In this study, we analyzed the relationship between religiosity and sexual prejudice. We examined the effects of different religious orientations (intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest), while controlling for the effects of fundamentalism and distinguishing between prejudice toward homosexuality and toward homosexuals. As predicted, intrinsic orientation was associated with prejudice toward homosexuality, but not toward homosexuals, whereas extrinsic orientation was constantly related to sexual prejudice, and quest orientation to prejudice reduction. When fundamentalism was added among predictors, the unfavourable effects of intrinsic religiosity disappeared, so as, in part, those of extrinsic orientation. At the same time, the association between quest and tolerance remained unchanged. Finally, in moderation analyses, we found that quest orientation, as a mature form of religiosity, favoured the beneficial role of intrinsic orientation. On the contrary, and consistent with the original predictions by Allport and Ross, the combination of high levels of intrinsic and extrinsic orientations had the most detrimental effects on sexual prejudice.

Key words: Religiosity; Religious orientations; Sexual prejudice; Homosexuals and homosexuality.

According to Gordon W. Allport (1954), the relation between religion and prejudice is paradoxical. On the one hand, religious teachings encourage followers to be tolerant and compassionate, willing to help other human beings. On the other hand, religion is sometimes the key booster of conflicts, wars, and even genocides. Reflecting this situation, decades of research in the field of social psychology have clearly demonstrated that religiosity can be associated with both increased and reduced prejudice (Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993; Hall, Matz, & Wood, 2010; Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005).

The first reason for the tangled relation between religion and prejudice is that religion is a complex phenomenon in itself. Batson and Ventis (1982) described the religious experience as characterized by uniqueness, complexity and diversity. The religious experience is unique, because it permeates every aspects of human life, but is different from all other everyday experiences, as its major aim is to give a precise and ultimate meaning to individual existence. The religious experience is psychologically complex, being characterized by beliefs, emotions, attitudes and behaviors that are integrated in human personality and transform individual life in dynamic ways. Finally, the
religious experience is diverse, as it seems impossible to provide a univocal definition that includes all forms of religiosity.

**Religious Orientations, their Combination and their Effects on Prejudice**

Starting from the assumption that religion can be experienced in different ways, and that people differ in the way they live and express their religiosity, Allport and Ross (1967) proposed the existence of two religious orientations: extrinsic and intrinsic.

*Extrinsic orientation* is characterized by instrumental and utilitarian values. Persons with extrinsic orientation use their religion for their own ends, such as to gain relief and protection and to formulate good social relationships. For these reasons, extrinsic orientation should be related to prejudice. In contrast, *intrinsic orientation* refers to an internalized and mature form of religiosity. Persons with intrinsic orientation “live” their religious experience, because religion is their master motive, and they try to follow it in a complete way. Given these premises, intrinsic orientation should be associated with tolerance.

Using their Religious Orientations Scale (ROS), Allport and Ross assessed the relation between prejudice and these two religious orientations. Analyzing the responses of six groups of churchgoers, they found that individuals might be classified into four categories, characterized by different levels of prejudice, depending on agreement or disagreement with extrinsic or intrinsic items. People who agreed only with extrinsically stated items — “the extrinsic type” — showed more prejudice than people who agreed only with intrinsically worded items — “the intrinsic type.” The other two patterns were “indiscriminately proreligious” and “indiscriminately antireligious or nonreligious.” The first included individuals who had high scores on both the intrinsic and extrinsic subscales: this particular combination was associated with more prejudice than either of the two other types. The second pattern held people who disagreed with items on the both subscales. This orientation was related to less prejudice compared to the other religious orientation patterns.

However, these hypotheses and findings by Allport and Ross were only partially confirmed in later research (for a review, see Batson et al., 1993). Specifically, extrinsic orientation was generally related to high levels of prejudice, whereas intrinsic orientation was not always related to tolerance. Indeed, intrinsic orientation showed inconsistent results, being from time to time associated with either higher or lower prejudice, or unrelated with this construct (see also Batson & Stocks, 2005; Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005). Consequently, Batson hypothesized that intrinsic orientation was associated with a desire to appear open and compassionate toward outgroups, following religious teachings, but this outward tolerance did not always translate into positive attitudes or behaviors. Moreover, as Batson and Ventis (1982) noted, items referring to intrinsic orientation may be sometimes related to *religious orthodoxy*, which focuses on the content of the religious beliefs themselves (see Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992). In this way, intrinsic orientation could be mixed with an immature form of religion, characterized by a lack of flexibility. With the aim of individuating a religious orientation that was always related to universal compassion and tolerance, Batson and colleagues proposed a third type of religiosity, called *quest orientation* (Batson, 1976; Batson, Eidelman, Higley, & Russel, 2001). This orientation, characterized by an open-minded, questioning approach to religion, should be firmly related to a reduction of prejudice.
Quest orientation can be considered as opposed to religious fundamentalism (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992). This fourth religious orientation is characterized by close mindedness, the certainty that one’s religious beliefs are correct and the conviction that only one’s own religion has access to the absolute truth. As a consequence, religious fundamentalism is generally associated with high levels of prejudice and negative attitudes toward outgroups that embrace different value systems (Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005; Jackson & Esses, 1997). Moreover, religious fundamentalism is often correlated with intrinsic orientation: people who hold fundamentalist religious beliefs tend also to be orthodox and, thus, to endorse some of the principles that characterize intrinsic religiosity (McFarland, 1989; Whitley, 2009; Wilkinson, 2004). On the other hand, Hunsberger (1995) found that fundamentalism was negatively correlated with quest orientation. This is not surprising, because fundamentalism is a form of religiosity that emphasizes adherence to revealed truths, whereas quest orientation emphasizes doubts and questions concerning these truths.

In the present research, we assessed simultaneously the role of these four religious orientations — intrinsic, extrinsic, quest and fundamentalism — as predictors of a specific type of social judgment: sexual prejudice.

Prejudice toward Homosexuals and Homosexuality: Love the Sinner, but Hate the Sin

The relationship between religiosity and prejudice may be especially problematic in the case of sexual prejudice. According to Herek (2000) sexual prejudice is a negative attitude toward an individual because of their sexual orientation. As Hunsberger and Jackson’s (2005) literature review underlined, most religions proscribe some forms of negative attitudes, such as racial/ethnic intolerance, but at the same time they may permit other forms of prejudice, such as those against people who are perceived to violate the religion’s value system: in many cases, homosexuals fall into this category (Duck & Hunsberger, 1999). Indeed, although most religions teach tolerance toward outgroups, many of the world’s prominent religions condemn homosexuality (Whitley, 2009).

Hunsberger and Jackson (2005) pointed out that people who are more religious are likely to have more negative attitudes toward homosexuals. Moreover, they found that both intrinsic religiosity and fundamentalism were more often positively related to prejudice against homosexuals than to racial/ethnic prejudice, whereas quest was frequently related to tolerance toward homosexuals. Similarly, in his meta-analysis of the studies on religiosity and sexual prejudice, Whitley (2009) found evidence of a positive association with prejudice toward homosexuals for most forms of religiosity. The only exception was quest, that tended to be associated with more tolerance toward lesbians and gay men.

However, a related vein of research suggests that the relation between religion and sexual prejudice may be more puzzling. In their experiments on helping, Batson, Floyd, Meyer, and Winner (1999) found that individuals with high levels of intrinsic orientation were less willing to help, and helped less, a gay person when they believed that their financial help could be used to promote homosexuality (the gay person wished to use the money to attend a gay pride rally) than when homosexuality was not involved (the money should be used to visit grandparents). This difference of behavior suggest that intrinsic people may discriminate against homosexuality, but not against homosexuals.
This phenomenon has been explained referring to the phrase by Saint Augustin “Cum dilectione hominum et odio vitiorum,” which is commonly translated into the ethical principle “love the sinner but hate the sin.” In an application of this principle to the field of sexual prejudice, Veenenvliet (2008) found that religious persons, especially individuals who embraced Catholic religion, did not explicitly condemn homosexuals (the “sinner”), but expressed disagreement with behaviors that violate the religious teachings and values (the “sin”; see also Mak & Tsang, 2008).

In light of these findings, in the present research we decided to investigate the relation between religiosity and sexual prejudice keeping distinct prejudice toward homosexuals and toward homosexuality.

The Present Research

In the present research, we aimed at observing simultaneously the effects of intrinsic, extrinsic and quest orientation on sexual prejudice, distinguishing between prejudice toward homosexuals (the sinner) and toward homosexuality (the sin). We also controlled for the effects of fundamentalism, as it is possible to hypothesize a partial overlap between this construct and intrinsic orientation. We supposed that intrinsic orientation would be positively associated with prejudice toward homosexuality, but not toward homosexuals. We also hypothesized that the negative effects of intrinsic religiosity would be reduced when controlling for fundamentalism. This latter religious orientation, so as extrinsic religiosity, should be positively related to prejudice toward both homosexuals and homosexuality. On the contrary, quest orientation should be always negatively associated with prejudice.

Finally, we examined the interactions between religious orientations. A first combination between intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity was originally proposed by Allport and Ross (1967), while the interactions involving quest orientation have not been yet considered in literature. Following Allport and Ross, we hypothesized that intrinsic orientation should be negatively related to prejudice when extrinsic orientation is low, while the simultaneous presence of these two orientations should lead to high levels of intolerance. There were not specific hypotheses about the possible interactions between quest and the others religious orientations, but we expected that, in general, quest would facilitate the process of prejudice reduction.

METHOD

Participants and Procedures

Three hundred and ninety-one participants, 176 males and 215 females, were asked to complete, on a voluntary basis, a questionnaire concerning the relation between religiosity and prejudice toward homosexuals.

Participants’ age varied between 15 and 73 years (M = 33.33, SD = 13.34). They were recruited in person or via advertisements, and they completed the questionnaire individually and returned it anonymously.

Two versions of the questionnaire were used, in which the order between the scales concerning religious affiliation and prejudice was varied. Half participants completed the question-
naire that began with the prejudice scales, whereas the other half completed the version beginning with the religious orientation scale. Order of presentation did not influence results, neither alone, nor in interaction with religious affiliation of participants. Thus, this factor will not be considered in the following analyses.

Measures

Religious orientation was assessed with 24 items taken from the Religion Orientation Scale (ROS; Allport & Ross, 1967) and the Religious Life Inventory (RLI; Batson et al., 1993). The items reflected the three religious orientations, as previously described: intrinsic (e.g., “I try hard to carry my religion over into all my other dealings in life,” “Religion is something I have never felt personally compelled to consider,” reverse scored), extrinsic (e.g., “The primary purpose of prayer is to gain relief and protection,” “The church is most important as a place to formulate good social relationships”), and quest (e.g., “I am constantly questioning my religious beliefs,” “For me, doubting is an important part of what it means to be religious”). Response scale was anchored with 1 (not describing me at all) and 7 (describing me very well).

Religious fundamentalism was measured with 10 item (α = .78) taken from the scale by Altemeyer and Hunsberger (2004). The scale assessed beliefs in the infallibility of sacred texts and of one’s religion and in the superiority of one’s religion over others. Items included “God has given humanity a complete unfailing guide to happiness and salvation which must be totally followed,” “All of the religions in the world have flaws and wrong teachings” (reverse scored). Responses could vary from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Prejudice toward homosexuality was measured with three items concerning homosexuality in general: “Homosexuality is a sexual disorder and it must be treated such consequently,” “The law should allow homosexual marriages” (reverse scored), “Homosexuality is not a natural form of sexuality” (α = .72). Participants were asked to express their agreement on a 7-point scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

Prejudice toward homosexuals was assessed with three items (α = .89; adapted from Pagotto, Voci, & Maculan, 2010), in which participants had to indicate how much they felt “positive,” “favorable” (both reverse scored) and “negative” toward homosexuals, on a scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very).

As an additional measure of prejudice toward homosexuals, we included a short scale of perspective taking. This construct is generally conceived as the main antecedent of empathy (Batson, 2009; Batson & Ahmad, 2009) and thus should be related to feelings of compassion and tolerance, dimensions that are central in the religion experience (Batson et al., 1993). In our questionnaire, perspective taking was measured with three items (α = .85; adapted from Voci & Hewstone, 2007), in which participants were asked to indicate which were their reactions when reading or hearing about discriminations against homosexuals: “I try to understand their thoughts,” “I try to see things as I were in their shoes” and “I always image their thoughts” (from 0 = not at all to 4 = very).

Religious affiliation. At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked to report their religious affiliation, selecting one among three possible options: Catholic, Agnostic/Atheistic, other religious affiliations. Responses to this item were used to identify participants as Catholics vs. Non religious.
RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

In what follows, “Catholic participants” refers to participants who reported having a Catholic religious affiliation (N = 284; 118 males, 166 females; mean age = 34.69 years, SD = 13.27, range: 15-73), whereas “Non-religious participants” (N = 107; 58 males, 49 females; mean age = 29.75 years, SD = 12.92, range: 17-61) refers to participants who reported being agnostic, atheist, secular, or did not provide any response to the religious affiliation item.

First of all, we conducted a principal axis factor analysis with Oblimin rotation on responses to the 24 items taken from the ROS and RLI scales, considering only Catholic participants. This analysis yielded six factors with eigenvalues greater than one. However, inspection of factor loadings (retaining items with loadings higher than .40) showed that only the first three factors, which explained 42.28% of the variance, had a clear meaning. Eight items referred to intrinsic orientation loaded on the first factor, whereas six items referred to quest orientation loaded on the second factor; finally, four items referred to extrinsic orientation loaded on the third factor. Thus, the three factors were labeled, respectively, Intrinsic (α = .88), Quest (α = .74), and Extrinsic orientation (α = .76).

Means and standard deviations of all measures, together with comparisons between Catholic and Non-religious participants, are shown in Table 1. Catholic participants scored significantly higher than Non-religious participants on Intrinsic (M = 4.43 vs. 2.16; p < .001), Extrinsic (M = 2.36 vs. 1.57; p < .001), and Quest orientation (M = 3.58 vs. 2.95; p < .001), as well as on fundamentalism (M = 3.24 vs. 2.04; p < .001). Moreover, Catholic participants, compared to Non-religious, reported significantly more prejudice toward homosexuality (M = 4.09 vs. 2.35; p < .001) and prejudice toward homosexuals (M = 3.31 vs. 2.35; p < .001). No difference between the two groups emerged for perspective taking (M = 1.89 vs. 2.08; p = .11).

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<td>M</td>
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<td>Extrinsic orientation</td>
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<td>Quest orientation</td>
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<td>Religious Fundamentalism</td>
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<td>Prejudice toward homosexuality</td>
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<td>Prejudice toward homosexuals</td>
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<td>Perspective taking</td>
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***p < .001
Regression Analyses

To test our hypotheses, we conducted a series of multiple regression analyses, for Catholic participants only.

General Effects of Intrinsic, Extrinsic and Quest

In the first analysis, the predictors were intrinsic, extrinsic and quest orientations and the criterion variables were prejudice toward homosexuality, prejudice toward homosexuals and perspective taking (see first part of Table 2).

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<td>$R^2 = .21$</td>
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* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, † $p < .10$
The predictors explained 12% of the variance in prejudice toward homosexuality. Prejudice was positively associated with intrinsic ($\beta = .21, p < .001$) and extrinsic orientation ($\beta = .15, p = .010$), whereas it was negatively associated with quest ($\beta = -.18, p < .001$).

With regard to prejudice toward homosexuals, the predictors explained 9% of the variance. Prejudice toward homosexuals was associated positively with extrinsic ($\beta = .19, p = .002$) and negatively with quest ($\beta = -.23, p < .001$). Intrinsic orientation did not produce any significant effect ($\beta = -.01, p = .87$).

For perspective taking, the three predictors explained 8% of the variance. Perspective taking was associated positively with quest ($\beta = .23, p < .001$) and, although marginally, with intrinsic ($\beta = .11, p = .061$) and negatively with extrinsic ($\beta = -.11, p = .064$).

Overall, intrinsic orientation behaves in three different ways, depending on the criterion variable: it was positively associated with prejudice toward homosexuality, probably because intrinsically oriented individuals internalized Catholic teachings, according to which homosexuality is a negative and immoral behavior (“hate the sin”); it was not related to prejudice toward homosexuals, as in this case prejudice is not related to a sin, but to individuals; finally, intrinsic orientation was associated to an increase in perspective taking, thus conducting to an inclination to understand homosexuals as they face discrimination (“love the sinner”).

As predicted, extrinsic and quest orientations had more stable effects on the criterion variables. In particular, extrinsic orientation was related to an increase of both forms of prejudice and to a decrease of perspective taking. Finally, consistent with Batson’s hypothesis, quest orientation was associated with more tolerant responses, across the three criterion variables.

Controlling for the Effects of Fundamentalism

In this second series of analyses, religious fundamentalism was added among predictors. The aim of this analysis was to distinguish the effects of intrinsic orientation from those of fundamentalism, as it is possible to hypothesize a partial overlap between these two constructs. Indeed, the correlation between intrinsic orientation and fundamentalism was $r = .55, p < .001$; fundamentalism was also positively correlated with extrinsic orientation, $r = .41, p < .001$, and negatively with quest orientation, $r = -.21, p < .001$.

First of all, it has to be noted that adding religious fundamentalism among predictors increased the percentage of explained variance of the criterion variables (see Table 2).

When controlling for the effects of fundamentalism, intrinsic orientation was not related anymore to prejudice toward homosexuality ($\beta = .06, p = .40$), and a negative effect on prejudice toward homosexuals emerged ($\beta = -.11, p = .098$). These results suggest that the positive relation, previously described, between intrinsic orientation and prejudice toward homosexuality (“hate the sin”) was due to the partial overlap between this orientation and fundamentalism. For the same reason, the previous null effect on prejudice toward homosexuals turns into a negative, although marginal effect: intrinsic orientation, once cleaned from its detrimental component related to fundamentalism, gives rise to the predicted “love the sinner” effect.

In a similar way, introducing fundamentalism as a predictor reduced the effects of extrinsic orientation, which was related to a single, positive influence on prejudice towards homosexu-
als. Finally, it is important to underline that the beneficial role of quest orientation remained unchanged, while, as predicted, fundamentalism per se had detrimental effects on prejudice and perspective taking.

**Moderation Analyses**

Next, we conducted a moderation analysis adopting the procedure proposed by Jaccard, Turrisi, and Wan (1990; see also Aiken & West, 1991), adding among predictors the two-way products of the three measures of religious orientations (Intrinsic by Extrinsic, Intrinsic by Quest, and Extrinsic by Quest). Prior to multiplication, the means of the terms were zero-centered, in order to avoid multicollinearity (see Cronbach, 1987). This analysis permitted us to further increase the percentage of the explained variance (see Table 2). We evaluated, before decomposing the products, which interactions had significant or marginally significant effects on the criterion variables (Table 2). Then, we decomposed such interactions computing the effects of the predictor for high vs. low (±1SD) levels of the moderator (see Aiken & West, 1991).

Two moderations were present for prejudice toward homosexuality. The first case, marginally significant, involved the product between intrinsic and extrinsic orientations ($\beta = .10, p = .068$): intrinsic orientation was related to prejudice toward homosexuality only when extrinsic orientation was high ($b = .21, SE = .11, p = .063$), but not when extrinsic orientation was low ($b = -.04, SE = .09, p = .67$; simple slopes are reported in Figure 1). The second moderation concerned the combination between extrinsic and quest orientation ($\beta = .14, p = .013$); the decomposition (Figure 2) indicated that quest orientation reduced prejudice toward homosexuality only when extrinsic orientation was low ($b = -.30, SE = .10, p = .002$), not when extrinsic orientation was high ($b = .07, SE = .12, p = .55$).
For prejudice toward homosexuals, only the intrinsic by quest orientation product had a significant, negative effect ($\beta = -0.13, p = .020$); simple slopes analysis indicated that intrinsic orientation was related to a reduction of prejudice only when quest orientation was high ($b = -0.28, SE = .10, p = .006$), not when quest was low ($b = .00, SE = .10, p = 1.00$; Figure 3).
When perspective taking was the criterion variable, two moderations emerged: one involving the product between intrinsic and extrinsic orientation ($\beta = -.15, p = .015$), the other that between intrinsic and quest ($\beta = .12, p = .048$). Simple slopes analyses showed that the positive effect of intrinsic religiosity was significant only for low levels of extrinsic orientation ($b = .24, SE = .07, p < .001$; when extrinsic was high: $b = .01, SE = .07, p = .94$; Figure 4). When quest orientation was the moderator, intrinsic orientation was positively related to perspective taking only when quest was high ($b = .20, SE = .07, p = .003$; when quest orientation was low: $b = .04, SE = .07, p = .53$; Figure 5).
Finally, we assessed the effects of the interaction between the three predictors on the criterion variables. In no case this three-way interaction had a significant effect.

DISCUSSION

In this study we assessed the relation between religiosity and prejudice toward homosexuals and homosexuality. Starting from the famous phrase taught by Saint Augustine, “Love the sinner but hate the sin,” we examined the effects of three religious orientations, intrinsic, extrinsic and quest, on sexual prejudice, distinguishing between prejudice toward homosexuals (the sinner) and prejudice toward homosexuality (the sin). Moreover, we controlled for the effects of fundamentalism (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992), as previous studies (e.g., McFarland, 1989) pointed out a possible, partial overlap between this dimension of religiosity and intrinsic orientation.

The results, obtained considering the data from Catholic respondents, supported the hypothesis that intrinsic orientation was related to more prejudice toward homosexuality (“hate the sin”), although it was not associated with prejudice toward homosexuals. This difference may be attributable to the fact that intrinsically oriented individuals follow religious principles that are somehow ambivalent: on the one hand, the Catholic Church teaches love and tolerance, but, on the other, it openly condemns homosexuality as an immoral and sinful behavior. It is noteworthy, however, that when controlling for fundamentalism, intrinsic orientation ceased to be associated with prejudice toward homosexuality and, at the same time, became a predictor of tolerance for homosexuals (“love the sinner”). This finding confirms that intrinsic and fundamentalism partially overlap, and that intrinsic orientation, cleaned from the detrimental influence of fundamentalism, is a beneficial form of religiosity that can lead to prejudice reduction.

Furthermore, we confirmed the hypothesis that extrinsic orientation was constantly related to sexual prejudice. Indeed, extrinsic orientation reflects the extent to which people use religion as a means to achieve nonreligious goals and leads people to adhere religious teachings without a personal elaboration. For this reason, individuals with high levels of extrinsic orientation may be less sensible to a fine-grained distinction such as that between prejudice toward the sin, but not the sinner. However, it has to be noted that, controlling for fundamentalism, the effects of extrinsic orientation on prejudice toward homosexuals were reduced.

This study also confirmed Batson’s hypothesis on quest orientation: this form of religiosity was always associated with tolerance and prejudice reduction. Indeed, quest orientation is an open-minded and questioning approach, and thus leads to more openness toward members of stigmatized outgroups. Quest orientation is opposed to religious fundamentalism: the first is associated with universal compassion and tolerance, the second is characterized by prejudice and intolerance. Consistently, controlling for fundamentalism, the effects of quest orientation were not altered.

The difference between prejudice toward homosexuality and toward homosexuals was also present when we examined the interactions between the three religious orientations. With regards to prejudice toward homosexuality (“the sin”), first we found that intrinsic religiosity increased prejudice only when extrinsic orientation was high. This result confirms Allport’s hypothesis regarding “indiscriminately pro religious” individuals, highlighting that the simultaneous presence of intrinsic and extrinsic orientation is associated with high levels of prejudice toward homosexuality. Second, quest orientation reduced prejudice toward homosexuality only when ex-
trinsic orientation was low. This finding, which extends Allport’s hypothesis to quest orientation, indicates that an inner religious investigation leads to a reduction of prejudice against homosexuality only when it is not mixed with practical and social motives.

As to prejudice toward homosexuals (“the sinner”), we observed different effects of intrinsic orientation depending on the moderator and the criterion variable. First, intrinsic religiosity reduced prejudice toward homosexuals and increased perspective taking only when quest was high: quest orientation, as a mature form of religiosity, boosts intrinsic individuals to express greater tolerance toward homosexuals. Second, intrinsic religiosity increased perspective taking only when extrinsic orientation was low. Confirming Allport’s prediction about the “intrinsic type,” intrinsic individuals tend to put themselves in homosexuals’ shoes only when they do not endorse extrinsic religiosity.

In conclusion, in this study we confirmed Allport’s hypotheses on the combination between intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations, distinguishing between prejudice toward homosexuality (“the sin”) and toward homosexuals (“the sinner”). At the same time, we extended the possibility of combining religious orientations to the quest dimension, showing that this form of religiosity constantly favors the emergence of compassion and tolerance.

We aware that some factors limit the conclusions that can be drawn from our findings, suggesting at the same time new avenues for future research. First of all, our results were obtained through a self-report questionnaire, and thus may be affected by social desirability effects. To solve this problem, future research should examine the relation between religious orientations and prejudice using implicit or behavioral measures (see Rowatt, Frankin, & Cotton, 2005). A second limitation is that our sample comprised only Catholic individuals. Further studies are needed to replicate these findings for other religious affiliations; with this aim, it would be important to broaden the formulation of the religiosity scales in order to be applicable to other religions. A third limitation is that we did not distinguish between prejudice toward gays and prejudice toward lesbians. It would be interesting, in light of the results by Bassett and colleagues (2001), to examine whether religious people show the same attitude toward gays and lesbians, and if these attitudes are differentially affected by religious orientations.

Future research should also consider the evolution that society is experiencing, the same evolution that led, in 1974, to the exclusion of homosexuality from the list of possible mental illness by the American Psychiatric Association and to the definition, in many countries, of sexual prejudice as a condemnable act by law. In particular, it would be useful to consider the adaption of the religious experience to modern societies. For instance, it could be worth to take into account the possible combinations between quest and intrinsic orientations, with their focus on the religious dimension, and broader forms of spirituality and life philosophies, that, being centered on openness and acceptance of diversity, should also lead to tolerance and prosocial attitudes.

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