

LGBT religiosity in emerging adulthood: Associations with well-being

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ABSTRACT

Prior research has found that LGBT and emerging adults (ages 18-29) report lower levels of religiosity. However, further research has found that there are LGBT individuals who are religious who have been able to reconcile and integrate these two identities (Rodriguez & Ouellette, 2000). The current study looked at variables which have previously been found to be associated with higher levels of religiosity and the implications for well-being based on this religiosity. Structural equation modeling indicated that identity integration was associated with higher levels of religiosity. Identity integration had a significant association with well-being when explained through one's level of religiosity. Implications for practice are discussed.

BACKGROUND

- Two groups of people who report lower levels of religious practice are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) and emerging adult (ages 18-29) individuals (Chan, Tsai, & Fuligni, 2015).
- Whereas both LGBT individuals and emerging adults are less-religious than other groups, it would be important to understand variables associated with higher religiosity in this marginalized community.
- Prior research has shown the positive implications on well-being due to religious practice (i.e. Lukenbill, 1998), further needs to be known related to the implications for the religious practices of this population

METHODS

Data and Participants (ages 18-25 currently practicing a religion)

- Secondary data from the Social Justice Sexuality project
- 82% of participants identified as a person of color.
- 49% of participants identified as a woman.
- Catholicism: 23%, Protestantism: 10.6%, Judaism: 6%, and Islam: 1.6%.

Measures

Identity Salience

- Is your sexual orientation "an important part of your identity?"
- Likert-scale from 1 (not important at all) to 6 (Extremely important).

Identity Integration

- "Think about your sexual identity, how much has your religious tradition or spiritual practice been a negative or positive influence for you in coming to terms with your LGBT identity"
- Likert-scale from 1 (negative influence) to 7 (positive influence).

Religiosity

- The participants indicated how often they generally attend religious services of any kind.
- This data was collected using a likert scale from 1-8 where 1 = *never* and 8 = *every week*.

METHODS

Well Being

- Well-being was measured as a latent variable
- Made up of 4 items ($\alpha = .87$) that asked over the past week, how often the participant felt just as good as other people, felt hopeful about the future, felt happy, and felt that [they] enjoyed life.
- Participants responded to questions with a Likert scale including 1 (*never*), 2 (*sometimes*), 3 (*a lot of the time*), 4 (*most of the time*).

RESULTS

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (N = 656)

Variables	M	SD	Range
Identity salience	4.81	1.50	1 – 6
Identity integration	3.49	1.71	1 – 7
Group identification	4.66	1.45	1 – 6
Religiosity	3.47	2.22	1 – 8
Feeling just as good as others	3.03	.93	1 – 4
Feelings of hope	3.10	.91	1 – 4
Feelings of happiness	3.05	.90	1 – 4
Life-satisfaction	3.15	.86	1 – 4
Women	.49	.50	0 – 1
Person of color	.82	.38	0 – 1

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001 (two-tailed).

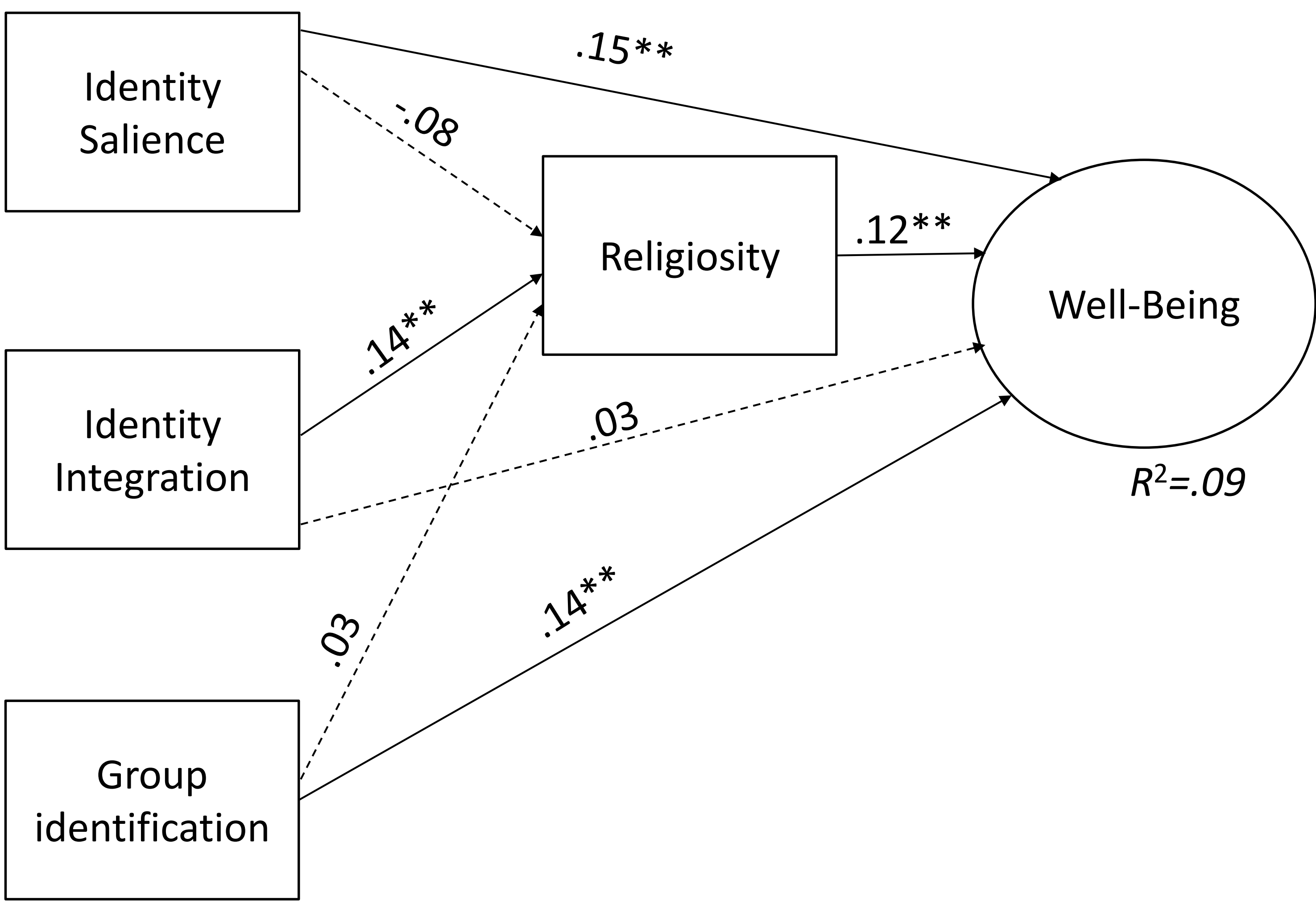
Table 2. Correlations (N = 656)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Identity salience	—				
2. Identity integration	-.03	—			
3. Group identification	.34***	-.04	—		
4. Religiosity	-.07	.14***	-.002	—	
5. Well-Being	.20***	.02	.19***	.12**	—

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001 (two-tailed).

RESULTS

Figure 1. Structural model of religiosity and well-being in LGBT emerging adults (Standardized Solution; N = 656) controlling for race and gender.



*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001 (two-tailed).
 $\chi^2(20) = 100.30$, $p < .001$; CFI = .94; TLI = .90; SRMR = .03; RMSEA = .08.

CONCLUSIONS

- Our research begins an important conversation into how religious institutions can support and welcome LGBT individuals.
- Feeling that one's sexual orientation was an important part of one's identity, feeling a connection to the LGBT community and higher levels of religiosity were associated with higher levels of well-being illustrating the importance of community and connection.
- Identity integration had a significant association with well-being when explained through one's level of religiosity
- The study illustrates how practitioners can work with religious communities to provide affirming spaces for this community as there are LGBT individuals who desire to be connected to faith communities
- The present study illustrates the implications for the mental health of LGBT emerging adults and so practitioners should work with clients to find a way to reconcile and integrate their identities if the client desires

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