

Societal Attitudes towards Homosexuality

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate potential relationships between religiosity, personal social contact, education and gender on societal attitudes towards homosexuality. There were 295 participants (males = 56, females = 239) and a battery of measures was used. Analysis of the data found there was a significant negative correlation between religiosity and attitudes towards homosexual males ($R = .226, p < 0.01$) and gay females ($R = .228, p < 0.01$). The study found significant positive correlations between personal social contact and attitudes toward gay males ($r = -.366, p < 0.01$) and gay females ($r = -.322, p < 0.01$). The study found there was a significant positive correlation between agreeableness and attitudes towards homosexual males ($r = -.149, p > 0.05$) and gay females ($r = -.162, p > 0.05$). Gender differences were found with female participants scoring lower in homonegativity in relation to both gay men and women.

Chapter One

Introduction

Meta-analysis shows a lot of research has been conducted into attitudes towards homosexuality, particularly in America. Research conducted by the American Enterprise Institute (2004) found that American society still harbours a more negative attitude towards homosexuality than other countries such as Britain. However, it found that their attitudes seemed to be predicted off similar demographic characteristics. In Ireland in 1993 homosexuality was decriminalised by the state and in 2011 civil partnership was introduced. In May 2015 marriage equality was voted into Ireland by popular vote becoming the first country ever to do so. The final results showed the yes vote won by a count of 62.1% meaning 37.9% voted against equal marriage rights for the LGBT population. According to the Irish gay and lesbian equality network there is still a problem of negative attitudes towards homosexuality in society.

Research by Weinberg (1972) describes these negative attitudes towards homosexuality and non-acceptance as homophobia and he was the first to introduce this term, which is now used to describe a fear an individual may have when they are in close contact with someone who identifies as being a homosexual. Homophobia is a term which denotes negative behaviours, attitudes and affective responses towards persons who are gay, lesbian and bisexual, (Snively, Kreuger, Stretch, Wilson Watt, & Chadha, 2004). In this study Snively and colleagues focused on researching individual predictors of homophobia and suggested that as our current social structure supports discrimination towards gay lesbian and bisexual people, most people have acquired some form of homophobia, including LGB

persons. As a result of societal indirect endorsement of homophobia LGB persons can encounter disapproval and stigmatization in many forms from the likes of government bodies, social groups and organizations to social inequalities in the workplace (Garnets, Hancock, Cochran & Goodchilds, 1991). Research titled: “Is some homophobia self-phobia” by N. Weinstein and R. Ryan (2012) offered different explanations as to why people are homophobic – one such stated theory is that it is self-phobia where repressed same sex attractions are actually concealed with a negative reaction to homosexual behaviour. Their research is also one of the first to document the role of parental influences in the formation of negative attitudes towards homosexuals. As a result of being exposed to homophobia Finn and Mc Neil (1982) reported that gay and lesbian individuals are susceptible to more hate crimes than any other minority group. A large scale study from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Human Rights found that homophobia is still very much a problem in Ireland. Their LGBT survey (2012) found that 51% of Irish LGBT participants felt personally discriminated against or harassed in the past 12 months on the grounds of their sexual orientation. They also found that out of this 51%, only 10% of the victims reported the discrimination and this was largely due to them feeling that it was not worth reporting as this discrimination “happens all the time”. As recently as 2014 an international study into homophobia in sport: “Out on the field” detailed that out of the Irish participants 83% of gay men and 89% of lesbians aged under 22 years have received verbal slurs such as “faggot” or “dyke”.

There is a great deal of research in relation to homosexuality and much of this research has been in relation to factors which influence attitudes towards homosexuality in both a positive and negative sense. Research shows that attitudes can either signal acceptance of homosexuality or non-acceptance. The purpose of this literature review is to educate

around past research and give some examples of assumptions that have already been explored and their findings in relation to attitudes towards homosexuality. The need for this study should be highlighted, as the overwhelming majority of research studies into attitudes towards homosexuality already conducted was completed in the United States and it is difficult to conclude if those findings can be generalised and applied to European nations such as Ireland.

In the 1970's opinion polls and surveys such as the General Social Survey which was a tool utilised in the US began to record societal attitudes towards homosexuals. At that time attitudes were not very positive: The American Psychiatric Association (APA) had homosexuality listed in its official Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) until 1973, so up until then if your sexual orientation was not heterosexual you were believed to have a mental health disorder, even being diagnosed by mental health professionals. Loftus (2001) reported in his research that the AID's epidemic was largely blamed on the homosexual population and as a result attitudes were mostly negative. According to Loftus when AID's first became an epidemic it was known as GRID – Gay Related Immune Deficiency and as so many people were dying from this mystery disease it created a huge fluctuation in negative attitudes and this period had a hugely negative impact on attitudes between the 1970's-1990's (2001). Up until the 1990's almost three quarters of the general population believed that homosexuality was wrong (Yang 2001). Smith (1992) found that the remaining quarter of the population believed it was either not wrong or were unsure. However in a study conducted by the American Enterprise Institute in 2004 it was found that there was a significant decrease in findings for the percentage of the population who believed being homosexual was wrong.

Researchers such as Haeberle (1999), Kelley (2001) and Lewis (2003) demonstrated the significance between different ages in relation to attitudes towards homosexuality. In each of their studies they found that of their participants the older participants were more likely to show prejudice and display a negative attitude towards homosexuals. Research by Kelley (2001) investigated public attitudes towards homosexuality through the use of data from the 1999/2000 International Social Science Survey. This survey obtained the views of a large random sample of Australian citizens and reports finding age having a significant correlation with attitudes towards homosexuality. However, research by Van de Ven (1994) with one hundred and eighty four students ($n = 184$) ranging from high school to undergraduates found that age did not have a linear effect as other research suggests. Van de Ven found that when he studied adolescents in high school and their attitudes towards homosexuality that particularly males had a significantly lower tolerance than their college counterparts. Research by Kurdek (1988), which studied attitudes towards homosexuals in one hundred and three participants ($n = 103$), reports that negative attitudes may be linked to adolescence being a very confusing time, particularly during puberty so the lack of tolerance and negative attitudes could be seen as a defence mechanism.

Gender has been the most researched predictor of homophobia. Previous research by (Herek & Gunt, 1993; Kite & Whitely, 1998) found a significant difference between the sexes; men have more intense homophobia than women. Lewis (2003) reported that women are more likely to have more positive attitudes towards homosexuals than men. Oliver and Hyde (1993) also reported significant gender differences for a number of sexually related variables including gender differences in attitudes towards homosexuality. Kite and Whitley

(1995) again indicated that there are noticeable gender differences when it comes to attitudes towards homosexuality with their study highlighting men as having a more negative attitude towards homosexuals, particularly gay men. However their research was unable to confirm if participants are more rejecting of homosexuals of the same sex (1995).

Several different research sources have shown that education has an overall positive effect on attitudes towards homosexuality. Eliason (1995) conducted meta-analysis of previous research and reported that positive attitudes towards homosexuality was correlated with the time individuals spent in education. A study by the American Enterprise Institute (2004) reported a significant positive correlation between education levels and attitudes towards homosexuals, meaning the higher the level of education of participants the more positive attitude they held. This was measured across high school, in college and across the different years of college from freshman to graduate. According to research conducted by Lottes and Kuriloff (1991) a student's attitudes changes over the course of their college experience. Their research reported differences in attitudes towards homosexuality, where it increased across the different years of university – meaning the more education an individual received, the more positive attitude they generally held towards homosexuality.

Lewis and Rogers (1999) found that an increase in positive attitudes and acceptance for homosexuality was the product of education and believed it largely came from an individual being taught how to think critically while in a diverse environment. Lewis (2003) complimented this finding with his own research where he reported that the more education an individual received the greater their ability to recognise prejudice in society. Matchinsky and Iverson (1996) found education can have a significant impact on attitudes towards

homosexuality. Their research involved one hundred and eight females from an American University (n = 108). Students taking course such as a social science or psychology were found to have more positive attitudes towards homosexuals than their counterparts in business or science courses. Corley and Pollack (1996) believed that there were more positive attitudes for those studying psychology and the social sciences because it is primarily a female populated area. Past research by Marsiglio (1993) which used data from a national survey indicated a person's unwillingness to befriend an individual who identifies as homosexual is significantly predicted by the education levels of parents. Marsiglio reported that the higher the education level for parents the higher the willingness to befriend a homosexual (1993).

Another variable which has been the focus of many studies for its effect on attitudes towards homosexuality is personal social contact. Basow and Johnson (2000) found personal social contact to be a variable that has a direct impact on attitudes towards sexuality and homophobia. Their research demonstrated that levels of interpersonal contact and homophobia are negatively correlated. Research by Allport (1954) states that interpersonal contact can reduce prejudice. Personal social contact has been studied a multitude of times in relation to homosexuality and researchers such as Lance (1987) and Snively et al (2004) found that no contact with a gay individual was strongly and positively correlated with homophobia ($p < .01$, $r = .779$). Snively and his colleagues conducted research with one hundred and seventy seven participants (n = 177) to determine factors which influenced homophobia and their findings reported the amount of homophobia participants had was significantly related to social contact. Altemeyer (2001) showed participants who reported to knowing someone who was gay generally expressed a more positive attitude than participants who either did not know a gay individual or reported to not knowing one. Herek and Glunt

state that the effectiveness of interpersonal contact between heterosexuals and homosexuals was successful in increasing attitudes towards homosexuality because it allowed homosexuals the opportunity to challenge stereotypes and for heterosexuals the opportunity to see a gay individual in a personal way as just an individual (1993).

There is a substantial amount of literature discussing the role of religiosity on the influence of attitudes towards homosexuality. In their research Pearce, Little & Perez (2003) identified religiosity as: “the extent to which an individual is committed to the religion he or she professes and its teachings, such that his or her attitudes and behaviours reflect this commitment”. Research by Hayes (1885) found that participants who identified as being religious were generally more prejudice towards homosexuals than participants who identified as being non-religious. Falsetti, Resick & Davis (2003) describes that when including religiosity as a variable in research it is important not to just ask the yes/no question of if a person is religious but also have the participants define “how they religious they are”. Lesbians and gay men more often than not find themselves coming into direct conflict with some of the key messages in the doctrine of most organised religions as the vast majority of religions state that a homosexual orientation is ‘immoral and against all that is intrinsically good’ (Herek, 1987). Souza and Cribari-Neto (2015) found attitudes to homosexuals negatively correlates with religious belief.

There has been some research attention given to trying to identify specific personality traits that have a relationship with attitudes towards homosexuality, however the majority of the focus has been placed on negative attitudes being related to authoritarianism. Several studies such as those by (Altemeyer 1988, 1996, 2001; Basow and Johnson 2000; Haddock

and Zanna 1998; Whitley and Lee 2000; Wilkinson 2004) have demonstrated that there is a significantly strong correlation between individuals with an authoritarian personality and negative attitudes towards homosexuality. Altemeyer (2001) also found that individuals with authoritarian personalities are more likely to say that they would help the government to harass, torture, imprison and execute gay people, and are more likely to approve of gay bashing. Much of the focus on personality in relation to attitudes towards homosexuality has focused on authoritarian personality, however there is also some limited amount of research conducted around social dominance orientation (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth & Malle, 1994) and self-esteem (Crandall and Cohen 1994).

Present Study

The aim of the present study is to examine the relationship between the variables which are comprised of religiosity, education levels of participants and their parents, personal social contact, personality and attitudes towards homosexual males and females. This study will examine these variables in line with the study's hypothesis and determine their effects if any on societal attitudes towards homosexuality. This research will also examine differences across both the age and gender of the participants. The literature review above examined each variable individually in an aim to achieve a contextual framework of previously conducted research.

Hypothesis

H1. It is hypothesised that a greater social contact with homosexuals will positively correlate with attitudes towards homosexuality

H2. It is hypothesised there will be a significant difference between genders in levels of homophobia

H3. It is hypothesised religiosity will negatively correlate with attitudes towards homosexuality

H4. It is hypothesised that higher parental levels of education will correlate negatively with homonegativity

H5. It is hypothesised that extraversion will correlate negatively with homonegativity

Chapter Two: Methodology

Respondents

Two hundred and ninety five participants (N=295) contributed to this study. There were two hundred and thirty nine females (N=239) and fifty six males (N=56). The sample consisted of adults over the age of 18 and they were sourced via random sampling through the use of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter and email lists. Participation in this research was purely on a voluntary basis.

Materials and Instrumentations

There was one questionnaire used for the entire sample. Each questionnaire consisted of five sections: (1) six questions where respondents were required to give information regarding age, gender, education level and that of their parents, home area; (2) a scale measuring personality (i.e. Ten Item Personality Measure (TIPI) (Gosling, S. D., Rentfrow, P. J., & Swann, W. B., Jr. 2003)); (3) a scale to measure negative attitudes towards homosexuals (i.e. homonegativity) among the general population (i.e. The Modern Homonegativity Scale (Morrison, M. A., & Morrison, T. G. 2002)). This scale consisted of two forms both containing 12 items: one form sought to measure attitudes towards gay males, the other attitudes towards gay females; (4) a personal social contact scale consisting of two forms (one in relation to gay men and the other in relation to lesbian women) each consisted of 4 items; (5) a scale measuring the theological beliefs of the respondent (i.e. Religiosity Measure, (Rohrbaugh & Jessor, 1975)).

Morrison & Morrison's Modern Homonegativity Scale (2002) comes in two forms, one for measuring attitudes towards gay males and the other for measuring attitudes towards gay females. Each scale consists of 12 items each of which is scored on a 5 item likert-type scale where options ranged from 1-5, strongly disagree to strongly agree. The purpose of the scale is to measure levels of homonegativity towards homosexuals meaning the lower a participant scores on the Modern Homonegativity Scale the better their attitudes towards homosexuality is. The scale was designed as a measure to be used among the general population.

Rohrbaugh & Jessor's Theological Religiosity scale consists of three questions, the first measuring worship length of the participant, the next, the participants opinion of God and the third measuring the participants attitude towards heaven. Each question had five possible answers to choose from, for the measure of worship length the participants could choose from "never" to more frequent options such as "daily". In the next question the answers ranged from 'I don't believe in a personal God or in a higher power' to 'I am sure that God really exists and that He is active in my life' and the final question answers ranged from 'I don't believe in any kind of life after death' to 'I believe in a personal life after death, a soul existing as a specific individual spirit'. These three answers were rated on a four point scale from zero to four meaning the scale could have a maximum score of twelve and a minimum score of zero. Where participants scored higher it indicated a higher level of theological religiosity and lower scoring participants indicated a lower level of theological religiosity. Religion of the participant was asked as a demographic which was incorporated into at the start of the theological religiosity questionnaire.

The Ten Item Personality Measure was used as a measure of the big five personality

dimensions. Each participant had to rate themselves under the ten different personality items which they were told they “may or may not agree with” and they had to rate themselves on a scale of one – “strongly disagree” to seven – “strongly agree”. Half of the ten items were then reverse coded and then the measure was scored under the five scales: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability and Openness to Experiences. Each scale could have a maximum of seven and a minimum of one and the higher the participant scored in that scale the more likely they were to possess high levels of that personality trait.

The Personal Social Contact (PSC) assessed the level of social contact of each participant in relation to both gay males and gay females. It also measured how positive this contact had been and if participants intended to have contact with homosexual males and/or females in the future based off of their existing experience. This scale was reversed in order to control for the potential of transfer effect which means that high scores on the scale was the result of high levels of personal social contact and low scores indicated no or little personal social contact. Two separate identical scale were used, each one to measure PSC in relation to homosexual males and homosexual females independently. Each scale consists of four questions which each participant had to answer, the first was to measure the level of social contact with either gay males or gay females with options for participants on a 5 point scale from “none” to “daily”. The next question was aimed at assessing participant’s social experience with homosexual male and females. Again options for participants to select were on a 5 point scale with option ranging from very negative to very positive The third statement aimed to measure how well the participants knew the gay male or female and again was measured on a five point scale from “not very well” to “very well”. The final question was designed to assess the participants prediction of their future behavior in regards to personal social contact with homosexual male and females, “If you do not currently know anyone who

is a gay female/male can you see yourself having a female/male friend of this sexual orientation in the future?”, a five point scale from “absolutely no” to “absolutely yes” was used by participants to rate this question.

Procedure

Participants were provided with a link to the survey via Survey Monkey through the form of public posts on Facebook and Twitter and a group email sent out to entire email lists. Along with the link itself, subjects were informed about the nature of the study and what it would entail for willing participants. Once participants followed the supplied link they would reach a brief introductory statement which thanked them for their interest, informed them how long the survey would take and a brief overview of what it would entail. It informed all participants that results would be completely anonymous and they were entitled to withdraw from the research at any stage up until the point of their survey submission. The statement also made a clear request that only those over the age of 18 should participate. Debriefing was provided at the end of the survey with a note of thanks for taking part and details outlining relevant helpline information should they find themselves affected by any issues raised within the survey as well as personal contact details should they require any further information. Subsequent to the retrieval of the data, it was downloaded from Survey Monkey and imported into the statistical package (SPSS version 22 for windows) for analysis.

Design

A cross sectional design was employed in this study. The study involved participants, who were sourced through random online sampling to take an anonymous online questionnaire. The criterion variable in this study was attitudes towards homosexuality which

was measured separately in terms of gay males and gay females. The predictor variables in the study were Gender, Religiosity, Education and Personal Social Contact and Personality.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the online questionnaire was entered into SPSS (Version 22) to analyse results by performing statistical tests. Descriptive statistics and frequencies were then carried out to examine participant demographics. A test for normal distribution was carried out in order to decide between using parametric or non-parametric tests. It was found that the data was normally distributed so the use of parametric tests was most appropriate to analyse the data for the current study. Mean, Standard deviation and a number of bar graphs were performed to show the various relationships between variables. A Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine if there was either a negative or positive relationship between the dependent variable – attitude towards homosexuality and each of the independent variables: religiosity, personal social contact, levels of parental education and personality. An independent sample t test was also used to examine the relationship if any between gender and attitudes towards homosexuality.

Chapter 3: Results

Descriptive Statistics

All data was coded for descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS (version 22). Descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations were calculated for each variable as well as Cronbach's Alpha which examined the reliability of the scales used in the current study. Preliminary tests were then run to examine the data and they verified that there was no violation of the assumptions of normality.

The descriptive statistics provide background information on the participating sample. The total number of participants in the current study was 295 (n=295) and of these participants 56 were male (n=56) and 239 were female (n=239).

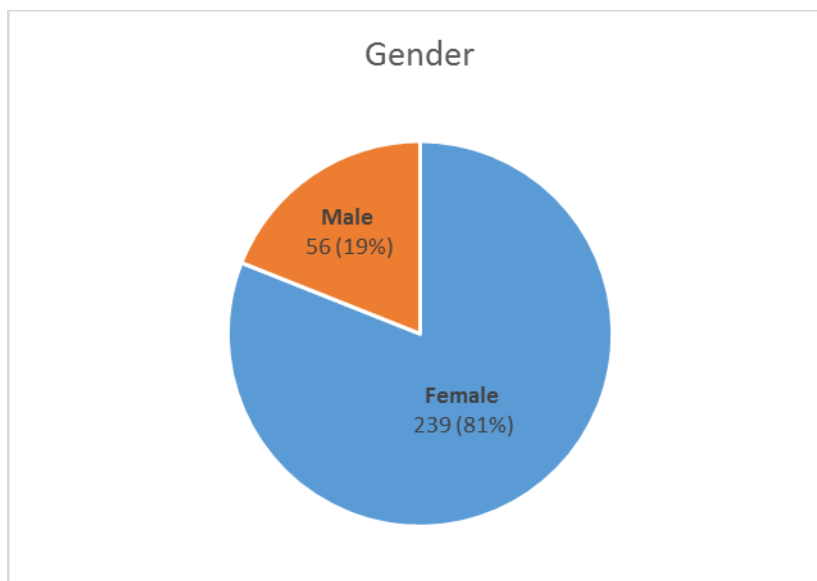


Figure 1.1 – Gender

Figure 2 below shows the age distribution among the participants. There were 43 participants in the (18 - 24) range, 166 participants in the (25 - 34) range, 46 participants in the (35 - 44) range, 36 participants in the (45 - 64) range and 4 participants in the (65+) range.

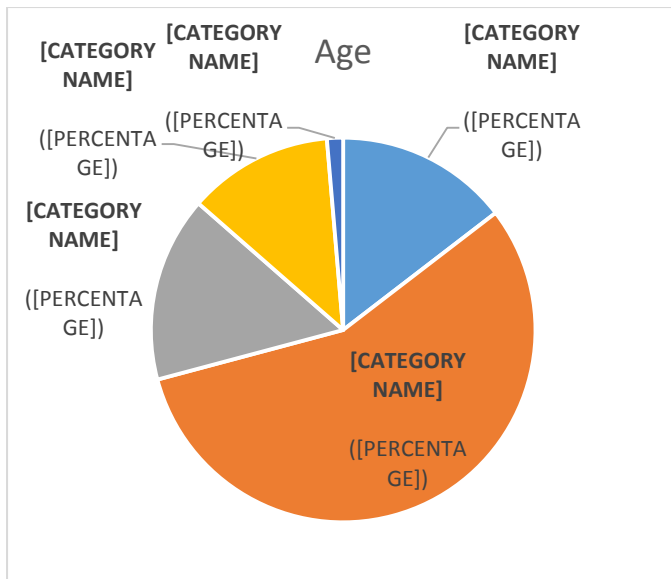


Figure 2 – Age

As previously mentioned all respondents completed an online survey, the Modern Homonegativity Scale (Morrison & Morrison 2002) was utilised in order to determine each participant's attitude towards homosexuality in relation to both gay males and gay females. Please see Table 1.1 below for the descriptive statistics of this variable.

Table 1.1 Descriptive Statistics for Criterion variable-Attitudes towards Homosexuality

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Deviation</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
Modern Homonegativity Scale Gay Males	25.8	7.894	12	55
Modern Homonegativity Scale Gay Females	25.67	8.553	12	58

In order to measure the criterion variables with the participants the following scales were used: the Ten Item Personality Measure (Gosling, Rentfrow & Swann 2003), the Religiosity Measure, (Rohrbaugh & Jessor, 1975) and a Personal Social Contact scale. Presented in the tables below are descriptive statistics and psychometric information from the administration of these measures.

Table 1.2 Descriptive Statistics for Predictor variables – Religiosity, Personal Social Contact and Personality

	Mean	Std Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Religiosity	7.43	3.479	0	15
Personal Social Contact with Gay Males	15.91	3.225	0	20
Personal Social Contact with Gay Females	15.27	3.303	0	20
Father's education level	2.63	1.705	1	6
Mother's education level	2.64	1.763	1	6

Inferential Statistics for hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: A greater social contact with homosexuals will positively correlate with attitudes towards homosexuality

In regards to the first aim of the study a pearson correlation was carried out between the criterion variable – attitudes towards homosexuality achieved from the Modern Homonegativity Scale (Morrison & Morrison 2002) and Personal social contact. The MHS was in two parts: one scale to represent attitudes towards gay females and the other to represent attitudes towards gay men. Both scales were included in the pearson correlation with personal social contact. The personal social contact with gay females (PSCGF) scores ranging from 4 unfavourable to 20 favourable and personal social contact with gay males (PSCGM) scores ranging from 4 unfavourable to 20 favourable whereas the scales used to measure attitudes towards gay males (MHSGM) and attitudes towards gay females contain 12 items each and both are rated on a 5 point Likert-type scale where the lower the score the less homonegative the participant. Illustrated in Table 1.3 below are the significant relationships between attitudes to homosexuality and personal social contact which were found when pearson correlations coefficients were conducted.

Table 1.3 Pearson Correlation Coefficients of Homonegativity and Personal Social Contact

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. MHSGM	--			
2. MHSGF	.942**	--		
3. PSCGM	-.366**	-.351**	--	
4. PSCGF	-.289**	-.322**	.452**	--

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As can be seen in the above Table 1.3, personal social contact with gay males is negatively significantly correlated with attitudes towards gay men ($r = -.366$, $p < 0.01$) and also negatively significantly correlates with attitudes towards gay females ($r = -.351$, $p < 0.01$). The pearson correlation also found significant negative correlations between personal social contact with gay females and attitudes towards gay men ($r = -.289$, $p < 0.01$) and attitudes towards gay females ($r = -.322$, $p < 0.01$). These results indicate that where there has been higher social contact with gay males and gay females there are more positive attitudes towards gay males and females.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant difference between genders in attitudes towards homosexuality

An independent t-test was run to test for significant gender differences if any exist with attitudes towards both gay females and gay males. As previously mentioned the Modern Homonegativity scale employs a 12 item, 5 point Likert-type scale where the lower the score

the less homonegative the participant and a separate scale was utilised to achieve a score for both gay males and gay females . Table 1.4 below demonstrates along with their t score and whether or not the gender differences are significant.

Table 1.4 – Gender Mean Scores based on MHSGM and MHSGF

Variables		Mean	SD	t	p
MHSGM	Male	28.27	8.34	2.63	.009
	Female	25.22	7.69		
MHSGF	Male	28.14	8.92	2.43	.016
	Female	25.09	8.38		

As seen in Table 1.4 females mean in relation to MHS for gay males (M = 25.22, SD = 7.69) and the mean score for males in relation to MHS for gay males was (M = 28.27, SD = 8.34). These scores were found to be significantly different between females and males ($t(293) = 2.63$, $p = 0.09$, CI (95%) .762 -> 5.33). As females have a lower score they have a more positive attitudes towards gay males than males have. This table also shows females mean in relation to MHS for gay females was (M = 25.09, SD = 8.38) and the mean score for males in relation to MHS for gay females was (M =28.14, SD = 8.92). These scores were found to be significantly different between the genders ($t(293) = 2.43$, $p = 0.02$, CI (95%).576 -> 5.53) again showing that female participants have a more positive, lower homonegative attitude. Comparing the means from both MHS for gay males and females the mean of female

participants towards gay females (M = 25.09) is lower than towards gay males (M = 25.22) which is the same for the male participants where their mean for gay females was higher (M = 28.14) than for gay males (M = 28.27) suggesting that both genders show more tolerance towards gay females over gay males.

Hypothesis 3: Religiosity will negatively correlate with attitudes towards homosexuality

A Pearson correlation was conducted to explore possible relationships between religiosity and levels of homonegativity across participants. Illustrated in Table 1.5 below are the significant relationships found when Pearson correlation coefficients were conducted with both MHSGM and MHSGF with religiosity.

Table 1.5 - Pearson Correlation Coefficients of Homonegativity and Religiosity

Variables	1	2	3
1. MHSGM	--		
2. MHSGF	.942**	--	
3. Religiosity	.226**	.228**	--

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As can be seen in Table 1.5 above, there is a statistically significant positive correlation between levels of homonegativity in relation to both gay males and gay females in respect of religiosity. Religiosity correlated positively with homonegativity towards gay

males ($R = .226, p < 0.01$) and also correlated positively with homonegativity towards gay females ($R = .228, p < 0.01$).

Hypothesis 4: Higher parental levels of education will correlate negatively with homonegativity

To investigate the final hypothesis of the current study: the possible relationship between parental levels of education for participants and homonegativity a Pearson correlation was conducted. The results of the correlation between MHS GM and MHS GF with parents level of education is illustrated in table 1.6 below.

Table 1.6 – Pearson Correlation Coefficients of Homonegativity and Parental levels of Education

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. MHS GM	--			
2 .MHS GF	.942**	--		
3. Mother's Education	-.112	-.106	--	
4. Father's Education	-.004	-.020	.480**	--

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As detailed in Table 1.6 above, there is no statistically significant correlation between either Homonegativity with gay males and parents education levels or between homonegativity with gay females and participant's parental level of education. Participant's

parent's levels of education were sourced through general demographic questions at the start of each survey. The survey collected data relating to both participants mother and father's education level. The pearson correlation coefficient with MHSGM showed a non-significant negative correlation for both mother's level of education ($r = -.112, p > 0.05$) and the participant's fathers level of education ($r = -.004, p > 0.05$). With MHSGF the pearson correlation coefficient also yielded a non-significant negative correlations with the participant's mothers level of education ($r = -.106, p > 0.05$) and the participants fathers level of education ($r = -.020, p > 0.05$). Although the pearson correlation did not yield any significant correlation between MHSGM or MHSGF and parental levels of education it did show that there is a stronger correlation between the participant's mother's level of education and homonegative attitudes for both gay males and gay females.

Hypothesis 5: Extraversion will correlate negatively with homonegativity

Further pearson correlations were carried out between the criterion variable – levels of homonegativity achieved from the Modern Homonegativity Scale (2002) and the Ten Item personality scale (2003) which is a ten item scale used for a measure of the Big Five model. A pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine if any significant correlations exist between levels of homonegativity and any of the Big Five factors. Illustrated in Table 1.7 below are the results found when pearson correlations were conducted between the Five Factors and both MHSGM and MHSGF.

Table 1.7 – Pearson Correlation Coefficients of MHSGM/F and Five Factors

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. MHSGM	--						
2. MHSGF	.942**	--					
3. Openess to experience	-.236**	-.218**					
4. Emotional Stability	.019	.016	.165**	--			
5. Conscientiousness	-.029	-.011	.056	.137*	--		
6. Agreeableness	-.149*	-.162*	.138*	.126*	.120*	--	
7. Extraversion	-.069	-.086	.276**	.228**	.152**	.077	--

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

As can be seen from table 1.7 there are some significant correlations between levels of homonegativity and two of the five factors. Pearson correlation coefficients identified significant relationships between agreeableness, openness to experience and homonegativity levels in relation to gay males and gay females. A significant negative correlation was identified between Agreeableness and homonegativity levels towards gay males ($r = -.149$, $p > 0.05$) and gay females ($r = -.162$, $p > 0.05$) meaning that higher levels of agreeableness has a significantly strong relationship with low levels of homonegativity. Pearson correlation also identified a significant negative correlation between openness to experience and levels of homonegativity towards gay males ($r = -.236$, $p > 0.01$) and levels of homonegativity towards gay females ($r = -.218$, $p > 0.01$) meaning that the higher a participant scored in openness to experiences the lower they scored in homonegative attitudes.

Chapter Four: Discussion

The main aim of the study was to investigate separate hypothesis regarding potential relationships between religiosity, personality, levels of education and personal social contact in relation to societal attitudes towards homosexuality through the measure of homonegativity. The four hypothesis will receive individual focus.

The first hypothesis was based on previous research findings, findings that reported a greater social contact with homosexual individuals would have a significant impact on lowering homonegative attitudes towards both gay males and females. Personal social contact with gay males is negatively significantly correlated with attitudes towards gay men ($r = -.366, p < 0.01$) and also negatively significantly correlates with attitudes towards gay females ($r = -.351, p < 0.01$). The pearson correlation also found significant negative correlations between personal social contact with gay females and attitudes towards gay men ($r = -.289, p < 0.01$) and attitudes towards gay females ($r = -.322, p < 0.01$). These finding suggest that the strongest correlation comes from personal social contact with gay males and it has a significant effect on attitudes toward homosexual men and women. Snively et al, 2004 had similar findings in his research where it was found that participants with a lower level of personal social contact tended to have a more negative attitudes towards homosexuals in line with Altemeyer (2001) who found the more a participant reported to personally knowing a gay individual the more positive their attitude towards homosexuality was.

The second aim of this study was to investigate the possible existence of any gender differences in respect of attitudes towards homosexuality. This was looked at under four different groupings, female participant's attitudes towards gay females, female participant's attitudes towards gay males, male participant's attitudes towards gay females and male

participant's attitudes towards gay males. An independent T test was used to compare gender with MHSGM and MHSGF. The scores obtained from the Independent T test in relation to attitudes towards gay males were found to be significantly different between females and males ($t(293) = 2.63, p = 0.09, CI(95\%) .762 \rightarrow 5.33$). The results of the T test showed that females had a slightly lower mean score ($M = 25.22$) in comparison to the mean score for males in relation to MHS for gay males was ($M = 28.27$) which indicates females having an overall lower level of homonegativity towards gay men meaning more positive attitudes towards homosexual males. In relation to gay females the T test again indicated significant differences between the genders ($t(293) = 2.43, p = 0.02, CI(95\%) .576 \rightarrow 5.53$). Female participants were again found to have lower overall levels of homonegativity and scored a lower mean on the MHSGF ($M = 25.09$) in comparison to the male participants ($M = 28.14$) again supporting previous research that female participants have a more positive, lower homonegative attitude towards homosexual females. These findings support this study's hypothesis as they show differences in relation to gender, females, overall have more positive attitudes towards homosexuals than males do. These findings are in line with previous research by Herek (1988) and Snively (2004) who both reported findings that males were more homophobic than women and that male participants of their research displayed more positive attitudes towards homosexual females over homosexual males. However where Herek's research found its participants to be most homophobic towards members of the same sex, this research found both males and females had more positive attitudes towards female homosexuals.

This study also sought to examine whether higher religiosity would be positively related to homonegativity meaning the higher the levels of religiosity the higher that homonegativity. This hypothesis is in line with research such as: Souza & Cribari-Neto

(2015) who found that homosexuality non acceptance positively correlates with religious beliefs. The results of the current study showed similar findings and this hypothesis was supported. A Pearson correlation coefficient found that theological religiosity had a significant relationship with homonegativity in relation to both gay males and gay females. The results of the Pearson correlation shows a significantly positive correlation with homonegativity towards gay males ($r = .226, p < 0.01$) and a significantly positive correlation with homonegativity towards gay females ($r = .228, p < 0.01$).

Worship length was found to have a positive significant correlation to homonegativity with gay males ($r = .279 < .01$) and gay females ($r = .281 < .01$). Meaning where there was greater religious worship length there was more negative attitudes. Herek (1984) conducted three different studies into the effects of religiosity on attitudes towards homosexuality and found worship length as having the strongest correlation to attitudes towards homosexuals both male and female. Herek's results were replicated each time where he found that those who worshiped less were more likely to have positive attitudes towards both gay men and women and those who reported higher worship amounts displayed negative attitudes towards homosexuals. Davis (2003) who believed "how religious a person is" is significant in influencing their attitudes towards homosexuality.

A further aim of this study was to examine the concept that education levels would have an influence on participant's attitudes towards homosexuality. Previous research by Marsiglio (1993) drew attention to education as being an important factor in an individual's willingness or unwillingness to befriend a homosexual. Marsiglio found an individual's attitude towards homosexuality was significantly predicted by their parent's level of

education (1993) with the higher the level of education, the more positive attitudes towards homosexuality would be. This study asked participants for some demographics around their own level of education and that of their parents. Of the participants, 30.5% reported that their mother (n=90) and 38.6% of participants fathers (n=114) did not complete primary education. This study examined if a correlation existed between parental levels of education and attitudes towards homosexuality by using a pearson correlation however, nothing significant was found between levels of education and attitudes towards homosexuality. The pearson correlation coefficient with MHSGM showed a non-significant negative correlation for both the mother's level of education ($r = -.112, p > 0.05$) and the participant's fathers level of education ($r = -.004, p > 0.05$) and in relation to MHSGF the pearson correlation also yielded non-significant negative correlations with the participant's mothers level of education ($r = -.106, p > 0.05$) and the participants fathers level of education ($r = -.020, p > 0.05$). This study did not find a significant correlation with parental levels of education and attitudes towards homosexuals therefore the hypothesis that levels of education would significantly correlate to attitudes towards homosexuality is unsupported.

The final hypothesis this study focused on was that certain personality traits would correlate to attitudes towards homosexuality. As mentioned before, previous research by Altemeyer (1988, 1996, and 2001) focused on traits which correlate to negative attitudes towards homosexuality such as authoritarianism however this study used a Big Five approach to see if any of them correlated with attitudes. Previous research by Eysenck, in studies undertaken in 1972 and 1976, links attitudes to sexuality to extraversion and distinguished extraversion as having a positive correlation to attitudes towards homosexuality, meaning the more extraverted a participant was the more positive the attitude towards homosexuals. This research did not find a significant correlation between extraversion and attitudes however

correlations were found with other traits. A Pearson correlation coefficient was used with each of the 5 personality scores: extraversion, openness to experiences, conscientiousness, agreeableness and emotional stability. A significant correlation was found between agreeableness and emotional stability. A significant correlation was found between agreeableness, openness to experience and attitudes towards homosexuality in relation to gay males and gay females. A significant negative correlation was identified between agreeableness and homonegativity levels towards gay males ($r = -.149, p > 0.05$) and gay females ($r = -.162, p > 0.05$) meaning that the higher a participant scored in agreeableness the lower levels of homonegativity. The Pearson correlation also identified a significant negative correlation between openness to experience and levels of homonegativity towards gay males ($r = -.236, p > 0.01$) and levels of homonegativity towards gay females ($r = -.218, p > 0.01$) meaning that the higher a participant scored in openness to experiences the lower they scored in homonegativity. The hypothesis that certain personality traits will have a significant correlation on attitudes towards homosexuality is supported and this study has been successful in identifying openness to experiences and agreeableness as being significantly correlated to attitudes towards homosexuality.

Limitations of the study

When critically evaluating this research it must be concluded that there are some limitations of the study which should not be overlooked when considering the results. As mentioned before, participants were sourced through convenience and snow ball sampling by means of an online survey distributed primarily through the use of social media outlets and email lists and even though the sample size consisted of two hundred and ninety five participants ($n=295$) it would be difficult to be able to generalise findings from a sample size like this to the population as a whole in the form of societal attitudes. It is recommended that

future research should source a broader sample in order to yield the most representative results for the general population.

Another limitation of this research is in the demographic section of the questionnaire where the sexuality of participants was not ascertained. By not measuring the sexuality of participants it was not possible to find if this was a confounding variable for some of the responses, meaning that it was not possible to find if there was a correlation with more positive attitudes and the sexuality of the respondents. This may have skewed some of the data. According to Blascovich & Tomaka (1991), self-report measures such as those employed in this research can often be susceptible to socially desirable outcomes. Future research could build on this study by using a greater variety of participants and looking at the benefits of conducting a cross cultural study. Most research on this topic to date, including this study has not used a cross-cultural design. The data was obtained through the use of social media sites and did not ask participants to provide information on their ethnicity. This study could be built upon by using a cross-cultural design.

Implications

The results of this study show that if genders are compared, females are more likely to have a positive attitude toward homosexuals than males and both genders show more positive attitudes towards gay females than gay males. Religiosity was shown to be correlated to attitudes towards homosexuality with religiosity positively correlating with homonegativity. This study found worship lengths to have a negative relationship with attitudes towards homosexuality, with the results showing participants who reported to worshipping more frequently had a more negative attitude than participants who worshipped less frequently.

Personal social contact was also found to have a significant correlation to attitudes towards homosexuality whereas levels of education did not.

There were several implications of this study. Firstly as it was found that men tend to have a more negative attitude towards homosexuals than women, these results should be taken into account when planning strategies around education and in dealing with problematic attitudes such as homophobia. Negative attitudes could be reduced or eliminated if a personal social contact approach was considered, as it has been found to be related to positive attitudes towards homosexuals. Strategies could look at providing more opportunities for integration between heterosexuals and homosexuals.

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Appendices

Dear Participant,

I am currently in my final year of Psychology with Dublin Business School and I am conducting research as part of my studies. The research is titled – “In the wake of marriage equality – an exploration of attitudes towards homosexuality” and it will be submitted for grading as part of my final year project.

You are invited to take part in this survey which will explore homophobia and how things such as gender, religion, education and personality can influence it in either a positive or negative way. Please note that participation is completely voluntary and anonymous. Participants can withdraw from the survey at any time if they so wish up until submission – as entries are anonymous it will not be possible after this point. All surveys and data collected will be stored in a secure manner. We do not anticipate any discomforts arising from this survey.

By completing this survey you are consenting to be of 18 years or older.

It is important to understand that by completing and submitting this survey you are consenting to participate in the study and for the data of the survey to be used.

If you feel you may have been affected by any of the subjects raised in this survey please find the following support information:

- Samaritans Ireland : 1850 60 90 90
(Available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.)
- The Aware Helpline : 1890 303 302
(Available Monday - Sunday, 10am - 10pm.)

Demographic Information

1. Please circle which best describes you Gender: Male / Female

2. Please tick which age category you are in:
 - 18-24 years old
 - 25-34 years old
 - 35-44 years old
 - 45-65 years old
 - 65+ years old

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed to date?
 - Did not complete secondary school
 - Completed secondary school
 - Some college
 - Trade/technical/vocational training
 - Bachelor's Degree
 - Postgraduate

4. What is the highest level of education your mother has completed to date?
 - Did not complete secondary school
 - Completed secondary school
 - Some college
 - Trade/technical/vocational training
 - Bachelor's Degree
 - Postgraduate

5. What is the highest level of education your father has completed to date?
 - Did not complete secondary school
 - Completed secondary school
 - Some college
 - Trade/technical/vocational training
 - Bachelor's Degree
 - Postgraduate

Modern Homonegativity Scale – Gay Men

Instructions: below are twelve statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 5 scale below, please indicate your agreement with each item by circling the appropriate number.

1. Many gay men use their sexual orientation so that they can obtain special privileges.
1=strongly disagree
2=disagree
3=don't know
4=agree
5=strongly agree

2. Gay men seem to focus on the ways in which they differ from heterosexuals, and ignore the ways in which they are the same.
1=strongly disagree
2=disagree
3=don't know
4=agree
5=strongly agree

3. Gay men do not have all the rights they need.*
1=strongly disagree
2=disagree
3=don't know
4=agree
5=strongly agree

4. The notion of universities providing students with undergraduate degrees in Gay and Lesbian Studies is ridiculous.
1=strongly disagree
2=disagree
3=don't know
4=agree
5=strongly agree

5. Celebrations such as "Gay Pride Day" are ridiculous because they assume that an individual's sexual orientation should constitute a source of pride.
1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

6. Gay men still need to protest for equal rights.*

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

7. Gay men should stop shoving their lifestyle down other people's throats.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

8. If gay men want to be treated like everyone else, then they need to stop making such a fuss about their sexuality/culture.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

9. Gay men who are "out of the closet" should be admired for their courage.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

10. Gay men should stop complaining about the way they are treated in society, and simply get on with their lives.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

11. In today's tough economic times, taxpayer's money shouldn't be used to support gay men's organizations.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

12. Gay men have become far too confrontational in their demand for equal rights.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

Modern Homonegativity Scale – Lesbian Women

Instructions: below are twelve statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 5 scale below, please indicate your agreement with each item by circling the appropriate number.

1. Many lesbians use their sexual orientation so that they can obtain special privileges.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

2. Lesbians seem to focus on the ways in which they differ from heterosexuals, and ignore the ways in which they are the same.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

3. Lesbians do not have all the rights they need.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

4. The notion of universities providing students with undergraduate degrees in Gay and Lesbian Studies is ridiculous.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

5. Celebrations such as "Gay Pride Day" are ridiculous because they assume that an individual's sexual orientation should constitute a source of pride.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

6. Lesbians still need to protest for equal rights.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

7. Lesbians should stop shoving their lifestyle down other people's throats.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

8. If lesbians want to be treated like everyone else, then they need to stop making such a fuss about their sexuality/culture.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

9. Lesbians who are "out of the closet" should be admired for their courage.*

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

10. Lesbians should stop complaining about the way they are treated in society, and simply get on with their lives.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

11. In today's tough economic times, taxpayer's shouldn't be used to support lesbian's organizations.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

12. Lesbians have become far too confrontational in their demand for equal rights.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=don't know

4=agree

5=strongly agree

Ten-Item Personality Inventory-(TIPI)

Instructions: Here are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other.

Disagree Strongly	Disagree moderately	Disagree a little	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree a little	Agree moderately	Agree strongly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I see myself as:

1. ____ Extraverted, enthusiastic.
2. ____ Critical, quarrelsome.
3. ____ Dependable, self-disciplined.
4. ____ Anxious, easily upset.
5. ____ Open to new experiences, complex.
6. ____ Reserved, quiet.
7. ____ Sympathetic, warm.
8. ____ Disorganized, careless.
9. ____ Calm, emotionally stable.
10. ____ Conventional, uncreative.

The Personal social contact questionnaire Contact with gay females.

Instructions: please circle one of the options in each question.

1. Have you had any previous social contact with gay females over the previous year?

None Once or twice Once a month Once a week Daily

2. Would you rate this as having been a positive or negative experience?

Very positive Positive Neither Negative Very negative

3. How well do you know this gay female/gay females?

Very well Well Do not know one Not well Not very well

4. If you do not currently know anyone who is a gay female can you see yourself having a female male friend of this sexual orientation in the future?

Absolutely yes Yes Unsure No Absolutely no

Contact with gay males.

1. Have you had any previous social contact with gay males over the previous year?

None Once or twice Once a month Once a week Daily

2. Would you rate this as having been a positive or negative experience?

Very positive Positive Neither Negative Very negative

3. How well do you know this gay male/gay males?

Very well Well Do not know one Not well Not very well

4. If you do not currently know anyone who is a gay male can you see yourself having a male friend of this sexual orientation in the future?

Absolutely yes Yes Unsure No Absolutely no

The theological religiosity scale

1. Religious Background: (please circle one)

Catholic	Orthodox	Protestant	Pentecostal
Jewish	Muslim	Hindu	Buddhist

Other _____

2. How often do you attend your place of worship? (please circle one)

Never	Once a year	Once or twice a year	Once or twice a month
	Once or twice a week	Every day	

3. Which of the following statements comes closest to your belief about God? (please tick

one box)

- I am sure that God really exists and that He is active in my life.
- Although I sometimes question His existence, I do believe in God and believe He knows of me as a person.
- I don't know if there is a personal God, but I do believe in a higher power of some kind .
- I don't know if there is a personal God or a higher power of some kind and I don't know if I will ever know.
- I don't believe in a personal God or in a higher power.

4. Which one of the following statements comes closest to your belief about life after death (immortality)? (please tick one box)

- I believe in a personal life after death, a soul existing as a specific individual spirit.
- I believe in a soul existing after death as a part of a universal spirit.
- I believe in a life after death of some kind, but I really don't know what it would be like.
- I don't know whether there is any kind of life after death, and I don't know if I will ever know.
- I don't believe in a personal God or in a higher power.