

Photocopy and Use Authorization

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree at Idaho State University, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for inspection. I further state that permission for extensive copying of my thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the Dean of the Graduate School, Dean of my academic division, or by the University Librarian. It is understood that any copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Signature _____

Date _____

Friendship versus Faith: How Mormon College Students Manage the
Conflict between their Beliefs about Homosexuality and their
Friendships with Gay and Lesbian Persons

by

Jessica M. Sargent

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Art in the Department of Sociology, Social Work & Criminology

Idaho State University

Spring 2018

Copyright (2018) Jessica M. Sargent

To the Graduate Faculty:

The members of the committee appointed to examine the thesis of JESSICA M. SARGENT find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

Jeremy N. Thomas
Major Advisor

DJ Williams
Committee Member

Kellee J. Kirkpatrick
Graduate Faculty Representative

Human Subjects Committee Approval

June 7, 2017

Jessica Sargent
College of Arts and Letters
MS 8087

RE: regarding study number IRB-FY2017-203 : Effect of Sources of Sexual Information
Received During Adolescence on Mormon College Students' Attitudes Toward Homosexuality
and Related Public Policy

Dear Ms. Sargent:

Thank you for your responses from a previous full-board review of the study listed above. These responses are eligible for expedited review under OHRP and FDA guidelines. This is to confirm that I have approved your application.

Notify the HSC of any adverse events. Serious, unexpected adverse events must be reported in writing within 10 business days.

You may conduct your study as described in your application effective immediately. The study is subject to renewal.

Please note that any changes to the study as approved must be promptly reported and approved. Some changes may be approved by expedited review; others require full board review. Contact Tom Bailey (208-282-2179; email humsubj@isu.edu) if you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely,

Ralph Baergen, PhD, MPH, CIP
Human Subjects Chair

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Conservative Religious Groups & Conflicts Related to Homosexuality.....	3
Methods.....	6
Participants & Research Setting.....	6
Data Collection & Transcription.....	7
Analysis.....	7
How Do Mormon College Students Experience Conflict Related to Homosexuality?.....	9
Faith versus Culture.....	9
Faith versus Faith.....	10
Faith versus Politics.....	11
Faith versus Friendship.....	12
How Do Mormon College Students Manage the Conflict between Friendship and Faith?.....	13
Avoidance.....	14
Hate the Sin, Love the Sinner.....	15
Agency.....	16
Differential Moral Responsibility for Non-Members.....	17
Unresolved.....	19
Discussion & Conclusion.....	21
References.....	25
Appendix.....	31

Friendship versus Faith: How Mormon College Students Manage the
Conflict between their Beliefs about Homosexuality and their
Friendships with Gay and Lesbian Persons

Thesis Abstract--Idaho State University (2018)

While previous research explores various conflicts among conservative religious members and various aspects of homosexuality, this work specifically explores the experiences of Mormon college students as they navigate the complexities associated with maintaining the belief that homosexual behavior is immoral while simultaneously fostering friendships with gay and lesbian persons. In particular, I find four unique cognitive management strategies: 1) avoidance, 2) hate the sin, love the sinner, 3) agency, and 4) differential moral responsibility for non-members. Findings indicate a kinder and more understanding discourse emerging from Mormon young people as well as more progressive public policy beliefs, but also reveal that the majority of participants still maintain that homosexual behavior is immoral. The findings are situated in relationship to the broader literature, especially that of contact theory, and implications for how cultural and social differences can be navigated are discussed.

Key Words: homosexuality, religion, friendship, conflict

Introduction

Adolescents from conservative religious groups regularly experience conflict between the messages they hear from their families and churches and the messages they hear from broader society, including from secular peers, from schools, and from the internet and other forms of popular media (Regnerus 2007; Trinitapoli 2007). In turn, many conservative religious groups go to substantial efforts to prevent their adolescents from coming into contact with these outside influences (Padilla-Walker and Thompson 2005; Rose 2017). Yet, by the time they become young adults, most such persons must ultimately decide how they will navigate the inherent conflicts between their religious beliefs and mainstream society (Moran, Lang, and Oliver 2007; Sharma and Guest 2013).

One context in which this kind of conflict often occurs is with regard to sexuality (Burdette et al. 2009; Helm Jr. et al. 2009). For instance, most conservative religious groups in America have long given warnings against activities such as premarital sex and pornography viewing, and have instead urged their young adults to push back against the promiscuity and sexualization of mainstream society (Bearman and Brückner 2001; Sumerau and Cragun 2015; Sumerau and Cragun 2016; Thomas 2013, 2016). However, in the last couple of decades, traditional admonitions about saving oneself for marriage have arguably been eclipsed by warnings about homosexuality and the presentation of stark differences between the widespread cultural and social acceptance of homosexuality and the belief of most conservative religious groups that homosexual behavior is invariably and irremediably sinful (Cragun, Williams, and Sumerau 2015; Thomas and Olson 2012b).

A closer look reveals that young adults from conservative religious groups actually experience several different types of conflict related to homosexuality. For example, not only do

they experience conflicts about the morality of homosexual behavior and the validity of homosexual identity (Maher, Sever, and Pichler 2008; Woodford, Levy, and Walls 2013), but they also experience conflicts related to public policy issues such as same-sex marriage and anti-discrimination ordinances and legislation (Besen and Zicklin 2007; Wolff et al. 2012; Woodford et al. 2012). In addition, and beyond just these theological and political contentions, likely the most pressing and personal type of conflict that these young adults face is with regard to how they manage the inherent conflicts between their beliefs about homosexuality and their relationships and friendships with gay and lesbian persons (Bergerson and Huftalin 2011; Wolff et al. 2012; Wolff et al. 2016).

In this thesis, I address this latter type of conflict, and I focus my investigation on the cognitive management strategies that some conservative religious young adults use in an attempt to reduce this conflict. To conduct this investigation, I interviewed Mormon, which is a common title for members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), college students at a public regional university in the western United States and asked them about their experiences of conflict related to homosexuality. Based on analyses of their responses, I show that these students demonstrate four distinct strategies for managing the conflict that they experience between their beliefs about homosexuality and their friendships with gay and lesbian persons. I situate these findings in relationship to the broader literature, especially that of contact theory (Allport 1954), and I explain the implications for how cultural and social differences can be navigated and negotiated at both the micro and macro levels.

Conservative Religious Groups & Conflicts Related to Homosexuality

Conservative religious groups have long been involved in conflicts related to homosexuality (Fetner 2008; Hunter 1991). As alluded to above, such groups have often been immersed in a variety of ongoing theological and political conflicts that have pitted conservative religious views about homosexuality against the increasingly liberal and secular views of mainstream society (Cragun, Williams, and Sumerau 2015; Thomas and Olson 2012b). At the same time, conservative religious groups have often faced internal conflicts related to homosexuality, both with regard to their attempts to find consensus around particular theological and political positions (Moon 2004; Wood and Bloch 1995) as well as with regard to their attempts to manage their personal interactions with the gay and lesbian persons who have inevitably been in their congregations, families, and communities (Andersson et al. 2011; Moon 2004).

Research into these personal interactions has usually enumerated the negative ways in which conservative religious groups have typically treated homosexual persons (Barton 2010, 2012; Finlay and Walther 2003; Griffin 2000) and has shown how judgmental and shaming messages about homosexuality have often had deleterious effects on gay and lesbian mental health, sometimes leading to depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation (Subhi and Geelan 2012; see also Wolff et al. 2016; Yarhouse and Tan 2005). Alternatively, research has also looked at how personal interactions with gay and lesbian persons can change or at least soften others' attitudes toward them (Barth, Overby, and Huffmon 2008; Barth and Parry 2009; Gregory and John 1996; Heinze and Horn 2009; Herek and Glunt 1993). Yet, while there is limited evidence to suggest that this may be the case for some persons from conservative religious groups (Lewis 2011; Marr 2015), in general, such groups are largely resistant to these effects (Baker and

Brauner-Otto 2015; Bramlett 2012; Garner 2013; Merino 2013; Skipworth, Garner, and Dettrey 2010).

It appears that, for the most part, conservative religious groups pose something of a counter-example to Allport's (1954) much studied contact hypothesis, which argues that when different or opposing groups interact with one another, this leads to a reduction in prejudice and an increase in understanding and acceptance (Dovidio, Gaertner, and Kawakami 2003; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). Indeed, as several scholars have pointed out, there seems to be something unique about conservative religious groups that inures them to the contact effects typically associated with interacting with gay and lesbian persons (Baker and Brauner-Otto 2015; Bramlett 2012). Although there is no research that I am aware of that has explored this in depth, scholars have generally connected this to the "ideological beliefs and core religious values" (Skipworth, Garner, and Dettrey 2010:891) that conservative religious groups systematically teach and repeatedly espouse about homosexuality (Bramlett 2012; Garner 2013).

While this is undoubtedly true, it still remains to be known how exactly persons from conservative religious groups are able to hold on to their beliefs about homosexuality and, at the same time, also engage in relationships and friendships with gay and lesbian persons. Thus, in this thesis, I address this uncertainty by looking at the cognitive management strategies that some conservative religious young adults use in an attempt to reduce this conflict. This is actually similar in approach to research that has been done by Thomas and Whitehead (2015) concerning how evangelical Christians have developed strategies for resisting the expected effects of attribution theory in relation to the origins of homosexuality. Specifically, in their study, they found that evangelicals have been able to maintain their "negative beliefs about the moral acceptability of homosexual behavior" (2015:345) regardless of their beliefs about the origins of

homosexuality—and that they have been able to do this by means of specific cognitive management strategies.

Accordingly, I take a similar approach and investigate the strategies that some conservative religious young adults use in order to maintain their beliefs about homosexuality despite having interpersonal contact with gay and lesbian persons. As noted above, I investigate this with regard to Mormon college students. Investigating this group is ideal for three reasons. First, alongside evangelicals, Mormons are one of the primary conservative religious groups noted for their long-standing opposition to homosexuality (Cragun, Williams, and Sumerau 2015). Second, unlike evangelicals, which actually show some degree of variability in their thinking and responding to homosexuality (Andersson et al. 2013; Thomas and Olson 2012a, 2012b), Mormons have been much more monolithic and consistent in their beliefs about the topic (Oaks 1995; The First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles 1995;), and this is perhaps especially the case for Mormon young adults, who are typically raised in families and congregations that are often noted for their cultural and theological homogeneity (Gallagher 2014; Phillips and Cragun 2011). Third, this in turn sets up the potential for substantial conflict when Mormon young adults go to college at a public regional university such as the one studied in this thesis (Wolff et al. 2016). Forced into somehow reconciling their conservative religious beliefs about homosexuality with their inevitable interactions with gay and lesbian persons, I argue that such students necessarily develop specific cognitive management strategies for reducing this conflict.

Methods

In order to discover the inner thinking and personal conflict mitigation employed by religiously conservative young adults who maintain relationships with gay or lesbian persons, 30 in-depth interviews were conducted during the summer and fall of 2017.

Participants & Research Setting

An Institute of Religion, which is a building where LDS religious classes are held for college students, sits at the center of campus at the university of study. Roughly 1,000 young adults attend courses within this particular Institute each year. In order to fully access the local Institute's population for this study, a written letter of approval was given by the President of the LDS Institute. Flyers, which advertised the need for research study volunteers who fit the below mentioned criteria, were legally placed throughout the Institute building and several contact sheets were distributed to Institute classes. Further, volunteer information was posted on local LDS Facebook group pages.

All participants met five specific criteria outlined in the flyers, facebook posts, and contact sheets. First, participants had to be English-speaking so communication between the primary investigator and the participants could be clear. Second, participants had to be between the ages of 18 and 24. This criteria was employed in order to target the typical age group for undergraduate college students. Third, participants had to be unmarried and could not have been married previously. This criteria was specified for several reasons. First and foremost, the LDS Institute is primarily for young single adults so maintaining this criteria was a natural progression. In addition, the LDS Church greatly emphasizes the value of marriage in eternal glory (Intellectual Reserve 2003), which leads many young adults within the faith to be entirely focused on marriage. In conjunction, the LDS Church preaches complete abstinence before

marriage. In the faith, marriage often opens a door of newfound personal sexuality and a new perspective of sexuality in general. Thus, unmarried participants were sought after in order to control for this additional variable. Fourth, participants had to be current students at the university of study. This criteria simplified the human subject process. Finally, participants had to be baptized members of the LDS Church. Participants could only experience the religious side of the conflict of interest if they were actually members of the aforementioned religion.

All participants responded to flyers, replied to Facebook posts, completed a contact sheet, or were referred using snowball recruitment. A volunteer group of roughly 50 individuals was accumulated through these methods. The volunteers were categorized by male and female and then randomly shuffled through an online scrambler and ordered by number. Ultimately, 15 females and 15 males were randomly selected from the volunteer group to participate in the study.

Data Collection & Transcription

Participants took part in confidential, semi-structured interviews, which were conducted in semi-private library study rooms on the university campus. Interviews spanned from approximately 15 minutes to 60 minutes and were conducted by the primary investigator (see Appendix for interview schedule). Once all interviews were completed they were professionally transcribed verbatim. All identifying information was redacted and each participant received a pseudonym. The names used in conjunction with direct quotes throughout this work are those assigned pseudonyms.

Analysis

The collected qualitative data was analyzed using grounded theory and content analysis (Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Saldana 2009). The first round of analysis was general.

All interview questions were organized in a detailed spreadsheet and each participant's answers were carefully arranged and logged under the correct sections. After examining the data in round one, the interviews were reanalyzed. The second round of analysis dove specifically into the different types of conflict participants were experiencing when it came to religious beliefs about homosexuality and relationships with gay and lesbian persons. A new spreadsheet was developed which organized the different types of conflict experienced (i.e. politics and religion, interpersonal relationships, church and broader society, etc.) and the different ways of dealing with conflict (i.e. avoidance, research, discussion, etc.). Again, the newly organized data was reexamined, which led to the third round of analysis. The third installment explored whether conflict was experienced, what type was experienced, how conflict was handled, and the outcomes (i.e. stance on same-sex marriage, beliefs regarding origin of homosexuality, etc.). The fourth and final analysis looked directly at the precise management strategies employed by participants experiencing the moral dilemma between religious beliefs and meaningful relationships with gay and lesbian persons. From this final analysis, the findings of this study emerged through themes directly gleaned from the data such as areas of conflict, methods of management, and final beliefs, all of which are discussed in-depth within this thesis.

How Do Mormon College Students Experience Conflict Related to Homosexuality?

For a traditional member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints coming to a stance on homosexuality is relatively easy. One of the two official LDS Church handbooks reads that “sexual relations are proper only between a man and a woman who are legally and lawfully wedded as husband and wife. Any other sexual relations, including those between persons of the same gender, are sinful” (Intellectual Reserve 2010:196). While LDS members overwhelmingly believe homosexual behavior is morally wrong, this study examines the various conflicts Mormon young adults still face regarding homosexuality. In particular, this study delves into the complex management strategies employed by Mormon college students as they attempt to manage the conflict between their faith about homosexuality and their friendships with gay and lesbian persons.

Faith versus Culture

From a very young age LDS members quickly recognize the divide that exists between the Church and broader society. The previous president of the Church expressed this fact in a sermon stating, “Where once the standards of the Church and the standards of society were mostly compatible, now there is a wide chasm between us, and it’s growing ever wider.” (Monson 2011). This type of conflict seems to be the most prevalent in the interviews conducted, with most participants mentioning the divide between the LDS Church and society at least once, while also functioning as the least concerning conflict for members. As Martha explains:

I recognized that the media, television, the Internet, stuff like that, was more open to [homosexuality], but I was kind of used to the world being different than the Mormon community.

Faith versus Faith

Conflict within the Church and/or conflicting messages propagated by the Church is a clash that Mormon members have gradually become aware of. In 2008, the LDS Church pushed its members to strongly support Proposition 8, which sought to eliminate the right of same-sex couples to marry in California. The Church's message seemed to be one that encouraged members to deny same-sex marriage, and any subsequent rights, to homosexuals. On the contrary, the LDS Church came forward in 2015 as a strong advocate of same-sex anti-discrimination laws in Utah. Of course, the support also came with a condition regarding religious freedom. Still, this support in early 2015 was a somewhat groundbreaking shift in the Church's same-sex policy beliefs and its willingness to show civility to all those involved in the debate. While the Church's move along the spectrum may be viewed as a step in the right direction by larger society, many LDS members struggle with the Church's more accepting approach. Thomas expressed his frustration by stating:

It's like, why are we trying to foster the relations when in the end it's considered wrong? You know? So, I guess for me, that has been the big, what's the plan here? Why are these two goals crossing? ... It's complex. I would just say sometimes it's hard to fight for something and not agree with it. And that's how I feel as a member of the Church right now.

Candace spoke very highly about the church and never strayed from its teachings, until she began discussing the Church's recent changes when approaching topics of homosexuality.

To be honest, it's something I'm still trying to, like, understand. We see that the Church is very adamant that this is something that's not okay, but we also see them supporting other affiliations that are sort of associated with gay rights. And so for me, I don't know... it's still something I'm trying to figure out where I stand on.

In November of 2015, the same year same-sex marriage became legal in the United States (*Obergefell v. Hodges* 2015), one of the Church's handbooks was changed so that children living in a family led by same-sex parents could not be baptized within the LDS Church until the

age of 18, when a child could properly denounce the lifestyle of his or her parents (Intellectual Reserve 2015). The Church received a great deal of backlash for this change, including from its own membership (Bailey 2015). Noah experienced surprise and confusion, but eventually came around to the idea:

There was obviously the policy change that happened a couple years ago within the Church about same-sex marriage people, that, um, just referring to their children not being able to be baptized if they were in that household until the age of 18. Um, which took, that actually took me a little while to fully understand and accept.

On the contrary, Seth expressed nothing but frustration and heartbreak during his interview:

That policy change, the infamous policy change as people refer to it as. Someone texted me, he was a friend who had a lot of the same opinions as me. He said, ‘This is happening.’ I basically just called BS. I said, ‘I need a source, I don’t believe you.’ Then he sent it to me, and I didn’t want to believe it. It really, really disturbed me. I remember just crying in my room, trying to reconcile what I believed in.

With the complex history of the LDS Church and homosexuality, many young people are developing different and unique opinions as to how homosexuality should be handled within the Church and within the political sphere. The stance expressed by participants regarding homosexuality itself is strong: homosexuality is a sin. The stance on how such matters should be handled, or what public policy is acceptable, is considerably less stable.

Faith versus Politics

According to recent studies, young people in America are less likely to identify as either Republican or Democrat and give both parties more negative ratings than have been seen in the last 20 years (Sago, Markus, and Joffe-Block 2016). Mormon young adults are no different as 20 of the 30 participants refused to identify with either of the two primary parties. Many interviewed members of the LDS Church agree with the legalization of same-sex marriage, a moderate to liberal political stance, while simultaneously confirming it is immoral in the eyes of

God, a very conservative belief. Micah, a self-declared Libertarian, went back and forth on his opinion throughout the entire interview:

Um, same-sex marriage, I'm still a little not sure. Um, 'cause that... I've heard just from many church leaders that it should not be legal. But I also feel that it should definitely not be legal but then, you know, there's that other part of me, like the Libertarian kind of side that says, you know, like, they should be free to do whatever they want to do.

Leah had a unique perspective as she identified as a Constitutionalist and is currently pursuing a paralegal degree. When pressed to explain her opinion on the legality of same-sex marriage, she responded as follows:

We're guaranteed rights and freedoms and providing for the general welfare, but when it comes to regulating marriage and forcing other people to accept those marriages when it's not something they agree with, I think that kind of oversteps the lines of where government should be. The legality of same-sex marriage, I don't know... it just means that society's progressing in a way I don't particularly agree with, but it's kind of inevitable.

Faith versus Friendship

While participants continue to experience conflict between the Church and society, conflict within the Church, and conflict amid political beliefs, the most consistent conflict is that which arises among the participants who have personal relationships with homosexuals and also have a firm commitment to the Church's moral standards. The conflict between personal experience and personal belief is causing the participants stress, anxiety, and confusion. How can Mormon young adults have a relationship with someone who engages in homosexual behavior and simultaneously hold the moral standard that homosexual behavior is sinful? The following sections examine the various strategies developed and used by modern LDS young adults in an attempt to reconcile their friendship and their faith in an ever-changing world.

How Do Mormon College Students Manage the Conflict between Friendship and Faith?

Of the 30 individuals interviewed, only four expressed entire clarity with regards to homosexuality. These four individuals did not endure any conflict or have any personal relationships with homosexuals and held historically traditional views about homosexuality. Two of the four, Deborah and Elizabeth, expressed having never changed their stance for any reason. Deborah did not face any internal or faith-based crisis, as her stance was solid and immovable, but instead expressed the following struggle:

Like I've stood where I've stood the whole time. I haven't like, wavered from that. And like, all these recent opinions and topics coming hasn't like, made me think otherwise. Um, the biggest conflict I've experienced is how I need to react or how I need to associate with, live with, work with people who do believe [in homosexuality and same-sex marriage].

One of the remaining two, Claudia, described the topic simply as “weird” and exhibited a general aversion to homosexuality. Jesse is rather unique in that he was the only male to have not experienced conflict and yet has a direct relative who identifies as homosexual. Jesse’s uncle is gay and, although he expressed having respect for the Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage (*Obergefell v. Hodges* 2015), Jesse displayed absolutely no wiggle room when it came to his belief in the immorality of homosexual behavior.

The other 26 participants conveyed sentiments of conflict as well as various methods of management. Fifteen of the 26 experienced the conflict personally, meaning they disclosed having close personal relationships with at least one homosexual. The remaining eight participants did not give specific examples of a relationship, but did detail methods of managing the conflict between faith and friendship.

For the 26 participants who experienced the conflict, four different categories of conflict management arose from the data. In addition, a few participants openly admitted that they were

genuinely unresolved when it came to balancing opinions about homosexuality and the LDS Church. Some of the participants only employ one management strategy, while others employ multiple. The following sections characterize how Mormon college students are able to maintain meaningful relationships with homosexuals and simultaneously hold the belief that homosexuality is a grievous sin.

Avoidance

The most conservative way Mormon young adults manage the conflict between relationships and faith is by simply avoiding or ignoring the friction entirely. When Anna was faced with the decision of same-sex marriage, prior to the Supreme Court ruling on the matter, she simply avoided the topic entirely:

I actually kind of avoided it for a long time because I think it was a little bit difficult because I wanted to say yes, but I wanted to say no, which was hard... when it came to just saying yes or no, I knew I had to say no when it came to same-sex marriage.

Anna's political beliefs, friendships, and faith all came to a grinding halt when faced with this particular topic. In the end, Anna ended up serving a mission during the time when the decision was made, so she was able to fully avoid the issue until she returned home and it had already been decided legally.

Additional participants spoke of an "out of sight, out of mind" mentality. For those particular individuals, it is much easier to not think about the conflict rather than face it head on. Several participants stated simply that, since they were not homosexual, any policy rulings or Church standards did not affect them personally. Salome perfectly embodied this mentality when she stated the following:

It's just like an out of sight, out of mind thing. It doesn't really affect me personally and so people are... if that's what they're going to do, then that's what they're going to do.

Perhaps the most interesting avoidance was performed by Seth. When delving into the conflict between friendship and faith, Seth expressed the following sentiment:

It is difficult for me whenever that topic (homosexuality) comes up because it's something I can't reconcile. Which is something I'm blatantly ignoring, and just focusing on Jesus was a cool dude, he said some good things, let's focus on that! I'm just letting this happen as it comes. Basically that was a long way of saying I disagree with [the Church's stance] but I'm just hoping for the best.

Seth went on to explain that he simply cannot reconcile his faith in the LDS Church with his personal convictions about homosexuality, but, because he loves both the Church and his homosexual friends, he is outright ignoring that conflict and ignoring the fact that his personal beliefs do not align perfectly with the Church's stance on the topic in order to maintain both ideologies.

Using avoidance as a strategy for mitigating conflict is perhaps the easiest route for participants, as it does not require one to address the cognitive dissonance that exists for LDS young adults. Avoidance allows participants to continue walking the line on both sides without having to make a firm choice or admit a conflict even exists.

Hate the Sin, Love the Sinner

One of the most common management strategies among those interviewed is a method that is actually promoted by the LDS Church itself. While technically a non-scriptural quote, "hate the sin, but love the sinner" is a common cultural cliché dispersed and embraced by members and Church leaders alike (Benson 1988:75; Komatsu 1987). Therefore, it is unsurprising that 15 of the participants cited this ideology as a method of conflict management. When explaining this idea, Isaac actually spoke in the plural form of "we" as he explained the entire Church's stance on homosexuality.

We believe in being followers of Jesus Christ. And one of his ideals that he taught was that we should love our neighbor, regardless of their decisions. And that doesn't mean

condoning the sin, but it means that we should, uh, we should still have love towards them.

While not all participants cited scripture in defense of their opinions, many, like Isaac, referred to the teachings of Jesus Christ revolving around love, compassion, and understanding.

Nevertheless, these statements were always qualified by reinforcing the fact that homosexual behavior and same-sex marriage were immoral actions. For example, Julia spoke often of treating others with kindness and seeing the good in others, but she was clear in her belief that homosexual behavior is wrong.

It is not correct to be in homosexual relationships, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they're not good people.

Hating the sin, but loving the sinner requires some amount of conflict recognition. This type of management allows participants to separate the individual from the immoral behavior without having to hate the individual or love the behavior. It is often viewed as a perfect solution or one that causes little internal crisis for the LDS member who is employing it.

Agency

Agency is a common term used in the LDS faith. For members, agency is defined as “the ability to choose right from wrong and to act for yourself” (Intellectual Reserve 2011). The Mormon Church begins and ends with agency, thus this concept is highly valued among the faithful. Fourteen of the participants cited agency, in that all people have the right to choose how they want to live, as a main source of conflict management. Of the 14 who cited agency, seven of these participants qualified their statement in some way. Participants cited agency as a sacred part of life and a gift from God, but, in the same breath, reiterated the belief that homosexuality is wrong and should not be acted upon.

Hannah expressed her opinion in a qualifying fashion, but she also mentioned that taking this stance is a compromise:

I've made that compromise, I guess, where I feel like they have their choice and so it's okay that they choose to use their agency and to choose what they want for their life... But it's not right according to what God would have us choose.

Like Hannah, many participants felt that admitting that other people have agency to choose somehow undermines their belief that it is wrong and that everyone should choose what is considered right. Adam tried to step away from his faith and instead used society as a reason that homosexual choices, though free to be made, should not be.

That's their choice of course, but I think that having the traditional family in America is important. ...The traditional man, woman, children is important for the foundation of a country. And so I think once that gets attacked, not necessarily attacked, but it's changed, that's where, I guess, the whole morals and foundation of the country can start to crumble.

Perhaps the most common type of qualification came as two fold. First, agency and the freedom to choose is fine as long as it does not impact the participant. Second, agency and the freedom to choose is fine, but those who choose incorrectly will pay for it later. Micah expressed both parts in his interview:

It's their choice, they can, you know... be homosexual if they want to. It's their choice as long as it does not affect me. They're responsible for their own consequences during and/or after this life.

For faithful conservative young adults, using the concept of agency as a strategy for conflict management is less about all people having the freedom to choose how to live and instead is more about homosexuals having the freedom to choose the wrong way to live.

Differential Moral Responsibility for Non-Members

While the abovementioned management strategies highlighted tolerance and also emphasized typical conservative viewpoints about homosexuality and same-sex policy, 10

individuals employed a completely different strategy. This strategy is definitely the most progressive method of dealing with conflict between faith and friendship. The ten individuals report having faith in their belief system, but do not hold those outside their religion to that same system. A mentality that embraces freedom of religion and freedom of personal action seems to be taking root among young LDS members as highlighted by Eve:

I just feel like people don't tell me what I need to believe and I'm able to believe what I want, so I think that people should be able to also believe what they want outside of this church as well.

This type of mentality may explain why over half of the LDS young adults interviewed felt that same-sex marriage should be legal in the United States. Beyond just the simple freedom to live and believe as one pleases, several participants identified homosexual behavior from non-members as acceptable because those outside the LDS faith have a differential moral responsibility than those dedicated within it. Timon spoke extensively on differential moral responsibility during his interview.

I think if you're in the religion, you know, you should to an extent adhere to what they're saying. Um, but I don't think that should affect people that aren't in the religion. They don't believe what you believe, like, if they're not a member of your church then they obviously don't believe what you believe.

Timon expressed anger with fellow members who expect those outside the religion to uphold the same moral standards held inside the religion such as the sinful nature of homosexuality and premarital sex. Almost identically, Seth explained that it is not fair to judge others based on LDS standards.

I don't label someone as making a morally bad choice just for doing that because people haven't really had the understandings that I have.

The idea of differential moral responsibility is something that should be studied and examined further among conservative groups. Direct questions about freedom of religion,

agency, and societal morality would likely draw out very unique answers as well as reveal a substantial amount of internal conflict that conservative church members are experiencing regarding the topics of homosexuality and same-sex policy.

Unresolved

While the purpose of this study was to examine the management strategies employed by conservative young people when faced with the incongruence between their faith and their relationships with homosexuals, it must be noted that a small subsection of participants plainly admitted their confusion on the matter. A little over 25 percent of participants expressed conflict with no current resolution, a problem that deeply pained and concerned these individuals.

Zacharias spoke his mind when trying to explain his conflict:

I believe that it is a sin in terms of religion. In terms of the social world it's a lot more difficult because if we take religion out of the equation then it's like why is it right and why is it wrong? ...In years past it was such a black and white sort of thing that it was easy to just kind of lead to this is good, this is bad. I think our world has, through the internet, through discussions, through people coming out and talking about things, it's made it a much more colorful thing.

Zacharias' conflict came about as he went "out into the world" and interacted with good people who lived differently than him. He now does not know exactly how to make those people's way of living fit with his religious beliefs about homosexuality.

Martha spoke specifically about same-sex marriage and the animosity that swirled around its legalization. Suddenly, she veered off and began expressing her own personal conflicts and confusions with homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and the LDS Church.

Why is it? Why do we think this way? I know why we think this way... but why do we think this way? ...I heard a lot about it (same-sex marriage) and I heard a lot of controversy. My parents and everybody in the church that talked about it were so like, 'No, they can't get married. This can't be legalized.' It just never made sense to me. As long as the church isn't doing it, shouldn't it be fine?

Seth's interview was one of the most heart-wrenching. Throughout the entire interview he questioned his faith and expressed deep sadness at the internal conflicts he was experiencing. He wants specific answers to his questions and his confusion, but the LDS Church is not providing them right now. Such conflict makes Seth feel unsure of everything.

One of my biggest faith crises I'm having at the moment is that I'm trying to understand why it (homosexuality) is a sin. If I view it from a religious perspective I get really confused. If I view it from a non-religious perspective, I think there's nothing wrong with it. I guess the thing that sucks about mixing religion with the real world is religion likes to draw lines. It's very hard to put those lines in the real world.

These participants want nothing more than to believe in the LDS Church that they have committed themselves to, but they also want to understand the depths of the doctrine in order to mitigate the conflict between faith and friendship.

Discussion & Conclusion

These findings provide ethnographic value, address relevant issues that religiously conservative young people experience today, and perhaps uncover how such individuals are dealing with the cognitive dissonance of believing homosexuality is immoral and also believing they should love and support their homosexual friends and/or family members. Ultimately, this study lends itself to several conclusions.

First, Mormon young adults on the whole are, like conservative religious members of similar faiths, experiencing conflict when it comes to homosexuality, whether it is faith versus culture (Cragun, Williams, and Sumerau 2015; Thomas and Olson 2012b), faith versus faith (Maher, Sever, and Pichler 2008; Woodford, Levy, and Walls 2013), faith versus politics (Besen and Zicklin 2007; Wolff et al. 2012; Woodford et al. 2012), or faith versus friendship (Bergerson and Huftalin 2011; Wolff et al. 2012; ; Wolff et al. 2016). While the methods by which to mitigate these various conflicts may vary, this research adds to the literature's claim that young adults today are experiencing the cultural shift toward acceptance of homosexuality in a unique way not seen before in conservative circles.

Second, several key management strategies, namely avoiding the conflict, hating the sin while loving the sinner, acknowledging individual agency, and concluding non-members have a different moral responsibility, are employed by Mormon young people in an effort to resolve internal and external conflict regarding faith and friendship. While these particular management strategies were identified by examining the conflict between religious beliefs and relationships with gay and lesbian persons, these strategies may have larger implications that go beyond the individual.

The LDS Church is currently run by older, typically more conservative, adult males. This research seems to point toward a more progressive, caring, and understanding approach to homosexuality coming from the Church's young adults. The realization of cognitive dissonance and the various management strategies employed to counteract such conflict could quite possibly lead to a large disconnect between the younger generation (the future of the Church) and the older generation (the current leaders of the Church). Will we see more LDS young adults leave the Church due to personal internal conflict and/or due to the disconnect between older leaders and younger members? Is there a possibility of higher rates of depression and anxiety disorders among LDS young adults as they continue to experience conflict between faith and friendship? Further research should explore these possibilities as well as if the management strategies identified here are also employed by other conservative religious peoples. In addition, further exploration should be done among Mormon young people regarding other moral conflicts such as same-sex adoption, abortion, and premarital sex.

Third, while previous research (Baker and Brauner-Otto 2015; Bramlett 2012) suggests that strictly conservative values have an ability to mitigate contact effects, this research shows a slightly different reality. Young people within the Mormon faith seem to be displaying more progressive public policy ideals regarding homosexuality (Murphy 2015) and the interviewed members were no different as 75 percent of participants agree with the legality of same-sex marriage. Further, just over 86 percent of participants experience conflict between friendship and faith, which indicates at least some level of sympathy with a desire to blend the two spheres together. In this respect, Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis seems to be holding true for Mormon college students as they interact with gay and lesbian persons. The LDS Church, on the macro level, is able to draw fine lines regarding the morality of homosexuality and espouse how

homosexuality should be dealt with, but it is difficult for members, who are at the micro level, to take moral and philosophical ideals into the reality of human interaction without softening to some degree.

Fourth, while support of public policy is up and conflict does exist, it seems LDS discourse regarding the immorality of homosexuality continues to hold strong for the supermajority, 93 percent, of participants. Similar to the findings of Thomas and Whitehead (2015), Mormon college students seem to be able to maintain their negative beliefs about homosexual behavior regardless of their beliefs about public policy, personal freedom, or friendship. Thus, the interviewed participants overwhelmingly believe in legal rights for homosexuals and in befriending homosexuals, but they also revert back to moral defenses against homosexual behavior. In this way, Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis seems less encompassing. This research suggests that, while contact with gay and lesbian persons softens Mormon college students' attitudes regarding public policy and friendship (Barth, Overby, and Huffmon 2008; Barth and Parry 2009; Gregory and John 1996; Heinze and Horn 2009; Herek and Glunt 1993), the LDS Church's teachings regarding the immorality of homosexual behavior continue to be supported by the same Mormon college students (Bramlett 2012; Garner 2013). In response to this conflict between friendship and faith, Mormon college students necessarily develop the specific cognitive management strategies listed above.

Fifth, the limitations of this particular study and the questions these findings raise can be further addressed and explored by new research. This study was conducted in a predominately LDS community, which may have skewed the shared perspectives of the participants. Further, participants were self-selecting and/or gathered through referrals, which may have led to more progressive participants who were more willing to talk about homosexuality and the complexities

of the topic within the LDS Church. Future research in this area should expand to different geographical regions, both locations with very few Mormon members and locations with extremely high homogeneity (i.e. Brigham Young University). As discussed above, future research should explore if the identified strategies apply elsewhere, such as with other religions or with regard to other controversial topics (i.e. abortion). More generally, this study highlights the need for more work that can address particular issues such as contact theory (Allport 1954), attribution effects (Thomas and Whitehead 2015), and religious moral discourse (Cragun, Williams, and Sumerau 2015) when it comes to conservative religion and sexuality.

This particular research should be encouraging to LGBTQ rights activists. This research clearly displays a more compassionate and caring discourse coming from traditionally conservative religious members and those same members are more likely to support the legal rights of homosexuals. While long-established moral discourses regarding homosexuality seem to be the one mountain contact theory cannot summit, Mormon young people's conflict between faith and friendship suggests a philosophical turning point may be just around the corner in conservative chapels all across the western United States and, perhaps, beyond.

References

- Allport, Gordon W. 1954. *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
- Andersson, Johan, Robert M. Vanderbeck, Gill Valentine, Kevin Ward, and Joanna Sadgrove. 2011. "New York Encounters: Religion, Sexuality, and the City." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 43(3):618-633. doi: 10.1068/a43202.
- Andersson, Johan, Robert M. Vanderbeck, Joanna Sadgrove, Gill Valentine, and Kevin Ward. 2013. "Same-sex marriage, civil rights rhetoric, and the ambivalent politics of Christian evangelicalism in New York City." *Sexualities* 16(3/4):245-260.
- Bailey, Sarah Pulliam. 2015. "Mormon Church to exclude children of same-sex couples from getting blessed and baptized until they are 18," *The Washington Post*, November 6.
- Baker, Ashley A. and Sarah R. Brauner-Otto. 2015. "My Friend is Gay, But... The Effects of Social Contact on Christian Evangelicals' Beliefs About Gays and Lesbians." *Review of Religious Research* 57(2):239-268. doi: 10.1007/s13644-014-0184-z.
- Barth, Jay, L. Marvin Overby, and Scott H. Huffmon. 2008. "Community Context, Personal Contact, and Support for an Anti-Gay Rights Referendum." *Political Research Quarterly* 62(2):355-365. doi: 10.1177/1065912908317033.
- Barth, Jay and Janine Parry. 2009. "2 > 1 + 1? The Impact of Contact with Gay and Lesbian Couples on Attitudes about Gays/Lesbians and Gay-Related Policies." *Politics & Policy* 37(1):31-50. doi: 10.1111/j.1747-1346.2007.00160.x.
- Barton, Bernadette. 2010. "'Abomination'—Life as a Bible Belt Gay." *Journal of Homosexuality* 57(4):465-484. doi: 10.1080/00918361003608558.
- Barton, Bernadette. 2012. *Pray the Gay Away: The Extraordinary Lives of Bible Belt Gays*. New York City, NY: NYU Press.
- Bearman, Peter S and Hannah Brückner. 2001. "Promising the Future: Virginity Pledges and First Intercourse." *American Journal of Sociology* 106(4):859-912. doi: 10.1086/320295.
- Benson, Ezra Taft. 1988. *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company.
- Bergerson, Amy Aldous and Denece Huftalin. 2011. "Becoming More Open to Social Identity-Based Difference: Understanding the Meaning College Students Make of this Movement." *Journal of College Student Development* 52(4):377-395.
- Besen, Yasemin and Gilbert Zicklin. 2007. "Young men, religion and attitudes towards homosexuality." *Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality* 1(3):250-266.

- Bramlett, Brittany H. 2012. "The Cross-Pressures of Religion and Contact with Gays and Lesbians, and Their Impact on Same-Sex Marriage Opinion." *Politics & Policy* 40(1):13-42. doi: 10.1111/j.1747-1346.2011.00337.x.
- Burdette, Amy M., Christopher G. Ellison, Terrence D. Hill, and Norval D. Glenn. 2009. "'Hooking Up' at College: Does Religion Make a Difference?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 48(3):535-551. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-5906.2009.01464.x.
- Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Cragun, Ryan T., Emily Williams, and J. E. Sumerau. 2015. "From Sodomy to Sympathy: LDS Elites' Discursive Construction of Homosexuality Over Time." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 54(2):291-310. doi: 10.1111/jssr.12180.
- Dovidio, John F., Samuel L. Gaertner, and Kerry Kawakami. 2003. "Intergroup Contact: The Past, Present, and the Future." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 6(1):5-21. doi: 10.1177/1368430203006001009.
- Fetner, Tina. 2008. *How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Finlay, Barbara and Carol S. Walther. 2003. "The Relation of Religious Affiliation, Service Attendance, and Other Factors to Homophobic Attitudes among University Students." *Review of Religious Research* 44(4):370-393. doi: 10.2307/3512216.
- Gallagher, Maggie. 2014. "The Mormon Advantage," *National Review*, December 12.
- Garner, Andrew. 2013. "Ambivalence, the Intergroup Contact Hypothesis, and Attitudes about Gay Rights." *Politics & Policy* 41(2):241-266. doi: 10.1111/polp.12010.
- Glaser, Barney and Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Gregory, M. Herek and P. Capitanio John. 1996. "'Some of My Best Friends' Intergroup Contact, Concealable Stigma, and Heterosexuals' Attitudes Toward Gay Men and Lesbians." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 22(4):412-424. doi: 10.1177/0146167296224007.
- Griffin, Horace. 2000. "Their Own Received Them Not: African American Lesbians and Gays in Black Churches." *Theology & Sexuality* 6(12):88-100. doi: 10.1177/135583580000601206.

- Heinze, Justin E. and Stacey S. Horn. 2009. "Intergroup Contact and Beliefs about Homosexuality in Adolescence." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 38(7):937-951. doi: 10.1007/s10964-009-9408-x.
- Helm Jr., Herbert W., Duane C. McBride, David Knox, and Marty Zusman. 2009. "The Influence of a Conservative Religion On Premarital Sexual Behavior of University Students." *North American Journal of Psychology* 11(2):231-244.
- Herek, Gregory M. and Eric K. Glunt. 1993. "Interpersonal Contact and Heterosexuals' Attitudes toward Gay Men: Results from a National Survey." *The Journal of Sex Research* 30(3):239-244. doi: 10.1080/00224499309551707.
- Hunter, James Davison. 1991. *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Intellectual Reserve. 2003. *Eternal Marriage Student Manual*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- Intellectual Reserve. 2010. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- Intellectual Reserve. 2011. *For the Strength of Youth*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- Intellectual Reserve. 2015. *Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- Komatsu, Adney Y. 1987. "Looking to the Savior," *Ensign*, April.
- Lewis, Gregory B. 2011. "The Friends and Family Plan: Contact with Gays and Support for Gay Rights." *Policy Studies Journal* 39(2):217-238. doi: 10.1111/j.1541-0072.2011.00405.x.
- Maher, Michael J., Linda M. Sever, and Shaun Pichler. 2008. "How Catholic College Students Think About Homosexuality: The Connection Between Authority and Sexuality." *Journal of Homosexuality* 55(3):325-349. doi: 10.1080/00918360802345065.
- Marr, Elisha. 2015. "The Contact Hypothesis and Millennial Evangelical Protestants' Attitudes toward Same-Sex Families." *Michigan Family Review* 19(1):1-25.
- Merino, Stephen M. 2013. "Contact with gays and lesbians and same-sex marriage support: The moderating role of social context." *Social Science Research* 42(4):1156-1166. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2013.02.004>.
- Monson, Thomas S. 2011. "Priesthood Power," *Ensign*, April.

- Moon, Dawne. 2004. *God, Sex, and Politics: Homosexuality and Everyday Theologies*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Moran, Christy D., Dennis James Lang, and Jenea Oliver. 2007. "Cultural Incongruity and Social Status Ambiguity: The Experiences of Evangelical Christian Student Leaders at Two Midwestern Public Universities." *Journal of College Student Development* 48(1):23-38.
- Murphy, Caryle. 2015. "Most U.S. Christian groups grow more accepting of homosexuality." Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center.
- Oaks, Dallin H. 1995. "Same-Gender Attraction," *Ensign*, October.
- Obergefell v. Hodges*, 576 U.S. ____ (2015)
- Padilla-Walker, Laura M. and Ross A. Thompson. 2005. "Combating Conflicting Messages of Values: A Closer Look at Parental Strategies." *Social Development* 14(2):305-323. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9507.2005.00303.x.
- Pettigrew, Thomas F. and Linda R. Tropp. 2006. "A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90(5):751-783.
- Phillips, Rick and Ryan T. Cragun. 2011. "Mormons in the United States 1990-2008: Socio-demographic Trends and Regional Differences." *Program on Public Values*. Hartford, CT: Trinity College.
- Regnerus, Mark. 2007. *Forbidden Fruit: Sex & Religion in the Lives of American Teenagers*. Oxford, England, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Rose, Susan D. 2017. *Keeping Them Out of the Hands of Satan: Evangelical Schooling in America*. Vol. 62. New York, NY: Routledge, Chapman and Hall Inc.
- Sago, Renata, Ben Markus, and Jude Joffe-Block. 2016. "Sick of Political Parties, Unaffiliated Voters are Changing Politics." *NPR: Politics*.
- Saldana, Johnny. 2009. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Sharma, Sonya and Mathew Guest. 2013. "Navigating religion between university and home: Christian students' experiences in English universities." *Social & Cultural Geography* 14(1):59-79. doi: 10.1080/14649365.2012.735691.
- Skipworth, Sue Ann, Andrew Garner, and Bryan J. Dettrey. 2010. "Limitations of the Contact Hypothesis: Heterogeneity in the Contact Effect on Attitudes toward Gay Rights." *Politics & Policy* 38(5):887-906. doi: 10.1111/j.1747-1346.2010.00262.x.

- Subhi, Nasrudin and David Geelan. 2012. "When Christianity and Homosexuality Collide: Understanding the Potential Intrapersonal Conflict." *Journal of Homosexuality* 59(10):1382-1402. doi: 10.1080/00918369.2012.724638.
- Sumerau, J. Edward and Ryan T. Cragun. 2015. "'Avoid that pornographic playground': Teaching pornographic abstinence in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." *Critical Research on Religion* 3(2):168-188. doi: 10.1177/2050303214567669.
- Sumerau, J. Edward and Ryan T. Cragun. 2016. "'How Low Can Humans Plunge!': Facilitating Moral Opposition in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." *Qualitative Sociology Review* 12(1)42-59.
- The First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles. 1995. *The Family: A Proclamation to the World*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.
- Thomas, Jeremy N. 2013. "Outsourcing Moral Authority: The Internal Secularization of Evangelicals' Anti-Pornography Narratives." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 52(3):457-475. doi: 10.1111/jssr.12052.
- Thomas, Jeremy N. 2016. "The Development and Deployment of the Idea of Pornography Addiction Within American Evangelicalism." *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 23(2/3):182-195. doi: 10.1080/10720162.2016.1140603.
- Thomas, Jeremy N. and Andrew L. Whitehead. 2015. "Evangelical Elites' Anti-Homosexuality Narratives as a Resistance Strategy Against Attribution Effects." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 54(2):345-362. doi: 10.1111/jssr.12188.
- Thomas, Jeremy N. and Daniel V. A. Olson. 2012a. "Beyond the Culture War: Managing Sexual Relationships Inside a Congregation of Gay Evangelicals." *Review of Religious Research* 54(3):349-370.
- Thomas, Jeremy N. and Daniel V. A. Olson. 2012b. "Evangelical Elites' Changing Responses to Homosexuality 1960–2009." *Sociology of Religion* 73(3):239-272. doi: 10.1093/socrel/srs031.
- Trinitapoli, Jenny. 2007. "'I Know This Isn't PC but...': Religious Exclusivism among U.S. Adolescents." *Sociological Quarterly* 48(3):451-483. doi: 10.1111/j.1533-8525.2007.00085.x.
- Wolff, Joshua R., Heather L. Himes, Ellen Miller Kwon, and Richard A. Bollinger. 2012. "Evangelical Christian College Students and Attitudes Toward Gay Rights: A California University Sample." *Journal of LGBT Youth* 9(3):200-224. doi: 10.1080/19361653.2012.652892.

- Wolff, Joshua R., Heather L. Himes, Sabrina D. Soares, and Ellen Miller Kwon. 2016. "Sexual minority students in non-affirming religious higher education: Mental health, outness, and identity." *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity* 3(2):201-212.
- Wood, James R. and Jon P. Bloch. 1995. "The Role of Church Assemblies in Building a Civil Society: The Case of the United Methodist General Conference's Debate on Homosexuality." *Sociology of Religion* 56(2):121-136. doi: 10.2307/3711759.
- Woodford, Michael R., Denise Levy, and N. Eugene Walls. 2013. "Sexual Prejudice among Christian College Students, Denominational Teachings, and Personal Religious Beliefs." *Review of Religious Research* 55(1):105-130. doi: 10.1007/s13644-012-0067-0.
- Woodford, Michael R., Perry Silverschanz, Eric Swank, Kristin S. Scherrer, and Lisa Raiz. 2012. "Predictors of Heterosexual College Students' Attitudes Toward LGBT People." *Journal of LGBT Youth* 9(4):297-320. doi: 10.1080/19361653.2012.716697.
- Yarhouse, Mark A. and Erica S. N. Tan. 2005. "Addressing Religious Conflicts in Adolescents Who Experience Sexual Identity Confusion." *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 36(5):530-536.

Appendix

Interview Schedule

Confirmation of Consent

1. Have you read the consent form?
2. Do you understand the consent form?
3. Do you have any questions that you would like to ask about the consent form?

Inclusion Criteria Questions

1. Do you speak English?
2. Are you a member of the LDS Church?
3. Are you between the ages of 18 and 24?
4. Are you currently unmarried?
5. Have you ever been married previously?
6. Are you a student at Idaho State University?

Demographic Questions

1. How old are you?
2. What is your gender?
3. How do you racially and/or ethnically identify?
4. Since age thirteen, what cities and states have you lived in?
 - a. Include the age you were in each location
5. What type of elementary school did you attend?
 - a. Probes:
 - i. Private? Public? Religious? Other?
6. What type of middle school did you attend?
 - a. Probes:
 - i. Private? Public? Religious? Other?
7. What type of high school did you attend?
 - a. Probes:
 - i. Private? Public? Religious? Other?
8. How long have you been a member of the LDS Church?
9. What is your mother's (or guardian's) religious affiliation?
 - a. How long has she been a member?
10. What is your father's (or guardian's) religious affiliation?
 - a. How long has he been a member?
11. What, if any, political party do you identify with?

Research Questions

1. What is your perspective on homosexuality?
 - a. Probes:
 - i. How do you feel about the morality of homosexuality? Of homosexual behavior?
 - ii. What is your opinion as to the origin(s) of homosexuality?
 - iii. How would you define the LDS Church's stance on homosexuality?

- iv. How do you feel about the LDS Church's current stance regarding homosexuality?
 - v. How do you feel about gay and/or lesbian persons?
- 2. What is your perspective on same-sex marriage?
 - a. Probes:
 - i. How do you feel about the morality of same-sex marriage?
 - ii. How do you feel about the legality of same-sex marriage?
- 3. Given what was just discussed, what messages regarding homosexuality did you receive prior to the age of 18?
 - a. Probes:
 - i. From whom were these messages received?
 - 1. Friends, family, church, leaders, school, media, etc.
 - ii. Did the messages received ever come in conflict with one another?
 - 1. If so, how did you deal with that conflict?
 - iii. Did you integrate the different messages or choose one over the other?
 - iv. Which messages were most influential in helping you arrive at your current stance?
 - v. How easy or difficult was it to come to your current perspective?
- 4. What messages regarding same-sex marriage did you receive prior to the age of 18?
 - a. Probes:
 - i. From whom were these messages received?
 - 1. Friends, family, church, leaders, school, media, etc.
 - ii. Did the messages received ever come in conflict with one another?
 - 1. If so, how did you deal with that conflict?
 - iii. Which messages were most influential in helping you arrive at your current stance?
 - iv. How easy or difficult was it to come to your current perspective?
- 5. Is there anything else that helped form your perspective on either homosexuality or same-sex marriage?
 - a. Is there anything else you would like to add or say?