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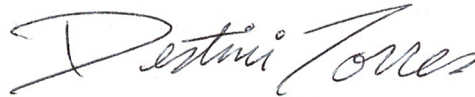
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Viewing the World in Binaries: Students' Perception of LGBTQ Issues

Destini I. Torres



Candidate for the degree

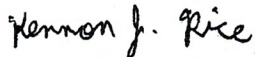
Bachelor of Arts

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

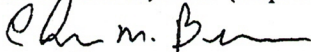
College Honors

Departmental Distinction in Sociology Department

Kennon Rice, Ph.D (Thesis Advisor)



Charles Brown, Ph.D (Departmental Reader)



Katherine Lehman, Ph.D (College Reader)



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ABSTRACT

Long standing dominant cultural messages presume binary categories of gender and sexuality and privilege heterocentrism and the cisgendered. However, increasingly, mainstream values are assumed to espouse inclusiveness and deconstruction. These values seem especially to be assumed prominent in the youth culture of college campuses. This values shift, in itself, would be dramatic, but also seems to represent a remarkable conceptual departure for these populations. Deconstruction of such concepts is a complex challenge, sometimes requiring new vocabularies. Therefore, it is reasonable to question how thoroughly and deeply values have actually shifted. Framed with the context of conflicting ideas towards LGBT issues, this study uses open-ended, semi-structured interviews to examine college students' prejudices and hypocrisies and specifically how students rationalize and articulate them. Sixteen undergraduate students at a small liberal arts college in Pennsylvania are interviewed. Students are roughly between the ages of 18 to 22 years old. The students are chosen using convenience/ snowball sampling.

INTRODUCTION

People often assume that prejudices no longer exist when it comes to controversial issues and are eliminated especially with younger generations. For instance, when Barack Obama was first elected in January 2009, many were ecstatic about “The United States first Black President.” His election was perceived by some as instantly eliminating all forms of racism. Obama himself quotes, “After my election, there was talk of a post-racial America. Such a vision, however well-intended, was never realistic,” (Kendi 2017). Parallel assumptions were made when on June 26, 2015 the Supreme Court legalized same sex marriage across the nation. With this new privilege for LGBTQ individuals, many people assumed all forms of LGBTQ discrimination would be eliminated. Having the privilege to marry gave a false sense of complete equality and fairness as when Obama was voted as President. Documenting the existing internal divisions even within individuals is pivotal in understanding social evolutions besides these social changes mentioned here.

When looking closely within the attitudes of those in the same generation the results indicate there are different levels of acceptance and not just across generations. Kardia (1996) found that students’ attitudes toward the LGBT community became more accepting when there were high levels of interpersonal contact with people who identified as LGBT (Kardia in Holland and Schott 2013: 577). Russell and Bohan (2005) recognize there are individual differences among any group, such as those who claim a LGBT identity, due to variations demographically: rural/urban living, socioeconomic status, level of education, ethnic or national identity, ability status, etc. Hagestad (1981) also argues that there has been homogeneity between generations; there is no generational divide, but instead generational similarity (Hagestad in Atkinson and

Dodder 1990). These results indicate that a generational divide may not be able to be assumed, but given the date of this publication, it cannot be assumed away either.

Long standing dominant cultural messages presume binary categories of gender and sexuality and privilege heterocentricism and the cisgendered. However, increasingly, mainstream values are assumed to espouse inclusiveness and deconstruction. This article explores what prejudices and hypocrisies exist for the LGBTQ community among undergraduate students and how they rationalize and articulate them. My hypotheses were (1) students have a lot of hypocritical thoughts that exist towards LGBTQ individuals, but are not articulated because it is left unrecognized (the concept of compartmentalization), (2) a lot of students believe they are open-minded and loving to everyone, but still hold beliefs of the privileges of this heteronormative and cisgender society, and (3) one form for rationalizing prejudices and hypocrisies is self-validating that the participants' beliefs and opinions are still open-minded. The semi-structured open-ended, in-depth, ethnographic style interviews reveal students essentialize the world around them, viewing sexuality in binaries, because they have not thought about the issues much or they do not want to see the issues in their true complexity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Homosexuality, officially classified as a contagious disease and deviant to our society's standards since 1968, was an acceptable reason to fire teachers in school who demonstrated homosexual traits: mannerisms, voice, etc. (Waller, in Renn 2010: 133). Less than half a century ago, in 1973, homosexuality was no longer viewed as a mental illness by the United States medical and psychological establishments. It was not until 1969, when a widely recognized gay rights movement began at Stonewall (Russell and Bohan 2005). Although in 1973 these establishments disregarded homosexuality as an illness and as a deviant behavior, LGBTQ

individuals who continue to be silenced by society and some are still promoting the message that homosexuality is deviant and/or an illness. LGBQ faculty [and students] that face the dilemma of revealing their sexual identity in classroom settings [and on campus] are faced with the issue that heterosexuality is the only acceptable sexual orientation, and with heterosexuality comes privileges (Tyson 1999 in Orlov and Allen, 2014:1025-26). Many students remain closeted or attempt to maintain a heterosexual persona in fear of discrimination and harassment (Hollad and Schott 2013). Fear dictates individuals' behaviors to fit the cookie-cutter gender and sexual orientation expectations that are created by our society. Silence, even among dissenters from these traditional ideas, serves to maintain oppression and prejudice (Freire 2009; Shaul 2009 cited in Orlov and Allen 2014: 1049). People who are silenced allow the education system maintain oppression and other societal ills which teaches students to accept and adapt to society's standards instead of challenging them (Freire 2009; Shaul 2009 in Orlov and Allen 2014: 1049).

Society's standards are set upon cisgender and heteronormativity which may cause those who do not fit into these labels to be ostracized physically and/or emotionally. Cisgender is when one's gender identity matches the same as their birth-assigned sex label (Tate, Bettergarcia, and Brent 2015). Heteronormativity is when the dominant stance within society is in the position of heterosexuality (Herz and Johansson 2015). Those who do not fit into society's norms like LGBTQ individuals may face discriminations that can cause an emotional toll. LGBTQ adolescents can be exposed to social rejection, social isolation, discrimination, diminished social support, and verbal and physical abuse (Lombardi; Savin-Williams; and Wyss cited in Alemida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, and Azrael 2009). Since the LGBTQ individuals violate social norms,

they may feel the need to hide their sexuality/gender identities in order to feel and stay safe (Rankin cited in Tetreault, Meidlinger, and Hope 2013).

Usually those who are not knowledgeable or are not exposed to something have negative views on the subject matter. Heterosexuals who know individuals that identify as LGBT tend to have more of a positive attitude toward LGBT individuals than those who do not know any LGBT individuals (Basow and Johnson; Eliason; Herek; Herek and Capitano; Herek and Glunt; Hill and Willoughby; Hinrichs and Rosenberg; Mayfield and Carrubba; Mohr and Rochlen; Raja and Stokes; Smith, Axelton, and Saucier cited in Worthen 2012: 289). Individuals who feel fear, hatred, or intolerance of being in the same space as those who identify as homosexual or any individual outside of the heteronormative spectrum are homophobic (Weinberg cited in Warriner, Nagoshi, Nagoshi 2013). Individuals who feel uncomfortable with or have prejudices towards an individual, who identifies as transgender, are transphobic (Hil and Willoughby cited in Warriner, Nagoshi, Nagoshi 2013). However students' attitudes were more favorable toward nonheterosexual individuals when they were taught by an openly gay instructor (Waldo and Kemp cited in Orlov and Aleen 2014). Exposure seems to help eradicate some of the prejudices that people have regarding LGBTQ individuals.

Queer theory is an analysis of the intersections of identities and it also resists oppressive social constructions of sexual orientation and gender (Abes and Kasch cited in Renn 2010). Gender is a societal definition of one's identity whereas sex is a biological definition. The identities we are made up of are interconnected, which is known as intersectionality. Masculinity is conceptualized as hierarchical and it is influenced by multiple factors. For example, a heterosexual men of color who is working-class is marginalized for less valued racial status and economic status, but is praised or valued for their gender and sexual orientation (Whitehead and

Barrett; Carrigan, Connell, and Lee cited in Dean 2013). Gender traits are tied with stereotypes and cultural associations; men are seen as assertive whereas femininity is conceptualized as sensitive (Bem; Spence and Helmreich; Helgeson; Whitley cited in Tate, Bettergarcia, and Brent, 2015). The gender hierarchy places a higher value on masculinity than on femininity (Connell; Schippers cited in Schilt and Westbrook 2009).

Gender and sexuality in many instances are spoken about separately, but as mentioned prior, identities are all interwoven or interconnected. “Intersectionality refers to the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individuals’ lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power” (Davis 2008: 68). Some people receive more class status, power, and overall privileges than other people because of the heterosexual [and cisgender] expectations that are interwoven or embedded in social institutions (Ingraham cited in Schilt and Westbrook 2009: 443).

Some identities that are devalued in comparison to social norms are racial minorities (non-white), females, and LGBTQ individuals. Transgender people are those who make social transitions which “disrupt cultural expectations that gender identity is an immutable derivation of biology” (Garfinkel; Kessler and McKenna cited in Schilt & Westbrook 2009: 441). “Sex is determined biologically which is barely synonymous with gender expression” (Fassinger and Areneau, 2007). Our society perceives things in binary logics by placing “either/or understandings of the world [to] eliminate nuance and uncertainty” (Foucault in Connell 2015: 8). Men versus women; straight versus gay are some of the instances in which our society attempt to create two groups to create better understanding of the world around us; however, the

reduction of these concepts to binaries has a tendency to control and limit ranges of identity and expression (Connell 2015).

The levels of acceptance of sexual orientation differ between genders. Heterosexual men tend to be more supportive of lesbians and bisexual women due to their eroticization (Kite and Whitley; Louderback and Whitley; Raja and Stokes cited in Worthen 2012) while heterosexual women are more supportive of gay and bisexual men because they feel less threatened by them sexually and may have a romanticized ideal narrative of a gay male friendship (Shugart cited in Worthen 2012).

As levels of acceptance of sexual orientation differ between genders, it also depends on race and religious beliefs. Concepts regarding or relating to sexual orientation are culturally and historically defined considering the role of race in regards to attitudes toward lesbians and gays (Waldo in Arndt and De Bruin 2006). There are inconsistent findings on the relation between race and homophobia (Holland and Schott 2013). The contradicting conclusions include that there is no relationship between heterosexism and ethnicity (Millham in Holland and Schott 2013), but another study “found that African Americans show more disapproval of homosexuality than do White people” (Alston in Holland and Schott 2013: 578). However, Finlay and Walther (2003) found that “Whites are significantly more homophobic than other racial groups” (in Holland and Schott 2013: 578). Other studies state that individuals who were more religious, had more conservative religious beliefs and those that attend church frequently are more homophobic (Kunkel and Temple; Herek and Glunt; Rademan in Arndt and De Bruin 2006).

Despite the fluidity of sexual identity (Marszalek and Cashwell; Reynolds and Hanjorgiris in Arndt and de Bruin 2006) our society views sexual orientation as a constant, never changing. There are many factors that influence a person's attitudes and beliefs toward LGBTQ individuals: race, religion, gender, exposure, etc. The way in which our society also reproduces heteronormative and cisgender system is by its stigmatization within the system. If society views LGBTQ individuals as such, then what are the prejudices and hypocrisies that exist for LGBTQ individuals in undergraduate students and how are these prejudices and hypocrisies articulated and rationalized by undergraduate students?

METHODS

The sample to be a participant in this research included those who were currently enrolled as an undergraduate traditional student at Albright College; they were within the ages of 18 to 22 years old. Albright is a private, non-profit, co-educational, liberal college in Reading, Pennsylvania. It is a medium size college that currently has 1800 undergraduate students enrolled and a total enrollment of 2400.

The sample was selected using convenience/snowball sampling. The convenience sample meant I would start off asking a couple of friends and/or acquaintances if they were interested in participating in the study. I asked verbally if these individuals would be interested, but I mainly asked for their participation through emails to avoid feeling pressured into the research. I would email those individuals to see if they were interested in participating. There was an attachment of the solicitation flyer and consent form with the email. If they were interested, then they were able to contact me through my email or cellphone. Snowball sampling occurred after the interviews finished I would ask if they had anyone in mind that would be interested in participating in this study. The people who were just interviewed would provide me some names of people I have

never met on campus before or tell the person they had in mind themselves. Those individuals would inform me of their desire to participate in the study. I tried to minimize and/or eliminate pressures to be a participant in my research by having friends recommend people to me or emailing friends rather than ask them in person.

Sixteen participants completed the interviewing process, eleven were from convenience sampling and five were from snowball sampling. There was one freshman, two sophomores, six juniors, and seven seniors. One participant was eighteen years old, two participants were nineteen years old, five were twenty years old, seven were twenty-one years old, and one was twenty-two years old. Like the study body at the College, most of the participants had interdisciplinary majors: one combined science and business, one combined social science and business, two combined in science and social science, one combined in humanities and education, one combined in social science and art. There were some participants who had only one concentration: two in arts, two in science, two in business, one in social science, and one in technology. Eight participants identified as female or women, five identified as male, two identified as gender fluid or non-binary (but felt female most days), and one identified as a transgender man. Six participants identified as straight, four identified as bisexual, one identified as pansexual, one identified as queer, one identified as bisexual and/or queer, and three participants said they did not like labels in relations to their sexual orientation (one said no labels, but mostly into females; one said no labels, doesn't view people as being a boy or a girl; and another person was not into labels, but if the person had to give someone a word to understand their identity would identify as pansexual).

The qualitative research was formatted in an ethnographic style with semi-structured interviews which were one-on-one interviews. These interviews were conducted in private

spaces, the second floor library on campus or the Computer Center and Mathematics (IT), on campus. Each interview lasted roughly 1.5 to 2.0 hours; although a couple of the interviews fell below an hour and a half while one went over two hours. The results cannot be generalized to all of the population of Albright College nor the population outside of the campus.

This research focuses on how prejudices and hypocrisies are rationalized by undergraduate students in regards to the LGBTQ individuals. My initial hypotheses were:

1. Students have a lot of hypocritical thoughts that exists towards LGBTQ individuals, but are not articulated because it is left unrecognized (the concept of compartmentalization).
2. A lot of students believe they are open-minded and loving to everyone, but still hold beliefs of the privileges of this heteronormative and cisgender society.
3. One form for rationalizing prejudices and hypocrisies is self-validating that their beliefs and opinions are still open-minded.

The population consisted of undergraduate students currently enrolled at Albright College and between the ages of 18 and 22 who are taking at least three classes a semester, making them a full time student. Prejudice is conceptualized as unfavorable opinion on the subject matter that has not given much thought, reason, and/or knowledge.

FINDINGS

My initial hypotheses guided many of the themes noted in my interviews, but I also arrived at additional themes inductively, during the course of the interviews. Ultimately, there are a total of thirteen themes on which I coded the data: (1) making sense of sexuality and gender by framing through race, media, and levels of exposure, (2) recognized self-contradictions, (3) unapparent contradictions recognition, (4) explicit identity management (personal identities around a progressive identity), (5) unexamined heteronormative/ traditional sex roles, (6) double standard

of heterosexuals and homosexuals/ cisgender and non-cisgender, (7) unsubstantiated statements (wrong)/prejudices, (8) expression of anxiety and fear, (9) traditional authorities (religion, parents, etc.), (10) lacking language and concepts, (11) binary/dichotomy/cut and dry, (12) deeply confused: generally they don't understand...They have not worked through their ideas, and (13) "I don't understand:" condemns that kind of thinking—progressive emotional rejection and not intellectual lack of understanding. Although there are interviews that fall under each theme, many of these snippets of interviews can exemplify multiple themes.

Making Sense of Sexuality and Gender by Framing through Race and Religion

Throughout the United States, individual states (and not all) have passed laws prohibiting transgender people from using public restrooms that align with their gender identity or gender expression and the law also limits anti-discrimination protections for LGBTQ individuals (discrimination ordinance on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity); in North Carolina the law is called House Bill 2 (HB2). When HB2 was passed on March 2016, the NBA (National Basketball Association) refused to host its All Star games in the state. PayPal, Google Ventures, Bank of America and other companies also refused to invest their money in the state and withdrew any plans of having programs, centers or any investments in North Carolina due to the law, creating an economic boycott (Katz and Eckholm 2016). I asked the participants their personal thoughts on the HB2 law and some of the participants compared the law to racial or religious discrimination to make sense of the discriminatory acts placed upon the LGBTQ individuals.

#13 "I honestly think it is a stupid law. This is like discriminating against a Hispanic person or black—it's like the '60s all over again or the '50s...discriminating against any person of color like not using the same water fountain as a white person or not using the same bathroom as a white

person...you denying people a basic right to use the bathroom...it really pisses me off.”

#2 “I think it is stupid [referring to the law]. They are going to the bathroom. It’s like the same thing when there were segregated bathrooms between blacks and whites...It’s like the segregation thing. Whites were worried that blacks had diseases and that we would...kill off the entire white race...I say go to the bathroom.”

#14 “When 9/11 happened, you kept quiet... ‘oh you are a Muslim you did 9/11...and that’s probably the same way for an LGBT ‘oh you are gay, I hate you.’ It sucks. You have to keep quiet to protect your emotions basically. When someone hates you does it feel good? ...that takes a different type of strength to bounce those hateful words, those hateful emotions, those hateful things and some people don’t have that [strength] so they stay quiet.”

Not only did the participants compare racial and/or religious discriminations to the HB2 law passed in North Carolina, but also questioned the people in their lives about how is discriminating people who identify as LGBTQ any different than segregation or slavery that took place in United States history.

#14 “Like one of my friends is actually gay. They [his parents] didn’t want me to associate with him...My argument was back then slavery was a thing if you were born then, you would probably say the same thing; don’t associate with a black man. And they were like we weren’t from this time, we weren’t from that time and we are telling you not to associate with him.”

No matter how a participant identified their sexual orientation, they made sense of HB2 and empathized with LGBTQ individuals by stating its similarities to racial and religious discrimination of the past. Participant fourteen also tried to justify his friendship with a gay man to his parents by trying to have them understand that he sees a correlation between racial and sexual orientation discrimination.

Recognized Self-Contradictions

I read each participant one blog post and two commentaries from the blog that speak about a gender free environment parenting style. Gender free environmental parenting style is

when parents do not define their children based off of societal gender roles and do not use the pronouns *he* or *she*, but uses their names to refer to them. After reading each blog aloud, I asked the participants a few questions. Many times their contradictions seemed to stem from sorting through their thoughts about the topics. Some had never heard of the topics that were brought up in the study or had never thought in depth about them.

#3 “Gender! What’s foggy is ...how we should raise our children. Like I said earlier, me knowing that I am female is a strong part of my identity, but if we are trying to move into a world less focused on gender...then are we going to be losing something? No but at the same time I am contradicting myself because I feel so strongly about being female, but I would want the world to be less focused on gender.”

The next respondent realizes that within their own racial community there are contradictions within the community’s definition of societal roles in regards to gender.

#10 “I will say a lot of black people, they’re very solid on how they view gender roles; not necessarily in the kinds of jobs you have, but more so the role you take in relationships. It’s very, a man needs to provide and if he doesn’t provide, then he is not a king...[her thoughts] but what if he likes to stay home with the kids and people think ‘oh he is not a real man’ or if a woman is not cooking or cleaning for her husband it’s viewed as a lesser than; ‘oh you are not a good wife or you are not a good woman.’ But at the same time there’s this disconnect because they say be this strong independent woman.”

Respondent number eight states she is conflicted about the NBA’s decisions to no longer host an event in North Carolina due to the HB2 law.

#8 “It’s weird because I am kind of torn. I feel jaded when it comes...to big business when it comes to that...I don’t want to be reminded that there are private investors that are running these organizations. I don’t want to worry if a big business does or does not support the communities that I am involved in... I think it is a good move, but I am overall really worried about big business involvement in social and political matters.”

The same participant was conflicted with having a transgender person in the open locker room with her, but only if her child was in the locker room too. When I asked her originally how she would have felt if a transgender person was in the locker room with her, she said she was

unbothered by it, but that she is already uncomfortable being naked in front of others. I proceed to ask her how she would have felt or reacted if her hypothetical child was with her when there was a transgender person in the room and her response was

#8 “That’s interesting. My first thought is I want to be in a stall alone with my child. I thought about it in an all gendered lens. I’ll admit that. I will check myself on that. If it was other moms and their children sure...if we were all women, sure—How can I span past that?”...I would like to think like I don’t care who is in the shower with me right now, but when I am with my child I am like I don’t know. I don’t know what’s appropriate...I don’t know how that’s going to affect my child. I just don’t feel comfortable showering people like me. I am biased.”

Having her hypothetical child in the locker room for her changes how she feels about changing in front of a transgender person. She checks herself and realizes she is biased. She does speak about how she is not a parent yet, and had not thought about what is meant for something to be appropriate for a child. Not just changing or showering the same space as someone who identifies as transgender, but any human being.

Unapparent Contradictions Recognition

Some of the participants were unaware of their contradictions until I asked a follow up question regarding their conflicting statements. The first participant state that one’s identity as female or male is in nature. One’s identity is known to individuals.

#1 “I feel like no matter what we are born inherently male or female. You can’t mess with that. You can’t change that. You can’t ignore that. It is nature. It is biological. And if you want to break it down more, it is more than just our outward appearance, it’s our genetic make-up.”

The participant states that genetics determine our identity as male or female. After stating our identity as female or male is determined for us through nature, she then replies in regards to the concept of raising children in a gender free environment,

#1 “When you are raising children you kind of give your child identity at first because they are not old enough to give themselves identities yet. They are really

dependent on their parents and when they get to that age when they can start making that decision themselves- then they are at the age when they can make that decision themselves.”

I asked her since she previously stated that gender is found in nature, something that is inherited, do children need guidance to help them figure out their gender. Her response,

#1 “Boys know they’re boys. Girls know they’re girls. That’s why you’ll see boys playing with boys and the girls playing with girls at recess. I think children can know, they kind of have that general sense of it. But I also feel like if they weren’t led, reinforce at least when they are growing up... I think that could lead to a lot of confusion early on especially because kids are confused regardless.”

Participant number one stated that gender was genetics that it was something that was inherited. If it is inherited, then why would living in a gender free environment cause confusion to a child’s gender identity if it something that the child supposedly knows instinctively? Her reply to my question does not really answer it, but further contradicts herself.

Participant number eleven faced contradictions in regards to the advice he gave to sports players. He identified as a straight transgender man, but no one knew. I asked him does he personally feel comfortable with both his gender and sexual orientation identities. His reply,

#11 “Yes about the transgender part, but just because no one knows...I don’t know what people think.”

He contradicts the fact that he is comfortable about identifying as transgender because no one knows of how he identifies himself. People continue to use the wrong pronouns to him since they are unaware of how he identifies. People perceive him as a butch woman. I asked him how he thinks the sports world silences players who are homosexual and how he thinks the sports world silences players who do not identify with their biological sex. His response,

#11 “Not a lot of people are open about who they are in sports when they should be because it will help younger children; especially guys because not a lot of guys are not open about who they are because they get more shit for it...for being gay.”

He says he wants other people to be open, but he himself is not open. He wants other people to be open and fearless because he is not. He wants them to do something that he is too fearful to do.

Explicit Identity Management (Personal Identities Around a Progressive Identity)

People act and say certain things so that they come across as more likable to the people they surround themselves with; especially in an interview touching upon complex topics. Social desirability is the when respondents’ say things that are perceived as “correct” or socially acceptable (Maecoby and Maccoby 1954). Although these biases do exist, the contradictions of the participants capture what their true views are on the subject matter as shown above. Here are some quotes of people labeling themselves as open-minded.

#15 “I grew up in a fairly democratic house. We’ve always been accepting...I have one cousin who is gay and she had her wedding five years ago so it’s ...nothing strange.”

When I was interviewing participant fifteen he seemed uncomfortable speaking on some of the topic matter. His body language was tense and gave very short direct responses overall. His body language differed from what he was stating verbally.

I asked participant number nine to describe what it means to be closed-minded and open-minded after she stated that people should research to open up their minds up. Researching could help someone become more knowledgeable about the LGBTQ individuals.

#9 “Me [laughs]. Just to put yourself out there. Trying to understand something regardless of how stupid you think it is. I try to understand things I find stupid all the time... You are trying to fathom what it is that makes that person see things the way they do.... I can understand why they [religious people] think people

shouldn't be gay...To be open-minded...it is putting the efforts to try to understand....try to put yourself in that person shoes.”

Participant one throughout the interviewing process states how she can see both sides of the argument and views on LGBTQ issues. She always tries to maintain an objective look on controversial subject matters; seeing things from both sides. One of the questions I have the participants answer is to describe a scenario in which a cisgender person would feel uncomfortable around someone who identifies as transgender. Participant number one mentions just being in the same room as a transgender person can cause discomfort to cisgender individuals.

#1 “It is really hard for some people to see them as human. I've seen it...I was watching a documentary one time, I [the person in the documentary] don't want to be in the same room as a gay person or as a transgender person; that made her feel uncomfortable. It wasn't a hate thing. It was an uncomfortable thing. She felt anxious being in the same room as a transgender person. I don't know how to explain that. I am so far removed from that, I can't even-I always try to empathize with people, but it is so hard for me to empathize with that. I don't see that. I can't even explain it.”

She claims to be far removed from someone who feels discomfort around a transgender person, but throughout the interview she does not give direct yes or no responses. Her responses are sometimes conflicting with one another.

Unexamined Heteronormative/ Traditional Sex Roles

Our society provides mundane ways in which heterosexuality is a privilege and because of people taking it for granted; it is normalized and naturalized creating a foundation for our society and culture (Myers & Raymond 2010; Herz and Johansson 2015). Heteronormativity is in relation to both sexuality and gender. “Normal” is defined as heterosexual and cisgender

individuals by perpetuating marriage, patterns of economic support and dependency and family life (Herz and Johansson 2015).

#3 “When I think about the beginnings of this country, I think of slavery and Christianity... Within Christianity Adam and Eve... It [is] perpetuate[d] in every way like in all forms of media... [I asked what does she mean by “it”? Her reply was] Heterosexuality and patriarchy.”

Participant three claims that heterosexuality and male dominance is shown in media.

Media produces and reproduces social norms.

#5 “It is because they [heterosexuals] have been the norm. They are seen as the norm because in truth heterosexuals do procreate. In an evolutionary standpoint, you want to protect the people who create the future... They are the normal people that set the standards. Modern society puts them above.”

Our heteronormative society assumes that almost everyone is cisgender and heterosexual.

Anyone who steers away from the norm is seen as deviant. The next two participants are both bisexual men who say they can hide their sexuality to fit the heterosexual norm in order to be deemed as “normal” or non-deviants. Switching on or off sexuality is an option for those who do not possess “homosexual” qualities. People who possess a “homosexual” trait; such as certain mannerisms or a certain pitch of the voice, are still perceived as “homosexual.” They are perceived as “homosexual” even if they do not identify as such.

#12 “No, because I am bisexual, I can chameleon my way in and like be accepted in, in any context of men—guys... a lot of guys like to gather around and talk about the girls they hooked up with, made out with, or have sex with. I can relate and share my stories because of the fact that I had sexual experiences with girls and I like girls... I can do the same thing with homosexual men.”

#7 “More so me being black is more of a prominent thing than being in the LGBT community... Maybe as a safety mechanism what I can do is felt a certain type of way about gays, I still like girls like ‘hey guys,’ I am good on this side... switching off your sexual preference to one way or another is a lot easier than switching off the color of your skin.”

Sexuality can be hidden in order to receive the privileges of heterosexuals and cisgender people (Stern, West, Jost and Rule 2013). There are clothing markers, mannerisms, or even tone of voice that can indicate one's lack of straightness. With heterosexuality comes expectations of marriage, of starting a family, etc., but once there is any slight viewing of not being heterosexual, all those expectations are distinguished.

#9 “Yeah I think so. From a social media standpoint, when a guy shows too much emotion [he] is not man enough or he's gay. Like you gay because you feel things. You are gay because your jeans are too tight... You are only gay if you like the same sex.”

#9 “I think for girls we are expected to be the child bearers, home bodies. My mom doesn't think I should be a homebody, but it's very [much like] yeah, you should get a man that wears suits and shoes. And a man is going to take care of you...I can take care of myself; I really don't need a man to do all of that; I can do it myself. I know she knows that, but I think to some degree she thinks I need a man to make me feel complete or to fulfill anything that I need. I think for men they are just supposed to go to work, make money and never really nurture their emotions and feelings.”

Participant number nine's response is interconnected with one's sex/gender. Heterosexual females/women are supposed to be with a male/man (and vice versa). The following quotes are from various different participants discussing gender roles in their families and the expectations that come along with being labeled as a boy or a girl.

#3 “Why my brother and I were treated differently? Why I had to do certain things because I was the girl? Like I was given chores to wash dishes while he was never required to wash the dishes. Like cleaning and cooking my brother never had to do that... Why doesn't he have to do that stuff? My mom said you are the girl you have to wash the dishes. [her response was] But he is the oldest.”

#4 My grandfather was not big on boys having dolls. My uncle was not even allowed to have a G.I Joe doll because it was a doll. It was not a manly thing to have. My brother one time had a Waterbaby [doll]...and we took him to my grandfathers....[her grandfather says], ‘Is that a doll my grandson is holding.’ My mom said ‘yeah, do you have a problem with that? I let my son play with dolls.’ ...In the Italian culture, very much you listen to your elders. If your elders are not okay with it, it is not okay. The baby doll was never brought over to my grandparents after that time...but he still played with it.

#7 “A couple finds out they are having a boy or a girl...their rooms are blue or their rooms are pink. You have certain toys you are buying for them, certain activities you allow them to do and not to do...you are guiding what your child is going to be, what their sexuality is going to be in a way.”

#15 “I know people who still believe in, males work while the wife stays at home. I come from a dual income family. My mom actually owns more than my dad. We never had a problem with that. We always had food on the table...In societal roles, we still typically see men in hard labor jobs as women try to work indoors—they are started to get more into the field. You always see men doing more dangerous, rougher jobs.”

Expectations are placed upon individuals once they are in the womb. Society’s gender expectations begin when finding out the sex of the baby. Our society has traditions that reveal the “gender” (when in actually the sex) of the baby. Colors are chosen once the sex is revealed and the expectations of people start to change with the announcement. When a child defies the social norm of gender binaries of being a boy or being a girl, then they are questioned for their action which is shown in participant fifteen’s response:

#15 [**I asked him how would you feel if his hypothetical son wore a skirt, heels and painted his nails pink**] “I would be a little shocked at first. Sit down maybe talk to him about. Encourage him with whatever he wants to do.” [**I asked him what would you sit down and talk to him about?**] “[To find out] why he did that and stuff like that.”

When someone deviates from societal heteronormative and cisgender norms, then those individuals are seen as different or outsiders. The person’s actions are seen as wrong because they do not align with the expectations society has set upon boys/girls, heterosexuals, and/or cisfemales/cismales.

Double Standard of Heterosexuals and Homosexuals/ Cisgender and Non-cisgender

People tend to categorize men/males groups as possessing masculine traits whereas women/females groups as possessing feminine traits. But these masculine and feminine traits also align with heterosexuality and cisgender people. If someone is not heterosexual, then they

are labeled in different levels of masculinity and/or femininity in comparison to their heterosexual, cisgender counterparts.

#1 “A lot of people who love football, love the masculinity of it...felt uneasy about that...I was talking to this guy one time and he was talking with me about this situation what’s next they are going to stop tackling in football because everyone is going to get too sensitive...**[in regards to a gay football player]**”

#10 “People definitely have privileges that they aren’t aware of. Like people who are cisgender will have the privilege of going to the bathroom and not having to worry about people looking at them and going oh they are not supposed to be here...Same thing with people who are heterosexual...We all just want to be accepted. We don’t want someone breathing down our necks telling us that our life is wrong, everything that we are is wrong.”

These double standards between the “norm” (heterosexual and cisgender) and the “deviants” (nonheterosexual and noncisgender) create privileges for the inside group or those who fit the norm. Participant one stated that a friend of hers viewed a gay man as less masculine than a heterosexual man. Participant ten stated that these privileges exist if no one questions a cisgender person going into the restroom of their choice when a transgender person is questioned. It is also a privilege not having to be “closeted.”

#13 “I still haven’t told my dad yet. [When she first moved into college freshman year her dad said] if you turn out to be like your mom [her mom is gay], I would be accepting of it, but I wouldn’t be okay with it. He would be okay with it to a certain extent.”

It is a privilege to not have to “come out of the closet” to family members or friends. It is something that heterosexuals never have to face. The act of “coming out” really captures the heteronormative world in which we live. People fear revealing their sexual orientation and/or gender identity when it does not fit the norm. Heterosexual and cisgender people do not have to fear not being accepted for their identity since they are the norm of society.

#10 “We [an advisor not at Albright and herself] were talking about going out for job applications...sometimes I wear suits...it’s how I like to dress. They were like ‘oh well for certain jobs...you have to femme it up’...I don’t mind that, but what

do you mean I have to? They were like for some jobs, in some positions...it's expected of you to wear a dress or a skirt rather than a dress shirt and dress pants. I guess in some standards...femininity in women is expected to come in the way that you dress, the way that you carry yourself, the way you respond to people...I know people who have very strong personalities, they get written off as acting too masculine or acting too much like a guy. And I guess if you are not as dainty and you aren't as dismissive to people's comments or commentaries and conversations, you are not seen as feminine."

#9 "My mom was a tomboy...it didn't matter to her if I wanted to go outside with ball shorts and a t-shirt and play football in the street or basketball in the street...I could go out and play football outside and my mom was like okay. Till this day I dress more feminine now than I did back then...She goes out in baseball caps. She has short hair. And my mom is not gay or anything she is definitely straight. Roles do not really matter to her; maybe because she played both roles...or she has always been like that."

Clothing is a marker to one's perceived sexual orientation. If one does not fit into what a man or woman should wear or how a man or woman should act, then the individual is not fitting into the social norm within our society. When someone does not fit into the social norms, then they are labeled as a deviant either in sexuality and/or gender.

Unsubstantiated Statements (Wrong)/Prejudices

Some people shape their opinions or thoughts around statements that are not true or not verified. Participant seven told me about a video he saw which was on a theory about homosexuality as a way of survival due to overpopulation. The participant did not say whether or not he agreed with the theory, but he did find it interesting.

#7 This one doctor said [when]...his son came out to him...He didn't have a problem with it...[The doctor's theory was] what if it is something distinctly nature. Within it, we have a whole bunch of people on the planet. If everyone was just straight and then we just kept populating and populating...then we will be overly populated, more than we already are. What if homosexuality is a way in doing crowd control...without doing anything too erratic...say you have homosexual couples who get together, then obviously we are not repopulating again so maybe it's the world's way of trying to fix itself. I was like that is interesting because that would be a cool theory. You also have to take in consideration...dolphins and other animals who they don't care..."

The doctor he is referring to is Dr. James O’Keefe, a Board Certified Cardiologist. He does not have much credibility in terms of knowing about human sexuality. Participant six views gender as biological thing. Gender is a social construction whereas sex is defined as biology.

#6 Yeah just the gender thing will be hard for me not being able to identify yourself just because from a science standpoint I look at it scientifically a x and x, and a x and a y. It is just how I look at it. I don’t care what you do. But yeah that [not using gender pronouns] would be the toughest for me, not being able to identify yourself or saying he or she. If you don’t want to say it that’s fine, I don’t really care. It is something you adapt to.

Participant six confuses the terminology of sex and gender. He tries to support his opinion of not being able to call someone by their pronouns in relations to their biological make-up. He uses science in order to make his argument valid, but sex is the scientific way of looking at things where as gender is defined within societies.

#12 “Everyone there [at arts HS] was pretty accepting. But there were things that some people said that were kind of off-putting. I am bisexual...but I am mainly into women so some of these girls I would like would say ‘oh my goodness I could never date a bi guy’ off the premise of...they are more likely to cheat on me. It’s a ridiculous concept....[another concept] bi people can’t get enough.”

#9 For some reason straight men think that all gay men are attracted to them....maybe sports teams are not ready to accept that [an open nonheterosexual player].

As the participants’ responses indicate, there are prejudices placed upon LGBTQ individuals. There are speculations of how they act just because they do not fit the heterosexual model. These prejudices placed on people can be one reason why people are fearful of being true to their identity.

Expression of Anxiety and Fear

When people do not fit into the regulations of social norms, they feel like an outsider or isolated and different (McKenna and Bargh 1998). When people do not fit the heteronormative

and cisgender societal rules, then they are fearful to step out of the structure and this causes anxiety due to not fulfilling societal expectations (Theodore and Basow 2000). People are not just fearful of the possibility of being rejected by society or those people they may surround themselves with, but also fear things they do not understand. When people are not exposed to things, then they are less understanding of it and sometimes fearful of it. There have been studies shown that individuals who are in contact with LGBT individuals are found to have more positive attitudes towards LGBT individuals; in comparison to heterosexuals who reported knowing LGBT individuals versus heterosexuals who do not (Worthen 2012). The study corresponds to the infamous line of “fearing the unknown.”

#8 “I remember seeing one of my trans friends giving themselves hormones replacement therapy, I asked are you okay? What is that [thought it might’ve been insulin]...what’s going on...that made me uncomfortable—not that they made me feel uncomfortable, but needles and also something I never saw. He even asked me I do this every Thursday and if we are going to be hanging out can I just give myself HRT real quick? I was like sure, I guess....trans self-care.” **[I asked why it would make someone feel uncomfortable]** “lack of exposure; something they never seen or done themselves before...I don’t know about that information [hormonal treatment]. Like me sympathizing with someone who is Black, is that just white guilt? I wanted to sympathize with my transsexual friend...”

Participant eight is in an agreement with that with more exposure there is better understanding of something.

#12 “One of the arguments that they used in HB2 was...a woman wouldn’t feel comfortable if a man walks into the bathroom. But a man is not walking into the bathroom, it’s a woman who may or may not have a penis...It’s more uncomfortable to force a man who was born a woman to walk into a bathroom full of women like that’s when a woman will feel more uncomfortable...I think it is sad in a way. I feel like ideally in life you want to live your truth whatever that is so people who are closeted don’t get to live their truth, I think that is sad...I think it is sad to live in a society where someone can be afraid to be 100% who they are.”

As participant number twelve finds it disheartening for people to live their truth due to fear of being excluded or rejected by society, participant number eleven feels the need to hide from his true identities in order to maintain positive relationships in his life.

#11[**His mother asked him if he was transgender this was his reply**] “I had a conversation with her and she asked me if I was trans and I said no, just because she was scared about the whole process of it. I didn’t want to worry her.”

#11 “Sometimes when I go to the bathroom, I still use the women’s bathroom, but I don’t like to. I feel like everyone looks at you like you are crazy...why are you in here? It should be wherever you feel the most comfortable with.”

Participant number eleven was not open about his identity as being a transgender man. He kept up this persona of being a woman in the eyes of all those around him due to fear. Fear of what people would think of him once he started using the men’s restroom. Fear and anxiety can be powerful that it may alter people’s behaviors. People may stay “closeted” to please those around them, allowing their own happiness to decline.

Traditional Authorities (Religion, Parents, etc.)

Religion and parents/guardians have historically brought guidance to some individuals’ lives. Religion as well as parents/guardians has provided individuals rules that state what is right and what is wrong. Many participants in this study mentioned that religion viewed LGBTQ individuals negatively.

#9 “Because the Church and the State had a really strong bond and Christianity became so huge that people used to that to control society and what they expected from society. Travel to the present. Christianity still has a huge influence today...and religion itself has a lot of control...”

#7 “And pretty much as far back as history, information, books...making that joke, it is not Adam and Steve, it’s always has been Adam and Eve. It has always been heterosexual...It has always been the norm...In the Bible, back in the day, but it was always something so sinful...now it has become more of a movement...”

#5 “In the Philippines we are mostly Catholic country. Being gay was actually illegal...My grandfather had to go into an arrange marriage with a female because he was gay and they expected heirs...He didn't freely express himself {sexuality} until his late years...this all takes place in the Philippines. It [homosexuality] is seen as a sin more than anything.”

#2 “I do believe that the Bible...whether through sexuality or race...it's up for interpretation. Granted there's one piece [in the Bible]...that says if you lay with men you are going to hell. If a man lies with a man, he is going to hell. But it also says if your children are acting crazy you have to beat them...stone them to death. It's up for interpretation whether it is Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism; it's all up for interpretation.”

Although religion is connected to having negative views about LGBTQ issues, religion maintains its influence in people's lives. Similar to religion, parents/guardians also provide rules and guidance for their children to follow. Participant fourteen has religious parents. He was in theater in high school which can be deemed as a feminine thing to do at least according to the participant.

#14 They [his parents] usually come to sport events, but they didn't come to the theater ones so I guess that's their way of saying they didn't approve, I guess.

Participant one stated there were spoken and unspoken expectations set by her parents upon her and her brother. I asked her if she felt any gender pressure from her parents and if they are any different between her and her siblings.

#1 “With my mom no. I don't think that she pressure on it. If my brother came out to my mother and said I want to wear a dress, my parents would freak out. My brother is a manly man, he is thirteen, but he is a boy...he plays football. He is a dude. My dad especially, wanted a boy, sometimes he might put pressure on my brother, but I think there might be more pressure on him because he is a boy than us because we are girls.”

Parents just like religion have gender and sexual orientation expectations for their children. These are just two institutions in which some people receive guidance from.

Lacking Language and Concepts

Sexual orientation and gender identity are very complex topics. There are many ways someone can identify their sexual orientation: straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, demisexual, asexual, and the list goes on. There are also many ways someone can identify their gender: cisfemale, cismale, bigender, agender, androgynous, gender nonconforming, and etc. With so many ways people can label their sexuality and gender; it is understandable when people do not know some of these terminologies. However I am sure most people know the definition of straight or girl or boy.

#6 “I think there should be a new definition. There is a scientific way of describing yourself, but...there should be a new word how people describe themselves other than the genetic part because it is getting confusing to everybody...The whole chromosome thing. You are a guy or you are a girl...You have the genetics of a man, but you want to identify differently. There has to be a different word than gender so people can understand it more. Gender was built off of how science proved it and identifying yourself is different I guess.”

Participant number six did not know that gender and sex have two different definitions. He wanted to create a word to distinguish how someone may self-identity versus the way the person was born, but he failed to realize that the distinction already exists.

#7 “Isn’t sex gender or no? I have always heard them used interchangeably. ‘Oh, what is the sex of your baby? Oh, what is the gender of your baby? Oh, male or female.’ I don’t see those as being different.”

Not only were the words gender and sex misused, but there were other words that were misused as insults. For instance, the words “gay” as stupid or weird or “faggot” as in femininity or as an insult.

#12 “Personally I was bullied in middle school into high school by football players, they would call me—the whole concept of using the word faggot as an insult is the entire thing I’m talking about. It still happens today... Other guys on my team will try to insult the other team by saying they are just a bunch of faggots. Oh what does that mean? There are a bunch of gay guys so they are

already worse at the sport. The people who are saying this don't necessarily realize what they mean...that is so ingrained in society that that's an insult...Well homosexuality used to be defined as a mental illness...It meant you weren't really a man...it is still in society that men who are heterosexual...if you asked a stereotypical heterosexual guy if you are gay, they would be like NO. NO. NO. Why would you say that? That's crazy [defensive tone]. They will almost get annoyed that you would imply that they were gay. If you ask a gay guy if he was straight, he would just say no, I am not gay. It's not a big deal."

Many words, especially any insinuating homosexuality, are used as insults. The question is why is that? Homosexuality is deviant to societal standards of homosexuality. As participant twelve mentioned, homosexuality was seen as a mental illness. Being homosexual or any traits seen as being homosexual were seen in a negative light.

I asked participant six, "would you claim someone who has the anatomy as a female, but identifies as a male as a woman or a man?" I asked this question because he kept referring to a transgender man as a woman; using the pronouns she/her.

#6 "I think there should be a new definition. There is a scientific way of describing yourself, but...there should be a new word how people describe themselves other than the genetic part because it is getting confusing to everybody...The whole chromosome thing. You are a guy or you are a girl...You have the genetics of a man, but you want to identify differently. There has to be a different word than gender. So people can understand it more. Gender was built off of how science proved it and identifying yourself is different I guess."

He saw human beings as male or female based off of their genitals. In his eyes, if someone has a penis, the person is regarded as a man/male. If someone has a vagina, the person is regarded as a woman/female.

#14 "You can't please everyone in short. Say if I was to go to the bathroom and...there was a female that transform to a male, I wouldn't know—well maybe I would."

Participant 14 uses the word “transform” to describe a transgender person’s transition. Something as settle as one word indicates how much someone is knowledgeable about certain issues and/or topics.

There are many ways our society encourages this binary outlook on our lives and the lives of others. For those who are questioning their own identity fall into this dichotomy. Some individuals may not know how to identify themselves due to society’s binary outlook unless they decided to research on their own.

#16 “It’s a form of body dysmorphia because you view your body a different way than it actually is...the thing that people don’t like about calling it dysmorphia it makes the trans person look crazy because body dysmorphia is typically a mental illness...people think that giving a mental illness name makes the trans person crazy.”

Those who do not fit the norm are not typically spoken about. Because of this people who do not fit these norms have trouble identifying themselves.

Binary/Dichotomy/Cut and Dry

Many times people categorize the world in dualist conceptualizations. These existing categorizations that people view the world around them are male/female, man/woman, boy/girl, heterosexual/homosexual, and masculine/feminine just to name a few (Dollar 2017). With the discovery of queer theory it is believed that our life experiences and our identities that form due to our experiences are fluid; highlighting the belief that the existence of categories are fiction, made up by society (Valocchi 2005). Some of the participants saw sex as female/male or sexuality as gay or straight or viewed a situation as good/bad or right/wrong etc. Some of the participants also realized that our society is set up in many ways in this dichotomous format.

#1 **[I asked her about her gender upbringing.]** Opposite of gender free. My mom definitely told me, my sister and I, that we were girls. I grew up with 100% consciousness knowing that I am a female that I am different from boys, not

different in a bad way, but I am not a guy. I am not a male. I grew up knowing that.

#15 **[Do you think another openly gay player in the NFL?]** “I think so as long it’s a player that can compete in that level... You want the best person to do the best job. Gay or straight, they want a playmaker... They drafted a guy because they thought he was a good football player so whether he is gay or straight, you want the best guy out there.”

#15 “Unfortunately, it is something that has been deeply rooted in our history for hundreds of years, sticking with beliefs, customs, religion, marry female, marry male is ingrained in us. So whenever there is change people are reluctant to it just because when you go from hearing one thing especially the older generations.”

#3 **[I asked does she think people feel uncomfortable being around someone who is transgender?]** “That also has to do with masculinity... [People transitioning into females] makes people uncomfortable because they see so much power in being masculine so when it’s flipped. ‘What do you mean you do not want to be a man?’ ... That is the point that makes people more uncomfortable... [She has been exposed to transgender women more than transgender men].”

#12 “Everyone there [at arts HS] was pretty accepting. But there were things that some people said that were kind of off-putting. I am bisexual... but I am mainly into women so some of these girls I would like would say oh my goodness I could never date a bi guy off the premise of... they are more likely to cheat on me. It’s a ridiculous concept... [another concept] bi people can’t get enough.”

People are either placing people in one or two categories: boy/girl, gay/straight, female/male, masculine/feminine, and heterosexual/homosexual. If an individual did not fit in one or two categories, they were seen as more deviant as shown in participant twelve’s response. Participant three’s response brings up some questions: can individuals have both masculine and feminine traits and/or are these traits gendered by society? Masculinity and femininity is gendered in our society, but it is also another social construct.

Deeply Confused: Generally They Don’t Understand... They Have Not Worked Through Their Ideas

In many instances people say “I don’t know” or “I don’t understand? What do people really mean when stating those three words? When they say those three words does it mean that they

do not truly understand something? That they cannot truly grasp the material presented to them? Or does it mean people grasp the material presented to them, but reject the material presented to them because they do not agree with it emotionally? For instance if someone says ‘I do not understand why homosexuality is a sin’ does the person genuinely not understand why? Or does the person think homosexuality is socially acceptable and understands that there are many factors that can influence someone’s views of the matter? In this case, then they would just be emotionally rejecting the belief. The following quotes capture this phenomena of “I don’t know” or “I don’t understand.” Specifically the “I don’t know and “I don’t understand” of this section is looking at when the participants genuinely do not understand a certain concept or idea.

#16 “I was very liberal and my friends were very conservative...I know whenever we would bring up something [controversial]...they relate it back on religion. ‘Oh, I don’t care if gay people are gay, but they can’t get married because my religion says no...My family never went to Church growing up so I had no idea and I still no nothing like the Bible...and whenever they tried to use it against me, I had no idea.”

#7 [**How do you think sexuality or sexual orientation is influenced raising a child up in a Gender Free Environment**] “I don’t know. It is a question that I have always gone back and forth about. That’s a good question. People think oh is it the environment that the child was in, but then I would have to argue no because there has been cases where you have a child come up in with two fathers or two mothers and that child is completely straight and vice versa. When you have two heterosexual couple and then their child comes out gay or bi...Upbringing-negating what I previously just said, upbringing has a hand to play in it, a little bit, but at the same time well no that doesn’t make any sense then. Because you can have heterosexual couples, straight kids; Heterosexual couples, gay kids; Homosexual couples, straight kids; Homosexual couples, gay kids...is it your upbringing or is it something genetic or whoever you choose to love...I don’t know.”

#13 [**why would this scenario bring discomfort**] “Maybe they don’t understand why or maybe they just don’t care...I don’t know why they would be uncomfortable with it. You identify as you want to and you have the basic freedom to just b/c someone else wants to identify as something else why does that offend you? It’s not your life so you shouldn’t care. Unless it directly affects you, I don’t see why anyone would care.”

#12 “I think there is a difference between gender and sex...The concept of non-binary is a little iffy to me because I don’t know how you can’t be anything...it confuses me and it doesn’t really make sense to me... Gender is in the mind and sex is in your genitals. Gender is just your brain chemistry, how you feel.”

The participants are revealing that they do not understand. They cannot fully wrap their minds around certain topics. Some of the participants due to their personal upbringing could not fully understand certain ideologies. For instance, participant sixteen grew up in a non-religious home. She knows nothing about religion so when people referenced the Bible to her in their argument she did not fully understand their argument. It invalidated their argument in her eyes. Participant twelve states he is unclear with understanding with non-binary and he states in the interview how gender is important to his life and the lives of human beings so that can tie to his incapability to fully grasp gender fluidity.

“Confused:” Condemns that Kind of Thinking...Progressive Emotional Rejection and Not Intellectual Lack of Understanding

The following quotes in this section capture the phenomena of “I don’t know” or “I don’t understand.” Specifically the “I don’t know and “I don’t understand” of this section is looking at participants who intellectually understand the topics and know the information to understand, but do not agree with that ideology and are purposively rejecting emotionally.

#9 “Gender bathrooms are irrelevant. When you are in your house, you and your father are using the same bathroom, there are no men and women bathrooms; I am in the home. I don’t see what the deal is. You are all peeing, taking a poop so. It’s going down the same sewage system... It’s like when you separate white and colored water fountains...what is that doing? Not doing anything.”

#4 I honestly don’t know...I’ve seen people say why are you in here sort of thing or glares or talking about them behind their back. I feel like it is a fear thing. I don’t understand the fear. ‘I don’t want to be around that. I don’t want to be influenced by that.’ A lot of moms don’t want their kids to ever see a drag queen or be around them because oh, god forbid, that they will think that they are gay too just by looking at them... I don’t understand the logic. It is the fear that seeing the gay community will turn their child gay.

These individuals are so emotionally invested in treating the LGBTQ individuals equally that it overshadows their intellect on the subject matter and interrupts them from understanding why individuals would see the LGBTQ negatively.

CONCLUSION

The responses of the participants support the hypotheses and/or helped develop new findings.

Making Sense of Sexuality and Gender by Framing through Race and Religion

Many of the participants spoke about racial or religious segregation in this section. The religious segregation statement was made by a person who does not identify as LGBTQ. He related the feelings and emotions of being discriminated against and having prejudices placed on him due to his religion to LGBTQ individuals who may have experienced similar things. He also tried to explain to his parents how he sees the discrimination of Blacks is one and the same to the discrimination of LGBTQ individuals. He, as well as other participants, frame their thinking through personal similar experiences or through the experiences they have learned about in history. This appears to be evidence that these other discourses are more accessible to the participants than is the discourse on LGBTQ issues.

Recognized Self-Contradictions

The participants were aware of their contradictions and continued to face inner-conflict, but continued to hold the contradictions anyway. One of the participants mentioned having a strong gender identity, but at the same time she wanted to live in a world less focused on gender. This may stem from minority groups taking pride of what is typically seen as less desirable in

society. In this case, it is reclaiming what it means to be a woman. At the same time of wanting to take pride in something that is seen as undesirable, the participant does not want to have roles and expectations placed on her due to how she identifies or how the world perceives her gender.

I believe that, in many cases, such as the self-recognition mentioned above, the participants caught themselves in the contradiction, making them question what it is they believe. They often claimed to be open-minded and rationalized their contradicting thoughts as seeing both sides of an argument. I interpreted their contradicting thoughts as a process of thinking aloud. People may say something right away without much thought and when they think about the issue more, they realize that they did not mean what they had originally said. Nonetheless, this is evidence that the values they hold in relation to these topics are not deeply considered.

Unapparent Contradictions Recognition

In these instances, the participants did not realize they had contradicted themselves until I followed up with a question regarding their conflicting thoughts. Some continued with their contradictions even after I asked them follow-up questions, but these individuals thought of themselves as open-minded as they were accepting of at least one dimension of sex/sexuality/gender issues. For instance, people may be open to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and pansexual individuals; however, may not be accepting of transgender individuals.

I asked one participant how would he react if his hypothetical son came up to him wanting to wear heels and have his nails painted pink or if his hypothetical daughter came to him wanting a buzz cut and wear a tux, his response was “I think it would be cool with the daughter. [She would be a] badass daughter. How old is the son?” He was so excited to have a daughter who he labeled as a “tomboy,” but instead asked the age of the son in a more timid tone than referring to “his” daughter. He says he is open-minded, but he proves on the contrary. There are

different implications placed on boys and girls at an early age which may stem contradicting thoughts of what is deemed okay or disapproved in society's standards.

By the end of some of the interviews or even during them, people would say, 'Oh, I hadn't thought of that.' Moments when participants said things like that helped indicate compartmentalization or lack of depth of thought on the issues.

Explicit Identity Management (Personal Identities Around a Progressive Identity)

I would say all of the participants whether directly or indirectly saw themselves as opened-minded people. Considering that many of them had conflicting arguments or statements supports my third hypothesis: a lot of students believe they are open-minded and loving to everyone, but still hold beliefs of the privileges of this heteronormative and cisgender society. For instance, there was a moment right before an interview, a participant noted, 'Don't hate me' and laughed, but then the person spoke about his opinions of trying to be accepting of people. Although he stated he tries to accept people, he also indicated he wasn't sure which pronouns to use for a transgender person "due to science." By the end of the same interview, he asked 'are we still friends?' He attempted to present himself as progressive just like some of the other participants did too. In some cases, how they perceive themselves to be opened-minded is different from the conflicting statements throughout their interview.

Unexamined Heteronormative/ Traditional Sex Roles

The heteronormative and traditional sex roles meant two cisgender people procreating or that a man and a woman had to be together as least according to some of the participants. In many cases social norms given by our society has influenced the participants' behaviors to fit them which maintain the power of heteronormativity. Two people stated that they could camouflage their sexuality to fit the setting. If they were around heterosexual men they could

also only speak about being sexually interested in women. Heterosexual people do not have to choose when they have to express their sexual orientation because it is flaunted since most people are assumed to be heterosexual.

People also considered the concept of femininity in society's standard as weak while masculinity is strong and out-spoken. Femininity is attached to women and masculinity is attached to men. Girls get pink and boys get blue. These standards and expectations set upon once the sex of the baby is determined in the womb.

Double Standard of Heterosexuals and Homosexuals/ Cisgender and Non-cisgender

People have to be aware of the clothing and even colors they wore because it can be perceived as homosexual or not fitting into one's perceived gender. For instance, the idea of "coming out of the closet" (for short "coming out") is something heterosexuals never have to face in their lives, which also connects with heteronormativity. Heterosexuals do not have to be fearful of coming out of the closet because their sexual orientation is what is "normal."

For those who do not have to "come out of the closet" they sometimes view the world in a heteronormative way due to some of the privileges they receive as having "normal" sexual orientation and/or being cisgender.

Unsubstantiated Statements (Wrong)/Prejudices

People's unsubstantiated statements and/or prejudices shape their opinions or thoughts around statements that are not true or not verified. In some cases, it seemed that more unsubstantiated statements/prejudices comments were made to the participants by people in their lives than the participants making the unsubstantiated statements themselves. I think it is because some of the participants who identified as LGBTQ or as polyamorous have had prejudices places

on them due to their sexual orientation or sexual identity; such as, “Bisexuals are sexual deviants; they want it all...there is always that thought, that they are going to switch and leave our partners because oh I decided I want a man this time” (participant five). The previous quote made by participant five was a quote she was stating her mother made toward bisexuals. The people in some of participants’ lives in many ways have made unsubstantiated statements towards them as individuals who identify as LGBTQ. There are negative views on those who don’t fit heterosexuality and cisgender standards.

Expression of Anxiety and Fear

Society’s social norms may have an influence on people’s behaviors. Many times it keeps those dominant ideologies afloat because of anxiety and fear of going against the norm. For instance, I asked participant sixteen how she would react if her hypothetical daughter wanted her hair buzzed off and to wear a tux or hypothetical son wanted to wear heels and to paint his nails pink. Her response was,

#16 “I would be completely fine with it, but also be worried...I wouldn’t want them to get hurt [by society]. Obviously, I would want them to freely express themselves, but there’s also this part of me that wouldn’t want them to get hurt because of the way they want to express themselves.”

She is more fearful of allowing her children to express themselves freely due the concept of safety. Some believe if they defy the norm in any way, openly, will be at risk of having physical harm being done to them which is captured in participant’s sixteen statements. A lot of times it seemed fear stemmed from the idea of being ostracized and/or from and/or from threats to safety.

Traditional Authorities (Religion, Parents, etc.)

Traditional authorities in some cases create the backbone of what people see as right and

wrong. These traditional authorities are sometimes made up of our parents/guardians and/or religion. Sometimes the two go hand and hand. All the participants stated that religion viewed LGBTQ issues in a negative light. Some of the participants affiliated to a certain religion. I asked some of them how they manage to hold their ideals that may differ from their religion. One participant says he holds his ideals and the ideals of his religion separately. There is inner conflict on what their religion says and their personal belief on LGBTQ individuals.

Lacking Language and Concepts

Some of the participants did not realize that there was a difference between gender and sex. Even one participant wished there was a word made up to describe the difference between someone's biological state and if the person decides to identify differently than their biological form. These words exist. For those participants who were aware of the differences between the two concepts had looked up, the definitions on their own (and for me personally I learned in a classroom setting).

Some people use words such as "faggot" or "queer" as insult. When these words are used in a derogatory way then it perpetuates heteronormativity and cisgender privileges. It maintains a dominance of the inner group (heterosexual and cisgender individuals) over the outsider group (nonheterosexual and noncisgender individuals) which can be seen through policies and laws.

Binary/Dichotomy/Cut and Dry

The English language reflects dichotomy. The English language maintains social norms. One of the participants realizes that there is only "he" or "she" in our language to define someone's gender what if someone does not fit into the binary? Some participants had difficulty with the binary pronouns when it came to identifying a transgender person. It can also be difficult to identify one's own pronoun usage if it does not fit the binary. Two participants

identified as gender nonconforming. One did mention that she liked to be referred to as she/her/they.

Deeply Confused: Generally They Don't Understand...They Have Not Worked Through Their Ideas

Many times it seemed as if someone could not fully grasp a concept because they themselves do not identify as LGBTQ and/or because of their upbringing. For instance, one of the participants stated he can only speak as a bisexual man because his experiences are different than those individuals who identify as a gay man or a lesbian woman. It was difficult for him to understand the concept of gender fluidity because he identifies strongly with his own gender as a man. It is difficult to see someone's life other than one's own, but it does not mean someone cannot provide support even when not fully understanding.

Hypocritical thoughts toward LGBTQ individuals can derive from learning (directly and indirectly) one thing at the home and learning another from a friend who identifies differently or learning from a class. For instance, many of the participants grew up with their genders told to them through the suggestions of their parents to partake in certain activities (football, ballet, etc.), the color choices of their rooms, and/or the toys that was bought for them. Many times it seemed the participants had these hypocritical thoughts due to what they experienced in their upbringing. For instance, one participant stated that his parents were open to anything so he was too, but he was the same person that wasn't sure which pronouns to use "due to science."

"Confused:" Condemns that Kind of Thinking...Progressive Emotional Rejection and Not Intellectual Lack of Understanding

The participants mentioned in this section discussed not understanding why people would not treat LGBTQ individuals as equals. The participants, who had a "lack of understanding", were due to their emotional support for LGBTQ individuals. Those participants who had a strong

connection to LGBTQ individuals either because they identify as LGBTQ and/or because they had close relationships with LGBTQ individuals were blinded by their strong emotional connection and purposefully chose not to understand those who were not in support as they were.

Final Thoughts

The purpose of the study is to develop a better understanding of the ways contradictions and hypocrisies play an imperative role in social change, specifically engaging with beliefs around LGBTQ issues. Like Obama's comment on "post-racial America," LGBTQ individuals create this fairytale world where everyone is supposedly treated equally and fairly due to legalization of same sex marriage across the nation. After learning and understanding such endeavors what role does everyone have to push for social change? And what can people do with what their role?

LIMITATIONS/FUTURE RESEARCH

The limitations of a convenience/snowball sampling are that people I have interviewed are not generalizable or representative of the Albright population and people who I chosen to participate in the research and those who were recommended to me by participants can limit to similar ideologies to me or want to try to say things to please me. Regardless this research seeks students' prejudices and hypocrisies which are unraveled during the interviewing process when stating contradictory statements.

As much as researchers try to distance themselves from biases, they still have them. My possible biases are that I have positive outlooks on the LGBTQ community. I have friends that are part of the LGBTQ community. I have researched the transgender community in Managua, Nicaragua. Although the interview was in a conversational style, none of the participants received any information about my stance on the LGBTQ community during the interviewing

process. Also I am not religious, but my family is Catholic. In this regard and while asking questions, I attempted to set my biases aside, but it is likely inevitable that they are reflected in my interview structures and my interpretations of data.

Future research may explore how the LGBTQ community may have contradictions and misconceptions within their own community or explore and how hypocrisies and contradictions in values are part of an evolution of changes in those values.

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Appendix

The Semi-Structure Interview

(All verbal unless indicated otherwise)

Introduction

I am conducting a study here at Albright College for my Honors Seniors Thesis. I am asking all participants questions based on their identity, current events, and hypothetical questions.

Please note at any time you are able to stop answering questions, skip questions, and/or stop the interview process.

Background

What is your name?

How old are you?

Which year in school are you currently in?

What is your major/ What are your majors?

How would you describe your gender?

- Was there ever a time when you identified differently?

How would you describe your sexual orientation?

- Was there ever a time when you identified differently?
- Was there ever a time when you questioned your sexual orientation?
- How would you describe your sexual orientation five years ago?

Gender Free Environment (I read aloud)

Intro to GFE: The following reading is from a Blog post made by Doll Eyes on the topic of gender free environment. If you do not know what it means to be in a gender free environment, then you will after hearing Doll Eye's post. Following the post, I will ask you some questions. Afterward, I will read two commentaries and will follow up with some more questions.

<http://www.city-data.com/forum/great-debates/1550974-can-children-successfully-raised-gender-free.html>

Doll Eyes:

"I was reading an online article about a new parenting method, raising children in a gender free environment. The parents that practice this method do not think it's necessary to define their children to others by gender and society's ideals of gender. The naysayers believe the parents are doing more harm than good because they say gender greatly impacts a person's self-image, interpersonal relationships, and even their sexuality (according to some). The supporters of this particular method hail the parents as revolutionizing parenting skills and say they are raising more stable children because they will not be bound by the "rules" of their gender.

Examples of a 'gender free child':

- Pregnancy announcement, nursery decor, parties, do not include any reference to the child's gender.
- Child is given a [unisex name](#) like Dakota, Reese, Parker, Alex.
- A daughter is not discouraged from trying out for the H.S. football team; a son is not reprimanded for playing in mother's make up.
- Child is referred to by their given name as opposed to "he" or "she."
- Child is taught that they are 'gender free' and to explain this ideology to classmates if they are asked about being "a boy or a girl."

What do you make of all of this?

Can a child be successfully raised in a gender free environment or not?

Questions Before the Commentary Readings

- (1) What do you make of all of this?
- (2) Can you see yourself raising your children this way? Why or why not?
- (3) What do you think of parents who do raise their children in a "gender-free" zone?
- (4) Do you think that raising a child like this could create confusion about sexuality or affect a child's sexuality? Why or why not?
- (5) How would you feel if your son came to you in a skirt, heels and his nails painted pink?
- (6) How would you feel if your daughter tried out for HS football team?
- (7) What if your daughter wanted to wear a tux? Or if she wanted a buzzed haircut and wanted to wear a flannel shirt?
- (8) Do you think it is a good idea to tell children this and raise them with these ideals?
- (9) So, what would it involve to teach children these lessons?

Commentaries to Doll Eyes Blog Post

Big George:

"Stuff like this is silly. Boys and girls have genders. Period. You cannot raise them to be gender-free. The key is to simply not be derogatory toward either gender.

And who are we kidding, really? Can teenage girls *really* play football at the same physical level as teenage boys? No. It's not that their value is different because of it, but let's admit that girls are not physiologically the same as boys."

PammyD

“I am a firm believer in not telling someone how to raise a child and probably would back out of this one too, however, parents who do this can be setting their kids up for bullying in school and more. What ever happened to celebrating the birth of your child boy or girl and let everyone know what you have given birth to. What are you supposed to say when someone asks "GUESS"..?? The Unisex name thing..not so bad, the not discouraging daughter from playing football..not so bad as she probably would end up being a kicker anyhow. The Gender Free thing bothers me. Why confuse the kid?? We wonder why are kids may end up gay or wonder why in the very least they have female tendencies if they are a boy or male tendencies if they are girls..I would say this would be the parents fault.

Good Lord..have your babies, let everyone know what gender they are, give them a good strong name that suits them for who they are and as they grow support them no matter what gender they are or who they become. Its called LOVE.

Questions After the Commentaries:

- (1) What are your thoughts on the commentaries?
- (2) How would you describe your gender upbringing?
- (3) Do you think your upbringing influenced how you view this subject matter? Why or why not?

Verbal-Conversational style Questions: “Current Events” (I read aloud)

Intro to this section: There will be three different current events relating to sexuality and gender. After hearing each current event, I will ask you a few questions.

- (1) “While we recognize that the NBA cannot choose the law in every city, state, and country in which we do business, we do not believe we can successfully host our All-Star festivities in Charlotte, North Carolina in the climate created by HB2.” HB2 aka as the House Bill 2 is a “law [that] limits anti-discrimination protections for LGBT individuals and requires transgender people to use public bathrooms that match the sex listed on their birth certificates, rather than the gender with which they identify.”

- What do you think it means for a sports company as big as the NBA to have a stance in something like the North Carolina LGBT law?
- What are your personal thoughts on the matter?

- (2) Michael Sam became the first openly gay player to be drafted by an NFL team when the [St. Louis Rams](#) selected him in the seventh round of the 2014 [NFL Draft](#). The former Missouri star was later released by St. Louis and picked up by the [Dallas Cowboys](#). Michael Sam participated on Dallas' practice squad but was released from the team in October of last year (2015).

- Do you think the NFL will have another openly gay player any time soon? Why or Why not?
- What message do you think the release of former NFL player Michael Sam is to the public?
- What do you think it means to play on a team with an openly gay player?
- What do you think it meant to have an openly gay player on the NFL?
- How do you think the sports world silences players who are homosexual? And how do you think the sports world silences players who do not identify with their biological sex?
- Why do you think there are no other openly gay players on the NFL?
- Do you think the fans will be accepting? Why or Why not?
- Are you on or have you ever been on a team whether it is/was athletic or not? How would you have felt if there was an openly gay member on your team?

(3) “You have the right to use the restroom, locker room, or other single-sex facility consistent with your gender identity or gender expression.” NYC Commission on Human Rights. What are your thoughts on this new protection?

Possible questions to further decision...

- Let’s say you are in a situation, where you are in an open shower when a transgender person walks in to shower too, would you not feel uncomfortable?
- What would do when you came out of the shower and as you put clothes on, you overhear someone talking to their friend about being transgender?
- What if your child is with you in a locker room situation that might include individuals who +appear physically different than they identify?
- “Why are the emotions of the non-traditionally sexed population privileged over heterosexuals?”
 - Why the emotions and feelings of heterosexuals take precedents in our society than those who are not heterosexuals?

Scenario (I read aloud)

Describe to me a scenario in which someone who identifies as their biological sex feels uncomfortable when around a transgender person.

After his/her scenario, I will ask the following questions:

- (1) Why do you think this will cause discomfort to someone else?
- (2) Would this make you feel uncomfortable? Why or Why not?

Hypothetical Stories (I read aloud)

Introduction: I will tell you two hypothetical stories in which place you in various different circumstances. After I will ask you a few questions based on the story.

Ask the participants to think of their best friends before starting this story (to think of a name and to not share the name with the investigator).

Story#1: After your morning class, you check your phone and see you have a miss call from your best friend. They left a voicemail revealing they had something extremely important to tell you. They invite you over to their dorm room. Your best friend tells you that they are questioning their sexuality. They have been talking to someone of the same sex on Instagram for the past month and met face to face for the first time the day before. Your best friend's parents have always in the past talked badly about the gay community and knew they could not confide in their parents so they turned to you.

- How do you respond to your best friend?
- Should they talk to their parents? Why or why not?
 - What should he/she say to his/her parents
- Your best friend asks what he/she should do with the person he/she met on Instagram.
- How would you feel if your best friend told you this in a locker room while you were changing? (The only two in the locker room)
 - More intimate environment?

Ask the participants to think of their favorite professor before starting this story (to think of a name and to not share the name with the investigator).

Story#2: You are walking to a class in Roessner Hall when you overhear your favorite professor, reveal to another professor that they are a transgender. You are shock because you have had always had a close relationship with your favorite professor and shared personal information with them. The next day you show up to class early and they are there.

- What do you say to them?
 - Do you pretend you did not hear anything? Why or why not?
- How would you treat your favorite professor now that you are aware of the secret information?
- Would you tell your classmates and other Albright students?
- Would you tell a very bigoted student about to engage in an independent study project with this prof?
- Would you tell a deeply troubled student looking for a mentor with their own identity struggles?

Ask if the participant has any last minute thoughts or comments or questions on the subject matter. Also, ask if the participant is there anyone they would recommend participating in this research.

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