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# The Influence of Intersecting Identities on Acceptance, Disclosure, and Internalized Homonegativity

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THE INFLUENCE OF INTERSECTING IDENTITIES ON ACCEPTANCE,  
DISCLOSURE, AND INTERNALIZED HOMONEGATIVITY

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling Psychology  
Seton Hall University

2012

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**SETON HALL UNIVERSITY**  
**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
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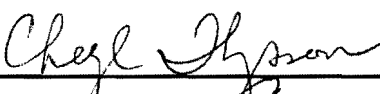
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## ABSTRACT

### THE INFLUENCE OF INTERSECTING IDENTITIES ON ACCEPTANCE, DISCLOSURE, AND INTERNALIZED HOMONEGATIVITY

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of intersecting identities on the levels of acceptance concern, disclosure, and internalized homonegativity experienced by gay and lesbian individuals. The majority of identity research has explored a range of identities, usually in pairs (i.e., sexual orientation and racial/ethnic identity); however, few studies have included religion when examining the intersection of multiple salient identities. Therefore, this study addressed how religious and racial/ethnic identities impact an individual's acceptance concern, level of outness, and her or his level of internalized homonegativity.

Gay and lesbian Christians, Jews, Muslims, and individuals from other religions from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds participated. The results of the study were mixed in that some of the hypotheses were supported whereas other findings were unanticipated. The findings of this study revealed that Jewish participants had lower levels of acceptance concern and internalized homonegativity than Muslims, and Jews had higher levels of outness than Christian and Muslim participants. Further, religious identity had a significant effect on the levels of acceptance concern after controlling for religiosity, whereas the level of internalized homonegativity and outness remained the same. Racial/ethnic identity had a significant effect on the level of internalized homonegativity (greater for the Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American Combined Group in comparison to White participants) after controlling for level of racial/ethnic identity.

The level of religiosity did not impact the participant's level of acceptance concern and unexpectedly, racial/ethnic identity was inversely related to the level of acceptance concern. In addition, higher levels of religiosity impacted the participant's level of internalized homonegativity whereas unexpectedly the level of racial/ethnic identity was inversely related to the level of homonegativity. Lastly, the levels of religiosity unexpectedly had significant and direct relationships to the predicted higher level of outness whereas the level of racial/ethnic identity did not impact the participant's disclosure level.

This was the first study to investigate the influence of intersecting identities on the levels of acceptance concern, disclosure, and internalized homonegativity experienced by gays and lesbians from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds. The implications of this study for practice, research, training, and advocacy were addressed.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Gay and lesbian individuals experience a range of psychological, emotional, and social effects when trying to balance accepting their sexual orientation, coping with internalized homonegativity, and choosing who they want to come out to (Corrigan & Matthews, 2003; Fassinger, 1991; Morris, Waldo, & Rothblum, 2001). In addition, some gay and lesbian individuals also have to negotiate the impact of intersecting identities such as religion or race/ethnicity with their sexual orientation (Chan, 1989; Schnoor, 2006). For instance, gay and lesbian individuals may prioritize their religious or racial/ethnic identity over their sexual orientation depending on community involvement and fear of rejection. However, existing literature on identity development theories and research on integrating identities rarely address the impact of intersecting identities on the experiences of gay and lesbian individuals. In recent years, this gap has begun to fill, as researchers have started to investigate the impact of racial and ethnic identity, gender, and cohort effects on the coming out process (Grov, Bimbi, Nanín, & Parsons, 2006). One area that has not yet been adequately studied, however, is the impact of religious identity, as it combines with other identities to influence the psychological well being of gay and lesbian individuals.

Religion tends to be viewed as a source of stress for gay and lesbian individuals who may experience prejudice from conservative religious communities (Hunsberger, 1996). Religious gay and lesbian individuals may feel estranged from their religious

organizations, could experience higher levels of internalized heterosexism (Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 2009), or may struggle with negotiating their sexual orientation with their religious identity (Schnoor, 2006). In addition, the interaction of racial/ethnic and religious identities could further impact their experience of managing the acceptance of their sexual orientation with the fear of rejection if they come out.

The developers of the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey of 2008 estimated that 84% of Americans are religiously affiliated and 78% of Americans identify as Christian (Pew Forum on Religion, 2010). Ritter and O'Neill (1989) stated that the three options Judeo-Christian religions have traditionally offered gays and lesbians were conversion, celibacy, or false heterosexual relationship; therefore, many gay and lesbian individuals have felt forced to choose between their sexual orientation and their religious identity. However, Buchanan, Dzelme, and Hecker (2001) found that some gay and lesbian individuals may re-negotiate their religious identity, rather than abandoning it in favor of their sexual orientation. For example, they may identify as spiritual as an alternative to being affiliated with an organized religious organization. Further, recent research has demonstrated that, although religion remains a source of stigma for some gay and lesbian individuals as well as their families, it can also be a source of support (Lytle, Foley, & Aster, 2011; Ream, 2001).

DeBlaere, Brewster, Sarkees, and Moradi (2010) stated that the interaction of salient identities such as religion, ethnicity, gender role, and language create culturally diverse experiences within the gay and lesbian community. Because of the combined effects of heterosexism and racism, those of multiple minority status are at risk of psychological outcomes such as depression and low self-esteem. Higher levels of

internalized homonegativity in racial/ethnic communities have resulted in the belief that being a sexual minority is a “White Phenomenon” (Dube & Savin-Williams, 1999; Smith, Foley, & Chaney, 2008), which leaves vulnerable youth without a source of community support. Because of this, sexual minority individuals of color more often try to pass as heterosexual in their community of origin, or may feel pressure to choose between their community and their sexual identity (Smith et al., 2008).

In making such a choice, researchers have suggested that gay and lesbian individuals have to consider the advantages (accepting one’s sexual orientation) and disadvantages (homonegativity) of coming out to the larger community (Dworkin, 1997). In a study of gay Jewish men, Schnoor (2006) found that although some participants classify themselves by their most salient identity, others are in the process of negotiating and integrating their multiple identities. Similar results have been found with samples of racially/ethnically diverse gays and lesbians (Chan, 1989). Further, researchers have found that racial/ethnic identity impacts acceptance, coming out, and internalized homonegativity. An increased acceptance of gay and lesbian individuals and coming out at a younger age are more typical in the White community (Grov et al., 2006; Parks, Hughes, & Matthews, 2004). Fassinger (1991) noted that societal homonegativity influences both heterosexuals as well as gay and lesbian individuals in their perceptions of same-sex relationships; thus, gay and lesbian individuals learn to internalize these homonegative messages.

Although Greene (1997) stated that family support, religious morals, connectedness to ethnic community, and acculturation are aspects that could affect the coming out process, the impact of religion as a component of multiple identities for gays

and lesbians has not yet been supported through empirical study. Greene noted that during the coming out process, gay and lesbian ethnic minorities face losing the social support that provided assistance in managing negative stereotypes from the dominant culture, and at the same time they may feel uncertain about receiving acceptance from the GLB community. Similarly, gay and lesbian individuals whose religious identities are important to them may also have to negotiate their identities within their religious communities. Additional study is needed to determine the combined effects of racial and ethnic identity and sexual minority status.

#### Statement of Problem

While the literature has begun to explore the intersection of racial and ethnic identity with sexual minority identity, few studies have included religion when exploring how identities are integrated, and no research has investigated the overlap of religion and race/ethnicity in relation to how they influence gay and lesbian individuals.

Literature addressing the intersecting areas of religion and gay and lesbian individuals tends to view religion as a source of stress. Hunsberger (1996) reported that Fundamentalists and Conservative denominations of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism have intolerant views of gay and lesbian individuals, but the strength of the correlation varied, with the correlation between fundamentalism and prejudice towards gay and lesbian individuals being stronger for Muslims and Christians than for Jews. According to the contributors of the Pew Forum on Religion (2007), when asked if “homosexuality should be accepted by society,” Christians ranged from 12-69% in agreement, with Protestants averaging 38% and Catholics averaging 58%, 27% of

Muslims agreed, and 88% of Reform Jews, as well as 77% of Conservative Jews were in agreement. Further, Yip (2005) noted that the religious scriptures of Christianity and Islam have been used to condemn homosexuality; whereas, Dode (2004) suggested that Judaism overall has a more open-minded approach in interpreting religious text.

According to Fulton, Gorsuch, and Maynard (1999), the Fundamentalists' bias towards gay and lesbian individuals is often more excessive than religious doctrine. For example, Fulton and colleagues reported that part of the correlation between Fundamentalism and prejudice towards sexually active gays and lesbians could be explained by religious dogma regarding prohibited sexual activity; however, the correlation between Fundamentalism and prejudice towards celibate gay and lesbian individuals cannot be related to religious doctrine and should be viewed as largely due to intolerance. Due to religious stigma, gay and lesbian individuals from conservative denominations may estrange themselves from their religious organizations. In addition, Herek, Gillis, and Cogan (2009) reported that religious sexual minorities (i.e., reported a religious identity, believed in a higher power, or attended religious services) were more likely to internalize heterosexism. Therefore, some gay and lesbian individuals have a dichotomous view of religion and sexual orientation (Lease & Shulman, 2003; Ritter & O'Neill, 1989).

As noted above, race and ethnicity also can affect the identity development of gay and lesbian individuals. Ethnically diverse gay and lesbian individuals may feel societal prejudices from their communities in addition to the society as a whole, and they are therefore less likely than are White gay and lesbian individuals to publicly disclose their sexuality or become activists. Greene (1997) noted that in the Latino, Asian American,

and African American cultures, the acceptance of a gay or lesbian identity often separates the individual from their family or community. Consequently, just as racial/ethnic minority gay or lesbian may hide their identities, they are less inclined to seek support if they have learned that coming out may distance them from their extended family or racial/ethnic community. The negative messages in racial/ethnic minority communities often intersect with strong religious views, often to a greater extent than in the White community (Smith et al., 2008).

The concept of individualistic and collectivistic cultures may further explain the differences between how White and racially/ethnically diverse individuals perceive gay and lesbian individuals. According to Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmekmeir (2002), individualistic cultures tend to value autonomy, Protestant work ethic, an interest in the immediate family, and self-fulfillment whereas, collectivistic cultures view one's identity through a group (e.g., family, religious community, and racial/ethnic community), meeting the group's needs or expectations, shared goals and values, and loyalty to the group. While someone from an individualistic culture may choose to come out based on personal needs, an individual from a collectivistic culture may consider her or his family's honor before disclosing a gay or lesbian identity. Further, in some collectivistic cultures the concept of an individual identity does not exist; therefore, the construct of an individual's sexual orientation may not exist in some cultures (Chan, 1997).

In addition to the factors of religion and race/ethnicity, a number of gays and lesbians must negotiate between the psychological benefits of accepting and disclosing their sexual orientation with internalized homonegativity and giving up heterosexual privileges that come with this hidden identity (Corrigan & Matthews, 2003; Morris et al.,

2001). Corrigan and Matthews examined gay and lesbian identity theory in relation to the advantages and disadvantages of coming out. It was theorized that gays and lesbians who accept their sexual orientation, start to disclose their identities, and take pride in themselves tend to have better mental health; however, it is also important to consider the potential impact of legalized discrimination and stigma on internalized homonegativity. For instance, Rosario, Schrimshaw, Hunter, and Braun (2006) found higher levels of acceptance, disclosure, and positive attitudes towards their sexual orientation with adolescents that were consistently gay or lesbian in comparison to those who transitioned from bisexual to gay or lesbian. These authors suggested that these results may relate to the length of time it could take to integrate and accept one's sexual orientation.

In summary, the existing literature exploring the interaction of religion and race/ethnicity on gay and lesbian individuals is limited; no research has addressed the influence of religion and race/ethnicity identity in regards to acceptance concern, coming out, and internalized homonegativity. While religion and racial/ethnic identity have been examined individually as sources of stigma in the gay and lesbian community; to date, the impact of religiosity and the level of race/ethnicity have been understudied. Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the influence of intersecting identities on acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and disclosure of gay and lesbian sexual orientation. Specifically, the foundation of this research was to investigate the effects of religious identity and racial/ethnic identity on acceptance concern, coming out, and internalized homonegativity experienced by gay and lesbian individuals. In addition, because the influence of both religious and ethnic identity may be affected by the strength



of religious faith or racial/ethnic identification, this study also investigated the level of religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity on these variables.

### Findings and Limitations of Existing Studies and Literature

Although numerous studies have examined how the influence of identity development on gay and lesbian individuals, few have considered the societal impact of religion and race/ethnicity together. Therefore, further research is needed to address these limitations. This section briefly reviews the existing research in the areas of identity development, religion, race/ethnicity, and the variables of acceptance, outness, and internalized homonegativity.

#### *Racial/Ethnic Identity Development*

A number of racial/ethnic identity development models were developed to conceptualize how marginalized groups have evolved past societal discrimination and prejudice to accept their identity. For instance, Cross focused on the experience of Black individuals who evolve through four stages of identity development that begins with identifying with the dominant culture, then accepting their own race/ethnicity and eventually integrating all of their salient identities as well as accepting other marginalized groups (Worrell, Cross, & Vandiver, 2001). Helms (1995) revised her racial/ethnic identity development theory by removing the term stages and replacing it with statuses, since people of color go through a fluid and cyclical process of accepting their identity. In addition, Helms addressed the process White individuals experience in moving from blindly accepting their privilege to developing a positive racial/ethnic identity while

recognizing and fighting against discrimination. Unlike the identity models that focused on race, Phinney (1990) created an ethnic identity model that can be used with multiple racial/ethnic groups. Phinney's ethnic identity development model starts with an unexamined identity, moves towards active exploration, and ends with an achieved identity. Phinney recognized that this process varies based on exposure to education and interaction with individuals who have a positive ethnic identity. During the first stage, unexamined ethnic identity, individuals often align with the dominant culture and internalized negative beliefs about their own culture; however, Phinney (1993) suggested that this does not equate to a preference for the dominant culture. For instance, children may blindly accept their culture based on positive role models and may not actively explore their ethnicity. During the ethnic identity search, the second stage, individuals actively explore their ethnicity through recognizing power and privilege, learning about their culture, and understanding prejudice (Phinney, 1993). The final stage, achieved ethnic identity, individuals accept their identity, are open to other cultures, and concerns regarding minority and dominant groups are resolved (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010).

### *Sexual Orientation Identity Development*

As with racial/ethnic identity development models, over the past thirty years a number of sexual orientation identity development models have been created to conceptualize how gay and lesbian individuals have evolved past societal discrimination and prejudice, with coming out often being included in this process (Worthington, Savoy, Dillon, & Vernaglia, 2002). For instance, Troiden (1979) focused on how gay men

evolve through four stages of identity development that begins with sensitization, the first stage, which refers to when individuals recognize that they are different without understanding why. The second stage, dissociation and signification, is when individuals try to rationalize that they are going through a temporary phase. Coming out, the third stage, refers to when individuals acknowledge their identity and the final stage, commitment, is when individuals accept their identity.

Morales (1990) created an identity development model for gay and lesbian individuals of color, and suggested that they had to prioritize and integrate their salient identities over time. The first stage, denial of conflicts, is when individuals overlook the prejudice they face and they may not identify with their sexual orientation. The second stage, bisexual versus gay/lesbian, refers to ethnic minorities choosing to identify as bisexual rather than gay or lesbian. The next stage, conflicts in allegiances, is when individuals identify with their racial/ethnic identity as well as their sexual orientation, but believes that these identities cannot be integrated. The fourth stage, establishing priorities in allegiances, refers to the emotional distress regarding identifying with race/ethnicity at the cost of rejecting their sexual orientation. The final stage, integrating the various communities, is when individuals become aware of the need to integrate their identities.

Then in 2002, Worthington and colleagues developed a multidimensional heterosexual identity development model that addressed how heterosexual privilege and biopsychosocial factors impact the acceptance of sexual orientation in addition to recognizing privilege, power, and oppression. Unexplored commitment, active exploration, diffusion, deepening and commitment, and synthesis are the statuses

included in the heterosexual identity model. This model begins with an unexplored sexual orientation that is based on family and societal influences, then individuals explore their needs, next they identify with their sexual orientation, and lastly they integrate their salient identities.

The development of sexual orientation has been theorized and researched primarily from the male perspective. For instance, Troiden (1979) and Worthington and colleagues (2002) suggested that individuals experiment with their sexuality before accepting their identity; however, research has started to explore the gender differences with the development of sexual orientation. Savin-Williams and Diamond (2000) examined the gender differences in sexual identity development of sexual minorities. They found that women were more likely than men to identify as bisexual, in regards to attraction men were sexually drawn to individuals; whereas, women were more emotionally attracted. Further, women were more likely to identify their sexual orientation before becoming involved in a physical relationship, while men were more likely to be sexually involved before labeling their sexual orientation.

### *Religion*

Research often shows that gay and lesbian individuals believe that they have to decide between being religious or identify as gay or lesbian, and these individuals may remain celibate if they choose their religion over their sexual orientation. More recently, literature has shown that gay and lesbian individuals do not have to choose, but may attend a gay-affirming religious organization or they may select another faith (Buchanan et al., 2001). Lease, Horne, and Noffsinger-Frazier (2005) found that involvement in

gay-affirming religious groups were negatively correlated to internalized homonegativity and positively associated with psychological health and spirituality. Consequently, these authors proposed that their results support the notion that gay and lesbian individuals do not need to choose between their sexual orientation and their religion. Limitations of this study include the lack of racial/ethnic and religious diversity in the sample; therefore, the results were only generalizable to White gay and lesbian individuals with an affirming faith. Hence, there is a need to explore the interaction of race/ethnicity and religion in regards to integrating sexual orientation with religious identity.

In a study that investigated the relationship between homophobia and conservative Christian religions, Rosik, Griffith, and Cruz (2007) found that stronger religious identities of Christian college students correlated with negative attitudes towards gay and lesbian individuals. Another perspective was offered by Ream (2001), who found that religiously-based homonegative messages received as an adolescent, intrinsic religion, and a sexual minority identity, predicted negative views of religion in sexual minorities. One noted concern was that although the sample was described as religiously and racially/ethnically diverse sexual minorities, actual data were not provided to confirm the diversity of this sample.

### *Race/Ethnicity*

Literature investigating gay and lesbian individuals has focused on the tendency for racial/ethnic sexual minorities to be less likely to receive support from their racial/ethnic communities as well as the notion that having a non-heterosexual orientation is a White experience (Dube & Savin-Williams, 1999; Greene, 1997). Through a

literature review, Lewis (2003) found that the rationale for homophobia varied. Blacks were more likely to hide their non-heterosexual identity through marriage as well as having children, to view AIDS as "God's Punishment," and to condemn sexual minorities. Lewis noted that racial differences influencing homophobia were related to religion and education; Lewis also suggested that, after researchers control for religion and education, Blacks were more likely to oppose anti-gay discrimination. Further, the literature Lewis reviewed stated that Blacks are assumed to be more religious, more likely to be a fundamentalist, and therefore are presupposed to be more homophobic than Whites. However, older, less-educated, religious Whites were found to be more homophobic than Blacks. Finally, Lewis noted that minority gay and lesbian individuals are less apt to seek support from the gay and lesbian community.

Dube and Savin-Williams (1999) found notable differences between ethnicities regarding identity of sexual orientation, family disclosure, and involvement in heterosexual experiences. Ethnic sexual minorities were more likely than Whites to avoid coming out, due to the trepidation of being rejected and perceived homophobia in their community. As with religion, some cultures feel they have to choose between their ethnic identity and identifying as a sexual minority. The development of sexual identity often includes the coming out process, but in Dube and Savin-William's study, less than half of the ethnically diverse sexual minority participants came out to their families. Similarly, Merighi and Grimes (2000) noted that Black, Latino/a, and Asian participants often reported that their culture impeded disclosing their sexual orientation to family members, whereas, White gay or lesbian parents may not feel as inhibited by their culture in coming out to their families.

Oyserman and colleagues (2002) found that in general European Americans tend to be individualistic. However, in comparison to European Americans; African Americans were found to be more individualistic, Asian American were less individualistic, and Latino American did not differ significantly. When evaluated with European Americans, Asian Americans and Latino Americans were more collectivistic and African Americans did not differ significantly. The effect for individualism significantly increased for African Americans over European Americans when uniqueness and competitiveness were considered. According to Oyserman and colleagues, while the construct of individualism has an accepted definition of focusing on the individual over the group, the construct of collectivism varies due to cultural differences of what constitutes as a group (i.e., extended family, religious group, ethnic group, etc.). Further, when a racially/ethnically diverse individual experiences a stressful event such as the coming out process, collectivistic values such as loyalty to one's family or community, group needs, and identifying as a group member may outweigh individualistic tendencies.

#### *Acceptance, Outness, and Internalized Homonegativity*

Research on gay and lesbian identity theory have focused on acceptance, outness, and internalized homonegativity in relation to identity development process. Rosario and colleagues (2006) found that adolescents who continued to identify as gay or lesbian had higher levels of acceptance, disclosure, and positive attitudes towards their sexual orientation than individuals who transitioned from bisexual to gay or lesbian. In a study focused on racial/ethnic differences, Moradi, Wiseman, DeBlaere, Goodman, Sarkees,

Brewster, and Huang (2010) found that LGB people of color and LGB White individuals only differed in their levels of disclosure when age was controlled, with LGB White participants reporting higher levels of disclosure to family members and religious communities than people of color. Although Grov and colleagues (2006) had similar findings, they reported that a significantly greater percentage of White participants were out to their parents than African Americans, Latinos, and Asians.

### Definitions of Terms

*Acceptance Concerns* is defined as the level at which a gay or lesbian individuals are apprehensive about how others view their sexual orientation, and for the purposes of this study acceptance concern was measured by the Need for Acceptance subscale of the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Scale (LGIS, Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). In 2011, Mohr and Kendra revised the LGIS scale; this subscale has been revised and renamed Acceptance Concerns. Further, Mohr and Fassinger (2003) used the Need for Acceptance subscale to measure self-acceptance in a study of attachment and Moradi, van den Berg, and Epting (2009) started referring to the Need for Acceptance subscale as Acceptance Concerns.

*Internalized homonegativity* is defined as a negative perception of one's own sexual orientation. For the purposes of this study, internalized homonegativity was measured by the *Internalized homonegativity* scale of the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Scale (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000).



*Outness* is defined as the extent that gay and lesbian individuals have disclosed their sexual orientation, and for the purposes of this study it was measured by the Outness Inventory (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000).

*Race and ethnicity* are terms that have been used interchangeably and defined as separate constructs. Ethnicity usually refers to one's cultural origin whereas race is a social construct that is usually based on physical characteristics (American Psychological Association, 2002); however, Fouad and Brown (2000) expanded on the definition of ethnicity to include a shared experience within a geographic location that the term culture does not cover. According to Phinney (1996, p. 919), the term ethnicity "is used to refer to broad groupings of Americans on the basis of both race and culture or origin;" however, the psychological impact of categorizing individuals into ethnic groups must be considered. Phinney suggests that due to the meaning associated with ethnicity, diverse racial and ethnic labels should be used for each group (e.g., Black, Caribbean American, and African American). For the purposes of this study, race and ethnicity was determined by an open-ended inquiry regarding the participants' race and ethnicity in the demographic questionnaire, and participants were asked to identify with one of the following racial/ethnic categories that were created by the developers of the 2009 U.S. Census Bureau as described in Chapter III: (a) Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander; (b) Black, African American, or Caribbean American; (c) European American or White; (d) Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin; and (e) Native American. Participants that could not be categorized into one of these five racial/ethnic categories were excluded for analyses of racial/ethnic effects.

*Level of Racial/Ethnic Identity* refers to the extent that an individual associates with her or his cultural heritage in regards to self-categorization, belonging, exploration, behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs associated with that group identity (Phinney & Ong, 2007). For the purpose of this study the level of racial/ethnic identity was measured by the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM, Phinney, 1992).

*Religion* is defined by Lease and colleagues (2005) as “the personal, experiential connection to a higher being and the structured, formal expression of faith” (p. 379), whereas, Hill and Pargament (2008) viewed religion as a fixed belief system that was institutionalized. For the purposes of this study, religion was determined by the following open-ended inquiries on the demographic questionnaire: religious background and current religion. Since the inquiry about religious identity was open-ended, participants were able to identify specific denominations in addition to the broad categories used in the analysis. Based on the participant’s responses, they were categorized into the following four religious faiths: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim, and individuals that do not fit into these three groups were labeled as Other religion.

*Religiosity* is defined as the strength of one’s fixed religious belief system. For the purposes of this study, religiosity was measured by the Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire (SCSRFQ; Plante & Boccaccini, 1997b).

*Sexual Orientation* as defined by the APA as “the emotional, romantic, sexual or affectional attraction to another person that is on a continuum from homosexual to heterosexual,” (American Psychological Association, 2006, p. 1). According to Rust (2003), in the 1970’s the terms gay and lesbian were utilized as positive expressions that differentiated two sexual orientations, and in the 1980’s the term queer was reclaimed by

some sexual minorities as an umbrella term that encompasses gender and sexual identities beyond a dichotomous perspective. Further, recent research has grouped gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) individuals together; however, this practice neglects the individual characteristics that bisexual and transgender individuals may experience (Fassinger & Arseneau, 2006). For instance, Morales (1990) theorized that gay and lesbian individuals of color would identify as bisexual in their process of accepting their gay or lesbian sexual orientation, and according to Grossman and D'Augelli (2009) transgender individuals have to negotiate their racial/ethnic, religious, gender, and sexual identities. This study investigated the intersecting identities that impact acceptance, internalized homonegativity, and the coming out process as experienced by gay and lesbian individuals. Due to the cohort effect of terminology and the concentrated focus of this study, the terms gay and lesbian were used in preference to queer or an umbrella acronym such as GLB or GLBT.

### Research Questions

Given the limitations of the existing research, the following are the specific questions to be evaluated by the present study.

1. What is the effect of the individual's religious identity
  - a. on her or his level of acceptance concern?
  - b. on her or his level of internalized homonegativity?
  - c. on her or his level of outness?
2. What is the effect of the individual's racial/ethnic identity
  - a. on her or his level of acceptance concern?

- b. on her or his level of internalized homonegativity?
  - c. on her or his level of outness?
- 3. What is the combined influence of the individual's level or religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity on her or his level of acceptance concern?
- 4. What is the combined influence of the individual's level or religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity on her or his level of internalized homonegativity?
- 5. What is the combined influence of the individual's level or religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity on her or his level of outness?

### Research Hypotheses

The following are the hypotheses for the present study.

H1. *The individual's religious identity would influence the level of acceptance concern, level of internalized homonegativity, and level of outness.*

- a. Based on research regarding the differences between religions in accepting homosexuality (Pew Forum on Religion, 2007) and literature regarding differences between religions in interpreting religious scripture, it was expected that participants with a Jewish religious identity would have less acceptance concern than Christian or Muslim participants.
- b. Based on research regarding the differences between religions in accepting homosexuality (Pew Forum on Religion, 2007) and literature regarding differences between religions in interpreting religious scripture, it was expected that participants with a Jewish religious identity would have less internalized homonegativity than Christian or Muslim participants.

- c. Based on research regarding the differences between religions in accepting homosexuality (Pew Forum on Religion, 2007) and literature regarding differences between religions in interpreting religious scripture, it was expected that participants with a Jewish religious identity would have higher disclosure levels than Christian or Muslim participants.

H2. *The individual's racial/ethnic identity would influence the level of acceptance concern, level of internalized homonegativity, and level of outness.*

- a. It was expected that the Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American Combined Group would have higher levels of acceptance concern than White participants given that previous literature has reported that in the Latino, Asian American, and African American cultures, the acceptance of a gay or lesbian identity often separates the individual from their family or racial/ethnic community (Greene, 1997).
- b. It was expected that the Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American Combined Group would have higher levels of internalized homonegativity than White participants given that previous literature has reported higher levels of internalized homonegativity in racial/ethnic communities (Dube & Savin-Williams, 1999).
- c. It was expected that the Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American Combined Group would have lower levels of disclosure than White participants given that previous research found that African American women had lower levels of disclosure in comparison to Latina and European Americans (Morris et al., 2002). In addition, previous literature

has suggested that there are higher levels of internalized homonegativity in racial/ethnic communities (Dube & Savin-Williams, 1999) and that an open gay or lesbian identity often separates an individual from her or his family or racial/ethnic community (Greene, 1997).

- H3. *The participants' religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity would influence the level of acceptance concern.* Based on preliminary findings by Hunsberger (1996) that found a correlation between religious conservatism and prejudice toward gay and lesbian individuals and literature suggesting that the negative messages in racial/ethnic minority communities frequently intersect with strong religious views, often to a greater extent than in the White community (Smith et al., 2008). Therefore, it was expected that lower levels of religiosity and racial/ethnic identity would predict lower levels of acceptance concern.
- H4. *The individual's religiosity and racial/ethnic identity would influence her or his level of internalized homonegativity.* Based on preliminary findings by Hunsberger (1996) that found a correlation between religious conservatism and prejudice toward gay and lesbian individuals and literature suggesting that the negative messages in racial/ethnic minority communities frequently intersect with strong religious views, often to a greater extent than in the White community (Smith et al., 2008). It was expected that higher levels of religiosity and racial/ethnic identity would predict a higher levels of internalized homonegativity.
- H5. *The participants' religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity would influence her or his level of outness.* Based on preliminary findings by Hunsberger (1996) that found a correlation between religious conservatism and prejudice toward

gay and lesbian individuals and literature suggesting that the negative messages in racial/ethnic minority communities frequently intersect with strong religious views, often to a greater extent than in the White community (Smith et al., 2008). Therefore, it was expected that higher levels of religiosity and racial/ethnic identity would predict a lower level of disclosure.

### Limitations of Present Study

This study attempted to include individuals from across the United States from a variety of religious and racial/ethnic backgrounds in order to increase the generalizability of these results; however, as described below, potential limitations include variables related to self-selection, religion, race/ethnicity, sample biases, and the self-report nature of the study, particularly given the sensitivity of the topic.

This study may be limited to individuals who attend religious organizations and religions that are more gay and lesbian-affirming since these individuals would be more motivated to participate. As previously noted, fundamentalist and conservative denominations of Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, and Christian religions are more likely to be intolerant towards gay and lesbian individuals; gays and lesbians from more conservative religious organizations may be less likely to participate in this study.

Some cultures that are more collectivistic may not be as willing to participate due to the nature of this study. Collectivistic concerns of shaming the family and identifying more with a group than as an individual may impact the level of participation in some racial/ethnic communities. Greene (1997) described how gay and lesbian individuals of racial/ethnic minority status have to worry about losing family and community support

without knowing whether or not they would be accepted into the larger gay and lesbian community; whereas, White gay and lesbian individuals may not view their culture as much of a barrier as racial/ethnic minorities. Therefore, the results may be less generalizable to those cultures.

This study may also be limited to individuals who may be more involved with the gay and lesbian community, and therefore, could be more compelled to participate. Since participants who are more likely to participate may be involved with gay and lesbian organizations, they may not represent gay and lesbian individuals who have limited their level of disclosure.

As previously mentioned, this study focused on the intersection of identities as they impact gay and lesbian individuals; however, scholars studying the gay and lesbian community have included bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and questioning individuals in their research of gays and lesbians. Fassinger and Arseneau (2006) addressed concerns about overlooking the distinct characteristics of each sexual minority group's experience by categorizing gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals together. Therefore, while bisexual and transgender individuals may struggle with negotiating identities in their disclosure process; future research should explore the unique considerations of transgender individuals independently.



## CHAPTER II

### Review of Related Literature

This chapter provides a critical analysis and summary of the literature relevant to the present study. This chapter is comprised the following six sections: (a) identity development and integration, (b) influence of religion on gay and lesbian identity, (c) influence of race/ethnicity on gay and lesbian identity, (d) acceptance, (e) internalized homonegativity, and (f) outness. In these sections, both the theoretical and empirical rationale are presented for the current study.

#### Identity Development and Integration

Since the 1970's researchers such as Cross and Troiden among many others have addressed the identity development of marginalized groups such as racial/ethnic minorities as well as gays and lesbians (Alexander, 1996; Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999; Troiden, 1979). Many of these models have considered the experience of moving away from assimilating with the privileged majority group towards accepting one's salient identity. Although most of these theories initially focused on one aspect of identity such as race/ethnicity or sexual orientation, revised models have included integrating multiple personal identities as a final step in the process of forming an identity. In addition, few theories have considered the impact of accepting more than one marginalized identity or how religion could impact this process. It wasn't until 1995 when Helms created a White identity development model and in 2002, Worthington and

colleagues created the heterosexual identity development model, that dominant groups were more thoroughly addressed.

Researchers such as Chan (1989), Grov and colleagues (2006), Moradi and colleagues (2010), and Schnoor (2006) have started to examine the negotiation and integration of multiple salient identities, and they have found that individuals may prioritize their identities. For instance, Chan found that gay and lesbian Asian individuals may fluctuate between having a stronger identity with their race or sexual orientation based on the community that they are in. Whereas, Grov and colleagues suggested that racial/ethnic identity development may occur before identifying with a gay or lesbian identity due to societal barriers. This concept may correlate with the fact that having a gay or lesbian sexual orientation is a hidden minority status unlike race/ethnicity.

### *Racial/Ethnic Identity Theory*

According to Helms (1995), racial/ethnic identity theory stems from sociopolitical roots regarding power, privilege, and marginalization. Originally racial/ethnic identity theory focused on the stages individuals transitioned through as they managed prejudice and discrimination, and specifically Helms and Cross originally conceptualized their theories on the experience of Black individuals (Helms; Worrell et al., 2001). Helms reconfigured her theory to address the interactive statuses that people go through as they develop a racial/ethnic identity and included identity development for people of color as well as White individuals. While Cross questioned whether or not integration into a racial/ethnic identity could occur without anti-White sentiments and if the acceptance of

other marginalized groups into a multicultural identity, should be considered (Worrell et al., 2001).

Cross' racial identity theory was among the first developed (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999), and originally included the following stages that included corresponding identities: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment; whereas the revised models were narrowed down to four stages, removing the internalization-commitment stage and the corresponding identities were adjusted (Worrell et al., 2001). Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, and Worrell (2001) reported that the pre-encounter stage originally focused on how Black individuals had pro-White and anti-Black identities due to self-hatred while the 2000 expanded model has the following three identities in the pre-encounter stage: assimilation (i.e., an American identity is more salient than race), miseducation (i.e., internalization of anti-Black views), and self-hatred (i.e., anti-Black or negative views about one's own race). During the encounter stage, individuals chose to become more involved in their racial/ethnic community as well as educating themselves (Phinney, 1990). The immersion-emersion stage has also evolved from the original model of anti-White and pro-Black identities to an expanded version that includes anti-White attitudes (i.e., a response to marginalization) and intense black involvement (i.e., embracing a Black identity, knowledge and enthusiasm about culture, and an emotional reaction to betraying their community) identities (Vandiver et al., 2001). Cross initially developed two stages of internalization: (a) the internalization stage included individuals who accepted their racial/ethnic identity and moved beyond the emotions associated with pro-Black and anti-White identities and (b) people in the internalization-commitment stage were not only

involved in their racial/ethnic community, but were activists. The 2000 model (Vandiver et al., 2001) combined the internalization stages and included more corresponding identities: black nationalist (i.e., empowerment, economically autonomous, and culturally aware), biculturalist (i.e., negotiating a Black and American identities as well as encounter experiences with diverse groups), and multicultural racial (i.e., accepting other salient identities such as gender, religion, sexual orientation, etc. as well as accepting other marginalized groups).

Helms (1995) developed two models of racial identity theory, one for people of color and another for White individuals. The People of Color Racial Identity Ego Statuses and Information Processing Strategies (IPS) model has a lot of overlap with Cross' theory, and includes the following statuses: conformity, dissonance, immersion/emersion, internalization, and integrative. The first status, conformity, aligns people of color with White individuals at the cost of undervaluing their own racial/ethnic identity. The dissonance status refers to the uncertainty of moving away from White culture towards becoming involved with one's own racial/ethnic group. During the immersion/emersion status, individuals become more involved and take pride in their culture while denouncing White culture. The next status is internalization, this is a point where individuals identify with their race/ethnicity and use their identity to make life decisions. Helms also includes an integrative awareness status in which individuals are able to negotiate and accept a variety of salient identities as well as accept and work with other marginalized groups.

Helms (1995) developed a White Racial Ego Statuses and IPS model that includes the following statuses: contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudoindependence,

immersion/emersion, and autonomy. The first status, contact, refers to the unawareness of racism and being content with racial status. Next, the disintegration status is when White individuals start to struggle with the quandary between racial and moral issues. For instance, an individual may recognize when action against racial microaggressions is needed, but this may be at the cost of privilege and group allegiance (Helms, 1995). The third status, reintegration occurs when White individuals romanticize their culture at the cost of prejudice towards other groups. The pseudoindependence status refers to when individuals try to balance their obligation towards White culture and starting to accept other racial/ethnic groups. Immersion/emersion status includes conceptualizing racism, starting to acknowledge White privilege, and working towards activism. The final status is autonomy which refers to a positive racial identity, addressing privilege, and fighting against racism by immersing one's self in other cultures through education, awareness, and interaction.

While Cross and Helms refer to their development models as racial identity theories; Phinney (1990) has created an ethnic identity model. Phinney's theory of ethnic identity formation includes the following three stages: unexamined ethnic identity, ethnic identity search, and achieved ethnic identity. The first stage, unexamined ethnic identity includes individuals who have not had much contact or exposure with race/ethnic concerns. Phinney suggested that this lack of exposure could be caused by unawareness, a lack of interest, or a positive racial/ethnic identity due to a strong community. Ethnic identity search is the second stage and this occurs when individuals actively explore their racial/ethnic identities through education and participation. The final stage, achieved ethnic identity, differs based on ethnic/racial experiences and may include being secure

with one's identity or resolving issues between racial/ethnic minorities and the dominant group. Further, Phinney suggested that the process may not end with achieving an ethnic identity, but it may include continuous examination. French, Seidman, Allen, and Aber (2006) used a longitudinal study to explore ethnic identity development using Phinney's Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure on a sample of 420 African American, European American, and Latino American adolescents. This sample included early adolescents who had a mean age of 12 years and middle adolescents who had a mean age of 14 years; there were 269 girls; and a relatively equal number of racial/ethnic identities between African American ( $n = 147$ ), European American ( $n = 152$ ), and Latino American ( $n = 121$ ) participants. Over a time span of two years, European American adolescents had more esteem for their race/ethnicity than African American or Latino American adolescents, in both age groups. Latino Americans were found to have more esteem in middle adolescents than African Americans. In addition, there was only an increase in exploration (i.e., discussing and learning about race/ethnicity) in middle adolescents.

Seaton, Scottham, and Sellers (2006) investigated identity formation, the progression of ethnic identity, and well-being of African American adolescents across a period of two years. There were 224 participants that ranged from 11 to 17 years in age who were grouped into the following four statuses of ethnic identity development: diffuse, foreclosed, moratorium, and achieved. The diffuse status includes individuals with unexamined identities, and individuals in this group had lower scores on both the exploration and commitment subscales of Phinney's Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. Individuals in the foreclosed status may have developed an identity based on their interpersonal relationships rather than personal exploration, and had lower scores on the

exploration subscale and higher scores on the commitment subscale. The moratorium status includes individuals who are actively examining their identity without commitment, and individuals in this group had higher scores on the exploration subscale and lower commitment scores. Individuals in the achieved status have committed to an identity, and they had higher scores in both the exploration and commitment subscales (Seaton et al., 2006). Thirty-nine percent of the participants stayed in the same status across the duration on the study, 33% advanced to a higher status, and 28% reverted back to a lower status. In addition, individuals in the three highest statuses (foreclosed, moratorium, and achieved) had higher levels of psychological well-being than those in the diffuse group, and those who remained in the same status had higher levels of psychological well-being.

### *Sexual Orientation Identity Theory*

Similar to racial/ethnic identity development models, sexual orientation identity development theories have focused on the experience of gay and lesbian individuals with little attention given to heterosexuals. Although some sexual orientation identity development models have been focused around the coming out process (i.e., Troiden, 1979); other models have considered a more multidimensional perspective (i.e., Morales, 1990). Worthington and colleagues (2002) were the first to develop an identity development model for heterosexuals utilizing a multidimensional approach.

One of the first models of gay and lesbian identity development was created by Troiden (1979), and it included the following stages: sensitization, dissociation and signification, coming out, and commitment. Sensitization is the first stage and it is

focused around experiences that prepare individuals to later identify as gay or lesbian. For instance, individuals in this stage usually describe their experience of feeling like they are different from their peers without always identifying why. This stage is divided into two phases, the first occurs before the age of 13 (i.e., differences during childhood such as issues concerning gender) and a second phase that last from the 13-17 years (i.e., sexual dissimilarity such as same-sex sexual behavior or alimention). Dissociation and signification is the second stage that occurs when individuals separate their identity from feelings or sexual activity. For example, individuals may recognize that they enjoy same-sex sexual activity and are interested in learning about homosexuality, but they believed that this was a phase. The third stage, coming out, refers to self-identifying with a gay or lesbian identity, becoming involved with the gay or lesbian community, and starting to view this being gay or lesbian as a positive identity. Commitment is the final stage in Troiden's model, and it occurs when a gay or lesbian individual accepts this identity and no longer views a bisexual or heterosexual lifestyle as an option.

Morales (1990) developed the Identity Formation Model for Ethnic Minority Gays/Lesbians, and it includes the following stages: denial of conflicts, bisexual versus gay/lesbian, conflicts in allegiances, establishing priorities in allegiances, and integrating the various communities. The first stage, denial of conflicts, refers to the phase that people down play the amount of discrimination experienced, they are aware of the consequences related to their sexual orientation, and they are unaware of the benefits associated with their identities. The next stage is bisexual versus gay/lesbian, and this occurs when racial/ethnic minorities are more likely to identify as bisexual over gay or lesbian resulting from feelings of confusion and despair. The third stage, conflicts in



allegiances, results when an individual believes that their racial/ethnic identity should be separate from their sexual orientation so they are not disloyal to either community.

Establishing priorities in allegiances is the next stage and it refers to the anger experienced when individuals identify with their racial/ethnic community over the gay and lesbian community due to a belief that integration is not possible. The final stage, integrating the various communities, occurs when individuals recognize the need to develop a multicultural identity that allows the integration of their various lifestyles.

More recently, Worthington and colleagues (2002) created a heterosexual identity development model utilizing a multidimensional model that considered biology; gender norms and socialization; religious orientation; microsocial context; culture; and systemic homonegativity, sexual prejudice, and privilege. The heterosexual identity model includes the following statuses: unexplored commitment, active exploration, diffusion, deepening and commitment, and synthesis. The first status, unexplored commitment, refers to the influence as well as expectations of families and society regarding gender roles, sexual behavior, and self exploration that influence most people to identify as heterosexual and assume that this is the only option. Active exploration is the second status and this includes examination and experimentation of sexual needs to recognize that relate to behavioral exploration, decisions to engage in behaviors based on values and beliefs (i.e., dating someone from another culture), biological needs (i.e., same-sex sexual activity or exploration of sexuality), and considering group membership (i.e., maintain privilege or questioning privilege). The next status, diffusion, may overlap with active exploration, but it is not focused on a goal (i.e., meeting sexual needs) and may result from a crisis (i.e., identity crisis). The deepening and commitment status occurs

when individuals commit to their sexual needs and sexual orientation identity. In addition, during this status they recognize group membership (i.e., privileges and marginalization that goes along with group membership), and their values as well as beliefs deepen or crystallize. The final status, synthesis, refers to individuals who are able to integrate their sexual orientation with their salient identities and they develop a congruent self-concept (Worthington et al., 2002).

Sexual orientation development models and subsequent research has focused on identity formation from the male perspective. For example, some models have proposed that sexual activity and experimentation often occur before individuals accept their identities; however, when gender is considered in research, the identity development process tends to differ for women. Savin-Williams and Diamond (2000) interviewed participants over the phone to investigate gender differences in sexual identity development of sexual minorities. The sample included 78 women and 86 men between the ages of 17-25 years, with more than 70% identifying as White, and over 70% were middle to upper middle socioeconomic status. Overall, more women identified as bisexual than the men (Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2000). In regards to questions about the first same-sex attractions, men were more likely to have sexual feelings than emotional feelings whereas women were split between having an emotional or sexual attraction. Men reported having their first sexual contact with a same-sex stranger or friend while women had their first sexual contact with a same-sex significant other or friend (Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2000). In addition, participants were divided into the following two groups: the sex-first group included individuals who experienced same-sex activity before labeling themselves as sexual minorities and the label-first

group identified as a sexual minority before becoming sexually involved with an individual of the same-sex. Eighty percent of the women were in the label-first group whereas 51% of men were in the sex-first group.

### Influence of Religion on Gay and Lesbian Identity

Religiously-based homonegativity exists in nearly all religious traditions (Hunsberger, 1996). Although previous literature has focused on the dichotomous belief that religion is a source of stress for gay and lesbian individuals, a few researchers such as Buchanan and colleagues (2001) have explored issues regarding the integration of both identities: being a sexual minority and being religious. One of the issues these individuals have to negotiate is the condemnation of homosexuality by various religions and religious denominations, or more specifically the sexual behaviors of sexual minorities that are denounced (Buchanan et al., 2001). Research often shows that gay and lesbian individuals have to decide between being religious or identify as gay or lesbian, and will remain celibate if they chose their religion over their sexual orientation (Ritter & O'Neill, 1989). However, Buchanan and colleagues found that gay and lesbian individuals do not have to choose, but may attend a gay-affirming religious organization or they may select another faith.

A more personal look at gay and lesbian religious issues was found in an article by Barret and Barzan (1996), in which these authors shared their own experiences. Barret and Barzan's personal experiences not only offer readers a glimpse of their biases, but a more in-depth perspective of this situation. These authors proposed that incomplete and incorrect information about gay and lesbian individuals is the basis for some of the

homophobic sentiments, but this article does not use empirical research to dispel these inaccuracies. Rather, Barret and Barzan used examples without citations to support their claims.

One of the few studies to explore homonegative attitudes in non-Christian religions was conducted by Hunsberger (1996). Hunsberger mailed questionnaires containing four scales measuring prejudice, fundamentalism, right-wing authoritarianism, and homophobia to individuals in Toronto with ethnic last names, and religious identities were later confirmed by participants. Twenty-one Hindu, 32 Jewish (Reform, Conservative, Reform/Conservative, Orthodox, and Hebrew), and 21 Muslim (Sunni, Ahmadi, Shei, and Salam) individuals were recruited for this study, and 431 Christians from a prior study completed in 1992 were used to make comparisons (both studies were used to assess a religious fundamentalism scale). Fundamentalist Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Hindu denominations were all found to be intolerant toward gay and lesbian individuals. Hunsberger suggested that fundamentalists from these religions were more likely to believe their faith was the only true religion, compliant with authority, and oppressive towards minority groups such as gay and lesbians. It was also noted that the non-Christian samples were small with approximately 20-30 participants in each group, and that self-selection bias was an issue.

The religiously-based homonegative messages in the Abrahamic religions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam stem from the "Holiness Code" in Leviticus and the story of Sodom (Johansson, 1990). The Old Testament, also referred to as the Hebrew Bible or Tanak in Judaism (Larue, 1997) and in Islam it is known as the Tawra (Vroom & Gort, 1994), has been used by these three religious groups to condemn same-sex

behaviors, although there is no mention of same-sex relations between women (Johansson, 1990). The Holiness Code verse that is often used to condemn same-sex behaviors is, “thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination;” however, Bailey (1975) questioned the accuracy of when these codes were developed and by whom. Bailey reported that this verse may have been amended to the original codes through a later edition. Minwalla, Rosser, Feldman, and Varga (2005) stated that the story of Lot (or Lut) in Sodom along with the interpretation of “might know them” referred to same-sex behaviors led to the obliteration of Lut’s people.

### *Christianity*

In the United States, Christianity is the predominant religion, and therefore has a greater impact on American culture and sociopolitical beliefs than any other religion (Schlosser, 2003). Based on the religiously-based homonegative messages in some Christian faiths, gays and lesbians continue to experience oppression and rejection (Borgman, 2009; Schlosser, 2003). As previously mentioned, some Christian denominations and organizations continue to use Leviticus and the story of Sodom among other scripture to condemn same-sex behaviors. While some Christians interpret the Bible as the literal word of God, other Christians have developed their own interpretations. A Biblical interpretation developed by Glaser (2006) for the Human Rights Campaign noted that the Holiness Code could also be viewed as the expectation for men and women to abide within gender-role socialization and suggested that the people of Sodom were condemned for sexual abuse, since rape is about power and humiliation, not sex.

Fulton and colleagues (1999) distinguished between prejudice based on religious morals (i.e., bias towards sexually active gay and lesbian individuals) and non-moral prejudice (i.e., prejudice towards celibate gays and lesbians), in a study of racism and internalized homonegativity; a sample of 76 White students from a conservative Christian university were recruited. Fundamentalism had a strong correlation with religious morals that was reported to be based on religious dogma; however, the strong correlation between Fundamentalism and non-moral prejudice was described as disproportionate to religious doctrine and thus the authors concluded that this should be viewed primarily as intolerance. Further, Fulton and colleagues stated that intrinsic religion had a significant correlation with morally based prejudice towards gays and lesbians, extrinsic religion that was socially rewarding was related to non-moral bias towards gay and lesbian individuals, and extrinsic religion that was personally rewarding was not correlated with either moral or non-moral prejudice.

Lease and colleagues (2005) studied the impact of gay-affirming experiences of 583 GLBT individuals who were involved in religious groups. The sample had a mean age of 40 years. Due to the lack of race/ethnicity variability in the sample, only White participants were included, and while the sample included Jewish, Wiccan, and Eastern religions, the majority of the participants were Christian. Participants completed measures to assess internalized homonegativity, spirituality, and psychological health. They found that participation in gay-affirming religious groups was negatively related to internalized homonegativity and positively correlated with psychological health and spirituality (Lease et al., 2005); therefore, they suggested that gays and lesbians not have to dichotomously decide between sexual orientation and religion. Due to the lack of

racial/ethnic and religious diversity in the sample the results were not generalizable beyond White gay and lesbian individuals with an affirming faith.

Rosik and colleagues (2007) were interested in understanding the relationship between homophobia and conservative Christian religions. They recruited 155 students from a Christian college and measured their internalized homonegativity, religious identity, and attitudes concerning sexually active gay and lesbians, celibate gays and lesbians, and sexually active heterosexual individuals. The sample included 113 female and 42 males who were given extra credit for their participation; however, no ethnic or racial demographics were provided. They found that the majority of individuals that had stronger religious identities correlated with both negative attitudes towards celibate gays and lesbians and sexual active gay and lesbian individuals. However, it should be noted that these participants reported equally negative views of unmarried sexually active heterosexuals in response to a scale (Sexual Orientation and Practice Scale developed by Bassett, Kirman, Hill, & Schultz) to measure attitudes towards sexual conduct.

Ream (2001) used a hierarchical analysis to identify which social elements of intrinsic religion (i.e., homosexuality as a sin and religiously-based homonegative messages) predict internalized homophobia, and found that intrinsic religion predicted viewing homosexuality as a sin, which then predicted internalized homophobia. In addition, Ream reported that religiously-based homonegative messages obtained during adolescence, intrinsic religion, and a sexual minority identity, resulted in sexual minorities having negative views of religion. Consequently, sexual minorities who associate societal homophobic messages with religion will have a less positive perspective on religion. Ream also noted that intrinsic religiosity could be either a source

of identity conflict or support, since intrinsic religion has been correlated with homonegative messages as well as resourceful coping. Although Ream proposed that intrinsic religion should not be dichotomously viewed as a stressor for sexual minorities, this was not based on his own investigation of the relationship between intrinsic religion and coping. Instead Ream used previous research findings to discuss the supportive qualities of intrinsic religion. Further, while the 33 participants in this study were described as religiously and racially/ ethnically diverse sexual minorities, no demographic data were provided to confirm the diversity of this sample.

### *Judaism*

Judaism is not only considered a religion, but some scholars consider Judaism as a race, ethnicity, or a combination of these identities (Dworkin, 1997). According to Schnoor (2006), Judaism has been labeled an ethno-religion. When viewing Judaism as an ethnicity, the cultures of Ashkenazim (e.g., East European or Soviet Union) and Sephardic (e.g., Spain and Mediterranean) should be considered; whereas, Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Reform are a few denominations of Judaism as a religion (Dworkin, 1997).

As with sexual orientation, religion is another type of invisible identity, and according to Dworkin the phrase "coming out" may have more than one context for gay and lesbian Jews. Although, coming out is often associated with disclosing a gay, lesbian, or bisexual identity, Dworkin stated that in a predominantly Christian culture, Jews also have a coming out experience. In each situation, Dworkin noted that an



individual will have to assess the risks (foregoing the protection of invisibility) and benefits (identity acceptance).

Further, the way gay or lesbian Jewish individuals negotiate these two identities may depend on their religious denomination. In Orthodox and Hasidic Judaism, homosexuality is denounced due to the literal interpretation of the Talmud (religious text which contains Jewish Law), and although Conservative Jews are not as strict in adherence to Jewish law they, too, condemn homosexuality (Dworkin, 1997; Schlosser, 2006). However, in Reform Judaism, Jewish law is believed to evolve over time and this denomination was the first to affirm homosexuality.

Jewish gay and lesbian individuals may experience anti-Semitism in the gay and lesbian community as well as homophobia from Orthodox and Hasidic Jewish communities (Schlosser, 2006). Schnoor (2006) interviewed 30 gay Jewish men in Toronto about their Judaism and their sexual orientation before asking these individuals how they incorporate these identities. Schnoor categorized gay Jewish men into four groups based on how they identified. Some participants primarily identified as Jewish (these individuals reported shame and trying to use religion to control their sexual orientation), some respondents had a strong gay identity (these individuals were secular or limited their religious involvement), a third group switched between their religious and sexual identities for social reasons (these participants kept their identities separated), and lastly some participants found ways to integrate their sexual orientation with their religion. These results were similar to Chan's (1989) findings that some gay and lesbian Asians were able to negotiate their sexual orientation with their ethnic identity; whereas, the majority of the participants reported being more connected to one identity over the

other. Further, gay and lesbian individuals must consider the interaction and potential implications of negotiating multiple identities (e.g., age, acculturation, geographical location, and family support) with their sexual orientation, in addition to religion.

### *Islam*

Similar to Christianity and Judaism, various denominations of Islam have different interpretations of religious doctrine. According to Minwalla and colleagues (2005), the Qur'an's story of Lut is often used to denounce gay and lesbian sexual behaviors. Specifically, the *Hadith* (statements accredited to the Prophet Muhammad) are viewed by some Muslims to be the direct word of Muhammad, whereas other Muslims doubt their genuineness (Minwalla et al., 2005). In over 80 countries homosexuality is criminalized, of these 26 are predominantly Muslim, and homosexuality used to be punishable by death in 7 Islamic countries and remains a capital offense in 5 countries (Hélie, 2004; International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, 2009). Currently, homosexuality remains a capital punishment in the following countries: Saudi Arabia, Iran, Mauritania, Sudan, and Yemen; however, since the Taliban's relative weakening in Afghanistan and the removal of Saddam Hussein in Iraq the death penalty has been removed (ReligionFacts, 2009).

Using grounded theory, Minwalla and colleagues (2005) interviewed 6 gay Muslims from a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (GLBTQ) affirming Muslim organization regarding their religious identity, their sexual orientation, and the intersection of these identities. Four of the participants were raised as Muslims (3 Pakistani and 1 born on the Asian Peninsula); whereas, two participants converted to

Islam from Christianity (1 African-American and 1 Anglo-American). The following themes that emerged: religion, East-West ethno-cultural comparisons, and color dynamics. During the interviews, the participants described their views of Allah and the Qur'an as sources of stress (i.e., feeling condemned) as well as a source of support (i.e., guidance). Minwalla and colleagues reported that in Eastern and Muslim cultures the concept of a gay identity did not exist and responsibilities to their family impacted the coming out process. Five of the 6 participants were men of color, and in addition to negotiating their religion with their sexuality they needed to incorporate their ethnic identities. Therefore, a number of gay and lesbian Muslims struggle to integrate their religious, ethnic, and sexual orientation into their overall identity, and this could impact on how they interact with their family members. In addition, cultural and religious beliefs could also impact on whether or not their family members are affirming of their sexual orientation.

### Influence of Race/Ethnicity on Gay and Lesbian Identity

Before the nineteenth century, the concept of sexual identity was framed by religious morals and in European, Canadian, and American cultures; homosexuality was an offense punishable by death (Greenberg, 1988). Eventually, sexual identity progressed from religiously based social expectations into a medical science and for the first time homosexuality was examined scientifically in the 1800's (Chan, 1995). According to Chan, heterosexuality became the norm in both society and medical practice; whereas, homosexuality was labeled as a perversion. Over the past forty years, the study of homosexuality has evolved with the Kinsey studies of sexual behavior in the

1940's and 1950's, the removal of homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Cass' model of sexual identity formation, and the gay liberation movement. However, the concept of sexual identity has not been sufficiently explored outside of European cultures (Chan, 1995). Therefore, having a gay or lesbian identity is often viewed as a "White Phenomenon" (Chan, 1995; Dube & Savin-Williams, 1999).

Dube and Savin-Williams (1999) explored the sexual identity development of 139 racially and ethnically diverse (White, Latino, African American, and Asian American) non-heterosexual males between the ages of sixteen and twenty-six. Findings suggested that there were ethnic differences regarding identity of sexual orientation, family disclosure, and involvement in heterosexual experiences. Ethnic sexual minorities were less likely than Whites to disclose their sexual orientation to family members based on concerns of being rejected and perceived homophobia in their community.

#### *White and European American Race/Ethnicity*

The majority of research regarding the development of sexual identity has focused on White, gay men of a middle-socioeconomic status (Parks et al., 2004); therefore, more research regarding the sexual identity development of gay and lesbian individuals of color is needed. In a study focused on the intersection of race/ethnicity and sexual orientation, 210 White participants were compared to 211 participants of color (African American and Latina). Differences between African American and Latina lesbians were provided when significant, and these groups were combined to explore how the experience women of color differed from White lesbians. Parks and colleagues found

that White lesbians were older when they started to question their sexual identity, quicker to identify as a lesbian, slower to come out, and more likely to disclose to non-family members. However, there was a cohort effect regarding when White women came out, with younger women having the tendency to disclose their sexual orientation at a younger age. Parks and colleagues reported that although an increased acceptance of gays and lesbians may have contributed to White lesbians coming out at a younger age, racial/ethnic perspectives may have stayed more consistent; thus, younger lesbians of color were less likely to disclose their sexual orientation. Research by Grov and colleagues (2006) had similar findings that White gays and lesbians were more likely to be out to their parents than African Americans, Latinos, and Asians.

Cerbone (1996) reported that as a White, middle socioeconomic status male, he was often viewed to be an individual with privilege as well as an oppressor; however, as a gay man he has been marginalized and oppressed. In addition, Cerbone stated that as an Italian, his first experience of discrimination was due to his race/ethnicity. Although being gay or lesbian is often described as a White experience, this notion overlooks prejudice between White ethnic groups. According to Cerbone, the construct of White was created to bring the various White ethnicities together and to have power over ethnic groups of color.

### *Black, African American, and Caribbean Race/Ethnicity*

According to Greene (1997), African Americans tend to be connected to their extended and immediate families in addition to other social networks such as religious organizations. Internalized homonegativity in the African Americans culture stems from

the religiously-based prejudice in addition to heterosexual privilege, sexism, and racism. For example, an African American lesbian may struggle to come out if she is already experiencing oppression due to her race/ethnicity and gender; by disclosing her sexual orientation she may experience a third form of prejudice or what Greene refers to as “triple jeopardy.” Mays, Chatters, Cochran, and Mackness (1998) reported that African Americans may struggle to disclose their sexual orientation out of fear of rejection; however, research has shown that disclosure often strengthens family relationships. Further, Mays and colleagues suggest that since a number of cultural traditions are celebrated with the family, disclosure could also strengthen the “connectedness to their ethnic heritage.”

Mays and colleagues (1998) researched the coming out process of 1,179 African American gay and lesbian respondents using a questionnaire to assess demographics and the degree of disclosure with individual family members. They found that 28% of participants were out to all family members and 15% had not come out to any family members; however, approximately 75% of respondents were out to their mothers and sisters. Predictors of disclosure included: age and age of first same-sexual contact, with older age in both variables relating to coming out (Mays et al., 1998). For the majority of family relationships, women were more likely to come out than men. Therefore, gender differences in the African American culture impact whether and to whom an individual chooses to disclose. They reported that women in African American families are often viewed to be more supportive; whereas, men are presumed to be less sympathetic. In addition, Mays and colleagues stated that the family of origin’s reaction to the disclosure not only impacts the gay or lesbian individual.

Crawford, Allison, Zamboni, and Soto (2002) used the scores from an ethnic identity measure and a sexual orientation identity assessment to group 174 gay and bisexual African American men into the following categories: integration (scored well on both identity measures), assimilation (scored higher on ethnic identity assessment), separation (scored higher on sexual identity test), and marginalization (scored lower on both scales). Participants belonged to the following religions: Christian ( $n = 98$ ), Other ( $n = 55$ ), Inactive, ( $n = 9$ ), Agnostic ( $n = 8$ ), and Muslim ( $n = 4$ ). The integration group was found to have higher self-esteem, more life satisfaction, more social support, better HIV prevention, and less stress than any other group and significantly differed from the marginalized group with each of these variables. Men in the assimilation group were significantly more likely to have stress regarding their gender-role and were more likely to have sexual relationships with women than those in the integration group and the separation group was significantly lower in regards to HIV prevention and having sex with women than the integration group. Therefore, the benefits of negotiating multiple identities include making healthier lifestyle decisions, less psychological distress, and more support; however, gender-role expectations significantly impacted the men who have a stronger ethnic identity than gay identity.

#### *Latino, Hispanic, and Spanish Origin Race/Ethnicity*

In the Latino/Hispanic culture, the family unit is the central source of support and gender role socialization provides clear expectations for women and men (Greene, 1997). Women have to meet the gender role expectations of being subservient, to live with their parents until marriage, and to be virtuous; whereas, men are supposed to provide

financial support and defend their families (Greene, 1997). Further, Toro-Alfonso (2007) stated that these gender roles impact the internalized homonegativity in Latino cultures when it is assumed that lesbians are masculine and gay men are feminine; thus, challenging the power differential between men and women. In the Latino/Hispanic cultures there are no affirming words for gay or lesbian, only pejorative terms are used (Greene, 1997).

According to Greene (1997), having intimate same-sex relationships are not unusual in Latino/Hispanic cultures as long as they fit into the expected gender roles. For example, a relationship between two women could be perceived as prolonging their virginity as long as they are not overt about their sexuality, and for men a same-sex relationship is culturally acceptable as long as the male takes the active role which is perceived to have more power (Greene, 1997). However, if a male takes a passive role in sexual activity he may be viewed as wanting to be female and therefore choosing to give up his power (Toro-Alfonso, 2007).

Alquijay (1997) explored the impact of self-esteem, socioeconomic status, and acculturation on incorporating being lesbian and Latina into an individual's identity. Ninety-two Latina lesbians from the United States participated in the study. Forty individuals were immigrants from Mexico, Central America, and 52 were from South America. Each was assessed on their sexual orientation, self-esteem, acculturation, and demographics. Alquijay (1997) found that Latinas who were less acculturated to the United States were less likely to have a have an established lesbian identity whereas socioeconomic status, income, and self-esteem did not correlate with the development of a gay or lesbian identity.



Greene (1997) reported that coming out in Latino cultures is tolerated, but not affirmed. According to Toro-Alfonso (2007), some gay and lesbian Latinos/as believe that migration is one way to escape the discrimination since in Latin America many individuals feel like they cannot be out about their sexual orientation. However, gay and lesbian individuals across the world may be subject to internalized homonegativity, and migration to another country may create new challenges such as racial discrimination.

*Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Race/Ethnicity*

In many Asian cultures, individual identities are not as strongly expressed as they are in Western cultures; rather, many Asian cultures have a collectivistic approach towards identity and a family or group identification is typical (Chan, 1995). According to Chan, in some Asian cultures an individual is more likely to be called by their hierarchical family position (e.g., first son or little sister) rather than her or his first name. Therefore, the concept of individual salient identities such as sexual orientation is atypical in Asian cultures.

Chan (1989) investigated the identity development of 35 gay and lesbian Asian Americans in order to test the assumption that gay or lesbian and racial/ethnic identities conflict. The majority of participants were second generation, ranging in age from 21-36, and their ethnic identities included Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Filipino, Bangladeshi, and Indian. The questionnaires were distributed at gay and lesbian Asian events, and consisted of questions regarding demographics, choice of community, disclosure, and discrimination. Chan reported the participants were more likely to be socially/politically active in the gay and lesbian community over the Asian community, and twice as many

respondents reported a higher level of comfort with the gay and lesbian community than the Asian community. However, when asked about the centrality of their identity, the majority of participants identified as Asian-American gay or lesbian as opposed to gay or lesbian Asian-Americans and a few individuals refused to rank one identity over the other. In addition, the respondents reported that their ethnicity impacted the coming-out process; most participants had come out to their families and friends, more individuals found it more difficult to come out to other Asians, and the majority had not come out to their parents. Further, there was a gender difference regarding the type of discrimination respondents experienced, with more women reporting prejudice due to their ethnicity while men had more bias due to their sexual orientation.

Overall, Chan (1989) found that participants were more likely to identify one identity over the other identity; however, there were a number of factors that impacted this decision such as social support, which identity developed first, and acculturation. In a review of literature regarding ethnicity and sexual orientation, Greene (1997) focused on conformity in Japanese and Chinese cultures without addressing the notion of collectivistic versus individualistic cultures. In addition, Greene failed to discuss the impact of acculturation on blending an Asian ethnic identity with a gay or lesbian sexual orientation. According to Chan (1995), Asian-Americans who are more acculturated to Western society are more likely to identify as gay or lesbian.

#### *Native American Race/Ethnicity*

The term *two-spirit* is a Native American term that refers to both the feminine and masculine spirits in an individual (Balsam, Huang, Fieland, Simoni, & Walters, 2004)

and Tafoya (1997) further explained that two-spirit individuals have gender fluidity and addressed their spiritual role in the community. Tafoya stated that a number of terms that have been used by Native Americans and European Americans have also labeled their sexual behaviors and gender roles. For example the term *berdache* or a male who takes a passive role in intercourse was placed on Native American men that did not fit into traditional gender-roles. Balsam and colleagues reported that although two-spirited individuals were respected and traditionally have held leadership positions, colonization and obligatory Christianity have vanquished these traditional beliefs. According to Tafoya, when Native Americans were forced into reservations, children were taken away from their parents in order to prevent the continuation of cultural traditions. Native Americans may experience internalized homonegativity from their racial/ethnic community as well as society and may experience racism from the gay and lesbian community (Balsam et al., 2004).

Balsam and colleagues (2004) interviewed 25 two-spirited individuals and 154 heterosexual Native Americans regarding their culture, mental health, substance use, and past traumas. Participants ranged from 18 to 77 years in age. Although tribal affiliations were not provided, 20.3% identified as full-blooded, 17% were at least three quarters, 24.8% at least half, 32% were at least one quarter, and 5.9% were less than one quarter. Prior to the interviews, participants completed assessments regarding trauma, physical and mental health, and substance use. Overall, two-spirited individuals significantly experienced more trauma, substance use, were more likely to report use of mental health services, and were more likely to drink alcohol to manage stress or for social gains in comparison to heterosexuals. Further, the majority of two-spirited individuals rated their

cultural and spiritual beliefs as very important. One reported limitation was that this study did not assess how two-spirited individuals integrated their sexual orientation, spirituality, and ethnic/racial identities (Balsam et al., 2004).

### Acceptance

According to Mohr and Fassinger (2000), gay and lesbian individuals have a need for acceptance and often consider how others will view their sexual orientation. For instance, sexual minority individuals of color are more likely to hide their sexual orientation since there may be a lack of support in their racial/ethnic community and concerns about being accepted into the gay and lesbian community due to racism (Smith et al., 2008). Further, some religions are more accepting of gays and lesbians than others (Pew Forum on Religion, 2007), with more religious conservatism being correlated with homonegativity (Hunsberger, 1996). Therefore, the experience of accepting a gay and lesbian identity may include balancing internalized homonegativity and societal stigma.

In a study that investigated self-acceptance and self-disclosure of 480 gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals from an attachment perspective (Mohr & Fassinger, 2003). The sample identified as 1.4% Asian American/Pacific Islander, 2.7% Black/African American, 84.9% White/European American, 2.7% Hispanic/Latino, 1.2% Native American/Native Alaskan, .4% Middle Eastern/Arab, 4.5% Biracial/Multiracial, and 2.2% other race/ethnicity; however, no religious identities were provided. Utilizing confirmatory factor analysis and a structural equation model they found that the level of self-acceptance (measured by the LGIS Need for Acceptance subscale) and outness

correlated with attachment anxiety and avoidance or negative identity, and individuals who were less accepting of their sexual orientation were unlikely to disclose their sexual orientation (Mohr & Fassinger, 2003). However, it was suggested that by not coming out due to a fear of rejection; sexual minorities missed out on opportunities for interaction with the larger gay, lesbian, and bisexual community and acceptance of their sexual orientation.

After controlling for age, gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and social desirability, Rosario and colleagues (2006) found that individuals who consistently identified as gay or lesbian were significantly more involved in the gay and lesbian community, acceptance of their sexual orientation, and have a more positive attitude towards gays and lesbians in comparison to individuals who transitioned from bisexual to gay or lesbian or those who continuously identified as bisexual. This racially/ethnically diverse sample consisted of 140 participants (49% female) between the ages of 14 to 21 completed three sets of questionnaires and interviews at 6-month intervals. Although there were no significant differences in identity consistency between racial/ethnic groups; Rosario and colleagues proposed that transitioning from bisexual to gay or lesbian may relate to the process of integrating and accepting one's sexual orientation. This corresponds with Morales' (1990) identity development model for ethnically diverse sexual minorities that suggests transitioning from bisexual to gay or lesbian is part of the identity formation for ethnic minority gays and lesbians.

### Internalized Homonegativity

Gays and lesbians have been referred to as an invisible minority due to socialized heteronormative assumptions both that label homosexuality abnormal (Fassinger, 1991) and that everyone is heterosexual (Herek et al., 2009). According to Herek and colleagues, heteronormativity persists through religiously based bias and legal discrimination. Fassinger noted that internalized homonegativity in society influences both heterosexuals as well as gay and lesbian individuals in their perceptions of same-sex relationships; thus, gay and lesbian individuals learn to internalize these homonegative messages.

Meyer (2003) noted that the stigma regarding the mental health of gay and lesbian individuals has remained, although homosexuality has been removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). Researchers have proposed that the higher incidents of mental illness found in the gay and lesbian community relate to the continued stigma and prejudice they face (Meyer, 2003). Herek and colleagues (2009) noted that heterosexism is an institutionalized form of prejudice; thus, heterosexuality is often considered the norm and unless a gay or lesbian identity is disclosed, individuals are assumed to be heterosexuals, leaving the gay or lesbian identity almost invisible. The three types of sexual stigma described by Herek and colleagues were enacted stigma (overt prejudice), felt stigma (awareness and behaviors due to society's prejudice), and internalized stigma (the impact of accepting society's stigma on an individual's self-worth). The various forms of sexual stigma have lead to minority stress (additional stress due to stigmatized status) in the gay and lesbian community (Meyer, 2003). For instance, legalized discrimination (e.g., unequal employment, marriage, and parenting laws)

reinforce stigma and results in minority stress. Corresponding to the forms of sexual stigma presented by Herek and colleagues, Meyer reported that gay and lesbian individuals may experience the following types of minority stress: external, expected, and internalized.

Herek, Cogan, and Gillis (2002; Herek et al., 2009) used baseline data from 2,259 sexual minorities (from a larger study about victimization and mental health) to assess self-stigma using the Revised Internalized Homophobia Scale (IHP-R) and found that men had more self-stigma regarding their sexual orientation than did women, and the following variables also predicted more self-stigma: younger age, lower level of education, and African American identity; whereas, older participants, those with more formal education, and those of other races had less self-stigma. However, Herek and colleagues did not provide specifics about the questionnaires administered or the participant's demographics. When Moradi and colleagues (2010), examined the differences between LGB people of color and LGB White individuals in regards to perceived stigma, internalized homophobia, level of disclosure, and comfort with coming out; the only significant difference was that LGB people of color were less out to their families and religious communities than White participants.

### Outness

Gay and lesbian individuals often consider the potential benefits and costs before deciding whether or not they want to come out. Researchers have suggested that the benefits to disclosing one's sexual orientation are psychological and the use of personal contact as an effective way in decreasing stigma (Corrigan & Matthews, 2003).

However, outness may also come with a number of risks such as rejection and discrimination (Corrigan & Matthews, 2003).

Morris and colleagues (2001) investigated predictors that lead to women coming out as lesbian or bisexual. The sample was comprised of 2,401 women that ranged in age from 15-83 years, 75% were European America, 44% considered themselves spiritual, and 16% were Christian. Their level of outness ranged from 0-100 percent with 71.2% out to heterosexual friends, 64.8% were out to family members, and 54.5% were out at work. They found that the following three factors predicted outness: self-identified as lesbian, involved in the gay and lesbian community, and higher number of years that individuals have self-identified as lesbian or bisexual. In addition, being out was negatively correlated with psychological distress, and psychological distress was then correlated with suicidality. Therefore, another benefit of outness is improved psychological well-being.

The results of this study also offered support for the concept that racial/ethnic identity impacts the coming out process. African American women in this sample had lower levels of disclosure in comparison to Latina and European Americans; however, the African American participants often reported a longer duration for self-identifying as lesbian or bisexual (Morris et al., 2002).

Beals and Peplau (2006) also investigated the impact of disclosure on the relationship quality of gay and lesbian individuals. Their sample consisted of 89 gay men and 55 lesbian women, the age ranged from 18-68, approximately 9 years was the mean for self-identifying as gay or lesbian, 43% were romantically involved in a relationship and 54% were European American. With social networks averaging around



18 individuals and a mean of coming out to 11 people, more participants initially come out to a heterosexual friend (72%) rather than a family member and among the first five disclosures included 80% heterosexual friends (usually female), 42% gay or lesbian friends, 40% mother, 31% sister, 24% brother, and 23% father. Hence, there was a gender pattern with whom gay and lesbian individuals come out to, and female friends and relatives were more likely to be among the first to know. In addition, Beals and Peplau (2006) found that there was a better relationship quality with those who knew about the participant's sexual orientation, there was a better quality relationship with individuals who received the disclosure directly, and direct disclosure also correlated with more acceptance of sexual orientation.

Moradi and colleagues (2010) compared LGB people of color with LGB White individuals regarding their views on heterosexist stigma, internalized stigma, and disclosure. A sample of 178 participants almost evenly divided between people of color and White LGB participants were assessed on perceived stigma, internalized homophobia, level of disclosure, and comfort with coming out in addition to data collected for a larger study that has not yet been published. They found that LGB people of color and LGB White individuals only varied their disclosure levels when age was controlled, with LGB people of color reporting lower levels of disclosure to family members and religious communities than White LGB individuals.

### Summary

Theorists such as Cross and Troiden have explored identity development for over forty years; however, the focus tends to be on marginalized groups such as racial/ethnic

minorities or gay and lesbian individuals (Alexander, 1996; Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999; Troiden, 1979). Although revised models of identity development include the integration of multiple identities as a step in the process, the original theories only considered one identity. Researchers have started to investigate the experience of integrating more than one identity; however, religion is rarely considered in the negotiation of identities.

In order to understand the cultural context that gay and lesbian individuals have to negotiate, it is essential to understand how various religious and racial/ethnic communities view gay and lesbian individuals. Although fundamentalist and conservative Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Hindu denominations were all found to be intolerant toward gay and lesbian individuals (Hunsberger, 1996), contributors to the Pew Forum on Religion (2007) provided denomination differences for Christian and Jewish perceptions of gay and lesbian individuals. Therefore, religious identity and level of religiosity may impact the acceptance, internalized homonegativity, and level of outness experienced by gay and lesbian individuals. Further, Greene (1997) stated that a number of factors such as family support, religious morals, connectedness to ethnic community, and acculturation are aspects that could affect the coming out process; however, these variables are often researched individually.

The present study explored the intersecting areas of religion and race/ethnicity as they affect the level of acceptance, disclosure, and internalized homonegativity as experienced by gays and lesbians. In addition, the impact of religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity were considered as they relate to these variables.

## CHAPTER III

### Methods and Procedures

In this chapter, the following information was addressed: participants, measures, and procedures. Specifically, selection of participants, rationale for grouping participants, demographic characteristics, measures, data collection, study design, and the statistical analyses, and power analyses used to test each hypothesis are described.

#### Participants

##### *Selection of Participants*

Nonproportional quota and chain sampling was utilized to obtain religiously and ethnically diverse participants. Nonproportional quota sampling involves choosing a percentage of participants to ensure that each of the groups was represented (Trochim, 2006) and Dyer (2006) reported that quota sampling could be utilized to obtain a more heterogeneous sample. Chain sampling involves identifying individuals who meet the study criteria and would forward the research request to potential participants (Bailey, 1994). In addition, Bailey suggested that quota sampling could be used with chain sampling when nonprobabilistic sampling is insufficient. I identified individuals who were involved in the gay and lesbian community, they passed my research request to individuals who met the criteria described below, and each individual who received the request was asked to pass the survey to potential participants (Mertens, 2005). Therefore,

nonproportional quota and chain sampling were utilized until minimum quotas were met (Dyer, 2006).

The developers of the 2008 U.S. Census Bureau estimated (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009), the ethnic identities of American are 15.4% Hispanic/Latino, 12.8% Black/African American/Caribbean American, 4.5% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1% Native American, and 65.6% White/Caucasian (not Hispanic or Latino). However, the ultimate goal was to include an equal percentage of the following ethnicities to over-represent smaller groups: Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American/Caribbean American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, and White/Caucasian. Specifically, I emailed the recruitment letter and link to online survey (described below) to my personal contacts (i.e., Men Of Color Health Association, Black Gay Research Group, and People of Color in Crisis), and requested that they forward the recruitment letter and online survey to individuals who meet the inclusion criteria.

After the racial/ethnic quotas had been obtained, sampling continued until religious quotas were met. The religious identity of Americans are 51.3% Protestant, 23.9% Catholic, 1.7% Jewish, .6% Muslim, and less than 23% includes those who identify as other Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, unaffiliated, or other/don't know (Pew Forum on Religion, 2010). Therefore, the goal was to have a sample that consisted of approximately one third Christian, one third Muslim, and one third Jewish participants to over-represent minority religions that have not been previously examined in regards to how these religions impact level of acceptance, level of disclosure, and level of internalized homonegativity. Specifically, I emailed the recruitment letter and link to online survey (described below) to my personal contacts in the Muslim community, and

requested that they forward the recruitment letter and online survey to individuals who met the inclusion criteria.

I recognize that bisexual or transgender individuals have similar concerns, and have also not yet been studied. However, my assumption is that some of the concerns of these two groups face would also be unique, and thus limiting the sample to gay or lesbian individuals would lead to a more homogeneous sample (Mertens, 2005). Therefore, the inclusion criteria were self-identifying gay or lesbian and 18 years in age or older.

#### *Rationale for Grouping Participants*

According to Phinney (1996, p. 919), the term ethnicity “is used to refer to broad groupings of Americans on the basis of both race and culture or origin;” however, the psychological impact of categorizing individuals into ethnic groups must be considered and based on the connotation associated with ethnicity, diverse racial and ethnic labels should be used for each group. The developers of the U.S. Census (2009) have used some variation of the following categories Hispanic, Non-Hispanic White, Black, Native American, and Asian/Pacific Islander; however, Phinney suggested that due to the meaning associated with ethnicity, diverse ethnic labels should be used for each group (e.g., Black and African American). According the Civil Rights Coalition (2010), the U.S. Census categories differentiate Latino and Hispanic as ethnicities and not racial categories since these individuals can be of any race; however, the government separates individual of Latino or Hispanic origins in order to assess federal programs and to protect the rights of individuals. The following racial/ethnic groups have been identified by the

U.S. Census Bureau (2009): American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White, and Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin.

The Civil Rights Coalition (2010) addressed the fact that Middle Eastern Americans are not offered Arab as a race nor is Arab listed as a separate ethnicity on the 2010 Census form. However, according to de la Cruz and Brittingham (2003), in the 2000 Census, 80% of Arabs identified as White, 17% identified with more than one race, and two of the final three percent identified with a race. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, Arab Americans were categorized as White unless they identified as another race.

### *Demographic Characteristics*

Approximately 211 on-line surveys were started by participants, and 181 were completed. Twelve participants dropped out after completing the demographics, another 14 discontinued the survey after the first questionnaire, 3 more stopped working on the survey after the second survey, and one person discontinued after the fourth measure. Four participants (1 transgender, 2 genderqueer, and 1 two spirited) were excluded from the analyses since the focus of this study was on gays and lesbians; therefore, 177 was the total sample size. Participants in the present study ranged in age from 18 to 68 years old ( $M = 37.64$ ,  $SD = 12.32$ ). More than half were male ( $n = 104$ , 58.8%) and 73 (41.2%) were female. Most participants were White ( $n = 135$ , 76.3%), 19 individuals identified as Asian (10.7%), 5.6% ( $n = 10$ ) were Black, 5.1% ( $n = 9$ ) were Latino, and 2.3% ( $n = 4$ ) were Native American. Approximately 67.2% ( $n = 119$ ) were raised Christian, 14.1% ( $n$

= 25) were raised in an Other religion, 14.1% ( $n = 25$ ) were raised Jewish, and 4.5% ( $n = 8$ ) were raised Muslim. Participants identified with the following religions and denominations: Christian (24 Christian, 23 Catholic, 23 Roman Catholic, 8 Lutheran, 7 Baptist, 7 Methodist, 7 Protestant, 4 Church of Christ, 4 Presbyterian, 3 Episcopalian, 3 United Universalist, 2 Mormon, 2 Pentacostal, 1 Nazarene, and 1 Polish Catholic), Jewish (19 Jewish, 3 Reform, 2 Conservative, and 1 Orthodox), Muslim (5 Islamic, 3 Muslim, and 1 Sunni Muslim), Other (12 none or nonreligious, 5 multiple religions, 3 Buddhist, 1 Agnostic, 1 Atheist, 1 Hindu, 1 Orthodox Blackfeet, and 1 Vietnam). The participants' current religious identity varied significantly from the religions they were raised with, and currently 27.7% ( $n = 49$ ) of the participants identified as Christian, 20.3% ( $n = 36$ ) no longer identified with a religion, 11.3% ( $n = 20$ ) were Jewish, 10.2% ( $n = 18$ ) identified as Atheists, 7.9% ( $n = 14$ ) identified with Other religious identities, 8.5% ( $n = 15$ ) were Spiritual, 10.2% ( $n = 18$ ) were Agnostic, and 4.0% ( $n = 7$ ) were Muslim. Table 1 provides demographic data by racial/ethnic group.

Table 1

*Overall Sample Demographic Variables*

	Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Black, African American or Caribbean American	European American or White	Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin	Native American
	<i>n</i> = 19 (10.7%)	<i>n</i> = 10 (5.6%)	<i>n</i> = 135 (76.3%)	<i>n</i> = 9 (5.1%)	<i>n</i> = 4 (2.3%)
Gender					
Female	7	7	56	2	1
Male	12	3	79	7	3
Family Religion					
Christian	7	7	95	8	2
Jewish	0	1	24	0	0
Muslim	3	0	4	1	0
Other	9	2	12	0	2
Current Religion					
Christian	4	4	37	3	1
Jewish	0	1	19	0	0
Muslim	2	0	4	1	0
Other	5	0	7	1	1
Atheist	1	0	17	0	0
Agnostic	2	2	13	1	0
None	4	2	27	1	2
Spiritual	1	1	11	2	0



## Measures

### *Demographic Questionnaire*

The demographic questionnaire (Appendix A) asks each participant to respond to the following items: gender, race/ethnicity, religious background, current religion, and age. All of the demographic questions were open-ended, and in addition, participants were asked to respond to one closed-ended question about racial/ethnic identity.

### *Acceptance and Internalized Homonegativity*

The Lesbian and Gay Identity Scale (LGIS; Mohr & Fassinger, 2000), is a 27-item instrument to measure characteristics of gay or lesbian identity. This measure uses a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 7 (*agree strongly*) with items 8, 17, 18, and 27 reversed scored (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). After completing principal components analyses, a 6-factor solution was chosen for both the gay and lesbian samples that accounted for 48% and 51% of variance, respectively. The following subscales were retained: Internalized Homonegativity, Need for Privacy, Need for Acceptance, Identity Confusion, Difficult Process, and Superiority. Sample items include (a) I would rather be straight if I could, (b) I will never be able to accept my sexual orientation until all of the people in my life have accepted me, (c) I am glad to be an LG person, and (d) I often wonder whether others judge me for my sexual orientation. The LGIS take about 5 minutes to complete; however, for the purpose of this study only the Internalized homonegativity and Need for Acceptance subscales were used.

In 2011, Mohr and Kendra revised the LGIS, with updated language by removing pejorative terms as well as rephrasing items to be more inclusive, adjusted the items

included in each subscale, and created 2 new subscales. The Need for Acceptance subscale was reduced from five items to three items and renamed Acceptance Concerns. In addition, the Internalized Homonegativity subscale decreased from five items to three items and adjusted the language (Mohr & Kendra). Previous scholars such as Moradi, and colleagues (2009) have referred to the Need for Acceptance scale as Acceptance Concerns, prior to the revision of the LGIS.

Mohr and Fassinger (2000) tested the reliability and validity of the LGIS on gays and lesbian individuals. An internal reliability with Cronbach Alpha's for the Need for Privacy, Need for Acceptance, Internalized Homonegativity, Difficult Process, Identity Confusion, and Superiority subscales of .81, .75, .79, .79, .77, and .65 were found respectively.

Convergent validity for the LGIS was demonstrated through correlations (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000) with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Fassinger and McCarn's Lesbian Identity Scale (LIS), Fassinger's Gay Identity Scale (GIS), and Phinney's Multigroup Ethnic Identity Scale was revised to assess same-group orientation (SGO; identity with gay and lesbian community) as well as other-group orientations (OGO; interaction with heterosexual community). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale had a significant negative correlation with the Need for Acceptance (-.34 and -.33) and Difficult Process (-.23 and -.23) subscales for lesbians and gays, respectively. In addition, there was a negative correlation between the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale and Internalized homonegativity (-.24) for gays and Identity Confusion (-.22) for lesbians. The LIS and GIS provided the level of identity development phases of internalization/ synthesis phased of sexual identity and deepening/commitment phase of group identity membership with the

internalization/synthesis phased of sexual identity having a significant negative correlation with the Need for Privacy (-.20 and -.26), Need for Acceptance (-.23 and -.27), and Internalized Homonegativity (-.36 and -.43) subscales for lesbians and gays whereas the Identity Confusion (-.37) only had a negative correlation for lesbians. The deepening/ commitment phase of group identity membership was positively correlated with Need for Acceptance (.28 and .29), Difficult Process (.24 and .23), and Superiority (.23 and .29) subscales for lesbians and gays while a positive correlation with the Need for Privacy subscale (.18) was only significant for lesbians. In addition, the SGO had a negative correlation with the Need for Privacy (-.39 and -.30) and Internalized Homonegativity (-.43 and -.47) subscales for lesbian and gays, and negative correlation with Need for Acceptance (-.18) and Identity Confusion (-.24) for lesbians. The OGO negatively correlation with Superiority (-.35 and -.35) for lesbians and gays, and negatively correlated with Need for Privacy (-.24) and Internalized homonegativity (-.22) for gays (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000).

### *Outness*

The Outness Inventory (OI; Mohr & Fassinger, 2000) is an 11-item instrument to assess the disclosure level of gay and lesbian individuals. This measure uses a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (person definitely does NOT know about your sexual orientation status) to 7 (*person definitely knows about your sexual orientation status, and it is OPENLY talked about*) with the option of 0 (*not applicable to your situation; there is no such person or group of people in your life*). After completing principal components analyses, a 3-factor solution was chosen for both the gay and lesbian samples that

accounted for 66% and 63% of variance, respectively. The following subscales were retained: Out to World, Out to Family, and Out to Religion. Sample items include (a) mother, (b) my work peers, (c) members of my religious community (e.g., church, temple), and (d) strangers, new acquaintances. The OI takes about 5 minutes to complete.

Mohr and Fassinger (2000) tested the reliability and validity of the OI on gays and lesbian individuals. An internal reliability with Cronbach Alpha's for the Out to World, Out to Family, and Out to Religion subscales of .79, .74, and .97 was found respectively. Convergent and discriminant validity for the OI was demonstrated through correlations with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Fassinger and McCarn's Lesbian Identity Scale (LIS), Fassinger's Gay Identity Scale (GIS), Phinney's Multigroup Ethnic Identity Scale was revised to assess same-group orientation (SGO, identity with gay and lesbian community) as well as other-group orientations (OGO, interaction with heterosexual community), and a demographic questionnaire regarding support from religious organization (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale had a significant positive correlation with the Out to World (.21) subscale for gays. The internalization/synthesis phase of sexual identity had a significant positive correlation with the Out to Family (.20 and .21) and Out to World (.21 and .24) subscales for lesbians and gays whereas the Out to Religion (.26) only had a positive correlation for gays. The deepening/ commitment phase of group identity membership was negatively correlated with Out to Family (-.19) and Out to World (-.20) subscales for lesbians. There was a positive correlation between the Out to Family (.21 and .20), Out to World (.31 and .31), and Out to Religion (.35 and .37) subscales with the SGO for lesbians and

gays. The OGO was only positive correlated with the Out to Family (.22), Out to World (.28), and Out to Religion (.37) subscales for gays. The demographic questionnaire also positively correlated with the Out to Religion subscale (.59 and .40) for lesbians and gays (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000).

### *Racial/Ethnic Identity*

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM, Phinney, 1992) is 12-item measure of ethnic identity. The MEIM can be used as an overall measure of ethnic identity or it can be broken down into the following subscales: Ethnic Identity Achievement, Affirmation and Belonging, and Ethnic Behaviors. This measure uses a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include (a) I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and custom; (b) I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me; and (c) I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group. The MEIM takes about 1-3 minutes to complete.

Roberts, Phinney, Masse, Chen, Roberts, and Romero (1999) tested the reliability and validity of the MEIM has been tested on high school and college students; however, a number of studies have used this measure on adults of all ages. An internal reliability with Cronbach Alpha of .84 was found for the overall scale. Further, an exploratory factorial analysis and a multigroup confirmatory factorial analysis were completed using a group of adolescents. A 2-factor solution accounted for 51.2% of variance. Five-items for Mexican Americans and 6-items for African Americans load significantly different from European Americans, and correlations

between the two factors for African Americans, European Americans, and Mexican Americans were .70, .74, and .75 respectively (Roberts et al., 1999).

Convergent and discriminant validity for the MEIM was demonstrated through correlations with a single measure of ethnic salience; the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; Coping was assessed using a scale based on Rosenbaum as well as Falkman and Lazaus; Scheier and Carver's Life Orientation Test was used to measure optimism; a Mastery test using Pearlin's theory was utilized; the Robert's University of California Los Angeles Loneliness Scale; and a Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children by Roberts, Roberts, and Chen was used to measure depression (Roberts et al., 1999). The MEIM positively correlated with the Coping (.27, .21, .20, and .23), Mastery (.26, .13, .12, and .19), Self-Esteem (.24, .14, .14, and .20), Optimism (.24, .14, .10, and .19), and Salience of Ethnicity (.44, .37, .40, and .48) measures with the three ethnic groups (European American, African, and Mexican American) individually and the total sample, respectively. There was a negative correlation between the MEIM and the Loneliness (-.08, -.04, -.08, and -.09) measure with the three ethnic groups (European American, African, and Mexican American) individually and the total sample. The MEIM negatively correlated with the Depression (-.14, -.07, and -.09) with the European America, African American, and Total sample (Roberts et al., 1999).

### *Religiosity*

The Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire (SCSRFQ; Plante & Boccaccini, 1997b) is a 10-item measure of religiousness that can be used with a religiously diverse sample. This measure uses a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1

(*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). In order to differentiate between low and high levels of religiosity a split-median procedure was used with scores above 26 corresponding to high faith and scores below 26 represent low faith (Plante & Boccaccini, 1997b). Sample items include (a) My religious faith is extremely important to me and (b) My faith impacts many of my decisions. Item five, "I consider myself active in my faith or church," has been revised to be more inclusive of non-Christian religions by replacing the words "or church," with place of worship. The SCSRFQ takes about 5 minutes to complete.

Plante and Boccaccini (1997a) tested the reliability and validity of the SCSRFQ on college student, civic group members, and high school students. An internal reliability with Cronbach Alpha's of .94, .97, and .96 were found respectively and split-half reliability, with corresponding  $r$ 's of .90, .95, and .96, were found respectively. Convergent and discriminant validity for the SCSRFQ was demonstrated through correlations with the intrinsic religious scale on the Age Universal Religious Orientation Survey (AUROS) developed by Gorsuch and Venable had a  $r$  that varied from .87 to .90, the internal and external scales from the Religious Life Inventory (RLI) developed by Batson and Ventis had Pearson  $r$  correlations that ranged from .76-.90 and .64-.73 respectively, and a negative correlation with the God Control scale from Berrenberg's Belief in Personal Control Scale (BPCS) that ranged from -.73 to -.92 between samples (Plante & Boccaccini).

The SCSRFQ has previously been used with a gay and lesbian sample that included individuals from religiously diverse backgrounds including a number of Christian denominations, Jewish, and Eastern religions (Lease et al., 2005). I have been

granted permission to revise the wording to remove Christian language, further making this non-denominational religiosity scale more suitable for a religiously diverse sample.

## Procedures

### *Data Collection*

An email containing the recruitment letter was sent to gay and lesbian individuals inviting them to participate in the study and to pass the email along to any other gay and lesbian individuals they know who may be interested in participating. The email provided participants with a link and a password to all the survey materials, which were posted on Survey Monkey (2011). The recruitment letter was explicit in the voluntary nature of this study and assuring so that the researchers would not know who had completed the survey. This ensured that participants did not feel undue pressure or coercion to participate. Participants completed an anonymous on-line survey; thus, the participants' names were unknown. To insure the confidentiality, all the data from the anonymous questionnaire and assessments were transferred to a USB memory key and were stored in a locked cabinet maintained by the principle investigator. No one else had access to these questionnaires.

Individuals who agreed to participate were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire. In addition, quantitative data was collected using the following measures: Lesbian and Gay Identity Scale (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000), Outness Inventory (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000), Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992), and Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire (SCSRFQ; Plante & Boccaccini, 1997b).



Before recruiting participants, volunteers who met the study criteria but were not part of the study completed the demographic questionnaire and four measures for this study. The pilot volunteers were used to gain an estimated amount of time to complete the survey. The volunteers needed approximately 5-10 minutes, averaging 6 minutes, to complete the demographic questionnaire and the four measures. The Recruitment Letter, Consent Form, and Demographic Questionnaire are included in Appendix A, B, and C, respectively.

### *Study Design and Statistical Analyses*

The following statistical analyses were tested in the current study: the first research question (What is the effect of the individual's religious identity on level of acceptance concern, level of internalized homonegativity, and level of outness?) was tested using a using a Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The predictor variable was religious identity and the criterion variables were acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness. Since there was an effect for acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness; follow-up analyses were conducted to explore the impact of religious identity on these variables after controlling for religiosity. These follow-up analyses were tested using a Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA). The predictor variable was religious identity; the criterion variables were acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness; and the covariate was religiosity. Based on the effect for outness, supplemental follow-up analyses were completed to access the impact of religious identity on the following outness subscales: Out to World, Out to Family, and Out to Religion subscales (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000).

These follow-up analyses were tested using a MANOVA. The predictor variable was religious identity and the criterion variables were Out to World, Out to Family, and Out to Religion.

The second research question (What is the effect of the individual's racial/ethnic identity on the level of acceptance concern, level of internalized homonegativity, and level of outness?) was tested using a MANOVA. The predictor variable was racial/ethnic identity and the criterion variables were acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness. Although there was not an effect for outness; follow-up analyses were completed to explore the impact of racial/ethnic identity on these variables after controlling for the level of racial/ethnic identity. These follow-up analyses were tested using a MANCOVA. The predictor variable was racial/ethnic identity; the criterion variables were acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness; and the covariate was the level of racial/ethnic identity. Additional follow-up analyses were completed since there was an effect for outness; follow-up analyses were completed to assess the impact of racial/ethnic identity on the following outness subscales: Out to World, Out to Family, and Out to Religion subscales (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). These follow-up analyses were tested using a MANOVA. The predictor variable was racial/ethnic identity and the criterion variables were Out to World, Out to Family, and Out to Religion.

The third, fourth, and fifth research questions (What is the influence of individual's level of religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity on the level of acceptance concern? What is the influence of individual's level of religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity on level of internalized homonegativity? What is the influence of

individual's level of religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity on level of outness?) were tested using three Multiple Regressions. The predictor variables were religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity and, the criterion variables were acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness.

### *Power Analysis*

In order to ascertain the appropriate sample size for the present study and to have a meaningful outcome, three power analyses were performed. To do the power analysis, I utilized the computer program G\*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) and employed Cohen's (1988) criteria for effect size. The first hypothesis, the individual's religious identity was expected to influence the level of acceptance concern, level of internalized homonegativity, and level of outness was tested using a MANOVA in order to test the effect between religion and the following variables: level of acceptance concern, level of internalized homonegativity, and level of outness. Assuming values of  $\alpha = 0.05$  and power = 0.80 with a medium effect size of .25, 33 was the estimated sample size. Then, Analysis of Variances (ANOVAs) were performed to find out where the differences between groups exist. Assuming values of  $\alpha = 0.05$  and power = 0.80 with a medium effect size of .25, 158 was the estimated sample size. The actual power for the MANOVA was .99, and observed power for the acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness each had .99 as power. To run a post hoc comparison, the power for this test is 0.10 for a small effect size and 0.40 for a large effect size. Further post-hoc MANCOVAs and pairwise comparisons were completed to see if there was a main effect and interaction between religious identity and religiosity to determine

whether religious denominations within groups were significant. The actual power for the MANCOVA was .99, and observed power for the acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness were .99, .98, and 1.0, respectively.

The second hypothesis, the individual's racial/ethnic identity was expected to influence the level of acceptance concern, level of internalized homonegativity, and level of outness was tested using a MANOVA in order to test the effect between race/ethnicity and the following variables: level of acceptance concern, level of internalized homonegativity, and level of outness. Assuming values of  $\alpha = 0.05$  and power = 0.80 with a medium effect size of .25, 30 was the estimated sample size. Then, an ANOVA was performed to find out where the differences between groups exist. Assuming values of  $\alpha = 0.05$  and power = 0.80 with a medium effect size of .25, 128 was the estimated sample size. The actual power for the MANOVA was .411, and .422, .339, and .423 were the observed powers for the acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness ANOVAs, respectively. The partial  $\eta^2$  (.027) for the MANOVA and partial  $\eta^2$  (.014-.018) for the ANOVAs suggest a small to moderate effects size (Cohen, 1988). According to Cohen, partial  $\eta^2$  of .01, .06, and .14 are equivalent to small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively. Further, Box' M was significant and the racial/ethnic identities differ in their covariance matrices and the Levene's test for internalized homonegativity was violated. Therefore, the low power is due to the small effect and larger than expected error variance. To run a post hoc comparison, the power for this test is 0.10 for a small effect size and 0.40 for a large effect size. Further post-hoc MANCOVAs and pairwise comparisons were completed to see if there was a main effect and interaction between racial/ethnic identity and level of racial/ethnic identity to

determine whether racial/ethnic membership within groups were significant. The actual power for the MANCOVA was .812, and observed power for the acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness were, .465, .908, and .381, respectively.

For the third, fourth, and fifth hypotheses, three Multiple Regressions were performed to investigate the influence of individual's level of religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity on the level of acceptance concern, level of internalized homonegativity, and level of outness. The third hypothesis, level of religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity was expected to influence the level of acceptance concern was tested utilizing a Multiple Regression. The fourth hypothesis, level of religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity was expected to influence the level of internalized homonegativity was tested using a Multiple Regression. The fifth hypothesis, level of religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity was expected to influence the level of outness was tested utilizing a Multiple Regression. Assuming values of  $\alpha = 0.05$  and power = 0.80 with a medium effect size of .15, 68 was the estimated sample size. The Multiple Regressions had observed powers for acceptance, internalized homonegativity, and outness of .99, .93, and .93, respectively.

## CHAPTER IV

### Results

In this chapter, descriptive statistics, tests of hypotheses, supplemental analyses, and a summary of findings are presented.

#### Descriptive Statistics of Primary Variables

Prior to testing the actual hypotheses for this study, overall descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum, and ranges) were calculated for each of the primary variables in the present study. The means and standard deviations for each of the variables based on religion and race/ethnicity are provided in Tables 2 and 3, respectively.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics of Religion*

	Christian	Jewish	Muslim	Other
	<i>n</i> = 119 (67.2%)	<i>n</i> = 25 (14.1%)	<i>n</i> = 8 (4.5%)	<i>n</i> = 25 (14.1%)
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )
Need for Acceptance (Acceptance Concern)	2.82 (1.17)	2.14 (.92)	4.50 (1.03)	2.88 (1.08)
Internalized Homonegativity	2.06 (1.13)	1.72 (.68)	3.88 (.99)	1.85 (.92)
Overall Outness	3.86 (1.41)	4.82 (1.29)	1.82 (.54)	3.40 (1.06)
Out to Family	4.86 (1.76)	5.95 (.97)	1.94 (.94)	4.67 (1.77)
Out to World	5.00 (1.68)	5.94 (1.06)	2.78 (1.11)	4.66 (1.69)
Out to Religion	1.71 (2.63)	2.56 (2.99)	.75 (.46)	.86 (1.82)
SCSRFQ	22.81 (10.27)	20.84 (7.18)	29.88 (8.01)	17.76 (9.57)

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics of Race/Ethnicity*

	White or European American  <i>n</i> =135 (76.3%)  <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American <i>n</i> =42 (23.7%)  <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )
Need for Acceptance (Acceptance Concern)	2.71 (1.13)	3.09 (1.36)
Internalized Homonegativity	1.99 (.98)	2.30 (1.46)
Overall Outness	3.94 (1.41)	3.49 (1.52)
Out to Family	5.10 (1.70)	4.07 (1.79)
Out to World	5.12 (1.63)	4.55 (1.83)
Out to Religion	1.60 (2.57)	1.86 (2.53)
MEIM	2.75 (.60)	3.05 (.73)

## Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 stated that the individual's religious identity would influence the level of acceptance concern, level of internalized homonegativity, and level of outness. Specifically, it was expected that (a) participants with a Jewish religious identity would have less acceptance concern than Christian or Muslim participants, (b) participants with a Jewish religious identity would have less internalized homonegativity than Christian or Muslim participants, and (c) participants with a Jewish religious identity would have higher disclosure levels than Christian or Muslim participants. This hypothesis was evaluated using a MANOVA. The predictor variable was religious identity and included the following four groups: Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Other. The criterion



variables were acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness. Box' M was significant and the religious identities differ in their covariance matrices; however, since due to the high power (.999), analyses were completed and should be reviewed cautiously. Significant differences were found among the four religious identities on the dependent measures [Wilks'  $\Lambda = .739$ ,  $F(9, 416.32) = 6.11$ ,  $p < .001$ ]. The multivariate  $\eta^2$  based on Wilks'  $\Lambda$  was .096; therefore, approximately 10% of the variance in the dependent variables accounted for by the religious identity.

Analyses of Variances on each dependent variable were conducted. To control for Type I error a Bonferroni correction was used to test each ANOVA at the significant level of .017 (.05 was divided by 3, the number of ANOVAs performed). The ANOVA for acceptance concern was significant [ $F(3, 173) = 9.06$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .14$ ], the ANOVA for internalized homonegativity was significant [ $F(3, 173) = 9.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .14$ ], and the ANOVA for outness was also significant [ $F(3, 173) = 11.56$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .17$ ].

Since Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was not violated, Scheffe post hoc tests were used. Post hoc analyses to the ANOVA for level of acceptance concern, level of internalized homonegativity, and level of outness were conducted using pairwise comparisons to identify which variables affected religious identity. The results for level of acceptance concern were significantly different between Christians ( $M = 2.82$ ) and Muslims ( $M = 4.50$ ), Jews ( $M = 2.14$ ) and Muslims ( $M = 4.50$ ), as well as Muslims ( $M = 4.50$ ) and Other religious identities ( $M = 2.88$ ), but there were no differences between Christians and Jews, Christians and Other religious identities, or Jews and Other religious identities. The levels of internalized homonegativity results were significantly different between Christians ( $M = 2.06$ ) and Muslims ( $M = 3.88$ ), Jews ( $M = 1.72$ ) and Muslims

( $M = 3.88$ ), as well as Muslim ( $M = 3.88$ ) and Other religious identities ( $M = 1.85$ ), but there were no significant differences between Christians and Jews, Christians and Other religious identities, or Jews and Other religious identity. The level of outness results were significantly different between Christians ( $M = 3.86$ ) and Jews ( $M = 4.82$ ), Christians ( $M = 3.86$ ) and Muslims ( $M = 1.82$ ), Jews ( $M = 4.82$ ) and Muslims ( $M = 1.82$ ), Jews ( $M = 4.82$ ) and Other religious identities ( $M = 3.46$ ), as well as Muslims ( $M = 1.82$ ) and Other ( $M = 3.40$ ) religious identities, but there were not differences between Christians and Other religious groups.

Therefore, hypothesis 1a was partially supported since Muslims have higher levels of acceptance concern than Jews. Though, Christians did not significantly differ from Jewish participants in terms of their level of acceptance concern. Hypothesis 1b was also partially supported; findings suggest that Muslim participants had significantly higher levels of internalized homonegativity than any other religious group. However, Christian participants did not have significantly higher levels of internalized homonegativity than Jews. Hypotheses 1c was supported since Jews had higher levels of outness than Christian as well as Muslim participants, but were not significantly different from Other religious identities. Further, Christians were more out than Muslims but did not differ from Other religions, and Muslims were less out than any other religious identities.

The second hypothesis stated that the individual's racial/ethnic identity would influence the level of acceptance concern, level of internalized homonegativity, and level of outness. Specifically, it was expected that (a) the Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American Combined Group would have higher levels of acceptance concern than White

participants, (b) the Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American Combined Group would have higher levels of internalized homonegativity than White participants, and (c) the Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American Combined Group would have lower levels of disclosure than White participants. This hypothesis was tested using a MANOVA. The predictor variable was racial/ethnic identity and included the following racial/ethnic groups: (a) European American or White and (b) the Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American Combined Group. The criterion variables were acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness. The MANOVA was insignificant [ $Wilks' \Lambda = .973$ ,  $F(3, 173) = 1.58$ ,  $p = .19$ ]; therefore, hypothesis 2 was not supported.

The third hypothesis stated that the participants' religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity would influence the level of acceptance concern, and it was expected that lower levels of religiosity and racial/ethnic identity would predict lower levels of acceptance concern. This hypothesis was tested using a Multiple Regression. The predictor variables were religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity and, the criterion variable was acceptance concern. The level of racial/ethnic identity and level of religiosity accounted for a small but significant proportion of acceptance concern variability [ $R^2 = .041$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .030$ ,  $F(2, 174) = 3.75$ ,  $p = .025$ ]. However, hypothesis 3 was not supported since unexpectedly lower levels of racial/ethnic identity predicted higher levels of acceptance concern; however, the levels of religiosity did not impact the participant's level of acceptance concern.

Based on the standard beta weights, the level of racial/ethnic identity was significant and accounted for the largest amount of variance ( $\beta = -.187$ ,  $p = .013$ ). The

beta weight for religiosity was insignificant. Table 4 summarizes the coefficients of the multiple regression analysis for acceptance concern.

Table 4

*Multiple Regression for Acceptance Concern*

	B	Standard Error	$\beta$
Level of Racial/Ethnic Identity	-.349	.139	-.187
Religiosity	.010	.009	.086

The fourth hypothesis stated that the individual's religiosity and racial/ethnic identity would influence her or his level of internalized homonegativity, and it was expected that higher levels of religiosity and racial/ethnic identity would predict a higher levels of internalized homonegativity. This hypothesis was tested using a Multiple Regression. The predictor variables were religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity and, the criterion variable was internalized homonegativity. The level of racial/ethnic identity and level of religiosity accounted for a small but significant proportion of internalized homonegativity variability [ $R^2 = .103$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .092$ ,  $F(2, 174) = 9.94$ ,  $p < .001$ ]. Hypothesis 4 was partially supported since higher levels of religiosity resulted in higher levels of internalized homonegativity whereas unexpectedly higher levels of racial/ethnic identity predicted lower levels of homonegativity.

Based on the standard beta weights, the level of racial/ethnic identity was significant and accounted for the largest amount of variance ( $\beta = -.23$ ,  $p = .002$ ). The beta weight for religiosity was also significant ( $\beta = .23$ ,  $p = .002$ ). Table 5 summarizes the coefficients of the multiple regression analysis for internalized homonegativity.

Table 5

*Multiple Regression for Internalized Homonegativity*

	B	Standard Error	$\beta$
Level of Racial/Ethnic Identity	-.403	.125	-.231
Religiosity	.026	.008	.228

The fifth hypothesis stated that the participants' religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity would affect her or his level of outness, and it was expected that higher levels of religiosity and racial/ethnic identity would predict a lower level of disclosure. This hypothesis was tested using a Multiple Regression. The predictor variables were religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity and, the criterion variables was outness. The level of racial/ethnic identity and level of religiosity accounted for a significant but small proportion of variability in outness [ $R^2 = .077$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .066$ ,  $F(2, 174) = 7.22$   $p = .001$ ]. Hypothesis 5 was not supported, and unexpectedly higher levels of religiosity predicted higher levels of outness whereas the level of racial/ethnic identity did not impact the participant's disclosure level.

In examining the standard beta weights, the level of religiosity ( $\beta = .23$ ,  $p = .002$ ) was significant and accounted for the largest amount of variance. The beta weight for the level of racial/ethnic identity was insignificant. Table 6 summarizes the coefficients of the multiple regression analysis for outness.

Table 6

*Multiple Regression for Outness*

	B	Standard Error	$\beta$
Level of Racial/Ethnic Identity	.318	.164	.141
Religiosity	.034	.011	.234

## Supplemental Analyses

Based on the significant findings for Hypothesis 1; follow-up analyses were utilized to explore the impact of religious identity on these variables after controlling for level of religiosity. Hypothesis 1a was partially supported, and as expected Jews had lower levels of acceptance concern than Muslim, but contrary to predictions, Jews did not differ from Christians. Hypothesis 1b was also partially supported in that Jews had lower levels of internalized homonegativity than Muslims, but Jews did not differ from Christians. Hypothesis 1c was supported, and as predicted Jews had higher levels of outness than Christian and Muslim participants. Therefore, additional analyses were utilized to see if the level of religiosity significantly impacted the levels of acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness.

These follow-up analyses were tested using a MANCOVA. The predictor variable was religious identity; the criterion variables were acceptance, internalized homonegativity, and outness; and the covariate was religiosity. Box' M was significant and the religious identities differ in their covariance matrices; however, since due to the high power (.999), analyses were completed and should be reviewed cautiously. The covariate, level of religiosity, was significant [Wilks'  $\Lambda = .840$ ,  $F(3, 170.00) = 10.83$ ,  $p <$

.001]. The multivariate  $\eta^2$  based on Wilks'  $\Lambda$  was, .16, therefore approximately 16% of the variance was accounted for by the level of religiosity. Significant differences were found among the four religious identities on the dependent measures [Wilks'  $\Lambda = .738$ ,  $F(9, 413.88) = 6.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ]. The multivariate  $\eta^2$  based on Wilks'  $\Lambda$  was, .096; therefore, approximately 10% of the variance in the dependent variables was accounted for by the religious identity, after controlling for religiosity.

Next, Analyses of Covariance (ANCOVA) on each dependent variable were conducted. To control for Type I error, a Bonferroni correction was used to test each ANCOVA at the significant level of .017 (.05 was divided by 3, the number of ANCOVAs performed). The relationship between religious identity and religiosity was insignificant in regards to the levels of acceptance concern as well as of internalized homonegativity. The relationship between religious identity and religiosity was significant for the level of outness [ $F(1, 172) = 19.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .010$ ]. The ANCOVA for acceptance concern was significant [ $F(3, 172) = 8.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .13$ ], the ANCOVA for internalized homonegativity was significant [ $F(3, 172) = 7.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .12$ ], and the ANCOVA for outness was significant [ $F(3, 172) = 14.85$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .21$ ].

Since Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was not violated, Bonferroni post hoc tests were used. Post hoc analyses to the ANCOVA for level of acceptance concern, level of internalized homonegativity, and level of outness were conducted using pairwise comparisons to identify which variables affected religious identity, after controlling for religiosity. The level of acceptance concern between Christians ( $M = 2.82$ ) and Jews ( $M = 2.14$ ), Christians ( $M = 2.82$ ) and Muslims ( $M = 4.50$ ), Jews ( $M =$

2.14) and Muslims ( $M = 4.50$ ), as well as Muslims ( $M = 4.50$ ) and Other religious identities ( $M = 2.88$ ), were significantly different after controlling for religiosity. There were no differences between Christians and Other religious identities or Jews and Other religious identities. The levels of internalized homonegativity between Christians ( $M = 2.06$ ) and Muslims ( $M = 3.88$ ), Jews ( $M = 1.72$ ) and Muslims ( $M = 3.88$ ), as well as Muslim ( $M = 3.88$ ) and Other religious identities ( $M = 1.85$ ), were significantly different after controlling for religiosity. Though, there were no significant differences between Christians and Jews, Christians and Other religious identities, or Jews and Other religious identity. The level of outness between Christians ( $M = 3.86$ ) and Jews ( $M = 4.82$ ), Christians ( $M = 3.86$ ) and Muslims ( $M = 1.82$ ), Jews ( $M = 4.82$ ) and Muslims ( $M = 1.82$ ), Jews ( $M = 4.82$ ) and Other religious identities ( $M = 3.40$ ), as well as Muslims ( $M = 1.82$ ) and Other ( $M = 3.40$ ) religious identities, were significantly was after accounting for by religiosity. Still, there were no differences between Christians and Other religious groups.

An additional set of analyses were completed since Hypotheses 1c was supported, and Jews were found to have higher levels of outness than Christian as well as Muslim participants. Therefore, follow-up analyses were also completed to assess the impact of religious identity on the following outness subscales: Out to World, Out to Family, and Out to Religion subscales (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). These follow-up analyses were tested using a MANOVA. The predictor variable was religious identity and the criterion variables were Out to World, Out to Family, and Out to Religion. Box' M was significant and the religious identities differ in their covariance matrices; however, since due to the high power (.99), analyses were completed and should be reviewed cautiously.



Significant differences were found among the four religious identities on the dependent measures [Wilks'  $\Lambda = .781$ ,  $F(9, 416.320) = 4.95$ ,  $p < .001$ ]. The multivariate  $\eta^2$  based on Wilks'  $\Lambda$  was .08; therefore, approximately 8% of the variance in the dependent variables accounted for by the religious identity.

Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) on each dependent variable were conducted. To control for Type I error a Bonferroni correction was used to test each ANOVA at the significant level of .017 (.05 was divided by 3, the number of ANOVAs performed). The ANOVA for Out to Family was significant [ $F(3, 173) = 12.55$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .18$ ], the ANOVA for Out to World was significant [ $F(3, 173) = 8.50$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .13$ ], and the ANOVA for Out to Religion was insignificant [ $F(3, 173) = 2.23$ ,  $p = .086$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ ].

Since Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was violated for all three outness variables, Dunnett's C post hoc test was used. Post hoc analyses for Out to Family and Out to World were conducted using pairwise comparisons to identify which how specific religious identities affected each criterion variable. The results for Out to Family were significantly different between Christians ( $M = 4.86$ ) and Jews ( $M = 5.95$ ), Christians ( $M = 4.86$ ) and Muslims ( $M = 1.94$ ), Jews ( $M = 5.95$ ) and Muslims ( $M = 1.94$ ), Jews ( $M = 5.95$ ) and Other religious identities ( $M = 4.79$ ), as well as between Muslims ( $M = 1.94$ ) and Other ( $M = 4.67$ ) religious identities, but there were no differences between Christians and Other religious identities. The Out to World results were significantly different Christians ( $M = 5.00$ ) and Jew ( $M = 5.94$ ), Christians ( $M = 5.00$ ) and Muslims ( $M = 2.78$ ), Jews ( $M = 5.94$ ) and Muslims ( $M = 2.78$ ), Jews ( $M = 5.94$ ) and Other religious identities ( $M = 4.66$ ), as well as between Muslims ( $M = 2.78$ ) and Other ( $M = 4.66$ ) religious identities, but there were no differences between Christians and Other religious.

Therefore, in regards to being out to families, Jews were significantly more out than Christians, Muslims, and Other religious identities. Christians and Other religious identities were more out to their family than Muslims. In terms of being out to the world, Jews were significantly more out than Christians, Muslims, and Other religious identities. Christians and Other religious identities were more out to the world than Muslims. And as previously mentioned there were not significant findings in terms of being out to religion.

Although Hypothesis 2 was not supported; follow-up analyses were conducted to explore the impact of racial/ethnic identity on this variable after controlling for level of racial/ethnic identity. The follow-up analysis was tested using a MANCOVA. The predictor variable was racial/ethnic identity; the criterion variables were acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness; and the covariate was level of racial/ethnic identity. Box' M was significant and the racial/ethnic identities differ in their covariance matrices; the covariate, level of racial/ethnic identity, was significant [Wilks'  $\Lambda = .888$ ,  $F(3, 171.00) = 7.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ]. The multivariate  $\eta^2$  based on Wilks'  $\Lambda$  was .11; therefore approximately 11% of the variance was accounted for by the level of racial/ethnic identity. Significant differences were found among the two racial/ethnic identity groups on the dependent measures [Wilks'  $\Lambda = .937$ ,  $F(3, 171) = 3.83$ ,  $p = .011$ ]. The multivariate  $\eta^2$  based on Wilks'  $\Lambda$  was .063; therefore, approximately 6% of the variance in the dependent controlling for level of racial/ethnic identity.

Next, ANCOVAs on each dependent variable were conducted. To control for Type I error a Bonferroni correction was used to test each ANCOVA at the significant level of .017 (.05 was divided by 3, the number of ANCOVAs performed). The

relationship between racial/ethnic identity and level of racial/ethnic identity was significant for acceptance concern [ $F(1, 173) = 10.46, p = .001, \eta^2 = .057$ ], internalized homonegativity [ $F(1, 173) = 18.87, p < .001, \eta^2 = .098$ ], and the level of outness [ $F(1, 173) = 7.10, p = .008, \eta^2 = .035$ ]. The ANCOVA for internalized homonegativity was significant [ $F(3, 173) = 10.95, p = .001, \eta^2 = .060$ ] whereas the ANCOVAs for acceptance concern [ $F(3, 173) = 3.54, p = .061, \eta^2 = .020$ ] and outness [ $F(3, 173) = 2.77, p = .098, \eta^2 = .016$ ] were insignificant.

A Bonferroni post hoc test was utilized. Post hoc analyses to the ANCOVA for level of internalized homonegativity were conducted using pairwise comparisons to identify how internalized homonegativity was affected by racial/ethnic identity, after controlling for the level of racial/ethnic identity. The level of internalized homonegativity between White participants (1.99) and the Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American Combined Group (2.30) was significantly different after controlling for the level of racial/ethnic identity.

Additional follow-up analyses were completed to see how the Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American Combined Group differ from White participants on the following outness subscales: Out to World, Out to Family, and Out to Religion subscales (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). These follow-up analyses were tested using a MANOVA. The predictor variable was racial/ethnic identity and the criterion variables were Out to World, Out to Family, and Out to Religion. Significant differences were found among the two racial/ethnic identities on the dependent measures [Wilks'  $\Lambda = .931, F(3, 173) = 4.30, p = .006$ ]. The multivariate  $\eta^2$  based on Wilks'  $\Lambda$  was .069; therefore,

approximately 7% of the variance in the dependent variables accounted for by the racial/ethnic identity.

Next, Analyses of Variances (ANOVA) on each dependent variable were conducted. To control for Type I error a Bonferroni correction was used to test each ANOVA at the significant level of .017 (.05 was divided by 3, which was the number of ANOVAs performed). The ANOVA for Out to Family was significant [ $F(1, 175) = 11.64, p = .001, \eta^2 = .062$ ], the ANOVAs for Out to World [ $F(1, 175) = 3.66, p = .57, \eta^2 = .020$ ] and Out to Religion [ $F(1, 175) = .31, p = .58, \eta^2 = .002$ ] were insignificant. White participants ( $M = 5.10$ ) had significantly higher levels of outness to their families than the Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American Combined Group ( $M = 4.07$ ).

#### Summary

The results of the study were mixed in that only some of the hypotheses were supported. Overall, there were limited significant differences between racial/ethnic identity and the dependent variables while religious identity impacted the outcome variables with more robust findings.

It was expected in Hypothesis 1 that the individual's religious identity would influence the level of acceptance concern, level of internalized homonegativity, and level of outness. Specifically, it was expected that Jewish participants would (a) have less acceptance concern, (b) less internalized homonegativity, and (c) higher disclosure levels than Christian or Muslim participants. As predicted, Jews had lower levels of acceptance concern than Muslims; however, Jewish participants did not differ from Christians. As presupposed, Jews had a lower level of internalized homonegativity than Muslims, but Jews did not differ from Christians. As expected, Jews had higher levels of outness than

Christian and Muslim participants. In addition, Christians were found to be more out than Muslims participants.

Hypothesis 1 provided information about how individuals with different religious identities differed in terms of their acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness; however, the level of religiosity could confound the results. Therefore, supplemental analyses for Hypothesis 1 were conducted to examine the impact of religious identity on acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness after controlling for the level of religiosity. Religious identity had a significant effect on the levels of acceptance concern after controlling for religiosity whereas the level of internalized homonegativity and outness remained the same after accounting for religiosity.

In addition, the original Hypothesis did not address the fact that individuals from different religious identities may vary in their coming out process, including those to whom they choose to reveal their sexual orientation. Thus, additional analyses were completed to examine the influence of religious identity on the following outness subscales: Out to World, Out to Family, and Out to Religion subscales (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). Since the homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices assumption for these analyses were violated, the following analyses should be considered cautiously. Significant results were found for Out to Family and Out to World, but Out to Religion was insignificant. Specifically, Jews were significantly more out to their families than Christians, Muslims, and Other religious identities. In addition, Christians and Other religious identities were more out to their family than Muslims. In regards to being out to the world, Jews were significantly more out than Christians, Muslims, and Other

religious identities. Christians and Other religious identities were more out to the world than Muslims.

Hypothesis 2 posited that that the individual's racial/ethnic identity would influence the level of acceptance concern, level of internalized homonegativity, and level of outness. Specifically, it was expected that the Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American Combined Group would (a) have higher levels of acceptance concern, (b) higher levels of internalized homonegativity, and (c) lower levels of disclosure than White participants. Hypothesis 2a, 2b, and 2c were not supported

Although Hypothesis 2 was not supported and did not provide information about how individuals with different racial/ethnic identities differed in terms of their acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness; the level of racial/ethnic identity could confound these results. Supplemental analyses for Hypothesis 2 were conducted to examine the impact of racial/ethnic identity on the acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness after controlling for the level of racial/ethnic identity. Racial/ethnic identity had a significant effect on the level of internalized homonegativity, and was greater for the Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American Combined Group in comparison to White participants after the level of racial/ethnic identity accounted for.

In addition, the original Hypothesis did not address the fact that individuals from different racial/ethnic identities may vary in who they come out to. Therefore, additional analyses were completed to examine the influence of racial/ethnic identity on the following outness subscales: Out to World, Out to Family, and Out to Religion subscales (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). Significant results were found for Out to Family while Out to World and Out to Religion were insignificant. Specifically, White participants were

significantly more out than the Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American Combined Group in regards to their families.

In regards to Hypothesis 3, it was expected that the participants' religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity would influence the level of acceptance concern, and it was expected that lower levels of religiosity and racial/ethnic identity would predict the lower levels of acceptance concern. Unexpectedly, racial/ethnic identity was inversely related to the level of acceptance concern and the levels of religiosity did not impact the participant's level of acceptance concern.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that the individual's religiosity and racial/ethnic identity would influence her or his level of internalized homonegativity, and more specifically, it was expected that higher levels of religiosity and racial/ethnic identity would predict a higher levels of internalized homonegativity. As predicted, higher levels of religiosity impacted the participant's level of internalized homonegativity, whereas unexpectedly the level of racial/ethnic identity was inversely related to the level of homonegativity.

Hypothesis 5 posited that the participants' religiosity and level of racial/ethnic identity would affect her or his level of outness, and it was expected that higher levels of religiosity and racial/ethnic identity would predict a lower level of disclosure. Unexpectedly, the level of religiosity had a significant and direct relationship with the level of outness whereas the level of racial/ethnic identity did not impact the participant's disclosure level.

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion

In this chapter, the results of the study and supplemental analyses, implications of findings, recommendations for future research, the limitations, and conclusions are presented.

### Primary Hypotheses

The first hypothesis examined the impact of religious identity on the level of acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness as experienced by gay and lesbian individuals. This hypothesis partially supported, and the effect of religious identity remained significant even after controlling for the level of religiosity. The results of this study revealed that Muslims significantly differed from all religious identities in terms of acceptance concern. Muslims had higher levels of acceptance concern than Christians, Jews, and Other religions; whereas, Christians were not significantly different from Jews in regards to their levels of acceptance concern. Both Buchanan and colleagues (2001) and Lease and colleagues (2005) suggested that gay and lesbian individuals do not need to choose between their religion and sexual orientation; however, neither of these researchers considered the Muslim experience. Minwalla and colleagues (2005) focused on gay Muslims, and through interviews they noticed that most participants continued to struggle with integrating their religious identity with their sexual orientation. In addition, according to the contributors of the Pew Forum Religion



(2007), Muslims were among the least accepting of homosexuality. Therefore, growing up in the Muslim religion and recognizing how others view their sexual orientation appear to have impacted the ability to accept their sexual orientation.

Muslims were also found to have significantly higher levels of internalized homonegativity than Christians, Jews, and Other religions, whereas Christians were not significantly different from Jews in regards to their levels of internalized homonegativity. As previously mentioned, the story of Lut in the Qur'an has been used to condemn gay and lesbian sexual behavior and of the 80 countries where homosexuality is a crime, about 33% are predominantly Muslim countries (Hélie, 2004; International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, 2009). Therefore, gay and lesbian Muslims have faced religiously and culturally-based homonegativity. The intersection of religion and culture should be considered to better understand these results. Previous scholars have noted that the combined effects of heterosexism and racism may result in high levels of internalized homonegativity (Dube & Savin-Williams, 1999), and perhaps the same is true for individuals who experience religiously-based prejudice as well as heterosexism.

Jewish individuals were significantly more likely than Christians or Muslims to disclose their sexual orientation. These data are consistent with previous research that suggests Jewish individuals are more accepting of gays and lesbians (Pew Forum on Religion, 2007), and Dode's (2004) proposition that Judaism tends to have a more open-minded approach to interpreting religious texts. Further, when the level of religiosity was controlled for, the religious identity continued to impact the levels of outness.

Interestingly, although there were significant differences between religious identities with regard to level of outness; the level of outness to religion was

insignificant. Across the board, participants ranked their outness to religion lower than outness to family or the world and this suggests that individuals who participated in this study may be in the process of negotiating the intersection between their religious identity and sexual orientation. In terms of coming out to family members, Jews were significantly more out than Christians, Muslims, and Other religious identities. Additionally, Christians and Other religious identities were more out to their families than Muslims. In regards to being out to the world, Jews were significantly more out than any other religious identity, and Christians as well as Other religious identities were more out to the world than Muslims. As previously mentioned the higher disclosure rate reported by Jews may be related to the amount of support and acceptance provided by their religious and/or cultural community since the effect remained after controlling for level of religiosity. In considering the mixed results for Hypothesis 1, it is important to discuss the number of participants whose religious identity has evolved. One hundred nineteen participants identified as being raised as Christians and 49 individuals continued to identify Christian; of the 25 participants raised in Judaism, 20 identified as Jewish; 8 participants were raised Muslim and 7 have remained in this religion; and participants from Other religious identities have also redefined their religious identities. Therefore, the change in religious identities may relate to the ongoing process of integrating religious identity with one's sexual orientation and may partially explain the differences between religious identity and the levels of acceptance concerns, internalized homonegativity, and disclosure.

Although racial/ethnic identity on its own did not impact the level of acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, or outness; racial/ethnic identity did influence

internalized homonegativity after controlling for level of racial/ethnic identity. This finding is inconsistent with previous research, since the effect for racial/ethnic identity was not found until controlling for the strength of racial/ethnic identity. According to Dube and Savin-Williams (1999), ethnic sexual minorities were less likely to disclose their sexual orientation due to acceptance concerns and internalized homonegativity; they were worried about being rejected and were aware of culturally based homophobia. As discussed below, the low numbers among the individual racial/ethnic groups in the sample may have limited the findings, especially since this set of analyses had low power. If these analyses were run utilizing a more evenly distributed diverse sample, the outcome may have resulted in significant differences.

Consistent with previous findings, there were significant differences in the level of outness to families between racial identities (Dube & Savin-Williams, 1999; Merighi & Grimes, 2000; Moradi et al., 2010). However, the level of outness to the world and outness to religion were not significant. White participants were more out to their families than were those from the Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American Combined Group. Again, in terms of outness to religion, individuals across racial/ethnic groups were the least likely to come out within their religions in comparison to disclosure to the world or families.

Unexpectedly, the levels of racial/ethnic identity were inversely related to the levels of acceptance concern, whereas the levels of religiosity did not impact the participant's level of acceptance concern. Further, the level of internalized homonegativity was influenced by the level of racial/ethnic identity and level of religiosity. While the level of religiosity was directly correlated to the level of

internalized homonegativity, unexpectedly racial/ethnic identity was inversely related to the level of homonegativity. Gay and lesbian individuals tend to negotiate multiple identities such as religious identity and racial/ethnic identity with their sexual orientation, and this process may be influenced by which identities feel more salient. Perhaps individuals who have negotiated their racial/ethnic identity and sexual orientation may experience lower levels of acceptance concern as well as lower levels of internalized homonegativity. However, with a predominantly White sample, the issue of racial/ethnic identity may not have been as salient, due to White privilege; hence, they may not have had to manage the combined effects of racism and heterosexism. Further, since the Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American Combined Group was small and self-selected; these results may not accurately represent the characteristics of these individual subgroups. Therefore the inverse relationship between level of racial/ethnic identity acceptance concerns as well as internalized homonegativity should be further explored.

Also, higher levels of religiosity predicted higher levels of outness, whereas the level of racial/ethnic identity did not impact the participant's disclosure level. It was hypothesized that higher levels of religiosity and racial/ethnic identity would result in lower levels of disclosure based on the preliminary findings by Hunsberger (1996) that correlated prejudice towards gay and lesbian individuals with religious conservatism across religious groups as well as literature suggesting that the negative messages in racial/ethnic minority communities frequently intersect with strong religious views, often to a greater extent than in the White community (Smith et al., 2008). Previous researchers such as Dube and Savin-Williams (1999) as well as Merighi and Grimes (2000) have reported that culture may impede the coming out process; however, the level

of ethnic identity has not been considered as part of this process. As previously mentioned, White participants were more out to their families than the Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American Combined Group, and the results may be due to the lack of heterogeneity in the sample. Therefore, the interaction between racial/ethnic identity and level of racial/ethnic identity on disclosure should be a focus of future research.

### Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study have implications for practice, research, training, and advocacy. Especially, since this was the first study to investigate the influence of intersecting identities on the levels of acceptance concern, disclosure, and internalized homonegativity experienced by gay and lesbian individuals. Previous scholars have suggested that gays and lesbians may need to negotiate the intersection of identities such as religion or race/ethnicity with their sexual orientation, and this process may vary based on saliency (Chan, 1989; Schnoor, 2006). Therefore, these findings may assist clinicians who work with gay and lesbian individuals.

According to Ritter and O'Neill (1989), gays and lesbians from Judeo-Christian religions used to believe that their three options were conversion, celibacy, or false heterosexual relationship; therefore, they may have believed that they had to choose between their sexual orientation and their religion. These notions may have also been reinforced by societal heterocentrism with the inclusion of homosexuality in the DSM. It wasn't until after the Kinsey studies from the 1940's and 1950's, with the removal of homosexuality from the DSM, Cass' sexual identity theory, and the gay liberation movement that concerns about acceptance, internalized homonegativity, and the coming

out process were addressed empirically. Over the last ten years, scholars have started to investigate how gay and lesbian individuals are re-negotiating their religious identities to integrate them with their sexual orientation (Buchanan et al, 2001). Further, scholars are beginning to demonstrate that, although religion remains a source of stigma for some gay and lesbian individuals as well as their families, it can also be a source of support (Lytle et al., 2011; Ream, 2001). Therefore, clinicians working with gay and lesbian individuals as well as their families could benefit from acknowledging the complex relationship between multiple salient identities and how to support individuals who are trying to negotiate these identities. For instance, findings from the current study suggest that gay and lesbian Muslim individuals may need more support with regard to their acceptance concerns, internalized homonegativity, and disclosure.

In addition, the impact of heterosexism and racism may further complicate the process gays and lesbians go through in dealing with acceptance concerns, internalized homonegativity, and disclosure. Practitioners should be aware of that gay and lesbian individuals from Black, Latino/a, Asian, or Native American cultures might have lower disclosure levels. Further, scholars have suggested that higher levels of internalized homonegativity in racial/ethnic communities relates to the belief that being a sexual minority is a “White Phenomenon” (Dube & Savin-Williams, 1999; Smith et al., 2008); thus, clinicians may need to recognize that gay and lesbians of color may fear that coming out could leave them without family or community support. Some gay and lesbian individuals of color may try to pass as heterosexual in their racial/ethnic communities or feel forced to choose between their race/ethnicity and their sexual orientation (Smith et al.). Therefore, it could be beneficial to assist racially/ethnically

diverse gay and lesbian individuals with exploring the advantages (psychological wellbeing) with the disadvantages (potential stigma) to coming out. Further, it is imperative that training programs include gay and lesbian concerns within their multicultural framework, especially at religiously affiliated universities that are interested in promoting multicultural competence. Smith and colleagues (2008) offered multicultural competency suggestions for counselor education programs to include an increased awareness of classism, ableism, and heterosexism through class discussions as well as practica opportunities, in order to better meet the needs of these oppressed clients. In addition to the aforementioned suggestions, training programs may want to consider offering multicultural seminars focused on gay and lesbian concerns such as acceptance, internalized homonegativity, and disclosure. Training programs would also benefit from classroom discussions that go beyond exploring specific marginalized groups, to address the intersection of multiple identities. Lastly, training programs should consider how they can facilitate GLBT students and allies with mentors who can support their clinical and research development.

Legalized discrimination in the United States continues to impact acceptance concerns, internalized homonegativity, and disclosure of gay and lesbian individuals (Corrigan & Matthews, 2003; Herek et al., 2009). The issue of legalized discrimination has implications for practice, training, research, and advocacy. Practitioners working with gay and lesbian individuals should familiarize themselves with state and national laws that allow for prejudice and stigma towards gays and lesbians to persist. For instance, gay and lesbian individuals could be fired for coming out in most states. Therefore, clinicians should be prepared to help their clients consider the advantages

(psychological advantages and decrease stigma) as well as potential disadvantages of disclosure (legalized discrimination). Training programs may want to consider the impact that legalized discrimination could have on their faculty and students which may be compounded by APA's footnote 4 (American Psychological Association, 2008).

### Recommendations for Future Research

In Chapter I, the concerns over grouping GLBT individuals together in research was discussed. By putting gay and lesbian individuals into an umbrella category with bisexual and transgender individuals, the unique characteristics of bisexual and transgender individuals tend to be overlooked (Fassinger & Arseneau, 2006). Therefore, future researchers should continue to explore the intersection of religious and racial/ethnic identities on acceptance, internalized homonegativity, and outness as experienced by bisexual individuals, and additional research should focus on the intersection of identities as they pertain to transgender and/or gender variant individuals.

Although Hypothesis 3 was not supported, the unexpected finding that racial/ethnic identity was inversely related to the level of acceptance concern is of interest. Hypothesis 4 was partially supported, but also had an unexpected finding in that the level of racial/ethnic identity was inverse related to the level of homonegativity. Finally, hypothesis 5 posited that higher levels of racial/ethnic identity and religiosity would predict lower levels of outness, and in part, the opposite was found. These findings may suggest that gay and lesbian individuals work on accepting and negotiating various identities simultaneously or perhaps the individuals who participated in this study have learned to accept the multiple aspects of their identities over the years through



negotiation and integration. While additional research exploring the impact of religious and racial/ethnic identities as they intersect with sexual orientation is needed; future studies should continue to explore the level of identification (e.g., religion and race) has on the experience of gay and lesbian individuals.

Furthermore, there is a lack of research addressing the intersection of a gay or lesbian identity with a non-Christian religious identity as well as investigating how this connection is further impacted by racial/ethnic identity. The few scholars that have researched gay and lesbian individuals from Jewish and Muslim backgrounds have had small sample sizes and most research has focused on the Christian perspective. Future researchers should also consider exploring the experience of gays and lesbians from various denominations within a religion.

In addition, scholars who have studied gay and lesbian individuals of color often group racially/ethnically diverse individuals into one racial category to compare with White gay and lesbian individuals due to small sample sizes and even when researchers focus on one race/ethnicity at a time, sampling is often an issue. Therefore, scholars should consider how to over-represent religiously and ethnically diverse individuals in their samples to better understand their unique experiences. Further, due to varying levels of ethnic identity, future researchers should think about investigating the impact of acculturation, assimilation, or generational cohorts as they influence the intersection of racial/ethnic identity and sexual orientation.

### Limitations of Present Study

As discussed in Chapter I, this study attempted to include individuals from across the United States from a variety of religious and racial/ethnic backgrounds in order to increase the generalizability of these results; however, there were a number of limitations such as self-selection, religion, race/ethnicity, sample biases, and the self-report nature of the study, particularly given the sensitivity of the topic.

In terms of the generalizability of this study, a methodological limitation was the under-representation of some religious and racial/ethnic groups. Approximately 119 participants were raised Christian (67.2%), 25 were raised in an Other religion (14.1%), 25 were raised Jewish (14.1%), and 8 were raised Muslim (4.5%). This sample had more representation from non-Christian religious groups in comparison to the national averages of 51.3 % Protestant, 23.9% Catholic, 1.7% Jewish, .6% Muslim, and less than 23% includes those who identify as other Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, unaffiliated, or other/don't know (Pew Forum on Religion, 2010). However, since the majority of the participants in the current study were Christian, the partially supported Hypotheses 1a and 1b may be attributable to the underrepresentation of Jewish participants. In particular, future studies may make greater efforts to include Jewish participants from more conservative denominations.

In addition, this study may be further limited to individuals who are active in religious organizations and may over-represent religions that are more gay and lesbian-affirming since these individuals would be more motivated to participate. As previously discussed, fundamentalist and conservative denominations of Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, and Christian religions are more likely to be intolerant towards gay and lesbian

individuals; gays and lesbians from more conservative religious organizations might be less likely to participate in this study. Perhaps this explains the low percentage of Muslim participants.

Although this study focused on individuals from diverse religious backgrounds, the sample size in each religious group did not permit analysis of within-group differences. Denominations and religious organizations within a religion differ. For instance, the contributors to the Pew Forum on Religion (2007) reported that Christians ranged from 12-69% in agreement with a statement about society accepting homosexuality. Similar variation is seen within other religions. Therefore, scholars should consider addressing denominational as well as individual differences among members of religious groups in future research on gays and lesbians.

This sample consisted of 135 White participants (76.3%), 19 individuals identified as Asian (10.7%), 10 were Black (5.6%), 9 were Latino (5.1%) and 4 were Native American (2.3%). In comparison to the developers of the 2008 U.S. Census Bureau estimated (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009), the ethnic identities of American as described in Chapter III, this sample had more representation of Asian, Native American, and White participants as well as less representative results for Black and Hispanic/Latino participants. Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c examined the impact of racial/ethnic identity on acceptance concern, internalized homonegativity, and outness were all insignificant; however, once the level of racial/ethnic identity was controlled for, acceptance concern was significantly different between the Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American Combined Group and White participants. The insignificant results for the Hypothesis 2 may be attributable to lack of heterogeneity in the sample.

Additionally, individuals from some collectivistic cultures may consider the potential for shaming their families and may have a stronger group identity than as an individual; therefore, individuals from collectivistic backgrounds may be less likely to participate, especially due to the nature of this study. Greene (1997) noted that gay and lesbian individuals of color may have to consider the lack of family and community support for coming out without knowing if the larger gay and lesbian community will be accepting while White gay and lesbian individuals may not view their racial/ethnic identity as a barrier to coming out.

The current study may over-represent individuals who are already involved with the gay and lesbian community, and thus, they could have been more motivated to participate. Also, a methodological limitation was the use of chain sampling. Since individuals who are more likely to participate may have been involved with gay and lesbian organizations, they could have forwarded the participant request to other gay and lesbian organizations, and therefore; this study may not represent gay and lesbian individuals who have limited their level of disclosure.

As previously noted, the current study focused on the intersection of religious and racial/ethnic identities as they impact gay and lesbian individuals; however, previous scholars have included bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and questioning individuals in their research of gays and lesbians. According to Fassinger and Arseneau (2006), if GLBT individuals are grouped together their unique differences may be overlooked. Although bisexual and transgender individuals may grapple with the intersection of multiple identities in their disclosure process; the focus of this study was on the experience of gay and lesbian individuals.

### Summary and Conclusion

The current study examined the influence of intersecting identities on the levels of acceptance concern, disclosure, and internalized homonegativity experienced by gay and lesbian individuals. Previous scholars have focused on identity research on the relationship between two identities (i.e., sexual orientation and racial/ethnic identity); however, few studies have included religion when examining the intersection of multiple salient identities. Therefore, this study was the first to address how religious and racial/ethnic identities impact an individual's acceptance concern, level of outness, and her or his level of internalized homonegativity.

A number of significant findings should be noted. The results of this study revealed that Muslims significantly differed from Christians, Jews, and Other religions; Muslims had higher levels of acceptance concern, higher levels of internalized homonegativity, and lower levels of outness. Christians did not differ from Jews with regard to their levels of acceptance or levels of internalized homonegativity; however, Jews were significantly more out than Christians and Muslims. In addition, religious identity had a significant effect on the levels of acceptance concern after controlling for religiosity whereas the level of internalized homonegativity and outness remained the same after accounting for religiosity. As for coming out to family members and the world, Jews were significantly more out than Christians, Muslims, and Other religious identities, and Christians as well as Other religious identities were more out than Muslims.

While racial/ethnic identity did not influence the level of acceptance concern, acceptance concern internalized homonegativity, or outness; internalized homonegativity

became significant after the level of racial/ethnic identity was controlled for. When specific types of disclosure were considered, White individuals were more out to their families than the Black, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American Combined Group. However, there were no significant findings in regards to level of outness to the world and outness to religion.

The level of racial/ethnic identity was found to inversely relate to the level of acceptance concern and the levels of religiosity did not impact the participant's level of acceptance concern. As predicted, higher levels of religiosity impacted the participant's level of internalized homonegativity whereas unexpectedly the level of racial/ethnic identity was inverse related to the level of homonegativity. Surprisingly, higher levels of religiosity predicted higher levels of outness whereas the level of racial/ethnic identity did not impact the participant's disclosure level. Therefore, the levels of religiosity and racial/ethnic identity should become a focus of future research in the experience of gay and lesbian individuals.

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## Appendix A

### Opportunity for Gay and Lesbian Individuals

I am a student in the Counseling Psychology Ph.D. Program at Seton Hall University, and I am the daughter of a gay man. I am inviting you to participate in a research study investigating the relationships between multiple identities (racial, ethnic, and religious) on gay and lesbian individuals' acceptance of their sexual orientation, degree of outness, and the levels of homonegativity they experience. These relationships are not well understood among mental health professionals, and this study can potentially provide insights that may advance the well-being of gay and lesbian individuals. The study will require approximately 10 minutes.

Participants will complete a demographic questionnaire and the following assessments: Lesbian and Gay Identity Scale, Outness Inventory, Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure, and Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study without any penalty at any time.

To insure anonymity, each participant will complete an anonymous on-line survey through Survey Monkey; thus, participant's names will be unknown and therefore cannot be used in connection with this study.

All the data from questionnaires and assessment will be transferred to a USB memory key and will be stored in a locked cabinet maintained by the principal investigator. No one outside of the research team will have access to these questionnaires.

If you are interested in participating in this study please click on the following link, which provides more information. You may also email me (Megan Lytle) at [megan.lytle@studentshu.edu](mailto:megan.lytle@studentshu.edu), or call me at 973-761-9451.

Please also feel free to forward this email to gay and lesbian individuals you know who may be interested in participating.

Appendix B  
Informed Consent



### *Researcher's Affiliation*

This study is being conducted by Megan C. Lytle, a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology Ph.D. program in the Department of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy, in the Seton Hall University College of Education and Human Services.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The overall purpose of this study is to advance the understanding the influence of intersecting identities on the levels of acceptance, disclosure, and homonegativity experienced by gay and lesbian individuals

### *Procedures and Duration*

Participants will complete a demographic questionnaire and four additional on-line assessments. The study will require approximately 10 minutes of time, during which participants will complete the following instruments:

### *Instruments*

Instruments in the study are: (1) demographic questionnaire regarding sex, race, ethnicity, religious background, current religion, and age; (2) Lesbian and Gay Identity Scale; (3) Outness Inventory; (4) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure; and (5) Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire.

### *Voluntary Nature of Participation*

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. Participants may decline to participate in the study at any time after beginning the study, and will not be penalized should they choose not to participate. Participants may withdraw their consent by informing the researcher of this decision.

### *Anonymity*

Participants will complete an anonymous on-line survey through Survey Monkey; thus, participant's names will be unknown and cannot be used in connection with this study.

### *Confidentiality*

To insure the confidentiality, all the data the anonymous questionnaire and assessments will be transferred to a USB memory key and will be stored in a locked cabinet maintained by the principal investigator. No one outside of the research team (Megan Lytle, M.A., Ed.S., and her advisor, Pamela Foley, Ph.D., will have access to these questionnaires.

### *Anticipated Risks*

There are no significant risks or discomforts likely to be associated with this study. However, participants who do experience significant distress are urged to use the American Psychological Association's psychologist locator to request a referral to a psychologist in your area through the following website: <http://locator.apa.org/>.

*Anticipated Benefits*

There are no expected individual benefits to the participants. However, this research may have broader benefits because of its potential to provide understanding that may advance the well-being of gay and lesbian individuals.

*Alternative Procedures*

This study does not involve any clinical treatment; therefore, there are no relevant alternative procedures.

*Whom to contact for additional information*

If participants have questions regarding the research process or would like to have a copy of the results, please contact Megan C. Lytle. If participants have questions regarding their rights as research participants, the Director of Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board (IRB), Dr. Mary Ruzicka, may be reached at 973-313-6314.

Megan C. Lytle, Ed.S., Principal Researcher  
megan.lytle@studentshu.edu  
973-761-9451

Dr. Pamela Foley, Faculty Advisor  
foleypam@shu.edu  
973-761-9451

Consent to participate is indicated by completing these assessments, and participants are affirming that they are at least 18 years old.

Appendix C  
Demographic Questionnaire

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

What do you consider your race and ethnicity?

\_\_\_\_\_

Which of the following categories do you most identify with (please check box)?

- ☐ Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander
- ☐ Black, African American, or Caribbean American
- ☐ European American or White
- ☐ Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin
- ☐ Native American

What was your family's religion (if any)?

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Please be specific)

What is your current religion (if any)?

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Please be specific)