

“THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE AFFIRMING, BUT I DON’T THINK THERE ARE A LOT OF
ALLIES.”: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF LGBTQ STUDENTS WITH ALLIES AT CHRISTIAN
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ABSTRACT

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“THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE AFFIRMING, BUT I DON’T THINK THERE ARE A LOT OF ALLIES.”: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF LGBTQ STUDENTS WITH ALLIES AT CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITIES

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LGBTQ college students frequently hold negative views of campus climate, often due to heterosexist and homophobic rules, regulations, and interactions. These experiences are often increased at Christian-affiliated colleges and universities. While some research has looked into ways to improve experiences of LGBTQ students, none have focused on the work of LGBTQ allies at Christian colleges and universities. This phenomenological study interviewed LGBTQ students at Christian colleges to better understand their lived experiences and interactions with LGBTQ allies at their institutions, as well as reasons for attending their university. The research participants were students with various sexual orientations and gender identities, from two universities. Using Saldaña’s (2013) qualitative coding methods, the interviews were analyzed for themes, of which five were developed. This research deepens the understanding of LGBTQ allies within the context of Christian colleges, as well as furthering understanding of LGBTQ students’ experiences at Christian colleges.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Across higher education institutions, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer) individuals experience problems related to heterosexism, and generally negative campus climate perceptions (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010; Woodford & Kulick, 2015). LGBTQ students frequently experience harassment and negative comments, as well as perceive overall negativity towards gender and sexual minorities at their institution (Rankin et al., 2010; Vespone, 2016). Researchers of LGBTQ college students specifically find higher rates of psychological distress and academic impairments related to mental health (Dunbar, Sontag-Padilla, Ramchand, Seelam, & Stein, 2017), decreased hope/increased hopelessness (Hirsch, Cohn, Rowe, & Rimmer, 2017), and increased reports of traditional and cyber victimization instances (Ramsey, DiLalla, & McCrary, 2016), all of which lead to increased depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation.

In particular, LGBTQ students at Christian colleges/universities are at risk of perceiving negative campus climates due to the intersections of faith and sexuality (Rockenbach & Crandall, 2016; Yarhouse, Stratton, Dean, & Brooke, 2009). Presently, many denominations and individual churches within Christianity express implicit and/or explicit disapproval of nonheteronormative and non-gender conforming behavior (Church Clarity, 2019; Southern Baptist Convention, 2019; United Methodist Church, 2014; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2019). Specifically, many Christian-affiliated higher education institutions have policies in place that are seen as discriminatory by LGBTQ students and allies (Joyce, 2014; Pappano,

2018; Wheeler, 2016), but are often legal due to Title IX exemptions. Title IX (Education Amendments Act of 1972, 2018) prohibits federally funded programs to discriminate on the basis of sex. Interpretations of the act have been inconsistent as to whether sexual orientation and gender nonconformity are also covered. Even so, exemptions are available for religious institutions to continue to receive federal funding if abiding by the legislation would conflict with their religious beliefs (Campus Pride 2018; Gjelten, 2018; O'Brien, 2017). Regardless of the structure of rules and regulations, universities that leave room for potential discrimination of LGBTQ students have an increased likelihood of mental health issues, public health concerns, and decreased academic performance (Wolff & Himes, 2010).

Regardless of the difficulties experienced at such institutions, LGBTQ individuals continue to enroll in Christian higher education. Research into why students continue to enroll at colleges and universities that hold policies potentially viewed as discriminatory against gender and sexual minorities is currently lacking. Some research has speculated (Coley, 2018) that a handful of reasons may exist, including a desire to be in a faith-centered academic environment, strong academic programs, and a desire to please their parents or to have parents' pay for tuition.

Statement of the Problem

Previously, research focused on the journeys that LGBTQ allies take as they explore and eventually accept the role of ally (Ryan, Broad, Walsh, & Nutter, 2013), as well as the personal benefits that a person receives by becoming and living out the role of ally (Rostosky, Black, Riggle, & Rosenkrantz, 2015). Research has also focused on LGBTQ individuals of faith, and looked at allies, and similar support systems, as one of several potential mitigating factors on negative perceptions of campus climate (Snow, 2018). Some specific research made suggestions on how educators can make their classrooms more safe and inclusive spaces

through their teaching practices (Renn, 2000). Finally, studies have sought information on how to best create and organize formal groups of outspoken student, staff, and faculty allies on college campuses (Poynter & Tubbs, 2008).

However, little research has focused on LGBTQ students' perceptions of the allies with whom they may be interacting. Research has especially been lacking in the study of LGBTQ allies at Christian colleges and universities. This study helps to fill the gap by focusing on LGBTQ allies at Christian higher education institutions, and does so by going to the most important source of information- the LGBTQ students that have lived-experiences with allies. While interviewing allies about their experiences can be useful, to best understand the importance of an ally, one must seek out those who are impacted by allies' work, not the allies themselves.

Statement of the Purpose

The current research studied the perceptions of LGBTQ students regarding LGBTQ allies at Christian colleges and universities, as well as the reasons that LGBTQ students attend such institutions. The seven student participants, from two Christian universities, were asked about their encounters with LGBTQ allies during their college experience, their perceptions of what it means to be an ally, and why they attended a Christian university. This research adds to the body of knowledge concerning LGBTQ students' experiences with, and perceptions of LGBTQ allies, as well as provides suggestions for how students, staff, and faculty of Christian colleges and universities can provide more effective support for LGBTQ students at their institution. In addition, this research creates the pool of research dedicated to the question of why LGBTQ students attend Christian colleges and universities, which was non-existent prior to this work.

Methodological Framework

This qualitative study used a phenomenological methodology to better understand the experiences of LGBTQ students at Christian colleges, especially in regards to their experiences with LGBTQ allies and reasons for attending a Christian college. Phenomenology is a beneficial qualitative approach to researching lived experiences of individuals or groups, and is considered to be extremely useful for increasing understanding of phenomena that are under researched (Astalin, 2013; Creswell, 2007). For this research, the phenomena of interest are why LGBTQ students attend Christian colleges and their experiences with allies while attending. While phenomenology makes no attempt to provide definitive answers to questions about a phenomenon, it does increase awareness and insight about the phenomenon in question (Astalin, 2013).

Research Questions

The current study sought answers to the following questions from the perspective of LGBTQ students at Christian colleges and universities:

1. What are the lived experiences of LGBTQ students with allies at Christian colleges and universities?
2. What reasons do LGBTQ students give for attending Christian colleges and universities?

Answering these questions may help understand the experiences of LGBTQ students at Christian colleges and universities, and may provide knowledge beneficial to improving the work of allies at those schools.

Definition of Terms

- Ally- A person engaging in “the lifelong process of building relationships with marginalized communities to which one does not belong” (Michigan State University, 2019, Ally section).
- Cisgender- “having or relating to a gender identity that corresponds to the culturally determined gender roles for one’s birth sex (i.e., the biological sex one was born with)” (American Psychological Association, 2015a, para. 1).
- Gender- “the condition of being male, female, or neuter. In a human context, the distinction between gender and sex reflects the usage of these terms: Sex usually refers to the biological aspects of maleness or femaleness, whereas gender implies the psychological, behavioral, social, and cultural aspects of being male or female (i.e., masculinity or femininity)” (American Psychological Association, 2015a, para. 1).
- Gender Expression- “the presentation of an individual, including physical appearance, clothing choice and accessories, and behaviors that express aspects of gender identity or role. Gender expression may or may not conform to a person’s gender identity.” (American Psychological Association, 2015b, p. 861).
- Gender Identity- “One’s innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One’s gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth” (Human Rights Campaign, 2020, “Gender Identity” section).
- LGBTQ- “A common abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning people. The acronym is used as an umbrella term when talking about non heterosexual and non-cisgender identities, and does not always reflect members of the community” (Michigan State University, 2019, LGBTQ section).

- Queer- an umbrella term that individuals may use to describe a sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression that does not conform to dominant societal norms (American Psychological Association & National Association of School Psychologists, 2015).
- Safe Space- a space for marginalized and oppressed communities to get away from those who or that which marginalizes and/or oppresses (Oglesby, 2019).
- Sexual Orientation- “A component of identity that includes a person’s sexual and emotional attraction to another person and the behavior and/or social affiliation that may result from this attraction” (American Psychological Association, 2015b, p. 862).
- Transgender- “An adjective that is an umbrella term used to describe the full range of people whose gender identity and/or gender role do not conform to what is typically associated with their sex assigned at birth” (American Psychological Association, 2015b, p. 863).

Delimitations

The current study was limited in scope to the lived experiences of LGBTQ students at Christian colleges and universities with LGBTQ allies on their campuses. While the experiences of LGBTQ students at non-religiously affiliated colleges, or at religious universities not associated with Christianity are important and deserve attention, this population was the original inspiration for this research, and was the population most accessible to the researcher. Other aspects of the lived experiences of LGBTQ students may come up naturally in interviews, but the research questions were focused on experiences with allies, and reasons why LGBTQ students attended Christian universities.

Assumptions

The researcher worked under the following assumptions throughout the research process:

- 1) Participants are participating voluntarily in the research.
- 2) Participants are answering questions honestly, to the best of their ability.
- 3) Each participant has unique experiences regarding the topics being studied.
- 4) The researcher is capable of recognizing and putting aside biases and presumptions while conducting interviews and analyzing data.

Role of the Researcher

The subject of LGBTQ allies within the context of Christian higher education is relevant to me personally, professionally, and as a research interest. Personally, I grew up attending a Churches of Christ affiliated church, in which I was heavily involved as a teenager. My first knowledge of having a close personal relationship with someone who identified as a gender or sexual minority came as a result of a close friend coming out to me at a summer church camp. I learned a great deal about the difficulties associated with attempting to reconcile faith, Biblical adherence, and non-heteronormative sexuality within many Christian churches and denominations as a result of watching and listening to the experiences of my friend.

I then attended a Christian university for my undergraduate degree, where I met and became friends with many more people who did not fit the heteronormative and/or gender binary-based beliefs that were held by the institution. I became more and more aware of the challenges experienced by LGBTQ individuals at schools like mine, where non-cisheteronormative behavior was banned in school policy, while also, through studying, coming to hold a theologically affirming position regarding gender and sexual minorities.

Professionally, I worked at the same Christian university from which I graduated, as a Graduate Assistant in the Department of Family Science, and as a Resident Director of several on-campus apartment buildings. In addition to my paid roles, I served as a chapel coordinator for a weekly chapel that served as a safe space through which students, staff, and faculty participated in discussion of gender, sexuality, and spirituality. My roles on campus allowed me to educate students on gender and sexuality related topics, as well as advocate for the full inclusion and proper treatment of LGBTQ students on campus.

As someone in academics, my main research interests revolve around gender and sexuality. However, that passion is clearly influenced by my experiences, as well as the experiences of those close to me. As I carry out my research, I bring in biases as an affirming Christian. My personal views would necessitate an LGBTQ ally to hold an affirming position similar to mine to be considered an ally. However, my research is not intended to hold people to my standards for allyship, but to listen and analyze the standards that LGBTQ students hold for allyship, and their experiences with allies at Christian colleges and universities.

Summary

Research in the field of LGTBQ topics is increasingly beneficial as studies contribute to growing knowledge about LGTBQ individuals and LGBTQ allies. However, research has not sought to better understand allies from the perspective of LGTBQ individuals, particularly on college campuses. Even more specifically, research has not honed in on how the interactions of LGTBQ allies, colleges and universities, and religion impact the lived experiences of LGBTQ students. The current study used a phenomenological approach to gain insight into the experiences at that very intersection.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to better understand the lived experiences of LGBTQ students at Christian colleges and universities, specifically related to their interactions with allies, as well as their reasons for attending a Christian college. This chapter discusses the theoretical perspectives which guided the methodology and analysis. In addition, this chapter discusses the previous research on LGBTQ college students experiences, LGBTQ students at Christian colleges, and LGBTQ allies that guided this study.

Theoretical Framework

The two theoretical lenses that provide the foundation for this research are feminist and queer theories. Feminist theories provide an approach that recognizes and appreciates the experiences of humans as being influenced by the discourse of various intersecting identities (De Reus, Few, & Blume, 2005), with gender, sexual orientation, and religion being the most relevant to the current research. In addition, feminist theories inherently focus on power imbalances between men and women, but also between other dominant and marginalized groups (Chibucos, Leite, & Weis, 2005), is relevant in looking at power imbalances that exist at the colleges and universities represented in the current research, as well as how they may be impacted by allies.

Queer theory within family science research is still relatively new (Allen & Mendez, 2018). Nevertheless, it would be remiss to research students who may identify as queer without paying attention to queer theory. In particular, queer theory's emphasis on breaking down traditional binary categories, especially those passed down through institutions (Berkowitz, 2009), or "making fluid what was seen as foundational" (Parker, 2001, p. 52) within gender,

sexuality, and in families as a whole, is a beneficial lens to approach the interactions between LGBTQ students and allies, especially at Christian colleges and universities (Allen & Mendez, 2018; Oswald, Blume, & Marks, 2005).

LGBTQ College Experiences

At non-religiously affiliated colleges and universities, research shows that LGBTQ students generally hold more negative campus climate perceptions than their straight and cisgender peers, while also experiencing unique challenges when interacting with students and faculty (Rankin et al., 2010). However, LGBTQ students cannot be treated as a monolith, as differences exist based on a number of factors.

Within groups of LGBTQ students at colleges and universities, a spectrum of campus climate (Rankin & Reason, 2008) perceptions and experiences exist. Some of the differences are based upon particular gender and orientation identifications. Studies find that cis-female lesbian, gay, bi, or queer identifying students are more likely to be *out* (publicly identifying as non-heteronormative, or non-gender confirming) on campus than cis-male gay, bi, or queer identifying students, as well as trans identifying students (Garvey & Rankin, 2015b). Gender-nonconforming students also report lower classroom climate (like campus climate, but specific to academic environments) perceptions than gender-conforming students (Garvey & Rankin, 2015a). In addition, Garvey and Rankin (2015b) describe that, overall, trans students hold more negative campus climate perceptions than both cis-male and cis-female lesbian, gay, bi, and queer students.

Another factor related to campus climate perception is LGBTQ students' comfort level of confronting anti-LGBTQ rhetoric on campus (Tetreault, Fette, Meidlinger, & Hope, 2013). The more comfortable a student is with confronting prejudice, the better their perception of campus climate. While students more comfortable with confronting prejudice have a higher perception of

campus climate, they also report experiencing direct forms of harassment more frequently (Tetreault et al., 2013).

Specific research on LGBTQ student experiences in on-campus housing finds various perceptions related to housing, staff, and interactions with other residents (Kortegast, 2017). Students report the need to gain information from other LGBTQ peers to determine which staff are safe to discuss sensitive matters with, and which campus housing areas are the safest for LGBTQ students to live in. LGBTQ students also report a mixture of positive, negative, and neutral interactions with fellow residents based on their gender and/or sexual orientation (Kortegast, 2017).

Smaller sections of the student body are also targets for research, such as athletes, or fraternity/sorority members, to better understand their perceptions of, and relationships with LGBTQ individuals. Worthen (2014) focused on the interactions between participation in athletics and campus Greek organizations. Male athletes, male and female athletes who are also in a Greek organization, and fraternity members were reported as being negatively associated with positive attitudes towards LGBTQ individuals. Being a member of a sorority was negatively associated, specifically, with positive attitudes towards lesbian and female bisexual individuals. Affiliation with LGBTQ individuals and religiosity mediated the negative association of both fraternity and sorority members, but only towards lesbian and female bisexuals (Worthen, 2014). While Worthen's results display a poor relationship between LGBTQ students and Greek organization members, the level of outness, comfort, and satisfaction of LGBTQ individuals who were members of a fraternity or sorority have drastically increased over the past several decades (Rankin, Hesp, & Weber, 2013).

While reports of LGBTQ experiences with fellow students are, at best mixed, reports of interactions with faculty/course instructors are fairly positive. LGBTQ students report more

negative experiences, as well as being more likely to hide their gender identity or sexual orientation from students than from instructors (Tetreault et al., 2013). LGBTQ students also report higher levels of satisfaction with their interactions with faculty than do their straight peers (Garvey & Inkelas, 2012). Though reports are generally high relating to faculty interactions, negative classroom climate perceptions are frequently tied to a lack of inclusive curricula or poor faculty response to overt or covert discrimination in the classroom (Garvey & Rankin, 2015a).

LGBTQ Christian College Experiences

While LGBTQ students at non-religiously affiliated colleges and universities experience specific challenges, LGBTQ students at Christian colleges and universities face unique situations tied to the mixture of strong religious/spiritual values and interpretations of the Bible, with the general campus climate. LGBTQ students at Christian higher education institutions often experience a certain level of invisibility as their sexual and/or gender identity is often hidden, sometimes by choice, and sometimes as a result of the campus climate. Data show a discrepancy between the number of students who publicly identify as heterosexual, and the number of students who privately identify as heterosexual at surveyed Christian colleges and universities (Stratton, Dean, Yarhouse, & Lastoria, 2013). Numbers indicate that students choose to assume a heterosexual identity despite internally holding a non-heteronormative sexual orientation. Gender minorities, who identify as gender non-conforming or trans report experiencing an unintentional invisibility as many institutions lack any clear policies relating to gender and gender expression (Wolff, Kay, Himes, & Alquijay, 2017). In addition, discussion of gender minorities is minimal, if even existent, in classrooms and institutional spaces, even if some baseline knowledge of gender minorities exists at the faculty/staff level.

In instances when invisibility is less common, many LGBTQ students reported feelings of rejection at both institutional and individual levels (Craig, Austin, Rashidi, & Adams, 2017; Snow,

2018; Wolff et al., 2017). Reports show that one in three students experience harassment or bullying as a direct result of their sexual orientation (Wolff, Himes, Soares, & Miller Kwon, 2016). While prejudice and discrimination against gender and sexual minorities are seen at many Christian colleges and universities, not all environments produce the same results. Research shows that sexual prejudice is more likely to be displayed by individuals who attend institutions affiliated with denominations that view any non-cisheteronormative identities and behaviors as a sin (Wolff et al., 2016), and also hold those views strongly at a personal level (Woodford, Levy, & Walls, 2013). Data also show that differences in attitudes exist between same-sex attraction, and same sex-sex behavior at some Christian colleges and universities (Yarhouse et al., 2009). In such environments, there is a distinction between same-sex behavior, which is considered sinful, and same-sex attraction, which is seen simply as a struggle to be managed and overcome.

While external factors like prejudice and discrimination impact LGBTQ students at Christian higher education institutions, internal crises are also prevalent. Students at non-affirming Christian institutions, and/or who have been raised in families and churches that hold non-affirming beliefs, may experience internal struggles as they attempt to reconcile their sexual and/or gender identities with their faith (Bailey & Strunk, 2018; Craig et al., 2017; Wolff et al., 2017). While reconciliation attempts with their own faith and sexuality occur, LGBTQ students at non-affirming Christian colleges and universities become more primed to notice when institutions lack religious/spiritual diversity of thought and practice, and when coercion and insensitivity concerning religious/spiritual matters exist (Rockenbach & Crandall, 2016).

While many challenges exist for LGBTQ students, resources also exist within Christian college environments. Students report being more likely to disclose their gender and/or sexual identity to friends/peers; far more likely than to counselors, teachers, and ministers (Yarhouse et

al., 2009). Students who have access to, and choose to be involved in Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA), report less negative experiences related to identity, as well as less religious incongruence (Wolff et al. 2016). One important resource that is reported as infrequently used, and infrequently beneficial for LGBTQ students is on-campus counselors and mental health resources (Yarhouse et al., 2009). Fears related to the use of conversion therapy, whether grounded or based in rumors, may dissuade LGBTQ students from seeing counselors affiliated with non-affirming Christian colleges and universities (Craig et al., 2017).

LGBTQ Allies

Research focusing on LGBTQ allies looks not only at who allies may be, but how they develop, and what benefits allies of LGBTQ individuals gain through allyship. While an ally to the LGBTQ community must be cisheteronormative, not all people who identify as such are equally likely to take on the role of ally. Women (Fingerhut, 2011; Perrin et al., 2014), people of color, and people of lower socioeconomic classes (Perrin et al., 2014) are more likely than men and/or white people to be LGBTQ allies. People who hold other minority identities may be more inclined towards social justice as a whole, and therefore be more empathetic to the plights of gender and sexual minorities. In addition, people with higher levels of education are more likely to be allies, likely due to the increase of knowledge that reduces stereotypes and prejudice (Fingerhut, 2011). Finally, those who have meaningful relationships with LGBTQ individuals are more likely to become allies (Fingerhut, 2011).

The process of becoming an LGBTQ ally does not occur in the exact same way for all individuals, but certain events or shifts in attitudes are common within studies about ally development. Frequently, LGBTQ allies have experiences in early childhood that may normalize non-cisheteronormative identities, or less specifically, that emphasize kindness, justice, and other attitudes that present a positive view of humans (Duhigg, Rostosky, Gray, & Wimsatt,

2010; Stotzer, 2009). As potential allies grow up, meeting LGBTQ individuals throughout adolescence aids in the process of understanding privileges and oppression, as well as creating empathy towards the negative experiences of the larger LGBTQ community (Duhigg et al., 2010; Stotzer, 2009).

While many allies may experience those developmental milestones on their way towards allyship, not all allies approach the role from a personal perspective. Some faculty and staff at colleges claim the role of ally as a professional, rather than personal role (Ryan et al., 2013). In their case, supporting and advocating for the rights and well-being of the LGBTQ students who occupy their classrooms, dormitories, or campus as a whole is a necessary responsibility to adequately perform their job. For them, allyship was not based as much on personal relationships as the sense of duty to protect those within their context at the university.

Some research splits LGBTQ allyship into two levels (Eichler, 2010; Grzanka, Adler, & Blazer, 2015). The first level of allyship is based on the understanding that non-cisheteronormative individuals are not inherently less than cisheteronormative individuals, and are therefore worthy of equal rights (Eichler, 2010). This level of allyship is more passive than the second level, which is based on activism (Grzanka et al., 2015). The second level takes the belief of equal rights, and puts it into action through protest, volunteering, and other means of social activism (Eichler, 2010). While both levels are beneficial in their own ways, the latter is of more use to LGBTQ individuals as their rights are not only supported, but fought for by active allies (Eichler, 2010).

The work of LGBTQ allies is seen in various ways (Linley et al., 2016). Ally work at colleges and universities can be done in formal settings such as asking for and using preferred pronouns, or pushing back against homophobic and/or transphobic behavior in classrooms (Linley et al., 2016). Formal ally work can also include unbiased academic advisement, or

genuine interest in the well-being of LGBTQ students outside of the classroom. Informal ally practices like attending pro-LGBTQ events or sponsoring student organizations are also beneficial to LGBTQ college students (Linley et al., 2016). Training for faculty and staff regarding LGBTQ allyship provided by, or at least encouraged, by institutions made LGBTQ students more comfortable in classes, more likely to come out to a faculty member, and less likely to expect bias from faculty members who had participated in the training (Ballard, Bartle, & Masequesmay, 2008).

While the benefits of allyship gained by LGBTQ individuals should carry the most weight in determining effective allyship, LGBTQ allies themselves report gains from their role as an ally (Rostosky et al., 2015). Ally gains from allyship include an increase in knowledge, meaningful personal relationships, opportunities to use social privilege and take a stand, and being a part of a community (Rostosky et al., 2015).

Current Research

The previous discussion of past research shows that the experiences of LGBTQ college students, including those at Christian colleges and universities, as well as the experiences of LGBTQ allies have been studied. However, the intersection of these areas of study seems to be void of research. Allies on Christian college campuses have not been given much attention, especially from the perspective of the students with whom they are allies. The current study focused specifically on this intersection of LGBTQ students, Christian colleges and universities, and LGBTQ allies. The current study proposed the following research questions:

What are the lived experiences of LGBTQ students with allies at Christian colleges and universities?

What reasons do LGBTQ students give for attending Christian colleges and universities?

Summary

Experiences of LGBTQ students at colleges and universities are not monolithic, but many studies highlight frequent negative overall campus climate perceptions, or negative perceptions of certain aspects of campus climate. Experiences of LGBTQ students at Christian colleges and universities seem to be more negative due to specific rules and general campus climates that are influenced by conservative, anti-LGBTQ Christian beliefs. LGBTQ allies play a role in improving campus experiences, but to what extent they impact the climate at Christian colleges and universities is currently unclear.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative phenomenological study researched the experiences of LGBTQ students with allies on Christian college campuses, and the reasons that LGBTQ students attend Christian colleges and universities. As the intersection between LGBTQ allies and Christian colleges has not been widely studied in the past, qualitative methods provided an opportunity for a depth of information from each of the participants that can lay a foundation for further research.

Participant Identification & Selection

Participants for this study identified as a gender or sexual minority. They did not have to identify with one of the specific identities listed in the LGBTQ acronym, but they had to claim non-heterosexual, non-cisgender, or both identities. All participants had to be enrolled in a college or university that is affiliated with a Christian denomination.

A purposive sampling approach was utilized to acquire participants for the study. This type of sampling sought out participants based on predetermined criteria (Cozby & Bates, 2018). Through personal and professional connections, recruitment scripts, including the purpose of the study, requirements of anyone who may be interested in participating, and contact information of the lead researcher were distributed among Christian colleges and universities (see Appendix A). Some specifically targeted areas were LGBTQ organizations that are formally recognized by a school, as well as groups that are more informally recognized on certain campuses. Recruitment scripts were posted, with permission, on social media pages

associated with LGBTQ students at Christian universities, as well as distributed through email groups associated with formal or informal LGBTQ organizations at Christian universities.

Data Collection Methods

Students who were interested were asked to participate in a semi-structured interview (see Appendix B). Semi-structured interviews allowed for specific questions to be planned in advance, but also allowed the flexibility to add follow-up or clarification questions needed for more complex and/or sensitive topics (Barriball & While, 1994). An emergent design was used to allow for follow-up questions to be added based on information provided by the participants (Creswell, 2007). Interview questions added in this way were only asked based on the information freely provided by the participants, and were only added into the official interview script if they proved to provide information relevant to the study that was not already acquired through other questions.

Interviews lasted 30 minutes, on average, ranging from 15-50 minutes, and occurred online via web conferencing, or face-to-face. Face-to-face interviews were conducted three times, and web conferencing interviews were conducted four times. Face-to-face interview locations were selected jointly between the researcher and participant, with the only guidelines being that it be a place quiet enough to record the interview, and that the participant was comfortable meeting in the location. All interviews were recorded to assure accuracy, and were transcribed by the researcher as soon as possible.

Students interested in participating in the study were sent a brief demographic survey (see Appendix C) intended to save time for more meaningful questions during the interview process, as well as to potentially prolong the point of saturation. Creswell (2007) described the point of saturation as when a researcher begins to encounter the same stories/experiences in numerous interviews. The participants were also sent an informed consent document (see

Appendix C) that was signed and returned prior to the web conferencing interviews, or signed at the beginning of the face-to-face interviews.

Researcher as Instrument

Within qualitative research the researcher is a key piece of data collection (Creswell, 2007). The researcher serves as an instrument for collecting data from the participants. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to be aware of their biases, as well as their posture towards the topic, while they are collecting and interpreting data. As the researcher, I had to be aware of what biases I may have towards the topic based on my experiences, and to allow the participants voices to be heard, instead of my own. As someone who attended and worked at a Christian university, I have had experiences as an ally, and am familiar with experiences of LGBTQ students who are close friends. It was necessary for me to be aware of what I thought about allyship, but to let the thoughts of the participants regarding allies be what was reflected in the research.

Data Management

The data acquired from each interview consisted of the audio recording of the interview, notes taken by the researcher during the interview, the demographic survey, and the informed consent document. The audio recordings were transcribed by the researcher using the Google Doc Voice Typing tool, and then saved onto an external hard drive, so that the identified transcripts were not readily available on the researcher's Google Drive, to preserve privacy. Transcripts were de-identified so that any identifiable information (names, places, etc.) were modified to protect anonymity.

Data Analysis

Transcripts and notes were analyzed using Saldaña's (2013) methods for qualitative analysis. The de-identified transcripts were exported into the ATLAS.ti Cloud qualitative

research software. The technique used for first cycle coding was an eclectic coding method consisting of several methods including simultaneous, structured, descriptive, in vivo, affective, versus, and subcoding (Saldaña, 2013). The first cycle coding was performed by the lead researcher and a peer debriefer, and was discussed with the graduate advisor. The second cycle coding method used pattern coding (Saldaña, 2013), and was performed by hand. The codes from ATLAS.ti were printed and cut by the lead researcher, and used to physically create piles representing a particular pattern in the data. Transcripts were then printed and highlighted with various colors to connect direct quotations to each pattern. Patterns were identified which were then developed into five themes after discussion with the peer debriefer and graduate advisor.

Trustworthiness of Data

In qualitative research, considerable time and attention are put towards ensuring the validity and reliability of the data being collected. Attention is also directed towards establishing trustworthiness. This research utilized member reflections, and two bracketing techniques to establish trustworthy data.

Member Reflections

Research participants were contacted after the interviews were transcribed. Personal transcripts were sent to each participant so that they could look over, clarify, and revise their statements. While the assumption that interview participants were open and honest was used, participants were allowed to look over their words and edit their thoughts, should what they said in the moment not accurately reflect their experiences, or should they wish to express their thoughts and experiences differently (Tracy, 2010). Participants made minor edits, such as changing singular word choices, or adjusting phrasing for clarity, but no major addition or deletions occurred.

All participants in the research were also asked to play a role in the analysis of data, not just in the interview process. After the transcripts were coded and themes/sub-themes were developed, participants were sent the themes/sub-themes to reflect on their validity from their personal perspective. Member reflections allow not only for a check on the validity of the analysis, but also on the comprehensiveness and meaningfulness of the findings (Tracy, 2010). Participants were given the option to respond to the themes, but none chose to respond.

Bracketing

Bracketing processes were used as a means of controlling for researcher biases while conducting interviews and coding and analyzing data: peer debriefing and reflexive journaling (Tufford & Newman, 2010).

Peer debriefing. The researcher participated in peer debriefing. Peer debriefing is a process used as a bracketing technique intended to bring to light potential hindrances to the researcher being able to listen to interviews and analyze data without succumbing to personal biases and experiences related to the subject (Tufford & Newman, 2010). This process was particularly important as the researcher was, essentially, listening to descriptions of things that they may have done, both positive and negative, in their own ally work at a Christian-affiliated university. Being aware of how personal experiences may impact the lens through which experiences were heard and interpreted was an important piece of peer debriefing. The peer debrief was a doctoral student who had previous experience in queer research, and also played a part in analyzing data.

Reflexive journaling. The researcher also participated in reflexive journaling throughout the data collection and analysis processes. Reflexive journaling allows researchers time and space to recognize potential hindrances to approaching the research process without problematic biases (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Throughout recruitment, interviewing, and

coding processes, the researcher took time to write down thoughts as biases were seen and previous personal experiences were brought to light. Due to reflective journaling, the researcher was able to recognize biases that could have impacted the themes that were identified, specifically one aspect of a theme that could have been left out.

Protection of Participants

The current research was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Texas Woman's University for approval prior to the collection of data through interviews. Potential risks in participating in the study were emotional discomfort, coercion, loss of confidentiality, and loss of time. Due to the nature of discussing gender, sexuality, and religion, past negative experiences may be brought back to mind. Should such memories become a problem for the participant, they were allowed to not answer a question, take a break, or stop the interview at any time. The researcher also supplied a list of resources should the participant wish to talk with a professional about their previous experiences. In order to avoid coercion, participants were reminded that participation was voluntary, and that they were free to stop participation at any time. During the recruitment process, no students were directly asked by the researcher to participate. All recruitment scripts were sent through mass communication, and never directed to an individual.

Several measures were taken to minimize the loss of confidentiality of the participants. Both face-to-face and web conferencing interviews were held in private locations. Audio recordings from either interview structure were downloaded onto an external hard drive and stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. Transcripts of the interviews were also stored in the locked cabinet. Informed consent documents were stored separately from the other interview materials. While transcribing the interviews identifiers (names, places, dates) were changed to protect confidentiality. In order to minimize the loss of time the researcher arrived

early to all interviews, and was prepared to begin as scheduled. The researcher also respected the amount of time that was asked of the participants, and no interview went over the time specified during communication prior to the interview.

Summary

This study sought to better understand the experiences of LGBTQ students with LGBTQ allies at Christian colleges and universities. Semi-structured interviews with LGBTQ students about their experiences with LGBTQ allies at their institutions, as well as discussion of why they chose to attend a Christian college increase knowledge at the intersection of Christianity, gender/sexuality, higher education, and LGBTQ allies. Such knowledge can potentially be used to improve the experiences of LGBTQ students at Christian colleges and universities at both individual and institutional levels.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Description of Participants

Participants in this research were seven undergraduate college students. The students attended two different Christian-affiliated universities, one located in the southern United States, and one in Canada. When asked about how they identify, six of the participants identified as White, not Hispanic or Latino, and one identified as Asian. Participants' ages ranged from 18-22, and they had been attending their current school for anywhere from two semesters to four years. Participants were asked where they lived, and five reported living in on-campus housing at their school, while two lived in off-campus apartments. Participants were asked what degree program(s) they intended to complete, and answers included psychology, business, communication, criminal justice, english, and social sciences.

The participants were asked how they would describe their gender identity and what pronouns they used. Students identified as the following genders, and preferred the associated pronouns: cisgender and preferred the typically associated pronouns for their gender (two cisfemale, one cismale), genderqueer, and preferred the pronouns they/them (two), gender-fluid and preferred either the pronoun they/them, or he/him (one), and gender non-binary and stated their preferred pronouns as them/them (one). The research participants were also asked how they would describe their sexual identity. Each participant used different terms to describe their sexual identity. The terms used were: homosexual, pansexual/polyamorous, greysexual, bisexual, queer, biromantic asexual, and lesbian. Finally, when asked about their personal religious affiliation four identified as a Christian, one identified as a part of the United Church of Christ, one identified as spiritual, and one identified as an atheist.

Themes

After analyzing the data using Saldaña's (2013) qualitative coding methods, five main themes were identified, and are discussed and described in the following sections: a) allyship requires continuous, active engagement with LGBTQ communities, b) allies recognize and engage with power dynamics depending on the space, c) meaningful relationships do not mean ally; not an ally does not mean not a meaningful relationship, d) reasons for attending, and e) differences in experience based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Allyship Requires Continuous, Active Engagement with LGBTQ Communities

Participants described the designation of ally as being associated with action. P4 explained that allies are "action-oriented." "Being an ally isn't passive. It is an active, constant effort" (P4). Those who wish to be allies must seek out opportunities to make an impact on the community they wish to ally with, in this case LGTBQ students. Without action there is no reason for a person to be considered an ally, because, "If you're somebody who is just affirming in theory, you're not an ally" (P7). Action does not have to be solely focused on outward advocacy, but can, and should also include actively educating oneself. P7 explained that "...doing your own research, looking into the history of the queer community, and why either a queer student group might be structured the way that it is, or why there are certain topics that we avoid..." is a meaningful action.

P6 described allyship with LGTBQ communities as they think of allyship with people of color:

Being an ally is...I think of it in terms of anti-racist action. You are anti-racist or you're racist. There's no 'I'm just sort of a steady-state anti-racist.' You have to take action.

Being an ally is an active thing, but it is always a continuing thing.

Related to the continuous, action-oriented nature of allyship, P6 added that,

...the thing is you're never just an ally through and through--in your being...We're going to make mistakes, so I think recognizing that for allies is important. So you can be a bad Ally and I don't think that takes away your little ally card. I don't think you ever had an ally card in the beginning. It's a series of continuing acts.

Because of these active and continuous nature of allyship, P4 claimed "I think there are people who are affirming, but I don't think there's a lot of allies."

Allies Recognize and Engage with Power Dynamics Depending on the Space

When discussing experiences with allies, descriptions of allies, and how allies could improve experiences of LGBTQ students at Christian colleges and universities, participants described allies as understanding and working with power dynamics. Depending on the power dynamics of specific environments, allies performed, and/or were expected to perform in certain ways. Categories of power dynamics were created based upon stories and examples from participants: spaces where allies are "the powers that be," spaces allies are privileged, and queer spaces.

"Powers that be" spaces. Some allies exist in spaces where they hold the most power. Professors were most often mentioned in this position, as the classroom, and whatever environment was associated with it, were created largely by the professor. P7 recognized that:

...in classrooms professors are kind of the ones in charge of the classroom. We don't really hear as much about Administration meddling in those spaces, so there's much more freedom for professors to engage with queer topics and a lot of times they do it in a really healthy way and they're actually interested in engaging.

P4 noticed this in a particular professor who “specifically curates her classroom to make sure that people feel heard and feel respected in their journey, especially when things like queer issues come up.” When discussing faculty allies, P6 felt that:

a lot of it rides around how professors manage the classroom space, so informing themselves by asking the right kinds of questions, and are they turning and taking those queer voices that they've sourced and actually listening to them and applying that to their classroom space...

P3 felt the benefit of sexuality being a part of the coursework, “We have three days for that, along with three days for every other topic, so there was a platform. I want to speak and like [share] my experiences.”

Several participants praised professors who intentionally sought out and used the preferred names and pronouns of their students. P7 described a professor whose classes “always begin with, ‘What are your preferred pronouns, [and] your preferred name?’” Normalizing pronoun use, even for students who used the pronouns that matched their appearance, allowed space for students who used different pronouns to state them. One participant told the story of a professor who had forgotten their preferred pronouns:

He forgot about my pronouns for the first bit of the semester... He remembered and he used my correct pronouns very pointedly, and so I emailed him just thanking him for that, and he emailed back and asked how he could maybe facilitate a better space in the classroom, and so he was just asking me what I would prefer, and I just gave him some suggestions. Then he stopped the class the next time and informed the class that “this student’s pronouns are they/them and if any of you would like to talk about, or have questions about gender, or would like to tell us about your pronouns, or tell me about your pronouns, go for it.” He kept open that space. He willingly apologized to the class

for not creating that space, and to me that's what I'm looking for. I'm not looking for people to just always be on point. Gender constructs are oppressive, I get it. When people are willing to kind of sacrifice a little bit of their ego, or their pedagogical space, or their social capital, and just even apologizing and then reframing how they do things, man that's excellent to me. (P6)

Other participants noticed the willingness to create safe environments outside of the classroom. A weekly chapel coordinated by faculty and staff that openly discusses the intersections of gender, sexuality, and faith was mentioned by three participants. P2 explained a particularly impactful chapel moment:

A couple weeks ago one of our students led chapel about being asexual. The teacher that was leading that chapel just openly admitted at the beginning that he did not really understand what asexuality was, but he still invited them to come and talk and to just tell all of us their experience, and the fact that afterwards he kind of said it again that 'this was not something I knew about before but I'm glad that you came to talk today'... just the fact that he was open to hearing about the new thing and was open to learning about it.

While professors were the main example of allies working as "powers that be" on college campuses, students did hold power in certain areas of campus. One student in particular was mentioned in several interviews for their work as an editor of the student newspaper. They were described by participants as "the best version of a student ally that I can think of" (P6) and that they "modeled for me what a best practice of an ally might be" (P7). Another student in a powerful position was a resident assistant who approached Participant 7 and asked, "how she could make her dorm a more inclusive space, specifically for queer students, but also how to do

that without singling out queer students.” The value of this type of space was best summed by P6 saying, “It feels like the powers that be in this space aren’t gunning for me.”

Privileged spaces. While students were not often described as holding the kind of power a professor holds in a classroom, they were described as instrumental in “[critiquing] the structures and the people in places of power” (P6). The spaces that were most discussed as needing the work of student allies could best be described as the spaces where cisheteronormativity is granted privilege. In classrooms, P5 was grateful for students who would hear comments made by professors or students and were willing to be “that one person who speaks up and be like, ‘I’m going to argue with you on that.’” They also expressed a need for more of those people “Because a lot of the time we can’t speak for ourselves because there’s a fear of being outed, there’s a fear of anything” (P5).

A unique description of how allies should act within spaces they are privileged by their sexual orientation and/or gender identity was similar to a pest:

The ally is somebody who’s going to advocate in all the spaces that they’re in. An ally needs to be kind of annoying to straight space. They really should be kind of that little push in the ear, that thing that makes people a little uncomfortable. (P6)

This type of ally work was expressed to be particularly relevant to spaces like dorms, where common language and behavior “can be traumatizing at times, especially for queer students” (P7).

While students were primarily described as being the allies in this type of space, faculty and staff were also able to provide help in these spaces. Multiple participants described a situation where the school’s student life office would not allow posters advertising the informal LGBTQ student group on campus (per the desires of the administration), so supportive professors used their office spaces and bulletin boards to display the flyers.

Queer spaces. The final type of space that allies work in is the spaces in which LGBTQ students hold the most power. The largest of these spaces were formal and informal student groups for LGBTQ students and allies. Most commonly, allies interacting in queer spaces learned “when to talk, and when to ask questions, and when to just kind of sit there” (P7). P6 called allies to recognize that:

...a queer space, that's not going to be the space for an ally to start spouting off things. Of course they can have a voice in that space. It's not that they aren't a valuable member of the community. We have allies in our queer community, but that's not going to be their primary place of spending their voice.

At times when LGBTQ students were using their voices, such as at events created by the students groups, allies “[went] to events... helped set up...[helped] take down. Those sorts of things” (P7).

Another way that allies interacted in queer spaces was by guarding knowledge. P7 outlined the process for becoming involved in their informal student group, including a confidentiality statement:

I lay out a policy on that because that's really important. We've had people who have been outed before by new members, so kind of this is a way for me to kind of show explicitly this is what our confidentiality policy is. If you break this you will not be allowed back into our community.

Another participant mentioned that when they are considering disclosing either their gender or sexual orientation, they “kind of test people a little bit, and then if I figure out that I think they'd be chill with it then I kind of tell them” (P2).

Meaningful Relationships Do Not Mean Ally; Non-Allies can have Meaningful

Relationships

When discussing the qualifications that participants felt were necessary for a person to be an ally, not all participants listed the same qualifications. Out of those descriptions, in conjunction with the stories of people who the participants did, or did not consider allies, three categories emerged in a hierarchy of people who were supportive of the participants, and/or LGBTQ students in general. People within each category have the ability to make a positive impact, but they do not all have the same scope of impact, nor the same requirements. The categories will be discussed from most requirements/largest scope of impact to least requirements/smallest scope of impact.

Ally (community ally). In order to be considered an ally at the highest level, four requirements existed: a) community approval in a particular context, b) active work, c) affirming theological stance, and d) cares about individual(s). The requirement that most distinctly separated this category from the next was the need for the designation of ally to be given by an LGBTQ student, and also accepted by the larger LGBTQ community of which they are a part. As P7 bluntly stated, "It's impossible for you to self-identify as an ally. If you're not recognized as an ally by a queer community, then you're not an ally." In addition to being given the designation of ally, an ally must earn and be given that title in each new context they wish to be an ally. For example, P7 discussed a person who was considered an ally by a friend, but that they did not consider an ally:

I think each new space that an ally comes into, each new queer space that an ally comes into, they kind of have to be able to show themselves to be an ally in that space. With that friend that they knew... they gave them the term ally, sure okay, they may have

been an ally in that space, but in my student group we don't know who you are, so you're not an ally to us.

In order to be given the designation of ally, work was required. As one participant explained, "It's not enough for me for somebody to say 'Oh yeah, I affirm queer people.' For me, an ally is someone who expends social capital for the betterment of marginalized folks" (P6). Much of the language used around this work focused on expending social capital, and using privilege for the betterment of LGBTQ students.

While affirmation on its own was not enough to be considered an ally, many of the participants were steadfast in their belief that theological affirmation of the goodness of LGBTQ people and relationships was still necessary.

It's really detrimental, I think, when people come in and they're like "Look, I want to be kind and welcoming. I need you to tell me things that I can do to help" but at the same time they still hold the point of view that if you're gay you're going to hell, or it's a sin to be gay. It's just really counterproductive and pointless. (P4)

In contrast, a couple of participants were less convinced that theological affirmation was necessary, such as P1 saying, "I wouldn't say that you again have to agree I think that mainly focuses on that the other person legitimately cares about all of you and not just one factor." P2 shared a similar sentiment by defining an ally as "who is going to support you and love you, no matter who you are, even if they don't fully agree with your decisions." Finally, an ally must care about the individuals with the LGBTQ community, which will be discussed in more detail within the following categories.

Ally-esque (personal ally). The middle category based on requirements/scope of impact, is complex in that the term *ally* was still often used when referencing a person who fits this category. People in this category may have simply lacked the work necessary to be considered an ally by a community. For example, one participant mentioned, “I heard that the Dean of [a department] is apparently fine. Again that doesn't make her an ally“ (P6). P6 also explained that “I'm not expecting you to be an ally for the queer community. I hope that they are affirming and working with that.”

However, doing ally work one time was not enough to be considered an ally, as P7 explained with a particular staff member, “As of right now he's just kind of a guy who's helping us out and doesn't hate us as staff, which is great. We need more people like that, but it's more of a community understanding.” Experiences with people who may best fit this ally-esque category were focused on individual relationships. One participant described their relationship with their boss by saying, “I don't know if I would say she's an ally to the whole community, but she's an ally to me at least, and to who I am” (P7).

Safe person. The final category based on requirements/scope of impact was someone who could be considered a safe person. The unique aspect of this particular category is that the people described held non-affirming theological positions. Participants described both hypothetical and real relationships with non-affirming individuals. P4 described their struggle with the complexity of personal relationships and allyship:

I'm kind of going through a process right now where I'm trying to decide whether you can be non-affirming and an ally, just because my roommate has been someone who I would describe as an ally, but who doesn't agree that being queer is biblical, but still puts in that effort to be super present, and validates and never tells me how my faith should look.

While P7 explained why they were hesitant when publicly talking about allies saying, “I don't want someone to think ‘oh my roommate is actually terrible because they're not affirming, But they love me so well, and they love the community so well.’”

Safe people are safe specifically for the person they have a relationship with, and may be considered unsafe by others:

A safe person has the space to not be affirming, but be loving and be caring for someone. A safe person is more not a community held belief, more of a personal feeling. So I might consider someone a safe person for me because they don't trigger certain things in me. The way they say things doesn't affect me, but someone with a different form of baggage, either religious or homophobia or transphobia, might not find them someone that they would want to go and talk to. (P7)

It was clear that several participants cared deeply about some of the relationships they held with non-affirming people. P1 said, “I don't even think that the other person has to agree with you as long as that person cares about you first and foremost.” P2 described one of their parents in similar terms, stating, “I have my mom... she loves me no matter what, but she doesn't love my identity, and you know, I feel like that's halfway to being a perfect ally.”

Reasons for attending

Participants described numerous explanations for why they were attending a Christian-affiliated university. A desire to be in an environment where religion/faith/spirituality was a focus of the institution, and dialogue about such concepts would be available and encouraged was cited by three participants. P4 explained:

I wanted to come to a place where I could hash out what I thought of my faith, because I had a lot of questions I was sorting through myself. I wasn't sure whether I wanted to walk away from my faith, or really embrace my faith. It was a process of coming to terms

with what it meant to be a Christian, and I thought that coming to an environment with lots of different Christians, with a lot of different opinions about what it means to be a person of faith, would be the setting to do that in. I was just excited about the opportunity to have a space where people have not necessarily a similar mindset to what I have, but have similar assumptive worlds that I do.

While they all desired an environment with religious emphasis, all three also desired a school that did not strictly require one specific iteration of Christianity. P2 said, "I wanted to be somewhere that I knew my faith would be a priority, but I could still be who I was even if I wasn't out to everyone around me."

Parents were mentioned by three participants as an important factor in attending their university. P1 had a parent who graduated from the university, which encouraged them to attend. P7 chose their school because while they were "less religious than them [parents]," they still desired to please them. P3 described being given a choice of three Christian-affiliated schools to attend, otherwise their parents would not pay for college. They said that if they had decided to attend a different university, "they [parents] would have assumed I am going to live a gay lifestyle, and they would have cut me off completely" (P3). Finally, P5 chose their university because many of their high school friends were also going to attend that school.

Just as the reasons for attending their school varied, so too did their responses to whether they would attend their school again. Under the same circumstances, three participants said that they would attend their university again. Under different circumstances, two participants said they would attend a different school. P5 described, in addition to friends attending a different school, they would need competing schools to be different sizes: "Other schools here are all really big and they don't give you as much one-on-one attention, and the school is very... they pay a lot of attention to you." P3, whose parents gave them three choices,

said “In an ideal world no, but in my circumstances [they would attend again].” Finally, two participants said they would not attend their school again under the same circumstances, but for both, as P6 said, “in terms of queer stuff, I would say that wouldn’t be the deciding factor.”

A couple participants who differed in whether they would attend their university again (one yes, one no) described similar benefits of the experience that they have had at their institution. They discussed how being in an environment that can be restrictive of parts of their being “kind of helped me learn to navigate my own sense of being, my own sense of self, my own way of relating to an institution...” (P6) and “helped me to become more solid in my faith walk as a queer, cisgender person” (P4).

Differences in experiences based on sexual orientation or gender identity

The final theme to come from the data was less related to allies, and more tied to how the experiences of the participants differed based upon their specific sexual orientation or gender identity. Participants who identified as bisexual, asexual, biromantic, and any non-cisgender identities described unique experiences with disclosure, understanding, and attitudes towards their identities. P2 succinctly stated their disclosure choices, saying, “A lot of people know I’m asexual, less people know I’m biromantic, and even fewer know that I’m non-binary.”

Fear was often attributed to why participants had not disclosed to more people. Some of the fear was that people were just less likely to comprehend gender variations that were felt to be more complicated to explain. P7 explained:

All of my friends and my community knows, but gender is a little harder to talk about here just because, like sexual identity they don't have to engage with that really it's just ‘That person is gay? Okay, cool.’ But my gender, I ask them to change pronouns, and I have quite a bit of internalized transphobia, and I struggle with asking people to be able to kind of take my gender into consideration because it's hard for some people that I

care about that I know won't be able to, not won't be able to, but won't try to change their pronouns for me. I just don't tell because I'm not ready for that level of hurt. So gender, less so. Also my gender identity is really fucking weird. It's just a lot to describe to people.

Other times, the fear was based on previous experiences, as with P5:

I also came out as genderqueer in high school, and then people did not react well so I took it back. And recently...maybe January or February, I started identifying as genderqueer again, and then changed my pronouns. And so before in high school no one would use the pronouns I asked for, and then everyone would just ask me really invasive questions.

Another interesting experiential difference based on specific identities was how problematic certain identities were comparatively for others. For example, the participant who identified as asexual explained that "...it's easier for me to tell people that I'm asexual because they don't care as much about that as the other things" (P2). The same was true of a participant who identified as bisexual, and was in a relationship with a cismale. P5 remarked that:

...evangelicals are like okay with anything as long as the penis going into a vagina...the reason why no one has any issues with my relationship even though it is a queer relationship is because it's a penis going into a vagina.

Summary

After analysis of the participant interviews, five themes emerged: a) allyship requires continuous, active engagement with LGBTQ communities, b) allies recognize and engage with power dynamics depending on the space, c) meaningful relationships do not mean ally; not an ally does not mean not a meaningful relationship, d) reasons for attending, and e) differences in experience based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The following discusses the

connection of these themes to the research questions, as well as the study's implications, strengths, limitations, and directions for future research.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Methodology

This phenomenological qualitative study sought to better understand the lived experiences of LGBTQ students with LGBTQ allies at Christian-affiliated colleges and universities. Using semi-structured interviews, seven LGTBQ college students, from two universities, participated in the research. After the interviews were transcribed, the researcher utilized Saldaña's (2013) qualitative coding methods to analyze the data. The researcher and a research assistant used an eclectic method for the first cycle coding. The researcher used pattern coding for the second cycle coding method, and then created themes from the patterns that emerged, in conjunction with the research assistant and graduate advisor.

Participant Description

The seven participants in this research were all undergraduate students who identified with a non-cisgender or non-heteronormative identity, or both. Identities mentioned in the demographic survey included homosexual, lesbian, bisexual, greysexual, queer, asexual biromantic, pansexual, gender non-binary, genderqueer, and gender fluid. All but one participant identified as some classification of religious/spiritual, and the other participant identified as an atheist. The participants had been enrolled in their school for anywhere between two semesters, to four years, and were each in a different degree program.

Research Questions

For this study there were two research questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of LGBTQ students with allies at Christian colleges and universities?
2. What reasons do LGBTQ students give for attending Christian colleges and universities?

The first question was answered by Themes One, Two, Three, and Five, and was the main question of interest to the researcher. The second question was answered by the fourth theme, and posed due to the glaring lack of peer-reviewed research on the subject.

Research Question 1: Lived Experiences with Allies

Learning about the lived experiences of LGBTQ students with allies at Christian universities began with who allies are, and by what processes does one become an ally. Based upon the experiences of the participants, the highest standard of ally consisted of a) community approval in a particular context, b) active work, c) affirming theological stance, and d) cares about the individual(s). These qualifications line up closely with the description of Eichler's (2010) category "ally activist" and Grzanka et al.'s (2015) "active activism" category. The work of allies in this category included community activism, personal education, and the confrontation/education of people expressing negative or misinformed sentiments about LGBTQ individuals.

Within this research, an emphasis was placed on constant, or continuous action. Becoming an ally does not begin and end with a single act that then deems one an ally for life. Nor was allyship something that could be gained or lost in a moment. Participants described allyship not requiring continuous perfection, but expecting moments of error. Recognizing the humanity of others, an important step in a person becoming an ally, was also important to be reciprocated towards allies. As humans, they will make mistakes in their continuous action, but

that does not disqualify them from allyship. They are simply asked to apologize and recognize when they are wrong, and to do better in the future as they continue being active.

Due to the added element of religious beliefs, the ally category for this research also required theological affirmation of the inherent goodness of LGBTQ individuals and relationships. A certain level of trust was missing if a person was interested in doing the work necessary for allyship, but was unable to reconcile their faith convictions with the value of LGBTQ people and relationships. In addition, the kind of work a person with a non-affirming theological stance could perform becomes extremely limited by those beliefs.

The ally-esque (personal ally) category shared similarities Eichler's (2010) "ally" and Grzanka et al.'s (2015) "passive activism." Within this category, theoretical affirmation, or simply believing that LGBTQ individuals and relationships are good, was sufficient. Within this particular research, some participants made the distinction that acts done by a person within a specific relationship with an LGBTQ individual do not automatically qualify the person for the highest level of ally. Therefore the work that may have merited recognition in the higher levels of other ally studies (Eichler, 2010; Grzanka et al., 2015) situates an individual better within the lower of the two categories in this research. Some of the explanation for that difference could be due to this study being the only one of the three that created the categories based upon the experiences of LGBTQ individuals, as opposed to the allies. It is possible some LGBTQ communities hold higher standards for allyship than some allies may hold for the same designation.

Regardless, it is important to note that while these relationships may not have been considered to provide the same level of benefit at the community level, they were still incredibly meaningful to the participants. These people were not looked down upon for being more

inconsistently active, or not active at all in the larger community, but were appreciated for what they provided to the individual.

A third category, “safe people,” existed within this research due to the addition of religious beliefs as a factor. People who fell into this category were people that have meaningful relationships with LGBTQ students, despite having a conflicting religious view of gender and sexuality. It is important to understand that bidirectionally meaningful and beneficial relationships existed between LGBTQ students and non-affirming friends, family, or school personnel. These types of relationships are frequently discounted, or even assumed to be incapable of existing. Ultimately, safe people relationships were still valued by participants, but played a different, and more limited role than the other categories.

Lived experiences of LGBTQ students also depicted who the allies are that exist at these schools. A majority of experiences with allies described by the participants were with faculty allies. In contrast, student allies were very infrequently described with much detail. In fact, one participant, to their own surprise, could not think of any specific experiences with student allies. “I can't really think of any allies. Oh my gosh. I don't know. I know queer people, but any real allies, no I don't think so” (P3).

There are a couple of possible reasons for the existence of fewer student allies at these schools. One possible explanation is that faculty are in a more educated position on gender and sexuality, and may be prepared to recognize, and call out stereotypes and prejudice within various contexts (Fingerhut, 2011). Another possibility is that college students are still young and developing. They may still be trying to understand their own gender and sexuality, or their own beliefs on the subjects. Students may be exposed to new sexual orientations, gender identities, and beliefs about gender and sexuality, both practically and theoretically. According to Duhigg et al. (2010) and Stozer (2009), these types of experiences, specifically with LGBTQ

individuals, and some level of normalization of non-cisheteronormative identity are important for the development of allies. Students may be in the midst of, or have yet to have experiences to facilitate such development while in college, thus limiting their ability to be an ally. In addition, the conservative nature of the schools involved, as well as the families that, at minimum, the participants came from and described, could cause such experiences to be limited. Students who could develop into allies with exposure to new ideologies about gender and sexuality may be stifled, or at least slowed by the same environment that causes LGBTQ students to be closeted.

Staff allies were also infrequently mentioned. This discrepancy could be partially due to the lack of regular interaction with many staff members. Employees within admissions, registrar, financial aid, or other similar departments may have limited interactions with students throughout their college career. One of the two staff allies mentioned was the supervisor at a participant's on-campus job. These types of jobs are not always widely available, so many LGBTQ students may not have that kind of opportunity to have meaningful interactions within the types of departments with which students are not frequently engaging.

Administration was mentioned both as the least frequent source of allies, and most frequent source of negative experiences on campus. While frustrated with many of the experiences they have had with their administrations, multiple participants expressed personal explanations about administrative attitudes. For example, "Administration is not the space that would draw in people who or even allow in people who would identify as an ally, or even super friendly to the queer community outside of like evangelizing them" (P7). Administration was also tied closely to the Board of Trustees and prominent donors, such as P4 saying, "Our Administration, our Board, they are all the most unaffirming people I've ever heard of. And our donors, our donors are also [non-affirming]..." Overall, administrators, board members, and

donors were all viewed to be the biggest perpetrators of the negative pieces of the campus climate, and least likely to be an ally.

Finally, the lived experiences of LGBTQ students described what allies actually did within their campus communities. Faculty, as described by participants, performed many of the types of support mentioned by Linley et al. (2016). Most frequently, faculty engaged in formal support, specifically within the classroom. Most prominently, professors expressed a desire to use preferred names and pronouns, and led classroom discussions that balanced broaching challenging subjects, while also calling out inaccurate and harmful comments, or as P6 described the act, “not taking shit.” A couple of faculty members also engaged in formal support outside of the classroom by sponsoring or advising whatever type of LGBTQ community existed at each school (Linley et al. 2016). At one school, professors were advisors for an informal student group, while at the other, a chapel facilitated by faculty and staff served as the student group. This type of engagement allowed for students and faculty or staff to interact more frequently, and more meaningfully than they might within the bounds of the employees’ job descriptions.

An interesting difference in the approaches and results of Linley et al. (2016) and this research was that Linley et al. listed being an ally, or engaging in ally work, in a separate category from those previously mentioned, specifically as an example of informal interactions with faculty. Based on the current research, all of the work mentioned in Linley et al.’s categories of support, with the exception of LGBTQ faculty visibility, are ally work. Therefore, allyship does not fall distinctly in an informal capacity, but also can take on a formal form, much like was described by Ryan et al. (2013).

Other examples of ally actions were understood specifically through the theoretical lens of feminist theories. By looking for the power dynamics, and structures of power that favored

cisheteronormativity over other gender identities or sexual orientations (Chibucos et al., 2005) at the two schools, the different spaces in which allies worked with, or challenged power dynamics were made visible.

Faculty, and some student allies, held positions of power in specific contexts, such as classrooms for faculty, or student organizations for students. These allies used their power to create environments that made LGBTQ students feel seen and heard. The main ways that those in power made their spaces safe for LGBTQ students were using correct language, and being receptive to critique. While allies were not always perfect in their execution of creating and maintaining a safe space, the best allies were willing to be corrected should they be wrong, and then sought to do better in the future.

Students and faculty allies were both in spaces where they were given more power due to cisheteronormativity, and were called to use that power, also mentioned as privilege, to advocate for a power dynamic that better respects and values LGBTQ students. Participants desired for allies to speak up in these spaces where they were privileged, but not in charge, especially in situations that may be dangerous, uncomfortable, or emotionally exhausting for LGBTQ students. P6 eloquently described this work as “punching up” by saying:

...if somebody wants to be an ally I think the best thing for them to do is ground any traction that they have in punching up. So their space isn't necessarily to critique queer dialogue, queer spaces. They're not in the space to critique the marginalized community. We've already got enough of those, but rather to critique the structures and the people in places of power. So speaking truth to power can be another word for punching up.

Faculty were also called to participate in these spaces, as they were in positions to advocate for a better environment at a campus level through their closer access to higher levels of power, such as administrators and board members.

Power was also emphasized within queer space. Not all spaces at the schools were dominated by cisheteronormativity. While the impact of the larger campus forces surely continued to influence individuals, and the community as a whole, LGTBQ students were able to claim power in spaces, both physically and emotionally.

On a community level, power was claimed through events put on by the student group, in which allies helped to protect the space by performing supportive roles, such as setting up and/or taking down things needed for events. Allies also performed more subtle ally work by simply being quiet. Allies were asked to recognize that, in these spaces, they did not hold the most power, therefore the ways in which they interacted in these spaces were different than those in which they were privileged, or held the most power.

On an individual level, a couple of participants mentioned their living space as a place of safety and power. P5 happily explained that they were able to live in a shared apartment, but have their own room, and said the big benefit was that “I don't have to share my space with another person.” Even though they lived on-campus, in an on-campus apartment still within the physical and psychological bounds of cisheteronormativity, they were able to feel powerful by having ownership, and therefore, safety, in even a physically small space.

Another way that LGBTQ students claimed power was by choosing how, to whom, and to what extent they wished to disclose information about their sexual or gender identities. Allies were called to respect the confidentiality of identities that were disclosed to them, and to keep other secrets learned in queer spaces. Participants described hesitancy in disclosing information in order to keep some level of control over who knows what about them, and even discussed testing people to find out if a person could be trusted in their space, both physically and emotionally.

Research Question 2: Reasons for Attending

When initially looking through research for the literature review of this study, there was a desire to have some explanation as to why LGBTQ students were attending Christian colleges and universities at all. After finding no studies focusing on this question, it became clear that this question needed to be asked, even if it was a secondary question in this study. The only mention of why students might attend Christian colleges and universities was by Coley (2018) and it was simply a remark in the introductory chapter of the book, and not based on any in-depth research. Coley (2018) briefly listed a handful of possible reasons an LGBTQ may attend a Christian university, including a desire to be in a faith-centered academic environment, strong academic programs, and a desire to please their parents or to have parents' pay for tuition. Within this study, three of the aforementioned possible reasons were given, with a faith-centered environment being mentioned by three of the seven participants, and pleasing parents and parents' paying for tuition each mentioned once. Not listed by Coley (2018) as a possibility, but mentioned by one participant was that many of their friends were attending the school, and they wished to be with their friends.

Implications

The current study holds implications for several groups within Christian colleges, and also broadly within Christian spaces: potential and current student allies, potential and current faculty/staff allies, and potential and current "safe people."

Potential and Current Student Allies

Regarding student allies, the most evident implication is that a small few are doing most of the work. The fact that some participants had a hard time, or were incapable of, coming up with specific student ally interactions means that there is tremendous room for growth, both in numbers and in impact. The largest hindrance to recognizing more student allies seemed to not

be students being theologically affirming, or caring about LGBTQ students, but that they were not involved in continuous ally work.

If a student is interested in being an ally, or improving their current ally work, participants described several important actions. Allies can speak up against anti-LGBTQ rhetoric both directed at, or in the presence of LGBTQ students, and in straight/cisgender spaces. Allies can educate themselves on gender and sexuality, which removes the burden from LGBTQ individuals who then are not required to give so much of their personal resources to assist an ally in their ally work. Student allies can work to normalize the use of pronouns so that those who may use pronouns that do not match expectations can feel comfortable stating their own pronouns. Allies can also use what privilege they afforded by being straight and cisgender to advocate for school policies that treat LGTBQ students equally in all campus arenas.

Potential and Current Faculty/Staff Allies

Unlike students, faculty allies seemed to be in good supply, though more can always be added. For faculty, the realization that they may be the main source of alliance LGBTQ students have at their university is necessary, and should inform their work. Faculty are given power to create classroom environments as they see fit, and can use that power to shape a classroom structure and curriculum that allows LGBTQ students to feel they can have a voice. Faculty can also intentionally use correct language, which can improve the classroom climate for LGBTQ students.

For staff, much like students, there is great room for growth in numbers and impact. They are able to perform many of the same acts as students and faculty, though because they are less likely to interact with large numbers of students, depending on their area of work, they may need to make even more intentional steps to engage with the LGBTQ community at their

school. Staff and faculty can use their positions as employees of the schools to advocate for proper treatment and clear and beneficial policy regarding LGBTQ students.

Potential and Current “Safe People”

Many people within Christian spaces hold conservative views of gender and sexuality, and many will continue to hold these views in the future. That, in and of itself, does not disqualify an individual from having a meaningful relationship with an LGBTQ friend, family member, student, colleague, etc. This study’s participants expressed that they cared deeply, and felt deeply cared about by people who had conflicting views on gender and sexuality. These relationships can exist, and may be beneficial for all parties involved.

Limitations

Due to time and resource constraints, this research only utilized participants from two Christian universities, with seven total participants, so the experiences cannot be casually generalized to all LGBTQ students at Christian universities. A majority of the participants identified as white, so any interaction with race/ethnicity was not addressed.

Recruiting for this type of study at Christian colleges and universities is complicated by policies that punish students for identifying as LGTBQ, or engaging in certain behaviors. Students may be less inclined to participate in interviews that could potentially result in punishment from their institution. Participation from students at schools where public LGBTQ identification is not allowed, and results in expulsion, is particularly difficult to acquire. In addition, schools with such policies are less likely to have a student group that is public enough to be contacted to ask for participation.

The interview process was carried out during the beginnings of the COVID-19 pandemic in both the US and Canada. Of the seven interviews, four were carried out under the context of being in social isolation. Both the schools represented in the research, as well as the

researcher's school, had cancelled on-campus classes, and encouraged or required students to stay off of the campus. Due to this, students were not as engaged in the student groups through which recruitment occurred, likely limiting the number of students who actually engaged with recruitment material.

Strengths of Study

Though being small, this study had a diverse sampling of gender identities and sexual orientations. None of the participants shared the same gender identity or sexual orientation, and no specific gender or sexual identity was represented more than twice. This study also benefited from the participants being very open to sharing their experiences, and even preparing for the interview to accurately describe their life. One participant even showed that they had written some notes so that they did not forget anything they thought was important for the research.

Directions for Further Research

Further research at the various intersections of religion, gender and sexuality, colleges and universities, and allies is nearly limitless. More research is needed to gain depth as to why LGBTQ students attend Christian colleges. The answers given by the small sample were not surprising, and may be similar in nature to cisgender/heterosexual students, but larger studies are needed to substantiate that possibility. This study focused on the experiences of LGBTQ students with allies, but many of the participants also shared some of their negative experiences at Christian colleges, and further research could look into the different types of experiences, and how they could be decreased. Due to time constraints little attention was given to how personal faith and religious experiences interacted with LGBTQ identity at Christian universities. Future research could focus on how LGBTQ students at Christian colleges interact with faith on personal levels. Also outside the scope of this study was religiously affiliated institutions of other faiths, such as Judaism, Islam, or Hinduism. Research could be focusing on the experiences of

LGBTQ students with allies in those contexts, and if they differ at all from Christian contexts. Of particular interest to the researcher is the idea of “safe people.” Further research could be done to learn more about the nature of relationships between LGBTQ individuals and non-affirming individuals, as well as if there are pathways towards “safe people” becoming allies, or at least moving to an affirming, ally-esque category.

Conclusion

The goal of this qualitative phenomenological study was to better understand the lived experiences of LGBTQ students at Christian colleges and universities, specifically focusing on experiences with allies, and why they were attending their current school. After completing seven semi-structured interviews with LGBTQ students at two Christian universities, and analyzing those interviews, five themes emerged that helped to answer the research questions of lived experiences and reasons for attending. These themes, in addition to answering the questions asked, provide knowledge to those interested in improving experiences for LGBTQ students at Christian colleges, and improving the quantity and quality of allies at those schools. Further research into both LGBTQ individuals and allies at Christian colleges can be used to improve perceptions of campus climate, and create environments where students can feel safe, and therefore fully embrace opportunities to grow intellectually, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, as is often stated as the mission of Christian college and universities.

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APPENDIX A
RECRUITMENT SCRIPTS

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT SCRIPTS

Social Media Postings

Option 1

Are you an LGBTQ student at a Christian college? This study is interested in the lived experiences of LGBTQ students at Christian colleges and universities. If you are interested in participating in an interview, please complete this brief [survey](#). If you have any questions, contact Jared King at jking18@twu.edu.



Option 2

Are you an LGBTQ student at a Christian college? This study is interested in the lived experiences of LGBTQ students at Christian colleges and universities. If you are interested in participating in an interview, please complete the brief survey linked in my bio. If you have any questions, contact Jared King at jking18@twu.edu.



Option 3

Are you an LGBTQ student currently attending a Christian college or do you currently know someone who is? We are looking for LGBTQ students willing to talk about their experience at a Christian college/university. If you are interested, please complete this brief [survey](#). Questions can be directed to Jared King at jking18@twu.edu.

(Image from Option 1 may be used with this post)

Email Script

Dear <insert name>,

Hello! My name is Jared King, and I'm a graduate student at Texas Woman's University. For my Master's thesis I am interested in studying the lived experiences of LGBTQ students at Christian colleges and universities, with specific focus on interactions and perceptions of LGBTQ allies, as well as reasons LGBTQ students attend Christian colleges and universities.

I am currently looking for LGBTQ students at Christian colleges to interview. Would you be willing to share some information about this study with your organization?

Here's a brief blurb you can share:

"This study is interested in the lived experiences of LGTBQ students at Christian colleges and universities. Specifically, I am interested in better understanding the reasons LGBTQ students attend Christian colleges and universities, and their interactions and perceptions of LGBTQ

allies on their campuses. In order to participate in the research, a face-to-face or web conference interview is requested. All potentially identifying details stated within the interview will be altered to protect confidentiality when publishing the study.

If you are interested in participating please fill out this brief survey. If you have any questions about the research, contact Jared King at jking18@twu.edu. All participation is voluntary.

[Lived Experiences of LGBTQ Students at Christian Colleges](#)

Thank you for your time.

Jared King

jking18@twu.edu

There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings, and internet transactions.”

Large Group In-Person Script

Hi everyone! My name is Jared King, and I am a Master’s student at Texas Woman’s University. In order to complete my Master’s in Family Studies, I am working on a thesis focused on the lived experiences of LGBTQ students at Christian colleges and universities. Specifically, I am interested in better understanding the reasons LGBTQ students attend Christian colleges and universities, as well as their interactions and perceptions of LGBTQ allies on their campuses.

I am currently looking for participants. In order to be a part of the study you must identify as non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgender, and be enrolled at a Christian college. If you are interested in participating, a face-to-face or web conference interview will be requested. All potentially identifying details stated within the interview will be altered to protect confidentiality when publishing the study.

If you wish to be a part of this research, or if you have any questions, you can contact me at jking18@twu.edu. All participation is voluntary.

Also, I am required to say that “*There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings, and internet transactions.*”

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW GUIDE

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Tell me about your decision to attend <school they are attending>.

How much did you know about the school's approach to LGBTQ students?

Based on your experiences at your current school, would you choose to attend <school name> again?

Tell me about the general climate towards LGBTQ students on campus.

How much have you disclosed your gender/sexual identity on campus?

How long have you been disclosing your gender/sexual identity with family and friends?

Is gender/sexuality something you feel safe talking about openly on campus?

Are certain spaces safer, or more open than others?

How would you define an LGBTQ ally?

Are there any necessary qualifications to be an ally, and if so, what are they?

Tell me about your experiences with LGBTQ allies at <school name>

Students?

Faculty?

Staff?

Administration?

Positive experiences?

Negative experiences?

What are some things that LGBTQ allies could do that would improve your experiences at <school name>?

Prompts to elicit more information:

Restating their response or echoing one part of response

It sounds like you are saying...

How so?

Why is that important?

Could you give me an example?

Tell me more

What would that look like?

How did others respond to that?

Why was that important to you?

Why does that stand out in your memory?

Why do you think you noticed that?

Why does that matter?

How did you feel about that?

What was significant about that to you?

APPENDIX C
DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Please fill in the blank or check the box as appropriate. Answer all questions to the best of your ability.

Name:

Age:

How would you describe your gender identity, and what pronouns do you use?

How would you describe your sexual orientation?

Ethnicity:

Hispanic or Latino or Spanish origin

Not Hispanic or Latino or Spanish origin

How would you describe yourself? (check all that apply)

American Indian or Alaskan Native

Asian

Black or African American

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

White

What is your personal religious affiliation?

What college or university do you currently attend?

What is the religious affiliation of your college or university?

How long have you attended your current college or university?

Enrollment level:

Undergraduate

Graduate

Housing:

On-campus

Off-campus

Major/Degree Program:

APPENDIX D
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

APPENDIX D
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY (TWU)
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title: Lived Experiences of LGBTQ Students at Christian Colleges

Principal Investigator: Jared King, B.S.	jking18@twu.edu	817/600-8490
Faculty Advisor: Catherine Dutton, Ph.D.	cdutton@twu.edu	940/898-2681

Summary and Key Information about the Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Mr. Jared King, a student at Texas Woman's University, as a part of his thesis. The purpose of this research is to learn more about the lived experiences of LGBTQ students at Christian colleges and universities regarding LGBTQ allies. You have been invited to participate in this study because you are a student enrolled at a Christian college or university and hold a non-heteronormative and or non-cisgender identity. As a participant you will be asked to take part in a face-to-face, or web conference interview regarding your experiences with LGTBQ allies at your institution. This interview will be audio recorded, and we will de-identify the transcripts to protect your confidentiality. The total time commitment for this study will be about two hours. The risks associated with this study include potential loss of confidentiality, emotional discomfort, coercion, and loss of time. These risks and the rest of the study procedures are discussed in greater detail below.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you are interested in learning more about this study, please review this consent form carefully and take your time deciding whether or not you want to participate. Please feel free to ask the researcher any questions you have about the study at any time.

Description of Procedures

As a participant in this study you will be asked to spend no more than two hours of your time in a face-to-face, or web conference interview with the primary researcher. The decision to do a face-to-face or web conference interview will be based on your available time, the time available of the primary researcher, and the distance of the primary researcher from your institution. If a face-to-face interview is chosen, the site of the interview will be decided jointly by you and the primary researcher. The primary researcher will ask you questions about your experiences with LGBTQ allies at your Christian college or university, as well as your reasons for choosing to

attend a Christian college or university. The interview will be audio recorded and then transcribed by the primary researcher to aid in the coding process.

At the conclusion of the transcription process the researcher will send you a copy of the transcript from your interview. You may revise and/or clarify your answers if you wish to change or add to anything based upon further reflection. At the conclusion of the coding process you will be sent a list of themes that were created based upon analysis so that you may comment on whether they reflect your experiences or not.

In order to be a participant in this study, you must be enrolled at a Christian college or university, and hold a non-heteronormative (gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.) and/or non-cisgender (trans, gender non-binary, etc.) identity.

A possible risk in this study is emotional discomfort. Questions asking about experiences related to lived experiences could bring up memories of negative experiences based on gender or sexual identity. If you become tired or upset you may take breaks as needed. You may also stop answering questions at any time and end the interview. If you feel you need to talk to someone about your discomfort, the researcher will provide you resources to find a suitable professional.

Initials

Coercion is also a risk in this study. All participants will be reminded that their participation is completely voluntary. No potential participants will be directly asked to participate in the study.

An additional risk in the study is the loss of time. The researcher will be prepared prior to the interview, so that extra time is not spent waiting on the researcher. The researcher will also be respectful of the time during the interview, and will not go over the time specified.

Another potential risk in this study is loss of confidentiality. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. Face-to-face interviews will be held at a private location to protect confidentiality. Web conference interviews will also be conducted in a private location and will utilize a secure web conferencing program. During the transcription process important identifying information (names, places, dates) will be edited to insure confidentiality. Participants should be aware of the policies of their institution before agreeing to participate in this study.

The audio recording and the transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. Only the researcher, his advisor, and a fellow graduate student will have access to reading the transcripts. The audio recording and identified transcripts will be destroyed within three years after the study is finished. The signed consent form will be stored separately from all collected information and will be destroyed three years after the study is closed. The results of the study may be reported in academic magazines or journals but your name or any other identifying information will not be included. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings and internet transactions.

The researchers will remove all of your personal or identifiable information (e.g. your name, date of birth, contact information) from the audio recordings and/or any study information. After all identifiable information is removed, your audio recordings and/or any personal information collected for this study may be used for future research or be given to another researcher for future research without additional informed consent.

If you would like to participate in the current study but **not** allow your de-identified data to be used for future research, please initial here _____.

The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researchers know at once if there is a problem and they will try to help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

Participation and Benefits

Your involvement in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Questions Regarding the Study

You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep. If you have any questions about the research study, you should ask the researchers; their contact information is at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the TWU Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at IRB@twu.edu.

Signature of Participant

Date