisexuals or their rights. Bisexuals are often treated differently from either heterosexual or GLB individuals. For instance, people often have less positive attitudes toward bisexual individuals than either heterosexual or GLB individuals (e.g., Eliason, 1997; Oswalt & Vargas, 2013) and view bisexual women and men as not being appropriate partners for heterosexual, lesbian, or gay individuals (Breno & Galupo, 2007). Thus, the results might not hold if participants were asked to consider bisexuals who want to marry, have sex with, or adopt a child with someone other than another bisexual. Future research could investigate whether relationships found here hold when participants are asked specifically about bisexuals.

A final limitation concerns the location and timing of the study, which was conducted in one west coast state in the United States in the months before and after the 2008 election in which GLB rights issues were on the ballot in many states. Inasmuch as location can affect individuals' attitudes, the results might have differed if the study had been conducted in a different region or time. Despite these limitations, results provide valuable insights into the study of religion, attitudes, and community sentiment. Future studies can address these limitations by conducting new studies using different samples (e.g., community members, non-U.S. sample), measures, and methodologies.

## CONCLUSION

GLB rights continue to be hotly debated topics in the United States. Religious organizations often get involved in these debates and can influence the outcome. Thus, it is no surprise that religion and attitudes toward GLB rights are related. As a whole, the findings of these studies indicate that a variety of religious characteristics do impact support for GLB rights regarding marriage, adoption, and sexual behavior. Support for these rights, and the predictive power of each religious characteristic, are not uniform. This indicates that community sentiment for GLB rights is complicated and thus deserves more attention from researchers.

## NOTES

1. This act was found to be unconstitutional by the Arkansas Supreme Court in 2011.
2. The measures included in these studies generally ask participants to vote for or against legal actions (e.g., a ban on same-sex marriage). Voting in one direction is a vote in "support" of GLB rights, while voting in the other direction is a vote in "opposition" of GLB rights. For consistency's sake, we will discuss all measures in terms of "support" of GLB rights.
3. The term *orthodoxy* is used here; however, the scale used has also been called a "fundamentalism" scale (see Bornstein & Miller, 2009, for review), and indeed orthodoxy and fundamentalism share many similarities. Although there is some dispute whether the two are different or essentially the same, that is beyond the scope of this article, and we simply note that the measure used has been called both "orthodoxy" and "fundamentalism."
4. Note, however, that Morrison and McDermott (2009) found that fundamentalism and support for GLB rights were negatively correlated; however, that study used a "fundamentalism" scale and not an "orthodoxy" scale. There is some debate as to the difference between fundamentalism and orthodoxy, though the two have enough similarity that one might assume that orthodoxy might also be negatively correlated to GLB rights.
5. Technically modern terms such as *same-sex sexual behavior* are not used in the Bible, but there are multiple passages that can be interpreted to suggest that same-sex relationships are forbidden.
6. Note that there is another, related religious orientation called "intrinsic religiosity" which is typically paired with "extrinsic religiosity"; however, intrinsic (i.e., internal) religiosity is not an *external* motivation and thus is not included here because it does not fit with the initial purpose of the article, which was to study beliefs and external motivations (but that discussion was cut due to reviewer comments). Furthermore, intrinsic religiosity has not been related to prejudice to the extent as extrinsic has, and thus there is less reason to include it in this study. As suspected, it was not related to the measures in this study.

7. The issue of same-sex marriage was presented as either spatially proximal (i.e., in the participant's hometown) or distant (in a distant town). Although the manipulated variables were not of interest in this study, they were controlled for in the analyses. Example summary is in the Appendix.

8. Participants first completed an experimental task that consisted of watching or reading about the 9/11 attacks, or Madrid terrorist attacks, or a neutral stimulus. Although the manipulated variables were not of interest in this study, they were controlled for in the analyses.

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## APPENDIX: EXAMPLE INSTRUCTIONS AND SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

Imagine that you are sitting in on a city council meeting. Of the many topics discussed, the most heated is a proposed initiative to legalize gay marriage.

If passed, the initiative would effectively give gay men and lesbians the legal right to marry. That is, if more individuals voted for the initiative than against it, the city would legally recognize the marriage of two same-sex partners.

Although there are several people arguing for the initiative, an argument from one person sticks out to you. The person makes the following argument: "Restricting marriage rights on the basis of sexual orientation is a violation of constitutional equal protection rights. Same-sex couples are just as capable of raising kids and having 'normal' families as heterosexual couples. Furthermore, allowing gay marriage will not lead to more loose marriage laws. As a gay individual, this is particularly important to me because I do not have equal rights."