

2009

Testing Religiosity's Impacts on Willingness to Communicate With Sexual Minority Members

Jenna L. H. Isakson

Follow this and additional works at: http://pilotscholars.up.edu/cst_studpubs



Part of the [Communication Commons](#)

Citation: Pilot Scholars Version (Modified MLA Style)

Isakson, Jenna L. H., "Testing Religiosity's Impacts on Willingness to Communicate With Sexual Minority Members" (2009).
Communication Studies Undergraduate Publications, Presentations and Projects. 47.
http://pilotscholars.up.edu/cst_studpubs/47

This Student Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Communication Studies at Pilot Scholars. It has been accepted for inclusion in Communication Studies Undergraduate Publications, Presentations and Projects by an authorized administrator of Pilot Scholars. For more information, please contact library@up.edu.

Testing Religiosity's Impacts on Willingness to Communicate With Sexual Minority Members

Jenna L.H. Isakson

Capstone Literature Review

Communication Across Barriers

Dr. Jeff Kerssen-Griep

December 9, 2008

I understand that in the interest of shared scholarship the University of Portland and its agents have the non-exclusive license to archive and make accessible my capstone project in whole or in part in all forms of media in perpetuity. Further, I understand that my work, in addition to its bibliographic record and abstract, may be available to a wider community of scholars and researchers through electronic access.

Abstract

The area of religiosity's impact on an individual's attitudes has been researched in a variety of cross-cultural ways, sometimes relating to attitudes about homosexuality. However, the behavioral manifestations of these attitudes have not been studied a great deal, particularly regarding communication behaviors. In this study, 61 university students were surveyed about their intercultural communication patterns, levels of religious commitment, and attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women. The purpose of this study was to extend research in this field. Correlation analyses demonstrated that highly religious individuals tended to be more apprehensive to communicate interculturally, especially with members of a sexual minority, and also reported greater prejudice against sexual minority members. Communication literature would benefit from further research on how communication behaviors across the sexuality barrier actually occur.

Testing Religiosity's Impacts on Willingness to Communicate
with Sexual Minority Members

Gay and lesbian rights are being questioned during every election and have become a pivotal debate topic. Rosik, Griffith, and Cruz (2007) found that not only should this issue be looked at academically, but it is of increasing social consequence. They state that there is a growing gap between devoutly religious individuals and the general culture when it comes to their attitudes on homosexuality. While the sociopolitical arena has increasingly shed more light on homosexuality, individuals in conservative religious communities are often those blamed for being homophobic due to their community being “the only remaining identifiable group holding coherent negative beliefs toward gay men and lesbian women,” (Rosik et al., 2007, p. 11). However, this homophobic label may be wrongly applied. This study is evaluating impacts of religiosity on attitudes toward homosexuals, but then going one step further to see how those attitudes effects their communication patterns with gay men and women.

The present study examines the relationship between participants' religiosity and their communication apprehension and willingness to communicate with gay men and lesbian women. Although existing research links communication apprehension and intercultural willingness to communicate across barriers, most such studies examined racial or ethnic barriers rather than sexual orientation differences. Similarly, research has described effects of people's religion on their attitudes toward gay men and women, but few have explored the communication patterns that arise from those conditions. This study sheds light on cross-barrier communication practices

as influenced by participants' religiosity. It is important to research this area not only because there is little research on it, but also, it will give a greater understanding of behavioral intentions associated with a person's religious attitudes, specifically regarding their intended communication patterns with people of a sexual minority. Research in all three relevant areas is reviewed below.

Literature Review

Religiosity

Religiosity, or religious commitment, is defined by Rosik (2007) as "the degree to which a person adheres to his or her religious values, beliefs, and practices and uses them in daily life" (p. 146). One study conducted by Allport and Ross in 1967 appears to be a foundational study of religious orientation of individuals, due to the frequency of its reference. Their report looked at the correlation between an individual's religious orientation and how prejudice that person seems to be. Allport and Ross (1967) confirmed past experiments' findings and even found one additional new trend. It had been previously established in studies that on average, church goers are more prejudiced than non-church goers (Allport & Ross, 1967). Both Allport and Ross (1967) and Wrench, Corrigan, McCroskey, and Punyanunt-Carter (2006) found church goers to be more ethnocentric. According to Sumner (as cited in Wrench et al., 2006) ethnocentrism is the "view of things in which one's own group is the center if everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it," (p.24). Thus, an in-group (religious-oriented individuals) and out-group (sexual minorities) paradigm is developed and prejudice perpetuates.

Within their study, Allport and Ross (1967) distinguished between types of church-goers. The first type is the intrinsically religious individual who "find their master motive in religion," live by the creed, and are brought to harmony by their religious beliefs (Allport &

Ross, 1967, p. 434). The second type of religious individual is the extrinsic type. This type uses their religion in a utilitarian manner to provide security, comfort, status, or social support (Allport & Ross, 1967, p. 434). The third finding, which was Allport and Ross's new discovery, was a group of churchgoers classified as indiscriminately pro-religious, where religion to these individuals is "ok," rather than good. Overall, the indiscriminately pro-religious were found to be more prejudice than the extrinsic and intrinsic type, and the extrinsic were found to be more prejudice than the intrinsic, making them the least (Allport & Ross, 1967).

Through the study conducted by Rosik et al. (2007), based on the religious orientations determined by Allport and Ross (1967), they found that the intrinsically religious orientation is positively correlated to homophobia, while extrinsic individuals are positively correlated to both racism and homophobia. In a similar study, Rosik (2007) found that "homophobia is an ideologically embedded construct whose normative values about same sex behavior can be at variance with those who adhere to a conservative religious ideology" (p. 151). Further within this study, Rosik (2007) found that intrinsically religious individuals limited their prejudice of sexual minorities to the moral dimension of homosexuality but did not restrict social contact with gay men and lesbian women. On the other hand, extrinsically-oriented individuals do not evaluate gay men and lesbian women based on morals, but rather would restrict social interaction. There seems to be a relationship between a person's religiosity and prejudice against those of a sexual minority, but how much does this seem to affect the communication behavior between individuals of different ideologies? According to Ragsdale (as cited in Punyanunt-Carter, Wrench, Corrigan, and McCroskey, 2008) religion not only affects values and beliefs but can impact communication behaviors used to interact with others.

Intercultural Communication Apprehension

One way that a person's religious orientation may affect a potential relationship with someone of a sexual minority, and vice-versa, is an individual's apprehension to communicate, and more specifically to communicate intercultural. According to Neuliep and McCroskey (1997, as cited in Punyanunt-Carter et al., 2008, p. 2) intercultural communication apprehension is "the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with people from different groups, especially cultural and/or ethnic groups." According to Donovan and MacIntyre (2004), the higher an individual's communication apprehension, the lower that person will evaluate her/his own communication competence, which can lead to anxiety. Daly and McCroskey (1984, as cited in Punyanunt-Carter et al., 2008) concluded that high anxiety or fear of a particular communication situation can lead an individual to withdraw from or avoid the situation all together. Due to this, individuals with high levels of intercultural communication apprehension tend to avoid communicating with people outside of their own culture or across intercultural barriers (Punyanunt-Carter, et al., 2008).

A few of the most prominent causes of communication apprehension found by Buss (as cited in Punyanunt-Carter, et al., 2008) include different, foreign, or atypical situations. These situations are all unfamiliar to a person and therefore can create uncertainty of how the communication with the stranger will unfold. This idea is encompassed in Berger and Calabrese's (as cited in Wrench et al., 2006) uncertainty reduction theory which states that "when people initially interact with each other there is innately an amount of uncertainty about the other's cognitions and behaviors," (p.27). This uncertainty can be worsened when it is dealing with cross-cultural communication. When strangers do decide to communicate with each other, Punyanunt-Carter et al. (2008) have found that in order to reduce the uncertainty within a social interaction with a stranger, the individuals will use non-verbal cues and

information-seeking strategies. As noted, communication apprehension can create anxiety and cause a person to withdraw from an intercultural interaction, therefore, a person must be “willing to communicate,” for an interaction to even occur. However, choosing to communicate with someone outside of an individual's in-group or culture can be influenced by he/she's ideologies and is separate from the apprehension they may experience. While apprehension and anxiety is an internal process, choosing to communicate is behavioral and is important to be considered in this context.

Willingness to Communicate

Willingness to Communicate (WTC), as it sounds, is the probability that an individual will choose to communicate (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004). McCroskey and Baer (1985, as cited in Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004) add that it is specifically in relation to speaking, when an individual has the freedom to do so. Willingness to communicate is directly influenced by an individual's communication apprehension and self-perception of competence (MacIntyre, 1994). Although a person's willingness to communicate gives an idea of that person's traits and personality, it is insufficient in reporting on their intercultural communication apprehension, as Kassing (1997) argued. Kassing (1997) pointed out that although people may be very willing to communicate within their own culture, they may be unwilling to communicate outside of it. Therefore, intercultural willingness to communicate (IWTC) is defined as “one's predisposition to initiate intercultural communication encounters,” (Kassing, 1997, p.400). While it is related to WTC, the IWTC is conceptually distinct (Kassing, 1997). A person's IWTC represents that person's willingness to communicate with out-group members, people unlike themselves. It is concerned with people's willingness to engage in conversation with people of different races and cultures (Kassing, 1997).

When a person chooses to communicate with a stranger, they are the communicator, and the other is the receiver of that communication. McCroskey and Richmond (1990, as cited in Kassing, 1997) found that the more distant a receiver is (a stranger vs. a friend), the less willing a person is to initiate communication. In context to this study, a highly religious-oriented individual may be less willing to communicate with a gay man, than with another highly religious-oriented individual. In this case, the religiously-oriented individuals make up the in-group, while the gay man would be considered an out-group member, and therefore, uncertainty and communication apprehension would influence the religious-oriented individuals' choice to communicate or not with the gay man. Kassing (1997) found that intercultural communication is more stress-provoking than intracultural communication, and thus can deter someone from engaging in an intercultural situation.

Rationale

Communication apprehension and willingness to communicate both are factors that influence and guide a person's interactions and communication behaviors with other people. Everyone makes decisions daily regarding whether and how to communicate with those around them. Sometimes that decision is easier because those around them are often within the same culture, or in-group as themselves. For this reason, Kassing (1997) developed the Intercultural Willingness to Communicate Scale to examine when people choose to communicate across barriers. When people do choose to communicate across a specific cultural barrier, "the actual or anticipated interaction...can lead to anxiety," and make communicating more difficult (Lin & Rancer, 2001, p. 64). This study examines the relationship between a person's religiosity and their communication patterns with a person considered to be a sexual minority. Rosik et al. (2007) found in several studies that religion, "particularly of a theologically conservative

orientation,” has been associated with homophobia (p.10). While this study, along with several others, has observed the attitudinal impact of religion on those across the sexual minority barrier, little has been researched on the communication patterns between the two.

Researching this area of the topic can broaden understanding of religiosity's effects on communication behavior and those communication behavior patterns across the sexual orientation barrier. This study is important because as Rosik, et al. (2007) found, homosexuality is becoming an increasing social issue and is often a topic of debate. However, studies have not shown if and how communication occurs between highly religious individuals and member of a sexual minority. It is important to investigate what is involved in creating constructive dialogue across that barrier.

After synthesizing the literature covering the three key elements of the study, one concept appeared repeatedly--ethnocentrism. As Allport and Ross (1967) and Wrench et al. (2006) found, church goers tend to be more ethnocentric than non-church goers. According to LeVine and Campbell (1972, as cited in Lin & Rancer, 2001), ethnocentrism is a person's "tendency to view their own group being the center of everything and to judge other groups based on its standards," (p. 63). Neuliep, Chaudoir, and McCroskey (2001, as cited by Lin & Rancer, 2001) discovered that ethnocentric in-group members tend to have the attitude that they are "strong and superior" while out-group members are "inferior and weak," (p.63). Since it has been found that church-goers tend to be more ethnocentric, it may be concluded that they are more likely to judge those of a sexual minority as inferior to their group. Lin and Rancer (2001) state that ethnocentrism "may create barriers for individuals of different backgrounds to communicate and understand each other," (63). Kassing (1997) recognizes ethnocentrism as a common barrier to intercultural communication and considers it a reason for a person's moderate to high

willingness to communicate, but low intercultural willingness to communicate. Wrench et al. (2006) concluded that the more an individual views their culture as “right,” the more apprehensive they are to communicate with someone outside of it. Therefore, the current study is essential to understand how ethnocentrism, stemming from religiosity, can impact communication over the sexual minority barrier.

Through reviewing existing literature related to religiosity, intercultural communication apprehension, and a person's intercultural willingness to communicate, several hypotheses can be offered.

H1: Religious emphasis scores will correlate positively with religious commitment scores.

H2: Religiosity scores will correlate positively with reported bias against gay men and lesbian women.

H3: Religiosity scores will correlate positively with intercultural communication apprehension scores.

H4: Religiosity scores will correlate negatively with intercultural willingness to communicate scores.

H5: Intercultural communication apprehension scores will correlate positively with bias against gay men and lesbian women.

H6: Intercultural willingness to communicate scores will correlate negatively with bias against gay men and lesbian women.

These hypotheses are based on the findings of previous studies discussed above, especially taking into consideration previous research on religiosity's affects on ethnocentrism.

Method

Procedure

Institutional Review Board approval was obtained before collecting data. Voluntary informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their completing a survey composed of five established scales. The survey was administered in one 100-level communication class and one 300-level philosophy class, was distributed to one religious group on campus; a few were distributed through convenience sampling in public areas of the campus.

Participants

Participants were 61 students at a Pacific Northwest university. Twenty-three of the respondents were male and 38 female. The ages of participants were 18 (n=16), 19 (n=11), 20 (n=13), 21 (n=14), 22 (n=5), 24 (n=1), and 30 (n=1). The reported sexual orientation of all 61 participants was heterosexual. There were 11 religious affiliations identified, which include Catholic (n=27), Christian (n=16), none (n=10), Lutheran (n=1), Unitarian (n=1), Episcopalian (n=1), Atheist (n=1), Agnostic (n=1), Presbyterian (n=1), United Methodist (n=1), and Buddhist (n=1).

Instrumentation

Intercultural Communication Apprehension. Five scales were used in this study. The Personal Report of Intercultural Communication Apprehension was developed by Neuliep and McCroskey (1997) to measure the level of an individual's intercultural communication apprehension. This is a five point likert-type scale consisting of 14 items, where strongly disagree = 1 and strongly agree =5. High scores indicate high intercultural communication apprehension; several items require reversing prior to analysis. Consistent with previous administrations, the present study found Cronbach's alpha = .90 for the scale.

Intercultural willingness to communicate. Kassing (1997) developed the Intercultural Willingness to Communicate scale with 12 items, six of which are filler items adapted from McCroskey's Willingness to Communicate scale (as cited in Kassing, 1997). For this study, the six filler items were dropped and one of the remaining items was modified to fit the current study. The modified item originally stated, "Talk with someone from another culture," but was changed to "Talk with someone who has a different sexual orientation than mine." For each of the six items, the respondents were asked to give a percentage of how often they would choose to communicate in each situation. "0" would suggest never while "100" would suggest always. High scores would indicate high intercultural willingness to communicate and low scores would indicate low intercultural willingness to communicate. The scale achieved Cronbach alpha = .93.

Attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. The participants completed the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale developed by Herek in 1994. This is a 20-item five point likert-type scale, where strongly disagree = 1 and strongly agree = 5. High scores represent prejudice attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. Several items required reversing before analysis. The reliability of this scale was strong at Cronbach's alpha = .96.

Religious emphasis. The Religious Emphasis Scale was developed by Altemeyer in 1988 to judge the emphasis an individual places on religion in their daily lives. This is a 10-item six point Likert-type scale, where no emphasis = 0 and very strong emphasis = 5. An example of one of these items is, "Taking part in religious youth groups." High scores would indicate a strong emphasis on religion in daily life. This scale's reliability was acceptable, Cronbach's alpha = .95.

Religious commitment. The Salience in Religious Commitment Scale developed by Roof and Perkins (1975) consists of three items, each offering a multi-point Likert-type scale. High

scores indicate high religious commitment. This scale differs from the Religious Emphasis Scale because it takes into consideration the internalization of the individual's religious beliefs (i.e. making life decisions based on religious beliefs), while the emphasis scale looks at the external displays of one's religion (i.e. attending youth groups). Previous reliability tests found an alpha reliability of .72; the present study could not find Cronbach's alpha due to the varying scales for each question.

Qualitative Communication Question. One question was developed specifically for this study, asking "What is your rationale for communicating with someone of a different sexual orientation than you? What thoughts guide your communication choices there?" This question was used as a qualitative examination and was not included in the statistical testing of the surveys. Unfortunately, due to printing errors, this question was included only on 27 of the surveys administered. The survey also sought demographic information including age, sex, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, and how many hours per week the respondent spends in religious activity.

Results

The first hypothesis predicted that having a high religious emphasis would mean also having a high religious commitment. For the Religious Emphasis Scale the maximum combined score was 50, with a mean score of 23 (SD = 13.6, N = 60). For the Salience in Religious Commitment Scale the maximum combined score was 12 and had a mean score of 7.6 (SD = 3.1, N = 59). Analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between religious emphasis and religious commitment scores, Pearson's $r = .83, p < .01$. Hypothesis One was supported.

The second hypothesis addressed the relationship between religiosity and attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women, predicting that a high religiosity would correlate with more bias

against gay men and lesbians. In order to examine this relationship a Pearson's correlation compared the Religious Emphasis Scale and Salience in Religious Commitment scales against the Attitudes toward Gay Men and Lesbian Women Scale. Each had a significant positive relationship with the bias scores. For the Religious Emphasis Scale, Pearson's $r = .49, p < .01$; for the Religious Commitment Scale, Pearson's $r = .51, p < .01$. This shows that people with both high religious emphasis and high religious commitment also tended toward bias against gay men and lesbians. Hypothesis Two was supported.

The third hypothesis stated that a person with high religiosity would also have high intercultural communication apprehension. To perform this analysis both the religious emphasis scale and commitment scale was compared with the Personal Report of Intercultural Communication Apprehension (PRICA). The Religious Emphasis Scale had a significant positive correlation, Pearson's $r = .34, p < 0.01$; the commitment scale had significant positive correlation, Pearson's $r = .28, p < 0.05$. Because the significance is higher between the emphasis scale and the PRICA, a person with an external emphasis on religion tends to be more apprehensive than a person with an internal religious commitment, yet those persons are also significantly intercultural communicatively apprehensive.

The fourth hypothesis predicted that persons with high religiosity are less interculturally willing to communicate. To judge this prediction a Pearson's correlation was run on both the Religious Emphasis Scale and Religious Commitment scale with the Intercultural Willingness to Communicate scale. Neither of these scales showed any significant correlation with their willingness to communicate interculturally. With the emphasis scale, Pearson's $r = .01, p = .93$; the commitment scale, Pearson's $r = .12, p = .38$.

The fifth hypothesis in this study looked at the relationship between intercultural communication apprehension and attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. To examine this relationship, a Pearson's correlation was conducted between the PRICA and the Attitudes toward Gay Men and Lesbian Women. This test resulted in significant positive correlation, Pearson's $r = .47, p < 0.01$. Therefore, people with high intercultural communication apprehension showed bias against gay men and lesbians.

The sixth hypothesis looked at the relationship between intercultural willingness to communicate and attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women, predicting that those willing to communicate would show less bias. Results approached significance in the predicted direction, Pearson's $r = -.3, p = .07$, but Hypothesis six was not supported.

The qualitative questions included on 27 of the surveys provide insight into respondents' rationale for communicating with a person of a sexual minority. The questions asked are "What is your rationale for communicating with someone of a different sexual orientation than you? What thoughts guide your communication choices there?" Twenty-two respondents answered this question, and two consistent themes arose from the questions. The most common theme was that people of a sexual minority are just another person, no different from that individual. Two people explained it by simply saying, "People are people." Many of the people who said something along those lines also stated that because of this, they don't communicate any differently. The second common theme was that people of a sexual orientation different from one's own have valuable life experiences and different viewpoints than that individual. Because of their perceived different viewpoints, some respondents felt that they could enhance their own life and become more knowledgeable from interactions with gay men and lesbian women.

Beyond these two themes, there were three unique answers. One individual said that “as long as [they] knew the individual, [they] would be ok, and would communicate no differently.” Another responded by saying, “Biologically they can’t help if they are gay/ lesbian” and “should not be discriminated against.” The last unique respondent said they would “want to offer support but not agree that they should act upon their orientation.” These responses add context to the survey scores indicating how people might choose to communicate with an individual across the sexual orientation barrier.

Discussion

This study investigated religiosity’s impacts on an individual’s intended communication behaviors across the sexual orientation barrier. It specifically examined intercultural communication apprehension and intercultural willingness to communicate in relation to communicating with gay men and lesbian women. In order to examine the relationships found, religiosity and communication will be looked at separately.

Religiosity

As stated earlier, religiosity is defined by Rosik (2007) as “the degree to which a person adheres to his or her religious values, beliefs, and practices and uses them in daily life” (p. 146). Through the two different scales used to observe an individual’s religiosity, this study was able to examine the impacts of both an external manifestation of religiosity (the emphasis scale), and an internalized manifestation (the commitment scale). For example, the data show that persons with high religious emphasis tend to have higher intercultural communication apprehension than persons with high religious commitment. This makes sense because the emphasis scale relates to a person’s external behaviors (praying, going to church/youth group, reading religious materials, etc.) and communicating is also an external behavior. However, persons with high religious

commitment also were found to have significant correlation meaning that they do have high intercultural communication apprehension.

The results show that persons with high religious emphasis and commitment are high in significance to being biased against gay men and lesbian women. This shows that while people who externally exhibit their religion are more apprehensive to communicate interculturally than people who internalize their religious beliefs, both held significant biases against gay men and lesbians.

Intercultural Communication Behaviors

The present study wanted to find out if dialogue between people with high religiosity and sexual minority members is likely to occur. The results show that highly religious community members are apprehensive to start an intercultural interaction. However, an area that could use further research is the reverse of this study. That would be to research if members of a sexual minority are willing to communicate with religious individuals. Although this study was unable to find any significant correlation between willingness to communicate and religiosity, significant information was found regarding the relationships between communication apprehension, religiosity, and attitudes toward people of a sexual minority. As discussed in the literature review, according to Neuliep and McCroskey (1997, as cited in Punyanunt-Carter et al., 2008, p. 2) intercultural communication apprehension is “the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with people from different groups, especially cultural and/or ethnic groups.” This study found that persons with high intercultural communication apprehension tended to hold biases against gay men and lesbians.

Of the 61 participants of this study, all identified with being heterosexual which shows that gay men and lesbians are not within their sexual orientation in-group and, therefore, they are

apprehensive of this cross-cultural barrier. Although the correlation found between intercultural willingness to communicate and attitudes toward gay men and women are not significant to rely on, it was close. Also, it was heading in the predicted direction, which was that individuals with high willingness to communicate would be less biased against people of a sexual minority.

Religiosity's Impacts on Communication

The most notable finding of religiosity's impacts on communication deals with intercultural communication apprehension. Analyses showed that high religiosity, both from the religious emphasis scale and religious commitment scale, has a significant relationship with having high intercultural communication apprehension. It also was found that individuals with high communication apprehension are biased against gay men and lesbian women. Therefore, because of these correlations, it can be said that individuals with high religiosity are less likely to communicate with people of a sexual minority because of their apprehension and prejudices, which can lead to anxiety and a desire to withdraw from an interaction with a gay man or a lesbian. It is interesting to note that the individuals who display their religious life through activities also are the ones more likely to be apprehensive and limit communication. While this does make sense, it is just interesting because people who internalize their religion and base life decisions upon it often are not as apprehensive.

Limitations

As with any study, this study has a few limitations that should be addressed. The first is that this research was conducted by using a questionnaire. By using a survey, less qualitative data is obtained from respondents. Had interviews been conducted and observational research done, more insight into actual communicative behaviors may have been achieved.

Secondly, while many of the correlations resulted in significance, the factor of social desirability could possibly be playing a role in the validity of this study. Particularly on the Attitudes toward Gay Men and Lesbian women because it contains some sensitive questions on an often taboo subject, as stated in the literature review, this topic is becoming a bigger social dilemma. However, the anonymity of the surveys may have helped the desirability problem.

Lastly, the number of participants and narrow population may influence the results found within the survey. The total number of surveys analyzed was 61. The population consisted solely of university students ranging from mostly age 18 to 24, with one 30 year old respondent. Although there were several religious orientations identified within the 61 surveys (11), the university in question as a whole is known to be a small, relatively conservative Catholic school. However, that does not imply that all the students are conservatively Catholic, it just shows that it may be a narrow population to survey from, especially with only 61 respondents.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to research the relationships between religiosity (both extrinsically and intrinsically), intercultural communication apprehension, intercultural willingness to communicate, and persons of a sexual minority. Because religiosity's impact on communicative behaviors across the sexuality barrier has rarely been researched, the present study is able to provide something new to communication studies literature. Overall, this study has demonstrated that a person's religiosity has an impact on both their attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women, and on their communicative practices, particularly on their intercultural communication apprehension, as predicted in the hypotheses. The more religious an individual is, the more apprehensive they may be to communicate with someone of a different sexual orientation than themselves. And those who exhibit their religion externally are even more likely

to be apprehensive, thus, limit their communication across this barrier, which is also an external way to exhibit their religious beliefs.

Drawing upon previous research, this is because people experience more anxiety when communicating outside of their culture. When people of high religiosity become more anxious or fearful about conversing with individuals of a sexual minority, prejudices can be reinforced and ethnocentrism persists, furthering the social dilemma. This study shows that more research needs to be conducted on how communication interactions occur between people of different sexual orientations, when they do occur. With a better understanding of how they occur, research can be conducted on how to make these interactions more fulfilling for both individuals and begin to close the gap between members of a sexual minority and individuals with high religiosity.

References

- Allport, G.W. & Ross, J.M. (1967). Personal religious orientation and prejudice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 5(4), 432-443.
- Altemeyer, B. (1988). *Enemies of freedom: Understanding right-wing authoritarianism*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Daly, J. A., & McCroskey, J.C. (Eds). (1984). Avoiding communication: Shyness, reticence, and communication apprehension. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Donovan, L.A. & MacIntyre, P.D. (2004). Age and sex difference in willingness to communicate, communication apprehension, and self-perceived competence. *Communication Research Reports*, 21(4), 420-427.
- Greene, B. & Herek, G.M. (1994). *Lesbian and gay psychology: Theory, research, and clinical application*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kassing, J.W. (1997). Development of the intercultural willingness to communicate scale. *Communication Research Reports*, 14(4), 399-407.
- LeVine, R.A. & Campbell, D.T. (1972). *Ethnocentrism: theories of conflict, ethnic attitudes, and group behavior*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Lin, Y. & Rancer, A.S. (2001). Ethnocentrism, intercultural communication apprehension, intercultural willingness-to-communicate, and intentions to participate in an intercultural dialogue program: Testing a proposed model. *Communication Research Reports*, 20(1), 62-72.
- McCroskey, J. C, & Baer, J. E. (1985, November). *Willingness to communicate: The construct and its measurement*. Paper presented at the annual convention of the Speech Communication Association, Denver, CO.

- McCroskey, J.C. & Richmond, V.P. (1990). Willingness to communicate: Differing cultural perspectives. *Southern Communication Journal*, 56, 72-77.
- Neuliep, J.W., Chadoir, M., & McCroskey, J.C. (2001). A cross-cultural comparison of ethnocentrism among Japanese and United States college students. *Communication Research Reports*, 18, 137-146
- Neuliep, J.W. & McCroskey, J.C. (1997). The development of intercultural and interethnic communication apprehension scales. *Communication Research Reports*. 14, 145-156.
- Punyanunt-Carter, N.M., Wrench, J.S., Corrigan, M.W., & McCroskey, J.C. (2008). An examination of reliability and validity of the religious communication apprehension scale. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 37(1), 1-15.
- Roof, W.C. & Perkins, R.P. (1975). On conceptualizing salience in religious commitment. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 14, 111-128.
- Rosik, C.H. (2007). Ideological concerns in the operationalization of homophobia, part II: The need of interpretive sensitivity with conservatively religious persons. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 35(2), 145-152.
- Rosik, C.H., Griffith, L.K., & Cruz, Z. (2007). Homophobia and conservative religion: Toward a more nuanced understanding. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 77(1), 10-19.
- Wrench, J.S., Corrigan, M.W., McCroskey, J.C., & Punyanunt-Carter, N.M. (2006). Religious fundamentalism and intercultural communication: The relationships among ethnocentrism, intercultural communication, religious fundamentalism, homonegativity, and tolerance for religious disagreements. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 35(1), 23-44.