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Religious orientation and attitudes toward gay marriage and homosexual bishops: an empirical enquiry inside an Anglican cathedral

Abstract

The aim of the present study is to examine the relationship between religious orientation and attitudes towards two contentious issues about human sexuality in the Church of England, by studying the broad range of people found attending an Anglican cathedral carol service. A sample of 381 individuals who attended a Carol Service at Worcester cathedral in December 2009 thoroughly completed the New Indices of Religious Orientation (NIRO). The scales were found to be reliable for the sample. The same participants responded to two statements relating to their attitudes towards gay marriage and the appointment of homosexual men as bishops. Both men and older people are found to report higher levels of negative attitudes towards both issues. Strong positive correlations are found between intrinsic religious orientation and negative attitudes towards gay marriage and gay bishops, these remain after controlling for age and sex. After further controlling for intrinsic and extrinsic orientation, it is found that quest orientation is positively associated with favourable views towards both issues. Areas for further research are identified.

1. Introduction

1.1 Homosexuality and the Anglican Communion

Attitudes towards homosexuality create arguably the greatest internal divisions within mainstream protestant Christian denominations. For the Anglican Communion two questions have come to dominate the discourse: the suitability of homosexual candidates for the office of bishop and the appropriateness of national churches authorising public liturgies for the blessing of a same sex union. Within Anglicanism national churches are autonomous bodies bound to their partners in other countries by a shared heritage around the historic creeds, the Christian scriptures, the sacraments of baptism and eucharist and the historic episcopate; together these four elements are known as the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (see for example Butler, 1988). The ten yearly gathering of all Anglican bishops in 1998 produced a resolution (see Lambeth Commission on Communion, 2004, appendix for full text) which sought to identify a common approach that would satisfy the largely conservative churches of the global south and the divergent, but strongly held, views within the more liberal churches of the north. At the heart of the Lambeth Resolution, and many official Anglican contributions to debates on human sexuality, is a strong distinction which is made between homosexual orientation and homosexual practice. This distinction is not recognised in wider British Society; “opt out” clauses for religious institutions in British legislation invariably refer simply to “sexual orientation”.

The subject of the ordination of homosexual persons as bishops sits within the realm of issues of church order. It became a matter of widespread public interest with the proposed appointment of a gay man to be a suffragan bishop in England. In the light of concerns expressed by prominent church members in the diocese in which he was going to serve and a letter to a national newspaper by nine other bishops from across the country, the candidate was forced to make a public withdrawal from acceptance of office. This was a particularly complex case as the person was widely accepted to be in a relationship that had

not been sexually active for a number of years. Soon after this event the election and consecration of a partnered gay man, understood in this case to be in a sexually active relationship, to be a diocesan bishop in the USA was the prime cause for setting up an international commission, leading to the publication of the Windsor Report (Lambeth Commission on Communion, 2004), and the proposed Anglican Covenant (Anglican Communion Office, accessed via website). More recently, the North American church has also elected a partnered lesbian woman as a suffragan bishop.

Same sex marriage is a very different topic; it is not primarily about how the church orders its internal affairs. Churches firstly see themselves as having a stake in marriage because they are institutions which hold marriage ceremonies. For the Church of England, as for a number of churches across a range of countries, this includes the right to perform the legal ceremony as well as the liturgical rite. Secondly church definitions of marriage contain explicit reference to this being a sexual union of a man and a woman, with reference to the biblical texts; some would accord it sacramental status. Thirdly, churches see marriage as a concept that is informed in its overall meaning and import by its individual expressions, couple by couple. Hence it is argued that extending the marriage franchise changes all marriages, it is not just a development for those who are newly enabled to marry.

Efforts to authorise national church liturgies for the recognition of same sex partnerships have grown alongside the move towards state recognition of such unions across Europe and North America and the continuing involvement of churches in either the solemnisation or blessing of marriages. Whilst some states have legislated for a separate form of union or Civil Partnership (as has been the case in Great Britain since 2003) others have opted to make marriage available on equal terms to same sex couples. The Canadian diocese of New Westminster became the first Anglican diocese publicly to authorise a liturgy and this too became part of the agenda of the Lambeth Commission on Communion.

Unlike the ordination of a bishop, which is clearly an act undertaken by the national church, the performance of blessings, civil partnerships or marriages takes place at local level. Despite the lack of authorised liturgies, parish clergy in England are able to use their discretion to perform blessings, inside or outside the church building, with little expectation of any comeback. They are not however at present allowed by secular law to act as registrars for Civil Partnerships. At the time of writing, but after the data in the present survey was collected, there is active political discussion as to whether Britain should abandon the distinctive and more restricted nature of Civil Partnership and to widen the concept of marriage to include same sex couples. In practice many such couples already refer to their union as “marriage” notwithstanding the formal legal distinctions. The extent to which a marriage can be presumed to include sexual activity more than can a civil partnership has not been a significant feature of the debate in England in either church or wider circles, attention has rather been focussed on whether or not marriage implies a complementarity and coming together of basic (gender) opposites rather than simply a partnership of two individuals and in consequence whether changes to the definition of marriage affect the nature of marriage for every couple rather than simply extending it to a wider constituency.

The two issues of gay bishops and same sex marriage come together with the more particular question in England as to whether a man in a Civil Partnership can be considered for ordination as a bishop. Unlike for marriage, there is no presumption in English law that a Civil Partnership contains an expectation of sexual activity. A House of Bishops statement on Civil Partnerships in 2005 (House of Bishops, 2005) set out that being in a Civil Partnership should not present a ban on ordination as deacon or priest for an individual whose life is otherwise in keeping with church teaching on human sexuality, however no mention was made of ordination to the episcopate. In 2011, in response to circumstances surrounding an individual case, the House announced that it was urgently studying the question, but that no such candidate would be considered until it had completed its consideration. Most recently (House of Bishops, 2012) in December 2012, the House has determined that no additional requirements apply to bishops beyond those in force for deacons and priests. The distinction between homosexual orientation, which might legitimately be expressed through a Civil Partnership, and sexual practice, lies at the heart of the 2005 statement.

1.2 Religion and attitudes towards homosexuality

The study of attitudes towards gay marriage and the appointment of gay bishops fits within the wider and well established field of religion and attitudes towards homosexuality. This has been explored from three main perspectives, relating respectively to the three dimensions of religious belonging, namely self-defined religious affiliation, church attendance and belief. All such studies need to bear in mind the strong correlations that are found between attitudes to homosexuality, age and gender. For example, Crocket and Voas (2003), using data from the British Social Attitudes and British Household Panel surveys from 1983 to 2000, show that more negative attitudes are associated with older people and that women are less disapproving of homosexuality than are men.

1.21 Affiliation

Religious affiliation is measured by asking participants to select the religious group to which they see themselves as belonging. It presents the widest measure of religious belonging, capturing the views of many who neither regularly attend religious activities such as church services, nor articulate a doctrinal foundation of belonging. Self-defined religious affiliation is widely used as a research tool. For example, Francis (1982) investigated 2,074 adults aged between 26 and 39, finding that 21% of Catholics and 18% of Anglicans agreed that “the practice of homosexuality is wrong” while only 8% of those with no religious affiliation took the same view. More recently, a large survey of 33,982 13 to 15 year olds (Francis, 2008) investigated a wider range of self-defined religious affiliations. This paper found that the overall proportion of Christians in the sample who considered that homosexuality is wrong was at 21% little different to the proportion (20%) of those claiming no affiliation, however the figure was much higher for some other religions (Muslims 42%, Jehovah’s Witnesses 81%) and showed a marked difference from one denomination to another (Anglicans 19%, Roman Catholics 20%, Pentecostals 59%). Some of these latter differences may reflect the different degrees of regular active participation in religious activity that are associated with self-defined affiliation to different religious groups, especially among teenagers. In both the above studies the impact of age was reduced by studying a relatively narrow age band.

1.22 Practice

Studies that focus on religious practice allow comparisons and contrasts to be made between the views of those who are regular churchgoers and others. Study of the relationship between religious practice and homonegativity across the Christian denominations has again drawn on the data drawn from the British Social Attitudes survey. Gill (1999) looked at both the 1983 and 1993 databases and found in each case that whilst around four fifths of weekly churchgoers considered homosexuality to be “always or mostly wrong” (79% in 1983, 80% in 1993) this was much higher than the corresponding figure of around two thirds for non-churchgoers (66% and 69% respectively). These figures may, however, be influenced by the different age profiles of the churchgoing and non-churchgoing respondents; surveys almost universally show a positive correlation between age and church attendance (see for example Author, 2009, a study among 1454 attendees at rural harvest services).

1.23 *Belief*

Many studies have taken belief as their focus. Some (for example Altemeyer, 2003) have looked at the particular place of fundamentalist beliefs in relation to homosexuality, others have sought to identify links with specific church teachings (see for example Veenvilet, 2008 on the notion of “hate the sin but love the sinner”). In each case (and from the findings of others) it would seem that there is a connection between the espousal of particular beliefs and attitudes towards homosexuality that go wider than the beliefs themselves necessarily imply. Others have sought to explore differences between traditions in one denomination. For example, Francis, Astley, and Robbins (2005) sampled 7,611 individual Anglicans who attended church at least twice a month, asking whether it was wrong for “people of the same gender to have sex together”. As well as seeing clear differences to the responses in relation to age (two thirds of lay people aged 70 or over agreed compared with only 42% of those under 50) they also found that whilst 85% of those who self-identified with the evangelical wing of the church agreed, the agreement level fell to 36% among those who considered themselves to be Anglo-catholic.

1.3 Religion and prejudice

The attitudes of religious people to homosexuality raise wider issues of religion and prejudice. Foremost among these is the observation that whilst many religions teach tolerance and acceptance, the results of research since the mid-twentieth century have repeatedly showed positive associations between religiosity and prejudicial attitudes (see for example Allport & Kramer, 1946). From this apparent contradiction researchers began first to identify different styles of religious motivation and then to develop different categories of prejudice in order to understand the relationships better. Allport (Allport & Ross, 1967) distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation.

On the one hand:

Persons with this (*Extrinsic religious*) orientation are disposed to use religion for their own ends. The term is borrowed from axiology, to designate an interest that is held because it serves other, more ultimate interests. Extrinsic values are always instrumental and utilitarian. Persons with this orientation may find religion useful in a variety of ways - to provide security and solace, sociability and distraction, status

and self-justification. The embraced creed is lightly held or else selectively shaped to fit more primary needs. In theological terms the extrinsic type turns to God, but without turning away from self. (p. 434)

On the other hand

Persons with this (*Intrinsic religious*) orientation find their master motive in religion. Other needs, strong as they may be, are regarded as of less ultimate significance, and they are, so far as possible, brought into harmony with the religious beliefs and prescriptions. Having embraced a creed the individual endeavours to internalize it and follow it fully. It is in this sense that he *lives* his religion. (p. 434)

Studies such as Donahue (1985) found that high levels of intrinsic religious orientation were negatively associated with prejudice, most markedly in the area of racism. This was not however the case when high levels of extrinsic religious orientation were identified.

Further research however ascertained that this negative association with intrinsic religious orientation did not apply to all areas of prejudice. This led Batson, Schoenrade and Ventis (1993) to make a distinction between “proscribed” and “non-proscribed” prejudices. A non-proscribed prejudice is one that is not condemned by church teaching, and indeed may (as is the case with regard to the two questions discussed in the present paper) be positively encouraged by some church teachings. Arguments follow the line that the higher the level of intrinsic religiosity the more an individual is likely to follow official church teaching, and hence to eschew proscribed prejudices whilst endorsing those that are supported by the official position of the religious institution to which they belong.

The original distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation was extended by Batson and Ventis (1982) who argued for a third category of “quest” orientation. This addition recognises the attraction of living with questions and doubt and of seeing the religious life as a journey or pilgrimage. Again a short characterisation of this orientation was offered:

An individual who approaches religion in this way recognises that he or she does not know, and probably never will know, the final truth about such matters. But still the questions are deemed important and however tentative and subject to change, answers are sought. There may not be a clear belief in a transcendent reality, but there is a transcendent, religious dimension to the individual's life. (p. 150)

The relationship between quest religious orientation and prejudice does not however seem to have been much explored to date. However, there is nothing in the NIRO quest scale which offers any innate bias towards or against any particular attitude with regard to human sexuality. Indeed, within and beyond the church, the debates on human sexuality in general and the specific two issues addressed here in particular are characterised by a level of blunt and dogmatic assertion on both sides that would seem equally inimical to the exploration of provisionality and doubt that characterises quest religious orientation.

1.4 Religious Orientation and attitudes towards homosexuality

From the brief summary of research into the attitudes of religious people towards homosexuality above it can be seen that, whilst there are clear links between negative attitudes regarding various aspects of homosexuality and religion, the question as to what are the dominant factors in predicting such attitudes is somewhat complex. It is also clear that there have been a variety of ways of measuring opinions and attitudes, which in themselves may impact significantly on the responses given. The question thus arises as to whether the concept of religious orientation, as defined above, has a contribution to make both to the specific consideration of marriage and appointments to the episcopate and hence to the wider debate on religion and homosexuality.

This is not in itself a new thing to ask; attitudes towards homosexuality comprise one of the categories of prejudices that were the focus of attention for Allport and Ross (1967) and later for Batson, Schoenrade and Ventis (1993). A positive association between a variety of negative statements about homosexuality and intrinsic religiosity has been found across a range of investigations, for example Herek (1987), Kirkpatrick (1993), Fisher, Devison, Polley, Cadman and Johnston (1994), and, more recently Wilkinson (2004).

1.5 Research Questions

With the measures and questions defined as above it is possible to pose a number of specific research questions.

The first set of these are concerned with the extent to which the present study reinforces earlier results in the specific context of the two issues being studied, the Church of England and the present day. In particular, after controlling for age and sex, does the present sample confirm the findings of Herek (1987) and later studies that negative attitudes towards homosexuality are positively associated with intrinsic religious orientation?

Secondly, previous research has focussed on the links between attitudes towards homosexuality and intrinsic religious orientation; in particular most studies have not sought to measure quest orientation. Does the use of the NIRO scales allow conclusions to be drawn with respect to quest?

Finally, does the choice of the two specific questions about homosexuality allow any distinctions to emerge between the attitudes of respondents to two very different yet contraversial questions within the field of attitudes towards homosexuality.

2. Method

2.1 Procedure

Some 381 individuals who attended the *Service of Nine Lessons and Carols* at Worcester Cathedral in 2009 anonymously completed a survey before the start of the service. This form of service was devised in the early part of the twentieth century at King's College Cambridge and rapidly became widespread across England. As well as being used in many parish churches today, the format remains popular and widely recognised with the annual

live radio broadcast from King's College Chapel on Christmas Eve being one of the set pieces of Christmas broadcasting. The particular Carol Service chosen for the survey took place over two consecutive evenings in the week leading up to Christmas and is an open event rather than one sponsored by a particular institution or organisation, or directed towards a specific age group.

Alongside basic demographic information (age, sex and frequency of church attendance) participants thoroughly completed a range of questions using a 5-point Likert scale of agreement, where they were invited to choose between "agree strongly", "agree", "not sure", "disagree" and "strongly disagree" in response to each statement. Completed surveys were handed in on the night.

2.2 Measures

2.21 Religious orientation

A wide variety of measures of religious orientation have been developed since Allport and Ross's original definitions. For the present study the *New Indices of Religious Orientation (NIRO)* were utilised. These were originally proposed and tested by Francis (2007) who set out a 27-item instrument which measures separately the three categories of religious orientation using a five-point scale of agreement. Each scale consists of nine statements divided into three subcategories of three each; the statements are arranged in a randomised order to produce the full scales. The early definitions quoted above are susceptible to the notion that the three orientations might be seen as characterising distinct types of individual, as in studies using psychological type where, for example, an individual is categorised as either introvert or extravert (Myers and McCauley 1985). The NIRO scales however, in common with many operationalisations of religious orientation, assign to each individual a score on a numerical scale, in this case in the range 9 to 45; entirely random answers to the statements would produce a sample mean of 27 and standard deviation of 3.6 for each scale. The three scores for an individual show positive correlations, typically in the 0.25 to 0.4 range (see Author 2012, a). A person for whom religion is a very important part of their life will typically have higher scores on all three scales than a person who considers religion much less important. It is particularly important to avoid attempting to categorise individuals as "questers", "intrinsic" or "extrinsic".

The instrument has been found to work well among those who are regular churchgoers. Furthermore, Author (2012, a) has shown that, despite the cathedral carol service sample containing a large proportion of those who attend church less than six times a year, the instrument has good reliability properties for the present sample and hence is suitable for use in conjunction with other scales and statements from the cathedral survey.

2.22 Measuring attitudes towards gay bishops and same sex marriage

Respondents were invited to express agreement, on a 5-point Likert scale, with two statements which cover the issues which have proved most widely debated in the British media in recent years.

Attitudes to the ordination of gay bishops were measured by responses to the statement “It should be possible for a gay man to be made a bishop”. Whilst this does not cover the full range of experience in the wider Anglican Communion, restricting the question to the area of male homosexuality avoids bringing into respondents’ answers their views as to the general suitability of ordaining women as bishops.

Attitudes towards same sex relationships were measured by the responses to the statement, “Homosexual couples should be allowed to marry”. This was chosen ahead of two other types of question. One focussed on church authorisation of religious liturgies for same sex unions would have been somewhat esoteric for a congregation containing many who have only occasional experiences of attending church. On the other hand a question set in terms of civil partnerships would have run the risk of not encouraging participants to respond to the question as a religiously based one, and of confusing the many for whom the difference between marriage and civil partnership is unclear.

In both cases the statement to which individuals were invited to respond was couched so that agreement reflected positive attitudes towards homosexuality.

2.3 Participants

The sample contained 152 men and 213 women (16 did not respond to this question). Some 28% were under the age of 40; 33% between 40 and 59; 31% in their sixties and just 8% aged 70 or older. There was a very wider range of churchgoing frequency in the sample with just over a fifth attending weekly or more, 12% nearly weekly, 9% at least monthly, 14% at least 6 times per year, 37% at least annually; 9% claimed never to attend church. Almost four fifths of the sample (78%) agreed or agreed strongly with the statement “I consider myself to be a Christian”, including about two thirds of those who go to church less than 6 times a year, a further 11% of the whole sample were undecided on the question. The figure for Christian affiliation is thus well above the two thirds of the Worcestershire population who declared themselves to be Christian in responding to the religious affiliation question in the 2011 UK national census (Office for National Statistics, 2012). Some 60% of the sample reported that they were confirmed and a further 27% baptised; 60% considered themselves to be members of the Church of England and 17% of other Christian denominations; less than 2% professed another world faith. Just over a quarter (27%) were on a Church of England Electoral Roll. Author (2012, b) offers a more extensive description of the sample.

From the above remarks on both procedure and participants it can be seen that the sample is unlikely to be distorted by the overrepresentation of any special interest groups and appears to include a wide range of individuals who have contact with the Church of England through its public worship, in both cathedrals and parishes, especially at Christmas. It must be recognised that any data collected from a gathered congregation cannot claim to be exactly representative of either the churchgoing, religiously affiliated or general population; however, this type of sample may arguably better reflect the missional aspect of the church’s engagement than any of them. Indeed, the wide range of churchgoing suggests it is a sample whose extent of engagement may be sensitive to the way in which the church responds positively to current issues in wider society.

3. Results and analysis

The responses of the participants to the two questions regarding attitudes towards homosexuality are set out in table 1.

Table 1
Responses to the two "Homonegativity" Statements

	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Agree strongly
Gay marriage	20	19	23	26	13
Gay bishops	15	15	24	29	17

Note. N = 381, all figures are percentages

For the statement regarding gay marriage some 39% of respondents agreed or agreed strongly that it should be possible, exactly the same percentage who either disagreed or disagreed strongly. By contrast almost half of the participants (47%) agreed that it should be possible for a gay man to become a bishop, with less than a third (30%) disagreeing. Both figures are markedly higher than those recorded in 2001 by the *Church Times* survey (Francis, Astley, & Robbins, 2005). In that survey 14% agreed with same sex marriage whilst 19% of laity agreed with the ordination of a gay bishop. The 2004 survey also asked whether "it is wrong for people of the same gender to have sex together"; a statement with which 54% in total agreed. The topic of same sex marriage is much debated in wider British society and there have been many polls published in recent years to assess the extent to which the notion has support in the population as a whole. Some of these are tainted by the phrasing of the question, particularly where the poll has been commissioned by a group with an interest in promoting a particular view. Most relevant in terms of date of survey from among the more reliable polls for this sample would be the ICM Observer poll of 2008 (Guardian News and Media, 2008) where a simple yes or no answer was requested to the statement, "Do you believe that same sex couples should be allowed to get married?". Some 55% said yes and 45% no. Most recently a question asking about whether the law should be changed to allow same sex marriage was included in a YouGov poll in conjunction with the Sunday Times. Again 55% supported the notion, with 36% not supporting and 9% being undecided (YouGov, 2012). This would suggest that whilst the present sample was somewhat less likely to support same sex marriage than the general population, the extent of this was limited.

One likely factor in the difference between the two studies is that of age. The *Church Times* respondents were largely older people with only 7% being under 40 (compared with the 28% for the present study) and 56% being aged 60 or above. When the results of that survey for the final statement quoted above are given they increase from 42% among the under 40s to two thirds (66%) of those over 70. In studying the influence of religious orientation on attitudes towards homosexuality it is therefore important to control for age.

The *Church Times* survey found little difference between the attitudes of men and women to either question. For both sexes around one in five (19% men, 20% women) supported the view that a gay man could be a bishop whilst 13% of men and of women agreed with same sex marriages. The present survey however shows something very different. Some 45% of

women supported gay marriage and half (50%) approved of ordinations of gay men as bishops. For men the figures were 29% and 42% respectively. This indicates that for the present sample controlling for gender will be necessary.

3.1 The NIRO instrument

The three NIRO scales had been developed primarily for use with those who have a fairly high degree of religiosity. Author (in press) showed that the scale properties remain good for the present sample with the Cronbach Alpha figures all at or above 70% (Cronbach, 1951) and good standard deviations.

Table 2
Scale Properties for Religious Orientation

	Alpha	Mean	SD
Intrinsic	.91	27.5	8.1
Extrinsic	.73	25.0	5.4
Quest	.80	28.7	5.7

Note. N = 381

In each case higher scores indicate higher levels of that particular religious orientation. As noted earlier, an entirely random set of answers would yield a mean of 27 and standard deviation of 3.6 for each scale.

By comparison with the findings of Francis & Williams (in press), for the intrinsic religious orientation of those attending Sunday services in three cathedrals, the present sample showed a significantly different pattern with a lower mean (27.5 compared with 32.3, 33.5 and 32.1) and much higher standard deviation (8.1 compared with 5.5, 5.1 and 5.0) at the highest level of statistical significance ($p < .001$) commonly used. The present sample also had a significantly lower mean (25.0 compared with 26.9, 25.4 and 28.9) for the extrinsic scale for two of the three cathedrals studied at the same significance level. This suggests that quest orientation plays a higher role for many in the present sample and in consequence that study of this aspect of religious orientation will be particularly important for the understanding of those who attend cathedral carol services and for other populations of churchgoers who share the same characteristics, for example those which contain a large number of individuals who attend church rarely.

3.2 Correlations

Table 3 sets out a complete correlation matrix for age, sex, religious orientations and the two statements used in the survey.

Table 3
Correlation Matrix for Age, Sex, Religious Orientation and Attitudes to Homosexuality

	Intrinsic	Extrinsic	Quest	Age	Sex	Gay bishops
Gay marriage	-.337***	.023	.045	-.433***	.178**	.650***
Gay bishops	-.275***	-.036	.054	-.318***	.136**	
Sex	-.008	.024	-.070	-.085		

Age	.389***	-.011	.084
Quest	.387***	.386***	
Extrinsic	.270***		

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

It can be seen from this table that the three NIRO scales are not independent (pairwise correlations being between .27 and .39 and all significant at the $p < .001$ level); people who have a high degree of religiosity are likely to respond with high values on all three indices and conversely those who take little interest in religious matters are likely to generate low scores on all the scales. The associations with both gender and age referred to above are also borne out by this analysis. At .65 ($p < .001$) the correlation between the two statements themselves indicates that whilst there is an unsurprising link between the responses of participants the correlation is not so high as to suggest that the two questions do not measure different aspects of attitudes towards homosexuality. The table confirms the results of previous studies that there is an association between intrinsic religious orientation and negative attitudes towards aspects of homosexuality; the negative correlations are significant at the $p < .001$ level for both statements. The strong association between intrinsic religious orientation and age however suggests that it will be important to investigate whether controlling for this factor changes the result. The correlation table does not suggest any link between homonegativity and either of the other two religious orientations.

3.3 Regression analysis for “gay marriage”

Table 4 sets out the linear regression model for the statement “Homosexual couples should be allowed to marry”. Demographic factors have, in accordance with common practice, been entered first. After these the three orientations are added in the order: intrinsic, extrinsic, quest. This ordering has been chosen in line with the established finding that intrinsic religious orientation has a strong association with negative attitudes towards statements that support homosexuality and to test the residual contribution of quest orientation after all the other variables have been taken into account. Whilst there are always technical caveats with regard to the use of linear regression with Likert scales of agreement, in particular the extent to which any such scale is truly linear, this approach is standard within the field and results achieved by it are considered reliable findings.

Table 4
Regression on “Homosexual Couples Should be Allowed to Marry”

	R^2	Change in			β	t	$p <$
		R^2	F	$p <$			
Sex	.034	.034	12.8	.001	.173	3.7	.001
Age	.182	.148	65.0	.001	-.275	-5.3	.001
Intrinsic	.218	.036	16.5	.001	-.295	-5.2	.001
Extrinsic	.224	.005	2.5	ns	.020	0.4	ns
Quest	.249	.025	11.9	.001	.183	3.4	.001

Note. ns = not significant

From this table it is clear that after controlling for age and sex there is still a clear association between levels of intrinsic religiosity and opposition to same sex marriages with

the increase in r^2 being .036 ($p < .001$). This supports the results of earlier studies and confirms that the link is not simply a consequence of the basic demographic factors that influence both intrinsic religiosity and homonegativity. After intrinsic orientation has also been controlled for there is still no association between extrinsic religious orientation and attitudes towards gay marriage. More surprisingly, after all the above factors have been controlled for a clear significant link emerges between quest orientation and support for same sex marriages with an increase in R^2 of .025 ($p < .001$). These findings would appear to be robust enough to withstand technical limitations of the linear regression model.

3.4 Regression analysis for “gay bishops”

Table 5 performs the same calculations, entering the variables into the model in the same order, with respect to the statement “It should be possible for a gay man to be made a bishop”.

Table 5

Regression on “It Should be Possible for a Gay Man to be Made a Bishop”

	R^2	Change in R^2	F	$p <$	β	t	$p <$
Sex	.018	.018	6.4	.01	.125	2.5	.01
Age	.112	.095	38.0	.001	-.218	-4.0	.001
Intrinsic	.140	.028	11.4	.001	-.239	-4.1	.001
Extrinsic	.141	.001	0.5	ns	-.007	-0.1	ns
Quest	.156	.015	6.0	.01	.140	2.5	.01

Note. ns = not significant

Once again, after controlling for age and sex a significant association (increase in $R^2 = .028$, $p < .001$) between intrinsic religious orientation and disagreement with the consecration of gay men remains. Controlling for intrinsic orientation as well yields no further link to extrinsic religious orientation, however once again the full regression model shows a significant association between support for gay bishops and quest orientation (increase in $R^2 = .015$, $p < .01$) with the likelihood of this being false less than 1%. Again, the findings appear robust enough to withstand the limitations of the model.

4. Discussion

The twin issues of same sex marriage and the appointment of gay men as bishops remain deeply contentious within Anglican circles in general and in the Church of England in particular. This diversity of views is well reflected in the responses given to the present survey, with opinion being evenly divided over gay marriage but with around three people agreeing that a gay bishop would be acceptable for every two who disagree. Unsurprisingly, older people are less likely to approve than younger ones, reflecting a widely observed difference in attitudes to many questions around human sexuality.

4.1 The two statements

There are a number of reasons which might explain why higher levels of support have been found in the survey for the ordination of a gay man as a bishop than for same sex marriages. Some respondents may have interpreted marriage as presuming a sexually active relationship whilst considering that a gay man may be living entirely in accord with traditional Christian teaching on the restriction of sexually activity to heterosexual marriage. Again, the support for same sex marriage may be reduced by the availability of Civil Partnerships conveying similar levels of rights and benefits under the law.

At the time the survey was conducted the terms Civil Partnership and Marriage were often used indistinguishably in the media and general conversation, to refer to same sex relationships (see for example, Weeks, 2007), however the more recent politicisation of the debate has allowed further issues and distinctions to come to the fore. If the recent decision of the House of Bishops to allow in principle the consideration of a man in a Civil Partnership to be ordained a bishop is followed by such a person being appointed then this will also further heighten the debate around sexual orientation and sexual practice. This would appear to be a timely moment to encourage further research into the attitudes of Anglican churchgoers to the two questions surveyed here, but as part of a more extensive enquiry into what are the key factors influencing their views.

For both statements there was a clear gender difference of more than ten percentage points, with women recording much lower levels of homonegativity.

4.2 Intrinsic religiosity

The clear positive association between levels of intrinsic religiosity and disagreement with the two statements used in the cathedral survey suggests that, if the argument of Batson, , Schoenrade and Ventis (1993) is followed then homonegativity is a non-proscribed area of prejudice, more particularly negative attitudes to gay marriages and gay bishops are perceived by the cathedral carol service congregation to be the teaching of the Church of England, even if these are not the views of a majority of themselves and by no means the only opinions offered by religious commentators. This finding is in line with those of other studies among different denominations and countries which have found negative attitudes towards homosexuality to be a generally non-proscribed form of prejudice in Christian circles.

4.3 Quest religiosity

The association between positive views towards the two statements regarding homosexuality and quest religiosity underscores the importance of seeing this as a separate form of religious orientation. Furthermore it endorses the value of using regression analysis when studying religious orientation, in order to control for the remaining two scales when investigating the impact of one or other. Moreover, quest orientation remained at broadly similar levels, whilst both intrinsic, and (to a lesser extent) extrinsic, religious orientation were weaker features of this sample than for the three Cathedral Sunday congregations compared above. This suggests that study of quest religious orientation may be particularly helpful in understanding those who maintain contact with the church through its occasional events, such as carol services, rather than frequent public worship. More widely it indicates that there is a need to investigate whether the distinction between proscribed and non-

proscribed prejudices is not valid for this religious orientation, and whether quest orientation captures that aspect of Christian faith which is generally opposed to prejudice and promotes inclusivity and acceptance. So, for example, after controlling for age, sex, extrinsic and quest orientation, is it still the case that for some “proscribed” forms of prejudice, such as racism, higher levels of intrinsic religiosity are associated with lower levels of negativity?

4.4 Extrinsic religiosity

In common with much earlier research, the present paper has found no significant relationship between levels of extrinsic religiosity and attitudes towards homosexuality.

5. Conclusions

Previous studies have found that negative attitudes towards homosexuality fall into the category of non-proscribed prejudice among those who attend the Church of England, as such they increase with intrinsic religiosity, both before and after controlling for age and sex. The present survey would reinforce those findings among the rather wider population who attend church occasionally. By contrast, and after controlling for age, sex and other religious orientations, higher levels of quest religiosity have been found to be associated with positive opinions in two major areas of debate about homosexuality. For cathedrals and other churches who seek to work with the grain of quest religiosity, and thereby potentially to meet the needs of many who may feel sidelined in other churches, these results suggest that programmes of congregational activity and engagement which seek to combat prejudice may be particularly successful. For those interested in the decision making processes of the Church of England, or of other churches, it may be that research into the religious orientations of those elected to bodies such as the General Synod would provide useful insights.

These results further open up the question as to whether it may be quest religiosity that captures the teaching of tolerance and acceptance that characterises both Christianity and other world religions. Further study of quest orientation may better inform the debate about proscribed and non-proscribed forms of prejudice.

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