Taylor University

Pillars at Taylor University

Master of Arts in Higher Education (MAHE) Theses

Graduate Theses

5-2018

Same-Sex Attracted Students Experiences with Sexual-Orientation-Based Hiring Policies at Goshen College

Steven Zantingh
Taylor University

Follow this and additional works at: https://pillars.taylor.edu/mahe

 Part of the Higher Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Zantingh, Steven, "Same-Sex Attracted Students Experiences with Sexual-Orientation-Based Hiring Policies at Goshen College" (2018). *Master of Arts in Higher Education (MAHE) Theses*. 112.
https://pillars.taylor.edu/mahe/112

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Theses at Pillars at Taylor University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master of Arts in Higher Education (MAHE) Theses by an authorized administrator of Pillars at Taylor University. For more information, please contact pillars@taylor.edu.

SAME-SEX ATTRACTED STUDENTS EXPERIENCES WITH SEXUAL-ORIENTATION-BASED HIRING POLICIES AT GOSHEN COLLEGE

A thesis

Presented to

The School of Social Sciences, Education & Business

Department of Higher Education and Student Development

Taylor University

Upland, Indiana

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Development

---

by

Steven Zantingh

May 2018

© Steven Zantingh 2018

Higher Education and Student Development
Taylor University
Upland, Indiana

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MASTER'S THESIS

This is to certify that the Thesis of

Steven Zantingh

entitled

Same-Sex Attracted Students Experiences with Sexual-Orientation-Based Hiring Policies at Goshen College

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the

Master of Arts degree
in Higher Education and Student Development

May 2018

Todd C. Ream, Ph.D. Date
Thesis Supervisor

C. Skip Trudeau, Ed.D. Date
Member, Thesis Hearing Committee

Drew Moser, Ph.D. Date
Member, Thesis Hearing Committee

Tim Herrmann, Ph.D. Date
Director, M.A. in Higher Education and Student Development

Abstract

At a Christian institution, same-sex attracted individuals' experiences and relationships may be vastly different, depending on the institution's campus climate surrounding the LGBT+ community. This study was conducted to understand the role institutional hiring policies regarding same-sex attracted faculty play in informing campus climate and sexual minority students' experiences. Referencing a recent non-discrimination policy change at Goshen College, this study sought to answer the following question: How did a change in a Christian institution's non-discrimination policy regarding sexual minority faculty affect the experiences of same-sex attracted students? Utilizing a narrative qualitative research design, the researcher conducted interviews with seven past and present students of Goshen College. The individual stories, shared by these participants, allowed for a collective same-sex attracted student experience with the change in Goshen's hiring policy. The results of this study highlighted the following key findings: heterosexism and inclusion, role models and future outlook, and the role of activism within Goshen's same-sex attracted student community.

Acknowledgements

I am so incredibly thankful for the people who have supported me throughout this thesis process. In what felt like a constant uphill battle, this thesis has given me a better understanding of grit and resiliency. Better yet, it has also showed me the incredible support system I have. This support was found in members of Cohort X, faculty and staff of Taylor University, and my family. Thank you for your willingness to listen and pull me back up when the thesis had knocked me down.

In particular I would like to thank Katie – my assistantship supervisor. Katie, thank you for modeling what it looks like to ask hard questions, for celebrating with me, and for continually pushing the envelope. Your guidance, edits, and friendship has made this thesis possible.

I would also like to thank my sister Deanna. Deanna, on a basic level, the words on these pages would not be present if you had not offered an ear to listen, fingers to transcribe, or eyes to edit. Perhaps more important, you always pushed me forward; that every meeting, every email, and every tear-filled phone call was going to be worth it. I know that I am a better researcher because of your guidance, love, and support.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

In 2015, the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities updated its stance on homosexuality. This public statement reinforced that marriage is defined as the relationship between one man and one women and this stance was therefore to be reflected in the policies and conduct codes of its member institutions (CCCU, 2015). This statement, made in accordance with what was explained to be orthodox Christian values, directly regulates an institution's hiring practices. Member institutions of the CCCU are, as a result, prohibited from hiring openly gay faculty.

However, these regulations based on sexuality do not inhibit same-sex attracted students from enrolling at these Christian institutions. Some Christian institutions, while maintaining the CCCU's statement on sexuality, offer support and affirmation to same-sex attracted students in the midst of their sexual identity formation. At CCCU institutions, sexual identity support given to sexual minority students cannot come from sexual minority faculty due to the policy-related probability that none exist.

Knowing the CCCU's stance on same-sex relationships, sexual minority students still choose to attend CCCU schools. These students may find comfort in the institution's Christian doctrines or may hope to find answers to sexual identity concerns (Yarhouse, Stratton, Dean, & Brooke, 2009). During college, same-sex attracted students are often faced with coming to terms with their homosexual identity (Rhoads, 1997). One must

then wonder how the presence and the absence of sexual minority faculty impact the identity development of these students.

Vivian Cass' model of sexual identity development tracks the experiences and self-perceptions of same-sex attracted students. As a result, this six-stage model shows how an individual in the midst of sexual confusion develops to a synthesis of sexual identity amongst all identity contributors (Cass, 1979). The experiences of a student in the midst of Cass' stages of sexual identity development are likely impacted by external forces, relationships, and resources (Astin, 1984).

Due to their unwillingness to abide by the 2015 statement on homosexuality, the CCCU changed Goshen College and Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) from full benefit receiving members of the CCCU to less involved affiliated members (CCCU, 2015). These two institutions stand by their decisions not only to hire gay faculty but to also provide benefits to their partners. At these institutions, sexual minority faculty members are able to teach, conduct research, and contribute to their fields within a Christian institution.

Institutions such as Goshen and EMU, when providing support and affirmation to their students, can do so in congruence with their institutions' policies on homosexuality. The value of supporting students is not out of bounds with their institutional policies. Other members of the CCCU may not share a congruence between support for sexual minority students and institutional policies on homosexuality. A same-sex attracted student at a CCCU institution may experience a disequilibrium of policy and institutional support. A disconnect between policy and support may affect sexual minority students' experiences and, in turn, their sexual identity development.

In summary, the identity development of sexual minority individuals may be affected by their experiences and relationships (Astin, 1984; Cass, 1979; Rankin, 2005). At a Christian institution, individuals' experiences and relationships may differ vastly depending on the institution's hiring policy concerning sexual minority faculty. If the experiences shape the development of sexual minority students, a study showing the impact that sexual minority faculty—considered an experience or resource—have on sexual minority students is essential. To satisfy this need, this research explored the following question: How did a change in a Christian institution's non-discrimination policy regarding sexual minority faculty affect the experiences of same-sex attracted students?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Sexual Identity Development

Student affairs professionals need to comprehend the current theories for sexual identity development for LGBT+ individuals. By understanding these developmental stages, one can determine the influence and impact of an individual's environment and relationships on that individual's sexual identity (Astin, 1984; Chickering, 1969; Sullivan, 1998). The foundational theory for understanding gay and lesbian identity development was created by Vivian Cass (1979); in particular, her theory of gay identity development features six consecutive stages.

The first stage, *identity confusion,* explains the internal struggles an individual may face when experiencing same-sex attraction for the first time. Once individuals accept their own same-sex attraction, they enter into the second stage: *identity comparison*. In this stage, subjects try to expand their knowledge on sexual identities and the available resources. Once individuals recognize others who experience same-sex attraction, they reach the third stage of Cass' (1979) theory. *Identity tolerance* shows an increase of commitment to a gay sexual identity. Individuals seek out other gay and lesbian individuals to provide support and community.

The fourth stage, *identity acceptance,* brings subjects not simply to tolerate their sexual identity but to accept it as positive. Subjects wrestle with maintaining congruence

with private and public views of self as the individual starts to disclose their sexuality to select persons. In the fifth stage, *identity pride*, individuals continue to disclose their sexuality, yet find dissonance in disclosing it to heterosexuals. This dissonance is a result of an adopted dichotomy of gay being good and straight being bad. They explore how to be openly gay, while interacting with heteronormativity and heterosexism. The last stage, *identity synthesis*, integrates all aspects on the individual's identity. Sexual identity becomes only one facet of self for the subjects but also provides less strain between subjects and heterosexual communities (Cass, 1979).

Following Cass, other theorists began to create separate models of development specifically for gay men and lesbian women (Chan, 1989; D'Augelli, 1994; Fox, 1995; McCarn & Fassinger, 1986). In particular, each model ends with subjects reaching identity synthesis or integration. Within these integration stages, the individual's sexual identity is one component of the individual's overall identity. This component finds harmony with other facets of the individual's identity.

According to Yarhouse (2010), the concluding stages in these models of sexual identity development create tension in Christian settings. In particular,

> [t]here is a group of people who do not identify themselves as gay—they appear to dis-identify with a gay identity and the people and organizations that support a gay identity—and they do not appear to be accounted for sufficiently in the various models of identity development. (p. 13)

Dis-identifying is then likely the result of individuals holding conflicting identity contributors. "This experience of identity synthesis is also characterized by congruence.

The person is able to live and identify themselves in ways that are consistent with his or her beliefs and values" (Yarhouse, 2010, p. 14).

As a result of this congruence, Christians who experience same-sex attraction or have a homosexual orientation progress through sexual identity development differently than individuals who do not hold typical Christian values (Yarhouse, 2010). In one study, Yarhouse (2010) noted Christian participants reach the same stages as non-Christian participants but at a much slower pace. On average, identity synthesis occurs at the age of 26 for Christian participants or much later than non-Christian participants, who reach identity synthesis around the age of 15. In addition, Christians forming a dis-identified synthesis reach this stage, on average, at the age of 34 (Yarhouse, 2010).

In a study conducted by Yarhouse and colleagues (2009), only 15% of sexual minority students at three non-affirming—that is, non-condoning of same-sex relationships—religious institutions identified fully as gay or lesbian. The remaining 85% were struggling at that time to come to terms with their sexuality. That sense of struggle or confusion included shame, guilt, and fear. Barnes and Meyer (2012) agreed but added that non-affirming institutions instill internal homophobia in sexual minority students, making the congruence of sexual and religious identity even harder.

Campus Climate

According to Rankin (2005), "Campus climate is defined here as the cumulative attitudes, behaviors, and standards of employees and students concerning access for, inclusion of, and level of respect for individual and group needs, abilities, and potential" (p. 17). The environment surrounding lesbian and gay individuals influences the previously discussed progression through the stages of sexual identity development. The

attitudes of peers and authoritative figures have a large role in forming this environment. Peers or people of authority who hold a heterosexist or heteronormative view may act as catalysts for internal conflicts in developing sexual minorities. Similarly, heterosexuals are also influenced by peers and culture. According to Sullivan (1998), "Just as important, the sexual identity of heterosexual students is shaped by an environment that is characterized by a fear of homosexuality, denigration of gay persons, and cultures, and either the invisibility or outright oppression of gay relationships" (p. 3). By understanding the group identity formation of a heterosexist population, as noted by Sullivan (1998), one can comprehend the extent and intent of this group's influence on gay sexual identity development.

Sullivan (1998) build from Hardiman and Jackson's (1992) racial identity development model in an effort to develop a group identity theory for working with heterosexual, gay, and lesbian students. This five stage model starts with *naïveté*. In this beginning stage, an individual is not aware of sexual orientation or the stigma surrounding same-sex affection. For example, young children may hold hands with members of the same gender without hesitation. Children do not consider sexual orientation or social stigmas before following through with their actions.

When individuals enter stage two, *acceptance*, they have internalized an understanding that everyone is or should be heterosexual. Individuals in this stage grasp the possibility of repercussions for acting inappropriately. Displays of same-sex affection are highly discouraged and may lead to being called homophobic slurs. In this stage, clear expectation exists for one to uphold gender roles. Heterosexual individuals tend to take it for granted and idly participate in heterosexist ideologies. Heterosexists maintain

beliefs that claim heterosexuality is more mature and equal to love and family, while homosexuality is a crime against nature and a mental illness.

The third stage, *resistance*, occurs when heterosexual individuals encounter gay individuals who do not fit the negative stereotypes held under heterosexual ideology. This experience may cause heterosexual individuals to question the accepted heterosexual message and recognize the problem and role they play in societal oppression. *Redefinition*, or stage four, builds from the self-awareness in stage three. Heterosexual individuals in this stage struggle to come to terms with a positive heterosexual self-identity and try to develop a heterosexual identity free of the oppressive ideologies of heterosexism. Once individuals create a heterosexual identity independent of heterosexist definitions, they reach the fifth stage, *internalization*. An individual in this stage understands the benefit of dismantling the stigmas surrounding homosexuality and the oppressive nature of heterosexism (Sullivan, 1998).

This model of heterosexism—and, in turn, homophobia—affects campus climate for both gay students and faculty. Sullivan's (1998) *acceptance* stage, on average, takes place during high school and early college years. This understanding of heterosexuality as normal makes life difficult for gay students, who, as a result, may suffer academically and developmentally. This reality is also evident in areas such as racism and sexism, as discriminatory environments negatively influence academic experiences, developmental growth, and institutional commitment (Rankin, 2006). Gay faculty also suffer from this climate as they worry about their reputation with students (Rankin, 2005).

Rankin (2005) sought to understand how campus climate is perceived at current institutions. Using 14 campuses and 1,669 self-identified LGBT people, the study was

designed to determine the experiences of LGBT individuals and their perception of campus climate and institutional responses. This study also had the largest recorded population sample in relation to self-identified LGBT people. Of those sampled, 73% of faculty, 74% of students, 81% of administrators, and 73% of staff perceived their campus climate as homophobic. The study shows 36% of the students sampled also reported experiencing harassment targeting their sexuality via derogatory remarks, threats, written comments, and/or physical assaults (Rankin, 2005). Individuals subjected to harassment suffer from negative psychosocial consequences, as "[v]ictimization shatters three basic assumptions: the illusion of invulnerability, the view of oneself in a positive light, and the perception of the world as a meaningful place" (Rankin, 2003, p.12). This study by Rankin (2005) showed that, amid high levels of harassment, LGBT individuals do not perceive their institutions respond appropriately and can even serve as the source of hostility. This research also noted 44% of students and 46% of administrators stated their institution did not thoroughly address issues surrounding homophobia.

This reality may prove common at private institutions that hold close religious ties. In particular, within the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities, the use of religious doctrine to inform institutional policies and governing practices may exist. For example, the CCCU (2015) has the following public statement on homosexuality: ". . . the CCCU has maintained the historic Christian view of marriage, defined as a union of one man and one woman, in its employment policies and student academic program conduct codes" (para. 3). Refusing to align with this statement, Eastern Mennonite University and Goshen College were moved from full membership to less involved affiliated members by the CCCU.

Heterosexism also takes root at these religious institutions, as heterosexuality is taught as normal through a variety of curricular and co-curricular contexts and is reinforced through policies (CCCU, 2015; Wentz & Wessel, 2012; Yuan, 2016). Even with this knowledge, homosexual students still attend religious based institutions. According to Yarhouse (2010), students who experience same-sex attraction may choose religious institutions because they find an affinity with the religious doctrines of those institutions. A student may want to experience religious perspective in both curricular and co-curricular settings. Questioning incoming students see religious institutions as a place to find answers to their sexual attractions within a faith context. The internal tension between identity and doctrine is not enough to bar same-sex attracted students from attending religious institutions (Yarhouse et al., 2009).

Same-Sex Attracted Faculty

Campus climate affects not only gay students but gay faculty as well. As a result of their age and thus greater opportunity for identity development, less tension often exists within a faculty member's identity development (Cass, 1979). However, tension may exist in workplace satisfaction, success, and opportunities for growth. As a result, LGBT faculty may closet themselves and portray heterosexual values in order to remain on the track to success.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Coalition offers relief for employees worried about sexual orientation-based discrimination. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act states an employer may not discriminate based on gender, including gender stereotypes. Heteronormative sexual orientation is a stereotype that assumes men are attracted to women and women are attracted to men. Title IX, though used primarily in education,

also focuses on gender discrimination at federally funded institutions. Title IX did not originally extend to employment. However, the Supreme Court expanded the policy to include employment-based discrimination (Ruth, 1996).

Same-Sex Attracted Faculty Members' Influence on Students

A study by Russ, Simonds, and Hunt (2002) noted a posture change occurs in students when faculty members disclose their homosexual orientation. The change in posture, in particular, refers to students' perception of learning. For example, in a series of mandatory entry-level classes at a university, students were required to complete a pre-survey to gauge the base level for growth. This survey covered a range of topics to camouflage the main intent of understanding students' attitudes toward sexual minorities. A month later, each class had a guest speaker who taught the same concepts to each class and was tested to ensure no variation between teachings. However, for randomly chosen sections, the guest speaker changed one variable: instead of mentioning his wife, Jessica, he would mention his husband, Jason.

Following this guest speaker's lecture, students completed another survey. This survey focused on what they learned from the guest speaker and judged the speaker's teaching abilities. Overall, students in the sections where the speaker mentioned his husband perceived that they learned less. Students with the heterosexual speaker, who mentioned his wife, ranked the speaker very high on his teaching capabilities and were less likely to write a comment critiquing the speaker's teaching style. By contrast, the students in the homosexual sections were more likely to leave a negative comment directed toward the speaker.

In particular, these comments suggested that the speaker was pushing his ideologies on students or that his flamboyant hand movements were distracting. Once again, the only variable to change was the mention of a partner, instead of a wife. The teaching experience was otherwise exactly the same (Russ et al., 2002).

This study noted that, depending on the starting attitudes of students toward LGBT individuals, it might be an occupational hazard for faculty members to disclose their sexual minority orientation (Russ et al., 2002). Students may perceive to learn less and dislike a faculty member based solely on their sexual orientation. As previously noted, the influence of students and their approval is a major component in the process of deciding if faculty should gain tenure (Pugh, 1998).

In a similar study, Waldo and Kemp (1997) sought to determine the effect that out homosexual faculty have on students' attitudes toward the lesbian, gay and bisexual communities. Their research used the "Attitudes Towards Lesbian and Gay Men Scale," or ATLG (Herek, 1984, 1994). A pre-test was given to five entry-level psychology courses. Seven weeks in or halfway, the courses would discuss homosexuality. In one section, the professor disclosed his homosexual orientation and informed the class of his personal narrative in relation to his sexuality. The other four sections covered the same material but without the presence of a homosexual faculty member or personal sexual minority narrative.

At the end of the course, a post-test ATLG was given and the results were compared with the pre-test. After comparing pre-test scores among the five course sections, the data showed no statistical differences among the sections. This baseline allowed an easy comparison of all sections' post-test scores. The attitudes of the class

with a homosexual professor showed significant positive increase, while the four other class sections remained close to the initial baseline measure (Waldo & Kemp, 1997).

The literature presents mixed results in relation to a homosexual faculty member's impact on students. On one hand, students may perceive to learn less from faculty who publicly identify as gay or lesbian (Russ et al., 2002). On the other hand, students' attitudes towards same-sex attracted individuals show positive gains (Waldo & Kemp, 1997). The literature does confirm that the experiences of sexual minority students may be largely affected by a campus culture (Rankin, 2005; Wentz & Wessel, 2012). These resulting experiences play a part in shaping the same-sex attracted student's sexual identity. In the midst of these developments, interactions with a culture of heterosexism or heteronormativity may allow for detrimental self-perceptions of the same-sex attracted individual (Yuan, 2016).

For example, the CCCU's statement on same-sex relationships informs a heteronormative view (CCCU, 2015). This view, when implemented within institutional policies, changes the campus climate for sexual minority students. Wentz and Wessel (2012) identified the experiences same-sex attracted students often encounter at faith-based institutions with heteronormative policies. Participants in this study confirmed the high amount of homophobia present on their campuses. One student recounted a chapel in which the speaker preached, "You can be gay, as long as you're trying to be straight" (Wentz & Wessel, 2012). Heterosexism such as this dominates many faith-based institutions.

If a Christian institution chooses to hire openly gay faculty, this choice provides relief from heteronormativity. Relief from this view may provide different experiences

that influence the development of same-sex attracted students. The present research study sought to identify the experiences of sexual minority students at Christian institutions and the impact that openly gay faculty members have on these experiences. Inversely, this study sought to identify the impact that the absence of gay faculty has on the development of sexual minority students at Christian institutions. Previous research has explored the experiences of gay and lesbian students at Christian institutions (Wentz & Wessel, 2012; Yarhouse et al., 2009; Yuan, 2016). However, no study has examined the impact sexual minority faculty may have on the experiences of sexual minority students at these Christian institutions. This study sought to determine what impact a non-discrimination policy—including sexual minorities—has on the experiences of sexual minority students studying at Christian colleges and universities.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Basic Design and Definitions

This study used a qualitative narrative design to measure the experiences of same-sex attracted students at Christian colleges and universities and the impact of gay faculty on that experience. By using a qualitative narrative design, the researcher gained a collective understanding of the participants' experiences as they moved through narrative stages. A qualitative narrative design allows for participants to share stories of their experiences, which—in conjunction with other participants' stories, documents, and artifacts—allow for a full understanding of a narrative stage. Specifically, this design was chosen to provide a small-scale longitudinal study that can document areas of growth and change (Creswell, 2007).

Context and Participants

The research took place at Goshen College located in Goshen, Indiana. Goshen is a small faith-based liberal arts college that enrolls approximately 870 students and holds denominational ties to the Mennonite Church of the United States.

A sample of seven participants—consisting of two alumni who graduated in 2015 and five current students—allowed for a saturation of ideas. See Appendix C to determine the participant timeline in relation to the timing of the non-discrimination policy change. Participants were at least eighteen years of age. As this study focused on

the experience of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students, each participant either identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual or disclosed experiencing same-sex attraction. It was not required that participants disclose their sexual identity or attraction to members of their community. As some participants may not have disclosed their identity or attraction, participants remain anonymous throughout the study.

Procedures

To gain useful data in this design, proper procedural steps were taken. First, a connection was made with the faculty advisors to Goshen's LGBT+ support groups: Advocates and Prism. Additionally, a connection was made to the LGBT+ Mennonite organization Pink Menno. The faculty advisors shared with their support and ally groups the need for participants in this research and the contact information of the interviewer. Interested students made first contact with the interviewer. Similarly, a Pink Menno moderator made a posting on a community message board asking for Goshen alumni participants who were present during the non-discrimination policy change that occurred in 2015 at Goshen College. Participants contacted the interviewer, and an interview schedule was drafted and distributed anonymously to each participant.

During each individual interview, the participant was asked a series of open-ended questions. If necessary, the interviewer asked follow-up questions in order to clarify or gain further insight. These questions (see Appendix A) were designed to provide insight into the participants' experiences with or without out gay faculty, depending on the timeline of the participants' enrollment. These questions were not biased or tailored for a specific result, nor did they ask about the participants' loyalty to

their institution's policies. Each interview was electronically recorded to provide accurate data that was later transcribed by a confidential resource.

Analysis

Participant responses were analyzed in narrative stages. Each stage's corresponding responses were categorized and grouped into themes. These themes were derived from the experiences of same-sex attracted participants as they engaged with a changing non-discrimination hiring policy. The themes of the stages were then compared to determine areas of growth, continuity, and transformation between experiences. Before results were published, a portion of the report was given to a sample group of participants. This member-check aided with accuracy and validity of the responses analyzed.

Benefits

This research needed to be conducted in some related context, as no literature exists concerning this topic. Research of this nature is vital to understanding the supports needed for the positive development of LGBT students. The qualitative research process of listening and being willing to learn directly from the recent lived experiences of LGBT students as told through their own words can help any institution move toward greater understanding and support of their LGBT students, regardless of their hiring policies, particular expressions of Christian doctrine, or even the results of this study. This point is important, as the presence of disclosing gay faculty within the network of CCCU schools is a topic of ongoing debate on some member campuses. A recent decision to remove institutions that support gay faculty has been made to honor the CCCU's stance on sexuality (CCCU, 2015). This research aimed to provide insights into the possible

impact this decision has on same-sex attracted students at CCCU institutions. The results may also provide input for Christian institutions assessing their current hiring policies.

This research aids in providing direct understanding of student experience, which should inform how Christian institutions can best support same-sex attracted students. By assessing areas of growth and continuity within this narrative, one can determine if the presence of gay faculty correlates with these best practices or if educators can provide missing resources to support same-sex attracted students.

Chapter 4

Results

The narrative, which was derived from seven participant interviews, explored the experiences of same-sex attracted students as their institution sought to change its sexual orientation hiring policy. The following narrative is a collective understanding, using multiple sources to determine themes. The results are organized into four main sections of the narrative: experience prior to policy change, efforts promoting policy change, policy change, and experience post-policy change.

Experience Prior to Policy Change

Each participant chose to attend Goshen College for different reasons. Some felt drawn to the tight-knit community or denominational ties while others sought a particular academic program. The motivation behind choosing Goshen was separate from each participant's sexual identity. Some participants did not think about their sexual identity prior to attending. "I did not conceptualize it, I legit didn't know what I was getting into" (Participant A2). As incoming first-year students, a wide spectrum of sexual identities existed among these participants, including gay, bisexual, straight, questioning, and queer. Eventually, each student came to identify some form of same-sex attraction. Each participant shared their college experience, reflecting on the campus culture prior to the hiring policy change and their sexual identity. From these conversations, five themes emerged: heterosexism, future outlook, LGBT+ support groups, role models, and faith.

Heterosexism. Every participant noted a campus climate rooted in heterosexism. This heterosexism was directly attached to the administration due to the non-affirming hiring policy. This climate influenced the participants' understanding of their own sexuality. Participants noted this climate affected their sexual development. For example, one participant offered,

> In some papers we signed, it mentioned that Goshen doesn't discriminate based on sex or gender or anything. But, I definitely didn't feel like, when I was questioning as a sophomore that there was anyone that I could really talk to about it. As far as I knew our counsellor on campus wasn't necessarily queer friendly. So yeah, institutionally I wouldn't say there was much support. (Participant A1)

This perception of the support on campus led participants to question the campus community. The students felt unsure of how they might be accepted on campus. This caused the students to withhold their sexual identity until they were comfortable or formed a friendship with their peer. One participant shared,

> I kind of wanted to come out before going to Goshen, so that everyone I was meeting I could be forthcoming with. But I didn't. I only came out to people later once I got to know them more and kind of deemed them as safe people. (Participant C2)

The heteronormative nature of Goshen's administration negatively affected same-sex attracted students. Multiple participants noted feeling disappointed or discouraged by the actions of the administration, while others felt frustrated. They wished they had chosen to attend an institution that fully accepted who they are.

Future outlook. The lack of recognition in a culture of heteronormativity caused each participant to consider their future purpose. Two participants mentioned hoping to be a teacher or professor in the future. Under the current policy, these students recognized that their own institution would not hire them due to their sexuality. This tension led both students to withhold their sexual identity. The process of coming out for these students was lengthened as a result of this policy. For example, one participant offered "I think it took me longer to come out because I was at the time interested in teaching and so it felt like my own college wouldn't have even considered hiring me in the future" (Participant C1). Though not every participant felt drawn to serve in higher education, all participants recognized the limitations set upon them. One participant described many close friends as passionate individuals who could become the talented professors Goshen needs in the future but that the hiring policy hindered that possibility.

Students experienced a sense of dissonance, knowing they would have to hide and shut out part of their identity to gain acceptance by Goshen's administration. A former student summarized the sentiment shared by many others:

> If people want to continue into higher education, what can that look like if you want to be a part of the Mennonite higher education community? The hiring policy impacted . . . it impacts every form of exclusion (Participant A2).

These participants noted that they felt marginalized by this policy, because it limits them, unlike their heterosexual peers.

LGBT+ support groups. Prior to the policy change, each participant mentioned attending either of the two LGBT+ support groups on Goshen's campus: Prism and Advocates. Prism is a confidential support group reserved for students who identify as

LGBT+. Advocates acts as Goshen's straight and gay alliance, a place for any member of the Goshen student body to share their support for LGBT+ students. Participants who were questioning their sexual identity attended these groups to learn, ask questions, and find others in their community with the same experiences. One participant highlighted that these groups as a safe space on campus where students could talk more freely.

Role models. The next theme pertaining to participants' pre-policy experience focused on same-sex attracted role models. Three of four students brought up how the hiring policy limits the role models to which queer students have access. Each student stressed that this is problematic for queer students and that the "idea of having that sort of model in front of you and around you – it seems better" (Participant C1). Each of these students attended LGBT+ support meetings where they were surrounded by queer identifying students. However, these students did not know of any LGBT+ adults. For example, one student noted, "Queer people who aren't millennials, they are kind of like unicorns to me. Because up until very recently I didn't know they existed. I never saw them" (Participant A1). This policy caused these students to live in a culture where same-sex attracted individuals, in later stages of life, were non-existent.

The lack of representation left students doubting their sexual identity, as they lacked visible examples of healthy sexual identity to which they could relate. One participant offered,

> I think that [the lack of representation] has definitely affected me. I think I can sometimes have a lot of internalized homophobia and biphobia and I think that when I didn't have those role models, not even necessarily needing to talk to but

> just kind of needing to know they exist and that they are successful in their relationships. (Participant A1)

The students did not need someone to mentor them or answer questions. They just wanted an example of a queer individual who has been through the same experiences and who offers a hope that they, too, can be successful in their work and relationships.

Faith. The last theme in the pre-policy section spoke directly to the faith walk of these same-sex attracted students. While this topic was directly discussed by only two participants, all participants mentioned aspects of the Mennonite church and their faith. The discussion brought forth by the two participants focused on the intersectionality of their faith and sexuality. "Coming out to myself was kind of a spiritual moment as well, weaving in my faith was that important to me at the time" (Participant C2). These students wanted to reach a point of integration with their faith and sexuality; however, the hiring policy caused both students to question both parts of their faith and their sexuality.

Efforts Promoting Policy Change

Continuing along the narrative, moving past the experiences before the policy change, each of these students reacted according to their experiences as sexual minorities at Goshen, and this reaction took the form of activism. In particular, this activism was a campaign against the institutions same-sex attracted hiring policy. Under the name Goshen College Open Letter or GCOL, this student-led movement also garnered support of Goshen alumni. Starting April 15, 2011, GCOL was a letter written by students to give to the administration. According to the GCOL Facebook page, the letter was signed by over 1,700 students and alumni. The letter pushes for and celebrates Goshen's support for LGBT+ students. However, the letter also points out that the college's hiring policy

discriminates against LGBT+ faculty and the painful impact this has on current sexual minority students.

Each participant spoke of participation in the GCOL campaign. Beyond simply a letter given to administration, GCOL sought change through other campus activities. One participant recounted,

> There was a lot of push, a lot of student energy that was really used toward getting that change. So there was a lot of really strong queer activism those first two years. I think both within the queer community and with straight allies being supportive. (Participant A1)

Every participant spoke of GCOL purple shirts, which read, "Where's my LGBTQ Prof?" These shirts were distributed and worn by the participants to large campus events like Hymn Sings and Board Meetings. These participants also organized and contributed their gifts towards events like GCOL Day of Silence, which sought to show awareness and provide support for the GCOL movement. Some participants involved in GCOL leadership spoke with board members, attended meetings, and drafted reports. One participant mentioned her involvement focused on diverting alumni financial gifts from the college towards the GCOL movement, until the administration changed their policy

The student participants each stressed the amount of time and energy they invested into the GCOL movement. Their activism even became a priority over their tests and assignments. It was something they could tangibly do to use their voice and create change. One participant offered, "So I guess when I got there, I also feel like I recognized how powerful my voice could be . . . especially in the context of faith

communities" (Participant C2). The students shared that their voice and actions were powerful in pushing the policy change movement forward.

Policy Change

With the GCOL movement taking place among students, the administration and Mennonite church officials created space for a possible policy change. In summer 2015, Goshen College, along with Eastern Mennonite University, changed their same-sex attracted faculty hiring policies. In announcing the decision, Conrad Clemens, Goshen College board chair, said,

> We voted to update the institutional Non-Discrimination Policy. . . . We deeply affirm the goodness of marriage, singleness, celibacy, sexual intimacy within marriage, and a life of faithfulness before God for all people. . . . We affirm the equal value and worth of each unique member of our community as a beloved child of God, and we seek to be a hospitable community for all. (Goshen College, 2015, para. 1, 4, 5).

This decision was made after a delegate meeting for Mennonite Church USA. In Kansas City on July 2, 2015, the denomination's delegates voted on a resolution to the Status of Membership Guidelines. This resolution invites "those in Mennonite Church USA to offer grace, love and forbearance towards conferences, congregations and pastors in our body who, in different ways, seek to be faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ on matters relating to same-sex covenanted unions" (Short, 2015, para. 7.) This resolution passed with 60% of the delegates voting in favor of this change (Short, 2015). The Mennonite Education Agency (2015), in response to both the decision of the MC USA denomination and the Goshen College Board, made the following statement:

> MEA will show forbearance and extend grace to these institutions. The MEA board remains committed to ongoing conversations and discernment concerning the impact and possible consequences of the institutions' actions that move them in the direction of changing their hiring policies placing them at variance with the denomination. (para. 6)

Participant reaction. Each participant reacted positively to the Goshen College board's decision to change the non-discrimination policy. Initially, the participants felt excitement. They understood the context of the decision and how impactful it would be. One participant claimed, "I was really excited especially in the wake of the 2015 Mennonite Convention and Goshen just saying, well, we'll change our hiring policy, and that made me I think, a little bit more proud of Goshen" (Participant C1). The students no longer felt ashamed as a sexual minority at Goshen College.

This excitement was followed closely by release. All of the frustration and emotional energy was gone. There was nothing left for these students to do but feel as though they accomplished something. The change they fought for, they found. One participant noted, "I was calling my friend and co-leader and sighing and just breathing again and feeling like what we did and the people that we worked with and all the bureaucracy that we went through was worth it eventually" (Participant C2). As this participant shared, there was no longer a need for queer activism.

These feelings of success were met with the feelings of burnout. For these students, the activism and involvement with GC Open Letter took a lot of time and physical and emotional energy. As necessary as the work was for the queer Goshen community, students did not realize how draining it was. ". . . [many] queer students

were really exhausted . . . from all the work they'd done in previous years and a lot of them obviously felt that it was a long time coming, and it didn't come soon enough and that was frustrating" (Participant A1). After the policy change, the students felt lethargic at the idea of continuing the push for queer activism

Experiences Post-Policy Change

After Goshen changed its non-discrimination policy, the presence of out and practicing sexual minority faculty was accepted. With the representation of same-sex attracted faculty now on Goshen's campus, the same-sex attracted student experience also changed. The main themes in the post-policy student experience are admissions, campus inclusion, role models, lack of conversations, and continued activism.

Admissions. Two participants who joined the Goshen College student body after the non-discrimination policy change mentioned the integral role this policy played in their college search. When searching for a prospective institution, the participants wanted to attend an institution that was inclusive and affirming. One participant noted, "That's probably one of the reasons I chose Goshen. I mean it's a Mennonite private campus but it doesn't discriminate against sexualities and transgender people and so I definitely wouldn't be at an institution that does" (Participant B2). During one of the participant's visits to campus, they noticed pride flags and "safe zone" stickers, which made them feel much more comfortable. Goshen College was chosen by these students because of the outlook it held for all LGBT+ members of its community.

Campus inclusion. Participants who attended Goshen after the non-discrimination policy change made note of the atmosphere of inclusion they felt. Some initial conversations occurred concerning the process of being more intentional about

inclusion towards minority populations on campus. The policy change, as one participant noted, “creates a friendlier climate for everybody” (Participant B2). The students felt that they were now equal and had the same rights as students who identified as heterosexual. This change in status also resulted in institutional pride. The students looked at their school differently and praised the administration for the steps it has made towards an inclusive campus. One student made the distinction that he was proud of Goshen in comparison to other colleges where “there are legitimately homophobic people who legitimately hurt the lives and the opportunities of their LGBTQ students” (Participant B1). He was proud to make that distinction.

Role models. Building on their prior experiences, the students noted the importance of out gay faculty as role models in their lives. Few faculty members immediately declared their sexuality, which did not surprise the students. For example, one student claimed, “I didn’t expect any [to formally come out], I mean what would that even look like right?” (Participant A2). Instead, students began to see faculty members bringing their partners to events or posting with them on social media. The public ownership of these faculty members’ sexuality was done in a normal manner, not a larger spectacle, which the students found encouraging and refreshing. One participant echoed,

> You feel a sense of pride. I don't necessarily know that I could explain to a straight person. It's like finally feeling like you relate, and you don't feel as alone. So seeing faculty in those positions would give that feeling, whereas, Prism does to an extent but you're at a place where it's specifically for gay people, so of course people there are going to be gay. But when you are just out in the world and you see them it's different. (Participant B3)

Participants felt pride in their sexuality when they could see same-sex attracted individuals who were thriving in their adult life.

The participants also noted these role models could now act as a mentoring resource. Regardless of their prior relationship with the faculty, they felt someone was in their corner, someone who could understand what the student was going through and had, by nature, an investment in the student's wellbeing. One participant mentioned a friend's very positive relationship with an out gay faculty member. "She felt really cared for and supported by this professor. . . . She kind of had this glow to her whenever she talked to her" (Participant A1). The students could now seek mentorship from individuals who could speak into their lives in a way that a heterosexual individual could not.

Lack of conversations. Prior to the non-discrimination policy change, participants constantly had and created dialogue concerning the inclusion of LGBT+ individuals. Many participants said Goshen no longer has these conversations. Reflecting on the policy change decision process, multiple participants suggested Goshen made its decision during a time when it would involve little conversation or chaos. One participant claimed, "I think also the college skirted around the hiring policy because it did it in collusion with the Mennonite Church's forbearance, and so it didn't actually have to – it was never confronted with its own decision" (Participant A2). With the decision made, the students felt as though the institution wanted to move on "and were kind of ready to just sweep it under the rug" (Participant A1). The students sensed that the administration wanted to move on, and that caused frustration.

The students thus expressed frustration with the lack of conversation in many areas. Students perceived that faculty went by a "don't ask, don't tell kind of policy"

(Participant B3). In extension of this unspoken policy, students were frustrated that the administration does nothing different in hiring practices. One participant claimed,

> There isn't an explicit statement to have reparations or to actively look for queer folks to hire or people of color to hire. Even though we don't have a racist hiring policy that needs changing we are still perpetuating these heterosexist and racist practices in our employment measures. (Participant A2)

The institution did not address what it meant to move forward after changing their non-discrimination policy. The students, burned out from their activism activities, felt deflated. Conversations subsided, as the students no longer prompted the discussions.

Continued activism. Stemming from a lack of conversation, participants pushed for continued activism and social justice efforts. One student said that a greater step in creating awareness did occur. Students could use their voice now and feel like there would be fewer repercussions. Another student noted the importance of these continued efforts, especially with regard to incoming students who think homosexuality is wrong.

One participant highlighted the activism efforts of the GC Open Letter but wished to continue with a larger sense of intersectionality. "This fight was important but also the ways that it perpetuated levels of white supremacy, because of its focus in white Mennonite culture. . . . that really impacted the queer community on campus . . . those who were visibly 'out' were white students" (Participant A2). This student hopes to continually push for an analysis of the stories of queer students of color.

This participant also wanted to draw attention to Goshen College's past decisions in dealing with same-sex attracted faculty, staff, and students. She is fighting for the institution to acknowledge and understand the reconciliation that should take place:

> I mean there have been professors that were fired for being gay in the past and students kicked out and there has not been anything to talk about that. So I think that's where we need to – I'd say that's a good step. (Participant A2)

Participants felt that, for their identity to be truly recognized, past same-sex attracted individuals should also feel the same sort of recognition.

The last mention of activism comes from a very different perspective, as one participant felt as though the LGBT+ community has a monopoly on activism at Goshen. The same group of students who advocate for gay rights also advocates for gender equality, racial reconciliation, and transgender rights. This participant referenced this group as the "LGBT Lobbyist" and had a hard time taking them seriously. For example, the participant noted, "Whenever these people do anything, it's just like 'oh great, now what do they want? Like even as an LGBT person. . . it's more that they call on so many things that not a lot of people care about" (Participant B1). This participant appreciated equal rights for all people, but he felt as though the "LGBT Lobbyists" are never satisfied. They never stop and live their own lives.

Reflection

The themes presented in this chapter allow for an in-depth understanding of these students' experiences. These themes highlight the collective narrative experience and show areas of change and emphasis throughout a same-sex attracted student's experience. The event of Goshen's policy change acted as a catalyst for these areas of change and emphasis. It is within these areas that one can understand the role an institution's non-discrimination plays in informing the same-sex attracted students' experience.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore changes in the experiences of same-sex attracted students at Goshen College as the institution made changes to its non-discrimination statement and sexual orientation hiring policy. As previously noted, the experience of these participants drew out specific themes for each narrative stage. This discussion analyzes the collective journey of these themes, reflecting on current literature when possible. Understanding the collective narrative of these students provides implications for Christian institutions to consider as they seek to support same-sex attracted students. Even with connections to literature and the saturation of participants, limitations to this study still exist. These limitations are discussed as areas of improvements amid suggestions for further research.

Findings

Analysis of the data consists of comparisons and components of transformation between the participants' experiences both prior to the policy change and after the policy change. In the process of comparing these experiences, one can identify how the overall narrative was affected by the institutional policy change. These areas of change in experience or perception are heterosexism and inclusion, role models and outlook, and engagement with activism.

Heterosexism and inclusion. As one compares the students' experience pre- and post-policy change by looking in particular at the themes presented within each narrative stage, a switch in the perception of campus climate towards sexual minority individuals occurred. Rankin (2005) defined campus climate as "the cumulative attitudes, behaviors, and standards of employees and students concerning access for, inclusion of, and level of respect for individual and group needs, abilities, and potential" (p. 17). Under the pre-policy change narrative, each participant emphasized a heterosexist campus climate. The participants' perceptions of this heterosexist climate were influenced by the hesitant acceptance among their peers and the administration. These students expressed frustration with the acceptance of heteronormativity and the homophobia it permits.

Drawing from the literature, this perception of campus climate resonates with Sullivan's (1998) understanding of heterosexual identity development, which noted, "The sexual identity of heterosexual students is shaped by an environment that is characterized by a fear of homosexuality, denigration of gay persons, and cultures, and either the invisibility or outright oppression of gay relationships" (p. 3). The participants in this study highlighted the characteristics of a heterosexist-forming climate during their experience prior to the policy change. The experiences of these participants can be confirmed further by the current literature. According to Rankin (2005), 74% of students perceived their campus climate to be homophobic (p. 3). The study participants paralleled these findings, also perceiving their own campus climate as homophobic.

In examining the data of the post-policy change experiences, the participants' rhetoric surrounding campus climate changed. In each case, no mention of institutional heterosexism surfaced. On the contrary, four of five participants noted experiences of

inclusion. Dialogue concerning the institutional process of inclusion of sexual minority students surfaced. Echoing Rankin's (2005) definition of campus climate, participants noted a perception of equal opportunity. Their abilities and potential were the same as those of their peers. All around, the participants perceived a generally friendly climate, free of major concerns due to their sexuality or attraction.

The policy change demonstrates transformation in the perception and experiences of campus climate towards same-sex attracted students. Frustration with administration on the grounds of these students' sexual identities no longer exists. One participant said, "There's something pretty big about being recognized on an institutional level and not just by people that are there and in the know. It sends a powerful message and it kind of fights institutionalized heterosexism and things like that" (Participant A1). In a larger sense, the students are now recognized by their institution and their Mennonite church.

With heteronormativity no longer enforced through policy (CCCU, 2015; Wentz & Wessel, 2012; Yuan, 2016), the Goshen campus climate provides an atmosphere for sexual minority students to fully explore their sexual orientation and their faith. For students entering into their sexual identity development, congruence between sexual orientation and faith needed for identity synthesis can now take place (Cass, 1979). The climate no longer attributes to dis-identifying with a conflicting gay identity (Yarhouse, 2010).

Role models and outlook. The theme of role models and mentorship was evident throughout the narrative of participants' experiences. Three of four students who attended Goshen pre-policy change identified a lack of same-sex attracted role models and representation among their college faculty. This void, contributing to the

heteronormative climate previously mentioned, impacted these students' perception of self and their abilities. Corresponding to Yuan's (2016) outlook of the interactions with a heteronormative climate, students mentioned similar detrimental perceptions of self. For example, one participant claimed,

> I think I can sometimes have a lot of internalized homophobia and biphobia and I think that when I didn't have those role models, not even necessarily needing to talk to but just kind of needing to know they exist. (Participant A1)

Internalized homophobia, often referred to as Internalized Sexual Stigma (Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 2009), results in the individual developing a negative attitude toward self and personal shortcomings as a result of their sexual attractions. The inability to see out gay faculty in the later stages of life caused participants to question their own capabilities in the future. Each participant drew conclusions based on their sexuality and limited their career aspirations accordingly. As one student noted, "My own college wouldn't have even considered hiring me in the future" (Participant C1). Based on this conclusion, the participants recognized the absence of role models was connected to the faculty members' disclosure of their own sexual identity.

Students knew potential role models were present but did not publicly disclose their sexual orientation. One student thus claimed, "And knowing some of the professors there that could not talk about that part of their life at all seemed like a tragedy" (Participant C2). In a sense, one student identified this behavior as a source after which to model herself. Pre-policy, Participant C1 chose to not disclose her sexual orientation, as she wished to pursue a career in teaching.

Continuing along the participant narrative, four of five post-policy students mentioned the theme of role models. However, this dialogue, given the added presence of same-sex attracted faculty, changed accordingly. The presence of out gay faculty provided a source of affirmation as well as a possibility of a mentoring relationship. Participants noted a relief in not feeling alone as authority figures now existed to whom students could relate. One participant claimed, "Just kind of knowing that even though we never talked about it, I had someone that could kind of understand at least somewhat what I was going through" (Participant A2). Moving past the feeling of loneliness, participants felt encouraged by their gay faculty.

Referencing Cass' (1979) stages of sexual identity development, the option of accessing members of LGBT+ culture allows the individual to move from the third stage of identity tolerance to stages of identity pride and identity synthesis. One participant claimed,

> I still think when you go somewhere and you see gay people doing, you know, whatever they may do. You know for example when you are young and you start realizing: huh. I might be gay and you see someone who is openly gay with whomever they are in a relationship with or whatever. You feel a sense of pride. (Participant B3)

This interaction with other individuals who identify as same-sex attracted, as stated by the participant, is crucial for one's progression through Cass' sexual identity development.

Comparing these two sets of experiences, in relation to the presence of same-sex attracted faculty role models, a noticeable transformation in the students' self-perception

and development became evident. Participants moved from a position of internalized homophobia to a place of pride in their sexual identity. Students no longer felt tension between their career aspirations and disclosing their sexual orientation. Instead, students felt encouraged that they can relate to out gay faculty who hold professional positions.

Activism. The last result derived from this narrative is the role and perception of activism. For each of the pre-policy participants, involvement in GC Open Letter was an opportunity to express their voice in the pursuit of change and recognition. Each student invested a great deal of time and energy in that effort, which collectively resulted in a queer activism on Goshen's campus. This activism spoke out directly against the heteronormative hiring policies that the students perceived as discriminatory. This push of queer-centered activism directly correlates with Cass' (1979) fifth stage of identity pride. This stage entails a devaluation of heterosexual institutional values in an attempt to add value to the LGBT+ community. Frustration directly connected to feelings of alienation resulting from heteronormativity surface. The participants' feelings and collective call for activism parallel the literature as they seek to reach identity synthesis.

As institutional values no longer enforced heteronormativity, the expression of queer activism no longer sought to devalue heterosexual institutional values. However, after a period of burnout, four of five participants still expressed a queer bent towards activism. Part of this effort reacted to the actions of the administration as they navigated the hiring policy change, calling for active steps to improve sexual minority hiring, promote inclusion, and reconcile with past same-sex attracted Goshen faculty. Expressions of this activism no longer relied on large-scale events or visible actions;

instead, participants viewed activism as disclosing their identity and freely adding a sexual minority perspective to campus dialogue.

Outside of activism directed to improve the LGBT+ community, participants shared examples of activism in support of other minority populations. This activism—advocating for women, people of color, and transgender students, as well as fighting against sexual harassment—pushed the queer population to recognize intersectionality. Participant A2 recalled her pre-policy activism and noted how her efforts, though good, promoted levels of racism within the queer community: "It perpetuated levels of white supremacy because of its focus in white Mennonite culture." That challenge pushed her, along with her community, to advocate for members of other minority populations.

That experience formed in another participant a perspective of an "LGBT lobby" (Participant B1) to the point one participant felt as though the LGBT+ community held a monopoly on activism on Goshen's campus. That monopoly, in the opinion of that participant, made it hard to take queer students seriously. For example, that student noted, "People are looking for things to complain about, without realizing they can live decent lives . . . they're making their own life worse by complaining than if they would just stop" (Participant B1). Though a collective attitude toward activism did not exist among participants, those attitudes and the topic of queer activism has changed as a result of the devaluation of heteronormative institutional values.

Limitations

The first limitation of this study is the relatively unique situation of the non-discrimination policy change of Goshen College. As Goshen holds denominational ties to the Mennonite Church of the United States, those beliefs or attitudes may provide a

specific variable. The specificity of this narrative, and thus the results and analysis, could be difficult to apply to or use to understand other Christian institutions. That possibility increases when one considers the variation between denominational ties and core beliefs among other Christian institutions.

The second limitation is the size and make-up of the population sample. Considering Goshen's undergraduate population is 870 students, the total of seven participants used in this study represents a very small percentage of Goshen's total population. It is also important to note that not all seven participants add data to each segment of the study's narrative (see Appendix C). Two participants graduated prior to the policy change, while three students enrolled after the policy change. Though the participants did not remain consistent, the data reflected saturation along individuals present throughout this entire chapter in Goshen's history.

The population sample also included two males and five females, all of whom identified as white, which may have affected the data. Lastly, the collection method used groups such as Prism, Advocates, and Pink Menno to gather participants. Membership in some of these groups could signify an advanced understanding of participants' sexual identity, which may differ from the larger population of same-sex attracted students at Goshen.

Third, due to the nature of a qualitative study, researcher bias is another possible limitation to note in relation to this study. Though the researcher had no connection to Goshen College or any participants, the research does identify as LGBT+, which may influence the researcher's thoughts and analysis. The researcher is aware of this bias and

tried to account for and remove elements of bias throughout the process. The researcher sought perspectives of non-biased individuals to look for and eliminate any possible bias.

Finally, other possible variables may have affected participant experiences. The make-up of campus climate and student experience involves many moving parts. The researcher asked participants to identify any outlier variables that may have influenced their experience outside the presence of same-sex attracted faculty and Goshen's hiring policy. No influencing factors were identified, but it is important to note this possibility.

Implications for Practice

Educators serving Christian institutions should understand the experience of their same-sex attracted students. In particular, this study notes implications for professionals in three areas: campus climate; LGBT+ development; and navigating policy change.

First, Christian institutions should understand their campus climate in relation to same-sex attracted students. Such an understanding should consist of an audit of institutional factors that contribute to a climate of inclusion or discrimination. How might an institution be considered homophobic by its same-sex attracted students? The discussion presented on campus climate could inform educators of the impact of a heterosexist climate on same-sex attracted students. Doing so may be difficult, as many orthodox Christian beliefs enforce a heteronormative lifestyle.

In close connection, Christian institutions need to acknowledge the gray area in which they implicitly place same-sex attracted students and how such placement impacts students' self-perception and development. The previous discussion noted the importance of out gay role models in the development of same-sex attracted students. While hiring gay faculty is not always possible, Christian higher education professionals

need to provide resources for same-sex attracted students. The data suggests the value of LGBT+ support groups to a degree, but the representation of gay individuals in later stages of life is also important. One suggestion, assuming a hiring policy limits the presence of same-sex attracted faculty, is to provide opportunities for sexual minority students to interact with gay Christians who are neither peers nor employees. Other resources, such as specific career counseling for same-sex attracted students or mental health counselors trained specifically for LGBT+ individuals, would add to a support network for this student population. If possible, discussions concerning the addition of sexual orientation to an institution's non-discrimination policy should be considered.

For institutions in the midst of a non-discrimination policy change, professionals need to understand the importance of continued dialogue and congruent actions in this process. The data and analysis presented suggested simply changing a policy is not enough to prompt the presence of sexual minority faculty on campus and orient the campus climate toward inclusion of sexual minorities. The change must inform dialogue and institutional action. The policy change should include dialogue of inclusion and practical steps for implementing and continuing discussion that do not rely solely on the initiative of its LGBT+ students. Similarly, the possibility of hiring an out gay faculty member is not the same as putting forth an effort to draw applicants of the LGBT+ community. Any diversity hiring efforts should include diversity of sexual orientation.

Areas for Further Research

The process of exploring the experiences of sexual minority students at Christian institutions is often difficult due to orthodox Christian beliefs. Still, this population ought to be explored and understood. Aside from improving upon the limitations of this study,

others areas of research may also be considered. The first area of further research is to compare and understand the experiences of same-sex attracted students at institutions who hire and do not hire same-sex attracted employees. Ideally longitudinal, such a study would provide a greater context of the same-sex attracted student experience and how the presence of same-sex attracted faculty would impact their development during and post-college. By comparing a collective student experience by "policy type," one could gain a better understanding of the role of same-sex attracted faculty.

Next, studying the intersection of vocation and sexual orientation may add insight into the experiences of same-sex attracted students in Christian higher education. Prompted by participants' experience in pursuing an academic vocation, this study would explore ways in which same-sex attracted student perceive their future and abilities.

Finally, a study of the experiences of same-sex attracted faculty at Christian institutions who choose not to disclose their sexual identity would prove beneficial. This study would provide insight for ways in which same-sex attracted faculty can be support, but also possibly determine how these faculty members can be an asset to same-sex attracted students and their institution.

Summary

At a Christian institution, same-sex attracted individuals' experiences and relationships may be vastly different, depending on the institution's campus climate surrounding the LGBT+ community. This study was conducted to understand the role institutional hiring policies regarding same-sex attracted faculty play in informing campus climate and sexual minority students' experiences. Referencing a recent non-discrimination policy change at Goshen College, this study sought to answer the

following question: How did a change in a Christian institution's non-discrimination policy regarding sexual minority faculty affect the experiences of same-sex attracted students? Utilizing a narrative qualitative research design, the researcher conducted interviews with seven past and present students of Goshen College. The individual stories, shared by these participants, allowed for a collective understanding of same-sex attracted student experiences before, in the midst of, and after a non-discrimination policy change. These results correlated with and added to the existing literature focusing on sexual minority student experience at Christian institutions. The researcher hopes for this study to add another perspective in the dialogue concerning the support of sexual minority students at Christian institutions. May it be used as a resource for Christians to understand the experiences of sexual minorities, within any form of Christian institution.

References

Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, *25*, 297–308. Retrieved from https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/ace/downloads/astininv.pdf

Barnes, D. M., & Meyer, I. H. (2012). Religious affiliation, internalized homophobia, and mental health in lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *82*, 505–515. doi:10.1111/j.1939-0025.2012.01185.x

Cass, V. C. (1979). Homosexuality identity formation: A theoretical model. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *4*, 219–235. doi:10.1300/J082v04n03_01

CCCU. (2015). Statement by the council for Christian colleges and universities (CCCU) board of directors re: Membership consultation process and ongoing commitment to mission. Retrieved from https://web.archive.org/web/20151025033855/https://cccu.org/news/articles/2015/StatementbytheCouncil

Chan, C. S. (1989). Issues of identity development among Asian-American lesbians and gay men. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *68*, 16–20. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.1989.tb02485.x

Chickering, A. W. (1969). *Education and identity*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

D'Augelli, A. R. (1994). Identity development and sexual orientation: Toward a model of lesbian, gay, and bisexual development. In E. J. Trickett, R. J. Watts, & D. Birman (Eds.), *Human diversity: Perspectives on people in context* (pp. 312–333). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Fox, T. C. (1995). *Sexuality and Catholicism*. New York, NY: George Braziller, Inc.

Hardiman, R., & Jackson, B. W. (1992). Racial identity development: Understanding racial dynamics in college classrooms and on campus. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, (52), 21–37. doi:10.1002/tl.37219925204

Herek, G. M. (1984). Attitudes towards lesbians and gay men: A factor-analytic study. *Journal of Homosexuality, 10*(1), 39–51. doi:10.1300/J082v10n01_03

Herek, G. M. (1994). Assessing heterosexuals' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men: A review of the empirical research with the ATLG scale. In B. Greene & G. M. Herek (Eds.), *Lesbian and gay psychology: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (pp. 206–228). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Herek, G. M., Gillis, J. R., & Cogan, J. C. (2009). Internalized stigma among sexual minority adults: Insights from a social psychological perspective. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *56*, 32–43. doi:10.1037/a0014672

Goshen College. (2015). Goshen college board of directors updates non-discrimination policy. Retrieved from https://www.goshen.edu/about/leadership/president/non-discrimination-policy-decision/

McCarn, S. R., & Fassinger, R. E. (1996). Revisioning sexual minority identity formation: A new model of lesbian identity and its implications for counseling

and research. *The Counseling Psychologist*, *24*, 508–534. doi:10.1177/0011000096243011

Mennonite Education Agency. (2015, July). *Statement of response to EMU and Goshen college hiring policy change*. Retrieved from www.mennoniteeducation.org/Resources/News/Pages/statementhiringpolicy.aspx

Pugh, W. W. T. (1998). "It's just my job to be 'out'": Tenure stories of lesbian, gay, and bisexual academics. *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies*, *3*, 93–112. doi:10.1023/A%3A1023207410442

Rankin, S. R. (2003). *Campus climate for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people: A national perspective*. Retrieved from the Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force website: www.thetaskforce.org/static_html/downloads/reports/reports/CampusClimate.pdf

Rankin, S. R. (2005). Campus climates for sexual minorities. *New Directions for Student Services*, (111), 17–23. doi:10.1002/ss.170

Rankin, S. R. (2006). LGBTQA students on campus: Is higher education making the grade? *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, *3*(2–3), 111–117. doi:10.1300/J367v03n02_11

Rhoads, R. A. (1997). Implications of the growing visibility of gay and bisexual male students on campus. *NASPA Journal*, *34*, 275–286. doi:10.2202/1949-6605.1029

Russ, T., Simonds, C., & Hunt, S. (2002). Coming out in the classroom . . . An occupational hazard?: The influence of sexual orientation on teacher credibility and perceived student learning. *Communication Education*, *51*, 311–324. doi:10.1080/03634520216516

Ruth, D. P. (1995). Title VII & title IX = ?: Is title IX the exclusive remedy for employment discrimination in the educational sector. *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy, 5*, 185–237. Retrieved from https://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cjlpp/vol5/iss2/4

Short, M. (2015, July 3). Delegates pass forbearance resolution. *Mennonite Church USA.* Retrieved from http://mennoniteusa.org/news/delegates-pass-forbearance-resolution/

Sullivan, P. (1998). Sexual identity development: The importance of target or dominant group membership. In R. L. Sanlo (Ed.), *Working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender college students: A handbook for faculty and administrators* (pp. 3–12). Westport, CT: Greenwood.

Waldo, C. R., & Kemp, J. L. (1997). Should I come out to my students? An empirical investigation. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *34*(2), 79–94. doi:10.1300/J082v34n02_04

Wentz, J., & Wezzel, R. D. (2014). Experiences of gay and lesbian students attending faith-based colleges: Considerations for improving practice. *Growth*, 11(1). Retrieved from www.acsd.org/article/experiences-of-gay-and-lesbian-students-attending-faith--based-colleges-considerations-for-improving-practice/

Yarhouse, M. A., Stratton, S. P., Dean, J. B., & Brooke, H. L. (2009). Listening to sexual minorities on Christian college campuses. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 37*, 96–113. doi:10.1177/009164710903700202

Yarhouse, M. A. (2010). *At the intersection of religious and sexual identities: A Christian perspective on homosexuality.* Retrieved from the Institute for the Study of Sexual

Identity website: http://sexualidentityinstitute.org/Papers/AtIntersectionofRegligiousandSexualIdentities.pdf

Yuan, C. (2016). *Giving a voice to the voiceless: A qualitative study of reducing marginalization of lesbian, gay, bisexual and same-sex attracted students at christian colleges and universities*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Appendix A

Survey Questions

The Impact the Presence and Absence of Sexual Minority Faculty has on the Experiences of Sexual Minority Students and Christian Colleges and Universities

1. Do you identify as LGB or Same-Sex Attracted? Yes or No
2. To clarify, you attended Goshen correct? What years?
3. Can you describe your sexual identity as an incoming freshman to Goshen?
4. Are/Were you aware of your institution's hiring policy regarding SSA faculty & Staff while you were a student?
    a. Can you explain, to the best of your knowledge, this policy?
    b. If the student is not aware – The interviewer will read the institution's hiring policy
5. How did/does this policy make you feel?
6. How if at all, did/does this policy impact you, as a sexual minority, during your time? You have the option of being indifferent.
7. Do you see any other areas of impact in regards to this policy?
8. *Did any feelings or the aforementioned experiences change as a result of Goshen's decision to hire LGB staff and support their partners? The summer of 2015.*
9. Are there any other contributing factors that have impacted your sexual identity, outside of the institution's hiring policy? If any? That should be noted.
10. What resources did your institution provide to help you understand your attractions or sexual identity? Please explain.
11. Would you be willing to read over segments of this research to analyze its accuracy?

Appendix B

Informed Consent

TAYLOR UNIVERSITY INFORMED CONSENT

How did a change in a Christian institution's non-discrimination policy, regarding sexual minority faculty, affect the experiences of same-sex attracted students?

You are invited to participate in a research study of the experiences of sexual minority students at Christian higher education institutions. You were selected as a possible subject because of your current or past enrollment at Goshen College, you identify as same-sex attracted, and you are at least 18 years of age. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you many have before agreeing to be in the study. The study is being conducted by Steven Zantingh, a MAHE graduate student at Taylor University.

STUDY PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to determine the impact a non-discrimination hiring policy, concerning sexual minority faculty, has on the experience of same-sex attracted students at Christian institutions. By determining this relationship, Christian institutions may learn how to best support same-sex attracted students.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE TAKING PART IN THE STUDY: If you agree to participate, you will be one of 8-12 current students or alumni, 18 years+,

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY: If you agree to be in the study, you will do the following things: Participate in one individual interview. This interview will last 30 minutes. The participant will be asked a series of open-ended questions. If necessary, the interviewer may ask follow-up questions in order to clarify or gain further insight. These questions are designed to provide insight into the participants' experiences with or without out gay faculty. These questions will not be biased, tailored for a specific result or ask about a student's loyalty to their institution's policies. Each interview will be electronically recorded to provide accurate data that will later be transcribed by the author. This interview will take place wherever the subject chooses, to provide comfort and necessary discretion. Once the study is complete, but not published, the participant will have the option of reading the report to ensure accuracy and reliability in the authors interpretations.

RISKS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY: While on the study, the risk is: The introduction or re-introduction of traumatic experiences and emotions. The participant may choose what he/or she is comfortable with sharing. The interviewer will not probe deeper into clearly traumatic experiences shared by the participant. The interviewer will

also communicate to the institutions counseling center prior to an interview. The interviewer will have the immediate contact information of a college mental health counselor, should the participant experience mental trauma. Should the participant feel uncomfortable, they may choose to end the interview.

BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY: There are no reasonable benefits to partaking in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study may be published. The researcher will use an anonymous and confidential number coding system between recordings and transcribed dialogue. The researcher will hold sole access to electronic recordings on a password locked recording device. They will be destroyed immediately after the dialogue has been transcribed.

Organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis include groups such as the study investigator and his/her research associates, the Taylor University Institutional Review Board or its designees, the study sponsor, Todd Ream, and (as allowed by law) state or federal agencies, specifically the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) etc., who may need to access your research records.

COSTS: Taking part in this study will not lead to added costs to you or your insurance company. There are no necessary medical procedures or medications.

PAYMENT: You will not receive payment for taking part in this study.

COMPENSATION FOR INJURY: In the event of physical injury resulting from your participation in this research, necessary medical treatment will be provided to you and billed as part of your medical expenses. Costs not covered by your health care insurer will be your responsibility. Also, it is your responsibility to determine the extent of your health care coverage. There is no program in place for other monetary compensation for such injuries. If you are participating in research which is not conducted at a medical facility, you will be responsible for seeking medical care and for the expenses associated with any care received.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS: For questions about the study or a research-related injury, contact the primary researcher Steven Zantingh, a graduate student at Taylor University. Steven Zantingh's contact information:

Phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX

E-mail:

Mailing Address:

Todd Ream is the faculty advisor of this study. He may be contacted at _____ or by phone at _____.

Inquiries regarding the nature of the research, your rights as a subject, or any other aspect of the research as it relates to your participation as a subject can be directed to Taylor University's Institutional Review Board at IRB@taylor.edu or the Chair of the IRB, Susan Gavin at _____

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF STUDY Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with Taylor University.

Your participation may be terminated by the investigator without regard to your consent in the following circumstances: The researcher determines there is imminent emotional trauma for you, the participant.

SUBJECT'S CONSENT

In consideration of all of the above, I give my consent to participate in this research study.

I will be given a copy of this informed consent document to keep for my records. I agree to take part in this study.

Subject's Printed Name: _____

Subject's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Figure 1. Participant Enrollment Timeline

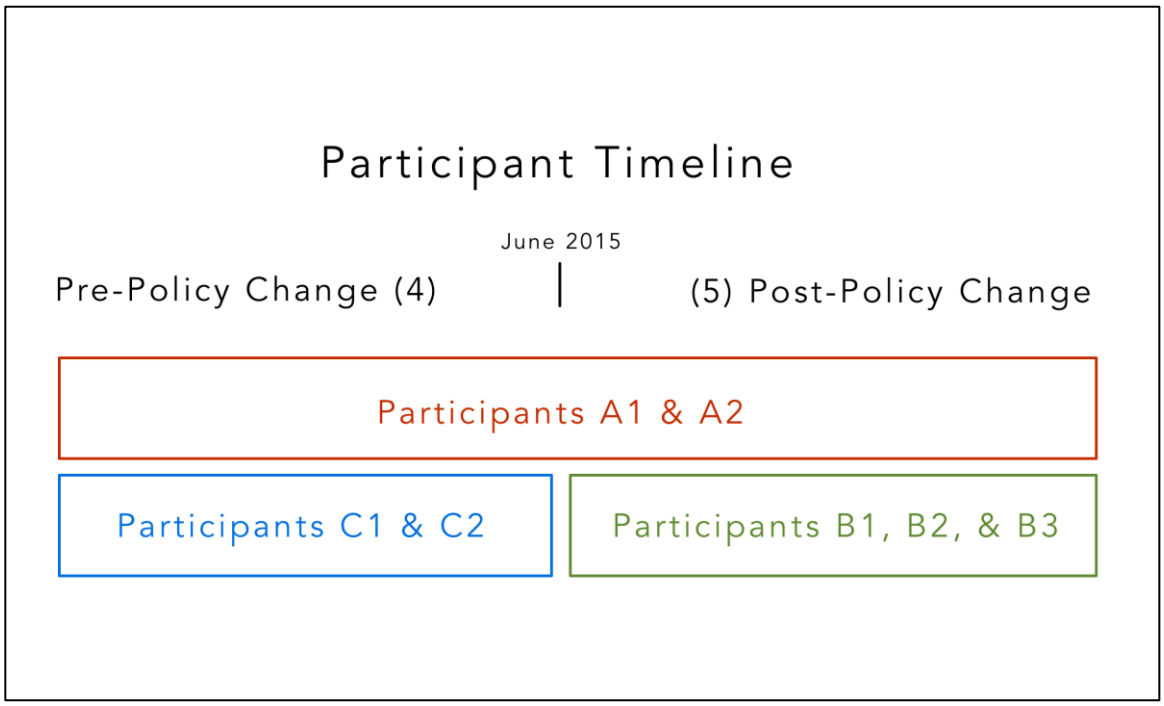

Figure 1. Participant enrollment timeline.