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Author(s)	Ho, Shirley S.; Detenber, Benjamin H.; Malik, Shelly; Neo, Rachel L.
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The Roles of Value Predispositions, Communication, and Third Person Perception on Public
Support for Censorship of Films with Homosexual Content

Shirley S. Ho

Benjamin H. Detenber

Shelly Malik

Rachel L. Neo

Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information
Nanyang Technological University
31 Nanyang Link
Singapore 637718

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*All correspondence should be addressed to the first author, Shirley S. Ho, at tsyho@ntu.edu.sg

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the roles of value predispositions, communication, and third person perception on public support for censorship of films with homosexual content in Singapore. Findings from a nationally representative telephone survey of adults showed that the majority of Singaporeans supported stricter censorship of films with homosexual characters. Conformity to norms, intrinsic religiosity, and Asian orientation were positively associated with public support for censorship. Media exposure and perceived negative media effects on self were negatively associated with public support for censorship. Our results supported the perceptual component but not the behavioral component of the third person effect.

The Roles of Value Predispositions, Communication, and Third Person Perception on Public Support for Censorship of Films with Homosexual Content

As a controversial and morally-loaded issue, homosexuality has often sparked heated debates (Gross, 1991; Ho & McLeod, 2008). While these debates have been most prominent in Western countries, disputes over homosexuality's significance in society and its regulation are becoming more common in Asia (e.g., Detenber, Cenite, Zhou, & Malik, 2009). Often the debates focus on the portrayals of homosexuality in the media, and the influence they may have on impressionable populations. Since media content can be seen as a reflection of societal values (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorelli, & Shanahan, 2002), it is worthwhile to understand how people respond to film portrayals of homosexuality and their willingness to impose restrictions on such content.

Singapore is a small country with a multi-cultural society and an electoral democracy that has made great strides in socio-economic development over the last few decades (Wilson, 2000). However, critics of the country's ruling party contend that these developments have come at the expense of political and personal freedoms (Rodan, 2004). Others have noted that the government has been able to strike a balance between regulating media outlets and providing some leeway for democratic political discourse (George, 2006). Despite what some see as a restrictive approach to the media (or perhaps because of it), other Asian countries such as China and occasionally even Western countries such as the United States appear interested in emulating Singapore's model of governance (Fish, 2010; Friedman, 2011). For this reason, examining and understanding support for censorship of contentious content such as homosexuality may have wider implications.

In Singapore, strict legal sanctions are still placed on the release and circulation of media content depicting homosexuality (Tan, 2003). Nevertheless, the government is more amenable to allowing content with gay and lesbian characters to be screened in cinemas than on local free-to-air (FTA) television channels due in large part to the wider accessibility of FTA content (Censorship Review Committee, 2010). Over a decade ago, films which contained positive depictions of homosexuality were largely banned by the Singapore government (Leong, 1997). In recent years, however, the government has promised to be more flexible in regulating non-explicit film content with homosexual characters (Censorship Review Committee, 2010). Movies with overt depictions of homosexuality such as “*Brokeback Mountain*” and “*The Kids are All Right*” have been screened uncut in cinemas (Media Development Authority, 2011; Ong, 2006). Furthermore, two successful runs of the “Love & Pride” film festival, which showcased positive portrayals of gays and lesbians, have been held in local mainstream cinemas (“The 2nd Love & Pride Film Festival,” 2009). In contrast, there is still virtually no homosexual content on FTA channels.

Film watching is a popular socio-recreational activity in Singapore (Uhde & Uhde, 2000), and provides a suitable context for examining public support of censorship. Previous attempts to gauge public perceptions of censorship of films in Singapore have been based on surveys using non-representative samples (Censorship Review Committee, 2003). To address this shortcoming, the present study aims to use a nationally representative survey to systematically (a) gauge the public level of support for censorship of films with homosexual content and (b) use Markus and Zajonc’s (1985) *Orientation-Stimulus-Orientation-Response (O-S-O-R)* model to examine the potential influence of value predispositions (i.e., conformity to norms, religious beliefs, and

orientations), communication (i.e., media exposure and interpersonal contact), and third person perception on public support for censorship of films with homosexual content in Singapore.

Our study makes several important contributions. First, our study tests the applicability of the *O-S-O-R* model in a non-Western context and expands upon the range of value predispositions tested in previous public opinion studies that have used the *O-S-O-R* model. The *O-S-O-R* model may apply well to other cultural contexts because the broad categories of predictors outlined in the model allow for the testing of certain value predispositions (e.g., cultural orientations) that may influence attitudinal or behavioral outcomes in these contexts. Second, this study provides insights for policymakers on how best to approach the regulation of film content with homosexual characters.

The *O-S-O-R* Model

Previous literature suggests that value predispositions and media consumption-related variables are factors which can potentially shape attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Markus & Zajonc, 1985). In this study, we draw upon the *O-S-O-R* model to provide an organizing framework to explain how value predispositions and media-related variables could potentially influence support for censorship of films with homosexual themes. The *O-S-O-R* model has been used to explain the direct interplay of value predispositions and information sources on support for various socio-political and scientific policies (e.g., Besley & Shanahan, 2005; Nisbet & Goidel, 2007; Scheufele, Nisbet, Brossard, & Nisbet, 2004).

Briefly, ‘*O1*’ stands for trait predispositions which serve as heuristic cues that influence behavioral intentions, ‘*S*’ represents “stimuli” which includes information sources such as media and interpersonal communication, ‘*O2*’ refers to orientations which could potentially have been influenced by the informational stimuli, and finally, the ‘*R*’ represents the criterion variable

which is typically an attitudinal or behavioral outcome (Besley & Shanahan, 2005; Markus & Zajonc, 1985).

Based on the structure of the *O-S-O-R* model, the variables examined in this study are classified as follows: ‘*O1*’ refers to conformity to norms, intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity, and Asian and Western orientation; ‘*S*’ represents attention paid to media content with homosexual characters and interpersonal communication; ‘*O2*’ stands for perceptions of the effects of film content with homosexual characters on self and others; and ‘*R*’ represents support for censorship of films with homosexual characters.

Conformity to Norms

Social norms represent standards or rules that are learnt through interactions with others (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). Social norms are derived from expectations that others have for our behaviors (Blake & Davis, 1964; Pepitone, 1976). These expectations are delineated from what other people commonly do in specific situations (i.e., descriptive norms; Schultz, Nolan, Cialdini, Goldstein, & Griskevicius, 2007), from the expectations of people who are important to us (i.e., subjective norms; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), from others’ approval or disapproval of these behaviors (i.e., injunctive norms; Schultz et al., 2007), and from our own behavioral standards (i.e., personal norms; Schwartz, 1977). Social norms guide peoples’ perceptions and judgments and can be regarded as a form of social orientation.

To gain acceptance from other group members, individuals may conform to norms by changing their stance on an issue to reflect the majority viewpoint (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). In a collectivist society like Singapore (Triandis, 1995), conforming to norms is regarded as a sign of tolerance, maturity, and self-control (Markus & Kitayama, 1994). Homosexuality is often deemed as a violation of Asian norms (Matteson, 1997).

The Singapore government has expressed concern that promoting homosexuality will bring about negative social consequences such as the erosion of family values (Lim, 2000). Studies have shown that people who adhere to societal norms also tend to exhibit higher levels of authoritarian submission, that is, the extent to which a person is willing to defer to the ruling party in any given nation (e.g., Xu et al., 2001). As authoritarian submission has been positively associated with censorship support (Lambe, 2004), it is reasonable to deduce that people who conform to norms will likewise espouse the need to censor film content depicting homosexuality. Given these considerations, we hypothesize the following:

H1: Conformity to norms will be positively associated with support for censorship of homosexuality in films.

Religious Beliefs

There are two aspects which make up an individual's religious orientation: extrinsic and intrinsic religiosity (Allport & Ross, 1967). Extrinsically motivated persons typically regard religion as useful to serving their own interests, in such areas as "security and solace, sociability and distraction, status and self-justification" (p. 434). Conversely, intrinsically oriented persons rely on religious teachings as a basis to guide the way they lead their lives.

Religiosity has been found to be positively associated with support for censorship (e.g., Fisher, Cook, & Shirkey, 1994; Herrman & Bordner, 1983; Lambe, 2004; Thompson, Chaffee, & Oshagan, 1990). Previous research has shown a negative association between intrinsic religiosity and tolerance of film portrayals of homosexuals, but demonstrated no significant association between extrinsic religiosity and tolerance of such film portrayals (Detenber et al., 2007). With these considerations in mind, the following hypothesis and research question are posited:

H2: Intrinsic religiosity will be positively associated with support for censorship of homosexuality in films.

RQ1: How will extrinsic religiosity be associated with support for censorship of homosexuality in films?

Asian and Western Orientations

With global migrations and multi-cultural communities, it is possible for an individual to assume more than one cultural orientation (Benet-Martinez et al., 2002; Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000). Differing cultural orientations can affect perceptions, memories and judgment, and shifts in cultural orientation can be influenced by media representations. For example, Hong et al. (2000) found that bicultural people were able to shift between their Asian and Western cultural frames when they were exposed to cultural cues relevant to their respective cultural orientation.

Western cultures have often been described as “individualistic and conflict-ridden” whereas Asian cultures place less emphasis on individual rights but more on harmony, family, and community as a whole (Pinches, 1999, p.1). Singaporeans are arguably bicultural as their identity entails a mixture of the East and West (Tamney, 1996). Tai (1989) has described Singaporeans as westernized in their outward appearance, but rooted in the Oriental culture. While the government often highlights “Asianness” as part of its national ideology (Hill, 2000), it also embraces capitalism, a form of Western influence (Tamney, 1996). Moreover, having been under the British rule for over a century until its independence in 1965, Singapore was considerably influenced by the Western values passed on by the British (Quah, 1995). Western cultural products, particularly through television programs and films, have also exerted their influence on Singaporeans (Weber, 2003).

Western orientations have been found to be positively associated with acceptance of homosexuals (Detenber, Ho, Neo, Malik, & Cenite, 2010). It is therefore plausible that people with higher levels of Western orientation will show less support for censorship of homosexual content. By contrast, it is likely that Asian orientation will be associated with greater support for censorship as people with high levels of Asian orientation tend to be more conservative and are more likely to uphold existing societal mores (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

H3: Western orientation will be negatively associated with support for censorship of homosexuality in films.

H4: Asian orientation will be positively associated with support for censorship of homosexuality in films.

Interpersonal Contact

According to the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954), prejudice or misconceptions that are formed based on misinformation can be reduced through interpersonal contact between members from the majority and minority groups. Through interactions, individuals can learn more about the other group and modify their beliefs about them. Herek and Capitanio (1996) contend that those with many gay and lesbian personal contacts are more likely to notice inherent differences among such individuals and will consequently be less likely to hold negative stereotypes.

As such, scholars concluded that increased interpersonal contact could help to reduce prejudicial attitudes and foster greater acceptance of lesbians and gay men (for a review see Pettigrew & Troop, 2006). Extending this notion to the current study, it is also plausible that through interpersonal contact with lesbians and gay men, people may hold more liberal attitudes toward film content depicting homosexuality. We therefore hypothesize the following:

H5: Interpersonal contact will be negatively associated with support for censorship of homosexuality in films.

Media Exposure

According to the theory of selective exposure, people tend to gravitate toward specific types of media content because of certain pre-existing attitudes, value orientations, or personality traits (Zillman & Bryant, 1985). Going by the premise of selective exposure, it may be that people who hold positive attitudes toward gay men and lesbians will be more inclined to watch films depicting homosexuality and be less likely to support censorship of films with such content.

Furthermore, people can forge strong bonds with both real and fictional personas that they encounter through media exposure, a phenomenon known as parasocial interaction (Horton & Wohl, 1959). Combining the contact hypothesis with parasocial interaction, Schiappa, Greg and Hewes (2005) developed the parasocial contact hypothesis that states that individuals who are frequently exposed to positive media portrayals of minorities, including gay and lesbian characters, tend to have less prejudicial attitudes toward them. Although early portrayals of gays and lesbians tended to be negative (Gross, 1991), media representations of this minority group from the 1990s onwards have become increasingly positive, often presenting more likeable and well-adjusted characters (Hart, 2004). While these studies were done primarily in Western contexts, Singaporeans are frequently exposed to western television shows and films (Weber, 2003). Due to the less prejudicial attitudes predicted by the parasocial contact hypothesis, people may also be less inclined to censor film content depicting homosexuality.

H6: Exposure to media content with gay and lesbian characters will be negatively associated with support for censorship of homosexuality in films.

Third Person Effect

The third person effect hypothesis (Davison, 1983) postulates that “people will tend to overestimate the influence that mass communications have on the attitudes and behavior of others” (p. 3). The third person effect hypothesis consists of two components. The perceptual component contends that individuals will perceive greater negative media effects on other people as compared with themselves, while the behavioral component states that this perceptual discrepancy or gap has certain behavioral consequences such as support for censorship.

Perceptual Component

Empirical studies have found robust support for the third person perception (Paul, Salwen, & Dupagne, 2000). Scholars have suggested that the third person perception is motivated by certain self-serving biases. Individuals are likely to use situational factors to account for their own actions but attribute other peoples’ behavior to personality characteristics (Heider, 1958). When individuals evaluate their own behavior, they are acutely aware of the external factors which cause them to behave in certain ways. However, individuals are less attuned to the external factors involved in other people’s situations.

Consequently, individuals will perceive others to be more influenced by media content than themselves because they underestimate people’s vulnerability to external influences and overestimate the extent to which these messages affect others (Gunther, 1991). In addition, Lambe and McLeod (2005) have contended that individuals are often guilty of the “ego-enhancement bias,” that is, the fallacy that they are more impervious to negative media effects than others.

The third person perception has been manifested in various socially undesirable media content such as pornography, television violence, gambling advertising, and political attack

campaigns (see Sun, Pan, & Shen, 2008a for a review). Numerous studies have also shown that the third person perception exists in Asian populations in addition to Western ones (Gunther & Ang, 1996; Lee & Tamborini, 2005). In general, people tend to overestimate the effects which socially undesirable media content has on others instead of underestimating the effects of such content on themselves (see Perloff, 1993 for a review). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H7: Individuals will perceive greater negative effects of film content with homosexual characters on others than on self.

Behavioral Component: Perceived Effects on Self and Effects on Others

According to Sun, Shen, and Pan (2008), support for media censorship is a pre-emptive form of rectifying behavior carried out to prevent gullible individuals from the effects of being exposed to undesirable media content. Individuals espouse the need to hinder the dissemination of harmful media messages for the greater moral good of the society (Sun et al., 2008). In a related manner, some scholars have drawn upon the protection motivation theory to explain the relationship between support for censorship and perceived effects of media content on self and others (e.g., Shah, Faber, & Youn, 1999). Based on the theoretical tenets of the protection motivation theory, if people perceive themselves or others to be highly susceptible to harmful media effects and severely affected by media content, they are likely to take protective measures such as expressing their support for censorship. McLeod, Detenber, and Eveland (2001) also showed that both perceived media influence on self and perceived media effects on others were significantly associated with support for censorship. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H8: Greater perceived negative effects of media portrayals on self (self-only) will be associated with stronger support for censorship of homosexuality in films.

H9: Greater perceived negative effects of media portrayals on others (others-only) will be associated with stronger support for censorship of homosexuality in films.

Behavioral Component: Perceptual Gap

Previous third person effect studies have used the concept of paternalism to explain the relationship between the perceptual gap and support for censorship (McLeod, Eveland, & Nathanson, 1997; Rojas, Shah, & Faber, 1996). According to the paternalism explanation, individuals are motivated to protect society from the repercussions of being exposed to harmful media messages. People tend to believe that others are vulnerable to the influence of such content, but perceive themselves to be savvy enough to avoid the negative consequences of being exposed to potentially harmful media content (McLeod et al., 1997). In other words, if people perceive media content to have a greater negative impact on others as compared with themselves, they would be more likely to indicate support for censorship (Gunther, 1995).

However, results of the relationship between perceptual gap and public support for censorship of undesirable media content have been mixed. The perceptual gap was significantly associated with censorship of pornography (Gunther, 1995), misogynic rap lyrics (McLeod et al., 1997), gambling advertising (Shah et al., 1999), and political attack advertisements (Salwen, 1998), but failed to predict support for issues such as restrictions on news coverage of the O. J. Simpson trial (Salwen & Driscoll, 1997) and publication of a holocaust denial advertisement (Price, Tewksbury, & Huang, 1998). Most germane to the present study, Gunther and Ang (1996) found that the perceptual gap was associated with stronger support for censorship of television content with homosexual characters in Singapore. Based on this study and other findings, we propose the following hypothesis:

H10: Greater perceived negative effects of media portrayals on others relative to self (self-others) will be associated with stronger support for censorship of homosexuality in films.

Method

A total of 959 Singapore citizens and permanent residents aged 18 years and above were interviewed using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) system from January to February 2010. We employed random-digit-dialing to ensure that unlisted household numbers were included and sampling within each household was done by utilizing the youngest male/oldest female technique, which has been effective in generating representative samples (e.g., Ho, Lee, & Hameed, 2008; Kennedy, 1993; Willnat, Lee, & Detenber, 2002). The interviews were conducted in English, Mandarin, or Malay, the three most commonly spoken languages in Singapore, and took an average of 16.2 minutes to complete. Based on AAPOR Formula 3, the final response rate was 36.6%.¹

The initial sample of 959 individuals was reduced to 924² upon data cleaning. The final sample consisted of 44.9% males with a mean age of 38 years old ($SD = 14.6$) and a median monthly household income of S\$3,500. The racial composition was 74.6% Chinese, 10.4% Malays, and 9.5% Indians. Singles made up 43.5% of the sample, while 54.3% were married. Nearly half of the respondents (48.7%) possessed a diploma or degree qualification, 44.5% had some secondary to upper secondary school qualifications, while only 6.7% held no formal education or primary school qualifications. The self-reported religiosity distribution of the respondents was 21.6% Christians, 27.2% Buddhists, 4.5% Taoists, 12.0% Muslims, 6.4% Hindus, and 24.0% freethinkers or held no religious beliefs.³ Individuals with no religious beliefs (16.8%) were excluded from our regression analysis when predicting support for censorship as

they were not asked questions related to intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. As such, a final sample of 764 respondents was used in our regression analysis.

Censorship of homosexuality in films. For the dependent variable, respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for censorship using two items adapted from Gunther and Ang (1996), “Do you personally think censorship of homosexuality in films from [Asia / the West]: (1) should be a lot more strict; (2) should be a bit more strict; (3) is about right as it is; (4) should be a bit more liberal; (5) should be a lot more liberal?” The two items were reverse coded and averaged, such that higher scores represent stronger support for censorship ($r = .75, p < .001, M = 3.49, SD = 1.05$).

For the following independent variables, most of the measures were assessed by asking respondents to indicate their level of agreement for each statement, on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = “strongly agree” to 5 = “strongly disagree.” The items within most measures were randomized to avoid potential question-order biases during the interview.

Conformity to norms was assessed using three statements adapted from Kim, Atkinson, and Yang’s (1999) Asian values scale, such as “A person need not conform to expectations of family and society.” Some of the items were reversed coded. All the items were then averaged, such that higher scores represent higher level of conformity to norms ($M = 3.30, SD = .69, \text{Cronbach’s } \alpha = .60$).

Asian orientation was assessed using three items, including statements such as “You are Asian at heart.” Responses were averaged, such that higher scores represent greater Asian orientation ($M = 3.89, SD = .50, \text{Cronbach’s } \alpha = .67$).

Western orientation was measured using three statements such as “You identify with Western culture.” Responses were averaged, such that higher scores represent greater Western orientation ($M = 3.08$, $SD = .67$, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .64$).

Intrinsic religiosity was tapped using eight items taken from the intrinsic religiosity subscale of Gorsuch and Macpherson’s revised universal I-E scale (1989). Items such as “It is important for you to spend time in private thought and prayer” were reverse coded when necessary and averaged, such that higher scores represent higher levels of intrinsic religiosity ($M = 3.03$, $SD = .62$, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .78$).

Extrinsic religiosity was assessed using six items taken from the extrinsic religiosity subscale of Gorsuch and Macpherson’s revised universal I-E scale (1989). Items such as “You pray mainly to gain relief and protection” were reverse coded and averaged, such that higher scores indicate higher levels of extrinsic religiosity ($M = 3.05$, $SD = .55$, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .64$).

Media exposure to lesbians and gays was assessed using four items in which respondents were asked, “How frequently are you exposed to [films / TV shows] with gay or lesbian characters? Is it not at all, sometimes, often, or very frequently?” and “How much attention do you pay to [films / TV shows] with gay or lesbian characters? Is it no attention at all, a little, some, or a lot of attention?” All items were measured on a four-point scale. Responses to the four questions were averaged, such that higher scores indicate higher levels of media exposure to lesbians and gays ($M = 1.57$, $SD = .51$, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .73$). Combining the items in this way yields a composite measure of mindful exposure to particular content.

Interpersonal contact was assessed by first asking respondents if they had a family member, relative, close friend, or an acquaintance who was homosexual. Respondents who answered “yes” to any of those questions were subsequently asked, “In total, how many [gay

men / lesbian women] do you know personally?” The total number of gay men and/or lesbian women known was then classified into three categories, specifically, 1 = “none,” 2 = “a few (1 – 3 contacts)”, and 3 = “many (4 and more contact)” ($M = 1.70$, $SD = .84$).

Perceived effects of media portrayals of gay or lesbian characters. Using a 5-point scale ranging from “large negative influence” at 1 to “large positive influence” at 5, participants were asked to indicate the level of effect that media portrayals of gay or lesbian characters had on themselves ($M = 2.63$, $SD = .93$) and on other Singaporeans ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 1.03$). The perceptual gap (the third person perception) was calculated by subtracting the estimates of effect on other Singaporeans from the effect on self, such that -4 = “more negative effect on self” and 4 = “more negative effect on others” ($M = .44$, $SD = 1.07$). The items and method for calculating the third person perception were adapted from Gunther and Ang (1996).

Control variables. Gender, age, income, race, educational level, and marital status were included as control variables.

Results

Our descriptive results revealed that 54.5% of the respondents supported a stricter censorship of homosexuality in films. Conversely, 20.8% of the respondents supported a more liberal stance and 24.7% of them thought that the current level of censorship was about right. With the exception of perceptual gap, all other variables were significantly correlated with support for censorship at the zero-order level (refer to Table 1).

[Insert Table 1 around here.]

We ran two sets of hierarchical regression analyses to examine the factors influencing support for censorship (see Table 2). Specifically, the “Self & Others” regression model examined the perceived negative effects of media portrayals of gay or lesbian characters on self (i.e., self-only) and on other Singaporeans (i.e., others-only) as predictors of support for

censorship, after controlling for demographics, values, orientations, and media exposure and interpersonal contact. Conversely, the “Self - Others” regression model assessed the perceptual gap (self – others) as the predictor of support for censorship, after controlling for the appropriate variables. Running separate hierarchical regression models was necessary to avoid the potential multicollinearity problem among the third person perception variables. Based on how the independent variables were entered into the OLS analyses in previous *O-S-O-R* models (e.g., Nisbet & Goidel, 2007), we decided to enter the control variables first, followed by values and orientations, media and interpersonal exposure, and finally, third person perception variables.

[Insert Table 2 about here.]

As shown in the “Self & Others” regression model, females and those with lower education levels were significantly more supportive of censorship of homosexuality in films. Age, income, and marital status were not significantly associated with the dependent variable.

Respondents with higher levels of conformity and intrinsic religiosity were more likely to indicate support for censorship of homosexuality in films, lending support to *H1* and *H2*. However, extrinsic religiosity was not significantly associated with support for censorship (*RQ1*).

Western orientation was not significantly associated with support for censorship. On the other hand, respondents with higher levels of Asian orientation were likely to be in favor of a stricter censorship. Therefore, *H3* was not supported but *H4* was supported.

Interpersonal contact was not significantly associated with support for censorship of homosexuality in films, failing to support *H5*. Conversely, media exposure had a significant association with support for censorship in the hypothesized direction. The more individuals were exposed to films or TV shows with homosexual characters, the more likely they were to think that censorship of homosexuality in films should be liberal. Thus, the findings supported *H6*.

To test for third person perceptions (*H7*), we performed a paired sample *t*-test and the results showed that the perceived negative effects on other Singaporeans were significantly larger than the perceived negative effects on self ($t(923) = 12.421, p < .001$). For the influence of perceived negative effects of media portrayals of gay or lesbian characters on self (self-only) and on other Singaporeans (others-only), the regression results showed that the more negative effects respondents felt such media portrayals had on themselves, the more likely they were to support censorship. Hence, *H8* was supported. However, there was no significant association between perceived effects on other Singaporeans and censorship support (*H9*).

To assess the effect of perceptual gap on support for censorship (*H10*), a second hierarchical regression was performed (see “Self – Others” regression model in Table 2), in which the perceptual gap was entered in place of the perceived negative effects of media portrayals on self and on other Singaporeans. The perceptual gap failed to show a significant association with support for censorship. Therefore, *H10* was not supported.

Discussion

This study examined several potential factors from various disciplines that could potentially explain public support for censorship of films with homosexual characters. Overall, our findings showed that conformity to norms, intrinsic religiosity, Asian orientation, media exposure, and perceived media effects on self were significantly associated with public support for censorship of film content depicting homosexuality. There was evidence for the perceptual component of the third person effect but not for the behavioral component.

As expected, conformity to norms was positively associated with public support for censorship. One plausible explanation may be that people generally perceive homosexuality as violating Asian norms (Matteson, 1997). Since individuals who conform to norms could gain affirmation and acceptance from others in a largely collectivist society like Singapore (Markus &

Kitayama, 1994), it is not surprising that individuals who express greater conformity to norms would tend to be more supportive of censoring film content depicting homosexuality.

Intrinsic religiosity was positively associated with support for censorship of films with depictions of homosexuality, but not extrinsic religiosity. These findings are consistent with previous research which has shown that intrinsic religiosity is a much better predictor of attitudes toward lesbians and gays than extrinsic religiosity (Detenber et al., 2007, 2010). This could be explained by the fact that intrinsic religiosity reflects the extent to which people live the tenets of their religion whereas extrinsic religiosity indicates the degree to which people use their religion for self-serving purposes. Given that certain religious doctrines disapprove of homosexuality, it is perhaps unsurprising that intrinsic religiosity was a significant predictor of pro-censorship attitudes in this study. This pattern of results supports the idea that extrinsic religiosity is not deep-seated and it is less likely to be connected to personal attitudes. Future studies should differentiate between intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity when using the concept of religiosity to explain public support for censorship.

With respect to cultural orientations, we demonstrated that Asian orientation was positively associated with support for censorship, but Western orientation had no significant association with our dependent variable. Asian culture is characterized by the preservation of harmony and status quo (Markus & Kitayama, 1994). Moreover, individuals with high levels of Asian orientation tend to be more conservative (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and express greater levels of disapproval of gay men and lesbians (Pew Research Center, 2007). It is thus logical for those with higher levels of Asian orientation to express greater support for censorship of film content depicting homosexuality. Western orientation showed a significant negative association with support for censorship initially, but the relationship became non-significant after

media exposure was added into the regression model (based on the step-wise models not shown here). In other words, media exposure explains away the variance contributed by Western orientation in our dependent variable. This could be due to the fact that Western orientation and media exposure were significantly correlated at the zero-order level, $r(769) = .24, p < .01$. This suggests that Asian orientation and media exposure may be stronger predictors of attitudes toward censorship as compared with Western orientation.

As expected, media exposure had a negative association with support for censorship of film content depicting homosexuality. As Schiappa, Gregg, and Hewes (2006) argued, it is possible that media exposure to film and television programs with homosexual characters, parasocial interaction with gay and lesbian characters, as well as attitudes toward these minority groups “are mutually reinforcing” (p. 32). Therefore, people with high levels of media exposure to homosexual characters are likely to oppose placing restrictions on film content with depictions of homosexuality.

In contrast to media exposure, interpersonal contact showed no significant association with support for censorship. Given that homosexuality is still regarded as criminal offense by the Singapore government and that strict restrictions are placed on films with homosexual characters (Tan, 2003), such overt governmental disapproval of homosexuality could diminish the impact of interpersonal contact on support for censorship of films with homosexual characters and themes. This is in line with the argument put forth by Pettigrew and Troop (2006) that suggests that the effect of interpersonal contact on reducing prejudicial attitudes is mitigated by the government’s stance on minority groups taken.

Consistent with previous studies (Paul et al., 2000), our results show that people perceive greater negative effects of films with homosexual characters on others than on themselves. This

finding adds to the already large body of evidence in support of the perceptual component of the third person effect. The respondents in this study were likely to have exhibited the ego-enhancement bias and overestimated the negative effects of films with homosexual characters on other Singaporeans. In addition, greater perceived negative effects on self was associated with stronger support for censorship whereas perceived effects on others and the perceptual gap failed to predict support for censorship. This suggests that people seem to be more supportive of censoring films depicting homosexuality only if such content is deemed to have negative effects on themselves. In other words, people seem to be more concerned about their own self-interests than the moral well-being of others. These findings are consistent with the results from the previous third person perception studies (e.g., Price et al., 1998), but differ from some other studies which have shown that perceived effects on others and the perceptual gap are better predictors of behavioral outcomes than perceived effects on self (e.g., Gunther & Ang, 1996). This could be explained by the fact that media portrayals of homosexuality are not regarded as being as noxious as pornography or media violence. Another possible explanation is that the relationship that people have with others (i.e., the degree of collectivism) may diminish the third person perception (e.g., Lee & Tamborini, 2005). This reduced variance could keep the behavioral component from being manifest in this study. Future research should attempt to identify the circumstances under which the perceptual gap or perceived effects on others will be a more significant predictor of behavioral outcomes than perceived effects on self.

There are some data-related issues that should be mentioned. First, the religiosity scales used in this study have been administered primarily to Judeo-Christian populations and may not be entirely suitable for other types of religions. Next, our study conceptualized support for censorship as a uni-dimensional construct, whereas other studies regard it as a multi-dimensional

construct (e.g., Lambe, 2002). Third, this study did not examine whether there were differences in support for censorship of films that had positive portrayals of homosexuality versus films that had negative portrayals of homosexuality. Future studies should consider the valence of portrayals when examining support for censorship of films with homosexual characters.

In conclusion, this study has theoretical and practical implications. Past third person effect studies often looked at demographics and media-related variables as predictors of support for censorship (e.g., Chia, 2007; McLeod et al., 2001; Rojas et al., 2006; Wei, Lo, & Lu, 2011). In contrast, our study examines the influence of demographics, values, orientations, mediated and interpersonal exposure, in addition to perceptions of effects on self and others. Some of these predictors have never been used in conjunction with one another. Each block of variables significantly contributes to the variance explained and thereby helps the theoretical model to account for 28.5% of the variance in support for censorship. Compared to other similar studies, this constitutes a fairly robust and holistic explanation. Furthermore, our study used a nationally representative sample, which is lacking in many contemporary studies of this kind (Sun, Pan, & Shen, 2008b).

In addition, the *O-S-O-R* model provides a unifying framework to explain how value predispositions, media attention, interpersonal communication, and third person effect variables influence support for censorship. Our findings also validate the utility of the *O-S-O-R* model in an Asian context. Consistent with previous studies using the *O-S-O-R* model (e.g., Nisbet & Goidel, 2007), first order orientations (e.g., conformity to norms, intrinsic religiosity, and Asian orientation), stimulus (e.g., media exposure), and second order orientations (e.g., perceived effects on self) were found to predict support for censorship in our study. With regard to the third person effect hypothesis, the fact that perceived media effects on self can have greater predictive

power than perceived media effects on others on support for censorship suggests that the hypothesis is only applicable in certain contexts and content. Future research should attempt to parse out the distinct impact of effects on self, effects on others, and the perceptual gap on various behavioral outcomes.

With regard to practical implications, our findings show that the general public is rather conservative and supports stricter censorship of films with homosexual characters. While the authorities did take into account public opinion when conducting its review (Censorship Review Committee, 2010), the findings of this study provide empirical evidence for the precise nature of public perceptions and concerns. Nonetheless, as societal attitudes toward homosexuals evolve and Singapore's media landscape changes, it is worthwhile to continue to monitor public support for censorship of films depicting homosexual characters and themes.

Table 1. Bivariate correlations among all the independent and dependent variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. Censorship of Homosexuality in Films	1.00															
2. Income	-.16***	1.00														
3. Education	-.21***	.41***	1.00													
4. Age	.19***	.01	-.28***	1.00												
5. Gender	.14***	-.09*	-.16***	.15***	1.00											
6. Marital Status	.19***	.10**	-.08*	.61***	.12***	1.00										
7. Conformity to norms	.28***	-.15***	-.14***	.25***	.04	.24***	1.00									
8. Intrinsic religiosity	.28***	.07	.07	.08*	.04	.09*	.11**	1.00								
9. Extrinsic religiosity	.11**	-.14***	-.20***	.08*	.04	.10**	.13***	.17***	1.00							
10. Western orientation	-.21***	.17***	.21***	-.24***	-.06	-.24***	-.20***	-.07	.00	1.00						
11. Asian orientation	.18***	.04	.06	.09*	-.03	.15***	.18***	.12***	.11**	-.07	1.00					
12. Interpersonal contact	-.21***	.22***	.25***	-.30***	-.03	-.27***	-.18***	-.03	-.13***	.24***	-.07	1.00				
13. Media exposure	-.25***	.13***	.15***	-.23***	-.04	-.22***	-.13***	-.04	-.03	.24***	-.07*	.30***	1.00			
14. Perceived effects on self (self-only)	-.30***	.10**	.11**	-.03	.04	-.03	-.11**	-.15***	-.17***	.08*	-.10**	.16***	.09*	1.00		
15. Perceived effects on other Singaporeans (others-only)	-.20***	.05	.05	-.06	-.04	-.08*	-.10**	-.17***	-.06	.02	-.09*	.06	.03	.42***	1.00	
16. Perceptual gap (self - other Singaporeans)	-.07	.04	.05	.03	.08*	.05	-.01	.04	-.09*	.05	-.00	.09*	.05	.47***	-.61***	1.00

Note: $N = 769$. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 2. Factors influencing public support for censorship of homosexuality in films

<i>Independent variables</i>	Public Support for Censorship of Homosexuality in Films		
	Zero-order correlation	Self & Others (<i>N</i> = 764)	Self – Others (<i>N</i> = 764)
Block 1: Demographics			
Income	-.16***	-.07	-.07*
Education	-.21***	-.10**	-.12**
Age	.19***	-.00	-.01
Gender ^a	--	.09**	.09**
Marital status ^b	--	.05	.05
<i>R</i> ² (%)		9.60***	9.60***
Block 2: Values			
Conformity to norms	.28***	.14***	.15***
Intrinsic religiosity	.28***	.21***	.25***
Extrinsic religiosity	.11**	-.04	-.02
ΔR^2 (%)		10.40***	10.40***
Block 3: Orientations			
Western orientation	-.22***	-.06	-.06
Asian orientation	.18***	.10**	.11**
ΔR^2 (%)		2.00***	2.00***
Block 4: Media and Interpersonal Exposure			
Interpersonal contact	-.21***	-.04	-.05
Media exposure	-.25***	-.13***	-.14***
ΔR^2 (%)		2.20***	2.20***
Block 5: Third person Perception Variables			
Perceived effects on self (self-only)	-.30***	-.20***	--
Perceived effects on other Singaporeans (others-only)	-.20***	-.04	--
Perceptual gap (self - other Singaporeans)	-.07	--	-.06
ΔR^2 (%)		4.30***	.40
Total <i>R</i> ² (%)		28.50***	24.60***

Note: Standardized beta coefficients are from final regression equation with all blocks of variables in the model. ****p* < .001, ***p* < .01, **p* < .05

^a Gender (0 = Male, 1 = Female)

^b Marital Status (0 = Not married, 1 = Married)

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Notes

¹ We generated a total of 12,004 random numbers, with disqualified numbers consisted of 6,825 fax / disconnected / business / non-Singapore resident numbers; 2,685 unanswered / busy numbers; 214 numbers with language issues; and 23 unattempted numbers. There were 2,257 eligible contacts, in which 1,074 refused, 124 did not complete the interview, and 72 asked to be interviewed at a later date (but the stipulated date was after the interviewing period ended). Out of the 987 completed interviews, data for 28 interviews were lost due to technical glitches. Outcome rates based on AAPOR guideline were: response rate 3 = .37; cooperation rate 3 = .45; and refusal rate 3 = .43. We calculated the 'e' value based on 'Completes/Total sample size.'

² Out of the 35 cases deleted upon data cleaning, 15 interviewees responded with 'don't know' or 'refused to answer' for more than 25% of the items, 18 cases had logical inconsistencies, and the remaining 2 interviewees provided similar responses on most questions. The percentage of missing values in each item was less than 10%.

³ Singapore citizens and permanent residents consist of 51.0% females, with median age = 36.9 years and median monthly household income = S\$5,398. The racial composition is 75.7% Chinese, 12.5% Malays, and 8.7% Indians (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2009). Singles comprise of 30.4% of the resident population, while 61.9% are married. 27.3% has no formal education or only primary school qualification, 43.1% has lower secondary, secondary, or upper secondary school qualification, and 30.0% has diploma or degree qualification (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2005). The Singapore resident population is made up of 42.5% Buddhists, 8.5% Taoists, 14.6% Christians, 14.9% Muslims, 4.0% Hindus, and 14.8% freethinkers or hold no religious beliefs (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2000).