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# A Multidimensional Assessment of Orthodox Jewish Attitudes Toward Homosexuality

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A MULTIDIMENSIONAL ASSESSMENT OF ORTHODOX JEWISH ATTITUDES  
TOWARD HOMOSEXUALITY

BY

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## ABSTRACT

### A Multidimensional Assessment of Orthodox Jewish Attitudes Toward Homosexuality

In the present study, I evaluated several dimensions of the attitudes held by Orthodox Jewish heterosexuals toward gay and lesbian individuals. The current controversy in the Orthodox Jewish community with regards to homosexuality has resulted in increased levels of homophobia in Jewish communities and subsequent rejection and isolation of Orthodox Jewish gay and lesbian individuals. The purpose of the current study was to gain an understanding of the attitudes held by Orthodox heterosexuals toward homosexuality, with the ultimate goal of eliminating hostility and oppression based on sexual orientation. In this paper, I reviewed the extant research on homosexuality and religion and articulated the need for conducting similar research with an Orthodox Jewish population. After reviewing the relevant measures, I provided a description of the methodology. The results showed that in addition to religious conflict and religious Jewish identity, homophobia and homonegativity play a significant role in driving Orthodox Jewish attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals. Furthermore, the results showed that Ultra-Orthodox Jews have more negative attitudes than Modern Orthodox Jews. The results also showed that attitudes were slightly worse toward gay men than lesbian women and slightly worse toward celibate homosexual persons than sexually active homosexual persons. Findings support the need for interventions aimed at reducing homophobia, directed specifically toward the Ultra-Orthodox community.

*Keywords:* attitudes, homosexuality, religion, Orthodox Judaism

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## DEDICATION

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

#### **Context of the Problem**

The subject of homosexuality in Judaism originates in the Jewish scriptures, or *Torah*, where the book of Leviticus forbids sexual intercourse between males, classifying it as a *to'evah* (i.e., something abhorred or detested) that can be subject to capital punishment under Jewish law. The Abrahamic religions, which include Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, refer to specific verses from Leviticus as the basis for the condemnation of homosexuality. They read as follows: Lev.18:22: *Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind; it is abomination.* Lev.20:13: *And if a man lie with mankind, as with womankind, both of them have committed abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.*

As homosexuality has become a more open topic of discussion in society in general, the issue has been a source of contention within several of the Jewish denominations and has led to debate and division across diverse Jewish constituencies. It is important to understand, however, that a singular “Jewish” view on homosexuality does not exist, as the various Jewish denominations differ greatly in their values and views of Jewish law and Jewish life. As such, the various denominations have taken very different approaches in addressing homosexuality within the Jewish context.

In the last decade, both the Conservative and Reform denominations have dedicated significant attention to modifying their approaches to homosexuality. For example, the Conservative Judaism’s Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (CJLS) recently issued multiple opinions regarding the Conservative stance on homosexuality,

with one opinion following the Orthodox position (which will be discussed in detail below), and another substantially liberalizing its view of homosexual sex and relationships (Roth, 2006). The Reform and Reconstructionist movements interpret Jewish teachings in light of humanism and scientific research, and as such, these denominations take more open approaches to homosexuality that range from not banning homosexual acts (i.e., tolerance) to actually validating intimate relationships (i.e., being affirming).

In contrast to the Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist denominations, homosexuality has only recently become a topic of discussion within Orthodox Judaism. Merely acknowledging its existence as a “problem” within the Orthodox community is a drastic shift from what was previously practiced, which was denying its existence altogether. As dialogue addressing homosexuality within the Orthodox community is a relatively new phenomenon, research that addresses attitudes regarding homosexuality in the Orthodox Jewish community is extremely limited. Furthermore, within the small body of literature that does address homosexuality in the Orthodox Jewish context, the majority of the research takes the perspective of the Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals themselves and not the perspective of heterosexual Orthodox Jews and/or the Orthodox Jewish community at large.

In general, the view of Orthodox Judaism has been to regard homosexuality as taboo, since the *Torah* categorically forbids it. Orthodox Judaism also uses a literal interpretation of the *Talmud* (the rabbinical interpretation of the *Torah*) to further support the condemnation of homosexuality (Dworkin, 1997). As Orthodox Jews rely on both the *Torah* and *Talmud* as a guide for living a “correct” Jewish way of life, Orthodox

communities look to contemporary rabbinic writings, which contain derogatory language with regard to homosexual people and acts, to validate their views and attitudes toward homosexuality and homosexual people. As a result, Orthodox communities, which are organized around these laws, reject homosexual behavior and ostracize those identifying as gay and lesbian (Halbertal & Koren, 2006). Due to emphasis on “traditional” gender roles, the “nuclear family,” procreation, and conservative religious values, many gay and lesbian Orthodox Jews feel a sense of alienation from the Orthodox Jewish community (Schnoor, 2006). One factor that may predispose Orthodox Jews to have negative attitudes toward homosexuality is the religious proscription against it; this may lead to intense homophobia in Orthodox families and the rejection of gay and lesbian people.

It is important to understand the unique philosophical, psychological and social tensions that can arise for Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals (Mark, 2008). First, despite the fact that the average age of coming out is dropping steadily in the general population (Boxer, 1989; Freedman, 2003), it may take longer for Orthodox Jewish gays and lesbians. In general, there is a delay in discussion of any sexual matters in the Orthodox community, especially among the more traditional Ultra-Orthodox communities. It is a common belief within these communities that avoiding discussion of sexuality and sexual matters will prevent non-married individuals from even thinking about sex and in turn from engaging in forbidden sexual activity (Mark, 2008).

Traditional Orthodox Judaism also highly values traditional gender roles and separation of the sexes both in school and in extracurricular activities, and this separation is common and expected, particularly in Ultra-Orthodox communities. Although this results in less experimentation and less opportunity for mutual exploration, it also results

in feelings of discomfort around heterosexual interactions in general (Mark, 2008). This lack of exposure to the opposite sex can intensify the confusion that individuals questioning their sexual orientation already might feel (Mark, 2008).

Orthodox gay and lesbian Jews are also likely to face an increased sense of guilt and shame in regards to their sexual orientation (Halbertal & Koren, 2006; Mark, 2008). Unlike secular culture, Orthodox Jews defer to rabbinic authority on many social issues and accept many limits in personal autonomy (Mark, 2008). Within Orthodoxy, there is paramount respect for and comfort with a way of life that has been passed down from previous generations. Therefore, a lifestyle that is incompatible with the Orthodox tradition is unwelcome and shamed, both by the individuals themselves and by the Jewish community at large. Additionally, there is a fear of assimilation that may result from the integration of secular values and a shift from the traditional ways of Orthodox Judaism. In contrast to the future-oriented worldview of Western society, traditional Orthodox Jews idealize emulating the traditions, values, and lifestyle of the generations before them (Heilman, 1992).

Although American Jews find themselves living in an individualistic culture where self-fulfillment and independence are highly valued, for Orthodox Jews, community and interconnectedness are of the utmost importance (Mark, 2008). These communities tend to be homogenous on the surface and extremely close-knit, and this emphasis on group identity and solidarity often leaves Orthodox Jews in conflict with modern culture. For example, community values and expectations are prioritized over individual happiness in Orthodoxy (Mark, 2008), which can contradict with western values such as autonomy, independence, and individualism.

In addition to the feelings of isolation and rejection that Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals face by their communities, there are also apparent contradictions within Jewish literature, philosophy and teachings that even increase the struggles that these individuals face. For example, Jewish teachings stress the importance of social justice and the belief that the stranger is to be treated well (Brown, 1990; Klepfisz, 1990). Additionally, Jews are an ethnic group that has historically been oppressed and ostracized (Schlosser, 2006), and thus, Jews are taught to sympathize with others who are victims of oppression as well (Klepfitz, 1990; Nugent & Gramick, 1989; Rose & Balka, 1989). Jews are also taught to argue and question, to never follow blindly, and to make choices (Brown, 1990; Smith, 1991). Additionally, Jews are taught to be individual thinkers and that many opinions and truths can and do exist. Although the above are considered “Jewish values,” they are not always encouraged or welcomed by Orthodox communities or leaders. Regarding questions about homosexuality, many Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals are told by rabbinical authorities that the prohibitions are explicit, leaving no room for alternative interpretations or further questions.

One participant in Schnoor’s (2006) qualitative study, which looked at the intersecting identities of Jewish gay individuals, noted that anti-gay sentiments have been superimposed onto the *Torah*, while other passages in the text that support same-sex love are conveniently ignored or denied (Schnoor, 2006). One of the participants in Schnoor’s (2006) qualitative study stated, “Homophobia has been added into Biblical stories over and over again, when in fact if you look at the Biblical text, there are a lot of homo-erotic elements to it: The Joseph and Potiphar story and certainly the David and Jonathan story. Those are examples of real loving relationships between men” (Schnoor, 2006, p. 54).

Rabbis Broyde and Brody point to the overemphasis on the prohibition of homosexuality in Orthodox Judaism, despite other evident larger social problems that also clash with Orthodox Jewish values. They state that the Orthodox community currently faces two very serious problems: (1) Heterosexual promiscuity and (2) Financial misconduct. They state, “We live in an era of scandals, an era in which Hasidic *rebbs* go to jail for money laundering and rabbis are arrested for selling organs, while blogs accuse rabbis who are running conversion courts of manipulations and sexual vices with candidates for conversion. These scandals reflect larger trends [than homosexuality] within our community of widespread betrayal and disloyalty” (Broyde & Brody, 2010, p. 3).

Similarly, Rabbi Shmuley Boteach also calls attention to the overemphasis of the prohibitions from Leviticus and the commandment to be fruitful and multiply, when there are 611 other commandments (of the total 613) that Orthodox Jewish individuals also struggle with and work hard to fulfill. Additionally, throughout history rabbis have modified and adapted laws in response to social and economic developments (e.g., abolition of slavery, banning of polygamy), but they unwaveringly resist making any changes in regard to stances on homosexuality (Halbertal & Koren, 2006). Many gay and lesbian Orthodox Jews take the position that although the *Torah* is a divinely written document that must be respected and revered, the way in which the passages from the *Torah* that concern homosexuality have been traditionally interpreted by religious authorities is incorrect and do not align with modern times (Schnoor, 2006). Many Orthodox individuals emphasize the dynamic and changing nature of *halacha* (Jewish law) and argue that more discussion and debate is necessary to develop new Orthodox

Jewish understandings of homosexuality (Schnoor). This point is illustrated by one of the participants in Halbertal and Koren's (2006) qualitative study:

If the *halacha* would want to deal with it they would find a way out. All of a sudden women are allowed to do things that, a generation ago, were not allowed, like learning Torah. The *halacha* changes, but in this issue the *halacha* just decided not to deal, just like in the whole world...I have no problems with G-d: the *halacha* today has nothing do with G-d. It is the religious community. One has to distinguish between the religious establishment and the religion (pg. 56).

Similarly, a common request made by Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals is to bring the two sets of conflicting identities closer – one's sexual identity and Jewish identity. Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals would like the rabbis, whose position it is to interpret and modify the *halacha*, to come up with *halachic* solutions (solutions based on Jewish law) that would allow observant Jews to look upon homosexual acts in more acceptable terms (Ariel, 2007). Again, reiterating the above, if the rabbinical tradition succeeded in modifying harsh Biblical rulings making, for example, Biblical punishments consisting of bodily mutilation outdated, the question remains as to why the rabbis cannot do the same regarding the Biblical prohibition against homosexual acts (Ariel, 2007). Most Orthodox rabbis as well as Orthodox community members have not been persuaded by gay and lesbian appeals, stating that both the Biblical and *Talmudic* commentaries are explicit regarding the prohibition of both gay and lesbian sexual acts of all types (Ariel, 2007).

Despite the clear Biblical and *Talmudic* prohibitions that many Orthodox leaders and authorities use in supporting their stance on homosexuality, many Orthodox gays and

lesbian individuals sense that the real block against redefining the *halachic* ruling on homosexuality has not been the explicit language in the *Torah*, *Talmud*, and rabbinical commentaries, especially since historically, the commentaries did not seem to be as harsh (Ariel, 2007). Rather, “the origin seems to be nested in the cultural biases of a conservative community that promotes “family values,” wants to see its sons and daughters married and producing children, and has little appreciation for “alternative lifestyles” (Ariel, 2007, p. 101). Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, who lived from 1895 to 1986, seems to base his approach on the attitudes of the mainstream American society, which were overall negative at the time. He viewed the acts as a *to'evah* in two forms, not just Biblically but also because of the manner in which mid-twentieth century society viewed the act (Ariel, 2007). Similarly, Dr. Nathaniel Lehrman, a psychiatrist, denounced homosexuality on medical, psychological and social grounds claiming that homosexuality worked against longevity (Ariel, 2007).

Orthodox Jewish communities, like other conservative cultural communities, often view homosexuality as a product of U.S. modern culture, and a negative aspect of assimilation. As Orthodox Jewish people in particular are concerned with maintaining a cohesive community, it may partially explain the religious response to homosexuality (Dworkin, 1997). Additionally, the historical stereotypical image of Jewish men was weak, non-manly and effeminate. As the image of some gay men is similar to this historical view of Jewish men, liberal Jewish men worked hard to change this stereotype by strengthening themselves and distancing themselves from a traditional Orthodox Jewish way of life (Ariel, 2007). Subsequently, as the above stereotypes had been internalized by Jewish men, this resulted in the Jewish negative views and disgust



towards the homosexual lifestyle and portrayal (Ariel, 2007). As stated above, although these negative views have changed in several of the Jewish denominations, they remain in many Orthodox sects and communities. As evidenced by an article published by a liberal Jewish psychiatrist stating that the lack of acceptance of gay and lesbian Jews by the Orthodox community was based not on the Biblical prohibition, but on the scholarly opinions of the larger society, cultural arguments continue to color much of the Orthodox dialogue and debate regarding the issue of homosexuality (Ariel, 2007).

### **Rationale for Hypotheses**

It is clear that there are a multitude of views regarding what has contributed to the negative attitudes towards homosexuality within the Orthodox Jewish community.

Firstly, although many rabbinical authorities give full credence to the explicit Biblical prohibitions laid out in Leviticus and the *Talmud*, as stated above, many Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals argue that the unwavering attitudes held by these rabbinical authorities lie within cultural biases. These cultural biases then result in the rejection and isolation of gay and lesbian Orthodox individuals from their communities.

Despite the claim made by many Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals that cultural biases play a larger role than the Biblical prohibitions in predicting negative attitudes towards homosexuality, it has yet to be studied. As such, one of the purposes of the current study is to gain an understanding as to which factors are playing the largest role in predicting Orthodox Jewish heterosexual attitudes towards homosexuality. Based on the existing literature on the subject laid out above, the question must be asked as whether the attitudes are of a religious nature or are more so a result of a homophobic

culture where a homosexual orientation does not “fit” within the homogenous and traditional Orthodox Jewish community.

In addition to examining homophobia and religion as factors contributing to negative attitudes towards homosexuality, gender of the homosexual individual has also been shown to play a role in heterosexual attitudes towards homosexuality. Despite the fact that research has indicated that heterosexual people’s attitudes toward gay men tend to be more negative than those toward lesbian women (Capitanio, 1999; Kite & Whitley, 1996), the opposite argument has been made in regards to Orthodox Jews. Many argue that among Orthodox Jews, attitudes towards lesbian women are more negative than attitudes towards gay men (Dworkin, 1997; Mark, 2008). Firstly, within Orthodoxy, women have traditionally been placed in a role that is secondary to men (Dworkin, 1997). Women cannot participate in a *minyan* (quorum necessary for communal prayer), cannot be called to the *Torah*, cannot worship with men, cannot be ordained as rabbis and are limited from time-bound commandments since their primary role is of mothers (Dworkin, 1997). Many Orthodox lesbian women argue that because they are already considered “less than” in the Orthodox community, their identifying as a lesbian decreases their status as an individual even further. Secondly, as the primary role for Orthodox Jewish women is to raise children, one of the primary difficulties for lesbian women is the bias towards heterosexual marriage (Cooper, 1989; 1990; Heschel, 1991; Yeskel, 1989) and the fact that a woman is not considered a full adult within the Jewish community until she has children. For these reasons, Jewish lesbians are marginalized within the Jewish community (Dworkin, 1997) and as a result many Jewish lesbians feel that they are left with the choice of closeting themselves and submitting to the community pressures of

heterosexual marriage and childrearing, or coming out as lesbians and being ostracized and not fully accepted as Jews (Dworkin, 1997).

Although research supports that attitudes towards a homosexual person may be affected by whether the homosexual person is a gay man or lesbian woman, differences may lie across religious groups. For example, with a primarily Christian sample, research supports that overall attitudes towards gay men have been shown to be more negative than attitudes towards lesbian women, but in the Orthodox Jewish context, as illustrated above, heterosexual attitudes towards lesbian women may be more negative than heterosexual attitudes towards gay men. Thus, another rationale for the present study is to gain an understanding as to whether there are differences between Orthodox Jewish attitudes towards gay men and Orthodox Jewish attitudes towards lesbian women.

In addition to differences in attitudes based on the gender of the gay or lesbian individual, research also supports the notion of differences between heterosexual men and heterosexual women in their attitudes towards homosexuality. For example, ample research has pointed to heterosexual men as being more homophobic than heterosexual women (Berkman & Zinberg, 1997; Eagly, Diekmann, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Koenig, 2004; Whitley & Kite, 1995). Similar to other studies looking at heterosexual attitudes towards gay and lesbian individuals, these studies have mostly been conducted with Christian samples. Thus, the present study also looks to gain an understanding as to whether these same heterosexual gender differences exist in the Orthodox Jewish community as well.

Aside from attitudes differing based on gender differences, research has also shown differences in attitudes based on the differentiation between the homosexual

person and the homosexual behavior. Within many conservative Christian groups, the distinction is often made between the homosexual person and the homosexual behavior. Bassett et al. (2003), for example, reported that intrinsically religiously oriented persons, meaning those who see their religion as the central and organizing principle of their lives (Allport & Ross, 1967), tend to reject gay and lesbian individuals when the measures of attitudes do not differentiate between the homosexual person and the person's homosexual behavior. In other studies, strongly identifying Christians have reported more positive attitudes and behavior toward celibate gay men than toward sexually active gay men (Bassett et al., 2002, 2003, 2005; Fulton et al., 1999). Furthermore, Wilkinson and Roys (2005) found that among Christians, gay men and lesbian women were rated more negatively when they were described as engaging in sexual behavior than when they were only having sexual fantasies or homoerotic feelings. Although this distinction between the behavior and the person has been studied among Christians, the same claims have been made by Orthodox Jewish community leaders and members, but have never been studied. Thus, another vital purpose of the present study is to gain an understanding as to whether Orthodox Jews, like many conservative Christians, also make the distinction between the homosexual person and the homosexual behavior.

Lastly, similar to the range in views toward homosexuality that exist within Christianity and Islam, the same phenomenon exists within Judaism as well. As stated earlier, the Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative and Orthodox approaches toward homosexuality are clearly different from one another, but differences may also exist even within the Orthodox denomination. Thus, in order to assess within group differences, the present study will also examine whether there are differences between Modern-Orthodox

and Ultra-Orthodox Jewish attitudes towards homosexuality as these two sects within Orthodoxy differ significantly in terms of their views and values on both a religious and social level.

### **Significance of the Present Study**

Finding empirical support for the dimensions of Orthodox Jewish heterosexual attitudes toward homosexuality is vital in producing the ultimate goal of the study, which is to eliminate hostility and oppression based on sexual orientation within the Orthodox Jewish community. This latter task can be difficult when there is a lack of understanding of conservative religious belief systems (Herek, 2004), such as that of the Orthodox Jewish denomination due to the community's insular nature as well as the lack of research that has been conducted with this population. Sensitivity to the intricacies of the attitudes held by the Orthodox Jewish community may provide a way to reduce homophobic attitudes and behavior within the community. Programs aimed at reducing negative attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals that take the unique Orthodox Jewish nuances into account are likely to be more readily accepted within Orthodox Jewish communities than those programs that demand such groups to surrender their historic moral frameworks regarding homosexuality (Rosik et al., 2007). As such, in order to reach the ultimate goal of reducing homophobia in the Orthodox Jewish community, the dimensions of these attitudes must be addressed first.

As stated earlier, claims have been made, but have not been empirically supported, that other factors such as cultural biases and homophobic and homonegative beliefs are playing a more central role in Orthodox Jewish attitudes towards homosexuality than that of the religious text-based prohibitions. Additionally, gender of

both the homosexual individual and heterosexual individual have been shown to have effects on heterosexual attitudes, but these differences have yet to be shown with an Orthodox Jewish sample. Lastly, as there are clear differences between Jewish groups regarding their values and views even within the Orthodox denomination, there may also be differences between the Modern-Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox sects of Jews in regards to their attitudes towards homosexuality.

### **Research Questions**

- 1) Do Orthodox Jewish heterosexuals' attitudes based on homophobic and homonegative beliefs (as measured by the "Hate" subscale) uniquely predict the general overall attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women when Religious Jewish Identity and attitudes based on one's feelings of religious conflict (as measured by the "Religious Conflict" subscale) are controlled for?
- 2) Do Orthodox Jewish heterosexuals hold different attitudes towards gay men than they do toward lesbian women?
- 3) Do Orthodox Jewish heterosexuals hold different attitudes towards celibate gay men and lesbian women than they do towards sexually active gay men and lesbian women?
- 4) What is the effect of Orthodox Jewish heterosexuals' gender (men vs. women) on attitudes toward:
  - a. Gay men
  - b. Lesbian women
  - c. Celibate gay men and lesbian women
  - d. Sexually active gay men and lesbian women

- 5) What is the effect of Orthodox Jewish heterosexuals' religious denomination affiliation (Ultra-Orthodox vs. Modern Orthodox) on attitudes toward:
- a. Gay men
  - b. Lesbian women
  - c. Celibate gay men and lesbian women
  - d. Sexually active gay men and lesbian women

### **Hypotheses**

- 1) Attitudes based on homophobic and homonegative beliefs (as measured by the "Hate" subscale) will uniquely predict the general overall attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women when Religious Jewish Identity and attitudes based on one's feelings of religious conflict (as measured by the "Religious Conflict" subscale) are controlled for.
- 2) Orthodox Jewish heterosexuals will have more negative attitudes towards lesbian women than they do towards gay men
- 3) Orthodox Jewish heterosexuals will have more negative attitudes towards sexually active gay men and lesbian women than celibate gay men and lesbian women.
- 4) Orthodox heterosexual men will have more negative attitudes than Orthodox heterosexual women towards:
  - a. Gay men
  - b. Lesbian women
  - c. Celibate gay men and lesbian women
  - d. Sexually active gay men and lesbian women

5) Ultra-Orthodox heterosexuals will be more negative in their attitudes than Modern

Orthodox heterosexuals towards:

- a. Gay men
- b. Lesbian women
- c. Celibate gay men and lesbian women
- d. Sexually active gay men and lesbian women



## **Definitions**

Jew: According to *halacha* (i.e., Jewish law), this term describes a person who is either born of a Jewish mother or a convert into the religion (Telushkin, 1991). Operationally defined, a Jew is anyone who self-identifies as Jewish.

Denominational Affiliation: Refers to the stream or movement of Judaism to which a person professes membership. Currently there are five major denominations: *Hareidi*, Modern Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist.

Modern Orthodox Jew: A Jewish person who affiliates with the movement within Orthodox Judaism that attempts to synthesize Jewish values and the observance of Jewish law, with the secular, modern world.

Ultra-Orthodox/Hareidi Jew: A Jewish person who affiliates with the most conservative form of Orthodox Judaism

Jewish Identity: The experience of feeling an affinity for, and personal attachment to Judaism and the Jewish people on a cultural and/or religious level.

Religious Jewish Identity: Describes a person's relationship toward the Jewish canonical tradition concerning the adherence of *halacha* (Friedlander et al., 2010). Operationally defined, religious identity is the score obtained on Religious Identity subscale of the *American Jewish Identity Scales (AJIS; Friedlander, Friedman, Miller, Ellis, Friedlander, & Mikhaylov, 2010)*.

Heterosexual/Heterosexuality: A person with an enduring pattern of or disposition to experience sexual, affectional, physical or romantic attractions to persons of the opposite sex (APA, 2007)

Gay Men: Men whose primary emotional, erotic, and relational preferences are same-sex and for whom some aspect of their self-labeling acknowledges these same-sex attachments; designation as gay refers to the sex of one's (actual or imagined) intimate partner choices, not gender expression, which may take a variety of forms (Fassinger & Arseneau, 2007, p. 21)

Lesbian Women: Women whose primary emotional, erotic, and relational preferences are same-sex and for whom some aspect of their self-labeling acknowledges these same-sex attachments (Fassinger & Arseneau, 2007, p. 21)

Heterosexual Attitudes Toward Homosexuality: Affective and evaluative components determined by a heterosexual person's beliefs about homosexuality (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and the associated behaviors. Operationally defined, overall general heterosexual attitudes towards homosexuality and homosexual persons will be measured by the *Attitudes Toward Lesbian and Gay Men Scale-Revised Version (ATLG-R; Herek, 1998)*. Attitudes towards homosexual sexual activity will be measured by the *Sexual Orientation and Practice Scale (SOAP; Bassett et al., 2005)*.

Attitudes based on homophobic and homonegative beliefs: Attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals based on homophobic and homonegative beliefs and feelings as measured by the "Hate" subscale of the *Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Knowledge and Attitudes Scale for Heterosexuals (LGB-KASH; Worthington & Dillon, 2005)*.

Attitudes based on feelings of religious conflict: Attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals based on conflicting beliefs and ambivalent homonegativity of a religious nature as measured by the "Religious Conflict" subscale of the *Lesbian, Gay and*

*Bisexual Knowledge and Attitudes Scale for Heterosexuals (LGB-KASH; Worthington & Dillon, 2005).*

Sexually active gay or lesbian individuals: Those who identify as gay or lesbian and engage in sexual activity with those of the same sex.

Celibate gay or lesbian individuals: Those who identify as gay or lesbian and abstain from sexual activity with those of the same sex.

### **Glossary of Jewish Terms**

Torah: Specifically defined as the five books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, or broadly defined as the entire body of Jewish teachings.

Talmud/Talmudic: The most significant collection of the Jewish oral tradition (a compilation of rabbinical opinions) interpreting the Torah.

Halacha/Halachic: The complete body of rules and practices that Jews are bound to follow, including Biblical commandments, commandments instituted by the rabbis, and binding customs

Mitzvah/Mitzvot: Any of the 613 commandments that Jews are obligated to observe. It can also refer to any Jewish religious obligation, or more generally to any good deed.

To'evah: Literally translated as an “abomination”.

Rebbe: The leader of a Hasidic community, often believed to have special, mystical power.

Rabbi: A religious teacher and person authorized to make decisions on issues of Jewish law.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of the Literature

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I first provide a brief demographic description and set of relevant terms applicable to the gay, lesbian and bisexual community, followed by a brief history of the acceptance of sexual minorities into the field of psychology. Next I give an overview of conservative religious approaches to homosexuality and the resulting effects on gay and lesbian individuals, focusing heavily on the concept of dual identity conflict. This section is then followed by a description of more modern and open Christian and Islamic approaches to homosexuality.

In the latter half of the chapter, I begin with a description of the various denominations of Jews and their respective approaches to homosexuality, followed by an elaborative description of the various Orthodox Jewish approaches and their bases. Afterward, I provide a description of the negative effects that these Orthodox Jewish approaches have on Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals, which leads to the justification of the present study.

#### **Demographics of the LGB community and relevant terminology**

Based on the 2005-06 American Community Survey (an extension of the U.S. census), approximately 8.8 million people identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual in the United States (Gates, 2006). It must be noted, however, that the total population of lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals has been estimated by some to be 10% of people, making the previous statistic potentially a very large understatement. Individuals that identify themselves as gay or lesbian describe their emerging sexual orientation as

beginning with a feeling of being different from people of the same sex (Anderson, 1994; Arey, 1995; Coleman, 1981; Kaufman & Raphael, 1996). Sexual orientation refers to “an enduring emotional, romantic, sexual, or affectionate attraction to individuals of a particular gender” (APA, 1999, p. 1). When individuals identify themselves as gay or lesbian, they begin the process known as “coming out” (Buchanan et al., 2001). This coming out process is described as “the process by which a gay person discovers and accepts his or her homosexuality” (Arey, 1995, p. 213) and can be complicated by feelings of self-hate, guilt, depression, and fear (Gluth & Kiselica, 1994). After coming out to oneself, coming out to others is often the next step and may result in rejection from family, friends and society as individuals adapt to the negative messages in society and validate the emerging feelings themselves (Buchanan et al., 2001)

In 1972 George Weinberg coined the term *homophobia*, which he originally defined as a heterosexual’s person’s dread of being in close proximity to homosexual men and women (Herek, 1994; Weinberg, 1972). The construct has proven influential in the cultural debate regarding sexual orientation. Its acceptance into the North American cultural framework has helped identify and spread the problem as worthy of being studied. Previously, studies only focused on those identifying as gay or lesbian as opposed to currently, where more studies are focusing on heterosexual individuals and their level of intolerance toward gay and lesbian individuals (Herek, 1994, 2004; O’Donahue & Caselles, 1993; Shidlo, 1994; Stein, 2004). As homophobia has played a central role in heterosexual attitudes toward homosexuality, gay and lesbian individuals have had a difficult time gaining acceptance into mainstream society.

### **History of the acceptance of sexual minorities in psychology**

Consistent with their battle for acceptance into mainstream U.S. society, gay and lesbian individuals have had to battle a long history of discrimination in the psychology field as well. Until the 1970s, a lesbian, gay or bisexual orientation warranted a Diagnosis and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) diagnosis of “sexual deviation” (Mendelson, 2003). A combination of the civil and human rights movements, research on lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals (Robertson, 2004; Rothblum, 2000), and activism brought the American Psychiatric Association to remove the diagnosis from the DSM in 1973 (Mendelson, 2003). Following the 1973 American Psychiatric Association's declassification of homosexuality as a mental illness, the American Psychological Association Council of Representatives adopted a formal resolution against the stigmatization of homosexuals (APA, 1975). It must be noted, however, that the DSM retained a diagnosis of “sexual orientation disturbance” to describe individuals who were dissatisfied with their homosexuality. This diagnosis became known as “ego-dystonic homosexuality” in the third edition of the DSM (APA, 1980), and was not removed altogether until the revised third edition of the DSM (APA, 1987). This modification left only a diagnosis of “sexual disorders not otherwise specified,” which is applicable to individuals distressed about their sexual orientation (Mendelson, 2003). The American Psychological Association states that homosexuality is “not an illness, mental disorder, or emotional problem” (APA, 1999).

Since then, gay affirmative therapies have emerged along with policy changes, and as a result, lesbian and gay individuals have increasingly found support and a voice within the field of psychology. For example, in 1997, in response to the growing need to guide clinicians caring for lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals, the American

Psychological Association's office of the Public Interest added a "Resolution on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation" to their list of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Concerns Policy Statements, establishing 16 Guidelines for Psychotherapy with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients (APA, 1997). In this resolution, the American Psychological Association declared that the organization "supports the dissemination of accurate information about sexual orientation, and mental health, and appropriate interventions in order to counteract bias that is based in ignorance or unfounded beliefs" (APA, 1997).

Despite these monumental changes, there remains a cohort of psychologists who practice reparative (or conversion) therapies that promote heterosexist beliefs, and perpetuate the validity of homosexuality as a mental illness. Currently, there is significant debate regarding the rights of clients who seek out such services in an effort to reconcile their sexual orientation with their religious beliefs (Morrow et al., 2004). Advocates for the mental health rights of sexual minorities warn other mental health professionals about the potential misuse and harm that can result from reparative therapies (Gonsiorek, 2004; Haldeman, 2002; Morrow, et al., 2004). Although the American Psychological Association has not explicitly banned conversion therapy, the organization currently condemns the use of such potentially harmful clinical practices, particularly in the absence of empirically supported research and the evident potential to violate the organization's *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (APA, 2002).

It is clear there have been monumental changes in terms of American mainstream attitudes toward homosexuality and the attitudes of many professional organizations toward gay and lesbian individuals. This said, however, homophobia and community

negative attitudes remain in several sectors of society. Outlined below, are the perspectives and approaches of conservative religious groups toward homosexuality, followed by a focus on the Jewish religion, with a heavy focus on the most conservative sects of Jews.

### **Conservative Religious Perspectives on Homosexuality**

Despite the increasing acceptance of the lesbian, gay and bisexual community within the field of psychology and mainstream society, many religious organizations maintain their stance that homosexuality is morally wrong (Robinson, 1999). Religion, particularly of a conservative orientation, has been pointed to in several studies as a significant predictor of homophobia (Finlay & Walther, 2003; Herek, 1994; Hunsberger, Owusu, & Duck, 1999; Johnson, Brems, & Alford-Keating, 1997; Morrison & Morrison, 2002; Schulte & Battle, 2004). The effect of religion as a predictor of homophobia may even be more important than gender differences, which have generally found men to be more homophobic than women (Berkman & Zinberg, 1997; Eagly, Diekmann, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Koenig, 2004; Whitley & Kite, 1995).

As the stance on and attitudes toward homosexuality continue to change in modern U.S. culture and society, the gap in attitudes toward homosexuality between devoutly religious people and the general culture is growing (Altemeyer, 2001; Finlay & Walther, 2003; Linneman, 2004; Loftus, 2001; Sullivan, 2003), particularly with regard to views on the morality of homosexual behavior. As the term homophobia has the ability to stigmatize those in opposition to gay and lesbian civil rights, it seems very probable this construct will be increasingly applied to conservative religious communities, as they



may be the only remaining group holding negative beliefs toward gay and lesbian individuals (Rosik et al., 2007).

The profound existence of homophobia in conservative religious communities makes the coming out process even more difficult for lesbian and gay individuals who have had a religious upbringing (Wagner et al., 1994). Religious involvement may be associated with greater internalized homophobia or a self-image that includes negative societal attitudes toward homosexuality. This is especially true for conservative Christian denominations (Brooke, 1993). An interpretation of Catholic teachings stated that homosexuals are objectively disordered and inclined toward evil (Ratzinger, 1986). Although this stance was declared decades ago, negative sentiment toward homosexuality still remains, as evidenced by The Catechism of the Catholic Church (Second Edition), the official and current text of the teachings of the Catholic Church. Section 2357 states: “Basing itself on sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered. They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2357). This said, in section 2358 and 2359, the Catechism states that those with a homosexual orientation did not choose this path and that they should be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity and should be supported with friendship and prayer (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2358, 2359). In addition to the statements in The Catechism, the thirteenth century writings of Aquinas also continue to be the basis for the

religious argument against homosexuality, particularly in Catholicism (Gaudet, 2007; Sands, 2007).

Aside from conservative Christian groups, conservative Muslims take a similar stance on homosexuality as well. While homosexuality among Muslims was described in the past as a common occurrence (as it was among the Greeks, who considered young males, and not women, the object of male sexual desire), it is now rejected and is even considered nonexistent among Arab Muslim males (AbuKhalil, 1997). Furthermore, homosexuality is seen as only a feature of non-Muslim, Western societies and contemporary Muslim scholars contend that all humans are ‘naturally’ heterosexual. Accordingly, homosexuality is considered a sinful and a perverse deviation from a person’s true nature (Abu-Saud 1990). Regarding Islamic law, in the area of sexual behavior, Pederasty (an erotic relationship between an older man and an adolescent boy) is equated with homosexuality and both are subsumed under the word *shudhudh jinsi* (sexual perversion) (AbuKhalil, 1997). Equating them makes them both seem inappropriate, and one clearly is, but all Islamic schools of thought and legal authority consider all homosexual acts to be unlawful. They each differ in terms of penalty, which range from severe punishment, including death (Hanabalites), to no punishment warranted (Hanafite). This said, however, the conservative perspective views the Qur’an as being very explicit in its condemnation of homosexuality, leaving scarcely any loophole for religiously based affirmation of gay individuals in Islam (Duran, 1993).

As a result of these conservative religious stances regarding homosexuality, many gay and lesbian individuals find themselves rejecting their religious faith in order to accept their sexual orientation (Oberholtzer, 1971; Brooke, 1993). Others believe that in

order to live according to God's will, one must forsake homosexuality (Brooke, 1993; Malloy, 1981). A struggle exists because gay and lesbian individuals from conservative religious groups are asked to choose between their sexual orientation and their religious beliefs, a difficult choice especially for those raised in a religious atmosphere (Wagner et al., 1994). Helminiak (1986, 1995) states that spiritual challenges are at the heart of the gay and lesbian experience, and as such, therapists are often called upon to address spirituality issues with gay and lesbian clients (Buchanan et al., 2001). Homophobic messages that religious institutions perpetuate are likely to result in an increased level of internalized homophobia for the gay or lesbian individual (Wagner et al., 1994), a delay in the development of a homosexual identity (Harry & DeVall, 1978) for the gay or lesbian individual, and add conflict to an already difficult path that gay and lesbian individuals must face (Barret & Barzan, 1996).

There are some religious institutions that have been particularly outspoken about the unacceptability of a gay or lesbian orientation (Carleton, 1997; Wagner et al., 1994). Traditional Bible advocates believe that a solution to the struggle around homosexuality is to abstain from gay or lesbian behaviors (Brooke, 1993). Gay and lesbian individuals are often given the message that they are not welcome nor can they have membership or fully participate in religious privileges (Barret & Barzan, 1996). In order to remain members of their religious institutions, they would have to remain closeted (Carleton, 1997). In order to accept their sexuality, gay and lesbian individuals often believe they must reject religion, or reject their sexual identity in order to accept their religion (Buchanan et al., 2001). Many researchers see rejecting part of the self, whether it be one's religious or sexual identity, as having negative effects on a gay or lesbian

individual's mental health (Wagner et al., 1994). Dual identity formation and reconciliation is thus an extremely relevant issue with potentially very harmful effects for the gay or lesbian individual. Further detail on dual identity formation and conflict is laid out below.

### **Consequences of Dual Identity Conflict**

There has been a substantial amount of research dedicated to composing models that explain identity formation, especially for racial (Cross, 1995; Helms, 1990; 1995), ethnic (Phinney, 1990; 1992), gender (Martin, Ruble, & Szkrybalo, 2002) and sexual (Cass, 1979; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996) aspects of one's identity. Although there has also been research dedicated to understanding how one might integrate one or more of these identities (Jones & McEwen, 2000; Sue & Sue, 1990), research is lacking in the area of how one might integrate or resolve the conflict when two or more of the identities clash (Sherry et al., 2010). Two aspects of identity that may be in competition are one's sexual identity and religious identity, such as when one identifies as gay or lesbian while also identifying with a traditionally non-affirming, conservative sect of a religion such as Orthodox Judaism. Research has shown that conflict between one's religious and sexual identity is associated with more distress, shame, internalized homophobia, depression, and suicidal ideation (Lease, Horne, Noffsinger-Frazier, 2005; Schuck & Liddle, 2001; Mahaffy, 1996). Additionally, gay or lesbian individuals often feel a sense of a loss as many end their faith or are rejected by their religious community amidst the process of coming into their gay or lesbian identity (Lease et al., 2005; Davidson, 2000; Robinson, 1999). This said, it is important to understand that many gay and lesbian individuals place an importance on both their religious and sexual identities, and thus those who choose not

to reject their religious identity may also experience these feelings of loss and loneliness regarding their gay community, as identifying as religious is often not accepted in these communities (Maynard & Gorsuch, 2001). Thus, individuals with these dual identities often find themselves either caught between two communities or lost without any community that will accept them for all aspects of who they are.

One of the ways that gay and lesbian individuals have gone about resolving this conflict is by rejecting their institutionalized religion of origin, and replacing it with a spiritual identity, which allows the freedom to reflect and construct an “individualized spiritual self” (Barret & Barzan, 1996). Since many of the psychological consequences are due to the anti-gay doctrine of an organized religion, re-organizing oneself as spiritual can often mediate the harmful consequences associated with dually identifying with a non-affirming organized religion (Lease, Horne, Noffsinger-Frazier, 2005; Davidson, 2000).

Those with conservative religious perspectives have been the major proponents of conversion or reparative therapies (Drescher, 2001b). As stated earlier, these forms of “treatment” aim at enabling conservative religious gay and lesbian individuals to live a heterosexual lifestyle aligned with their religious beliefs. There is ample literature speaking to the ethical issues and skeptical therapeutic and research validity with regards to using conversion or reparative therapies (Beckstead & Morrow, 2004; Drescher, 2001a; Forstein, 2001; Halderman, 2001, 2003; Schroeder & Shidlo, 2001; Silverstein, 2003; Tozer & McClanahan, 1999). Despite the fact that conversion therapy was banned by the American Psychiatric Association (2000) and a similar stance was taken by the American Psychological Association (1998) and other professional organizations

(Morrow & Beckstead, 2004; Schneider, Brown, & Glassgold, 2002), it does not mollify the predicament that individuals who identify as gay or lesbian and religious face, as many conservative religious groups still stand behind the utility and value of conversion or reparative therapies. Many religious leaders thus continue to refer those who are struggling with their sexual identity for such treatment. Furthermore, there may be individuals from conservative religious communities who seek conversion treatment to be “cured” of their homosexual feelings.

Individuals who experience conflicts between their religious beliefs and sexual orientations at times believe that the solution to their dilemma is to allow or deny either identity. Such a solution, however, yields both personal and emotional loss (Davidson, 2002; Haldeman, 2001). If one attempts to minimize one’s sexual nature, one risks giving up a profound avenue of connection with, and growth through, another human being (Duberman, 2001; DuBowski, 2001; Moor, 2001), while, if one attempts to minimize one’s religious orientation, one risks losing the community in which one has found nurture, meaning, and a sense of belonging (Ford, 2001). Despite many clear detrimental approaches taken by conservative religious groups toward the issue of homosexuality, the issues of homophobia and attitudes toward homosexuality are complex, and thus require multidimensional analysis in order to understand the nuances and intricacies behind the associated feelings and beliefs. Ample research has been conducted looking at the dimensions of heterosexual attitudes toward homosexuality and homophobia among Christians and a review of this research is laid out below.

### **Modern Perspectives of Traditionally Conservative Religious Groups**

Despite research highlighting clear negative attitudes among conservative religious individuals and groups toward gay and lesbian individuals, it is important to understand that tolerance and homophobic beliefs may coexist for some conservative religious individuals (Fulton et al., 1999). However, gaining a clear understanding of how such beliefs may interrelate requires independent measurement of the constructs (Rosik et al., 2007). For example, within many conservative Christian groups, the distinction is often made between the homosexual person and the homosexual behavior (“love the sinner, hate the sin”). Historically, measures of homophobia have not been constructed to account for this distinction (Bassett et al., 2005), but recent studies have suggested that it is an important distinction that helps at gaining an understanding of conservative religious sentiment towards homosexuality (Bassett et al., 2002, 2000).

Bassett et al. (2003), for example, reported that intrinsically religiously oriented persons, meaning those who see their religion as the central and organizing principle of their lives (Allport & Ross, 1967), tend to reject gay and lesbian individuals when the measures of attitudes do not differentiate between the homosexual person and the person’s homosexual behavior. These findings suggest that when measures conceptually separate homosexual persons from their sexual behavior, an intrinsic religious orientation is associated with valuing the homosexual person. In other studies, strongly identifying Christians have reported more positive attitudes and behavior toward celibate gay men than toward sexually active gay men (Bassett et al., 2002, 2003, 2005). Fulton et al. (1999) found that Christians tend to display greater opposition for sexually active homosexuals than for celibate homosexual individuals. Some of these participants who reported morality-based homophobic attitudes did not limit their social contact with gay

and lesbian individuals and did not avoid them more than they avoided others who behaved in other ways that they perceived to be immoral (e.g. liars, alcohol abusers, racists). Additionally, Wilkinson and Roys (2005) found that among Christians, gay men and lesbian women were rated more negatively when they were described as engaging in sexual behavior than when they were only having sexual fantasies or homoerotic feelings.

Another important distinction crucial to understanding the full picture of conservative religious attitudes towards homosexuality is that research has indicated that heterosexual people's attitudes toward gay men tend to be more negative than those toward lesbian women, especially among heterosexual men (Herek & Capitano, 1999; Kite & Whitley, 1996), and this potential gender difference is often overlooked in the literature. Rosik et al. (2007) examined whether religiously devout Christian students made value distinctions between the person and their sexual behavior for both lesbian and gay individuals. They found that those who distinguished between a lesbian and the lesbian's behavior were more negative in their attitudes than their more accepting peers. Interestingly, the respondents rated sexually active heterosexual individuals almost identically to sexually active homosexual individuals, illustrating the raters' attitudes towards sexual behavior, rather than their attitude towards homosexuality or the person themselves. This finding further supports the research that distinguishing between the person and behavior is an important component to fully understanding attitudes toward homosexuality among religious individuals.

Similar to Christianity and Judaism, divergent understandings and interpretations of Islam's position toward homosexuality exist as well. Some who have analyzed the Qur'anic passages, believe that same-sex indiscretions are not one 'of the most dangerous



crimes' as is believed by certain traditional Muslims, and that the Qur'an's objections towards same-sex actions are on par with objections toward opposite-sex and non-sexual indiscretions alike (Jamal, 2001). Others who have analyzed the passages have asserted that the Qur'an is not clear about the position of same-sex sexuality (Jamal, 2001). More modern and liberal perspectives argue that the Qur'an neither mentions the type of punishment for homosexual acts, nor portrays a strongly negative attitude against such acts. Lastly, similar to the views of many gay and lesbian Orthodox Jews, Dossani (1997) asserts that the roots of gay intolerance seem to be more sociological and cultural than religious. Although it is clear that contemporary mainstream Islam officially condemns homosexuality, there is a growing movement of tolerance among Muslims, especially in the Western world, who view Islam as an evolving religion that must adapt to modern-day society (Al-Fatiha Foundation, 2002).

Sensitivity to distinctions made by many conservative religious heterosexual individuals may provide valuable information for constructing ways to reduce homophobic attitudes and behavior (Rosik et al., 2007). For example, the distinction made between the homosexual person and the sexual behavior is supported by conservative Christian and Jewish theology where all persons are created and valued by G-d (Bassett et al., 2000). As stated earlier, according to Rosik et al. (2007) programs aimed at reducing negative attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals that take this distinction into account are likely to be more readily accepted within conservative religious populations than those programs that demand such groups to surrender their historic moral frameworks regarding homosexuality.

Furthermore, Rosik et al. (2007) state that Biblical passages emphasizing kindness, patience, humility, love and self-control can be applied to relations with gay and lesbian individuals to reduce homophobia without invalidating the normative value assumptions of conservative religious groups. The researchers state that such an approach could be successful in decreasing disrespect, verbal hostility, and other behavioral displays of homonegativity among members of these religious communities. As of 2007, only one study had tested this type of intervention (Bassett et al., 2005). These authors reported improved attitudes toward gay men among Christian students who rejected both celibate and sexually active gay men. Participants became less rejecting after interventions that promoted the value of homosexual persons while not affirming their sexual behavior. This said, however, this trend abated over time, suggesting the need for repeated exposure to the “valuing-person message” (Rosik et al., 2007) as a means of counteracting the more rejecting message found in some conservative religious communities.

According to Rosik et al. (2007) such attempts to identify and work with sub-groups of religious conservatives, such as those who emphasize the distinction between person and behavior, may hold real promise in lessening homophobic actions. Interventions that are sensitive to a group’s moral and religiously based framework are likely to be more effective than continued efforts to invalidate conservatively religious normative assumptions regarding homosexual behavior, a strategy that often results in only an intensification of negative attitudes, homophobia, and anti-homosexual backlash.

As stated earlier, Herek (2004) asserted that the ultimate aim of research in the area of homophobia and conservative religion is for all hostility and oppression based on

sexual orientation to be eliminated. He further states that this can be difficult when there is a lack of a nuanced understanding of conservative religious belief systems, and as such, the resulting risk may be the misinterpretation of attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals among traditional religious communities. This risk for the misinterpretation of attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals is especially true for the less researched religious communities, as a lack of research yields little insight into the complexities of attitude development and formation.

### **A Call for Research Addressing Homosexuality in the Jewish Context**

Although psychology has moved toward a more culturally inclusive approach where ethnic and religious factors are explored, research and practice of psychology makes little or no mention of Jewish issues, culture, or identity (Langman, 2000; Schlosser, 2006). According to the Jewish Virtual Library (2010), American Jews comprise nearly 2.2% of the United States population. While numerically small, it is difficult to describe or label Jews, as the population is incredibly diverse regarding ethnic identification, adherence to religious law and practices, and cultural customs (Friedman, et al., 2005; Schlosser, 2006).

Orthodox Jews are typically defined as the most conservative denomination within the Jewish religion (with more and less conservative sub-groups within the Orthodox denomination) and as historically having traditionally conservative religious attitudes towards homosexuality. Yet, within the body of literature that looks at heterosexual attitudes and views toward gay men and lesbian women, there is no inclusion of the attitudes and views held by Jews, and Orthodox Jews specifically. The Orthodox Jewish denomination is an extremely under researched sub-group within

Judaism and the issue of homosexuality is intensely current and one of the most heated debates in the history of the interpretation of Jewish law among Orthodox communities. As stated earlier in the introduction, as the various Jewish denominations differ so widely in their values and worldviews, a Jewish view of homosexuality does not exist. It is thus important to provide background of the main tenets of the various Jewish denominations and their varying views and approaches to homosexuality in order to provide a context and framework for the varying Orthodox views and approaches.

### **Jewish Affiliations and Denominations**

**Orthodox Jews.** Orthodox Jews adhere to both the laws in the written Torah (first five books of the Bible) and the interpretation of those laws in the oral Torah (Talmud). Generally, Orthodox Jews are often defined by their observance of the laws of Kosher (*Kashrut*), the Sabbath (*Shabbat*), and the laws of family purity (*Niddah*; Langman, 2000). Within the realm of Orthodoxy, Jews are often divided further into two main sectors, Modern Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox (i.e., *Haredi*).

Modern Orthodox Judaism attempts to blend Jewish values and Jewish law with the secular, mainstream society. Modern Orthodox Jews recognize and value the importance of secular studies, higher and quality education for both men and women, and the importance of being able to financially support oneself and one's family. Generally, Modern Orthodox Jews also place high national and religious significance on the State of Israel, and institutions and individuals are typically Zionist in orientation (*Edah*, n.d.).

*Hasidic* and *Yeshivish* traditions are generally grouped under the umbrella of Ultra-Orthodox or *Haredi* Jews. These Jews tend to avoid contact with the secular world and live their lives as much as possible within their own community. Ultra-Orthodox life

is very family-centered. Males and females usually attend separate schools (*yeshiva* or *seminary*, respectively), where the curriculum is primarily dedicated to Torah study. In general, studying in secular institutions is discouraged. Additionally, marriage is often arranged through facilitated dating, known as *shidduchim*. Regarding manner of dress, Ultra-Orthodox Jews value both modesty and distinctiveness. Men traditionally wear black suits and black hats, while women wear long sleeved and high necked shirts and long and loose skirts, mostly in black, navy, or gray (Wieselberg, 1992).

**Non-Orthodox Jews.** Non-Orthodox Jews are generally less likely to observe many of the traditional Jewish laws and customs followed by Orthodox Jews. Additionally, they are often more assimilated than Orthodox Jews and are not typically identifiable by dress (Langman, 2000). The major non-Orthodox affiliations include the Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist movements. In general, Conservative Judaism prioritizes an acceptance toward modern culture, an acceptance of interpretational and critical secular scholarship regarding Jewish texts and a commitment to the observance of Jewish law. Furthermore, Conservative Judaism believes that interpretation of Jewish texts and Jewish law should be constantly evolving in order need to meet the needs of Jews in varying circumstances.

Differing from the Conservative movement, Reform Judaism does not prioritize Jewish law and those who affiliate do not look to rabbinical authorities to interpret the guidelines of Jewish living (Kaplan, 2003). One of the central tenets of Reform Judaism is a commitment to a progressive outlook on social and cultural issues, including both issues of gender and sexuality. Thus, making changes and implementing them have been central elements of the Reform movement since its inception in the mid-1800s (Kaplan,

2003). Lastly, the Reconstructionist movement shares almost all of the tenets of Reform Judaism but is distinguished by its commitment to preserving tradition.

Although denominational affiliation is often a central component of one's identification with Judaism, as it is often aligned with a Jewish person's values and worldview, there are other aspects of Judaism and the self that are also salient in one's identity as a Jewish person. Outlined below is a description of this construct, the relevant research, and a description of the construct's importance and relevance to the present study.

### **American Jewish Identity**

Similar to the diversity among the Jewish denominations and affiliations, there is no single definition or description of Jewish identity (Langman, 2000). Research has shown that Jewish identity is complex (Schlosser, 2006), and that many American Jews see themselves as bicultural, navigating both Jewish and American aspects of culture (Friedman et al., 2005). Additionally, race has traditionally been seen as a large aspect of culture, and as Jews predominantly have white skin, they have often been considered an invisible minority group in the United States (Schlosser, 2006). For many Jews, Judaism is not simply a religion or a race, but rather a feeling of belonging to a specific ethnic group tied to history, tradition, and ancestry (Friedlander et al., 2010; Alba, 2006; Klaff, 2006; Kugelmass, 1988).

In general, consideration of both religious and cultural aspects is essential as the degree to which Jews define their Jewish identity according to religious principles and laws affects their orientation to mainstream society to family, and peers (Klaff, 2006; Kugelmass, 1988). In relation to the present study, only religious identity will be

measured as a predictor of attitudes toward homosexuality. As religious principles and laws affect and guide those who identify as Orthodox Jews, it is warranted to expect that attitudes towards homosexuality may be affected by one's level of religious identity. As was stated above, both Religious Jewish Identity and Jewish denominational affiliation are central components of a Jewish person's views and values. Before reviewing the various Orthodox approaches to homosexuality, a description of the other various denominations' approaches is outlined first in order to provide a context for the Orthodox approaches.

### **Approaches to Homosexuality: Non-Orthodox denominations**

**Conservative Judaism.** In Conservative Judaism, the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (CJLS) of the Rabbinical Assembly makes the movement's decisions concerning Jewish law. In 1992, the CJLS action affirmed its traditional prohibition on homosexual conduct, blessing same-sex unions, and ordaining openly gay clergy. However, these prohibitions grew increasingly controversial within the Conservative movement.

In 2006, the Conservative movement began allowing rabbis to choose among three major responses on the subject of homosexuality. Two of the responses adopted were traditionalist in nature. One response by Rabbi Joel Roth, reaffirmed a general complete prohibition on homosexual conduct, while the second response by Rabbi Leonard Levy, maintained that homosexuality is potentially curable and encouraged people with homosexual inclinations interested in living as religious Jews to seek treatment (Roth, 2006). The third response presented an innovative reading of Jewish law to permit certain homosexual activity outright (Yuter, 2008). The response lifted most

restrictions on homosexual conduct and opened the way to the ordination of openly gay and lesbian rabbis and acceptance of homosexual unions, but remains to prohibit religiously recognizing gay marriage. The response called upon the *Talmudic* principle of *kavod habriyot* (human dignity) as the basis for this approach. The response maintained a prohibition on male-male anal sex, which it described as the sole Biblically prohibited homosexual act (Doroff, Nevins & Reisner, 2006).

Under the rules of the Conservative movement, the adoption of multiple opinions permits individual Conservative rabbis, congregations, and rabbinical schools to select which opinion to accept, and hence to choose individually whether to maintain a traditional prohibition on homosexual conduct, or to permit gay unions and clergy.

**Reform Judaism.** The Reform Jewish movement was the first to affirm homosexuality as a legitimate lifestyle for Jews and to accept gay and lesbian outreach synagogues as members of the movement (Cooper, 1989; 1990; Kahn, 1989; 1990). The position taken by the progressives is that there is no fixed view of *halacha* (Jewish law); rather, it changes over time to fit the culture and the environment. As such, the Reform movement views that a person can be Jewish and gay/lesbian and fulfill the covenant (Kahn, 1989; 1990). Sex is not viewed as exclusively for procreation, but is seen as an important aspect of love and companionship (Plaskow, 1989). Lesbians who do not have children can fulfill their Jewish obligation to nurture family by teaching youth or participating in other religious activities for youth (Dworkin, 1997). In line with their humanistic and cultural values, Reform authorities consider that, based on current scientific evidence about the nature of homosexuality as a biological sexual orientation, a new interpretation of the law is required.



In the late 1980s the primary seminary of the Reform movement, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, changed its admission requirements to allow gay people to join the student body. In 1990 the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) officially endorsed a report of their committee on homosexuality and rabbis. They concluded that “all rabbis, regardless of sexual orientation, be accorded the opportunity to fulfill the sacred vocation that they have chosen” and that “all Jews are religiously equal regardless of their sexual orientation.”

In 1996 CCAR passed a resolution of civil marriage. However, this same resolution made a distinction between civil marriages and religious marriages. In 1998, an ad hoc CCAR committee on Human Sexuality issued a report that called for CCAR to support rabbis in officiating at gay marriages. Additionally, to promote inclusion of LGBT members and clergy, the Reform movement established the Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation at Hebrew Union College, which offers educational programs and makes available copies of Reform response and policies on homosexuality (Rifkin, 2010).

Reform services now include prayers that acknowledge the loss of gay and lesbian lives during the Holocaust (Cooper, 1989; 1990; Kahn, 1989), the loss of gay and lesbian lives from AIDS, and that recognize the importance of gay/lesbian pride with a special Shabbat service (Kahn, 1989). Additionally, new rituals celebrate the life cycles of lesbians and gays. Rituals have been developed to recognize the coming out process, commitment of a relationship, and to mourn the loss of a partner. These prayers and rituals are done with the intention of moving lesbians and gays towards acceptance and integration of their Jewish and gay/lesbian identity (Dworkin, 1997).

**Reconstructionist Judaism.** Similar to the Reform movement, the Reconstructionist movement sees homosexuality as a normal expression of sexuality and welcomes gay and lesbian individuals into Reconstructionist communities to participate fully in every aspect of community life. Since 1985, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College has admitted gay and lesbian candidates for their rabbinical and cantorial programs. In 1993, a movement Commission issued: *Homosexuality and Judaism: The Reconstructionist Position*. The Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association (RRA) encourages its members to officiate at same-sex marriages/commitment ceremonies, though the RRA does not require its members to officiate at them (Israeloff, 1998).

#### **Approaches to Homosexuality: Orthodox denomination**

The discussion among contemporary Orthodox Jewish rabbis about homosexuality has been shaped and informed by an evolving political and social context (Mark, 2008). As homosexuality has become increasingly more normative in secular culture, rabbis have been faced with many more questions (Halbatal & Koren, 2006). Furthermore, the desire for Orthodox Jewish gay and lesbian individuals to remain in their communities is strong and Jewish leaders have been forced to respond to their inquiries about how to live both an Orthodox and gay lifestyle (Ariel, 2007). Rabbis have expressed *halachic* opinions (rulings based on Orthodox Jewish law) ranging from banning both the homosexual act and the homosexual person to just banning the homosexual act and accepting the homosexual individual (Halbatal & Koren, 2006).

Historically, it seems that the Orthodox opinions generated in the 1960s-1990s were more accepting of gay and lesbian individuals in their rulings. In the 1960s and 1970s Zalman Schachter and Shlomo Carlebach asserted that gay men and lesbian

women should assume an observant Jewish lifestyle even if they could not bring themselves to follow all of the commandments (Ariel, 2007). In the 1970s, Norman Lamm, president of Yeshiva University stated that homosexual acts were uncontrollable and advocated that gay and lesbian individuals should not be punished, persecuted or excommunicated (Ariel, 2007) Yeshayahu Leibowitz (1903-1994) stated that although he could not change the Jewish law to make homosexuality acceptable, gay and lesbian individuals were members of the Jewish community and should strive to follow the commandments even if there were some they could not abide by. This opinion was based on Rabbi Zadok HaCohen's (1823-1900) who viewed homosexual desires as uncontrollable, and therefore absolved the persons involved from punishment as they could not be made accountable for their deeds (Leibowitz, 1999).

Although there is a clear strong inclination toward the Biblical prohibition against the act of homosexuality and not the homosexual person, more recently there is a strain of modern rabbinic thought that has expanded its focus to address homosexuality as "being" or just identifying as gay or lesbian, and thus a resulting emphasis on changing one's "being" (Halbetail & Koren, 2006). Despite this trend, there is also a growing sense of openness and acceptance of gay and lesbian individuals among the modern Orthodox. This sense lies in understanding human inclinations, which many in the scientific and medical sectors now say are influenced by genetics, and are therefore irreversible. However, there are still many Orthodox scholars that insist that this is not the case, and that gay and lesbian individuals can be made to change (Rifkin, 2010).

In the Ultra-Orthodox community specifically, there's been little movement toward the acceptance of gay and lesbian individuals. There are community leaders,

especially among the Ultra-Orthodox, who fear the influence that gay and lesbian individuals will have on others, and who therefore prefer to banish them not only from participating in religious services and synagogues, but from the community and even their family homes (Rifkin, 2010). One stance was conveyed to Rabbi Steven Greenberg, the first openly gay Orthodox rabbi. Greenberg has dedicated much of his rabbinical career to advocating for Orthodox Jewish gay and lesbian individuals. He continues to publicly express the pain that religious gay and lesbian individuals experience, stating that many gay and lesbian Orthodox individuals have left the community and even some so desperate that they have attempted suicide. Greenberg, conveying this sentiment to another Orthodox rabbi was given the following response: “Maybe it’s a *mitzvah* (good deed/religious obligation) for them to do so. Since gay people are guilty of capital crimes, perhaps it might be a good idea for them to do the job themselves” (Greenberg, 2010, p. 25).

Ariel (2007) describes the “Don’t ask, don’t tell” approach taken on by many Ultra-Orthodox leaders and groups, where they encourage gay and lesbian individuals to remain in the closet and to marry and procreate. Furthermore, the Lubavitcher *Rebbe*, representing one of the largest Hasidic sects, stated that, “despite the misguided way of the past, everyone has the capacity to change.” Many Ultra-Orthodox leaders thus support and encourage conversion and/or reparative therapy whereas other Orthodox leaders, such as Dr. David Mandel, an Orthodox psychiatrist in Jerusalem, have taken the approach that although homosexuality and its associated acts are wrong, “changing people is not relevant” reiterating that the *Torah* prohibits behaviors, not inclinations.

Rabbi Hillel Goldberg bases his approach towards homosexuality on the view of Rabbi Israel Salanter (1810-1883) who stated that unconscious drives differ from one person to the next, but personal responsibility remains universal (Goldberg, 2007). As such, Rabbi Goldberg states that, “people are not robbed of the freedom to choose to undergo therapy empowering them to follow the norm” (Goldberg, 2007, p. 23). He further states that even if the proportion of genetic or biochemical influences contributing to homosexuality for any individual is equal to or greater than the influences of his or her upbringing, there is no reason to believe that the fact would specifically deny the possibility of altering the individual’s sexual preference (Goldberg, 2007).

In addition to Rabbi Goldberg’s view that the individual can change his or her sexual preference, he sees advocating for the rights of gay and lesbian individuals (right to be free of harassment, violence, and prejudice) as driven by advocating for rights for homosexuality, stating “Rights for homosexuals are meant to pave the way for full legitimating of homosexuality” (Goldberg, 2007, p. 25). As such, Rabbi Goldberg further states that discrimination against homosexuals is self-preventable, explaining that unlike race, sexual preference can be hidden, and therefore there is no need for “gay rights” laws. He believes that “self-control, not legal protection, is the solution” (Goldberg, 2007, p. 26).

According to Rabbi Goldberg, “homosexual rights or ordinances are symptomatic of a larger process of social fragmentation that should not be encouraged” (Goldberg, 2007, p. 25). He further states that the “gay synagogue” or “gay church” is disturbing, as a homosexual house of worship creates the religious acceptance of homosexuality. Goldberg concludes that, “the goal is to reject homosexuality but accept the

homosexual,” stating further that inclusiveness is not a matter of accepting a deviant sexual orientation, but of accepting a person (Goldberg, 2007, p. 27).

The rabbinical opinions of Rabbi Broyde and Rabbi Brody appear to be rather mixed in terms of their acceptance of homosexuality and sensitivity toward gay and lesbian individuals. Regarding the act of homosexuality, they state that in all forms it is sinful and despite the argument of nature versus nurture, every person can choose whether or not to act on inclinations, no matter how strong those inclinations may be (Broyde & Brody, 2010). Regarding the individuals themselves, they state that Judaism does not seek to label the individuals as “evildoers” who must be shunned, stating that the Jewish tradition has a longstanding policy of diverse attitudes towards transgressors and only in the rarest circumstances does it mandate excluding people from the community. Furthermore, they state accepting a gay individual within one’s synagogue does not reflect any less commitment to *halacha* than accepting a Sabbath violator or those who do not observe *taharat mishpacha* (the laws of family purity). They also state that there is a clear distinction between recognition and sensitivity vs. acceptance and legitimization and that every Jew must be cared for with respect and sensitivity. Because gay and lesbian individuals within the Orthodox community regularly experience anguish, suppression and depression and sometimes to the extent of self-endangerment, Broyde and Brody (2010) state that these cases deserve the community’s empathy and understanding but not to the point of any compromise in commitment to *halacha*.

Despite this seemingly open view illustrated above, Rabbi Broyde and Rabbi Brody also stand behind not encouraging a coming-out movement of “Homosexual Orthodoxy.” They state that they believe that there are very few actively gay orthodox

Jews existing in the world due to the understanding of the deep philosophical, *halachic* and sociological contradiction of this identity, stating that the non-Orthodox denominations have blatantly misinterpreted the *halachic* tradition. They further state that the significantly threatening aspect of American culture is the importance placed on self-fulfillment, particularly in one's sexual life, which clashes with Jewish law as American values promote exercising personal autonomy toward achieving self-fulfillment (Mark, 2008). The Jewish tradition encourages self-sacrifice and restraint to an extent that secular society deems unreasonable, specifically regarding sexual matters (Broyde & Brody, 2010).

Regarding current Modern Orthodox approaches, in 2009 former Yeshiva University students stood on a panel and relayed their struggles in the community, which resulted in a large amount of criticism and outrage, influencing the president of Yeshiva University and the dean of its rabbinical school to issue a statement on Judaism's "absolute prohibition of homosexual relationships" (Rifkin, 2010). The forum did not address homosexual behaviors or the attitudes of *halacha* toward homosexuality, but merely the oppressive atmosphere that Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals are often forced to endure (Rifkin, 2010).

This controversial, yet monumental forum may have led to the July, 2010 releasing of a statement of principles on homosexuality by Modern Orthodox leaders and educators. For the six months prior to the release of the statement, a number of Orthodox rabbis and educators developed and edited the statement of principles to address the treatment of Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals in the Orthodox community. The original draft was prepared by Rabbi Nathaniel Helfgot and then commented upon and

revised based on the input of Rabbi Aryeh Klapper, Rabbi Yitzchak Blau and dozens of other *Torah* scholars, educators, communal rabbis, mental health professionals, and a number of Orthodox gay individuals (*Statement of Principles*, 2010).

The statement reads that, “Every Jew is obligated to fulfill the entire range of mitzvot between person and person in relation to persons who are homosexual or have feelings of same-sex attraction. Embarrassing, harassing, or demeaning someone with a homosexual orientation or same-sex attraction is a violation of Torah prohibitions that embody the deepest values of Judaism” (*Statement of Principles*, 2010, p. 1).

Furthermore, it reads that the undersigned are “opposed on ethical and moral grounds to both the ‘outing’ of individuals who want to remain private and to coercing those who desire to be open about their orientation to keep it hidden” (*Statement of Principles*, 2010, p. 2). The statement also calls on synagogues and schools to welcome homosexuals, saying that “with regard to gender and lineage, they should participate and count ritually, be eligible for ritual synagogue honors, and generally be treated in the same fashion and under the same *halachic* framework as another member” (*Statement of Principles*, 2010, p. 2). Lastly, it reads that “*Halacha* only prohibits homosexual acts; it does not prohibit orientation or feelings of same-sex attraction” (*Statement of Principles*, 2010, p. 1).

There is an evident move in the more liberal Orthodox circles towards building a more sympathetic and tolerant attitude toward gays and lesbians (Ariel, 2007). At the turn of the twenty-first century, a number of Orthodox scholars and thinkers began to respond favorably to gay demands for reevaluation of the Jewish traditional approach to homosexuality (Ariel, 2007). In 2000, Jacob Milgrom, an Orthodox scholar and author of a study of Leviticus, offered a new interpretation of the passages that prohibit



homosexuality, claiming that Leviticus sets standards for an ideal society in the land of Israel, rather than rules for Jewish behavior worldwide. He states that the underlying message of all of the sexual prohibitions is procreation without a stable family, which would allow for new and alternative approaches towards Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals (Milgrom, 2000).

Rabbi Steven Greenberg, mentioned above, through the exploration of the religious texts, tries to reinterpret to find alternative options for sexual activity that would result in a lesser grave transgression for the individual. Greenberg states that during his time in a gay men's study group, they found through their research that texts that initially seemed to close the door to any type of homosexual activity, actually opened them up (Greenberg, 2004). Greenberg articulates that although it is a fair worry that taking a stand against homophobia might be interpreted as approving of all homosexual behavior, he states that Orthodox clergy have the obligation to protect Jewish gay and lesbian individuals from harm (Greenberg, 2004). As such, Greenberg (2010) stated that Orthodox rabbis should (1) Sign the statement of principles outlined above, (2) Sign and have their Orthodox institution represented on a recent letter, spearheaded by the LGBT advocacy group *Keshet*, condemning bullying and homophobia in the Jewish community, and (3) Must immediately cut off any support or endorsement of "reparative therapy." Greenberg further states that as long as the myth that homosexuality is a pathology to be cured is perpetuated, Orthodox individuals who find that they cannot cure themselves will continue to turn to despair and consider ending their lives.

Like Rabbi Steven Greenberg, Rabbi Shmuley Boteach is another Orthodox advocate for gay and lesbian Orthodox individuals. Boteach (2010) states that rabbinical

authorities and leaders, as well as other Orthodox individuals insist that homosexuality is gravely sinful because the Bible calls it an “abomination.” Rabbi Boteach argues that the word “abomination” appears approximately 122 times in the Bible. He states that eating non-kosher food is an “abomination” (Deuteronomy 14:3), a woman returning to her first husband after being married in the interim is an “abomination” (Deuteronomy 24:4), bringing a blemished sacrifice on G-d’s altar is an abomination (Deuteronomy 17:1), and Proverbs labels envy, lying and gossip as “an abomination to [the Lord]” (Proverbs 3:32, 16:22).

According to Rabbi Boteach, the Ten Commandments were given on two tablets to connote two different types of sins: religious and moral – sins against God (religious) and sins against one’s fellow man (moral). He states that homosexuality is a sin against God (religious), not a moral sin, which involves injury to an innocent party, and therefore the sin of homosexuality is no different than the other “abominations” listed above. Reiterating this point, he states that one who is gay or lesbian is violating two of the commandments: (1) To refrain from male same-sex relationships and (2) For men and women to marry and have children. He states further that Jews dedicated to living a “*Torah* life” have 611 commandments left to work toward fulfilling (Boteach, 2010).

Despite new and open approaches, these remain few and unfamiliar territory (Ariel, 2007). Most Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals are still more familiar with the Biblical and *Talmudic* prohibitions, which have been reiterated by numerous rabbinical authorities and leaders, then with such open and modern thinkers as Jacob Milgrom, Rabbi Steven Greenberg, and Rabbi Shmuley Boteach who have offered *halachic* loopholes for gay men and women to live in peace with themselves (Ariel, 2007). As

these new approaches are few and not readily accepted by most Orthodox leaders and communities, the traditional approaches have led to various irreconcilable problems for lesbian and gay individuals who have been raised in and/or currently identify with Orthodox Judaism.

### **Community and Identity Issues for Orthodox Jewish Gay and Lesbian Individuals**

The expectations for a traditional and specifically heterosexual lifestyle are grounded for Orthodox Jews at birth. At birth, the child is given a blessing that he/she be raised to learn *Torah*, to stand under the *chupah* (marriage canopy) and to practice *maasim tovim* (good deeds). Additionally, Jewish children and adults are constantly blessed to be a source of *nachat* (pride) for their parents, the generations before them, and to the community at large. With this as the expectation, the converse of bringing shame and disappointment to one's family and community is a difficult prospect for gay and lesbian individuals to face. With the culture's lack of emphasis on individuality, an individual's homosexual orientation not only brings shame on the individual but shame on the entire family and community, and for the Ultra-Orthodox sects of Jews may damage the marriage prospects for siblings and even for more distant relatives (Mark, 2008).

In general, within the Orthodox Jewish community, a family with an openly gay member can result in significant adverse impact for the immediate and extended family. The stigma around homosexuality is great within the Orthodox community and thus the impact of its publicity within a family can have lasting damaging effects. This attempt to protect family values ends up resulting in more destruction of actual families (Halbental & Koren, 2006). Furthermore, this adds to the significantly large pressure on the gay or

lesbian individual to conform to the Jewish community norms in order to avoid bringing shame and damage upon the family (Mark, 2008).

The significance and effects of the Holocaust also has a considerable impact on the lives of gay and lesbian Orthodox Jews (Mark, 2008). The mass destruction of Jewish lives and communities that occurred during the Holocaust adds to the immense pressure to ensure genetic survival of the Jewish people. Specifically, due to the massacre of Jewish children, Orthodox Jewish women have been taught the responsibility of bearing several children (Kantrowitz, 1992). As homosexuality does not lead to reproduction, coming out as gay or lesbian can be seen as a rejection to rebuilding the Jewish nation (Mark, 2008). Furthermore, women have historically been devalued in Orthodox Judaism and abide by certain sets of rules due to their biological ability to child bear (Hendricks, 1985), and as such, two of the primary difficulties for lesbian women are the bias towards heterosexual marriage (Cooper, 1989; 1990; Heschel, 1991; Yeskel, 1989) and their feelings of being personally responsible for the survival of the Jewish people (Klepfisz, 1990; Yeskel, 1989). For the above reasons, Jewish lesbians specifically are marginalized within the Jewish community. This leaves Jewish lesbians with the choice of closeting themselves and submitting to the community pressures of heterosexual marriage and childrearing, or coming out as lesbians and being ostracized and not fully accepted as Jews by the Orthodox community (Dworkin, 1997). Rabbi Shmuley Boteach states that he once asked a church clergyman “Why can’t you simply announce to all gay men and women, ‘Come to church. Whatever relationship you’re in, G-d wants you to pray, give charity, and to lead a godly life.’” The clergyman responded that the effect that

homosexuality has is too important to overlook as it is the greatest threat to marriage and family (Boteach, 2010).

In addition to having difficulty with their respective Orthodox communities, Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals are also likely to experience increased isolation and difficulty acclimating to secular gay communities. Their “necessary secrecy” due to communal pressures and stigma and their lack of interaction with the secular world may cause them to have difficulty seeking out the support of secular organizations. Jewish gay congregations tend to be on the liberal or secular side of the Jewish spectrum (Ariel, 2007), and as such, Orthodox Jewish gay and lesbian individuals find themselves with nowhere to turn, being unwelcomed by their Orthodox communities but also being rejected by the secular Jewish gay and lesbian organizations (Ariel, 2007). For example, the Israeli gay liberation movement has identified both culturally and politically with the secular left. The gay society is accepted in Israel as co-fighters for the secular, left-wing population, and as such, Orthodox Israeli gay and lesbian individuals have nowhere to turn because they are not accepted by their religious community or by the secular and left-wing gay community in Israel (Ariel, 2007). Seeking out this support and making oneself vulnerable in joining a new community adds a new layer of stress for those coming out (Mark, 2008).

Bartoli and Gillem (2008) highlight excerpts from the documentary film, *Trembling Before G-d* (Dubowski, 2001), that illustrate one of the many struggles for Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals, the struggle to form an integrated Orthodox Jewish gay or lesbian identity. The film is comprised of intimately-told personal stories of Ultra-Orthodox and Modern Orthodox Jews who are gay or lesbian. The film portrays the

unique personal and universal challenges that these individuals face in reconciling their passionate love of Judaism and G-d with the Biblical prohibitions that forbid homosexuality. “Malkah,” one of the individuals featured in the documentary, is an Orthodox Jewish woman, who struggled to integrate her Orthodox Jewish and lesbian identities. At the beginning of her process, she stated that she felt she could not possibly be both:

I thought for a while “How can I be a religious lesbian? How does that go together?” and I thought for a while “What if I’m not religious?” and it was almost like a physical revulsion, this physical rejection of that thought, like it couldn’t possibly be...It is very unfortunate that we have met a lot of lesbians that feel that there is no option being Orthodox and being gay, and that’s how we felt at the beginning. Truthfully, that’s how we felt, but we didn’t give up; we have overcome that (pg. 204-05)

Bartoli and Gibbs (2008) state that further along in the process, “Malkah” was able to preserve what was most important for her in both identities, and further state that despite her experiencing many losses (community and family), she found support directly from God and was able to use an Orthodox Jewish religious framework, which she valued greatly, to integrate her two identities.

David’s story is also featured in *Trembling Before G-d* (Dubowski, 2001). David states that while engaged in a 12-year unsuccessful struggle with various forms of conversion therapy, he “used to ask G-d to help to change” him. After realizing that he couldn’t change his sexual orientation, he struggled with the loss related to realizing he

would not have children, something he dreamed of all his life. At this point, he asked G-d to:

...please help me be happy being who I am, being gay and be at peace with it, and that You [G-d] should be pleased with me in this respect...I want to know that I can have a relationship with You [G-d] as a Jew completely, including this part of my being...I don't want to be a "less-than" Jew because I'm gay (pg. 205).

Due to the evident layers and complexity behind both the identity formation and experience of Orthodox Jewish gay and lesbian individuals, Halbertal and Koren (2006) conducted a qualitative study using narrative methodology in order to gain insight into the participants' subjective perspectives of themselves and their experiences as Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals. The themes that emerged from the narratives of the Orthodox gay and lesbian participants were (1) Initial denial to themselves of their gay/lesbian identity, (2) The challenges involved of coming out to family, friends and community and the ramifications and personal responses to those ramifications and attempts to manage them, (3) Internalized homophobia from both mainstream Western culture and from the Jewish approach to homosexuality, and (4) Choice and lack of choice of religious sexual identity. Additionally, two main challenges for Orthodox Jewish gay and lesbian individuals came out from the study; that of a commitment to a tradition that delegitimizes, condemns and punishes homosexuality and the presence of Jewish legal texts and rabbinical rulings, which appear to be the principle mediators of attitude and custom among Orthodox Jews in regards to their approach towards homosexuality and homosexual individuals (Halbertal & Koren, 2006). Many of the participants stated that they approached rabbis either with wanting help to become heterosexual or to live life as

gay or lesbian within the religious framework. Many of the participants stated that they left these meetings with a large sense of guilt, reproach and bizarre methods for curing themselves (Halbertal & Koren, 2006). Although “choice” is debated, almost all participants spoke about themselves as both gay and religious inherently, as if each were “unchosen” parts of them (Halbertal & Koren, 2006). Thus, because of their not seeing change as an option, eventually they were abandoned and alienated from the religious establishment, as illustrated by two of the participants in Halbertal and Koren’s (2006) qualitative study:

It is thought of as if you are tainted. If you transgress the Sabbath then you did a bad deed, but it doesn’t reflect your whole personality. Here, if you did a sexual act it means your whole life, your whole outlook, it means you are secular, it means beginning that slippery slope downhill. I am considered an abomination (p. 53).

It hurts. It just hurts. I am not angry at G-d, I am angrier at society. They have to start looking out for us, what even the halacha will minimally allow. I do not want to go to a counselor. I want to go to a rabbi and say I am gay. But then he will also say, “Just go marry a woman”...Don’t they understand that it is impossible, the world is not built that way? (p. 54)

It is clear that there are a number of community issues and inner struggles that those who identify as both Orthodox and gay or lesbian are likely to face. As was stated earlier in the introduction, the “coming out” process for any gay or lesbian individual can be difficult and is likely to be associated with feelings of guilt and shame. For Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals, their inner struggle with their sexual identity is accompanied



by community expectations, traditions, and values that are said by many to be completely incompatible with homosexuality. As a result, this has led to community hostility, stigma, and homophobic messages, further resulting in pain and suffering on many levels for Orthodox gay and lesbian Jews. Those various areas of struggle are laid out below.

### **Consequences of Community Attitudes toward Orthodox Gay and Lesbian**

#### **Individuals**

Due to the evident pain and suffering endured by Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals, there are core areas of struggle that Orthodox Jewish gay and lesbian individuals bring to treatment and dire consequences that they are likely to face due to Orthodox community norms (Mark, 2008). Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals are likely to present in therapy with internalized homophobia, great pressure to conform to communal norms, fear of grief and loss of relationships, status within families and communities, religiously-based questioning such as feeling abandoned and/or punished by God or feeling anger towards God and the community, and having difficulty forging a new identity and composing a new life (Mark, 2008)

It is important to understand what these individuals have been faced with before seeking out therapy. As stated above, Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals who have turned to a rabbinical authority or community leader for help might have been encouraged to seek out sexual conversion or reparative therapies. Isay (1996) conducted a study analyzing the contributing factors that motivated 10-15% of gay men to enter into a heterosexual marriage. These factors included societal pressures and the craving for “normalcy,” factors that increase the likelihood for Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals to undergo sexual conversion or reparative therapy. Promise of conversion is appealing

to those suffering from low self-esteem, internalized self-hate, and fear of disapproval from others (Mark, 2008). Gay and lesbian individuals are often highly motivated to change so they can remain in their home and community and live a traditional Orthodox Jewish life.

As evidenced above by one of the participants in Halbertal and Koren's (2006) study, rabbis have been known to retract their support and empathy if the suffering individual decides that conversion therapy is not the right choice for them. Because homosexual behaviors are prohibited, rabbis are inclined to view homosexuality as a choice and thus able to be changed. Furthermore, since some people have reported having been "cured" of their homosexuality by reparative therapy, rabbis might believe that those who do not seek reparative therapy are not trying hard enough to live an Orthodox Jewish life. Often the logic that is used is that there would not be a prohibition if it wasn't something that could be controlled (Halbertal & Koren, 2006). As long as reparative therapy is believed to be a legitimate alternative to homosexuality, the burden of change falls upon the gay or lesbian individual and not on the beliefs of the community (Halbertal & Koren, 2006).

It is important to also understand that transmission of HIV, which is often even more closeted by the Orthodox individual than identifying as gay or lesbian, is a significant and fatal result of some of the rabbinical approaches to homosexuality. As homosexuality is not acknowledged and directly addressed, it is likely that infections in the Orthodox community will continue to occur (Mark, 2008). Shame and stigma are two of the forces that helped spread AIDS in the U.S. (Shilts, 1987; Rotello, 1997) and this is perpetuated by some rabbis who advise Orthodox gay males to marry and fulfill their

homosexual desires on the side. This approach can be damaging to the gay individual, the gay individual's partners, and the gay individual's spouse. Sometimes gay individuals dissociate from themselves and are unable to recall any sexual acts, which may have caused them to contract HIV. Orthodox gay males can also be vulnerable to HIV by virtue of the fact that they are not educated about prevention or safe sex measures (Mark, 2008).

The push for engaging in potentially damaging reparative therapy, the spread of HIV, low self-esteem, internalized self-hate, and isolation from others, are just some of the areas of suffering endured by Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals. These areas of pain and suffering, however, have the ability be controlled and changed, as they are based on and perpetuated by community norms, expectations, and hostility. Before change can occur in the Orthodox community, however, an analysis of the attitudes of the Orthodox community toward homosexuality is necessary.

### **Justification of the Present Study**

It is clear that there has been a significant portion of research dedicated to looking at the experiences of Orthodox Jewish gays and lesbians and the associated identity development issues that Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals may face. This said, however, to date, there is a noticeable absence of published research, specifically quantitative, that assesses the multiple dimensions of Orthodox Jewish heterosexual attitudes towards gay and lesbian individuals, and subsequently an absence of research and literature aimed at reducing the evident negative attitudes and existing homophobia in Orthodox Jewish families and communities. The present study is thus an attempt to gain a current and multidimensional understanding of the attitudes held by Orthodox

Jewish heterosexuals toward gay and lesbian individuals. It is my goal to use the collected data and subsequent analysis to inform program development to be used with Orthodox Jewish audiences to address homosexuality in the Orthodox community.

The following chapter includes a description of the inclusion and exclusion criteria for participants, the method of recruitment of participants, the various assessment instruments that will be administered, and the methods of analyses that will be conducted in order to assess the various dimensions of Orthodox Jewish heterosexual attitudes towards homosexuality.

## CHAPTER III

### Methodology

#### **Power Analysis**

To estimate the minimum number of participants needed for the sample, a power analysis was performed using the customary alpha of 0.05, power of 0.80, and an effect size of 0.30 for a Factorial MANOVA analysis with two groups. G\*Power (Faul et al., 2009) was used to perform the power analysis; a determination was made that 128 participants were necessary for this study.

#### **Participants**

The original sample consisted of 429 individuals. Participation was limited to adults (age 18 and over) who identified as Orthodox Jews (Modern Orthodox or Ultra-Orthodox) and also identified as heterosexual. A number of the participants self-identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual and were thus removed from the sample before analysis. Additionally, five multivariate outliers were removed from the sample before analysis, making the final sample 379 individuals. Of the 379 participants, 164 identified as male (43.3%) and 215 identified as female (56.7%). Regarding religious affiliation, 313 participants identified as Modern Orthodox (82.6%) and 66 identified as Ultra-Orthodox (17.4%). Regarding the racial breakdown, the majority of the participants identified as White (96.0%;  $n = 364$ ). The remaining 4.0% of participants identified as Black/African American ( $n = 1$ ), Latino/Hispanic ( $n = 1$ ), Biracial ( $n = 2$ ) and "Other" ( $n = 11$ ). Lastly, with regard to age, 197 (52.0%) participants identified as being between ages 18-35, 167 (44.1%) participants identified as being between ages 36-64 and 15 (3.9%) participants identified as being age 65 or above (see Table 1 below).

Table 1.

*Participant Demographic Characteristics*

	N	% of N
Gender		
Male	164	43.3
Female	215	56.7
Religious Affiliation		
Modern Orthodox	313	82.6
Ultra-Orthodox	66	17.4
Ethnicity		
White/Caucasian	364	96
Black/African American	1	< 1
Hispanic/Latino	1	< 1
Biracial	2	< 1
Other	11	2.9
Age		
18-35	197	52
36-64	167	44.1
65+	15	3.9

*Note.***Measures**

*The Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale, Revised Version (ATLG-R)* is a brief measure of heterosexuals' attitudes toward gay men and women (Herek, 1998).

The scale consists of 20-items that assess affective responses to homosexuality, gay men,

and lesbians. Ten items reference gay men (the ATG subscale) and ten items reference lesbians (ATL subscale). All items are rated on a 9-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*). Herek and McLemore (2011) reported that the ATLG subscales have high levels of internal consistency (i.e., when self-administered,  $\alpha > .85$  with most college student samples and  $\alpha > .80$  with most nonstudent adult samples; for telephone surveys with oral administration to adult samples,  $\alpha > .80$  for 5-item versions and  $\alpha > .70$  for 3-item versions). Test-retest reliability ( $r > .80$ ) has been demonstrated with alternate forms (Herek, 1988, 1994). Scores on the ATLG subscales are reliably correlated with other theoretically relevant constructs (e.g., Herek, 1994, 2009; Herek & Capitanio, 1996, 1999a). Higher scores are associated with high religiosity, lack of interpersonal contact with gay men and lesbians, adherence to traditional gender-role attitudes, belief in a traditional family ideology, and endorsement of policies that discriminate against sexual minorities. In addition, ATG scores are reliably correlated with AIDS-related stigma. The ATLG's discriminant validity also has been established. Members of lesbian and gay organizations scored at the extreme positive end of the range, and nonstudent adults who publicly supported a gay rights ballot measure scored significantly lower on the ATLG than did community residents who publicly opposed the initiative (Herek, 1988, 1994). In the present study, Cronbach's *alphas* for both ATL and ATG subscales was .78.

*The Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Knowledge and Attitudes Scale for Heterosexuals* (LGB-KASH) is a 28-item measure that examines the multidimensionality of attitudes held by heterosexual persons. The LGB-KASH consists of five factors or scales. The first subscale, "Hate," reflects attitudes about avoidance, self-consciousness, hatred, and

violence towards LGB individuals. The second subscale, “Knowledge of LGB History, Symbols, and Community,” reflect basic knowledge about the history, symbols and organizations related to the LGB community. The third subscale, “LGB Civil Rights,” addresses beliefs about the civil rights of LGB individuals with respect to marriage, child rearing, health care, and insurance benefits. The fourth subscale, “Religious Conflict,” contains items addressing conflicting beliefs and ambivalent homonegativity of a religious nature with respect to LGB individuals. Lastly, the fifth subscale, “Internalized Affirmativeness,” contains items that reflect a personalized affirmativeness and a willingness to engage in social activism. All items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very uncharacteristic of me or my views*) to 7 (*very characteristic of me or my views*).

Two-week test-retest reliability estimates for the LGB-KASH subscales were as follows: Knowledge, .85; LGB Civil Rights, .85; Internalized Affirmativeness, .90; Religious Conflict, .77; Hate, .76 (Worthington, Dillon & Becker-Schutte, 2005). Regarding, convergent validity, bivariate correlations were calculated among the LGB-KASH, the Attitudes Towards Lesbian and Gay (ATLG) scale, and the Attitudes Regarding Bisexuality (ARBS) scale (Mohr & Rochlen, 1999) scores to test the relationships between these different measures of attitudes toward LGB individuals. Results indicated significant correlations among the ARBS, ATLG, and LGB-KASH subscales. Religiosity and gender were associated with the LGB-KASH subscales, but age was not. All but one of the bivariate correlations between the LGB-KASH and ATLG subscales were significant and in the expected direction. The pattern of significant correlations between the LGB-KASH and ARBS subscales was less consistent than for



the ATLG. Religious Conflict attitudes were moderately and significantly correlated with all of the subscales of the ATLG and ARBS. Civil Rights attitudes were very strongly associated with the ATL, ATG, and Tolerance subscales of the ARBS for both men and women. Knowledge scores were uncorrelated with all but one (ATL) of the subscales of the ATLG and ARBS. Religious Conflict, Hate, and LGB Civil Rights attitudes were correlated in the expected directions with each of the ATLG and ARBS subscales, with only two exceptions; however, three of these bivariate correlations were not significant. Internalized Affirmativeness attitudes were correlated with both subscales of the ATLG but with only one subscale of the ARBS. In the present study, Cronbach's *alpha* for the "Hate" subscale was .80. and Cronbach's *alpha* for the "Religious Conflict" subscale was .71.

*The Sexual Orientation and Practices Scale (SOAP)* is a scale designed to differentiate between attitudes towards homosexual persons and homosexual behavior. The instrument contains three subscales: (a) attitudes toward single homosexuals who are sexually active, (b) attitudes toward single homosexuals who are celibate, and (c) attitudes toward single heterosexuals who are sexually active. Each subscale contains 5 items that have participants evaluate the target person in a particular context. For example, "I would attend the performance of a person whom I knew was a sexually active homosexual." Participants respond to each item on a 9-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*). Bassett et al. (2005) reported respectable Cronbach's *alphas* for the three subscales ranging from .75 to .84. Bassett et al. (2007) revised the SOAP and found that the Cronbach's *alphas* for the subscales ranged from .79 - .85. Additionally, they found that the intra-scale correlations were all strongly

positive ( $r$ 's ranged from .67 to .80). If participants was rejecting of one stimulus category, then they were rejecting of the other categories as well. The inter-scale correlations with the SOAP subscales showed that people who were more rejecting of Inactive Homosexuals also tended to score high on a measure of Intrinsic Faith ( $r = .51$ ), score high on a measure of Extrinsic-Social Faith ( $r = .35$ ), and score low on a measure of Perspective Taking ( $r = -.33$ ). Furthermore, participants who were more rejecting of Active Homosexuals also tended to score higher on the measures of Intrinsic and Extrinsic-Social Faith [Intrinsic:  $r = .39$ , Extrinsic-Social:  $r = .25$ ] and higher on a measure of Personal Distress ( $r = .29$ ). In the present study, the Cronbach's *alpha* for the celibate homosexual person subscale was .83 and the Cronbach's *alpha* for the sexually active homosexual person subscale was .87.

*The American Jewish Identity Scales* (AJIS) is a 33-item measure developed by Friedlander et al. (2010), composed of two sub-scales that divide Jewish identity into two separate factors, cultural identity and religious identity. 18 items comprise the religious scale, and 15 items comprise the cultural scale. Both subscales are rated on a 4-point scale from 1 (*not at all true of me*) to 4 (*very true of me*). The religious identity scale includes items such as "I observe the Sabbath" and "I study Jewish religious texts," whereas the cultural identity scale includes questions such as "I am proud to be Jewish" and "I feel a strong connection to Israel."

Convergent validity was established for this measure by correlating the items on the scales with other measures that relate to the identified construct. Specifically, the cultural items that were not retained for the scale were those that did not correlate at a minimum of  $r = .40$  when compared to the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure - Revised

(MEIM-R; Phinney & Ong, 2007), which is a scale of generic ethnic group membership, and/or the Jewish American Identity Scale (J-AIS; Zak, 1973), which is a measure of cultural Jewish identity. Religious identity items that were not retained were those that did not correlate at a minimum of  $r = .40$  when compared to scores on the Religious Commitment Inventory – 10 (RCI-10; Worthington et al., 2003), which is a self-report measure of perceived religiosity, and/or reported frequency of attendance at Jewish religious services. After items were discarded, all the retained items were again correlated with the scales. Of the new items, all of which did not meet the criteria were removed. This procedure was repeated until all items on the AJIS met the criterion.

Convergent validity was further tested for the cultural identity scale by correlating its scale score with that of the MEIM-R (Phinney & Ong, 2007), and the J-AIS (Zak, 1973) in addition to the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (CSES; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). The religious identity scale's convergent validity was also further tested by correlating its scale score with that of the RCI-10 (Worthington et al., 2003), reports of perceived religiosity, frequency of attendance at Jewish religious services, and self-identified Jewish denomination.

The results indicated that the cultural identity and religious identity scale scores correlated significantly, and in the expected direction with the tested measures. The cultural identity scale's correlation with the MEIM-R total score and its subscale scores ranged from,  $r(1786) = .59$  to  $.65$ ,  $p < .0001$ . Additionally, strong correlations were evident with the A-JIS  $r(274) = .79$ ,  $p < .0001$  and with the CSES  $r(1786) = .63$ ,  $p < .0001$ . Moreover, significant positive correlations were demonstrated between the religious identity scale and with the RCI-10,  $r(274) = .80$ ,  $p < .0001$ , self-reports of

religiosity,  $r(273) = .73, p < .0001$ , frequency of attendance to religious services,  $r(1729) = .68, p < .0001$ , and religious denomination,  $r(1077) = .65, p < .0001$ . The test-retest reliability for the AJIS is  $r = .89, p < .0001$ , with  $r = .94, p < .0001$  for the religious identity scale, and  $r = .71, p = .003$  for the cultural identity scale (Friedlander et al., 2010). In the present study, the Cronbach's *alpha* for the Religious Jewish Identity subscale was .84, which indicates respectable internal consistency among the items.

### **Design**

The research questions that the researcher aimed to answer were (1) Do Orthodox Jewish heterosexuals' attitudes based on homophobic and homonegative beliefs uniquely predict the general overall attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women held by Orthodox Jewish heterosexuals when Religious Jewish Identity and feelings of religious conflict are controlled for? (2) Do Orthodox Jewish heterosexuals hold different attitudes towards gay men than they do towards lesbian women? (3) Do Orthodox Jewish heterosexuals hold different attitudes towards celibate gay men and lesbian women than they do towards sexually active gay men and lesbian women? (4) What is the effect of Orthodox Jewish heterosexuals' gender (men vs. women) on attitudes toward: (a) Gay men, (b) Lesbian women, (c) Celibate gay men and lesbian women and (d) Sexually active gay men and lesbian women? (5) What is the effect of Orthodox Jewish heterosexuals' religious denomination affiliation (Ultra-Orthodox vs. Modern Orthodox) on attitudes toward: (a) Gay men, (b) Lesbian women, (c) Celibate gay men and lesbian women and (d) Sexually active gay men and lesbian women?

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to measure the strength of Religious Jewish Identity as measured by the AJIS and the "Hate" and "Religious

Conflict” subscales of the LGB-KASH as predictors of general overall attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals as measured by the ATLG-R scale. Paired-samples t-tests were used to measure significant differences between the means of attitudes toward gay men vs. attitudes toward lesbian women, as well as between the means of attitudes toward celibate homosexual individuals vs. attitudes toward sexually active homosexual individuals. Finally, a factorial MANOVA was used to assess the effects of gender (male vs. female) and religious denomination affiliation (Modern Orthodox vs. Ultra-Orthodox) on attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals and attitudes toward celibate and sexually active gay and lesbian individuals as measured by the ATLG-R and SOAP scales. It must be noted that although the AJIS contains two subscales (a religious identity subscale and cultural identity subscale) only items on the religious identity scale were administered to the participants because Religious Jewish Identity is the only predictor from the AJIS that was examined.

### **Procedure**

Once IRB approval was obtained, a solicitation email (Appendix A) was sent to heterosexual Jewish adults using a snowball sampling technique. In this email, potential participants were invited to participate in the study and asked to forward the email to other heterosexual Jewish individuals whom they knew and thought may be interested in participating in the study. Additionally, the letter of solicitation was posted onto many Jewish informal web groups listservs to gain access to a diverse sample of Jewish participants.

In the letter of solicitation, I was explicit regarding the voluntary nature of the study and assured anonymity; I also provided a link to the study survey and a password

enabling participants to access the study survey. Included in the study survey was a demographics measure (Appendix B), and the four questionnaires described above (Appendices C-F).

## CHAPTER IV

### Results

#### **Overview**

The purpose of this study was to assess the various dimensions of the attitudes held by Orthodox Jewish heterosexual individuals toward gay and lesbian individuals. Specifically, the study aimed to assess the impact of gender and religious affiliation on one's attitudes, as well as differences in attitudes toward gay men versus lesbian women and differences in attitudes toward sexually active gay men and lesbian women versus celibate gay men and lesbian women. Lastly, the study aimed to assess the unique contribution of homonegativity and/or homophobia when Religious Jewish Identity and one's feelings of religious conflict were controlled for. This chapter will provide a detailed explanation of how the data was analyzed and will present the findings from each of the tested study hypotheses.

#### **Data Screening**

Using PASW Statistics 18 (SPSS Inc., 2009), the researcher performed data screening for missing values, outliers, and normality. After reverse scoring, variables were created containing items from the measures that were administered to the participants. The data was then screened for outliers. It was determined that there were seven outlying cases for the Attitudes Toward Sexually Active Homosexual Individuals variable and six outlying cases for the "Hate" variable. Log transformations were then conducted for the two aforementioned variables, which reduced the total amount of univariate outliers from 13 to 4 and reduced the skewness for both the Attitudes Toward

Sexually Active Homosexual Individuals and “Hate” variables (see descriptive statistics below). The data was then screened for multivariate outliers. There were five cases with Mahalanobis distances greater than 24.32 (critical value for 7 degrees of freedom). The five cases all were self-identified Ultra-Orthodox males; however, due to the relatively large sample size that remained ( $N = 379$ ), these cases were removed. Assumptions for factorial-MANOVA, paired-samples t-test and hierarchical multiple regression analyses were then tested for. As stated above, due to lack of normality among two of the variables, the variables were log transformed, and thus the results from the present study need to be interpreted with this understanding.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Prior to testing the study hypotheses, descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values, skewness and kurtosis were calculated for each of the primary study variables. Visual inspection of the values indicates that Orthodox Jewish attitudes toward gay men are slightly worse than attitudes toward lesbian women. Orthodox Jewish attitudes toward celibate homosexual individuals are slightly worse than attitudes toward sexually active homosexual individuals (before the log transformation of the sexually active variable). And Orthodox attitudes based on one’s feeling of religious conflict are stronger than attitudes based on homophobic and homonegative beliefs (before the log transformation of the hate variable). Table 2 provides a summary of these descriptive values. As mentioned in the above section, two of the variables were log transformed due to lack of normality. Table 3 provides a summary of the log transformed descriptive values.

Table 2.



*Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness	Kurtosis
AttGay	3.95	1.68	1.00	7.00	0.07	-0.95
AttLesb	3.69	1.62	1.00	7.00	0.20	-0.82
AttCel	2.95	1.96	1.00	9.00	0.93	0.10
AttSexAct	2.40	1.74	1.00	9.00	1.44	1.72
ReligID	3.57	0.40	1.00	4.00	-1.33	2.04
ReligCflet	3.71	1.21	1.00	7.00	-1.12	-0.27
Hate	1.55	0.84	1.00	6.00	2.17	5.59

*Note.* AttGay = Attitudes Toward Gay Men subscale of the ATLG-R scale; AttLesb = Attitudes Toward Lesbians subscale of the ATLG-R scale; AttCel = Attitudes Toward Homosexuals who are Celibate subscale of the SOAP scale; AttSexAct = Attitudes Toward Homosexuals who are Sexually Active subscale of the SOAP scale; ReligID = Religious Identity subscale of the AJIS scale; ReligCflet = Religious Conflict subscale of the LGB-KASH scale; Hate = Hate subscale of the LGB-KASH scale.

Table 3.

*Descriptive Statistics for Log Transformed Variables*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness	Kurtosis
LogAttSexAct	0.49	0.19	0.30	1.00	0.74	-0.63
LogHate	0.39	0.12	0.30	0.85	1.42	1.45

*Note.* LogAttSexAct = Log transformation of the Attitudes Toward Homosexuals who are Sexually Active subscale of the SOAP scale; LogHate = Log transformation of the Hate subscale of the LGB-KASH scale

**Statistical Analysis**

**Hypothesis 1.** The first study hypothesis stated that Orthodox Jewish attitudes based on homophobic and homonegative beliefs would uniquely predict overall attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women when Religious Jewish Identity and feelings of religious conflict were controlled for. As determined by the correlation matrix (see Table

4), all of the variables (Religious Jewish Identity, “Religious Conflict”, and “Hate”) correlate with Attitudes Toward Gay Men and Lesbian Women and therefore were used in the regression model to predict Attitudes Toward Gay Men and Lesbian Women. The “Hate” variable had the strongest correlation with Attitudes Toward Gay and Lesbian Individuals ( $r = .605, p < .01$ ). Religious Jewish Identity and “Religious Conflict” were less strongly and about equally correlated with Attitudes Toward Gay Men and Lesbian Women ( $r = .374, p < .01$ ;  $r = .308, p < .01$ ). Of note, the independent variables were tested for multicollinearity. Tolerance levels were found to be close to 1 and VIF values were less than 10, indicating that the independent variables were unique from one another.

Hierarchical multiple regression was then used to evaluate the relationship between the independent variable “Hate” and the dependent variable Attitudes Toward Lesbian and Gay Individuals, controlling for the impact of Religious Jewish Identity and “Religious Conflict” on Attitudes Toward Lesbian and Gay Individuals. This method of analysis was chosen to separate out the effect of homophobia and homonegativity (“Hate” variable) from the effect of one’s Religious Jewish Identity and feelings of religious conflict on one’s attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals.

First, the overall model with all three predictors entered into the model, was significant,  $F(3, 375) = 106.53, p < .001$  and the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables was 46% ( $R^2 = .46$ ). Additionally, all three predictors appear to make a significant, unique contribution to the model. For the Religious Jewish Identity predictor,  $t = 5.70, p < .001$ , for the “Religious Conflict” predictor,  $t = 4.72, p < .001$ , and for the “Hate” predictor,  $t = 13.51, p < .001$ .

Second, the researcher aimed to test the relationship between the dependent variable and the predictor “Hate” after including the control variables (Religious Jewish Identity and “Religious Conflict”) in the analysis. When the predictor variable “Hate” was added to the model, it contributed to the overall relationship with the dependent variable, Attitudes Toward Gay and Lesbian individuals,  $F(1, 375) = 182.58, p < .001$ . The increase in  $R^2$  by including the predictor variable “Hate” in the analysis was 0.26 (See Table 5). Additionally, the B coefficient for the relationship between the independent variable “Hate” and the dependent variable Attitudes Toward Gay and Lesbian Individuals was 7.35,  $p < .001$  (See Table 6), which implies a direct relationship where higher numeric values for “Hate” (higher levels of homophobia and homonegativity) are associated with higher numeric values for Attitudes Toward Gay and Lesbian Individuals (more negative attitudes). Therefore, hypothesis one stating that homophobic and homonegative beliefs predict Attitudes Toward Gay and Lesbian Individuals when Religious Jewish Identity and feelings of religious conflict are controlled for, was supported. As the “Hate” variable was log transformed, this relationship should be interpreted with this understanding as the variable is non-linear.

Table 4.

*Hypothesis 1: Correlation Matrix*

	ReligID	AttGayLesb	Hate	ReligCflet
ReligID	1.00	0.37**	0.21**	0.20**
AttGayLesb	0.37**	1.00	0.61**	0.31**
Hate	0.21**	0.61**	1.00	0.15**
ReligCflet	0.20**	0.31**	0.15**	1.00

Note. \*\* indicates correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 5.

*Hypothesis 1: Model Summary for Hierarchical Multiple Regression*

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error	Change Statistics				
					R <sup>2</sup> Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig.
1	0.44	0.20	0.19	1.46	0.20	46.20	2	376	.000
2	0.68	0.46	0.46	1.20	0.27	182.58	1	375	.000

Note. Model 1 Predictors: ReligCfct, ReligID; Model 2 Predictors: ReligCfct, ReligID, Hate; Dependent variable: AttGayLesb

Table 6.

*Hypothesis 1: Model Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Coefficients*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	-2.17	0.69			-3.16	.002
ReligID	1.33	0.19	0.33		6.92	.000
ReligCfct	0.33	0.06	0.24		5.19	.000
(Constant)	-3.24	0.57			-5.69	.000
ReligID	0.92	0.16	0.23		5.70	.000
ReligCfct	0.25	0.05	0.18		4.72	.000
Hate	7.35	0.54	0.53		13.51	.000

Note. Dependent Variable: AttGayLesb

**Hypothesis 2.** The second study hypothesis stated that overall, Orthodox Jewish heterosexuals would have more negative attitudes towards lesbian women than they do towards gay men. A paired samples t-test was conducted to test this hypothesis. An initial comparison of the means indicated that attitudes toward gay men were more negative (M

= 3.95, SD = 1.68) than attitudes toward lesbian women ( $M = 3.70$ , SD = 1.62), and the paired samples t-test indicated that the difference between the means was significant,  $t = 8.46$ ,  $p < .001$ . Although the difference between the means was significant, hypothesis two was not supported as the attitudes toward gay men were more negative than the attitudes toward lesbian women, and not vice versa.

**Hypothesis 3.** The third study hypothesis stated that overall, Orthodox Jewish heterosexuals would have more negative attitudes towards sexually active gay men and lesbian women than they would toward celibate gay men and lesbian women. A paired samples t-test was conducted to test this hypothesis. An initial comparison of the means indicated that attitudes toward celibate homosexual individuals were more negative ( $M = 2.95$ , SD = 1.96) than the attitudes toward sexually active homosexual individuals ( $M = 2.40$ , SD = 1.74), and the paired samples t-test indicated that the difference between the means was significant,  $t = 7.92$ ,  $p < .001$ . Although the difference between the means was significant, hypothesis three was not supported as the attitudes toward celibate homosexual individuals were more negative than the attitudes toward sexually active homosexual individuals and not vice versa.

**Hypotheses 4 and 5.** The fourth study hypothesis stated that Orthodox heterosexual men would have more negative attitudes than Orthodox heterosexual women towards: (a) Gay men, (b) Lesbian women, (c) Celibate gay men and lesbian women, and (d) Sexually active gay men and lesbian women. The fifth study hypothesis stated that Ultra-Orthodox heterosexuals would have more negative attitudes than Modern Orthodox heterosexuals towards: (a) Gay men, (b) Lesbian women, (c) Celibate gay men and lesbian women, and (d) Sexually active gay men and lesbian women.

A factorial MANOVA was conducted to determine the impact of both gender (male vs. female) and religious affiliation (Modern Orthodox vs. Ultra-Orthodox) on the four dependent variables (attitudes toward gay men, attitudes toward lesbian women, attitudes toward celibate gay men and lesbian women, and attitudes toward sexually active gay men and lesbian women). Results revealed a significant multivariate main effect for religious affiliation, Wilks'  $\lambda = .834$ ,  $F(4, 372) = 18.472$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial eta squared = .166. Meaning, 16% of the variance among the four dependent measures can be attributed to religious denomination affiliation, thus, confirming hypothesis five. There was, however, no significant multivariate main effect for gender, thus not supporting hypothesis four. Of note, Box's  $M$  test was significant,  $p < .001$ , which means that there are significant differences among the regions in the covariance matrices. However, because the power to detect the main effect was high (1.000) and the researcher used a strict confidence interval of .0125 (see below), the risk of making a Type I error was minimal.

Given the significance of the overall test (for religious denomination affiliation), the univariate main effect for religious denomination affiliation was examined by conducting one-way ANOVAs on each of the dependent variables. Using the Bonferroni method, each ANOVA was tested at the .0125 level. Significant univariate main effects for religious affiliation were obtained for all four dependent measures. Specifically, the ANOVA for attitudes toward gay men was significant,  $F(3, 375) = 40.989$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial eta square = .099, power = 1.000. The ANOVA for attitudes toward lesbian women was significant,  $F(3, 375) = 40.996$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial eta square = .099, power = 1.000. The ANOVA for attitudes toward celibate homosexual individuals was significant,  $F(3,$

375) = 39.033,  $p < .001$ , partial eta square = .094, power = 1.000. And the ANOVA for attitudes toward sexually active homosexual individuals (log transformed) was significant,  $F(3, 375) = 70.312$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial eta square = .158, power = 1.000 (See Table 7). Post-hoc pair-wise comparison tests were not performed for the main effect as there were only two religious affiliation groups (Modern-Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox) that were compared.

The mean differences between Ultra-Orthodox and Modern Orthodox groups on the four dependent variables highlights the specifics of the significant impact of religious affiliation on the four dependent variables. On the first dependent variable (Attitudes Toward Gay Men), the mean for the Modern Orthodox group ( $N = 313$ ) was 3.70 ( $SD = 1.62$ ) and the mean for the Ultra-Orthodox group ( $N = 66$ ) was 5.13 ( $SD = 1.45$ ). On the second dependent variable (Attitudes Toward Lesbian Women), the mean for the Modern Orthodox group was 3.45 ( $SD = 1.54$ ) and the mean for the Ultra-Orthodox group was 4.83 ( $SD = 1.49$ ). On the third dependent variable (Attitudes Toward Celibate Homosexual Individuals), the mean for the Modern Orthodox group was 2.66 ( $SD = 1.79$ ) and the mean for the Ultra-Orthodox group is 4.29 ( $SD = 2.18$ ). Lastly, on the fourth dependent (log transformed) variable (Attitudes Toward Sexually Active Homosexual Individuals) the mean for the Modern-Orthodox group was 0.45 ( $SD = 0.17$ ) and the mean for the Ultra-Orthodox group was 0.65 ( $SD = .19$ ). Higher means for the Ultra-Orthodox group across the four variables indicate more negative attitudes than among the Modern Orthodox group on each of the variables (See Table 8).

Table 7.

*Hypothesis 4 and 5: Factorial MANOVA Between-Subjects Effects*

	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender	AttGay	13.26	1	13.26	5.43	.020	0.01
	AttLesb	8.14	1	8.14	3.52	.061	0.01
	AttCel	10.47	1	10.47	3.04	.082	0.01
	AttSexAct (log)	0.03	1	0.03	0.99	.321	0.00
Religious Affiliation	AttGay	100.10	1	100.10	40.99	.000	0.10
	AttLesb	94.72	1	94.72	41.00	.000	0.10
	AttCel	134.65	1	134.65	39.03	.000	0.09
	AttSexAct (log)	2.17	1	2.17	70.31	.000	0.16

*Note. Sig. level with bonferonni correction:  $p < .0125$*

Table 8.

*Hypothesis 5: Factorial MANOVA Descriptive Statistics*

	Religious Affiliation	M	SD	N
AttGay	Modern Orthodox	3.70	1.62	313
	Ultra-Orthodox	5.13	1.45	66
AttLesb	Modern Orthodox	3.45	1.54	313
	Ultra-Orthodox	4.83	1.49	66
AttCel	Modern Orthodox	2.66	1.79	313
	Ultra-Orthodox	4.29	2.18	66
AttSexAct (log)	Modern Orthodox	0.45	0.17	313
	Ultra-Orthodox	0.65	0.19	66

*Note.*



## CHAPTER V

### Discussion

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, results are interpreted in light of the research questions and individual hypotheses and will be discussed alongside relevant literature. Next, I will discuss the clinical implications of the research findings, followed by a discussion of the limitations of the present study and directions for future research.

#### **Interpretation of Results**

*Hypothesis 1.* In addition to the Biblical prohibition against homosexuality, evidence of homophobia and homonegativity in the Orthodox Jewish community was the basis for the first research question and hypothesis that posited that homophobic and homonegative beliefs (“Hate” variable) would uniquely predict Orthodox Jewish attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women when Religious Jewish Identity and feelings of religious conflict (“Religious Conflict” variable) were controlled for; results from the present study supported this hypothesis, and thus highlight the legitimacy of the feelings and claims made by many Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals who state that rather than the religious prohibition against homosexuality, it is Orthodox Jewish community expectations, traditions, and values that are incompatible with an alternative lifestyle like homosexuality, that has led to community hostility, stigma and homophobic messages.

Despite these claims, many Orthodox rabbis, as well as community members, continue to state that the Biblical and *Talmudic* commentaries are explicit regarding the prohibition of both gay and lesbian sexual acts of all types (Ariel, 2007), and it is these laws and commentaries that are the sole basis for viewing a homosexual lifestyle as

unacceptable. The present study's findings evidence that the issue is more complex than a simple, explicit religious prohibition, and provide further support for the notion that homophobic and homonegative feelings are strong sources that drive negative attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals within the Orthodox Jewish community.

Although these findings confirm the current and significant presence of homophobia and homonegativity within the Orthodox community, there have been recent efforts among many Modern Orthodox rabbinic leaders to advocate for acceptance and tolerance of gay and lesbian individuals within Orthodox synagogues and communities (i.e., The Yeshiva University Panel (2009) and Statement of Principles on Homosexuality (2010)); these efforts provide reason to be optimistic about attitudes within the Modern Orthodox community improving in the future. Additionally, among the Modern Orthodox sample, the overall means on the various attitude measures (Attitudes Toward Gay Men, Attitudes Toward Lesbian Women, Attitudes Toward Celibate Homosexual Persons, and Attitudes Toward Sexually Active Homosexual Persons), tended to center around 2 ("Uncharacteristic of my Views"/ "Disagree") and 3 ("Somewhat Uncharacteristic of my Views"/ "Somewhat Disagree") on the Likert scales of the respective measures. As such, it appears that among the sample of Modern Orthodox Jews, attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals were overall more positive than negative.

***Hypothesis 2.*** Based on the literature, it was clear that most of the extant research on attitudes toward homosexuality was only generalizable to Christian populations. Specifically, among Christian samples, studies consistently found that attitudes toward gay men were more negative than attitudes toward lesbian women (Capitanio, 1999; Kite & Whitley, 1996). This led to the posited research question, which asked whether there

were differences between attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women among the Orthodox Jewish population. As stated above, although among Christians, attitudes tend to be worse toward gay men than toward lesbian women, opposite claims have been made with regard to Orthodox Jews; specifically, heterosexual attitudes toward lesbian women have been viewed as worse than heterosexual attitudes toward gay men (Dworkin, 1997; Mark, 2008). This claim is based on the notion that within Orthodox communities, women have traditionally been placed in a role that is secondary to men (Dworkin, 1997). According to Dworkin (1997), many Orthodox lesbian women argue that because they are already considered “less than” in the Orthodox community, their identifying as lesbian has decreased their status as an individual even further.

Furthermore, as the primary role for Orthodox Jewish women is to raise children, one of the more problematic issues for lesbian women is the bias towards heterosexual marriage (Cooper, 1989; 1990; Heschel, 1991; Yeskel, 1989) and the fact that a woman is not considered a full adult within the Orthodox community until she has children. Despite the sentiment that attitudes among the Orthodox community would be different from those among Christian populations in that they would be more negative toward lesbian women than gay men, hypothesis two was not supported. Rather, the results of the present study are consistent with the findings from research conducted with Christian populations, that attitudes toward gay men are worse than toward lesbian women. These findings do not necessarily imply that the above claims about lesbian women within the Orthodox community are not valid, but rather shed light onto the feelings that Orthodox individuals may have about gay men within the Orthodox community. One possible explanation for this finding may be due to the more prominent role that men play in an Orthodox

community, whereas in many Orthodox communities, women tend to be “behind the scenes”. For example, there may be more public controversy and debate with regard to Orthodox gay men as there is often debate as to whether they should be allowed to participate and take on specific roles in religious services. These arguments and debates are not relevant to either heterosexual or homosexual women. Additionally, the current findings support a statistical significance; however, the practical significance may not be so pronounced due to the small difference on the scale in question. Furthermore, as stated earlier, among the Modern Orthodox sample, the means for both subscales (Attitudes Toward Gay Men and Attitudes Toward Lesbian Women) were relatively low and centered around the “Somewhat Uncharacteristic of My Views” category on the Likert scales. Meaning, attitudes toward both gay men and lesbian women were overall positive among the Modern Orthodox Jewish sample.

***Hypothesis 3.*** In addition to the gender of the homosexual individual as discussed above, research with Christian populations has also shown differences in attitudes based on the differentiation between the homosexual person and homosexual behavior; this was the basis for research question three, which asked whether there were differences between Orthodox Jewish attitudes toward celibate homosexual individuals and sexually active homosexual individuals. As stated earlier in the introduction, within many conservative Christian groups, the distinction is often made between the homosexual person and homosexual behavior (“love the sinner, hate the sin”), with strongly identifying Christians reporting more positive attitudes and behavior toward celibate gay men than toward sexually active gay men (Bassett et al., 2002, 2003, 2005; Fulton et al., 1999). Additionally, Wilkinson and Roys (2005) found that among Christians, gay men

and lesbian women were rated more negative when they were described as engaging in sexual behavior than when they were only having sexual fantasies or homoerotic feelings. Although not studied with an Orthodox Jewish population until presently, the distinction between the homosexual person and the sexual behavior is supported by Jewish theology where all persons are created and valued by G-d (Bassett, et al., 2000). Furthermore, similar claims have been made by Orthodox Jewish community leaders and members. Specifically, as stated in Chapter I, Orthodox opinions generated from the 1960s through the 1990s were accepting of gay and lesbian individuals in their rulings, stating that the individual should not be punished, persecuted, or excommunicated from his or her community (Ariel, 2007). Furthermore, they stated that although the Jewish law could not be changed to make homosexuality acceptable, gay and lesbian individuals were members of the Jewish community (Ariel, 2007) and should be treated as such. Based on these opinions, hypothesis three of the present study posited that Orthodox Jewish attitudes toward celibate homosexual individuals would be less negative than attitudes toward sexually active homosexual individuals; this hypothesis was not supported. Rather, results indicated that Orthodox Jewish attitudes toward celibate homosexual individuals were actually worse than attitudes toward sexually active homosexual individuals. Although the difference between the means was statistically significant, the actual difference was slight and may imply that the distinction between the person and the behavior is no longer as important as it was 20-50 years ago. In fact, according to Halbertal and Koren (2006), more recently there is a strain of modern rabbinic thought that has expanded its focus to address homosexuality as "being" (i.e., simply just identifying as gay or lesbian) and an emphasis on changing one's "being", insisting that

gay and lesbian individuals can be made to change (Rifkin, 2010). The results of the present study, which illustrate that attitudes toward celibate homosexual individuals are worse than attitudes toward sexually active homosexual individuals (the opposite of what was expected) supports the notion highlighted above, that among some circles of Orthodox Jews there is an emphasis on changing one's sexual orientation as opposed to maintaining one's identity while refraining from the forbidden sexual behavior. And it is this frame of mind that may be responsible for Orthodox heterosexuals not displaying more positive attitudes toward celibate homosexual individuals over sexually active homosexual individuals.

***Hypothesis 4.*** In addition to differences in attitudes based on the gender of the homosexual individual, previous research also supports the notion of differences between heterosexual men and heterosexual women in their attitudes toward homosexuality. For example, ample research has pointed to heterosexual men as being more homophobic than heterosexual women (Berkman & Zinberg, 1997; Eagly, Diekmann, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Koenig, 2004; Whitley & Kite, 1995). Similar to the previous two hypotheses, this hypothesis was posited as previous research has been mostly conducted with the general population. As such, the present study aimed to see if similar patterns were detected within the Orthodox Jewish population. Despite more negative attitudes among heterosexual men within the general population, there were no apparent differences between the attitudes held by heterosexual men and the attitudes held by heterosexual women among the Orthodox Jewish population. As stated in Chapter III, there was no significant main effect for gender among attitudes toward lesbian women, gay men, sexually active homosexual persons and celibate homosexual persons. Although

these results are not consistent with research conducted with the general population, they provide support for the notion that the effect of religion as a predictor of homophobia may even be more important than gender differences (Herek, 2004), which is further supported by the results for research question five (see below).

***Hypothesis 5.*** Similar to the range of views and attitudes toward homosexuality across Christian and Muslim groups, the same phenomenon exists across Jewish groups as well. As stated in Chapter I, the Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative and Orthodox approaches toward homosexuality are clearly different from one another. However, until presently, differences within the Orthodox denomination itself have not been empirically studied. The hypothesis that religious denomination affiliation would have a significant effect on attitudes toward gay men, lesbian women, sexually active homosexual persons and celibate homosexual persons, was based on the literature that Ultra-Orthodox and Modern Orthodox groups within the umbrella of Orthodoxy have approached the issue of homosexuality differently. The results of the present study supported hypothesis five; more positive attitudes were found among Modern Orthodox Jewish individuals and more negative attitudes were found among Ultra-Orthodox Jewish individuals. These results are consistent with the current literature, which describes an evident move in the more liberal Orthodox circles towards building a more sympathetic and tolerant attitude toward gay and lesbian individuals (Ariel, 2007). In fact, at the turn of the twenty-first century, a number of Orthodox scholars and thinkers began to respond favorably to the demands made by Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals for the reevaluation of the Jewish traditional approach to homosexuality (Ariel, 2007). In contrast (and also consistent with the results of the present study), within the Ultra-

Orthodox community, there has been little movement toward the acceptance of gay and lesbian individuals. Specifically, there are community leaders among the Ultra-Orthodox who fear the influence that gay and lesbian individuals will have on others, and who therefore prefer to banish them not only from participating in religious services and synagogues, but from the community and even their family homes (Rifkin, 2010). Furthermore, Ariel (2007) describes the “Don’t ask, don’t tell” approach taken on by many Ultra-Orthodox leaders and groups, where they encourage gay and lesbian individuals to remain in the closet and to marry and procreate or to seek out conversion and/or reparative therapy. The results of the present study highlight the stark differences between the two affiliations within the Orthodox umbrella and demonstrate the importance of addressing sub-group differences when conducting research with Jewish individuals. Meaning, it is clearly vital to obtain a representative sample of each of the various sub-groups as there are clear differences between their respective values and belief systems.

### **Clinical Implications**

As stated in the introduction, according to Herek (2004), the ultimate aim of research in the area of homophobia and conservative religion is for all hostility and oppression based on sexual orientation to be eliminated. Specifically, according to Rosik (2007), interventions sensitive toward a group’s moral and religiously based framework is likely to be more effective in reducing homophobia than to invalidate conservatively religious normative assumptions, as this latter strategy often results in an intensification of negative attitudes, homophobia, and anti-homosexual backlash. As such, the current study aimed to obtain a deeper and empirically-based understanding of the perspectives



of Orthodox Jews toward homosexuality with the ultimate goal of developing outreach programming that incorporates these perspectives. With this goal in mind, it is first important to note that overall, the attitudes toward both gay and lesbian individuals as well as both sexually active and celibate homosexual individuals were more positive among the Modern Orthodox sample than the Ultra-Orthodox sample. As stated earlier, the majority of the means among the Modern Orthodox Jewish group varied between 2 (“Uncharacteristic of my Views”/ “Disagree”) and 3 (“Somewhat Uncharacteristic of my Views”/ “Somewhat Disagree”) on the Likert scales of the various measures. The means among the Ultra-Orthodox population were less positive, varying between 4 (Neither Characteristic or Uncharacteristic of my Views”/ “Neither Agree or Disagree”) and 5 (“Slightly Characteristic of my Views”/ “Somewhat Agree”) on the Likert scales of the various measures. On all scales, lower numbers are indicative of more positive attitudes and higher numbers are indicative of more negative attitudes. With regard to the Modern Orthodox group, although the lower means imply that attitudes toward homosexual individuals are more positive than what was predicted (and therefore interventions to decrease negative attitudes and homophobia may not be necessary), it is important to consider that this sample was self-selected (discussed in more detail below in the “Limitations” section), and as such, the results may not be reflective of the Modern Orthodox Jewish population. The self-selected sample is also problematic for making conclusions about the Ultra-Orthodox population, as many sects of Ultra-Orthodox Jews do not use the internet, which likely limited the sample and its generalizability. Furthermore, as Ultra-Orthodox Jews value their insular community, gaining access to this population was difficult due to the “outsider” status of the researcher, and thus a true

generalizable sample of Ultra-Orthodox Jews may not have been obtained. However, the significantly worse attitudes among the Ultra-Orthodox sample highlight the importance of targeting interventions toward the Ultra-Orthodox population specifically. In being mindful of the values and belief system of this specific group, it is important to consult with a rabbinical leader within the community and possibly design and deliver an intervention as a unified force to demonstrate the value and legitimacy of such an intervention. In addition, the results of the present study validate the feelings and thoughts described by many Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals that it is a homophobic belief system more so than one's religious belief system that drive attitudes toward homosexuality. As such, in addition to targeting interventions toward the Ultra-Orthodox population, it is important to acknowledge that it is not simply one's set of religious beliefs and values, but also homophobia and homonegativity, that play a significant role in maintaining Orthodox Jewish community attitudes. Therefore, congruent with the approach of Rosik et al. (2007), in designing an intervention for this group of Jews who steadfastly adhere to the religious law, utilizing Biblical and *Talmudic* passages emphasizing kindness, patience, humility, love and self-control may be effective if incorporated into the intervention. As stated in Chapter II, it has been shown among other conservative religious groups that such an approach is successful in decreasing disrespect, verbal hostility, and other behavioral displays of homonegativity among its members, at least in the short-term.

Of note, with regard to developing interventions based on gender differences, as stated earlier, there was not a significant main effect for gender (for the heterosexual person), and therefore interventions should equally be targeted toward both heterosexual

men and heterosexual women as one group does not significantly feel better or worse than the other toward homosexual individuals. With regard to the gender of the homosexual individual, despite the prediction that attitudes toward lesbian women would be worse among the Orthodox Jewish population (due to the already “lower” status of women within the Orthodox community), similar to the general population, attitudes were more negative toward gay men among the Orthodox Jewish population. Therefore, although the feelings of both gay men and lesbian women should be addressed in an Orthodox specific intervention, a slight emphasis on gay men may be warranted due to the slightly more negative attitudes toward gay men than toward lesbian women evident in the Orthodox Jewish community.

### **Limitations of the Present Study**

It is important to interpret the study findings in light of several limitations. Perhaps the most significant limitation is the on-line survey methodology used to obtain participants. Although the Internet has been a profound asset for research on rare and marginalized populations that might have otherwise gone unstudied (Koch & Emry, 2001), participants obtained through an anonymous Internet survey are self-selected and thus results are not necessarily generalizable to the population. Self-selection bias, also termed sample-selection bias, refers to this issue of sample representativeness and sample generalizability (Braver & Bay, 1992). The problem of bias often arises when researching populations that are difficult to find or recruit (Koch & Emry, 2001), such as the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter (homosexuality) and the “outsider” status of the researcher (a Modern Orthodox Jew), recruiting Ultra-Orthodox participants for the present study was a difficult task. In

addition, as stated earlier, internet usage is uncommon and discouraged among many subgroups within the Ultra-Orthodox community, which undoubtedly also affected the researcher's ability to obtain a representative sample. Furthermore, even among those who use the internet, lack of knowledge of the internet as well as a lack of trust in the ability of the researcher to ensure confidentiality may have also deterred many individuals from this group from participating in the study. As a result, those who did participate may have represented a more open-minded or "modern" group within the Ultra-Orthodox community and the results may be more representative of the specific sample rather than the population at large. Also of note, the sample size of the Ultra-Orthodox sample ( $N = 66$ ) was significantly smaller than the Modern-Orthodox sample ( $N = 313$ ). Although the Ultra-Orthodox sample was large enough to provide analyzable data, by virtue of its size, the sample may not be representative of the Ultra-Orthodox population at large.

In addition to the evident issues arising from the Ultra-Orthodox sample size, the researcher received feedback from participants indicating that the set of questions felt limiting, further stating that they could have better articulated their feelings and thoughts through a qualitative, open-ended format. As a result, it is possible that the data does not fully encompass people's attitudes with regard to the subject, which for many are likely complex. In addition to the limitations posed by the questions, some participants felt that the demographic section was limiting as well. Specifically, some participants stated feeling uncomfortable labeling themselves either Modern-Orthodox or Ultra-Orthodox as they did not see these terms as representative of their identity as Jews. In addition, the demographic section did not ask participants whether they converted to Judaism from

another religion or whether they identified as a *Baal Teshuva*, which refers to a Jew who was not raised Orthodox, but embraced Orthodox Judaism later in life. Those who converted to Judaism or those Jews who were not raised Orthodox may have been raised with a set of values that continue to affect their view toward homosexuality. With regard to *Baalei Teshuva* specifically, as new embracers of an Orthodox lifestyle, these Jews are often said to follow the Jewish law more strictly, which may cause one to have more negative attitudes toward controversial issues like homosexuality, or cause one to accept the prohibition without questioning. It is also possible that some of these individuals were raised in open-minded or more free-thinking environments. As such, despite their newly embraced dedication to Orthodoxy, the values the person was raised with may continue to play a pivotal role in their having more positive attitudes toward homosexuality than their counterparts who were raised in Orthodox Jewish homes and communities.

Lastly, with regard to the data screening, due to the lack of normality among two of the study variables (Attitudes Toward Sexually Active Homosexual Individuals and “Hate” subscales) these variables were log transformed. Although the log transformations improved the normality of the variables, the study findings must be interpreted with this understanding as a result.

### **Future Directions for Research**

The results of the present study provide important and powerful information with regard to the current attitudes held by Orthodox heterosexual individuals toward gay and lesbian individuals. As noted above, the ultimate goal of the present study was to gain a nuanced understanding of the attitudes toward homosexuality so as to be able to use the data to develop interventions to reduce and eliminate homophobia and homonegativity

within Orthodox Jewish communities. As was stated in Chapter II, Bassett et al. (2005) reported improved attitudes toward gay men among Christian students who rejected both celibate and sexually active gay men. Specifically, participants became less rejecting after interventions that promoted the value of homosexual persons while not affirming their sexual behavior. Among Orthodox Jews, the present study highlighted the impact of homophobia on the development and maintenance of people's attitudes, even when their "Religious Conflict" and Religious Jewish Identity were controlled for. The present study also highlighted that attitudes were more negative among Ultra-Orthodox Jews than among Modern Orthodox Jews. It is thus vital for future research in this area to focus on developing interventions targeted specifically towards Ultra-Orthodox communities with the purpose of reducing the evident homophobia and homonegativity that exists within these communities.

In addition to developing population specific interventions, as stated earlier, many of the study participants felt that their attitudes toward homosexuality were not able to be fully articulated with the limited set of questions posed to them. To obtain a richer and deeper understanding of Orthodox Jewish attitudes toward homosexuality, qualitative methodology may be a more effective format for researching this topic in the future, as the feelings and thoughts behind individuals' attitudes clearly go beyond the scope of the measures that were administered to the participants in the present study.

Lastly, as stated earlier, the sample size of the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish sub-group was significantly smaller than the sample size of the Modern Orthodox Jewish sub-group. As a result, future research may focus on studying this sub-group specifically with the

intention of obtaining a larger sample to produce findings more representative of the population.

### **Conclusion**

The results of the present study provide invaluable information with regard to the attitudes held by Orthodox Jewish heterosexual individuals toward gay and lesbian individuals. As the issue of homosexuality is currently one of the most heated debates in the Orthodox Jewish world, these results are instrumental in adding to the extant research that looks at the feelings of Orthodox gay and lesbian individuals. In this vein, the results provide empirical support for the opinions that have been put forth by many among the Orthodox Jewish gay and lesbian population, who state that it is due to cultural fear of a homosexual lifestyle that does not fit within the confines of Orthodoxy that is driving the negative attitudes of many Orthodox Jewish communities. And it is this, and not the religious prohibition against homosexuality alone, that has resulted in their being ostracized and isolated from their respective Orthodox communities. Despite more positive attitudes among the Modern Orthodox sample, the study highlights the significant role that homophobia plays in the current attitudes held by Orthodox individuals toward homosexuality. Furthermore, the present study highlights the importance that research continue with this population on this subject matter, with the intention and hope of ultimately being able to eliminate homophobia within the Orthodox Jewish community, enabling Orthodox Jewish gay and lesbian individuals to live peacefully with both their sexual and religious identities.

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## Appendix A

## Letter of Solicitation

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Rachel Shapiro Safran and I am a doctoral student in Seton Hall University's Counseling Psychology Ph.D. program. As a fellow Orthodox Jew, I am interested in investigating the predictors and nuances of Orthodox Jewish heterosexual attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals, and I would like to invite you to participate in my study. The study consists of a survey that is quick and easy to fill out. I worked very hard to keep this study brief – you can complete it on-line at your own convenience, and it should take no more than **15 minutes** to complete.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and anonymous. The survey will not ask you for any identifying information about you and you are free to withdraw at any time. Additionally, any information gathered from the study will be written about collectively so that no one person's information will be displayed. All data will be kept on a USB flash drive in a locked filing cabinet, which can only be accessed by myself and my academic advisor, Dr. Lewis Schlosser.

If you are at least 18 years old and are willing to participate in this study please click on the following link: <http://asset.tlhc.shu.edu/servlets/asset.AssetSurvey?surveyid=3246> and type in the password "jew" (without the quotation marks) in order to complete survey. Your completing the survey will serve as your consent to participate in the study. The survey will be running between September 2011 and December 2011. If you do choose to participate please visit the website between those dates.

In addition, I would appreciate it if you would forward this e-mail to any other Orthodox Jewish adults whom you know that may also be interested in participating. If you have any questions or concerns about the study please feel free to contact myself or my adviser using the contact information provided below. This study had been approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

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## Appendix B

### Demographic Questionnaire

The following are a few demographic questions that ask you about yourself. Please answer as completely and honestly as possible.

- 1) Age: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Sex: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Race: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Sexual orientation: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) Marital status: \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) Highest level of education attained: \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) Country in which you were born: \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) Affiliation with which you identify: \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Modern Orthodox
  - b. Ultra-Orthodox/*Haredi*
- 9) State in which you reside: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix C

### The Attitudes Toward Lesbian and Gays Scale (ATLG-R)

Please rate on a 1-7 scale to what degree you agree with the following statements with 1

= strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. Sex between two men is just plain wrong.
2. I think male homosexuals are disgusting.
3. Male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in men.
4. Sex between two women is just plain wrong.
5. I think female homosexuals (lesbians) are disgusting.
6. Female homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in women.

## Appendix D

**The Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Knowledge and Attitudes Scale for Heterosexuals  
(LGB-KASH)**

Please rate on a 1-7 scale whether the following statements are characteristic of you or your views with 1 = very uncharacteristic of me or my views and 7 = very characteristic of me or my views.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very uncharacteristic of me or my views			Neither characteristic of me or my views			Very characteristic of me or my views

1. It is important for me to avoid LGB individuals.
2. LGB people deserve the hatred they receive.
3. I would be unsure what to do or say if I met someone who is openly lesbian, gay, or bisexual.
4. I sometimes think about being violent toward LGB people.
5. Hearing about a hate crime against an LGB person would not bother me.
6. I would feel self-conscious greeting a known LGB person in a public place.
7. I am knowledgeable about the history and mission of the PFLAG organization.
8. I am knowledgeable about the significance of the Stonewall Riot to the Gay Liberation Movement.
9. I am familiar with the work of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.
10. I could educate others about the history and symbolism behind the pink triangle.
11. I feel qualified to educate others about how to be affirmative regarding LGB issues.
12. Health benefits should be available equally to same-sex partners as to any other couple.

13. Hospitals should acknowledge same-sex partners equally to any other next of kin.
14. I think marriage should be legal for same-sex couples.
15. It is wrong for courts to make child custody decisions based on a parent's sexual orientation.
16. It is important to teach children positive attitudes toward LGB people.
17. I conceal my negative views toward LGB people when I am with someone who doesn't share my views.
18. I keep my religious views to myself in order to accept LGB people.
19. I try not to let my negative beliefs about homosexuality harm my relationships with LGB people.
20. I have difficulty reconciling my religious views with my interest in being accepting of LGB people.
21. I can accept LGB people even though I condemn their behavior.
22. I conceal my positive attitudes toward LGB people when I am with someone who is homophobic.
23. I have conflicting attitudes or beliefs about LGB people.
24. I have had sexual fantasies about members of my same sex.
25. Feeling attracted to another person of the same sex would not make me uncomfortable.
26. I would display a symbol of gay pride (pink triangle, rainbow, etc.) to show my support of the LGB community.
27. I have close friends who are LGB.
28. I would attend a demonstration to promote LGB civil rights

## Appendix E

### The Sexual Orientation and Practices Scale (SOAP)

Please rate on a 1-9 scale to what degree you agree with the following statements with 1

= strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither agree or disagree		Somewhat Agree		Strongly Agree

1. I would feel uncomfortable being treated by a health professional who was a sexually nonactive homosexual.
2. I would be hesitant to invite a sexually nonactive homosexual to my house.
3. I would be disappointed if my child's teacher was a sexually nonactive homosexual.
4. I would be open to developing a deeper friendship with a sexually nonactive homosexual.
5. I would consider voting for a candidate I knew to be a sexually nonactive homosexual.
6. I would move if I learned that my neighbor was a sexually active homosexual.
7. I would terminate the friendship if I learned that my close friend was a sexually active homosexual.
8. I would be willing to carpool with a sexually active homosexual.
9. I would attend the performance of a person whom I knew was a sexually active homosexual.
10. I would be upset if my spouse became friends with a sexually active homosexual.
11. I would feel nervous being in a group of sexually active heterosexuals.

12. I would feel that I failed as a parent if I learned that my child was a sexually active heterosexual.
13. If given the choice, I would opt out of working with a sexually active heterosexual.
14. I would support a candidate for the local school board even If I knew she/he was a sexually active heterosexual.
15. I would eat at a restaurant even if it was owned by a sexually active heterosexual.



## Appendix F

### American Jewish Identity Scales (AJIS)

Please respond to the following items about your Jewish identity on a 1 to 4 scale, where

1 = not at all true of me and 4 = very true of me.

1	2	3	4
Not at all true of me	Somewhat true of me	Fairly true of me	Very true of me

- 1) \_\_\_\_ I observe the Sabbath.
- 2) \_\_\_\_ I enjoy Jewish literature.
- 3) \_\_\_\_ I deliberately seek out Jewish professionals (health care providers, realtors, etc.)  
or businesses.
- 4) \_\_\_\_ I read Jewish newspapers.
- 5) \_\_\_\_ I am embarrassed, ashamed, or angry when a Jew does something criminal.
- 6) \_\_\_\_ I study Jewish religious texts (e.g., Torah, Talmud, Gemora).
- 7) \_\_\_\_ I try to follow all Jewish commandments in my daily life.
- 8) \_\_\_\_ I am proud to be Jewish.
- 9) \_\_\_\_ I believe in the coming of the Messiah.
- 10) \_\_\_\_ Being ethnically Jewish is more important to me than my nationality.
- 11) \_\_\_\_ I show my Jewish identity to others by the way I dress.
- 12) \_\_\_\_ It is important for me to date or marry a Jew.
- 13) \_\_\_\_ I make contributions to Jewish causes.
- 14) \_\_\_\_ I regularly keep my head covered for religious reasons.
- 15) \_\_\_\_ A member of my household lights candles on the Sabbath.
- 16) \_\_\_\_ I have a mezuzah in my home.

- 17) \_\_\_\_ I know today's date on the Hebrew calendar.
- 18) \_\_\_\_ I listen to Jewish secular music.
- 19) \_\_\_\_ I feel connected to Judaism through my personal ancestors.
- 20) \_\_\_\_ I celebrate all Jewish holidays.
- 21) \_\_\_\_ My sense of being Jewish is constant no matter where I am.
- 22) \_\_\_\_ "Tikkun olam" ("healing the world") is a Jewish value that is important to me.
- 23) \_\_\_\_ I follow the dietary rules of Passover.
- 24) \_\_\_\_ I read Hebrew.
- 25) \_\_\_\_ I keep Kosher.
- 26) \_\_\_\_ I dress in accordance with Jewish religious commandments.
- 27) \_\_\_\_ I feel a strong connection to Israel.
- 28) \_\_\_\_ I am active in a Jewish community center or organization.
- 29) \_\_\_\_ I regularly go to a Mikvah.
- 30) \_\_\_\_ I fast on Yom Kippur.
- 31) \_\_\_\_ I attend Jewish religious services at a temple, synagogue, or shtiebl.
- 32) \_\_\_\_ When in mourning, I observe all Jewish religious rituals.
- 33) \_\_\_\_ I ritually wash my hands before eating bread.