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Sex and Faith in Dialogue: Interdiscursivity and Academic Activism in Baptist Communities

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by

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2018 The language of sex and consent. (Interview on Touch Podcast: Conversations of Spirit & Body) Link: https://soundcloud.com/user-654815313/touch-podcast-episode-4-with-shawn-warner-garcia-and-nate-novero

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ABSTRACT

Sex and Faith in Dialogue: Interdiscursivity and Academic Activism in Baptist Communities

by

Shawn Rachel Warner-Garcia

What do we talk about when we talk about sex? For some, it is a matter of mechanics: bodies, physiology, functioning. For others, it is a matter of morals: norms, risks, rewards. Like everything else in our world, sex is a site of social construction – a part of the human experience that is mediated through our understanding of that experience. In particular, sexuality as a form of knowledge is made possible by the discursive processes that constitute it. Discourse is the field on which particular ideologies, structures, and desires surrounding sexuality get played out. In many ways, discourse holds a unique status in religious contexts: it can be constructed as a holy artifact or a means to salvation, and it is also vital for creating and disseminating religious tradition and identity. Historically, Western Christianity has often been mostly closely associated with sexual repression and heteronormativity, most notably through emphasis on lifelong heterosexual monogamy within marriage and sexual chastity outside of marriage. Since the 1970s, evangelical forms of Christianity in the United States have been major proponents for what has been called 'purity culture,' a movement that promotes sexuality purity – particularly among women – as well as abstinence until marriage. Purity culture has been so pervasive in the U.S. that it often operates independently of

religious identity and ideologies, infiltrating sexual education curricula in schools and political discourses around gender and sexuality.

Scholarly inquiry into these three veins – discourse, sexuality, and Christianity – has spanned a number of disciplines and has been marked by disparate methodologies and analytic frameworks. My dissertation seeks to bring many of these threads together to provide a meaningful account of the current discourses around sexual ethics among Christians in the United States. I focus in particular on the Baptist denomination of Christianity as a site of study, since its loose denominational structure gives rise to a wide variety of beliefs and practices around sexuality that are discursively negotiated in community spaces. Through a methodology I call event ethnography, I provide an in-depth examination of the 2012 [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant to capture the complexities of this singular event as situated within its larger cultural context. I analyze the constraints of the physical space of the event, how plenary speakers interdiscursively engage with many of the same Christian texts and traditions in radically different ways, and the emergent dialogicality of the audience's engagement both in person and online through Twitter. My analysis of this event shows the ways in which social histories, institutional structures, and spatiotemporal realities both enable and constrain particular types of discourse. I also explore the ways in which my research has morphed from a traditional focus on discourse analysis to a more activist approach of community-engaged research. I discuss the various ways I am currently collaborating with Baptist leaders in the development of resources that promote healthier, more holistic conversations around sexuality. I argue that these forms of academic activism can help build more robust scholarship as well as bring about positive social change.

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Foreword

> The central issue, then, is not to determine whether one says yes or no to sex, whether one formulates prohibitions or permissions, whether one asserts its importance or denies its effects, or whether one refines the words one uses to designate it; but to account for the fact that it is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said.
>
> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Vol. 1* (1976: 11)

In the fall of 2012, I took a graduate seminar on the feminist applications of Foucauldian poststructuralist theory. I had just returned six months prior from a last-minute, frenzied trip to collect a large amount of data from a conference convened by a group of Baptists in the southeastern United States who wanted to collectively address the topic of sexuality. I had no idea at the time that this data would eventually serve as the basis of my dissertation research, or how much the ideas of Foucault would resonate with me throughout my work on this project.

In the graduate seminar, I read through the entirety of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*. I was alternately mesmerized by his expansiveness, bewildered by his verbosity, and enamored by his ability to speak so incisively to the three issues that had captured my intellectual imagination for as long as I could remember: discourse, sexuality, and religion. I had grown up female in the southeastern United States during the height of evangelical Christianity and what was called the 'purity movement,' which placed sexual chastity – particularly for women – at the pinnacle of the moral order. Foucault's proposal and

subsequent dismissal of the repressive hypothesis of sexuality spoke to me in ways he likely never could have anticipated when he wrote it. Despite my liberal arts education and liberal political leanings, I was stunned to realize that I was indeed repressed – that we all were – but not in the ways we thought we were. I immediately wanted to know more about how power, knowledge, ideology, and discourse were all at play in our cultural understandings of sexuality.

Foucault alone may not have provided a sufficient theoretical framework to approach the type of social-critical research I wanted to do, and most would argue he never set out to create such a framework anyway. But he seeded many of the important questions that would drive me in the directions I would eventually go. As an academic, I benefit from his persistent problematization of the will to knowledge and the ways in which this power dynamic often serves to subjugate. As a scholar of discourse, I am constantly reminded of his articulations around the possibility of language to both enable and entrap. As an activist, I think often of his ambivalence about our ability to step outside of the social structures that fuel our own oppression. This dissertation is offered as an entry point into the complex, contradictory, and often confounding world of Christian sexuality, in the hopes that such a foray might produce a particular will to knowledge that inches closer to liberation.

Chapter 1

Introduction

What do we talk about when we talk about sex? For some, it is a matter of mechanics: bodies, physiology, functionings. For others, it is a matter of morals: norms, risks, rewards. Like everything else in our world, sex is a site of social construction – a part of the human experience that is mediated through our understanding of that experience. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1976) offers up sex as a case study for demonstrating how we use language to create our social reality. In particular, sexuality as a form of knowledge is made possible by the discursive processes that constitute it. Discourse is thus the field on which particular ideologies, structures, and desires surrounding sexuality get played out.

In this introductory chapter, I outline three key concepts that both frame and constitute the intersecting topics covered in this dissertation. First, I investigate the role of discourse in creating social meaning, with an emphasis on the situated nature of these processes. Next, I turn to Christianity as both an ideological and a structural system that offers unique considerations in the study of discourse. Finally, I explore the ways in which sexuality in particular has been taken up as a site for moral meaning-making within various religious traditions. I conclude by outlining how each of these topical threads is brought together in this dissertation in order to illustrate the uniquely social nature of each.

1 Studying discourse: Interdiscursivity, dialogicality, and discourse spaces

What is discourse? In many college-level introduction to linguistics classes, students typically start with a small unit of analysis, such as the phoneme, and move through the progressively larger units of morphology and syntax until reaching the so-called "discourse" level. In fact, many linguists would define discourse as a unit of language that is longer than a single sentence. Thinking more broadly, though, discourse is more than just a unit of analysis; it is a way of looking at language data that emphasizes context. Sometimes this involves tracing the ways that linguistic form is related to linguistic function. Other times, it is about tracing themes and ideas across different mediums and speakers and even drastically different time periods.

Both in theory and in practice, discourse has the capacity to transcend spatiotemporal constraints. That is, discourse is not bound by physical adjacency or co-occurrence. In an endeavor to more closely interrogate discourse in action, I propose a working definition that addresses the what, how, and where of this phenomenon: *discourse* is the construction of meaning by social actors using communicative systems that are embedded in sociocultural contexts. I explain each of these elements in more depth and show how they are rough equivalencies to the three concepts I focus on in this dissertation – interdiscursivity, dialogicality, and discourse spaces (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Definition of discourse mapped onto key theoretical concepts

Element	Definition of Discourse	Theoretical Concept
WHAT	the construction of meaning	interdiscursivity
HOW	by social actors using communicative systems	dialogicality
WHERE	that are embedded in sociocultural contexts	discourse spaces

The first element is related to the "what" of discourse. Bakhtin's (1981) essay on discourse in the novel emphasized that the construction of meaning does not happen in isolation but in relation to prior texts and the ever-evolving social influences of culture and ideology. A number of scholars have traced these threads through the processes of intertextuality (e.g., Hanks 1986; Briggs and Bauman 1990, 1992; Fairclough 1992), noting the ways in which texts are always constructed in relation to other texts. In recent years, many scholars have found the term *interdiscursivity* useful in highlighting the situated and temporal aspects of the contextual nature of meaning-making (e.g., Bauman 2005; Lempert 2009; Dick 2011). In particular, interdiscursivity is useful in moving scholars of discourse beyond the speech utterance or the bounded event as the primary unit of analysis. It also prompts us to think about and account for the ways in which discourse is situated within larger systems, histories, and contexts.

What then should the discourse scholar take as the unit of analysis? The framework of interdiscursivity certainly provides a multitude of options – from words to actions to ideologies – that offer productive ways to trace the construction of meaning. The present study is particularly inspired by Agha's (2005) essay on semiosis across encounters, in which he states that "the data of social life plucked from their isolable moments invariably point to lived moments that lie beyond them" (p. 1). A significant portion of this dissertation provides an in-depth account of a relatively bounded event – what I call in Chapter 2 an *event ethnography*. Yet the meaning and impact of this event can only be understood through its contextualization within the larger discursive landscape – both prior and future – that motivates the particular instances of discourse that exist there.

The second element relates to the "how" of discourse and involves two parts: social actors and communicative systems. The constructed meaning of discourse does not exist apart from the entities that create it. Most of the time, we assume these entities are human beings, though sometimes even dogs (e.g., Tannen 2004) and deities (e.g., Titon 1988) may be deputized as social actors, thus blurring the lines on who or what is understood to participate in semiotic processes. What counts as a communicative system is not always a straightforward matter either. In addition to linguistic systems, the resources of embodiment, multimodality, and technology may also be employed in the construction of meaning (e.g., Guthrie, Raymond, and Stivers 1997; LeVine and Scollon 2004; O'Halloran 2004).

Given the complexities of how discourse is enacted, the concept of dialogicality is particularly useful for understanding the ecology of how meaning is created and circulated. Du Bois' frameworks of stancetaking (2007) and dialogic syntax (2014) provide useful ways not only to capture resonance (or the catalytic activation of affinities across utterances) in discourse but also to locate the role of voices and multimodal resources in constructing meaning across time and space. Moreover, his work on interior dialogues also demonstrates the ways in which all types of interactions are inherently dialogic, even ones that on the surface may appear monologic (Du Bois 2009). In my analysis, I draw on these frameworks to show how dialogicality may become saliently emergent in spaces that are constructed as monologic.

The third concept, that of discourse spaces, focuses on the situated nature of discourse in a particular time and place. Across linguistically informed scholarship, discourse spaces have been utilized both literally – as in the case of sign language (e.g., Poulin 1996) – and metaphorically – as in the case of persuasive political texts (e.g., Cienki et al. 2010). A

theory of discourse space has been developed in the intersecting fields of cognitive linguistics and critical discourse analysis by Chilton (2005), and while this model is mostly concerned with mapping out mental representations of discourse, it provides a useful analogy for understanding how generalized discourse structures are instantiated for particular purposes. Discourse spaces are not simply canvases on which to perform preformulated actions; they are conceptual categories that alternately transform and are transformed by the actions that happen within them. Crucially, discourse spaces situate the *what* and the *how* of discourse within a specific material reality that is felt by participants and observable to researchers. These spaces may be manifested through particular physical characteristics such as buildings, artifacts, and bodies, and they may also be metaphorically manifested through things like participation frameworks and the medium of communication.

In addition to being cognitively relevant, discourse spaces are also fundamentally socioculturally situated, a theoretical concept that has been well-developed within the framework of the ethnography of communication (Hymes 1980; Gumperz 1982). Discourse spaces provide a way to account for the many different factors that influence their existence: medium, participation framework, register, stance, prior discourses, and so on. The plurality of discourse spaces is important as well: there is never simply a single discourse space that exists at any given time. As I show in my analysis in Chapters 3 and 4, multiple types of discourse spaces (such as physical and digital) can be manifested at a single event, complicating our understandings of what constitutes simultaneity and synchronicity (cf. Busker 2002). This plurality also allows for accountings of meta-discourse, since spaces themselves may serve as the site of discursive negotiation, as seen in my discussions of safe spaces in Chapter 2.

The framework of discourse spaces draws on the productive tensions present in the related frameworks of interdiscursivity, cognitive linguistics, critical discourse analysis, and the ethnography of communication. It provides a way to analyze discursive phenomena that may be observed by scholars and felt by participants to be singular or constant and yet are contextualized by complex histories and activated in dynamic ways. Discourse spaces thus allow for the general and the particular, individual and collective, monologic and dialogic, transformed and transforming.

2 Studying Christianity: Lived religion and the anthropology of Christianity

In many ways, discourse holds a unique status in religious contexts. It can be constructed as a holy artifact such as a sacred text (e.g., Malley 2004) or as a means to salvation such as a prayer of repentance (e.g., Hanks 2013a). Discourse is also vital for creating and disseminating religious tradition and identity (e.g., Green and Rubin 1991; Harding 2001) and even for enacting language policies (e.g., Avni 2012; Liddicoat 2012). While much of the scholarship of discourse and religion has focused on ritualistic, institutional, or esoteric practices (e.g., Bauman 1989; Besnier 1994; Goodman 2008; Hanks 2013b), it is also important to investigate how religion as a sociocultural construct is enacted through the everyday lived experiences of religious individuals.

Inasmuch as discourse offers a valuable lens into understanding religion, religion also presents a unique case study for discourse. As Keane (1997, 2004) points out, the enactment of discourse in religious contexts calls into questions many basic assumptions about language

and interaction, including identity, agency, authorship, genre, and register. All of these aspects contribute to notable instantiations of interdiscursivity in religious settings, where participants engage with and transform texts and traditions in real time (cf. Besnier 1994; Shoaps 2002; Bielo 2008). Moreover, scholars have shown the ways in which religious discourse can have immense impacts beyond strictly religious settings, as seen in the rise of the fundamentalist "Moral Majority" (Harding 2001) and the influence of biblical literalism (Crapanzano 2001) in the United States.

The study of Christianity, and in particular Christianity in the United States, has only recently become the subject of critical scholarly inquiry. While Christian theologians and practitioners have long offered apologetics and internal reflections on this religious tradition, in recent decades secular scholars have offered more in-depth and critical accounts of modern Christianity as a cultural phenomenon. Within the field of feminist studies, there have long been tensions between the secular and the sacred (cf. Reilly 2011). Notably, feminist-informed scholarship has brought about critical reflection on the role of gender within Christian traditions and practices, including vast cultural shifts in relation to the ordination of women and the use of gender-inclusive language (e.g., Smith 1993; Ramshaw 1995). Recent feminist scholarship has also attempted to show the ways in which a re-envisioning of Christianity as postmodern and postcolonial may lead to productive feminist theological frameworks that enable more just religious systems (e.g., Jantzen 1999; Shepherd 2002; Hunt and Neu 2010).

Sociological inquiries into Christianity have elucidated broad cultural trends in the beliefs and practices of modern Christians, particularly in relation to the tensions and contradictions that arise around moral issues such as sexuality. For example, a Gallup poll

from 2011 showed that while 76% of evangelical Christians believe that sex outside of marriage is morally wrong, 80% of young, unmarried Christians have had sex (as cited in Charles 2011). However, other social science surveys report that increased religious identification and participation correlate with lower sexual activity (e.g., Edwards et al. 2008) as well as with increased opposition to nonmarital sexual relations (e.g., Cochran and Beeghley 1991). These sociological studies provide useful insights into the ways in which Christianity is conceptualized and perceived in American cultural contexts, but their primary reliance on self-reported data limits their ability to speak to the complex quotidian practices of Christians themselves.

The recent cross-disciplinary approach of lived religion has brought together scholars of sociology, anthropology, history, and religious studies to fill in some of these knowledge gaps by providing fuller ethnographic accounts of the experiences of religious individuals (e.g., Hall 1997; McGuire 2008; Streib 2008). As opposed to cataloguing broader beliefs and religious systems, scholars of lived religion emphasize the importance of experience, perception, and embodiment using ethnographic and historical lenses. Additionally, the newly emergent subfield of the anthropology of Christianity has placed Christianity more squarely as the object of ethnographic inquiry, while also prompting scholars to grapple with the complex ways in which Christianity is implicated in the foundations of both anthropology and modernity (e.g., Bialecki, Haynes, and Robbins 2008; Robbins 2014). Both of these scholarly threads inform this dissertation in crucial ways, both in motivating particular methodologies and in providing productive theoretical frameworks for understanding religious discourse and practice.

3 Studying sexuality: Diversity in ethical models

As Christianity has piqued the interest of scholars from a number of disciplines, so too has the study of sexuality. Moreover, research on sexuality has similarly benefited from scholarly approaches that center socioculturally situated practices such as discourse, identity, and ideology. With the 'discursive turn' in social theory in the 1990s (cf. Carter 2013), renewed emphasis on interaction and social systems reinvigorated not only inquiry into the complex nature of social categories but also their intersections. While there have been many productive studies of religion and gender (e.g., Gallagher and Smith 1999; Julé 2005, 2007; Mahoney 2008; Shaw 2008; Cherry 2012; Eriksen 2014), far less research has focused on the interplay of religion and sexuality (but see Erzen 2006; Warner-Garcia 2015; Warner-Garcia et al. 2017). The present study seeks to address some of these gaps by providing ethnographic accounts of the ways in which sex, sexuality, and sexual ethics are negotiated by religious individuals both inside and outside of explicitly religious contexts.

Organized religion as a community of practice takes many different forms and draws on many different traditions in its understandings of the relationship between spirituality and sexuality. The world's major religions have approached the issue of sexuality in a variety of ways – from Buddhist renunciation, to Hebrew affirmation, to Hindu sacredness (Parrinder 1980). Within Christianity, a diversity of opinions and attitudes toward sexuality exist, both across historical spans of time and in contemporary global Christian ethics. Historically, Western Christianity has often been mostly closely associated with sexual repression and heteronormativity (e.g., Brown 2008; Pagels 2011; Wiesner-Hanks 2014), in particular

through an elevation of the mind over the body – what is often referred to as *mind-body dualism* – as well as sexual chastity, especially for women. Since the 1970s and peaking in the 1990s, evangelical veins of Christianity in the United States have been major proponents of what has been called 'purity culture' (e.g., Moslener 2009; Klein 2018), a movement that has been primarily encapsulated by the *True Love Waits* program that encourages young women and men to take vows of chastity until marriage (cf. Wright 2011). Purity culture has been so pervasive in the U.S. that it often operates independently of religious identity and ideologies, infiltrating sex-education curricula in schools and political discourses around gender and sexuality (Valenti 2009).

In recent years, a notable number of Christian scholars and clergy have pushed back on this purity-focused approach to sexual ethics. In contrast to evangelical Christianity's emphasis on personal piety, they promote an ethical framework that is centered around social justice and community accountability. One of the most influential figures in this intellectual pivot has been Margeret Farley, whose 2008 book *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* urges a Christian system of beliefs and practices that is justice-focused, inexorably embodied, and intellectually responsible. Farley lays out a normative framework that focuses on seven criteria that must be met in order for decisions about sexual acts and dispositions to be just: no unjust harm, free consent, mutuality, equality, commitment, fruitfulness, and social justice. Another prominent figure in modern Christianity's rethinking of sexual ethics is William Stayton, an ordained Baptist minister and sex educator who has worked for the past several decades to promote pleasure as a moral good and increased training around sexuality and sexual ethics for ministers (e.g., Stayton 1989, 2002; Stayton and Pillai-Friedman 2009; Turner and Stayton 2014).

A similarly relational religious model for approaching sexuality, as well as other types of relationships and community, is the model of covenant. The concept of covenant has been influential in both the Judaic and Christian traditions (cf. Baltzer 1971; Allen 1984), characterizing many events in the Bible, such as God's promise to multiply Abraham's descendants and Jesus' words at the Last Supper, as well as modern religious sacraments, such as baptism and marriage. A covenant is essentially a promise that exists between God and one or more persons. Many Christians refer to "the covenant of marriage" in order to index not only the relationship and promise that exists between the two partners but also God's role in ordaining and blessing the union (Cade 2010). In recent decades, covenant has been used in many Christian communities as a model for conceptualizing a contemporary sexual ethic that moves beyond traditional patriarchal models while still calling for certain self-constraints on human sexual relationships (cf. Warner-Garcia 2015a). The covenantal model is also an instrumental organizing tool for the sexuality conference that is analyzed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation.

4 Dissertation overview: Christian discourses of sexuality

As I have shown in the previous three sections, scholarly inquiry into discourse, Christianity, and sexuality has spanned a number of disciplines and has been marked by disparate methodologies and analytic frameworks. This dissertation is an attempt to bring many of these threads together to provide a meaningful account of the current discourses around sexual ethics among Christians in the United States. I focus specifically on the Baptist

denomination of Christianity as a site of study. Unlike most other mainline denominations of Christianity, Baptists do not have an overarching governing structure such as a pope, bishops, or a council that dictates moral and theological viewpoints. This has given rise to wide variety of beliefs and practices around sexuality that are often discursively negotiated in community spaces.

In Chapter 2, I provide in-depth ethnographic background on Baptists in the United States as well as an overview of the methodological and analytic frameworks I employ in my investigation of the 2012 [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant. I build on the concept of discourse spaces introduced in this chapter and elaborate a methodology of event ethnography as a way to capture the complexities of a singular event situated within a larger cultural context. In particular, I analyze the ways in which the physical space of the conference, as well as how the organizers discursively constructed the event, constrained the types of dialogue as well as its participants at the event. I also address the particular subjectivities I bring to this project as a researcher and participant-observer.

Chapters 3 and 4 offer a comparative analysis of the different discourse spaces that were manifested at the 2012 conference. In the first half of Chapter 3, I analyze how two of the plenary speakers interdiscursively engaged with many of the same Christian texts and traditions but in radically different ways. The second half of this chapter is devoted to mapping out the emergent dialogicality that was achieved through engagement from the audience during the plenary sessions. Chapter 4 picks up this thread of audience engagement and traces it in the digital discourse space of Twitter. I analyze how the act of live-tweeting affords novel types of engagement not only from co-present participants but also from official organizing voices and non-present parties following the event from elsewhere. I

argue that the coextension of physical and digital discourse spaces opens up news avenues for inquiry into the nature of real-time interdiscursivity.

In Chapter 5, I move my focus from an event ethnography of the 2012 conference to an accounting of its impacts and trajectories. I explore the ways in which my own research agenda has morphed from a concentration on traditional discourse analysis to a more activist approach of community-engaged research. Building on my work on discourse spaces at the conference, I discuss the various steps I have taken since then to collaborate with Baptist leaders in the development of resources and interventions that promote healthier, more holistic conversations around sexuality. This chapter represents a significant shift in both my research focus and my evolution as a scholar, as I contend with the motivations behind and implications of my own participation in the discursive processes I study. I conclude in Chapter 6 with a reflection on the theoretical contributions of this dissertation as well as the ways in which academic activism can help build more robust scholarship to bring about social change.

Chapter 2

Baptists, ethnography, and subjectivities

The analytic portions of this dissertation provide an account of the 2012 [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant, which served as a springboard to the activist applications of my research on religion and sexuality. In this chapter, I outline the ethnographic background, methods, and subjectivities that have contextualized my work. I offer a brief history of Baptists in the United States as a way to understand why the 2012 conference was situated within a particular historical trajectory. In particular, I show how the evolution of the Baptist denomination of Christianity gave rise to a broad diversity in beliefs and practices and motivated the conference organizers to frame the event in conversational rather than political terms. I then introduce the methodology of an event ethnography as a way to capture the complexities of the conference as occurring both within a particular cultural context and as a singular event with many interrelated parts. I conclude with an account of my own subjectivity as a researcher and the ways in which my positionality afforded me access to the communities and data that I include in this dissertation.

1 Ethnographic background: Baptists in the United States

With recent cultural shifts in the United States, many Christians have sought to assert or maintain moral authority on hot-button issues of gender and sexuality. In particular, Baptists

– whose local churches enjoy a high degree of autonomy in dictating beliefs and practices – have grappled with the diversity of opinions within their faith communities on issues like homosexuality, abortion, gender identity, and divorce. More conservative branches of Baptists such as the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) espouse traditional ideologies about gender and sexuality, as evidenced by the recent circulation of the Nashville Statement (Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood 2017) denouncing homosexuality and endorsing the moral model of monogamous heterosexual marriage. However, more moderate and progressive Baptist organizations such as the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF), the New Baptist Covenant (NBC), and the Alliance of Baptists (AoB) are beginning to have frank discussions about the complex intersections of faith and sexuality. In this section, I discuss the historical development of the Baptist denomination of Christianity, how Baptists fit into the broader cultural landscape of Christianity in the United States, and the uniquely Baptist aspects of community-building that contextualize my research.

1.1 A brief history of Baptists

The Baptist branch of Christianity traces its roots to 17th-century Europe. Though there is no single founding figure – such as Martin Luther for Lutherans or John Wesley for Methodists – many Baptists often point to John Smyth and Roger Williams as the founders of the Baptist tradition in Europe and the United States, respectively. While there are often attempts to link Baptist identity to the New Testament church that emerged in the first century shortly after the death of Jesus, Baptist beliefs and practices have clearly been heavily influenced by other Christian traditions such as Methodism, Puritan Separatism, and other antiestablishment sects

such as Quakers and Anabaptists (Leonard 2003). Indeed, often the defining characteristic of what it means to be Baptist is the view that there is no one way to be Baptist. This diversity has led to many varied attempts to lay out so-called "Baptist distinctives" (Leonard 2003), such as the list that Baptist historian Robert Torbet (1950) proposed in the mid-20th century:

1. **The Authority of Holy Scripture**: the idea that the Bible is a highly regarded or primary sources of moral and spiritual authority
2. **A Regenerate Church Membership**: the idea that members of a congregation share a spiritual kinship with current and former Baptists that can be traced back to the time of the New Testament
3. **Baptism by Immersion**: the idea that salvation-granting baptism is only achieved through complete submersion in water
4. **Autonomy of the Local Congregation**: the idea that individual Baptist churches have the authority to select their own membership and leaders, as well establish policies and practices
5. **Priesthood of All Believers**: the idea that every person baptized into the Baptist tradition is able to access the Bible and God without the need for a priest or other authority figure as an intermediary
6. **Religious Liberty**: the idea that the church and the state should be kept separate and that neither should impose authority over the other

These general principles that Torbet outlined can be seen in various forms, fashions, and arrangements throughout Baptist history.

One of the unique characteristics of the Baptist tradition in America has been its simultaneous development alongside the founding of the United States as a nation. Of particular relevance are Baptists' roots in Puritanism as well as the religion's emphasis on individualism. This has led other Baptist historians such as Walter Shurden to define Baptist distinctives on the basis of what he calls "four fragile freedoms" (1993):

1. **Bible Freedom**: the right and responsibility of every believer to study Biblical scripture himself or herself.
2. **Soul Freedom**: the right and responsibility of each person to interact with God free of imposition by creed, clergy, or government.
3. **Church Freedom**: the right and responsibility of every church to determine their membership and leadership, to order their worship and work, to ordain whom they perceive as gifted for ministry, and to participate in the larger Christian church.
4. **Religious Freedom**: the right and responsibility of each believer to maintain distinct relationships to the spiritual and civic realms.

Some critics of Baptist beliefs have even claimed that Baptists' emphasis on freedom and the free will of the individual potentially puts them outside of orthodox Christianity, since it "crystallizes attention upon the possibilities of men rather than upon the power of God" (Harrison 1959: 22). Harrison's critique highlights the importance of the individual in the search for religious truth within the Baptist tradition. Indeed, this tradition emerged in times of great religious and social upheaval – both in Europe and America – and many of its

founding figures even eventually moved away from fledging Baptist institutions in search of greater truths within other traditions.

1.2 Modern Baptists in the United States

Within the world of Christian doctrine, Baptists in the United States are often notorious for "harsh dogmatism and ever-narrowing circles on inclusion," particularly with respect to issues of gender and sexuality (Sanders 2011, para. 9). Many conservative Baptist organizations such as the SBC cite Biblical scripture in promoting the ideas that women's appropriate role in ministry and family life is one of subservience and submission and that appropriate sexual orientation and expression are limited to monogamy within lifelong heterosexual marriage (Southern Baptist Convention 2000).

While modern-day Baptists are often viewed as synonymous with religious and political conservativism, this conflation is a rather recent development. In fact, even the SBC was not always so squarely on the conservative end of the spectrum, and both the moderate CBF and the progressive AoB grew out of what was alternately deemed the "fundamentalist takeover" or the "conservative resurgence" (depending on a person's particular perspective) of the SBC in the 1980s. After more than a decade of public controversy, conservative factions within the SBC successfully took control of the organization in 1990. The new leadership emphasized tenets such as biblical inerrancy (the idea that the Bible is without fault and factually true), an exclusively male clergy body, personal piety over social justice, and an alignment with conservative political forces. In 1987, progressive Baptists left the SBC and formed the AoB, reaffirming Shurden's four founding freedoms and eventually

becoming one of the first Baptist organizations in the southern United States to take stands for racial reconciliation, marriage equality, and ecological justice (Gardner 2015). In 1990, the more moderate CBF was formed as a denominational network of affiliated but autonomous churches. As such, CBF does not issue position statements on social and theological issues, but the organization has recently been the site of controversy due to an internal policy that prohibits the intentional hiring of non-celibate gay and lesbian persons in some positions (Allen 2016). The Associated Baptist Press (ABP) was also founded in 1990 as "the first and only independent news service created by and for Baptists" (Associated Baptist Press 2010), offering an alternative news source from the SBC-controlled Baptist Press.[1]

Several of these organizations inform this dissertation. The CBF organization was the driving force behind the [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant, as I discuss in more detail in the next section. It is also the site of much of my applied research (Chapter 5), including my activist work against its discriminatory hiring policy. The AoB organization has become one of my collaborative partners, and I discuss my involvement in the planning and implementation of its 2018 JustSex conference in Chapter 5. Finally, I draw on news articles from the Associated Baptist Press throughout much of my analysis in this and the next chapter.

[1] The founding editor of Associated Baptist Press was my father, Greg Warner, a connection I discuss in more detail in section 4 of this chapter.

2 The planning and implementation of the 2012 [Baptist][2] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant

Set against the backdrop of the historical trajectory of Baptists in the United States, and situated by the unique positioning of CBF as a moderate Baptist organization, the 2012 [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant came to be. This section gives an overview of how and why it took shape in the ways that it did. I begin by providing background information on how CBF first began to have a conversation about sexuality as an organization. I then discuss who was involved in the conference and how it was structured. I show the ways in which the framing of the conference as a "conversation" was constructed and contested, as well as how this framing complicates analytic understandings of what constitutes conversation.

2.1 The context for convening the conference

The issue of sexuality – and, in particular, sexual orientation – has been part of CBF's organizational identity almost from its inception. CBF's founding principle of not passing resolutions about belief and practice has long drawn criticism from detractors who view the organization's "silence as an indication of tacit approval, or at least accommodation, of social and theological liberalism" – including and possibly especially around sexuality (Allen 2016c: para. 2). During the decade after its founding in 1990, CBF weathered political criticism from both the right and the left for moves such as creating a resource packet for

[2] I discuss in more detail the motivation and meaning behind putting "Baptist" in brackets in Chapter 3.

ministering to people with HIV/AIDS but also removing its support from a fellow Baptist organization that issued a statement affirming gays and lesbians.

These threads of ambivalence on sexuality issues came to a head during a 2000 CBF General Assembly meeting in which the organization adopted a "'statement of organizational value' disallowing the expenditure of funds for organizations that 'condone, advocate or affirm homosexual practice' or the 'purposeful' hiring of non-celibate gays as CBF staff or missionaries" (Allen 2016). While the policy evoked vehement debate among constituents at the meeting, it survived several attempts to rescind it and endured for over a decade until the 2010 General Assembly meeting, which featured a breakout session entitled "A Family Conversation about Same-Sex Orientation" (Allen 2011). In this session, the debate around CBF's hiring policy, questions about homosexuality, and a wider discussion of Christian sexual ethics created a confluence of such high interest and attendance that CBF leaders decided to plan a separate event to accommodate discussion. Two years later, in partnership with the Center for Theology and Public Life at Mercer University (a moderate Baptist educational institution with ties to CBF), CBF convened the [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant in Atlanta, Georgia, on April 19-21, 2012. The conference expanded the scope of the 2010 breakout session to encompass a broader discussion of human sexuality and Christianity, and the organizers also worked explicitly to distance the conference from the political controversies surrounding CBF's discriminatory hiring policy that remained on the books at the time (Allen 2012). I discuss the complexities of this positioning in the next section and revisit the status of the controversial hiring policy in Chapter 5.

2.2 Overview of conference structure and participants

The conference was hosted at First Baptist Church Decatur (FBCD), a historic Baptist church located just outside Atlanta that describes itself as "a vibrant and progressive community of faith" (FBCD 2018). At the time of the conference in 2012, Julie Pennington-Russell served as FBCD's pastor. Pennington-Russell had drawn controversy and media coverage throughout her ministry, most notably for being appointed as the first female senior pastor of a Southern Baptist congregation in Texas in 1998 (Associated Press 1998) and later for her installation as senior pastor at FBCD in 2007, which at the time was "the largest church associated with the Southern Baptist Convention or the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship to call a woman as senior minister" (Mohler 2007). FBCD also served as the home church to several of the conference organizers and speakers, including lead organizer David Gushee and speaker Melissa Browning; Browning's plenary talk will be analyzed in depth in the next chapter.

The gathering featured 14 plenary speakers, worship sessions, and small-group gatherings that sought to explore current models and discussions of Baptist sexual ethics. The plenary speakers were organized into seven sessions – some speakers grouped into pairs or triads based on related topics, others highlighted as the sole speaker on a particular topic. (See Appendix A for the full conference program.) Each of these sessions ran for about an hour and a half, and they were explicitly structured by the organizers to privilege the voices of the plenary speakers with no time for open discussion among the rest of the participants. I discuss the impact of this structuring in section 2.4 below as well as in Chapter 4.

Each plenary session commenced with a brief period of worship and communal singing, and the entire event culminated in an extended worship service. These elements, along with the conference's setting in a church, served to facilitate the creation of a community among the participants and to highlight the religious nature of the gathering. They also served as a counterbalance to the mostly monologic structure of the plenary sessions, though participants engaged in emergently dialogic practices throughout these sessions, as I show in Chapters 3 and 4.

The conference drew about 400 attendees over the three-day period – a mix of pastors, scholars, and laypeople (i.e., religious affiliates who are not ordained) from within CBF who represented the diversity of theological and political views within that organization. Before the conference began, the organizers assigned participants to small groups that they called *covenant groups*. These groups were intentionally designed to facilitate conversation across different segments of the audience and to provide a safe space in which to discuss the often-controversial topics that were raised at the conference. I discuss the role of these safe spaces in section 3.2 below.

2.3 Framing the event as a conversation

The concept of 'conversation' was central to the planning and implementation of the [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant. However, discourse scholars have traditionally thought about conversation in different analytic ways than the conceptualization invoked at this event. Specifically, conversation analysts point to certain characteristics that make institutional discourse different from 'everyday' or 'mundane' conversation (cf.

Heritage 2005), including specific interactional goals, institution-relevant identities, and constraints on what counts as allowable contributions. 'Conversation,' on the other hand, is thought to be a more basic or unmarked form of interaction (cf. Goodwin and Heritage 1990) since it involves an element of casualness and equality of speaker rights. However, Gaudio (2003) complicates this notion by pointing out that these characteristics of conversation are the result of interactional and ideological work by participants rather than being inherent or default (cf. McElhinny 1997). In the case of the conference discourses analyzed here, 'conversation' was endorsed as an institutional goal by the organizers in order to promote a particular way of relating among participants. However, the establishment of the genre of 'conversation' was not unproblematic, as organizers actively set boundaries on the conversation, not necessarily in order to reach political consensus but to foster and model what they considered to be proper and constructive dialogic engagement on controversial issues.

The [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant was explicitly constructed as a dialogic event, and the first step in establishing this framing was to explicitly advertise it as such. In the nearly yearlong lead-up to the conference, organizers worked to validate and frame the event within ongoing religious and cultural debates about sexuality. Most of this framing was accomplished via news media, including articles and opinion pieces in the Associated Baptist Press, a national news service for Baptists that was rebranded as Baptist News Global in 2014. In total, 22 ABP articles explicitly referenced the conference, beginning in May 2011 and continuing through the dates of the conference in April 2012.

In these news and opinion pieces, organizers continually cast the purpose of the conference in dialogic rather than political terms. Gushee, who in addition to being the main

convener of the conference is professor of ethics at Mercer University, is quoted in one article as saying that "the conversation will be focused on 'how we should live as followers of Christ' and not to declare a position on any issue" (Perkins 2011). Other organizational representatives, such as then-CBF Executive Coordinator Daniel Vestal, reinforced the idea that the purpose of the conference was to hold a conversation rather than a policy summit. As one article stated, "Vestal said the event's aim is 'conversation' and is not a summit meeting. No statement of public policy will be offered as a result of the conference" (Allen 2011). Additionally, phrases such as "family conversation," "narratives," "model for dialogue," and "resource" (Perkins 2011) were often used to describe the conference. Organizers' use of terms such as "narratives" and "dialogue" emphasized the co-constructed nature of the event, while their use of other terms such as "model" and "resource" implied that the dialogue was designed to be useful to participants beyond the event itself.

The actions of the organizers to distance the conference from policy-making was also an attempt to avoid the promotion of a particular political ideology. Gushee provided reassurance in an ABP opinion piece that the conversation was not in fact a cover for an implicit political agenda:

> We are not hiding an advocacy agenda behind the cloak of conversation. There is no hidden agenda here. We think that our explicit, open agenda is demanding enough – to have a conversation within a willing part of the Baptist family about what it means to live in responsible sexuality in a context in which our traditional sexual ethic is being challenged and quite often abandoned, and not just by secular folks. (Gushee 2012)

Gushee asserted that "conversation" was not about policy-making by either explicit or implicit means. His rejection of an "advocacy agenda" thus distanced himself and the

conference from a particular – presumably progressive – political agenda that is often associated with issues such as marriage equality and anti-discriminatory sexual and gender practices.

Gushee also argued that faithfulness—to Christ and to others in the Christian community—was the main goal of the conference conversation. In addition to writing opinion pieces and offering interviews to the news media, Gushee also sat down for an interview with me the day before the conference began. In this interview, he used pedagogical language such as "relearning" and "figuring out" to emphasize the co-constructed and processual nature of the conference dialogue, reflecting an emphasis on drawing people into an internal community conversation rather than defining who and what should be excluded.

Example 2.1. "Internal Christian conversation" (GusheeInterview, 8:07-8:19)[3]

1	Gushee:	Christians need to learn how to have an internal,
2		or relearn,
3		(0.3)
4		how to have an internal Christian conversation.
5		You know fellow Christians,
6		gathered around Christ,
7		(0.3)
8		inspired by the Holy Spirit,
9		(0.9)
10		figuring out what does it mean to be a,
11		(0.2)
12		faithful Christian people,

The inward-focused nature of the conversation that Gushee proposed inevitably involved a degree of gatekeeping to determine who was allowed into the internal discursive space as ratified speakers and what constituted being "faithful Christian people." Thus, while

[3] For a complete list of transcription conventions used throughout the dissertation, see Appendix I.

"conversation" may be framed as open-ended, it is often constrained by the goals that the conversing community sets out to achieve.

Even before the conference began, the conference organizers exemplified the type of internal conversation that they were promoting for the conference, noting that faithfulness does not always lead Christians to the same theological and moral conclusions. Vestal was quoted by ABP as saying the following about the goals of the conference:

> Vestal said conference planners "are not of one mind on matters related to sexuality" but "agree that faithfulness requires that churches and Christians courageously explore matters that frustrate the ministry and message of reconciliation." (Allen 2011)

Vestal argued that disagreement on matters of sexuality did not preclude faithfulness to the "ministry and message" of the church, which he maintained was primarily about reconciliation. Rather, Christians could agree on the overall goal of conversation about controversial topics like sexuality even if they disagreed on the details. This set conversation apart from policy-making, since policies are typically forged through consensus or at least majorities, whereas conversation can still occur in contexts where consensus does not exist. Moreover, policy tends to be outcome-based and conversation is more process-based.

2.4 Structuring conversation

In addition to framing the event ahead of time as conversation-oriented, the organizers also structured the conference in such a way as to encourage discourse to occur within particular spatial and temporal constraints. One of the most obvious ways that the event was organized as a conversation was reflected in the conference program. Each of the plenary talk titles was

phrased as a question, for example, "Faithful Listening in Challenging Times: How Do We Discern God's Voice?" and "Ancient and Contemporary Voices: What Do Christians Think God Thinks about Sex?" Formulating presentations as questions served to distribute moral knowledge and authority both among those who would ask the questions and among those who would seek to answer them. This dialogic arrangement framed the speakers as co-constructing, rather than co-opting, authority.

The appropriate spaces for dialogic participation from conference attendees, however, were structured to occur outside of the large-group settings. During the main plenary sessions, the only people who spoke to the entire audience were the presenters and the organizers. While the audience was invited to sing a communal song before and after each talk, there was no question-and-answer or large-group discussion during these sessions. This structuring of time and space emphasized the building of community around common knowledge and tradition (with hymn-singing being a recognizable and reconciling act) while also framing the sessions as a time for listening and reflection rather than active participation.

Conference attendees engaged dialogically with the ideas and issues presented in the plenary sessions in the small break-out groups, which were carefully composed by the conference organizers and led by specially selected and trained facilitators. In his explanation of the conference in an ABP article, Gushee discussed the purpose of the small groups:

> "We are not proposing to create a document or getting involved in public policy or the political arguments," Gushee said. "We are not looking for grandstanding diatribes. We believe that people are most likely to have legitimate, honest conversations in small groups. So after plenary testimonies and presentations, we will divide attendees into groups to discuss what they've heard. We want to foster a deliberate, thoughtful conversation." (Perkins 2011)

Gushee expressed a desire to avoid the type of "grandstanding diatribes" that are characteristic of many policy debate arenas, such as congressional testimonies or political town hall meetings. The small groups served as a way to channel dialogic engagement into what was considered to be their appropriate place: small, confidential, covenantal groups. The enactment of these discourse spaces will be discussed in more detail in section 3.2 below.

2.5 Contesting conversation

In many conversations about controversial topics such as sexuality, there may be dissenting voices. With this conference, some dissenters questioned the possibility of constructive conversation about sexuality, while others questioned the wisdom of having the conversation at all. In an ABP opinion piece, Baptist pastor Luke Smith noted the potential dangers of allowing any official conversation about sexual ethics, as this could elevate some voices over and above the will of local congregations and the "cooperative alliances" of Baptist churches:

> Those advocating dialogue lack an appreciation for the potential costs associated with the loss of intimacy that is created by illicit sexual behavior... Rather than modeling dialogue on important issues of the day, I fear we as the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship are modeling how to allow a few loud and persistent voices to derail cooperative alliances. ... We would not consider pederasty a position that we ought to leave up to individual conscience... The CBF often emphasizes a respect for local church autonomy. This is undermined when individuals act independently of their local congregations. (Smith 2012)

Smith maintained that opening up dialogue on issues of sexuality ran the risk of undermining the traditional Baptist understanding of proper Christian sexual expression

(presumably, monogamy within lifelong heterosexual marriage). From this perspective, even the initiation of conversation could threaten the status quo since it implied that the issue is not, in fact, settled. Smith also claimed that the Baptist idea of soul freedom ("individual conscience") should not trump church freedom ("local church autonomy"), as he expressed concern about the ability of local churches to enforce moral sexual standards if individuals are able to decide on their own about these issues. Specifically, he cited "pederasty," an example that has often been mobilized—particularly by conservative religious individuals (Scroggs 1986)—to warn about the supposed dangers or unnaturalness of homosexuality (cf. Greenberg 1990). Smith's reference to pederasty indexed the fear tactics of many hegemonic slippery-slope arguments, which claim that any degree of tolerance of homosexuality will inevitably lead to a culture of "anything goes" within Christian communities (cf. White and Niell 2002). Thus, Smith deemed even the prospect of conversation risky enough to advocate avoiding it altogether.

Others viewed the "conversation" framing as limited not because of its potency but because of its ineffectuality. During their talks at the conference, many of the plenary speakers expressed optimism about the conversations happening throughout the event. However, Baptist scholar Coleman Fannin, who gave a plenary talk emphasizing the importance of tradition that is analyzed in more in detail in Chapter 3, seemed doubtful that a productive and positive conversation about sexuality could be had.

Example 2.2. "Skeptical" (FanninPlenary, 13:15-13:38, 14:28-14:49)

1	Coleman:	Given our fragmented state,
2		(0.3)
3		I'm skeptical about our capacity,
4		to avoid the impasse reached by every other denomination,
5		that has addressed the subject of sexuality.

(1.2)
Although I want to believe that a respectful and open conversation is possible,
(0.4)
I feel that moderate Baptists lack the means,
to guide a conversation toward real resolution.
(0.8)
We can talk,
but can we resolve.
(0.6)
Or to bind the participants in the denomination together,
in a real covenant.
((46 lines omitted))
However,
I venture that in the end,
arguments will not matter much.
(0.5)
And that most Baptists will make up their minds,
or have already done so,
on the basis of personal feelings,
and especially their respective cultural milieus.
(0.6)
Which means that will likely end up very close to where the culture ends up.
(0.6)
Regardless,
of whether the culture is right or wrong.
(1.7)
Let me say that again,
Regardless of whether the culture is right or wrong.

Fannin criticizes several components of the conversational model endorsed at the conference. First, he juxtaposes the language of conversation ("respectful and open conversation") with the language of policy-making ("impasse," "real resolution," "arguments") in order to argue that the ultimate goal of conversation is—or should be—to reach some kind of consensus ("guide such a conversation toward a real resolution"). Therefore, according to Fannin, not to reach an agreement as a result of conversation is ultimately to fail at having a conversation.

Second, Fannin claims that Baptists are likely incapable of achieving these policy-oriented goals since they do not care about "arguments" and instead will simply make up their own minds on the basis of "personal feelings" and through the influence of their "cultural milieus." While Smith's ABP opinion piece asserted that the exercise of individual

conscience was a threat to churches' ability to make local decisions about sexuality, Fannin argues that an overemphasis on individual conscience would lead to misguided and ineffectual decision-making. Both Smith and Fannin seem to presume that conversation is simply the prioritization of individual conscience at the expense of congregational decision-making. They thus position policy-making as the more important endeavor since it ultimately leads to defining—and defending—the church against potentially destructive cultural forces. (Fannin's juxtaposition of culture and tradition is analyzed in more detail in the next chapter.) Ironically, then, the construction of the conference as a conversation was criticized for being both too risky even to consider and too impotent to be worth engaging in.

While the construction of the [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant as a conversation provided a certain amount of freedom for a variety of voices and opinions to be heard on controversial topics, this did not mean that there were no boundaries set on the discussion. Conference organizers went to great lengths to structure the conference in such a way as to promote dialogue – from their characterizations of the conference in news coverage, to their development and arrangement of the conference program, to their modeling of dialogue through the convening of covenant small groups. The framing of the event as a conversation provided the discursive space for conflicting opinions to be discussed candidly and to be left unresolved or unsettled. However, given the potential pitfalls of dialogue surrounding controversial topics, the organizers also exercised a particular type of boundary setting when laying the groundwork for these discussions. By regulating the framing of the conference, the types of voices that were heard, and the appropriate spaces for participant engagement, the organizers sought to control and model how to have a productive conversation about sexuality within covenant communities. Nevertheless, dissenting voices

called into question this conversation model as either too permissive or too limited, advocating instead for decision-making based on religious tradition rather than open dialogue.

The amount of work that the organizers carried out in order to frame the conference as a conversation reveals several things about the nature of conversation as a discourse genre. For one, conversation is not necessarily a "naturally occurring" phenomenon, since in some contexts participants must go to great lengths to make conversation happen. Moreover, the distinction between institutional and non-institutional interactions is neither total nor entirely stable. The general view of conversation as casual and equitable may have been mobilized by the organizers for particular political purposes, but to claim that all conversation is inherently casual and equitable is to gloss over the complex social and political work that can go into the construction of conversational settings and interactions.

3 Methodology and data

The model of conference-as-conversation was constructed on multiple levels at the event. In this section, I discuss the benefits of using an event ethnography approach to understand the complexities of how discourse spaces were framed and constructed at the conference, and I outline the various types of data that I engage with in my analysis. I also briefly examine the limits of ethnographic research within tightly regulated spaces and the varying contributions of different types of discourse-analytic approaches.

3.1 Event ethnography

One of the ways in which I seek to illuminate the complexities of the [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant is by employing a methodological approach I call *event ethnography*. This term is adapted from a related methodology in the field of global environmental politics called *collaborative event ethnography*, in which multiple researchers and participants compile comparative materials from an event in order to develop a "thick description" (Geertz 1973) of how ideas circulate within the power structures of a group convened in the same space (Brosius & Campbell 2010; Büscher 2014; Davies et al. 2015). One of the central tenets of collaborative event ethnography is to centralize voices that are often marginalized in political processes; for this reason, this approach has recently begun to be utilized by anthropologists to engage in more collective and nuanced analyses of the co-production of knowledge (e.g., Blaikie et al. 2015). In this dissertation, instead of comparing different analytic perspectives on the same type of data from an event, I analyze multiple types of data that all relate to the same event. This approach allows me to trace the circulation of discourses across different voices and media, with a central focus on how the 'eventness' of the conference provides a particular context for the discursive construction of meaning.

3.2 Data overview

In this section, I give an overview of the multiple types of data that I compiled and analyzed in order to produce an event ethnography of the conference. These data were collected in

order to show both the official, sanctioned discourses of the event and the emergent, alternative discourses that were also present.

3.2.1 Official discourses

About a year before the conference took place, ABP began running opinion pieces and news articles detailing how the event was taking shape. A total of 22 articles explicitly referenced the conference – 10 opinion pieces and 12 news articles – between May 2011 and April 2012. Most of the news articles interviewed the main conference organizers – including Gushee, Vestal, and Rick Bennett (director of missional congregations for CBF at the time) – about the scope and the goals of the conference as well as some of the controversy surrounding CBF's ongoing hiring policy debate. Additionally, Gushee wrote 4 of the 10 opinion articles featured in ABP; the other 6 were authored by pastors and students in the Baptist world who were either anticipating the conference or reporting on their experience there. The news media thus became a crucial way for the organizers to set the tone for the event and to begin framing the conference as a conversation.

Additionally, I collected my own data from the conference organizers via email correspondence and ethnographic interviews conducted immediately prior and during the conference. From February 2012 through April 2012, I corresponded with Bennett, Lance Wallace (Director of Communications for CBF at the time), and Jessica Tidwell (Program Management Intern for CBF at the time). While at the conference, I interviewed four people: Gushee, Pennington-Russell, Sharyn Dowd (one of the plenary speakers), and Kyle Reese (conference attendee, current pastor of the church I grew up in, and current moderator of the CBF organization). This data helped flesh out my understanding of the aims of the event as

well as the constraints on what type of research I would be able to conduct there. My direct interactions with conference organizers and attendees were also supplemented by participant observation through head notes and field notes that I recorded throughout the event (cf. Sanjek 1990). I draw on these observations in providing context for the rest of the data that I analyze.

The 14 plenary talks presented at the conference were recorded and live-streamed by the organizing team, and my data set of these talks consists of downloaded versions of the publicly available videos. Prior to the event, I requested to record my own copies of these talks but was asked by the organizers not to do so in order to prevent unnecessary disruption at the event and to enable me to engage in the event more as a participant than a researcher. I discuss the plenary talks in more detail in the next chapter.

3.2.2 Emergent discourses

In addition to capturing the content of the plenary talks, the video recordings of these sessions also contain instances of spontaneous engagement from the audience through a variety of responses. Thus I analyze both the official and the emergent types of discourses that were present in these recordings. Additionally, because the physical discourse space of the conference was constrained to preclude extensive in-person interaction during the plenary sessions, many of the attendees took to Twitter to log their reactions and commentary throughout the conference. In fact, the conference organizers established an official event account and hashtag (#SexandCovenant) and encouraged participants to engage using the Twitter platform (see Example 2.3). In this section, I give an overview of the methodological

considerations of using Twitter data; I provide more background on how Twitter operated as an alternative discourse space at the conference in Chapter 4.

Example 2.3. Tweet from official conference account encouraging users to engage on Twitter with the #SexandCovenant hashtag

During the three-day event, over 2,000 tweets were tagged with the #SexandCovenant hashtag, which I collected using the Crimson Hexagon software package. (I discuss the use of this software in more detail below.) The Twittersphere thus became an alternative discourse space where participants could dialogically engage in real time. Moreover, the use of Twitter created additional layers of intertextuality as tweeters responded to and engaged with plenary speakers' constructions of Christian tradition, sacred texts, and moral authority.

The digital space of social media has often been conceptualized as ancillary or even detrimental to in-person interactions (e.g., Kraut et al. 1998; Turkle 2011; Walton 2017; Barr 2018). However, the use of social media has revolutionized the ways in which humans interact with others, and platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have become quotidian and intimately woven into the fabric of people's lived experiences. As technology evolves to become more interactive and user-centered, it allows people to create more

multifaceted social spaces and social relationships. Researchers have shown that use of social media is positively correlated with increased political engagement (e.g., Holt et al. 2013; Boulianne 2014), more robust engagement in classrooms (e.g., Junco et al. 2010), and positive health outcomes among those suffering from chronic diseases (e.g., Merolli et al. 2013). Moreover, the prevalence and integration of social media has also enriched the discourse landscape in such a way that scholars must now account for these complexities when carrying out ethnographic and discourse-focused research even within face-to-face communities of practice (e.g., Thurlow and Mroczek 2011; Zappavigna 2012).

In conceptualizing a social media platform like Twitter as a discourse space, it is important to establish what kind of field site it is and how this digitally based field site is similar to and different from other physically based field sites. For example, it is useful to consider the type of "eventness" that is established through the use of a particular hashtag when conducting an event ethnography. Bonilla and Rosa's (2015) seminal work on digital protest and hashtag ethnography discusses the ways in which the use of the hashtag #Ferguson on Twitter created a shared political temporality surrounding the shooting of unarmed African American teenager Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014. By following Twitter users' engagement with #Ferguson, they demonstrate the potential for a hashtag to constitute a sociological and analytic "event" unit that can be mobilized for political purposes. However, establishing a field site based on the use of a particular hashtag is not without complication. As the authors point out, "If we are to take a hashtag seriously as a field site, we must thus not assume its fixed and stable boundaries – any more than we would with other field sites, which can also appear to be isolated, bounded, and homogenous but are, in practice, much more dispersed, interconnected, and diffuse" (Bonilla and Rosa

2015: 7). While a hashtag offers a certain amount of ready-made analytic coding, analysts cannot assume that this coding system directly corresponds to people's experiences of eventness. We must therefore view hashtags as "entry points into larger and more complex worlds" (Bonilla & Rosa 2015: 7). In Chapters 3 and 4, I compare how the physical and digital discourse spaces at the conference capture complementary aspects of people's experiences at the conference.

One of the methodological challenges of utilizing social media data for empirical analysis is the issue of obtaining informed consent. While many social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram offer a wide array of options for producing both public and private content, Twitter is primarily a public platform both in its conceptualization and in its functionality. When a user creates an account on Twitter, their account and all of their tweets are public by default (Twitter 2018a). Users can manually set their account and/or their tweets to be private and viewable only to followers who are approved by the account holder. In Twitter's privacy policy published in May 2012 (immediately after the conference occurred), the company states:

> Our Services are primarily designed to help you share information with the world. Most of the information you provide us is information you are asking us to make public. … Our default is almost always to make the information you provide public for as long as you do not delete it from Twitter, but we generally give you settings to make the information more private if you want. Your public information is broadly and instantly disseminated. When you share information or content like photos, videos, and links via the Services, you should think carefully about what you are making public. (Twitter 2012)

Anyone may access public information on Twitter without creating an account, and information is public by default unless users actively specify otherwise (Twitter 2018b). Platforms like Facebook have historically dominated among social media companies because they capitalize on connecting people online who already know each other in real life, though privacy issues have recently plagued Facebook and caused its value to significantly drop (Timberg and Dwoskin 2018). By contrast, Twitter is built on a model of social interest that emphasizes one-way following and capitalizes on shared interests rather than personal relationships (Ravikant and Rifkin 2010). It is not surprising, then, that only about 10% of Twitter accounts are set to private (Beevolve 2012). Users acknowledge and agree to the public-as-default nature of Twitter when they sign up for an account, but this does not necessarily mean that all users understand its implications, which occasionally prompts public reminders or admonishments from tech pundits (Nolan 2014).

In my research, the methodological and ethical issues raised by Bonilla and Rosa (2015) were particularly pertinent in determining how to access, attribute, and incorporate public Twitter data. While Bonilla and Rosa use the metric of "virality" – that is, the extent to which the publicness of specific tweets has been expanded through mainstream circulation – in determining whether author attribution is warranted when citing tweets, the relative lack of virality of the #SexandCovenant event and event hashtag precludes the use of this metric in my data. However, because of the comparatively constrained nature of the conference and its accompanying hashtag, as well as my access to this space as a researcher (which will be discussed in more detail in section 4 below), I used different tiers of informed consent metrics in deciding whether to include and attribute the tweets I analyze in Chapter 4.

For the first tier of informed consent, I included what I call *persistently public tweets* in my Twitter data set. However, when using the Crimson Hexagon platform to collect relevant #SexandCovenant Twitter data in the summer of 2016 (four years after the conference took place), I came across a number of tweets that appeared in the collated data set accessible through Twitter's application program interface (or API, the software intermediary that allows a program such as Crimson Hexagon to "talk to" the Twitter platform) but that were no longer publicly available on the Twitter website itself. It was unclear whether these posts were inaccessible because the users who generated them had deleted them or made them private, or if the updates and transitions in the Twitter platform in the years since they were produced simply rendered them inaccessible. As a researcher, I decided not to include any of these tweets in my analysis since my access to them was only through licensed commercial software and not through publicly available means. However, if tweets met this baseline metric of persistent publicness, I considered them to be viable data points for further analysis based on users' acceptance of Twitter's privacy policy.

For the second tier of informed consent, I sought out active and ongoing informed consent from individual Twitter users before attributing their tweets to either their real name or their Twitter handle. To do so, I messaged the users whose tweets I include in my analysis in Chapter 4 to request permission to provide attribution credit. Of the nine users I reached out to, six provided affirmative consent and three did not respond. I have thus redacted name and username information from those tweets for which I have not (yet) received affirmative consent. While obtaining this level of informed consent is not always feasible in large-scale digital data projects, I felt compelled by the relatively small scale of the data set I was working with, as well as my responsibility as a collaborative researcher, to perform due

diligence in assuring I was using content produced by my community members in responsible ways that they actively consented to. For more extensive discussions about the ethical questions involved in utilizing Internet data, see D'Arcy and Young (2012), Bolander and Locher (2014), and Burgess and Bruns (2012), as well as many of the citations in Bonilla and Rosa (2015).

3.2.3 Protected discourse spaces

In addition to navigating the questions of privacy for online data related to the conference, I also encountered research constraints related to the physical space and in-person interactions of participants at the conference. As discussed above, in structuring the event, the organizers set up time and space for small-group discussions in what they called "covenant groups." These groups of about eight to ten people were created by the organizers before the conference began and each met a total of five times throughout the three-day event. In my communication with the organizers ahead of the conference, they requested that I not enter these spaces as a researcher, only as a participant. Their rationale was to protect the groups as safe spaces (cf. Hanhardt 2013; VanderStouwe 2015) where participants could openly engage in dialogue in confidentiality. Thus I participated in a covenant group as an attendee but did not collect any sort of ethnographic data (e.g., video or audio recordings, field notes, participant interviews) during my time there.

In my ethnographic interview with Gushee just before the conference, he noted the intentionality behind constructing the covenant groups as safe spaces where participants essentially entered into agreement with each other to maintain confidentiality.

Example 2.4. "They're just gonna be in conversation" (GusheeInterview, 28:06-28:24)

1	Gushee:	The idea—
2	Warner-Garcia:	[Mm]
3	Gushee:	[We] call these groups,
4		covenant groups.
5	Warner-Garcia:	On purpose.
6	Gushee:	[They] will make a covenant [tog]$_2$ether,
7	Warner-Garcia:	[Mm-hm.]
8		[Yeah.]$_2$
9	Gushee:	as to the kind of conversation they're gonna aim to have,
10		and the level of confidentiality to it?
11	Warner-Garcia:	Mm-hm.
12		(0.6)
13	Gushee:	And they're not gonna be blogging about it,
14		they're not gonna [be] Facebooking [about it]$_2$,
15	Warner-Garcia:	[Hm.]
16		[Yeah hm.]$_2$
17	Gushee:	or tweeting about it,
18		they're just gonna be in conversation.
19	Warner-Garcia:	Yeah.
20	Gushee:	That's what we're trying for anyway.

These small-group discussions thus became a type of discursive safe space at the conference, protected and set apart from a research agenda that could have potentially interfered with the successful enactment of the safe spaces they were intended to create.

It is important to note that conference participants were not actively given the choice of whether to consent or not to the research I proposed to do during the small-group discussion sessions; the organizers decided ahead of time to preclude the possibility of research taking place in these spaces. This top-down model highlights the implications of different means of ethnographic refusal (cf. Simpson 2007; Tuck and Yang 2012): if those in power preempt the possibility of consensual choices, is ethnographic refusal simply a transference of power from one entity (the researcher) to another (the community's gatekeepers)? The question then becomes: Who are these safe spaces created for? A lack of access for researchers likely provides protection not only for participants but also for leaders

who may be concerned with exposure and liability. While there are no clear answers to these issues, future research on safe spaces and ethnographic refusal must continue to take into account the triangulation of power between the researcher, community members, and community leaders.

3.3 Sociocultural linguistics

Given the wide array of data I collected at the [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant, a broad analytic framework became necessary for successfully synthesizing the different ways in which discourse spaces were constructed and enacted at the conference. The interdisciplinary research methods I utilize fit under the umbrella of sociocultural linguistics (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), and tools from the fields of linguistics, sociology, and anthropology form the basis of my methodology in both data collection and data analysis. I draw on aspects of several discourse-analytic frameworks when analyzing the spoken and textual data in my corpus: in particular, conversation analysis (e.g., Schegloff, 2007), critical discourse analysis (e.g., Weatherall, Stubbe, Sunderland, & Baxter, 2008), and post-structural discourse analysis (e.g., Baxter, 2008). This multifaceted approach allows me to present an event ethnography from a simultaneously sociocultural and linguistic perspective by drawing on both the micro-level discourses that were constructed at and around the conference and the macro-level discourses of the larger historical and sociopolitical context in which the event took place.

4 Researcher subjectivity

In order to explicate my own positioning within the larger research project – as well as to contextualize the ways in which I was able to gain access to the types of data that I did – it is important to specify my own subjectivity as a researcher. In this section, I provide information related to my involvement in the historical dynamics of Baptist life, my unique access to the conference and its organizers, and my personal investment in this research project. My goals in detailing this contextualizing information are to elucidate the complexities of researchers' relationships to their work, provide a holistic description of my methodology, and introduce additional layers of analytic accountability to my research.

4.1 Biographical background

I grew up in the southern United States in the 1980s and 1990s and attended a moderate Baptist church throughout my childhood. Both my family and my community were deeply religious and raised me to value spiritual piety, personal integrity, and social activism. While I was explicitly taught many of the tenets of evangelical Christianity, I was also encouraged to question, doubt, and seek answers for myself rather than to blindly believe sources of authority – religious or otherwise. I believe that my academic interests grew out of having this opportunity to ask hard questions during the most formative times of my life.

For college, I attended Baylor University, a private moderate Baptist institution in Texas, where I gained deeper knowledge of both the field of linguistics and the complexities of Baptist history and politics. Many if not most of my connections to organizers and

attendees at the [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covent came directly out of my time spent at Baylor. I have continued to adhere to many of my religious beliefs and practices, though they have necessarily developed and evolved over the years. Part of my participation in Baptist life has involved establishing and maintaining connections with people in leadership positions within the denomination, including those who helped organize the conference as well as many who attended. I thus attended the conference in a dual role as both a researcher and an invested attendee.

Another way I have gained access to Baptist communities is through my family ties. My father Greg Warner is a religious journalist who was the founding editor of the Associated Baptist Press (ABP) in 1990, which was formed as the first and only independent news service for Baptists in response to the conservative takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention's Baptist Press. As mentioned above, ABP is the source of all of the news articles cited in my dissertation; however, my father had retired from the company by the time it was reporting on the conference. My father is also one of my ongoing collaborators in many of the activist-oriented parts of my research. He continues to be a vocal and visible figure within Baptist life, as well as a strong advocate for LGBTQ inclusion, healthy church communities, and leadership accountability. I discuss his involvement in these projects in more depth in Chapter 5.

4.2 Access to the conference event and its organizers

Prior to the conference, I corresponded extensively with many of the conference organizers, leaders, and speakers in order to arrange the logistics of the research portions of my

attendance at the event, which included conducting in-person interviews with several of them. My father is a long-time friend of Gushee, and I also knew Pennington-Russell and Dowd because they were both my pastors at a church in Texas during my college years. Moreover, I had varying levels of acquaintance with many if not most of the 400 attendees who participated in the conference. Thus my involvement as a participant-observer was essentially already from an insider perspective. Indeed, one of the most challenging parts for me in conducting this research has been to explicate and critically examine all of the implicit knowledge I have gained through my ongoing participation in Baptist communities.

4.3 Collaboration and activist engagement

My involvement in Baptist life has uniquely positioned me not only to provide insider-informed scholarly accountings of how these communities operate but also to bring academic knowledge into the communities that I study. The methodological frameworks of collaborative ethnography (Lassiter 2005a, 2005b) and engaged anthropology (Low and Merry 2010) offer productive ways of envisioning how this two-way relationship of knowledge exchange and production can work. At the core of these frameworks is the acknowledgement that collaboration is not just a consequence of fieldwork but rather a critical factor in research design and dissemination. Since the inception of this dissertation project, I have thus conceptualized its scope and purpose to be two-fold: an academic inquiry into the everyday religious practices of Baptists in the United States, and a collaborative activist project that brings academic and religious communities into greater dialogue with one another. In pursuing these dual aims, I have had to navigate the complexities of

maintaining multiple identities within multiple communities, and my role as an activist has been at times both circumstantial and intentional (cf. Marcus 1995). In Chapter 5, I revisit this discussion in order to explicate my ongoing work in Baptist communities to work for social and sexual justice.

5 Conclusion

This dissertation endeavors to be both an in-depth study of a specific event and a broad analysis of the sociopolitical realities that contextualize its occurrence and impel future activist work. In this chapter, I have given an overview of the background, methods, and frameworks I believe offer opportunities to provide compelling insights into these areas. The history of Baptists in the United States situates the occurrence of the [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant within a denominational trajectory that continues to grapple with simultaneous commitments to individual freedom and an ever-evolving collective identity. Within the increasingly secular culture of the United States, Baptists are also struggling with how to maintain a claim to moral authority – whether through alignment with particular political movements (such as the SBC has done with conservativism or the AoB has done with liberalism) or through lowest-common-denominator neutrality (as CBF has endeavored to do). The [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant thus represents a unique cultural moment that illuminates the confluences of an ongoing religious identity crisis and an evolving social consciousness. These tensions are played out in the intentional structuring of the conference as a ‘conversation,’ a concept that is both analytically and ethnographically

rich in its intentional ambiguity. The methodology of an event ethnography provides a productive framework for unpacking these complexities, while collaborative and engaged anthropology offer opportunities for moving beyond analytic accounts to activist action. Within all of these domains, I seek to situate myself – my connections, my entanglements, my commitments – as both a researcher and a community member whose positionings offer unique opportunities but also necessitate continual accountability.

Chapter 3

Interdiscursivity and emergent dialogicality in interactionally constrained discourse spaces

As discussed in Chapter 1, discourse is always socioculturally situated. The framework of interdiscursivity allows scholars of discourse to analyze the "ways that the now-said reaches back to and somehow incorporates or resonates with the already-said and reaches ahead to, anticipates, and somehow incorporates the to-be-said" (Bauman 2005: 145). In this chapter, I investigate how the discourses in a structurally monologic space interdiscursively resonate with the "already-said" of prior texts within the Christian tradition, as well as how these monologically constructed discourse spaces became emergently dialogic through spontaneous engagement from co-present participants. I show how time, place, and materiality are all implicated in the enactment of complex, competing, and intersecting discourse spaces.

I begin by discussing how the content and structure of the plenary sessions complicates understandings of how religious authority is enacted. This is seen through the centering of certain voices and not others at the conference, as well as the explicit construction of the plenary session spaces to be monologic. Despite this structuring, I show how two of these elevated voices interdiscursively engage with the same prior Christian texts and traditions – namely, the Wesleyan quadrilateral as well as Christian conceptualizations of love – in radically different ways. The two speakers' invocation of these prior texts thus

sheds light on the elements of interdiscursivity that are present in this seemingly monologic space. Moreover, the fact that the speakers construct drastically different ethical models using the same resources emphasizes the central role of the individual in the process of constructing and also contesting religious authority (cf. DuBois 2009). Finally, I explore the ways in which specific types of audible engagement from the audience during the plenary sessions – such as laughter or murmuring – produces an emergent level of dialogicality within an otherwise monologically constructed space. My analysis demonstrates the ways in which discourse exemplifies and enables complex types of engagement even in spaces that are interactionally constrained (cf. Harrison 2005).

1 Conference structure and background

1.1 Plenary session speakers and structures[1]

As discussed in Chapter 2, the discourse spaces at the 2012 [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant were carefully constructed by organizers leading up to the event. With over 400 attendees traveling to Atlanta to participate, leaders structured different types of spaces for different types of engagement. Prior to the event, conference organizers had set up a training retreat for the plenary speakers and the small-group facilitators where they discussed the themes and structure of the conference. Though the speakers did not circulate the manuscripts of their talks to each other before the event, they were asked to share their

[1] Parts of this section have been previously published in Warner-Garcia (2016).

talks ahead of time with the conference organizers, and the text of each of the talks was later published in a conference proceedings.

The speakers for these plenary sessions were chosen carefully and intentionally. Conferences, as opposed to other forums such as online discussions, are temporally and spatially constrained events that place boundaries on who contributes and how. As such, conferences limit the number of speakers and also elevate certain participants to places of prominence, such as plenary speakers, panel discussants, and paper presenters. The selection of conference participants thus involved a type of border control, and the selection process served to highlight particular voices while—intentionally or unintentionally—erasing others.

While all 400 conference participants were able to contribute in small-group discussions, only 14 people were selected to give plenary talks. In the news coverage leading up to the event, Rick Bennett, who was the director of missional congregations at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) and one of the co-organizers of the conference, told the Associated Baptist Press the following regarding the selection of plenary speakers:

> In recommending and inviting presenters, the planning team looked for persons who had genuinely struggled with questions and matters of sexuality and covenant first,... people who had wrestled with the hard questions. (Allen 2012a)

Instead of highlighting particular points of view or demographic details as criteria in the plenary selection process, Bennett said that the organizers had sought out people who had "genuinely struggled" and "wrestled with" some of the issues that the conference would address. He thus emphasized the primary importance of selecting people who had thought critically about matters of sexuality—and were perhaps conflicted about, undecided on, or

even marginalized by some of its attendant issues—rather than selecting a representative or diverse group of plenary speakers.

However, in related news coverage published around the same time, Bennett's co-organizer David Gushee pointed out that the team took care not to select the "usual suspects" and instead to include speakers from diverse backgrounds—including diverse sexual orientations:

> Close study of the program and a bit of educated surmising reveals that the conference speaker list is not always the "usual suspects." We Baptists will hear from a few helpful non-Baptists (gasp!). We will hear from speakers of various ages, regions, educational backgrounds, races, theological perspectives, marital and family histories and, yes, sexual orientations. That latter category may worry a few people. It is perhaps a bit bold. But we simply concluded that we could not have a family conversation about sexuality if some parts of this Baptist family were excluded in advance. We are not willing to host a conversation where we talk about people, but instead one in which we talk with people. (Gushee 2012)

Gushee emphasized that the lineup of plenary speakers represented diversity on numerous fronts, but much of this diversity was represented by only a handful of the speakers. For example, of the 14 speakers, only two were African American (none identified as Latinx or Asian American) and only one identified as gay. While there was some occupational diversity—the lineup included anthropologists, theologians, pastors, seminary students, missionaries, and lay leaders—there was little educational diversity, as all of the speakers had at least some graduate education and most had doctoral degrees. However, the plenary speakers did represent a wide age range (from mid-20s through mid-60s) and were split fairly

evenly between men (six) and women (eight), although there were no openly transgender or nonbinary persons on the program.

The 14 plenary speakers thus represented voices that had been sanctioned to speak with authority on the topic of sexuality and covenant. Although they represented a diversity of identities and perspectives, the discourse space in which they spoke was structured to be exclusively monologic. During the plenary sessions, no time was allotted for questions from the audience or large-group discussion when the 400 participants were all gathered together in one place. In this chapter, I show how two of the plenary speakers – Melissa Browning and Coleman Fannin – worked within this monologic framework to interdiscursively engage with prior texts in the Christian tradition, as well as how the audience engaged in emergently dialogic practices that pushed back on the monologic structure of the sessions.

Browning and Fannin participated in a plenary session that the organizers titled "Ancient and Contemporary Voices: What Do Christians Think God Thinks About Sex?" These two speakers were biographically similar in many ways – they both went to Catholic universities, they attended the same Baptist seminary, and in their talks they both drew on many of the same sources in constructing their arguments. However, their session was set up as a point and counterpoint, and they demonstrated very different understandings of many of the same sacred texts and thought traditions that contribute to Christian models of morality.

1.2 The Wesleyan Quadrilateral

One of the theological models that both Browning and Fannin drew on in their plenary talks is what is often referred to as the *Wesleyan quadrilateral*. John Wesley, a British theologian

who lived and wrote in the 18th century, was one of the most influential figures in the Methodist denomination of Christianity (Campbell 1991), which in practice is closely related to the Baptist tradition. In fact, both the Baptist and the Wesleyan principle of the primacy of scripture (*sola scriptura*) trace their roots to the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century. Wesley's theological writings have been influential in Christian thought for centuries, but the term *Wesleyan quadrilateral* was not coined until 1985 by American theologian Albert C. Outler (Outler 1985). Now in common usage among many Protestant denominations, including many Baptists, the *Wesleyan quadrilateral* refers to the four sources of authority that Wesley references when considering theological issues: scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.

The relationship between these four sources of authority is often debated. In addition, commentators often employ different understandings of what each of the four sources refers to (Campbell 1991). For example, when Wesley was writing in England during the Enlightenment period, the concept of reason was more connected to the philosophy of positive realism than to the contemporary meaning of this term, rational analysis. Similarly, Wesley's original writings used the concept of experience to mean experiential religion – a heartfelt emotional connection to Christian beliefs and to God – rather than a person's general experience in the world. Furthermore, Wesley used the term *tradition* to reference the time of the early church fathers in the several centuries during and after the writing of scripture, rather than the modern Christian notion of tradition, which encompasses the accumulation of Christian thought and practice for the past two millennia.

One of the defining characteristics of Wesley's theological writings was their inherent ecumenism, which brought into dialogue a wide swath of Christian teachings and traditions

(Bevins 2006). Thus, Wesley's ideas, and in particular the tenets of the Wesleyan quadrilateral, have a long and illustrious history of debate within Christian thought. In fact, the productiveness of the quadrilateral can be credited in part to the fact that Wesley did not define a systematic theology or doctrine himself but rather proposed a theological method by which Christians could theologize for themselves (Bevins 2006). As such, the quadrilateral has been deployed as a framework for approaching many modern theological and ethical issues, including topics related to sexuality such as same-sex attraction and behavior (Zahniser and Cagle 2007).

In practical application, the Wesleyan quadrilateral has been taught and represented in a number of different ways, all of which point to the commentator's underlying assumptions about the four respective sources of authority. For example, Figure 3.1 reproduces a sketch from Laurie Haller, the resident Methodist bishop for the Iowa area of the United States who also runs an online blog about matters of faith. In a post from 2013 about considerations in Christian ethics, Haller represents the quadrilateral as a Venn diagram that places scripture as the backdrop upon which the other three sources are overlaid in overlapping patterns.

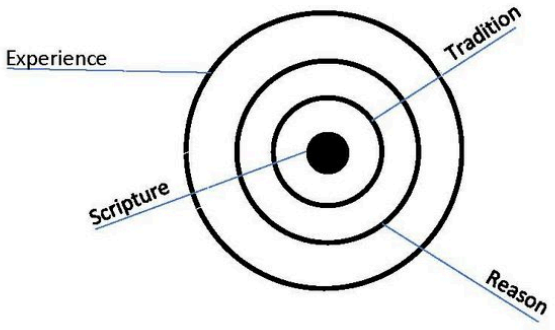
Figure 3.1. Venn diagram rendering of the Wesleyan quadrilateral with scripture encapsulating and contextualizing all other sources of authority (source: Haller 2013)

As Haller (2013) writes in the blog post, "United Methodists understand that while scripture is our primary resource for Christian living, wise, ethical decision-making also considers the traditions of the church, the use of our God-given capacity to think and reason, and our individual experience." While placing primacy on scripture, Haller reiterates the necessity of the other three sources to fill in the gaps in Christian understanding.

Other online commentators, such as Methodist layperson Philip Brooks, rely on nature-based metaphors to understand the inextricable relationship of the four sources of Christian authority (Figure 3.2). In 2015, Brooks wrote a guest article for the website United Methodist Insight in which he advocated for retaining the quadrilateral as a theological tool but revising how it is taught in churches (Brooks 2015). As he writes in the article, "I myself prefer the image of throwing a rock into a still pool of water. The rock is scripture, the source and foundation for what is about to happen. Tradition, reason, and experience are the ripples

that form in the water and eventually overtake the whole pool. They owe their power ultimately to the rock, but the rock depends upon them to express itself upon the pool."

Figure 3.2. Abstracted rendering of the Wesleyan quadrilateral with other sources of authority emanating out of scripture (source: Brooks 2015)



This model represents a more abstract envisioning of the quadrilateral as opposed to a theological method for moral decision-making.

Still others, like New Testament scholar Scot McKnight, construct elaborate renderings of the Wesleyan quadrilateral that repurpose its components in order to illustrate an evolving understanding of scriptural authority (Figure 3.3). In a 2010 post on his blog Jesus Creed*,* McKnight writes, "I agree with Wesley that scripture should be primary among the four [components]; I also agree that it should not be, perhaps more importantly, *cannot be* the only player in forming our knowledge of God. … Not only do Tradition, Experience, and Reason form the lens for our view of Scripture, they address, *with Scripture*, they explore and fill in many gaps in our understanding of God, some of which Scripture itself creates. Perhaps most importantly, they make *the* faith into *our* faith" (McKnight 2010, original emphasis).

Figure 3.3. Architectural rendering of the Wesleyan quadrilateral (source: McKnight 2010)

The Wesleyan quadrilateral is a familiar and productive theological model within Christianity that has been interpreted and reinterpreted for hundreds of years, including by many of the speakers at the [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant. Notably, Browning and Fannin both interdiscursively engaged with this model in their plenary session but in very different ways, highlighting certain parts over others. In the section, I discuss in depth their mobilization of the Wesleyan quadrilateral, as well as their respective invocations of other Christian concepts such as love and justice, in their constructions of a framework for sexual ethics.

2 Interdiscursivity at the [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant

The [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant was primarily organized by two Baptist-affiliated entities, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Center for Theology and Public Life at Mercer University in Atlanta, Georgia. However, the inclusion of *[Baptist]* in brackets in the title of the event was intentional. The Baptist identity served as an ideological backdrop that motivated and characterized many elements of the event, from the focus on soul freedom (cf. Yarber 2011; see discussion of Baptist identity in Chapter 2 on the four Baptist freedoms) to the insistence on not issuing policy statements (cf. Gordon 2011; Gushee 2011). Organizers also took care to invite speakers who were both within the Baptist world and those who were not, as discussed in the previous section. Moreover, while many in attendance and in leadership at the conference identified with Baptist principles such as the primacy of scripture, others did not necessarily have these theological and ecclesiastical attachments. One of the first sessions on the first day of the conference explicitly addressed some of these potential differences. The session was entitled "Faithful Listening in Challenging Times: How Do We Discern God's Voice?" and the description of the session in the conference program included an explicit reference to the four parts of the Wesleyan quadrilateral: "This plenary will present methodological and hermeneutical grounding for the gathering, dealing with such questions as: What role do scripture, tradition/history, experience, and reason/science play in our understanding of God's purposes for us? What weight do we give to each of these sources? Why? Does the weight shift, depending on the relative fullness or thinness of the scriptural resources?" Thus, the organizers structured the conference in such a way as to highlight these four canonical sources of Christian authority

from the outset. Two Baptist pastors presented in this session, one of whom (Dowd) was later referenced several times by Fannin in his subsequent plenary talk, which is discussed later in this chapter. With the theme of the Wesleyan quadrilateral set up on the first day of the conference, on the second day Browning and Fannin were the first subsequent plenary speakers to tackle the topic of how to interdiscursively engage with the multitude of voices and sources of authority already present within Christianity.

The ways in which Browning and Fannin present their plenary talks give insight not only into their own theological orientations but also into their assumptions about the positionings of the audience. Before they launch into the substantive parts of their talks, both Browning and Fannin spend a bit of time at the beginning establishing their connections with the audience, the conference conveners, and Baptists in general. However, the amount of time they each spend doing this varies. Browning takes 33 seconds and 30 lines of transcript to briefly cover her Baptist educational background, her high regard for the two organizations hosting the conference, and the fact that the event is being held in her home church of First Baptist Church in Decatur, Georgia, just outside of Atlanta. By contrast, Fannin spends about twice that amount of time (60 seconds and 68 lines of transcript) establishing the long history of his connection to the pastor of First Baptist Church, as well as his gratitude to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship for being "probably the reason that I really became fully Baptist."[2] The difference in the amount of affiliative groundwork each speaker lays is perhaps indicative of the varying degrees to which they feel they must work to establish a connection to the audience, as well as their theological pedigree.

[2] The pastor of First Baptist Church at this time was Julie Pennington-Russell, who had also served as the senior pastor at a church I attended while at college in Texas.

Figure 3.4. Coleman Fannin during his plenary talk at the [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant

Figure 3.5. Melissa Browning during her plenary talk at the [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant

As discussed in Chapter 2, the composition of the audience at the conference probably skewed toward the progressive end of moderate Baptists, simply based on the fact

that many conservative Baptists – or those who might uphold "traditional" teachings on sexuality – likely chose not to attend the event because they viewed it as too risky or pointless. Notably, many conservative Baptists followed the event by engaging remotely through Twitter, as will be discussed in the next chapter. While it is impossible to precisely determine the theological and political leanings of the audience, the assumption that they might not be very receptive to hearing "traditional" teachings is voiced by Fannin himself. In Example 3.1, Fannin references one of the speakers from the previous day's session on discernment, Sharyn Dowd, a well-known and well-respected Baptist pastor, teacher, and biblical scholar whose talk dealt with the topic of how to discern God's voice.[3] He also directly cites how one of the organizers, Rick Bennett, conceptualized Fannin's talk and how it fit in with the rest of the program.

Example 3.1. "Counter balance" (FanninPlenary, 1:41-2:15)

1	Fannin:	And the word I have to bring is,
2		(0.5)
3		I think Rick,
4		said it,
5		uh to me,
6		that it was a little bit of a,
7		<@>counter balance?</@>
8		Um,
9		(0.6)
10		and--
11		And--
12		I think that that's true,
13		(0.5)
14		but I hope it's taken,
15		um,
16		in the spirit,
17		%uh,
18		of Sharyn's presentation last night.
19		Because,
20		um,
21		and knowing Sharyn,
22		um I wasn't surprised.

[3] As noted in Chapter 2, I was also closely acquainted with Sharyn Dowd at the time of the conference, since she had served as an associate pastor at a church I attended while at college in Texas.

23 But I was,
24 (H)
25 Um,
26 Really,
27 (0.8)
28 moved by what she said,
29 and,
30 um,
31 really appreciative of what she had to say.
32 And so I,
33 I see,
34 (0.2)
35 what I'm doing,
36 maybe you won't,
37 but I see it as,
38 picking up on,
39 on,
40 some of the things that were,
41 (0.8)
42 that she had said.
43 (0.4)
44 Um and I hope it's taken in that spirit.

While Fannin casts his talk as something of a "counter balance" to the rest of the presentations (which in fact is a phrase he has borrowed from one of the conference organizers, Rick Bennett), he nonetheless aligns himself with the "spirit" of the event (line 44) and especially of Dowd's talk. Later in his talk, Fannin expounds a bit more on what he means when he invokes the spirit of Dowd's talk. In Example 3.2, he first sets up an alignment between himself and the church's traditional teachings but then immediately follows up with a lighthearted but sincere qualification.

Example 3.2. "I could be wrong" (FanninPlenary, 14:03-14:22)

1 Fannin: At present,
2 I find the case,
3 for the church's traditional teachings,
4 to be very convincing.
5 (1.3)
6 Still,
7 presumably someone could make a more convincing argument,
8 for a different understanding.
9 (0.9)
10 In other words,

11		I could be wrong.
12		(0.5)
13		Everyone heard me,
14		(0.2)
15		for posterity,
16		I could be wrong.
17	Audience:	@@@@[@@]
18	Fannin:	[And that was] actually in here before Sharyn's talk last night.
19	Audience:	@@@[@@]$_2$
20	Fannin:	[I could be]$_2$ wrong.

In this example, Fannin does the delicate work of expressing his own view on sexual ethics – which, given the composition of the audience and his framing of his talk, is likely to be a minority view at this event – while also allowing space for the possibility that this view might be wrong. This example also illustrates an instance where laughter – in this instance audience laughter – is used to mitigate potentially problematic portions of a talk where the views of the speaker may or may not line up with the views of the audience. I discuss the function of laughter, as well as other audience responses, in section 2.3 below.

Example 3.2 also represents one of many instances where Fannin invokes the idea of "tradition." In fact, he uses the word *tradition* and its grammatical variants 34 times throughout his talk. Almost all of these occurrences constitute neutral descriptive uses or positive affective uses in which Fannin aligns himself with tradition. For example, he says things like, "I'm convinced that the church's traditional teachings – properly understood (they're often not properly understood) – are correct," and "The next step is to learn from Catholics as well as Christians from other traditions – not because Baptists need to craft some sort of hybrid identity, but because Catholics have better maintained the tradition that all Christians share. We've forgotten it, but they in large part have not." Among each of the four components of the Wesleyan quadrilateral, Fannin emphasizes tradition most prominently and positively. His stance of presenting a distinctively traditional perspective is

also noted by many attendees and remote tweeters on Twitter, as discussed further in the next chapter.

Fannin rarely mentions the other three quadrilateral components by name: *scripture* once, *reason* three times, and *experience* twice. However, he references *culture* and its grammatical variants 30 in separate instances throughout his talk, and this term seems to be a gloss for the quadrilateral category of experience. Almost every single instance of *culture* in his speech is presented with negative affect, either on its own or through the other concepts with which it is grouped.

In Example 3.2, Fannin allowed for the possibility that his traditional viewpoint might be wrong. In Example 3.3, which follows almost immediately afterward, he notes the seeming futility of engaging in theological debates on sexual ethics at all, since by his estimation, Baptists are irrevocably influenced by "the culture."

Example 3.3. "Cultural milieus" (FanninPlenary, 14:28-14:52)

1	Fannin:	However,
2		I venture that in the end,
3		arguments will not matter much.
4		(0.5)
5		And that most Baptists will make up their minds,
6		or have already done so,
7		on the basis of personal feelings,
8		and especially their respective cultural milieus.
9		(0.6)
10		Which means that they will likely end up very close to where the culture ends up.
11		(0.6)
12		Regardless,
13		of whether the culture is right or wrong.
14		(1.7)
15		Let me say that again,
16		Regardless of whether the culture is right or wrong.
17		(0.5)
18		Will end up where the--
19		Where the culture ends up.

In this example, as well as other places in his talk, Fannin disparages the influence of "the culture" on Baptists. I examine in more detail how the concept of culture, especially as a foil for Christianity, operates in Fannin's talk in the next section.

In contrast to Fannin, Browning references the different components of the Wesleyan quadrilateral in a somewhat more balanced way, mentioning *experience* 20 times, *scripture* 12 times, *tradition* 9 times, and *reason* twice. Strikingly, she does not use the word *culture* at all in her talk, indicating that at least for her, these concepts are not conflated, as they are for Fannin, with the quadrilateral category of experience. She does, however, juxtapose different parts of the quadrilateral to elucidate how an overemphasis on some parts has led to erasure of others, as seen in Example 3.4.

Example 3.4. "Shaped our understanding" (BrowningPlenary, 27:23-27:40)

1	Browning:	In thinking this through,
2		we must examine the ways in which the mind-body dualism present in Christian history and some scriptures,
3		(0.4)
4		has shaped our understanding of sexual ethics.
5		(1.0)
6		We must realize that this dualism was gendered.
7		(0.4)
8		And did not account for women's experience.
9		(0.3)
10		Or the experience of the marginalized.

Browning positions experience as an antidote to the negative effects of Christian history and tradition – specifically, for combating the privileging of minds over bodies and men over women. As opposed to Fannin's approach of largely eliding other parts of the quadrilateral apart from the one he is explicitly tasked with discussing, Browning mobilizes three of the components of the quadrilateral (she omits mention of reason in this part of her

talk) to fashion a more holistic understanding of how each of these elements can or should relate to each other.

The clear juxtapositions of parts of the quadrilateral – particularly tradition and experience – in Fannin and Browning's talks was further undergirded by the framing and structuring of their plenary session as presenting two contrasting viewpoints: "ancient" versus "contemporary," "traditional" versus "experiential." Before they even took the stage to give their respective talks, therefore, the session was implicitly cast as a debate. These tensions were drawn on both by the speakers in their construction of various ethical models and by the audience as they responded to the starkly contrasting approaches of each speaker.

2.1 Interdiscursive engagement with sources of moral authority

Throughout the entirety of both Fannin's and Browning's talks, they each draw on many different types of prior texts in the Christian tradition but to varying degrees. Immediately preceding Example 3.3, Fannin explicitly lays out what he will *not* attempt to do in his talk by saying, "I could make a detailed argument for my understanding of sexuality and marshal evidence and scholarship from theology, biblical studies, biology, and the social sciences in support of it. … However, I venture that in the end, arguments will not matter much." And although he releases himself from the responsibility for convincing the audience of the correctness of his perspective, he does extensively cite almost all of these scholarly areas – with the exception of biblical literature, which he indirectly cites only once – including ancient church fathers as well as a wide swath of modern philosophers, sociologists, and theologians from almost every mainline Christian denomination. By contrast, Browning

provides a thorough biblical and historical foundation for her talk through citation of biblical texts (six passages in all) and ancient theologians and historians. She largely presents these historical voices in a pedagogical fashion that invites participants to come to their own conclusions about their usefulness, and many participants rendered their verdicts about these ideas in the alternative discourse space of Twitter (as will be discussed in the next chapter). When she does invoke modern scholars, it is to show the ways in which they have fundamentally reimagined how to weigh the four traditional sources of authority in Christian understandings of human sexuality.

In Example 3.5, she lays out each part of the Wesleyan quadrilateral and asks the audience to imagine what a reconfiguration of these components might look like, and how that might influence the ways that some of the historical texts in the Christian narrative are viewed.

Example 3.5. "Wider resources" (BrowningPlenary 19:26-20:29)

1	Browning:	Within the study of Christian ethics,	
2		we have a paradigm,	
3		that's called the Wesleyan quadrilateral.	
4		You've heard about that a lot.	*Raises both hands*
5		This week.	
6		(0.5)	
7		Weekend.	
8		(0.4)	
9		The term comes from an analysis,	
10		of John Wesley's theological writings,	
11		that showed how Wesley used scripture tradition,	
12		(0.4)	
13		reason and experience,	
14		when navigating moral issues.	
15		(0.6)	
16		In Baptist life I'll admit,	
17		(0.4)	
18		we have a tendency to turn only to scripture.	
19		When thinking through moral problems.	
20		(0.6)	
21		But as Christians there are wider resources,	
22		that can help us interpret scripture.	

23	(0.4)	
24	Such as tradition,	
25	reason,	
26	and particularly experience.	
27	(0.8)	
28	Today,	
29	I want to talk a little bit more about the category of experience.	
30	(0.3)	
31	Because this is where we locate,	
32	a theology of embodiment,	
33	or body theology.	
34	(0.8)	
35	Doing theology from the body,	*Rests R hand on podium*
36	is a way to overcome,	*Moves R hand down*
37	the mind body dualism still present in Christian theology and practice.	
38	(0.5)	
39	It draws on the category of lived experience,	
40	to help us navigate the moral life.	
41	(1.0)	
42	It reminds us that we are not just our minds.	
43	(0.3)	
44	But we <u>are</u> embodied people.	
45	(0.7)	
46	Our bodies shape the way we interact with each other,	*Rests L hand on podium*
47	(0.3)	
48	and the ways in which we know ourselves.	

Browning begins by laying out how the Wesleyan quadrilateral came to be, and by acknowledging that Baptists often give more weight to scripture than other sources of moral authority (lines 16-18). However, she invokes the other tenets of the quadrilateral in an attempt to recalibrate how each of these sources of authority are weighted (lines 21-26). In particular, she elevates the category of experience (or the body) for the audience's consideration (lines 35-37), and she positions this recalibration in an activist light. Browning claims that by situating experience at the center of the quadrilateral and doing theology "from the body," Christians can overcome the mind-body dualism that has dominated many parts of Christianity, particularly in the Puritanical roots of American Baptist life. Browning's elevation of the body echoes other parts of scripture such as the Gospel of John, which states, "And the Word became flesh and lived among us" (John 1:14, New Revised Standard

Version). In crucial ways, the Christian narrative hinges on the embodiment of the divine, of God taking human bodily form in order to save humanity. The embodied theology that Browning proposes therefore supplants the traditional Baptist emphasis on the primacy of scripture ("the word") with the body ("the flesh") as the source of wisdom through which other sources of authority are understood.

By contrast, Fannin focuses less on which source of authority in the quadrilateral should be primary and more on how these sources of authority interact. In particular, he examines the tensions between "the culture" and "tradition" and how elevating personal and cultural experiences can produce moral reasoning that is overshadowed by the individual rather than constructed in community.

Example 3.6. "What… should the individual trust" (FanninPlenary 19:10-20:00)

1	Fannin:	Most #### see no need,	
2		for a religious,	
3		or for that matter sexual identity,	
4		(0.4)	
5		other than the one they invent,	
6		(0.6)	
7		or learn through osmosis.	
8		(1.2)	
9		I'm not arguing that Baptists should discount our personal feelings.	
10		Or either reclaim,	
11		or withdraw from the culture.	
12		(0.4)	
13		That's not what I'm arguing.	*Begins shaking head*
14		(0.6)	
15		I don't think we could,	
16		even if we wanted to.	
17		Or tried.	*Stops shaking head*
18		(1.3)	
19		However,	
20		(0.2)	
21		although the individual may assert that Jesus is their authority,	
22		(0.6)	
23		it's very likely that,	
24		quote,	
25		what the Bible says,	*Forms air quote*
26		or,	
27		where the spirit leads,	*Forms air quote*

28 (0.2)
29 will turn out to be what he or she wants the Bible to say,
30 (0.5)
31 or where he or she wants the spirit to lead.
32 (0.7)
33 Which is often precisely what the culture has formed him or her to want.
34 (1.1)
35 There's always some community,
36 and some tradition,
37 informing the individual's moral reasoning.
38 (0.7)
39 So the proper question is not,
40 (0.4)
41 which has priority,
42 the individual,
43 or the community and the tradition,
44 (0.6)
45 but what sort of community and tradition,
46 should the individual trust.

Fannin constructs an argument around the problem of what happens when "the culture" (which appears to be a gloss for feelings, desire, individualism, and so on) co-opts community and tradition. He does not completely sideline the category of experience, but he argues that it how the category of experience is constructed and perceived matters (line 9). As he puts it, "there is always some community, some tradition, informing the individual's moral reasoning" (lines 35-37) and so the real question becomes "what sort of community and tradition should the individual trust" (lines 45-46). Compared to Browning, Fannin is thus more concerned about holding each source of authority accountable to the other rather than determining which source of authority should be primary.

However, Fannin's use of air quotes in lines 25 and 27 indicates his skepticism of the ways in which many Christians go about relating certain parts of the quadrilateral to others. He argues that even the processes of scriptural interpretation ("what the Bible says") and spiritual revelation ("where the spirit leads") are often inextricably linked to feelings and culture (lines 29-33). Whereas Browning positively highlights the quadrilateral category of experience as a means of productive interpretation for scripture and history, Fannin

somewhat dismissively casts experience as a degradation of these other more reliable components of the quadrilateral.

Fannin and Browning both invoke the prior text of the Wesleyan quadrilateral to critically examine the ways in which Christians can and should go about moral reasoning. While this invocation points to the continued influence of Wesley's theological model on modern Christian thought, the most interesting points of analysis arise in the places where Fannin and Browning reconfigure and relate the elements of the quadrilateral to one another. They each construct radically different understandings of the respective roles of different sources of authority within Christianity.

2.2 Constructing love as a moral paradigm

As Fannin and Browning lay out their understandings of the place and weight of different sources of moral authority, they also begin to construct ethical paradigms for how to think about the place of sexuality in Christians' lives. In particular, they both invoke the concept of love, but they have radically different takes on what love can or should prompt Christians to do in relation to sexuality.

In the next example, Fannin once again contrasts Christianity with the dominant (secular) culture, drawing a distinction between different views on love. In other places during his plenary talk, he speaks at length about how he believes the defining characteristic of Baptists is "cultural captivity" – that is, their propensity to equate their religious and ethical mores with the prevailing sociopolitical movements of their time. He continues this juxtaposition of culture and Christianity in Example 3.7, positioning the Christian conception

of love as a system that imposes order and limitations on the cultural conception of love as "anything goes."

Example 3.7. "Love sometimes says no" (FanninPlenary 8:07-8:30)

1	Fannin:	In the dominant cultural narrative,	
2		(0.5)	
3		love is always nice and accepting.	
4		(0.5)	
5		That is,	
6		it always says yes.	
7		Or almost always.	
8		(0.4)	
9		In contrast,	
10		in the Christian narrative,	
11		love sometimes says no.	
12		(0.8)	
13		A word that's hard to accept.	
14		(0.9)	
15		This no is essential,	
16		because of the reality of sin.	
17		(0.3)	
18		Which affects all of our desires.	
19		Even those,	
20		like sexual desire,	*Opens palms on edges of podium*
21		that naturally long for the good.	
22		(0.9)	
23		And which every culture is tempted to deny.	

In this example, Fannin takes a somewhat paternalistic approach to characterizing the role of love in the Christian narrative, and also its role in the lives of Christians. He once again draws a distinction between "culture" and "Christianity," this time spelling out how love operates differently in each of these contexts (lines 1-11). In recent decades, the concept of love has been mobilized by many religious progressives as a way to reclaim what they see as the core message of the Christian faith: to love self and others in radical ways. Fannin seems to conflate the "dominant cultural narrative" with the call of progressive Christianity to be "nice and accepting" (lines 1-3). Instead he proposes that the role of love within Christianity is – or should be – to set healthy boundaries, to "sometimes [say] no" (line 11).

In Fannin's argument, true Christianity is beholden to religious tradition, while false Christianity is beholden to culture. Once again, he draws on assumptions about human nature, sin, and love that he does not necessarily explicate. For example, he claims that "no" is an essential part of a Christian conceptualization of love, but he does not explore here or elsewhere in his talk who says "no" and to what. Moreover, Fannin puts culture in a double bind by positing not only that it misunderstands the role of love but also that it denies the existence, or at least the impact, of sin. "Culture" thus becomes a catch-all for problematic parts of what Fannin sees as corrupting a pure – or at least purer – form of Christianity, preserved in sacred texts and traditions.

This portion of Fannin's plenary talk is one of his most direct indictments of progressive Christianity, to which many if not most of the audience members adhere. Whereas in other places of his talk, the audience might be able to interpret Fannin's use of the word *culture* to mean secular society, his invocation of concepts such as love and sin place his critique here squarely within the realm of Christianity. While Browning works to contextualize tradition and scripture in relation to reason and experience, Fannin does not carve out space for an ethical interpolation of culture or experience as valid sources of moral authority within Christianity. It is always a point of departure, a contrastive caricature, by which to measure its shortcomings against tradition and scripture.

By contrast, Browning crafts a narrative around the concept of love that draws on the various positive aspects of love found throughout Christian scripture and history. Like Fannin, she also directly addresses the notion of setting limitations on love, but she goes a step further than Fannin and lays out what the criteria are or should be for determining right and just types of love. Whereas Fannin's conceptualization of love and sexual ethics draws

heavily on its juxtaposition with culture, Browning does most of her conceptual work clarifying the sometimes murky notions of love and ethics within Christianity. In fact, the entire thrust of her talk is to solidly position experience as a credible source of ethical authority.

Example 3.8. "The law of love" (BrowningPlenary 29:42-30:37)

1	Browning:	We also remember the law of love.	
2		(0.6)	
3		We remember,	
4		that we are called to love our neighbors as ourselves,	
5		(0.5)	
6		which means we first have to learn to love ourselves.	*Nods*
7		(0.4)	
8		To care for our bodies.	
9		(0.8)	
10		We remember,	
11		in the gospel of John,	
12		where Jesus says we will be known as his disciples,	
13		because of the love we have for one another.	
14		(1.3)	
15		In navigating the moral life,	
16		(0.6)	
17		could we not be true—	
18		more true to our calling,	
19		by focusing on love?	
20		(0.8)	
21		Now this doesn't mean that anything goes if we call it love.	*Shrugs shoulders*
22		(0.8)	
23		Like Farley reminds us,	
24		(0.4)	
25		there are certainly foolish and mistaken loves,	
26		unjust loves,	
27		(0.3)	
28		that we should never bless.	
29		(0.9)	
30		But when we find love,	*Clasps hands together*
31		(0.2)	
32		rooted in justice.	
33		(0.7)	
34		When we find love rooted in commitment,	
35		(0.4)	
36		rooted in Christ,	
37		when we find love that shapes us as moral people,	
38		(0.3)	
39		and seeks the good of others,	
40		(0.8)	
41		how can we deny the blessing,	

42 (0.2)
43 that only covenant can give.

While Browning and Fannin did not have the benefit of reading each other's talks before the conference, it is clear that they are both operating within the same religious tradition and cultural context, in which love is a relevant theme. In seeming response to Fannin's characterization of supposedly disordered love as "always nice and accepting," Browning characterizes proper Christian love as rooted in justice, a concept she draws on from theologian Margaret Farley's book *Just Love* (cited in line 23). Instead of focusing on a litmus test for love and relationships (such as Fannin's "yes" and "no"), she focuses on the quality and characteristics of love (lines 30-39).

Interestingly, Browning first frames love in somewhat legalistic terms, referring to the "law of love" that compels Christians to love their neighbors as themselves (lines 1-6). However, this law is one that comes directly from God as expressed in scripture, rather than from human interpretations of what the boundaries of love should be. More than laying out an argument *against* something (e.g., culture, individualism, progressivism), Browning is laying out a treatise *for* something: namely, loving and trusting one's body as a source of moral wisdom.

Browning directly invokes scriptural references in supporting her characterization of love (lines 4, 10-13), something Fannin explicitly avoids doing. She is thus inviting the audience into new understandings of prior texts such as Jesus' commandments that most of them are likely familiar with. Her approach is pastoral and warm, even as her agenda is somewhat radical and ambitious. She is introducing a new litmus test for sexual ethics: not right and wrong ("yes" and "no"), but just and unjust. This gives a new lens through which to view moral decisions – not as dictated from on high by the immutable authority of scripture

and tradition, but as lived in the bodies of people whose experiences are considered in an evaluation of justice.

The plenary speakers' elevated positioning within the conference event thus creates a particular type of discourse space in which the speakers are able to both invoke and wield authority. In all of the examples analyzed here, we see that the voices that interdiscursively engage with prior texts are every bit as central in the construction of religious authority as the sources on which they draw. Fannin and Browning utilize similar ideological elements but in varying configurations and with different emphases, yielding vastly disparate frameworks for constructing an approach to sexual ethics. Indeed, the seemingly static elements that comprise religious texts and traditions are not quite static after all. Rather, their authority is predicated on the ways in which they are manifested in the lives and discourses of religious practitioners, who bring their own subjectivity and interpretations to the table.

Here, DuBois' (2009) investigation into the co-voicing of ritual in solitude helps us see the dialogicality that is inherent even in seemingly monologic contexts. He notes, "Ritual is designed precisely to mediate the reflexive engagement between the implied voice of a prior text and the present voice of one who would reenact it. It is in this sense that ritual is constructed dialogically, through the collaborative achievement of co-voicing" (pg. 337). On many levels, the plenary speakers at the conference are engaging in various types of religious rituals in their talks – the rituals of reciting, proclaiming, testifying, interpreting. These rituals are interpolated with complex layers of interdiscursive engagement as they collaboratively co-voice, and as a result co-construct, religious authority.

3 Audience engagement as emergent dialogicality

This religious authority arose not only between the dialogic relationship between the plenary speakers and prior texts but also their interactional and emergent relationship with the audience. As mentioned previously, the plenary sessions were structured in such a way as to minimize direct interaction between audience members and the plenary speakers, with no space for discussion. This deliberate constraining of time and space was intended to limit heated debate and "grandstanding" (see discussion in Chapter 2). However, these spatiotemporal constraints did not prevent audience members from spontaneously engaging throughout the talks – both audibly through vocalized responses and digitally through live-tweeting. In this section, I analyze the audible audience responses that interject into the physical space of the conference – specifically laughter, murmuring, and cries of "amen."[4] In the next chapter, I turn to the alternative discourse spaces that were created through the audience's simultaneous engagement on digital platforms.

In a structurally formal space such as a conference plenary session (and in particular at a gathering of mostly white mainline religious folks) there are typically only a handful of sanctioned audible audience responses. Among them are relevantly placed applause (such as at the beginning and the end of a talk), relevantly timed laughter, and perhaps an "amen" or two when the gathering is religious in nature. Analyzing audience responses gives insight into not only the general interactional norms that govern the space and place of plenary

[4] The video and audio data that was captured at the conference is inevitably incomplete. In particular, because of the angle of the camera and the use of only the podium microphone to capture sound, the ability to hear and analyze audience responses from the video data alone is limited. In this section, I primarily rely on the audience responses that are audible under these technological constraints, and I also draw on my headnotes (Sanjek 1990) as a participant-observer at the conference where necessary and reasonably reliable.

sessions but also some of the relational dynamics that emerge between the audience and a particular speaker.

In total, there were 15 audible audience responses during Fannin's 35-minute talk and 11 audible audience responses during Browning's 30-minute talk. Both talks were bookended by applause to welcome the speakers onto the stage and to usher them off, as was the case for all 14 plenary talks throughout the conference. Given the consistent and predictable incidences of applause at these points, it seems reasonable to assume that these occurrences of applause are part of the conventional structuring of each of the plenary sessions and not necessarily indicative of differential types of engagement from the audience.

3.1 Laughter

One of the most prevalent types of audible audience engagement during the plenary talks was laughter. In fact, not only is laughter one of the few typically sanctioned audience responses, but oftentimes speakers directly solicit laughter from the audience. Laughter has been shown to serve a variety of purposes in interaction, including but not limited to the creation of intimacy, topic transitions, and conflict management (e.g., Glenn 2003; Coates 2007; Norrick and Spitz 2008; Warner-Garcia 2014). In a space as physically and interactionally constrained as a plenary session at a conference – particularly one that is structured to preclude or minimize audience engagement with the speakers – audible responses such as laughter become a crucial component for the audience to react in real time to what is being communicated by the speakers. In this section, I analyze the different functions of laughter based on three factors: the duration of the laughter sequences, whether speaker and audience laughter co-occur in the same sequence, and whether laughter occurs in laughter-relevant

sequences. I demonstrate how each of these factors indicate to an overall positive relationship between Browning and the audience and a somewhat fraught relationship between Fannin and the audience.

There were essentially two different types of audience laughter that occurred during the plenary talks, and these types can be differentiated based on duration. I distinguish between *scattered laughter* as laughter having a duration of 1.5 seconds or less and *extended laughter* as having a duration of more than 1.5 seconds. The audience engaged in both scattered laughter and extended laughter sequences during the two talks, though at different rates. During Fannin's talk, there were 7 instances of scattered laughter and 2 instances of extended laughter. During Browning's talk, there were 3 instances of scattered laughter and 2 instances of extended laughter.

Fannin and Browning both engage in light-hearted openings for their talks, drawing extended laughter from the audience. In Example 3.9, Fannin begins his talk by teasingly saying that the conference organizers should have taken the Atlanta Braves' baseball team schedule into account when planning the timing of the event.

Example 3.9. "The Braves are not in town" (FanninPlenary, 00:20-00:45)

1	Fannin:	%I wanna say before I begin,	
2		%I'm,	
3		very,	
4		(0.8)	
5		happy to be,	
6		in my,	
7		home state?	
8		@	
9		(0.5)	
10		And in the town where I was born?	
11		(0.7)	
12		Um,	
13		I'm very upset,	
14		that the Braves are not in town?	
15	Audience:	@[@@]	*Laughter duration: 1.3 seconds*

16	Fannin:	[Um,]	
17		Cause I don't get many chances to @come back?	
18		So I feel like that was a little bit of a wasted opportunity?	
19		On the conference organizers' part.	
20		(0.3)	
21	Audience:	@@@@	
22	Fannin:	[Um,]	
23	Audience:	[@@@]	
24		@@@@	
25	Fannin:	[(clears throat)]	
26	Audience:	[@@]	
27		@@@@	*Laughter duration: 3.7 seconds*
28	Fannin:	But I'll--	
29		I'll be okay (Hx).	

Similarly, Browning launches her plenary talk with an extended story about her younger brother in the joke genre style of "kids say the darnedest things." Example 3.10 presents the opening anecdote from her talk, which solicits raucous extended laughter from the audience.

Example 3.10. "What do you know about sex?" (BrowningPlenary, 01:03-02:20)

1	Browning:	Um,
2		(0.2)
3		this is a story about my little brother.
4		And,
5		I didn't ask to tell this story,
6		so I might get in trouble.
7		(0.6)
8		Um,
9		but,
10		when my little brother was in first grade,
11		(0.4)
12		he liked to sit with the big kids on the bus.
13		(0.6)
14		And so one day,
15		on the way home,
16		the big kids,
17		he was sitting with on the bus,
18		were talking about sex.
19		(0.6)
20		And now,
21		my little first-grade brother,
22		thought he knew what sex was.
23		(0.7)
24		But the thing that these kids were talking about was different.
25		(0.6)
26		They were talking about bodies touching bodies,
27		(0.4)

28		They said that,	
29		you had to have sex to make a baby?	
30		Which back then was true.	
31		(0.6)	
32		Um,	
33	Audience:	@@@@@@@@@@@@[@@@]	*Laughter duration: 5.0 seconds*
34	Browning:	[And he thought] this was ludicrous,	
35		he had no idea what was going on,	
36		so he came home,	
37		(0.4)	
38		and he--	
39		As soon as he got off the bus,	
40		he found my mom,	
41		and he said,	
42		(0.3)	
43		<VOX>Mom.	
44		You won't believe what the big kids were saying on the bus.</VOX>	
45		(0.3)	
46		And he told her about all this,	
47		he told her everything he heard,	
48		(0.6)	
49		my mom looked at him,	
50		and listened intently,	
51		and he said,	
52		(0.4)	
53		<VOX> is it true?	
54		(0.4)	
55		Do you have to have sex to have a baby?</VOX>	
56		(0.7)	
57		And my mom looked at him and said,	
58		<VOX>Well,	
59		Ryan?	
60		What do you know about sex.</VOX>	
61		(0.8)	
62		And he looked back at her,	
63		and he said,	
64		(0.2)	
65		<VOX>I don't know much.	
66		(0.3)	
67		But I know at church,	
68		they tell us not to do it?	
69		And I know our pastor doesn't do it.</VOX>	
70		(0.3)	
71	Audience:	@@@@@@@@@@	*Laughter duration: 5.2 seconds*

Examples 3.9 and 3.10 represent instances where each of the plenary speakers structures part of their talk to allow for and even solicit laughter from the audience. The content of their speech, as well as the presence of pauses before the audience laughter sequences, indicates that the speakers structured their talks in such a way as to invite the

audience to actively and positively engage with their talks. The length of the extended laughter sequences is also notable. The audience produces 3.7 seconds of extended laughter in response to Fannin's joke, which takes 19 seconds to setup (lines 1-20), while they produce two separate sequences of laughter lasting 5 seconds and 5.2 seconds in response to Browning's joke, which is setup in two parts lasting 32 seconds (lines 1-32) and 35 seconds (lines 34-70) respectively. This gives a setup-to-laughter ratio of about 5:1 for Fannin's joke and 6:1 for Browning's joke. The duration of these extended laughter sequences thus seems to be correlated to the length of the joke setup.

While it is useful to examine the presence and structure of audience laughter sequences, it is equally valuable to examine the speaker's own use or non-use of laughter. One of the most striking rhetorical differences between the two talks is the abundance of laugh-speak in Fannin's talk and the complete absence of it from Browning's. Throughout his talk, Fannin produces a total of 4 instances of stand-alone laughter, 29 instances of isolated laugh-speak (where laugh inflection is limited to a single word), and 4 instances of extended laugh-speak (where laugh inflection is deployed across multiple words). Of the 37 total instances of laughter that Fannin produces, only about a quarter of them (n=10) occur in laughter-relevant sequences that are preceded or followed by an audience laughter sequence. The other 27 instances occur sporadically throughout Fannin's talk, at places that are not seemingly intended to be humorous or lighthearted.

Such a sequence is illustrated by Example 3.11 below. Prior to this example, Fannin has been musing on the scope and feasibility of the conference, comparing it to another recent event that had not included space for more traditional voices in the conversation about sexual ethics. Here, he turns to reflect on the irony and even pain of his own positioning as a

privileged person advocating for Christian teachings that traditionally have been deployed against sexual and gender minorities.

Example 3.11. "I take it very seriously" (FanninPlenary, 5:21-6:31)

Fannin: Somewhat selfishly,
I'm also anxious,
because I like to think,
that I'm deeply concerned with social justice.
(0.8)
And that,
being a pacifist,
I do not condone violence or oppression of any kind.
(1.1)
But I know how powerful impressions can be.
Particularly when it comes to such a touchy subject.
(0.6)
After all,
I'm a white male who's from the south,
(0.6)
teaches at a university that prohibits sexual activity,
outside of heterosexual marriage,
(0.8)
who was a virgin until getting married,
(0.3)
and has one child and another on the way.
(0.9)
And yes,
I'm convinced that the church's traditional teachings,
(0.3)
properly understood,
(0.6)
they're often not properly understood,
(0.6)
are correct,
(0.3)
and that although sexual orientation is determined by a combination of genetics,
and environment?
(0.6)
sexual behavior is rightly directed toward two equally valid ideals.
(0.3)
Celibacy and heterosexual marriage.
(0.7)
That the latter has two inseparable ends,
procreation and the union of husband and wife,
in self-giving love,
(0.7)
and that apart from these ends,
there is no well-grounded rationale,
for anything other,
(0.4)

47 than approval of virtually all consensual sexual activity.
48 (1.1)
49 In @other @words,
50 (0.2)
51 it @may appear that I ex@emplify,
52 sexual exclusivism,
53 and @heterosexism.
54 (1.7)
55 And I'm not making light of this charge,
56 I'm saying it maybe in a light way,
57 but I'm not making light of it.
58 I take it @very seriously.
59 Very very seriously.

In this example, Fannin is explicating the serious reservations he has about his own positionality at the conference and particularly with delivering the content of his talk. He delivers the culmination of these observations with an extended episode of laugh-speak (lines 49-53), indicting himself in two exclusionary processes – sexual exclusivism and heterosexism – that are likely to be on the minds of the audience members listening to him. His use of laughter at this point seems to represent a desire to diffuse the implications of his positionality as well as to indicate to the audience that he is self-aware enough to realize its problematic nature. (For an extended discussion of how coping laughter works to mitigate interactional face threats, see Warner-Garcia 2014.) Moreover, he takes the meta-awareness to the next level and proceeds to comment on his use of coping laughter from lines 49-53, pointing out that he in fact takes the matter "very seriously" (line 58), a line that notably is also produced with laugh-speak. Fannin's use of laughter thus creates something of a double-bind: it is deployed in order to diffuse tension (either on his part or the audience), but it may also have the effect of inserting levity in inappropriate places.

3.2 Murmuring

In addition to Fannin's use of laugh-speak to mitigate the potential negative effects of his own speech, he also employs laugh-speak – along with laughter pulses and smile voice – in order to mitigate the third type of audible audience engagement that was present during his talk: murmuring. While applause and laughter might be seen as overall positive types of audience engagement, murmuring is typically not. The negative affect of the audience's murmuring is especially apparent in the context seen in Example 3.12.

Throughout the conference, participants engaged in the communal singing of hymns before each of the plenary sessions. In this example, Fannin points out the apparently paradoxical nature of two of those hymns. The first, "Sing a New Church," is a modern hymn written by sacred music composer Delores Dufner and published in 1994 by the Oregon Catholic Press (Gia Publications n.d.). The song contains themes of unity in diversity, global peace and justice, and the church's role in "shap[ing] a circle ever wider" for grace and inclusion. The second, "God of Grace and God of Glory," was written in 1930 by Harry Emerson Fosdick, a white Baptist pastor who led an interdenominational and interracial church in New York City and who was a strong advocate for urban social ministry (Hawn n.d.). The song, written during the Great Depression and in between the two World Wars, is a petition for moral courage in troubling times and a call for the church to align itself with the priorities of God rather than humankind. The line from this song that Fannin references appears in the first stanza, which entreats God to "crown thine ancient church's story, bring its bud to glorious flower." The dialectics of these two songs – one with Catholic roots, the other with Baptist roots, one modern, the other over 80 years old – already represent a notable juxtaposition on the part of the conference organizers, who chose to include both in

the worship sessions of the event. However, in this example, Fannin pits the paradoxes present in the songs against each other and ultimately concludes that they cannot be held in productive tension, at least not by moderate Baptists.

Example 3.12. "We can't sing a new church" (FanninPlenary, 12:19-13:14)

1	Fannin:	Therefore I'm skeptical,	
2		about moderate Baptist capacity,	
3		to receive the wisdom of the church,	
4		(0.3)	
5		in its history and catholicity,	
6		(0.4)	
7		rather than treating the tradition,	
8		as something to be selectively mined for resources,	
9		(0.3)	
10		caricatured as anti-sex,	
11		(0.3)	
12		or simply dismissed out of hand.	
13		(1.0)	
14		And--	*Scratches nose*
15		And I was struck yesterday,	*Looks up at audience*
16		by um,	
17		(0.6)	
18		The two songs that we sang.	*Continuously moves R hand in circular motion*
19		(0.5)	
20		The first one,	
21		had a line that said,	
22		sing a new church.	
23		(1.0)	*Smiles*
24		((Sniffs))	*Scratches nose*
25		And I thought,	
26		well that's interesting,	
27		because we can't--	
28		(0.7)	
29		s- I--	
30		<☺>I understand the sentiment,	
31		but we can't sing a new church.	
32		(0.3)	
33	Audience:	((Murmur))	
34	Fannin:	Um,	
35		the church is the church. </☺>	
36		It's--	
37		It's always been around.	
38		((Sniffs))	
39		(0.4)	
40		Um,	*Looks down at podium*
41		and then,	
42		I was also @struck,	
43		by the second song we sang,	
44		that had a line,	

45		that said,	
46		(0.4)	
47		@Crown thine ancient,	
48		(0.3)	
49		church's story.	
50		<☺>(Hx)	*Looks up at audience*
51		(H)</☺>	
52		So can we really,	*Furrows brow*
53		crown the ancient church's story,	*Points in distinct locations near podium*
54		and sing a new church.	
55	Audience:	((Murmur))	
56	Fannin:	Interpreted in a certain way we @can,	*Continuously moves R hand in circular motion*
57		but you see how,	
58		(0.7)	
59		For Baptists,	
60		I think we've been much more on the end of,	
61		(0.2)	
62		sing a new church.	
63		(0.3)	
64		Rather than,	
65		crown thine ancient church's story.	*Looks down at podium*

For the majority of his talk, Fannin reads his speech off of the paper in front of him on the podium. However, Example 3.12 represents one of the few times in his talk that he goes off-script and directly addresses the audience with remarks that appear not to have been written ahead of time. Beginning in line 15, he looks up at the audience and engages in much more elaborate gesturing than is present throughout most of the rest of his talk. The initiation of smile-voice in line 30 might be an indication that he acknowledges that what he is saying might be controversial to the audience, or that he is inviting the audience to understand and agree with his evaluation. When he is met with murmuring from the audience, he eventually returns his gaze to the podium (line 40) but presses on to note the line that struck him from the second song (lines 41-49). He once again pauses his speech and looks at the audience with a smile (compare lines 32 and 50-51), ultimately culminating his thoughts with a rhetorical question to the audience (lines 52-54). The audience once again responds with murmuring, a bit louder this time (line 55), and Fannin backs off of his conclusion slightly to allow for the possibility of other interpretations of the dialectics (line 56). However, he

brings it back to the initial point he made at the beginning of the example, claiming that Baptists tend to dismiss the tradition and history of the church (supposedly captured in the line "sing a new church") rather than building on this tradition (as represented in the line "crown thine ancient church's story"). While it is difficult to determine the precise meaning of the audience's murmuring, Fannin's response to these episodes seems to indicate that he interprets this type of audience engagement as disaligning with the point he is trying to make. In the next chapter, this example will be further elucidated by looking at some of the tweets that audience members produced during this precise point in his talk.

3.3 "Amen"

During Browning's talk, no such murmuring was recorded. Rather, apart from applause and laughter, the only other type of audible audience engagement was from an audience member (or possibly multiple members) who exclaimed "amen" at two separate points during her talk. While the rhetorical practice of call and response is common among some Christian groups such as African-American congregations and Pentecostals (Keith & Whittenberger-Keith 1988; Pitts 1989; Wharry 2003), for this group of mostly white mainline Baptists, a spontaneous "amen" was not necessarily the norm.

Example 3.13. "Amen" (BrowningPlenary, 26:17-26:44)

1	Browning:	We might ask the same question asked at a recent breakout session at CBF,
2		General Assembly.
3		(0.3)
4		How is God calling us to be the presence of Christ,
5		among people with same-sex orientation.
6		(1.0)
7		<☺>Yet,
8		when we ask the question,
9		we must remember that we who are Christians,</☺>
10		(0.5)

11		we who are the presence of Christ,
12		are both gay and straight,
13		(0.4)
14		young and old,
15		rich and poor,
16		marginalized and mainline,
17		(0.2)
18		male female transgender queer.
19		(0.4)
20	Audience:	Amen.
21		(1.6)

In this and the other example where an audience member responds with an "amen" (not analyzed here), Browning is detailing some of the more progressive and inclusive points of her talk. Here, she points out that Christians are not only called to minister to marginalized peoples but also to welcome them as part of the Christian communities in which they are already participants. In the other "amen" episode (which occurs about one minute after this one), Browning notes that much of what many Christians today believe about gender and sexuality is based on ancient understandings of mind-body dualism and strict gender roles where women were subordinate to men. In Example 3.13, Browning structures her speech to evoke the rhythms and cadence of a prototypical call-and-response sequence, including pairs of words that on the whole are organized into parallel intonation units (lines 12-18).

Each of these examples of audience engagement – applause, laughter, murmuring, and cries of "amen" – demonstrate an emergent dialogicality within the constrained physical space of the plenary talks. My analysis shows that even within these restrictive discourse spaces that disallowed extended engagement through question-and-answer discussions, the speakers and the audience were able to create meaningful and substantial amounts of interdiscursivity. In the next chapter, I will explore additional ways in which the audience transcended the constraints of the plenary sessions by engaging in real-time digital discourse through live-tweeting.

4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analyzed a number of different levels of interdiscursivity that were present during two of the plenary talks at the conference. Throughout their talks, Fannin and Browning bring prior texts into dialogue with current theological and ethical issues – specifically, they both mobilize the Wesleyan quadrilateral in distinct ways in order to address questions around sexual morality. Moreover, they invoke familiar and similar Christian concepts such as love in order to construct ethical paradigms that potentially recast these prior texts. Finally, the speakers and the audience co-construct a framework for engagement through emergently dialogic practices such as laughter. My analysis demonstrates that, even in a largely monologic space such as a plenary session at a conference, there are always interdiscursive elements already present. Moreover, the sanctioned speakers in this constrained space mobilize these interdiscursive elements to very different effects, elucidating the assumptions and positionality not only of the speakers but also the audience. In the next chapter, I explore the ways in which participants circumvented the constraints of these physical spaces by utilizing the digital discourse space of Twitter.

Chapter 4

Live-tweeting and the subversiveness of alternative discourse spaces

In the previous chapter, I analyzed the ways in the plenary speakers at the [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant interdiscursively engaged with many of the same Christian texts and traditions in order to construct moral understandings of sexuality. I also explored how the emergently dialogic actions of the audience injected an additional layer of interdiscursivity into these spaces as they spontaneously reacted to the words and ideas of the plenary speakers. In this chapter, I examine yet another domain of interdiscursive complexity that emerged at the conference through the digital platform of Twitter. Throughout the three-day conference, over 2,000 tweets were produced by over 140 users with the hashtag #SexandCovenant. I show how the practices of live-tweeting afforded more expansive types of real-time and simultaneous dialogic engagement at the conference by subverting the constraints on physical spaces, allowing for complex participation frameworks, and challenging existing systems of structural power and influence. These practices allowed participants to create alternative discourse spaces that were interpolated on top of and around the carefully constructed spaces at the conference itself.

1 Sociality, power, and collective action on Twitter

As noted in Chapter 2, Twitter occupies a unique space in the social media landscape. It embodies and promotes a novel form of engagement among its users, making it a particularly interesting site of study for scholars of discourse (e.g., Page 2012; Zappavigna 2012; Squires and Iorio 2014; Thornborrow 2014; Chiluwa and Ifukor 2015; Evans 2015). As Bonilla and Rosa (2015: 7) note, "In the era of transistor radios and television sets, one did not necessarily know what listeners or viewers yelled back at their machines, but on Twitter one can get a sense of individual responses to mediatized events." Moreover, Bonilla and Rosa point out, Twitter users are not simply posting *about* something, as is common on a platform such as Facebook – rather, they are participating *in* something when they tweet. The use of hashtags (marked by #) in particular can serve to topicalize something while also constituting multiple levels of indexicality (cf. Silverstein 2003). That is, a hashtag can provide metadata that a tweet is about something while also interdiscursively importing indexical meanings to the conversation.

Additionally, participation in Twitter discourse is sometimes viewed as a particular type of social action. As Squires (2015: 252) notes, "Many users of Twitter see tweeting itself as a potential form of activism, giving voices to those unrepresented by mainstream dialogue elsewhere in mass media." The activist potential of digital platforms like Twitter has been documented by a number of linguistic anthropologists and social movement scholars (e.g., Juris 2012; Penny and Dadas 2013; Tremayne 2014; Bastos et al 2015; Williams 2015; Lee and Chan 2016; Gerbaudo 2018), and their insights provide a productive

framework for understanding the ways that the Twittersphere can serve as a subversive discourse space.

Twitter is used for a variety of purposes, including – but not limited to – journalism (both mass media and citizen journalism), marketing and branding, activism and social movements, and engagement with popular culture and celebrities (e.g., Hermida 2010; Burton and Soboleva 2011; Larosa et al 2012; Murphy 2012; Stever and Lawson 2013; Leung et al 2015). All of these purposes are accomplished through a sort of "ambient" sociality (Gillen and Merchant 2013) that is created by the platform's particular norms and features. Twitter is also distinctive among social media sites in that it "centers on text, information, and publicity, while de-centering reciprocity, privacy, and multimodality" (Squires 2015: 247). The public and asymmetrical nature of Twitter can both create and destabilize particular power dynamics that are operational in both the online and offline worlds. Because they are largely user-driven, "social media platforms such as Twitter offer sites for collectively constructing counternarratives and reimagining group identities" (Bonilla and Rosa 2015: 6). These dynamics can be seen in particular in the phenomenon of live-tweeting, in which users co-create conversational ecologies that are synergistic and divergent from mainstream narratives of real-life events.

The phenomenon of *live-tweeting* has been well-documented for events such as presidential debates, television watching, sports games, and even academic conferences (e.g., Shamma, Kennedy, and Churchill, 2009; Hawthorne, Houston, and McKinney 2013; Djuricich and Zee-Cheng 2015; Ji and Zhao 2015). Essentially, live-tweeting is a social action where a Twitter user posts a tweet about an event while the event is happening. While live-tweeting is temporally constrained (users must be tweeting about something as it

simultaneously occurs), it is not physically constrained. Users may or may not be physically present at the event, and they may or may not be co-present with other people (who may or may not be engaged in the same event). Given these parameters, live-tweeting often affords different types of dialogic engagement than is achievable in face-to-face interaction. For example, with live-tweeting, multiple participants can intelligibly contribute to a "conversation" in a synchronous manner, and users can even simultaneously participate in multiple conversations at once. Additionally, since almost all Twitter conversations are publicly viewable, participation frameworks are vastly extended to include a potentially incalculable number of onlookers to the conversation (cf. Goffman 1981). In my analysis in the following section, I demonstrate the ways in which users capitalize on all of these features of the social action of live-tweeting in order to expand the interdiscursivity of a physically constrained discourse space.

2 Live-tweeting at the [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant

The live-tweeting that occurred during that 2012 [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant allowed for the development of discourse spaces that were both coextensive with but distinct from the physical space of the conference. In particular, participants' Twitter activity allowed them to engage in real-time dialogue around the ideas that were being raised at the conference but that were not allowed voice in the plenary sessions. Moreover, the fact that these types of conversation unfolded in the decidedly public and social space of Twitter often served to level the playing field among official and unofficial voices (cf. Squires and

Iorio's 2014 discussion of the importation of vernacular writing into the public sphere). In this section, I investigate the different types of voices that were present in this digital discourse space and the unique affordances of the Twitter platform in constructing a somewhat subversive paradigm for engagement in constrained spaces.

Broadly speaking, three different types of users participated in the #SexandCovenant Twitter conversation: official organizers, conference attendees, and non-co-present participants. In the following sections, I analyze tweets from these three groups in order to demonstrate the different ways that each participated in extensions of interdiscursivity into the alternative discourse space of Twitter.

2.1 Official voices

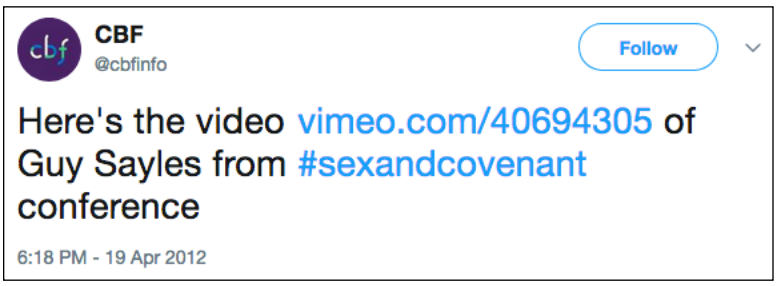
The official accounts of the two institutional sponsors for the event, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (@CBFInfo) and the Mercer University Center for Theology and Public Life (@CTPLMercer), tweeted regular updates throughout the conference. Additionally, there was an official @SexandCovenant account. Taken together, these three official accounts produced 336 tweets, roughly 16% of the 2077 total #SexandCovenant tweets that were generated during the 3-day conference. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the #SexandCovenant hashtag in fact originated and was promulgated by the official accounts at the event. Even though the #SexandCovenant discourse space was authorized and convened by the conference organizers, the voices that occupied this space (including the official voices) were qualitatively different than those present in other spaces at the conference, as I show in the rest of my analysis in this chapter.

Each of the three official accounts differed in the frequency and content of their tweeting, though on the whole they all maintained a professional, informative, and positive quality. The @CBFInfo account was overseen by CBF's director of communications at the time, Lance Wallace, and CBF staff member Carla Davis was responsible for posting actual updates (L. Wallace, personal communication, November 8, 2018). This account produced 36 tweets that primarily managed the flow of information at the conference. They focused on announcing the beginnings and ends of sessions as well as notifying followers when photos and videos from the event were posted shortly after each session. All of @CBFInfo's posts featured original content and did not retweet (i.e., reproduce a tweet in its entirety with attribution) from other users.[1]

Example 4.1. Tweet from @CBFInfo announcing the beginning of the first conference session

[1] Retweeting can take many forms, including reproducing another person's tweet in its entirety, abridging or

Example 4.2. Tweet from @CBFInfo announcing the availability of a video from one of the plenary sessions



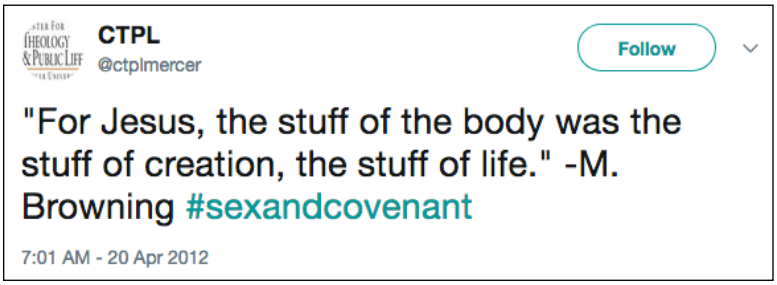
Given the overwhelmingly informational nature of @CBFInfo's tweets (Example 4.1), with almost no commentary or evaluative remarks, it seems that this account was mostly used to provide a digital roadmap of the event to Twitter users who were not physically present at the conference itself. This is further supported by the account's cataloguing of digital resources from the event (Example 4.2), which non-present users could use to learn more about what was being talked about at the conference. The interdiscursive effect of @CBFInfo's tweets was essentially to broadcast information from the conference program, with additional information on the timing and flow of the event (as indexed through the time-stamping of tweets) as well as ways to access more information on other platforms. Despite this relatively bureaucratic functionality of the account, other Twitter users seemed to find @CBFInfo's posts useful, as they retweeted them a total of 67 times.

By contrast, @CTPLMercer was one of the accounts that tweeted most prolifically at the conference, producing a total of 159 tweets (8% of all tweets). Other users averaged a total of 15 tweets throughout the event, with only one other individual (@ecampbellreed) tying @CTPLMercer for the most tweets. The tweets from @CTPLMercer were produced by conference organizer Gushee (D. Gushee, personal communication, November 9, 2018) and

were markedly less formal and official than those from @CBFInfo. They ranged from event commentary to quotations from speakers to retweets of other participants' tweets (which accounted for 45% of this account's total tweets).

Example 4.3. Tweet from @CTPLMercer at the beginning of the conference providing meta-commentary on the proliferation of other #SexandCovenant tweets

Example 4.4. Tweet from @CTPLMercer quoting from Melissa Browning's plenary talk



Example 4.5. Tweet from @CTPLMercer noting the beginning of a session with additional evaluative commentary on its feel and impact

The @CTPLMercer account was very engaged with other tweeters at the conference, as indicated by the fact that nearly half of the tweets were retweets from a variety of other users. In fact, one of the first #SexandCovenant tweets sent from this account (Example 4.3) noted pleasure at seeing the abundance of other tweets from the conference and stated their intention to prolifically retweet. This tweet is also noteworthy in that it mobilizes the use of the first-person pronoun *my* even though the tweet is coming from an official account that otherwise elides the identity of the individual producing the posts. Thus even the official, institutional voices of the conference became somewhat personalized in the digital space of Twitter.

Aside from quoting other Twitter users through retweets, @CTPLMercer also extensively quoted directly from the plenary speakers who were speaking at the conference, such as in Example 4.4. These quotative tweets almost never provided additional contextualization or commentary, leaving it open to interpretation as to how the account user was interactionally aligning with the quoted speech. At the very least, @CTPLMercer's isolation of particular parts of the plenary talks oriented to them as somehow notable and worthy of discussion.

@CTPLMercer's tweeting of quotes from speakers not only interdiscursively marked certain parts of the plenary talks as noteworthy, it also provided some signposting for the flow of the event similar to the @CBFInfo account. At other times, @CTPLMercer noted the goings-on at the conference while also providing commentary on these occurrences, as seen in Example 4.5. After a descriptive opening clause ("plenary started with congregational singing"), the account followed up with affective evaluations that addressed the impact of what was happening at the conference ("funny how," "feels like," "faithful gathering, indeed"). The positively affective stances seen in tweets like this reinforced the official narrative of the event as community-building and conversation-supporting, while also humanizing these official voices.

The final official account for the event, @SexandCovenant, was run by plenary speaker Melissa Browning (M. Browning, personal communication, November 26, 2018) and produced 141 tweets, over 90% of which were identical to those produced by @CTPLMercer. While the overlap in content may have been strategic to maximize the visibility of official tweets from the conference, it did render the more personalized elements expressed in many of the tweets somewhat artificial. Thus there existed a tension between the institutional goals of disseminating information about the conference via official digital channels and authentically framing the message in this alternative discourse space.

Throughout the event, the official voices of the conference occupied a multitude of discourse spaces. As discussed in Chapter 2, organizers worked extensively in the lead-up to the conference to frame the event in the news media as a dialogue or conversation. During the event, the official voices on Twitter bolstered this narrative by providing signposts and scaffolding for those wishing to dialogically engage in this space. While there was occasional

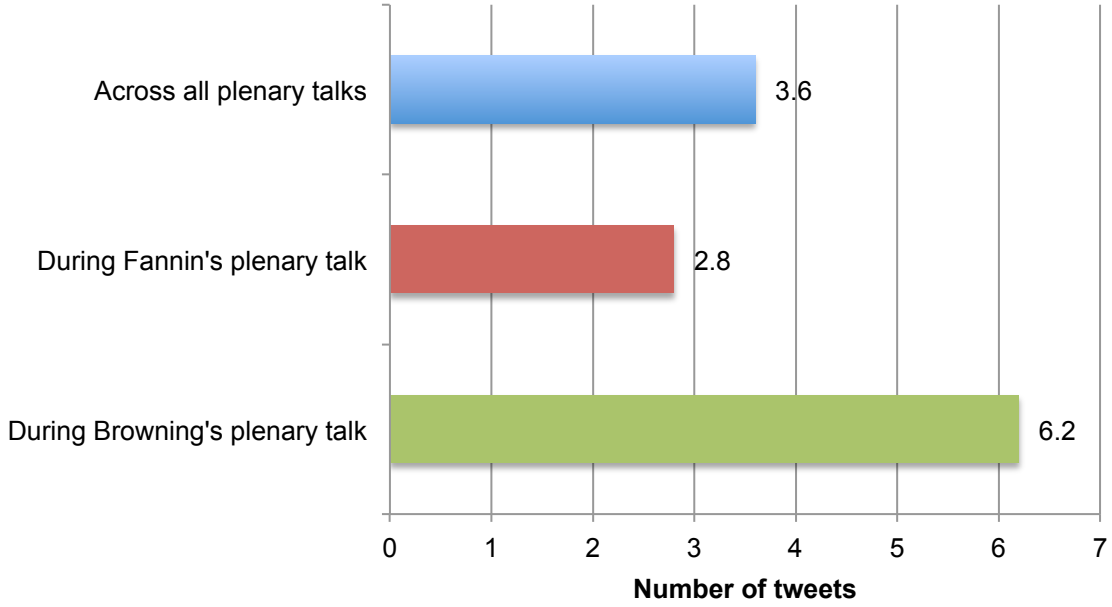
commentary and affective stancetaking, by and large these official voices did not engage in debate or discussion moderation in this digital space. Rather, they took the role of facilitator, even working to establish this discourse space in the first place by encouraging the use of the #SexandCovenant hashtag.

2.2 Co-present conference attendee voices

In this section, I analyze some of the Twitter activity that occurred during the two plenary talks I analyzed in the previous chapter – given by Melissa Browning and Coleman Fannin – in order to show the ways in which participants interdiscursively engaged with the content of these talks. I explore how the digital space of Twitter allowed conference attendees to log their real-time reactions to the content being covered in the plenary sessions in ways that were both public and timely but otherwise precluded by the monologic structuring of the plenary session spaces.

One of the first notable differences between Twitter activity that occurred during Browning's versus Fannin's talks was the volume. By cross-referencing the duration of each plenary talk with the tweet timestamps, I determined that there was an average of 3.6 tweets per minute across all of the 14 plenary talks. Twitter activity was the highest during Browning's talk, averaging 6.2 tweets per minute (185 tweets during her 30-minute talk), and was lower during Fannin's talk, averaging 2.8 tweets per minute (97 tweets during his 35-minute talk).

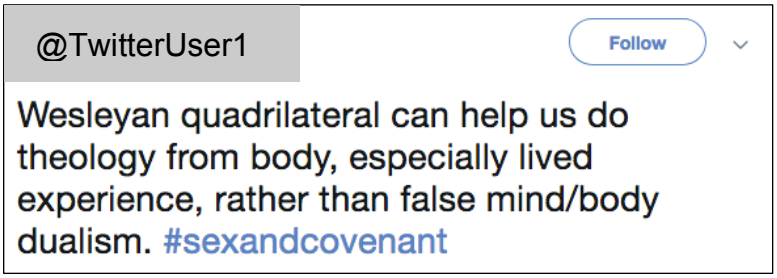
Figure 4.1. Average number of tweets per minute during Fannin's and Browning's plenary talks



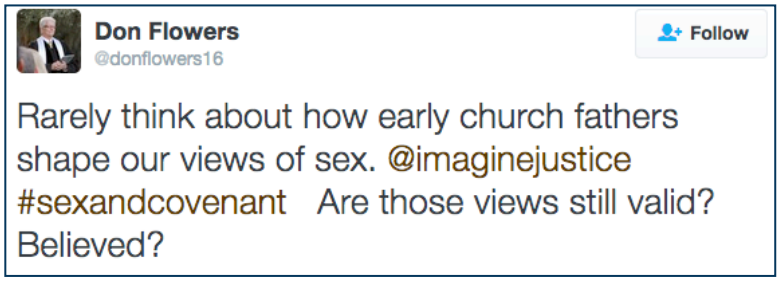
As Figure 1 shows, the amount of dialogic engagement via Twitter was markedly higher during Browning's talk, not only as compared with Fannin's talk but also as compared with all other plenary speakers. After Browning's, the next highest number of tweets per minute during a plenary talk was 5.5, which was the 165 tweets posted during Judge Wendell Griffen's 30-minute talk on the last day of the conference.

Many of the 185 tweets that were produced during Browning's talk engaged with its already interdiscursive elements. Some cited her mobilization of the Wesleyan quadrilateral in overcoming the ideas of mind-body dualism, while others picked up and expanded on her implicit critique of early church fathers and theologians.

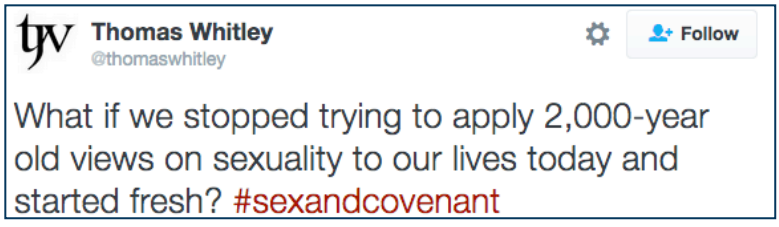
Example 4.6. Tweet from @TwitterUser1[2] paraphrasing Browning's use of the Wesleyan quadrilateral



Example 4.7. Tweet from @donflowers16 reflecting on Browning's analysis of the views of the early church fathers on sex[3]



Example 4.8. Tweet from @thomaswhitley suggesting that Christians excise ancient views from current discussions on sexuality



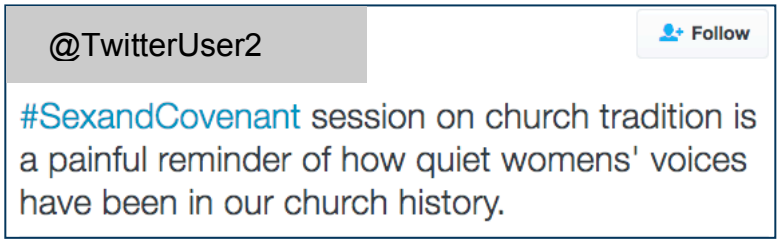
[2] For the three Twitter users from whom I have not received affirmative consent for attribution, I have redacted their usernames and photos, replacing this information with a generic numbered username.

[3] Throughout the conference, Browning also tweeted from her personal account @imaginejustice, and many of the conference participants mentioned her Twitter handle in their tweets about her talk. (Notably, Coleman Fannin did not tweet during the event and does not, to my knowledge, have an active Twitter account.) While I focus in this section on tweets from conference attendees rather than plenary speakers, Browning's personal tweets throughout the conference warrant further study.

Example 4.6 represents a recirculation of some of the ideas analyzed in Browning's talk from Chapter 3 (specifically Examples 3.4 and 3.5). As discussed in the previous section on the official conference accounts, these digital citation practices serve to index a noteworthy quality to particular words and ideas from the plenary speakers while not necessarily imbuing them with additional commentary. By contrast, other Twitter users extrapolated from Browning's citation of early church fathers, calling into question their validity (Example 4.7) or even suggesting a dismissal of them as sources of authority altogether (Example 4.8). The digital discourse space of Twitter thus offered attendees a platform for expressing what they viewed as notable or problematic or downright wrong about the content being covered in the plenary talks, without interjecting into the tightly regulated physical space of the sessions themselves.

While some attendees noted issues with many of the established texts and traditions within Christianity that were invoked during the plenary talks, others called out the absence of certain voices – whether historically or at the conference itself – from the conversation.

Example 4.9. Tweet from @TwitterUser2 noting the elision of women's voices within Christian history

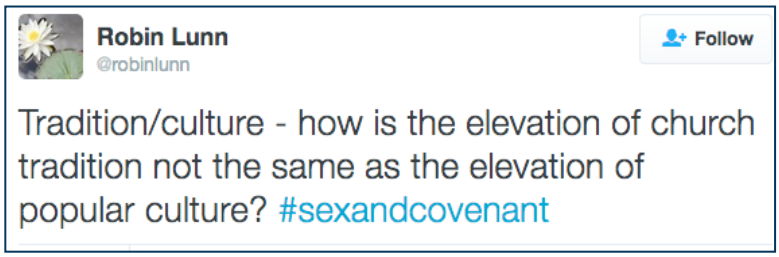


Example 4.10. Tweet from @TwitterUser1 calling on dissenters to weigh in on the conversation about church tradition

In Example 4.9, @TwitterUser2 provides a meta-commentary on the types of historical sources that were invoked by Browning and Fannin, noting that women's voices are often absent or silenced in the Christian tradition. While the plenary talks themselves engaged with these primary sources of authority, this tweet shows the ways in which this alternative discourse space can be used to engage in meta-discourse about the content of the conversation itself. Similarly, @TwitterUser1 tweet (Example 4.10, which is itself a retweet from @joshplant) calls on other voices to enter the conversation currently being had at the conference. This example shows that not only are participants engaging in real-time interdiscursivity via Twitter, but they are also using the medium to incite discourse from additional participants.

This interdiscursive engagement also emerged during Fannin's 35-minute talk, in which participants produced a total of 97 simultaneous tweets. Many of these tweets commented on the invocation of tradition at this session, a concept that Fannin referenced 34 times in his plenary talk. While Fannin primarily aligns positively with tradition, many of those tweeting during his talk called into question his characterizations of tradition.

Example 4.11. Tweet from @robinlunn problematizing Coleman's prioritization of tradition over culture



Example 4.12. Tweet from @ecampbellreed claiming that Fannin's treatment of Catholic tradition is an oversimplification

Example 4.11 shows how one tweeter picked up and problematized Fannin's dichotomization of tradition and culture. The formulation of @robinlunn's post as a question also elucidates some of the implicit discursive structures present on the Twitter platform. For example, the addressee of the question is not immediately apparent and thus the question takes on a more rhetorical nature than had it been posed within the physical space of the conference plenary session. The affordance of this digital discourse space can also be seen in Example 4.12, where @ecampbellreed – who was one of the most prolific tweeters at the event – produces a quote from Fannin's talk ("Catholics have better maintained the tradition we all share") with the simple follow-up hashtag commentary #toosimplystated. This tweet is an example of how discursive practices on the Twitter platform, such as the use of hashtags,

can be used in novel ways to engage in interdiscursivity. While the #SexandCovenant hashtag serves as a marker of a particular discursive space tied to the eventness of the conference, the #toosimplystated hashtag offers an incisive meta-commentary disguised as meta-data.

This section shows how co-present conference attendees were able to use the act of live-tweeting as a way to engage in real-time with the content of the plenary sessions. Participants mobilized the distinctive features of this digital platform not only to create a space for ongoing conversation but also to expand the boundaries of interdiscursivity in that context of the conference event.

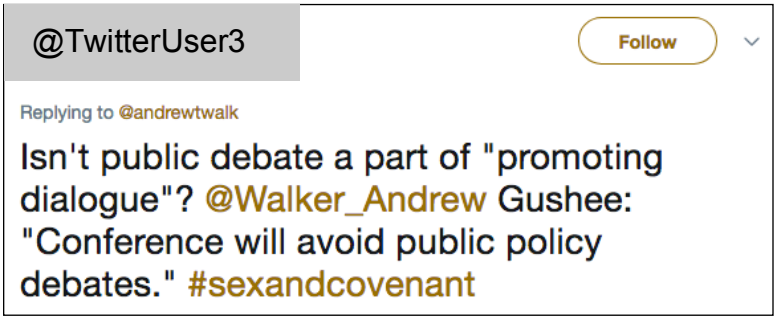
2.3 Non-co-present voices

The discussions on Twitter were also not only constructed by co-present participants at the conference. Since geotagging (or the practice of marking posts with specific location information) was not widely used on Twitter in 2012 when the conference took place, it is difficult to tell precisely how many users were tweeting about the conference from remote locations. However, based on the content of many of the tweets – such as users noting their desire to be at the conference, their gratitude at accessing the digital resources, or their explicit mention of their location – it is possible to identify some of those who were following the #SexandCovenant conversation from afar. Of the over 2,000 tweets in my corpus, I was able to determine that at least 50 tweets were produced by at least 14 users who were engaging in the #SexandCovenant conversation from afar. Nearly half of the remote

tweets involved some form of retweeting, either with or without commentary, and many of these users made extensive use of @mentions[4] in order to engage other users more directly.

Example 4.13. Tweet from @Ponydrivers inviting other users to comment on the conversation

Example 4.14. Tweet from @TwitterUser3 engaging with @Walker_Andrew's quote from plenary speaker David Gushee



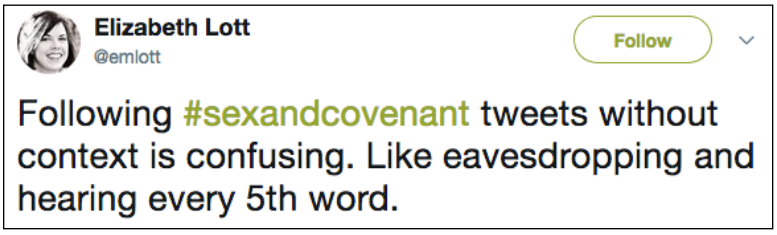
Although these remote users were not physically co-present at the conference, they were able to use the digital discourse space of Twitter to engage in the conversations that were taking place there. These tweets show the multitude and complexity of the other voices

[4] @mentions on Twitter are the main way to establish addressivity or to "tag" a tweet as relevant or of interest to others.

present in the conversation – including the plenary speakers, conference organizers, and attendees. Example 4.13 provides an example of the ways in which the framing of conversation made its way even into the discourses of participants who were not at the conference. Moreover, remote users such as @TwitterUser3 were able to problematize the absence of public debate even though they were not engaged in the face-to-face conversational spaces taking place in Atlanta (Example 4.14).

Tweets from non-co-present participants also reveal the limitations of solely relying on the digital platform to engage in conversation, as noted in Examples 4.15 and 4.16 below.

Example 4.15. Tweet from @emlott noting the difficulty in following #SexandCovenant tweets while not at the conference



Example 4.16. Tweet from @TwitterUser3 about the challenges of following two hashtag threads simultaneously on Twitter

At the time that the conference was happening in 2012, the Twitter platform did not have the functionality to easily group interrelated tweets into threads as it does now. This fact, mixed with the necessarily selective nature of tweeting, likely made it difficult for remote users to follow along with the conversation, as noted by @emlott in Example 4.15. Additionally, remote users such as @TwitterUser3 remarked on the challenges of simultaneously engaging in multiple Twitter conversations at once (Example 4.16). These posts from non-co-present participants illustrate that even though Twitter may be useful in for allowing more users to engage in conversations remotely, the depth and breadth of that engagement is still limited.

3 Conclusion

The relative monologicality of the conference's plenary sessions contrasted with the synchronous conversations about the conference via the online social media platform of Twitter. Through real-time posting of content and commentary, participants cultivated a novel and innovative space for the type of dialogic engagement that was constrained in the physical space of the conference. This technology enabled not only alternative spaces for discourse but also alternative voices in the construction of covenant sexuality at the conference. While this digital platform served an important political purpose that aligned with the overall messaging of the event – that of engaging a multitude of voices in conversation – it also served this political purpose in a very different way than the physical space of the conference. As discussed in Chapter 2, the conference was a highly structured, carefully crafted, and semi-private space. By contrast, Twitter is relatively unstructured,

ever-evolving, and highly public. This digital space enabled a completely different type of conversation to take place around the conference because it subverted or circumvented many of the physical barriers to participation that the organizers had imposed on the event. At the same time, however, Twitter as a conversational space is limited by its brevity, incompleteness, and idiosyncrasies of the discursive practices that can make it opaque to outsiders. Nonetheless, the interplay of these different discourse spaces – particularly as manifested at a physical event that is being digitally documented – reveals the complexities in how interdiscursivity can happen not only across time but also synchronously across space and media.

Chapter 5

Community engagement as academic activism:

Producing public knowledge with and for communities

Throughout the process of gathering and analyzing data from the 2012 [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant, I have been challenged to try to understand my dual role as both a researcher and a community member. As I have analyzed the different voices and spaces that were a part of this conversation on Baptist sexual ethics, I have wondered, "Where is my voice?" and "Where do I belong?" Moreover, my research was revealing not only the complexities of these discourses but also some of the ways in which some religious discourses were perpetuating harm, exclusion, and even abuse. I was forced to confront the question: "What is my responsibility as a researcher and as a community member?" It did not feel sufficient to simply acknowledge these harmful aspects and hope others would use this knowledge to enact change.

In academic spaces, there are often discussions of establishing the 'relevance' for scholarly work outside the academy. This, in fact, is not simply a question of the viability and application of academic inquiry beyond the ivory tower but a matter of accountability to society at large. As linguist Noam Chomsky wrote in his 1969 essay on the responsibility of intellectuals, scholars "have the power that comes from political liberty, from access to information and freedom of expression" (p. 324). William Labov, who is widely regarded as the founder of variationist sociolinguistics, also echoes these sentiments in his influential

1982 article discussing the tensions between simultaneous commitments to academic objectivity and social action as seen in the case study of the Black English trial. Through the development of the so-called *principle of error correction*, Labov lays out a vision of how the dissemination of academic knowledge can support social change and correct mistaken beliefs about languages, peoples, and cultures. The limitations and pitfalls of this approach have been alluded to throughout sociolinguistic research since, most pointedly and recently by educational linguistic Mark Lewis, who applies the lenses of language ideology and critical race theory to show how the principle of error correction leaves largely unchecked the sociopolitical systems that enable oppressive beliefs and actions (Lewis 2018). Other notable sociolinguists such as John Gumperz have also promoted the aims of social justice in their descriptions of the close ties between language and social structures (Heller 2018), and modern scholars such as Anne Charity Hudley (2013) note the ways in which sociolinguistics as a discipline is crucially situated to contribute to and benefit from a social justice framework. The threads of social activism and political engagement can be traced through the related subfields of linguistic and cultural anthropology (e.g. Hale 2006; Lambek 2010; Resnick 2010), which take somewhat more direct approaches to addressing the role of scholars in the processes of social change as well as the disciplinary assumptions that undergird, and at times undermine, this type of work. This research has been instrumental not only in promoting critical reflexivity within academic activist endeavors, but also in problematizing the very nature of the separation in the first place between the academy and everything else – whether it be communities or activism or politics.

Within the fields of linguistics and anthropology, specific methodological frameworks have developed in recent decades that seek to destabilize the artificial separation

between the academy and communities that participate in or are affected by research. Robust models for community-based and participatory research have emerged in language documentation (Benedicto et al. 2007; Rice 2011) and sociocultural linguistics (Bucholtz, Casillas, and Lee 2016), and anthropological approaches such as public anthropology (Scheper-Hughes 2009), collaborative ethnography (Lassiter 2005a, 2005b), and engaged anthropology (Low and Merry 2010) offer productive ways of envisioning how knowledge production and exchange can happen between scholars and those outside the academy.

As a scholar at a public research institution, I see it as part of my duty and our mission as a university not only to make research accessible to the public but to conduct research in the first place with the public in mind. In this chapter, I detail the methods, aims, and outcomes of my community-engaged work with Baptists in the United States. I begin by noting some of the unique methodological considerations when conducting community-engaged research and then I move on to detail the different phases of community engagement that characterized my dissertation research. In summary, I cover some of the valuable lessons I learned throughout this process and offer ideas for further exploration. As I discuss in more detail throughout this chapter, I have striven to approach all my community-engaged work with care and thoughtfulness, but the reality is that this work is often chaotic, there are a lot of false starts, and – in my own experience – there are moments where I question the value of some of my endeavors. My hope in detailing the ups and downs of this work is two-fold: I want to show that meaningful work can be done in messy places, and also that a level of vulnerability in all of these pursuits can in the end work to dismantle some of the systems of power within cultural institutions (such as academic and religious ones).

1 Methodological considerations in community-engaged research

As many community-engaged researchers have found, there are particular methodological questions and challenges in doing the type of work that we do. In my years of research with Baptist communities, I have come to realize the importance of three considerations in particular: holding oneself to a high code of research ethics, accounting for the complex subjectivities of the researcher, and producing an end product that is meaningful to the community.

1.1 Consent and ethical standards

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at colleges and universities exists to ensure the safety of the people that are involved in scholarly research, and the standards they set are important guidelines for researchers doing work with 'human subjects' (though that terminology is itself problematic). However, as many scholars have recently noted, the standards set by the IRB are often insufficient – and sometimes even counterproductive – to conducting ethical scholarship (e.g., Metro 2014; Mortensen 2015; Mangual Figueroa 2016). Many communities are unaware of the ethical review system in academia (or if they are aware, they are often bewildered by it), but they certainly feel the effects of this system. It is therefore imperative to interrogate the purpose and aims of the IRB process and to compare that with what 'counts' as doing ethical work in a particular community.

The process of gaining ongoing informed consent has varied widely throughout my dissertation research. Most of the data I analyzed in Chapters 3 and 4 is publicly available

and so has not been subject to many of the stipulations that the IRB is concerned with. The only times I actually used my IRB-approved consent forms was when I conducted a handful of private interviews with community members at the conference. All of the other negotiations of consent in my work have happened outside of the IRB framework. (For example, see Chapter 2 for discussions on the use of public Twitter data and 'safe spaces' at the conference.) Importantly as well, these negotiations have not necessarily been in the service of limiting my liability as a researcher (and thus the liability of my institution) but rather working to ensure that my relationships with community members remain just, mutual, and constructive. Throughout this chapter, I discuss the ways in which I have communicated with community members in order to establish ethical approaches for engaging in the work I do in their communities.

1.2 Researcher subjectivity

In determining how to conduct ethical research beyond the stipulations of the IRB process, I also had to consider my positioning both within and outside of the community I was working with. As discussed in Chapter 2, my own Baptist background has allowed me unique access not only to spaces and people but also to insider knowledge related to my research. When embarking on the community-engaged aspects of my research, I became acutely aware that my role as an 'independent' researcher was not only untenable but probably not completely accurate to begin with. This led me to critically examine exactly the type of role I imagined myself to occupy as I set about the work I sought to do.

In Cornel West's 1991 essay on pragmatism and politics, he lays out four models of "intellectual vocation": two of these vocations primarily exist to affect change within the academy (through critiquing academic productions of knowledge and through creating oppositional scholarly coalitions), and two of these vocations primarily exist to affect change outside the academy (through direct engagement in public debate and through building bridges between the academy and progressive organizations). As Bromley (1994) points out, each of these models provides a number of appealing and admirable aspects, but the persistence of the split between 'academy' and 'community' precludes the possibility that any model on its own is sufficient to encapsulate the complexities of the experience of academic activism.

As opposed to focusing explicitly on the individual role of the scholar-activist, the framework of engaged anthropology provides a useful way of categorizing some of the practices that often constitute community-engaged work. In their preliminary typology, Low and Merry (2010) offer six such types of work: sharing and support, teaching and public education, social critique, collaboration, advocacy, and activism. My own engaged work touches on each of the six categories they identify but most squarely falls under social critique, activism, and education. In the sections below, I explicate my activities related to community engagement as well as my often ever-changing roles in these activities.

1.3 Outputs of community-engaged research

In addition to the role and activities of the scholar in community-engaged work, another key focus of many discussions on this topic involves the output of such work. Communities have

a right to the products of their shared knowledge; it is therefore incumbent on the scholar-activist to co-produce texts and other byproducts that are accessible to community members and the broader public. Moreover, at every stage of community-engaged research, it is important for the researcher to balance the impulse to bring ideas to the community with closely listening to what the community itself wants from the research. In the following sections, I detail the different types of engagement and interventions that I worked to produce in consultation with the Baptist communities I established at the 2012 conference.

2 Re-engaging the community

When I attended the [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant, I did not realize how prominently it would eventually figure into my research. As I began my analysis of the event, and as I witnessed what happened in the years following, I realized that I wanted my role as a researcher to expand into more of an activist role. When I received funding from the UCSB Interdisciplinary Humanities Center's Humanities in the Community program in 2016, I decided to re-engage the Baptist community in order to better understand the current state of affairs of sexuality discussions in churches and to hopefully develop educational interventions to help fill in the gaps. I therefore proposed to conduct an anonymous, online needs-assessment survey that would allow me to collect both qualitative and quantitative data on the topic. This survey provided the basis for re-engaging with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship community and also for developing curriculum materials on faith and sexuality.

2.1 Overview of the Survey on Faith and Sexuality in the United States

In the summer of 2016, I began running an anonymous online survey to learn more about how Christians in the United States talk about sexuality and engage in sexual practices (Warner-Garcia 2018). The goal of the survey was to better understand how people who are part of Christian communities, both presently and in the past, encounter discussions of sexuality in their faith communities and how these discussions have influenced their personal approaches to sexuality. Through a series of yes/no, multiple choice, and free response questions, the survey asked participants to reflect on their experiences with faith and sexuality. For the survey, I defined "sexuality" broadly to include things like sexual practices, body image, sexual orientation, romantic relationships, sexual desires, sexual limit-setting, and sexual violence. I estimated that the survey would take about 30 minutes to complete, and the median response time for those who completed the survey in its entirety was 33 minutes. (See Appendices B-D for the complete survey instrument.)

Between May and June of 2016, I started drafting the survey questions, beginning with a series of free response questions intended to elicit narrative answers from participants regarding their experiences with faith and sexuality growing up. I then consulted other survey instruments – primarily the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System from the Center for Disease Control (CDC 2017) and the “Sex in Christian America” survey from the Hart Institute (Hart Institute 2018) – in order to model additional questions regarding sexual history, desires, and practices. The survey was created using Qualtrics, a secure online platform that complies with the regulations of UCSB’s Internal Review Board. I created three different versions of the survey, with slight variations regarding which questions were

displayed to participants based upon their responses to previous questions, such as their age, religious upbringing, and sexual practices. (See survey display logic and skip logic represented in Appendices B-D.)

In June 2016, I distributed test versions of the survey to five members of the Baptist community and two fellow scholars in order to solicit feedback. After incorporating their suggestions, I submitted a final copy of the survey instrument to UCSB's Internal Review Board and received approval to begin collecting data on August 5, 2016. Over the next eight months, I distributed the survey three separate times through my own personal and professional networks, using a snowball sampling method (cf. Morgan 2008) where an initial pool of participants are recruited who then further distribute the survey to their respective networks. In particular, I sent the survey to academic listservs, posted about it on my personal and professional social media accounts, and sent targeted emails to community collaborators enlisting their help in distribution. While snowball sampling typically precludes the ability to make generalizable or representative statements about a given population, it does offer a relatively expedient way to determine general trends among the survey sample and in particular to access "hidden populations" who may be otherwise difficult to study (cf. Heckathorn 1997; Salganik and Heckathorn 2004). My survey data is likely not entirely representative of any particular Baptist faith community; however, it does provide useful information about where to most effectively target activist interventions in these communities.

2.2 Survey results

The following section provides an overview of some preliminary results from the survey that were accessed on August 24, 2018, when the survey had been live for a little over two years. (The survey remains active and will continue to collect data through July 2019.) Given the qualitative nature of most of my academic training, as well as of the rest of my dissertation research, the results I present here are necessarily introductory and require future quantitative inquiry. Upon completion of my dissertation, I plan to team up with a quantitative scholar to provide more robust analysis of the survey results and make some of the raw data publicly available.

In August 2018, there were a total of 763 survey responses, and 325 (43%) of the respondents indicated that they are currently part of a Baptist community or have been in the past. Nearly all of the questions in the survey were optional, which resulted in a wide range of levels of completeness for the survey results. For example, of the 325 Baptist-identified respondents, 183 (56%) of them completed the survey in its entirety. Twenty percent of respondents who initiated the survey completed less than 10% of it. When reporting on results below, I include all answers that were entered into the survey for particular questions, regardless of how much or how little each unique respondent completed of the overall survey. I also include the raw numbers for each calculation in order to show the subset of respondents who chose to provide an answer for particular questions.

Figures 5.1 and 5.2 illustrate some basic biographical information of the 325 Baptist-identified respondents, who will serve as the primary data sample for the rest of this section.

Figure 5.1. Age distribution of Baptist-identified survey respondents (n=325)

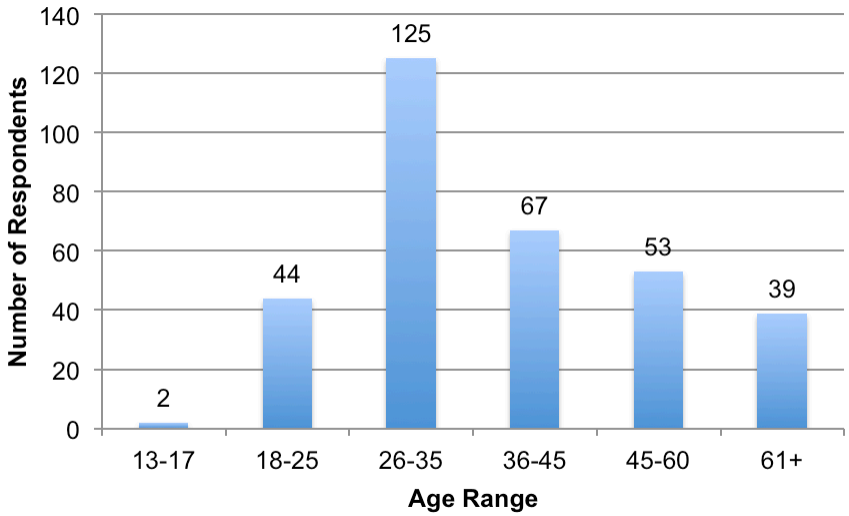
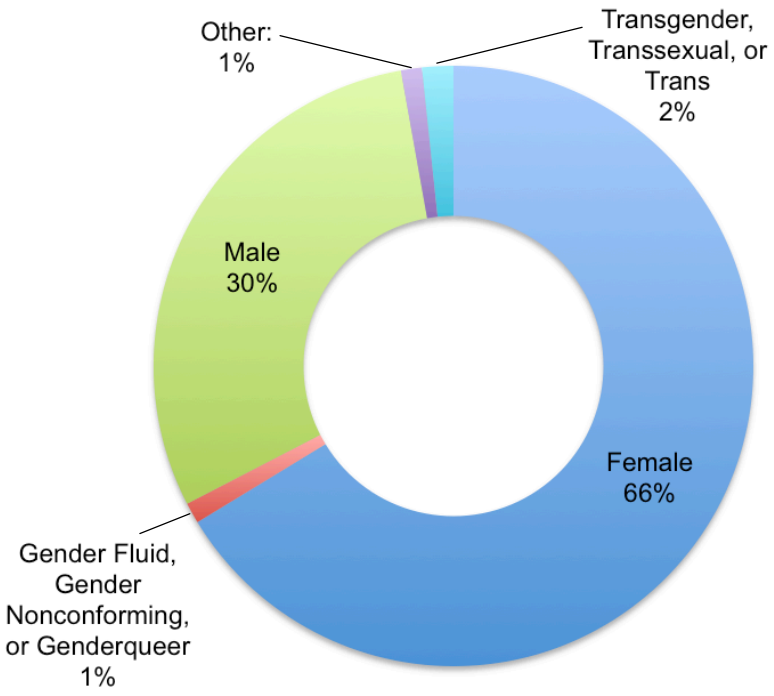


Figure 5.2. Gender distribution of Baptist-identified survey respondents (n=178)



Well over a third of respondents (38%) were between the ages of 26-35, a group that came of age during the 1980s and 90s when Baptist identity was fundamentally shifting and organizations like the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) and the Alliance of Baptists

(Aob) were splitting off from the increasingly conservative Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) (see discussion in Chapter 2). A very small number of respondents (less than 1%) were under the age of 18, providing little insight into whether and how respondents' experiences in Baptist churches may or may not have changed in the past decade or so. Further research is needed to investigate trends in sexuality education among youth in religious settings. Roughly two thirds of the Baptist respondents identified as female, a slightly higher gender distribution than national data collected by the Pew Research Center (2014) that indicate women comprise about 55% of mainline and evangelical Protestant communities more generally. Four percent of respondents identified as outside of the traditional gender binary (e.g., trans, gender non-conforming, other).

Based on information respondents provided about their state of residence, the vast majority of Baptist respondents (74%) were located in the southeastern region of the United States, an area of the country where the Baptist denomination has historically flourished. (Here, the southeastern United States is defined as including 12 states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.) The U.S. south is also the primary geographic region of influence for the SBC (which originated in Augusta, Georgia), the CBF (currently headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia), and the AoB (which originated in Charlotte, North Carolina).

The free-response questions in the survey primarily focused on respondents' experiences with learning about sexuality in different contexts – including the church, their family, and their community – both while they were growing up and in their current lives. Based on the results of these questions, it appears that Baptists have been highly successful at

creating consistent messaging about sex. Two axioms in particular stand out: "Don't do it" (at least not until marriage), and "Don't talk about it." An overwhelming majority of Baptists feel that their faith communities do not adequately address issues of sexuality. When survey respondents were asked about how their faith community addressed sexuality growing up, some of their responses included:

Example 5.1. Sexuality was only discussed in shades of DON'T DO IT.

Example 5.2. [The] True Love Waits Campaign was done as a youth group. I do not recall hearing anything about sexuality beyond 'wait for marriage.'

Example 5.3. I came into the youth group at the height of purity culture. Modesty was our biggest priority. Consent was never discussed. Not once. Nearly every Bible study circled back to a discussion of purity. There was no room for grace.

Example 5.4. [My faith community] stressed the importance of purity and heterosexuality. We were told that being queer was a choice. We were separated into groups, mainly divided by gender, and asked whether we were sexually active. We had to fill out a survey detailing what we knew about sex/sexuality/if we had done anything sexually. We weren't talked to about sexual limit-setting or sexual violence.

Based on the survey results, there appeared to be three different ways that church communities have historically addressed sexuality: they say nothing, they prescribe particular moral standards (especially for women), and/or they condemn particular types of people or activities. For example, a number of respondents indicated the main message they heard about sexuality from church leaders was not to do it, at least not until marriage (Examples 5.1 and 5.2). For many, this ethic was steeped in the language of purity and modesty, echoing the tenets of the so-called purity movement (Examples 5.3 and 5.4). Aside from prohibitions on sex outside of marriage and advocating for sexual chastity, many respondents noted that compulsory heterosexuality was the norm in their churches and any other sexual identity was

either elided or condemned (Example 5.4). Not surprisingly, this left a number of glaring gaps as far as sexuality-related topics that were not addressed in churches, such as consent, sexual boundaries, and sexual violence (Examples 5.3 and 5.4).[1]

When I asked respondents to tell me what they wish their churches had taught them about sex growing up, Baptist-identified respondents wrote comments such as:

Example 5.5. I wish I had been taught that 'sexual purity' and 'personal worth' weren't yoked together.

Example 5.6. I wish I had been taught what consent means.

Example 5.7. I wish I'd known what I know now about the development of anti-gay Christianity and the history of LGBT people within the church.

Example 5.8. So many things! That sex is not evil. That being Queer is not a choice and that God made me the way I am and he loves me anyway. That being Bi is not greedy, confusing or evil- it's just being bisexual. That being raped is not my fault.

Not surprisingly, we see many of the respondents addressing the gaps they identified in the previous question. In particular, they point out the need for less of a focus on purity and more of a focus on positivity when it comes to sex (Examples 5.5 and 5.8). Additionally, respondents noted the need for supportive survivor-centered messaging around consent and sexual violence (Examples 5.6 and 5.8). Another prominent theme in response to this question was the desire to learn about sexual identity issues earlier and with a more even-handed approach (Examples 5.7 and 5.8). These initial qualitative results point to many of the negative impacts of the current way that a lot of churches are approaching the topic of sexuality. They also provide insights into areas where Baptist-identified individuals would

[1] There was one respondent, however, who wrote at length in response to this question about their positive experiences with their church, family, and school all addressing sexuality honestly and positively. It appears that the limitations of the survey text box were the only thing that kept this respondent from going on at length about all the good they felt this had sowed in their life.

like to see the church do better in these areas. More coding and narrative analysis of these free-response questions will likely help further elucidate the topics of most pressing concern as well as reveal the similar narrative threads in individuals' stories of their spiritual and sexual journeys.

In addition to pointing out the gaps and the negative messaging about sex, respondents also discussed at length what they would like to see more of from their faith communities:

Example 5.9. I think that sexuality should be talked about in faith communities because it normalizes it as a part of who we are.

Example 5.10. I think churches need to focus more positively on sexuality. The focus on the bad/shameful has such a negative effect on people, even when they abide by the standards set.

Example 5.11. Even if churches teach abstinence, they should also cover consent, healthy dating, and additional resources.

Example 5.12. I think churches should teach all people that their bodies are good and pleasing to God, that they have a right to bodily autonomy and safety, and that there is nothing that they can do (and nothing that can be done to them) to separate them from God's love.

These narrative responses from the survey provide useful insights about the experiences of those who participate in Baptist life in the United States. They also reaffirm that, among the Baptists surveyed, there is an overwhelming desire for churches to address sexuality more frequently, positively, and holistically.

In addition to the free-response questions about sexuality in general, the survey also asked respondents to provide information about their sexual practices, desires, and identities. For the purpose of the survey, "sexual activity" was defined as stimulation of the breasts, genitals, or other erogenous areas through activities such as such as kissing, touching, and

oral stimulation; "sexual intercourse" was defined as sexual contact involving penetration (though it is acknowledged that penetration is not part of some people's sexual activities by choice); and "sexual partners" was defined as those with whom a person shared sexual contact involving penetration. Below I present an introductory sample from which I will base my future quantitative analysis (planned for after the completion of the dissertation).

Table 5.1. Median ages of first sexual activity and first sexual intercourse (including both consensual and non-consensual experiences)

	Age of first sexual activity	**Age of first sexual intercourse**
Baptists	16 (min=4, max=34, n=178)	21 (min=10, max=46, n=171)
Non-Baptists	16 (min=6, max=29, n=165)	19 (min=11, max=33, n=157)

Table 5.2. Median and average numbers of sexual partners

	Number of sexual partners
Baptists	3 (median), 8 (average) (min=1, max=250+, n=169)
Non-Baptists	5 (median), 11 (average) (min=1, max=250+, n=153)

Table 5.3. Rates of usage of pornography and other erotic material

	Have you ever used pornography or other erotic material?	
	Yes	**No**
Baptists (n=186)	78%	22%
Non-Baptists (n=165)	82%	18%

Table 5.4. Rates of sexual satisfaction

	Overall satisfied	**Overall neutral or unsatisfied**
Baptists (n=137)	72%	28%
Non-Baptists (n=140)	86%	14%

Table 5.5. Rates of non-monogamy (can include consensual non-monogamy such as polyamory or non-consensual non-monogamy such as an affair)

	Have you ever had a sexual or romantic relationship with a person while you were in a committed relationship with someone else?	
	Yes	**No**
Baptists (n=175)	30%	70%
Non-Baptists (n=162)	38%	62%

In response to questions about sexual identity, the rates in my survey were quite different from national averages (cf. Ward et al. 2014), as shown in Table 5.6 below. This may be due to my recruitment and sampling methods for survey respondents, or that I simply asked questions differently from national surveys. A notable difference in this area is that I asked respondents to first tell me how they think of themselves (their private sexual identity) and then also to describe how they thought others viewed them (their public sexual identity).

Table 5.6. Sexual identity label comparisons: public vs. private, survey data vs. national data

SEXUAL IDENTITY LABEL	**BAPTIST SURVEY RESPONDENTS** (source: Warner-Garcia 2018)		**NATIONAL** (source: Ward et al. 2014)
	Private	*Public*	
Heterosexual	67%	78%	96.6%
Bisexual	10%	3%	0.7%
Gay	5%	5%	0.9%
Lesbian	2%	4%	0.7%
Queer/Questioning	6%	1%	n/a
Other	10%	9%	1.1%

Table 5.6 also reveals that there are stark differences between the rates of certain sexual identities in public and in private. In fact, when comparing sexual identity responses for unique survey respondents, 27% of Baptists reported a mismatch between their public and their private sexual identities.

Another surprising result of my survey was how many Baptists have experienced forced sexual activity in their lifetimes: 40%. This included everything from rape and sexual abuse, to social and psychological pressure to engage in sexual activity, to forced sex within marriage. This rate is even higher among Baptist women (46%) and young adults aged 18-25 (44%). All of these numbers are well above the national averages, which show that 20% of American women and 2% of American men will be raped at some point in their lives (Black et al. 2011). Some of the differences between the national data and my survey data may be due to how people categorized "forced sexual activity" in the survey as opposed to how it is defined by national survey studies. Because of this result, as well as the frequency with which issues of consent and bodily autonomy appear in the free-response answers on the survey, I decided to focus my attention on developing educational interventions related to this topic first and foremost, which I discuss later in this chapter.

2.3 Presentation at the 2017 Cooperative Baptist Fellowship meeting

The purpose of the national survey on faith and sexuality was to understand the experiences, trends, and needs around sexuality education among Baptists in the United States. After running the survey for about a year – from August 2016 through June 2017 – I presented preliminary results at CBF's General Assembly meeting held in Atlanta, Georgia, on June 26-30, 2017. Roughly five years had passed since the 2012 [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant, and CBF as an organization was approaching a watershed moment over its discriminatory hiring policy (which at that time was still on the books) that prevented openly gay persons from serving in certain leadership and missions positions. At the previous year's General Assembly meeting in 2016, CBF leaders had announced the formation of a team called the Illumination Project, whose task was to develop a process of discernment that would allow the organization to remain unified amidst a diversity of opinions on a number of issues including sexuality (Allen 2016a). The 2016 General Assembly meeting also saw the issuance of two separate statements in response to the mass shooting at the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida – a venue known to be a haven for the LGBTQ community in the area. The official statement from the CBF Governing Board denounced the violence while also noting the divisions in the organization over matters of human sexuality (Allen 2016b). The unofficial statement, which was signed by nearly 400 individuals affiliated with CBF, issued a call for ending violence and discrimination against LGBTQ individuals and proposed "full inclusion of all people at every level of religious life" (Statement of Solidarity 2016). The 2017 General Assembly meeting featured a report from the Illumination Project task force

(Allen 2017b), as well as the first-ever ancillary event at a General Assembly meeting that included a panel of LGBTQ and ally individuals associated with CBF (Allen 2017a).

My proposed workshop on the intersections of faith and sexuality thus touched on many of the issues that were being hotly debated in CBF circles in 2017. Throughout the process of proposing, planning, and implementing my session, CBF leaders were in constant communication with me about the scope and content of my workshop. Before officially accepting my proposal, I engaged in a conference call with the event planners where I detailed exactly what I planned to cover and how my workshop did – and did not – intersect with other concurrent conversations within CBF about sexuality. Once I had been approved to present, organizers asked me to share my proposal as well as sample slides with numerous other leaders within CBF, most notably members of the Illumination Project committee as well as their Sexual Misconduct Task Force. Members of both of these committees were present at my workshop, and in fact a member of the Illumination Project introduced me during the session. At several stages in the planning process, organizers expressed concern over whether my breakout session would focus too much on homosexuality or political issues around sexuality, and I reassured them that my goal was to present preliminary results from my research and engage participants in open discussions about the types of resources that would be useful to help their churches engage in more holistic discussions around sexuality.

The workshop was well-attended (about 50 participants) and well-received by both organizers and participants. Many attendees noted surprise at some of the statistics I shared, and several people made a point of talking with me afterward about how sorely needed these conversations about sexuality are. Following the success of this workshop, I submitted a proposal to present at the 2018 General Assembly on some of the curriculum I began

developing based on the needs assessment survey results. This proposal, however, was not accepted and I have shifted most of my community collaborations to the Alliance of Baptists organization since then (which I discuss in more detail in the following sections).

3 Developing interventions

One of the goals of my re-engagement with the Baptist community in 2017 was to ultimately develop interventions into the area of sexuality training within churches. This ended up happening more quickly than I anticipated, as I realized that there was already grassroots activism happening within the CBF organization around issues of sexuality. In the following sections, I detail the ways in which I was able to join this work and lay the groundwork for ongoing community collaborations to produce robust resources and training materials on faith and sexuality.

3.1 Activism within the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship community

One of the most rewarding aspects of re-engaging with the CBF community was the process of being invited into the ongoing grassroots efforts of CBF members who were already working toward sexual justice within the organization. After the 2016 General Assembly meeting, an advocacy group began to form within CBF around the issue of LGBTQ inclusion, one of the central issues being the removal of the organization's discriminatory hiring policy. In conversation with members of this group, I learned that LGBTQ ministers

and allies had been routinely excluded from General Assembly programming and were now organizing in a grassroots fashion to show solidarity and to present a unified voice to the Illumination Project and CBF leadership about the hiring policy and the larger issues of LGBTQ inclusion within CBF churches.

During the 2017 General Assembly, members of this advocacy group met on two separate occasions – during a panel discussion before General Assembly and during a brainstorming meeting after General Assembly – to discuss what the group's goals were and how to achieve them. As a follow-up to these discussions, I worked with four other members to draft a petition statement calling for the removal of the hiring policy. This petition was circulated beginning on August 30, 2017, and had received over 550 signatures by the time it was delivered to the members of the Illumination Project and CBF leadership on September 27, 2017. (See Appendix E for a full draft of the statement and accompanying documents that were delivered.) Notably, the petition was also signed by 12 former CBF moderators, the highest elected position within the organization (Allen 2017c). In addition to contributing to the creation and circulation of the petition, I also wrote a lengthy email to the Illumination Project team explaining my perspectives on this issue as a scholar-activist. (See Appendix F for full text of the message.)

This was the first time in my work with CBF that I began to clearly step into an activist role and to take a particular stance in their ongoing internal political debates. Even though the focus of my research and my presentation at the 2017 General Assembly meeting was not primarily about sexual identity, I felt that coming alongside this work to remove the discriminatory hiring policy was a meaningful way for me to leverage my professional credentials and my personal energies in service of something I deeply cared about.

Throughout my involvement with the CBF grassroots group working toward full LGBTQ affirmation and inclusion, I tried to remain cognizant of the fact that I was not necessarily the architect of this activist work. Rather, I was there to support efforts that had already been underway well before I even came on board. At the same time, I realized that I had much less to risk – both personally and professionally – in this advocacy work than those who remained within the CBF organization, some of them even on their payroll.

In February of 2018, the Illumination Project committee presented a report on the outcome of their discernment process, which essentially resulted in a relaxing of the hiring policy but with certain implementation practices that would allow for the continued discrimination against LGBTQ individuals for certain positions (Allen 2018a). Among the many op-eds and reaction pieces that were written when this policy shift was announced, David Gushee – one of the main organizers of the [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant – was quoted in a Baptist News Global article as saying that the new policy "may be the worst of all possible options" (Allen 2018b). Four years prior (and two years after the conference), Gushee had published a book in which he famously chronicled how he changed his mind on the issue of homosexuality from a traditionalist view to an inclusive view (Gushee 2014). At the time his controversial book was published, he was serving as CBF's scholar-in-residence but that post was ended shortly thereafter. When the revisions to CBF's hiring policy came out in February 2018, he criticized the fact that the discernment process not only excluded biblical and ethical scholars from the debate but also LGBTQ persons as well (Allen 2018b). Later that year, in June 2018, CBF continued to grapple with the fallout from the hiring policy revisions at their General Assembly meeting in Dallas. Three state conventions had threatened to withdraw their financial contributions from CBF over what

they saw as a tacit endorsement of homosexuality (e.g., Dilday 2018), while several other churches had moved to withhold funding from CBF because they believed the organization continued to discriminate based on sexual orientation (e.g., Allen 2018c). In the midst of this, the 2018 General Assembly featured the first official gathering of the Affirming Network – a group of CBF-affiliated ministers and leaders working toward the removal of the hiring policy and full inclusion of LGBTQ persons within CBF – while also not including any breakout workshops on the topic of sexual identity (Allen 2018d).

3.2 Activism within the Alliance of Baptists community

While CBF continues to contend with internal policy issues related to sexuality, other Baptist bodies are forging ahead with more activist approaches to addressing sexual ethics. One of the valuable connections that came out of my presentation at the 2017 CBF General Assembly was with a leader of the Alliance of Baptists (AoB), a progressive Baptist organization that split off from the Southern Baptist Convention around the same time as CBF in the late 1980s. (See Chapter 2 for a fuller discussion on the history of these organizations.) In late summer 2017, I was brought on to the planning team for an AoB event that had been in the works for several years and that would eventually come to be called the JustSex conference (Alliance of Baptists 2018). As a smaller and unapologetically progressive organization, the AoB approached the topic of human sexuality in radically different ways from the CBF. In particular, they saw their role in the conversations around sexuality as more catalyst than peacekeeper. Throughout the planning process for the JustSex conference (which took place October 18-20, 2018, in Nashville, Tennessee), AoB leaders

continually asked what we could do as a team to push the envelope on discussions about sexual ethics. Moreover, there was an intense focus on creating tangible resources from the event that will expand the impact of the event beyond the people who are able to attend in person. Throughout the year I have been involved in planning the JustSex conference, I have been brought in to consult on nearly every aspect of the event – from the plenary talks to the small group sessions to marketing strategy. I was also asked to present a breakout session as well as conceptualize and develop the take-home resources that would be made available after the event, as both of these align with my activist goals of developing sexual ethics curriculum for Baptists.

3.3 Developing curriculum on sexual ethics

One of my long-term research goals is to create online resources on sexual ethics that can be used by churches and individuals to help facilitate better conversations around faith and sexuality. Over the past year, I have cultivated connections with a number of pastors, scholars, and activists who are connected to the Baptist world and working on issues of sexuality. Working with several collaborators in the Baptist community and drawing on the findings of the needs assessment survey, I am currently designing an interactive curriculum site called Positively Sex (www.positivelysex.com) that will feature innovative content on a wide variety of topics related to sexuality. (See Appendices G and H for concept sheets related to the site.) In contrast with many secular sex-education curricula, which typically focus on anatomy and physiology, this curriculum addresses more socioculturally significant aspects of sexuality such as consent, gender and sexual identity, body image, and pleasure.

Moreover, unlike almost all faith-based sex-education materials, my curriculum does not promote any particular moral standard such as the well-known conservative abstinence-only or purity-based approaches. Through this reframing, the curriculum materials empower participants to make their own decisions rather than prescribe a particular moral standard such as abstinence until marriage.

At the JustSex conference, I was able to debut the first module from this curriculum project with one of my collaborators, Morgan Caruthers Fletcher, who is an AoB-affiliated pastor in Denver, Colorado, and an adjunct faculty member at Iliff School of Theology. We co-led an workshop that featured a discussion of how consent is practiced and negotiated in church spaces, as well as an interactive, somatic activity where participants has the chance to experience how expressing and respecting consent felt in their bodies. We closed the workshop by debriefing and unpacking the ways in which internalized cultural messages can sometimes inhibit expressions of bodily autonomy, especially in church culture where consent is often assumed or sublimated to institutional norms and power structures. (See Appendix H for a concept sheet related to the consent lesson.) This workshop forms the basis of our first educational model for the Positively Sex website. We are currently incorporating feedback from the workshop participants and hope to launch this content in early 2019. Down the line, we are planning to develop subsequent modules on topics such as sexual and gender identity, body image, and pleasure. My eventual goal is to grow Positively Sex into an independent and self-sustaining educational initiative, housed in either a university or a nonprofit and supported by grant funds, that provides content and community-building online as well as in-person trainings and consulting.

4 Lessons learned in community-engaged work

Since originally being funded by UCSB's Interdisciplinary Humanities Center to engage in community-focused research in the spring of 2016, I have reflected a fair amount on what it means to do work that is meaningful for both academia and faith communities. I have also had the opportunity to work with a number of different individuals and organizations who have taught me valuable lessons in how to approach – and how not to approach – community collaboration. In this section, I summarize some of these formative lessons and offer some reflective thoughts on my experiences.

It is imperative to be aware of and sensitive to the competing priorities in different communities. One of the first things I realized in constructing the needs assessment survey is that I had to frame the goal of this endeavor in vastly different ways for academic communities and faith communities. On the whole, academia was satisfied with the intrinsic motivation of filling the knowledge gap about the sexual practices of religiously identified individuals. However, I quickly learned that my scholarly curiosity was not enough to convince faith communities that this was a worthwhile endeavor. This prompted me to envision what the real-world impacts of my applied research might be, and ultimately led me to position myself as a scholar-activist working as a conduit between two communities I claimed residence in. At times, I have had to take off my mantel of 'researcher' in order to meaningfully engage in emergent conversations that required more vulnerability on my part than might be appropriate for a scholar to engage in. At other times, I have had to firmly stake my claim to a researcher identity in order to remain relatively independent from the

organizational politics of some of the communities I work with. For example, when I attended the [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant, I had to decide whether it was more important for me to participate in the safe spaces of the small group meetings as an invested attendee, or to maintain some interpersonal distance as a researcher. I chose to attend these small groups even though it meant participating in a setting where I felt the organizers had precluded the possibility of my research. I did so because I felt it was important for me to be able to personally integrate everything that was happening at the conference, even if I could not directly account for it in my research. Navigating these competing priorities of community-engaged research thus necessitates a level of reflection on the part of the researcher that allows space for and tensions between multiple overlapping identities. There are no hard-and-fast rules in this endeavor, and the researcher must commit to cultivating sensitivity in themselves as well as a shared responsibility with all stakeholders.

Finding the right people to work with is crucial. Given the stakes – and often the precarity – of doing community-engaged research, it is crucial to find collaborators who share the same values and vision for the work. This can often take time as well as trial and error. The team that I have assembled for my curriculum development project has gone through so many iterations that I have lost count. In fact, it is still incomplete and a work in progress. I have also found that different collaborators have varying levels of time and expertise to lend to different parts of the project. For example, collaborators who were instrumental in providing feedback on the needs assessment survey were unable or unwilling to participate in other parts of the project such as presenting results or developing curriculum.

The community-engaged researcher thus often serves as a manager of both projects and people, coordinating a cadre of collaborators that is ever-evolving and occasionally tenuous.

Be willing to adjust expectations. Though it may sound like a truism, things will never go according to the researcher's plan or timeline. As a humanistic social scientist, I often have the luxury (but also the anxiety) of working independently on my research projects. When endeavoring to do community-engaged work, the researcher necessarily sublimates some of that autonomy to the needs, priorities, and timeframes of the people they are working with. The work will always take longer than anticipated, and expectations must be continually managed and adjusted. When I first reached out to leaders within CBF about attending the [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant as a researcher, I had high hopes about the massive amounts of rich and multifaceted data I would collect there. It quickly became clear to me that the organizers were not as enamored as I was about documenting every aspect of the conference for research purposes. I had to shift how I conceptualized my role at the event to be more balanced between participant and observer, and this ultimately allowed me to gain a deeper understanding than would have been possible had I been preoccupied with data collection the entire time. Sometimes these expectation adjustments happen out of necessity, but they can often give rise to more responsive and nuanced research in the end.

Maintaining momentum can help mitigate the challenges of doing community-engaged work. Particularly for scholars who are accustomed to working relatively independently, one of the most frustrating aspects of this type of research is feeling like momentum has stalled. Constantly waiting on community members to follow up, relying on others to complete their portions of the work, allowing time and space for ideas to percolate –

community-engaged work goes at a very different pace than many other types of research. These aspects are unavoidable and can actually be used to the researcher's advantage. In fact, it is both helpful and necessary for the community-engaged researcher to lean into something of a project manager role by scoping out projects, managing workflow, and serving as a liaison between constituencies. However, this process takes time, thoughtfulness, organization, and patience. Consistency and follow-up are key. I have composed countless emails (perhaps enough to constitute a dissertation unto itself) to community members, organizational leaders, potential collaborators, prospective funders, and sympathetic friends detailing the development of various aspects of my projects. Regular digital communication is particularly important when projects and people are distributed across large geographic distances, as mine are. Maintaining momentum in community-engaged work is essentially about learning how to mobilize people without inadvertently badgering them – a delicate balancing act, to be sure.

You must learn to talk like a human being again. Not only is the timing and consistency of communication important, but also the quality and content as well. It can often take years for scholars to learn the ins and outs of the academic register, and just as long to unlearn it as well. Doing community-engaged research involves a deep commitment to understanding epistemologies and discursive practices that are different from traditional academic ones. When first began reaching out to potential community collaborators, I found myself explaining my proposed project innumerable times, in an endless variety of ways, to very diverse types of audiences. I learned through their questions, concerns, and not a small number of "no thank you"s the ways in which I still needed to take off my disciplinary blinders and engage with them where they were, not where I wanted them to be. I should also

say that there is no road map for doing so because every community is different, every researcher's positionality and personality is different, and it requires an enormous amount of sensitivity and responsiveness to ongoing development. However, an awareness of these issues is a critical first step in addressing them.

5 Conclusion

The multifaceted, ever-changing nature of community-engaged research can be difficult to capture in any static way. In this chapter, I have attempted to give a meaningful overview of my work as it currently stands. Even over the next three months after submitting my dissertation, the landscape of this work will shift dramatically as I wrap up the JustSex conference, build out the Positively Sex website, and endeavor to report more robust quantitative results from my national survey. My community-engaged work has been by far the most challenging but also rewarding aspects of my dissertation research. It has brought me from a place of relative insularity as an academic to a place of intense integration – with other disciplines outside my own, with the communities in which I work, and within myself as a human being. While it has often been difficult to envision and find support for these endeavors, the benefits for my scholarship have been innumerable.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

My dissertation, somewhat appropriately, begins and ends with a focus on eventness. The [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant first inspired my academic endeavors to better understand the ways in which Baptists construct models of sexual ethics through discourse practices. My analysis of this event has shown the ways in which social histories, institutional structures, and spatiotemporal realities both enable and constrain discourses. All of these insights arise through close examination of the iterative practices that occur within a bounded event, with an understanding of how they are both contextualized by and at the same time constantly recontextualizing the broader frameworks in which they take place.

As I conclude my dissertation, I am in the process of debriefing from the JustSex Conference, an event that provided the opportunity to take what I have learned and share it with a community of Baptists who are looking to launch a concerted intervention into our culture's discourses on sexual ethics. This is an event that was conceptualized less as a moment and more as a movement. In many ways, it pushed the boundaries of eventness and forced me as a scholar to reevaluate how I study spaces and places and the discourses that occur there. While I do not yet know the long-term impact this event will have, my hope is that it will fuel an ongoing intervention into Christian communities that leads to a more just and liberatory sexual ethic framework for people of faith.

In this concluding chapter, I revisit some of the key theoretical questions addressed throughout this dissertation. In particular, I invite scholars to reimagine the ways in which we

conceptualize and study our 'objects' of inquiry, whether that be discourse or religion or sexuality. I also offer a final invitation for scholars to engage in endeavors of academic activism that bridge the artificial separation the academy and communities.

1 Reimagining discourse, Christianity, and sexuality

The field of discourse analysis is ever-expanding as our understanding of what 'counts' as discourse becomes more nuanced and expansive. Social theorists such as Foucault and Bakhtin draw our attention to the workings of discourse writ large that are embedded and reproduced in our social structures, while conversation analysts point us to the micro-level negotiations of meaning in everyday interactions. Interdiscursivity brings all of these levels of discourse into dialogue with each other to show how discourse is both constituted by and also transcends utterances, interactions, and events. My analysis contributes to this complex understanding of discourse by expanding the focus from face-to-face interactions to broader systems of discursive engagement that exist in and around particular spatiotemporal constraints.

The framework of discourse spaces thus becomes a useful tool in understanding this interplay. Crucially, my analysis has shown that the construction of discourse spaces is achieved through discourse itself. In Chapter 2, I examined how the organizers of the [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant discursively constructed the space for 'conversation' by delineating certain structures for participation, such as monologic plenary sessions and safe spaces for small groups. In Chapter 3, I explored how both plenary

speakers and audience members interdiscursively engaged these structurally monologic spaces through the mobilization of prior discourses within Christianity and through emergently dialogic practices such as spontaneous laughter. In Chapter 4, I demonstrated the power of digital platforms such as Twitter to go beyond simply mediating discourse to creating alternative discourse spaces with the potential to subvert traditional structures for engagement. All of these analyses illustrate how discourse spaces are complex, overlapping, and recursive in ways that point to the inherent complexity of discourse itself.

An examination of discursive practices also necessarily reveals the multifaceted dimensions of the individuals and institutions enacting these discourses. While modern Christianity has become a subject of critical scholarly inquiry only relatively recently, this growing area of study has benefitted from a close examination of the lived experiences of religious practitioners. This dissertation provides insights into the ways in which Christian identities and ideologies are constructed through iterative discourse practices that often go overlooked by both internal apologists and external observers. In Chapter 2, I provided an in-depth account of the foundations and trajectories of the Baptist denomination of Christianity, highlighting the ways in which this particular community of practice is influenced by simultaneous commitments to individual freedom and collective identity creation. In Chapter 3, I traced how individuals invoked specific Christian texts and traditions in order to dialogically construct different ethical models. In Chapter 4, I accounted for the ways in which Baptists utilized online spaces to engage in discursive practices that not only pushed the boundaries of what constitutes conversation but also enacted Christian identity in a public, shared space. Finally, in Chapter 5, I explored how a deep and contextualized understanding of Baptists' discursive practices allows for the possibility of effective activist

interventions into these spaces. Each of these accounts contributes to an understanding of religion as a dynamic system that is always being constituted and reconstituted by its practitioners.

Nowhere are these dynamic shifts more apparent than in close examination of the evolving approaches to sexuality within Christianity. From its puritanical roots, Christianity in the United States has segmented into different veins of thinking around sexual ethics, three notable examples being the purity culture model, the just love model, and the covenantal model. In my analysis, I have shown the ways in which these often oppositional approaches are discursively negotiated by religious individuals who draw on many of the same Christian texts and traditions but come to radically different conclusions. By examining the discourses that are mobilized in constructing models of sexual ethics, scholar-activists are able to work more closely with communities to create interventions into these areas.

2 Future directions: The potential of academic activism

As our knowledge about discourse, Christianity, and sexuality continues to expand, so too must our academic approaches to these endeavors. In Chapter 5, I accounted for the ways in which my own research has grown from traditional discourse analysis into academic activism. This trajectory has not been accidental, even if it was unanticipated. As I have moved through the challenging ideas and spaces that have characterized my research, it has become apparent to me that navigating this process has been crucial for me to produce meaningful scholarship. The academic world needs the fuller bodies of knowledge that exist

outside of the walls of the ivory tower. Communities can benefit from strategic partnerships with scholars who often serve as the gatekeepers to systems of knowledge and power. Moreover, it is important recognize that these processes are already inextricably implicated and intertwined.

Throughout my dissertation work, I have delved into not only how discourse, Christianity, and sexuality relate to each other but also my relationship to each of them as a researcher. In many ways, I have come to realize my own agency as a researcher studying discourse. Elucidating the sociocultural structures of discourse is ultimately a political act, since it brings to light the processes of power and authority that often remain invisible in community systems. These structures then become accountable to the community, and the researcher is also implicated in this process and must choose how to bear the responsibility of such a will to knowledge. Moreover, I have had to contend with the impacts of both my religious and sexual identities within the communities I navigate through. For some secular scholars, my membership in a faith community has called into question my ability to adequately conduct my research – either because of my status as an insider to the community I study or because they question my commitments to the dominantly secular goals of the neoliberal institution of higher education. In some of the faith communities I work with, my identity as a queer person has also occasionally jeopardized my ability to safely navigate in tightly regulated spaces, where my validity as a person is sometimes up for public debate. In explicating the many voices that contribute to meaning-making in the communities we work with, I hope that we are able to continue critically examining our roles and voices as researchers. Within academia, there will always be tensions between centering community epistemologies and addressing injustices produced by these epistemologies. At the same

time, we must also contend with how to account for and represent the voices of the marginalized within the communities that we study. I believe that a commitment to academic activism can help us balance our obligations as researchers, citizens, and often as community members. While there are no easy answers, there are very worthwhile questions that will hopefully move us toward more just approaches to doing scholarship and being human.

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Appendix A
[Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant Program

A [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant

April 19-21

2012

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Resource Center & the Center for Theology and Public Life at Mercer University

Appendix A
[Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant Program

First Baptist Church, Decatur, Georgia
April 19-21, 2012

Program

Thursday, April 19

11:00 Hospitality Center & Resource Area Open

1:30 Welcome & Introductions:
- FBC Decatur – Julie Pennington-Russell
- Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
- Mercer University
- Plenary Presenters
- Covenant Community Facilitators – Lynyetta Willis & Allison Gillmore

2:00 **Session 1**
While We Were Avoiding the Subject: What's Going on in the World (and the Church)?

Themes: An introductory session setting the tone for the event, naming and explaining the ways in which present realities, and contemporary findings in the social and natural sciences, differ from and challenge traditional sexual ethics. This session mixes a call to faithful Christian discipleship and a call for openness to fresh thinking. The session will underscore the necessity and urgency of our gathering.

- Convener: Rick Bennett, Director of Missional Formation, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Atlanta, Georgia
- Presenter: Jenell Paris, Professor of Cultural Anthropology, Messiah College, author of *The End of Sexual Identity: Why Sex is Too Important to Determine Who We Are*

3:30 Break

4:00 Covenant Community Groups - Dialogue 1

5:30 Dinner & Fellowship

6:30 **Session 2**
Faithful Listening in Challenging Times: How Do We Discern God's Voice?

Themes: This plenary will present methodological and hermeneutical grounding for the gathering, dealing with such questions as: What role do scripture, tradition/history, experience, and reason/science play in our understanding of God's purposes for us? What weight do we give to each of these sources? Why? Does the weight shift, depending on the relative fullness or thinness of the scriptural resources? How does understanding of the rule and reign of God made known in Jesus shape our vision of what it means to be human beings, including, of course, human sexual beings? How does the church nurture virtues and practices which contribute to God's dream for human flourishing?

1

Appendix A
[Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant Program

- Convener: David Gushee, Distinguished Professor of Christian Ethics, Mercer University, Atlanta, GA
- Presenter: Guy Sayles, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Asheville, North Carolina
- Presenter: Sharyn Dowd, Associate Pastor, First Baptist Church, Decatur, Georgia

8:00 Covenant Community Groups - Dialogue 2

9:00 Dismiss

Friday, April 20

8:00 Morning Prayers

8:15 Coffee Fellowship

9:00 **Session 3**
Ancient & Contemporary Voices: What Do Christians Think God Thinks About Sex?

Themes: This plenary will offer and explore scriptural texts, theological themes, historical models, and contemporary resources which have been and/or should be part of a Christian theology of sex. It will highlight the kinds of images, metaphors, ideas and experiences which are crucial for anyone who wants to frame his or her own Christian theological understanding of human sexuality.

- Convener: David Gushee, Distinguished Professor of Christian Ethics, Mercer University, Atlanta, GA
- Presenter: Coleman Fannin, Baylor University (PhD, University of Dayton)
- Presenter: Melissa Browning (PhD, Loyola University, Chicago)

10:30 Break

10:45 Community Groups Dialogue 3

12:15 Lunch

1:30 **Session 4**
Covenant 101: What Are the Ties that Bind?

Themes: A close focus on the promise and limits of covenant as a central moral norm for sexuality. What is a covenant? What is the nature of promise-making and promise-keeping? How do covenants structure, nurture, protect, and enrich human, and divine-human, relationships? What is the relationship between "covenant" and "marriage" as concepts? What is the impact, and what do we do, when covenants shatter? How can they be renewed and restored? If they can't be renewed and restored, how do we help people (and faith communities) learn from the brokenness, find healing, and move into a hopeful future? Do parents have a covenant relationship with their children? And what about those who seek covenant relationships but cannot find them in our contemporary setting?

Appendix A
[Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant Program

- Convener: David Gushee, Distinguished Professor of Christian Ethics, Mercer University, Atlanta, GA
- Presenter: Convener: David Gushee, Distinguished Professor of Christian Ethics, Mercer University, Atlanta, GA
- Presenter: Emily Holladay, student, McAfee School of Theology, Atlanta, GA
- Presenter: Jennifer Crumpton, Communications & Social Media Director, Odyssey Networks, ordained Disciples of Christ minister

3:00 Break

3:30 Covenant Community Groups Dialogue 4

5:00 Supper Groups

7:00 **Session 5**
Covenant 201: What Are the Boundaries of Covenant?

Themes: Marital sexual relationships are (essentially, or literally) not available to many Christians. They are not readily available to Christians in socioeconomic contexts in which the resources necessary to make and sustain marital relationships are scarce. They are not available to gay and lesbian Christians, at least in most religious and state contexts, which have not offered acceptance of covenanted same-sex relationships. They are not available or desired by many divorced or widowed senior adults. This session explores the frontiers of covenant-making in relation to these groups.

- Convener: David Gushee, Distinguished Professor of Christian Ethics, Mercer University, Atlanta, GA
- Presenter: Roz Nichols, Pastor, Freedom's Chapel Christian Church, Memphis, TN
- Presenter: Cody Sanders, PhD candidate, Brite Divinity School, Ft. Worth, TX
- Presenter: Rhonda Blevins, Associate Pastor, Community Church at Tellico Village, Louden, TN

8:30 Break

9:00 Jennifer Knapp in Concert

Saturday, April 21

8:00 Morning Prayers

8:15 Coffee Fellowship

9:00 **Session 6**
From Fear to Joy: How Might Congregations Lead the Way?

Themes: This plenary will model, and offer resources for, difficult conversation, giving congregational leaders some handles on how to guide discerning/listening conversations in their churches.

Appendix A
[Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant Program

- Convener: Rick Bennett
- Presenter: LeDayne Polaski, Program Coordinator, Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, Charlotte, NC
- Presenter: Wendell Griffen, Pastor, New Millennium Church, and Circuit Court Judge, Little Rock, AR
- Presenter: Lindsay Comstock, Minister of Christian Education and Youth, First Baptist Church, Worcester, MA

10:30 Covenant Community Groups 5

11:30 **Session 7**
Celebrating God's Gifts: Seeking and Acknowledging Christ in One Another

Theme: A brief service of worship including a homily and communion by intinction.

- Worship Leader 1: Joy Yee, Pastor, 19th Avenue Baptist Church, San Francisco, CA and former CBF Moderator
- Worship Leader 2: Patrick (Pat) Anderson, Editor, Christian Ethics Today and former Coordinator of Florida CBF, Beech Mountain, NC
- Worship Leader 3: Wendell Griffen, Pastor, New Millennium Church, and Circuit Court Judge, Little Rock, AR
- Worship Leader 4: Lindsay Comstock, Minister of Christian Education and Youth, First Baptist Church, Worcester, MA

Appendix B

Survey Instrument for Ages 13-14

TEST Survey on Faith and Sexuality Among Christians in the United States

Q1 My name is Shawn Warner-Garcia, and I am a graduate student in the Linguistics Department at the University of California, Santa Barbara. I do research on language, sexuality, and religion, and I am currently conducting this anonymous online survey as part of my dissertation project on how Christian youth and adults talk about and engage with sexuality. Having grown up in a Baptist church in Florida, I'm excited to be able to combine my background with my research interests! If you'd like to find out more about me, you can visit my website here.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked some questions about yourself, your faith community, and your experiences with faith and sexuality. The survey asks you to reflect on how you have encountered discussions of sexuality in the faith communities that you grew up in or are currently a part of. You will also be asked questions about your current and past sexual experiences. For this survey, I am defining "sexuality" pretty broadly to include things like sexual practices, body image, sexual orientation, romantic relationships, sexual desires, sexual limit-setting, and sexual violence.

As you take the survey, you might think about or write about experiences you've had that make you feel uncomfortable or upset. You should only share as much as you feel comfortable. I also encourage you to take the survey in a private and secure location to make sure that your answers remain anonymous. You can decide not to take this survey, or you can change your mind about taking it and quit at any time. You can also choose to answer some questions and not others.

To take this survey, you need to be at least 13 years old and live in the United States. Please answer the next two questions so that I know you're eligible to participate.

Appendix B

Survey Instrument for Ages 13-14

Q2 What is your age?

- ❍ 0
- ❍ 1
- ❍ 2
- ❍ 3
- ❍ 4
- ❍ 5
- ❍ 6
- ❍ 7
- ❍ 8
- ❍ 9
- ❍ 10
- ❍ 11
- ❍ 12
- ❍ 13
- ❍ 14
- ❍ 15
- ❍ 16
- ❍ 17
- ❍ 18
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- ❍ 21
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- ❍ 25
- ❍ 26
- ❍ 27
- ❍ 28
- ❍ 29
- ❍ 30
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- ❍ 70
- ❍ 71
- ❍ 72
- ❍ 73
- ❍ 74
- ❍ 75
- ❍ 76
- ❍ 77
- ❍ 78
- ❍ 79
- ❍ 80+

Appendix B

Survey Instrument for Ages 13-14

Q3 Do you live in the United States?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Answer If Do you live in the United States? No Is Selected Or What is your age? 0-12 Is Selected

Q4 Thank you for your time and interest. However, based on your responses to the two previous questions, you are not eligible to participate in this survey.

If Thank you for your time and... Is Displayed, Then Skip To End of Survey

Appendix B

Survey Instrument for Ages 13-14

Answer If What is your age? 13-14 Is Selected

Q5 This survey is part of a research project, and the answers you give in the survey will be used as part of that research. Here is what you need to know before you decide to participate or not:

PURPOSE

The goal of the survey is to better understand how Christians talk about and engage in sexuality. Your survey responses will help me and other researchers create teaching materials about how faith and sexuality are connected.

PROCEDURES

If you decide to participate, you will be asked some questions about yourself, your faith community, and your experiences with faith and sexuality. The format of the questions are yes/no, multiple choice, and free response. Your answers will be completely anonymous, which means that they won't be linked to your name or identity in any way. The survey should take about 30 minutes to complete, although if you have a lot to say, you can take as long as you'd like. It's important that you complete the survey in one sitting since I'm not collecting any personal identifying information from you and you won't be able to save your responses and return later.

RISKS

As you take the survey, you might think about or write about experiences you've had that make you feel uncomfortable or upset. You should only share as much as you feel comfortable. If you decide to take the survey and someone else finds out (like your parents or your friends), it's possible that they might not approve and this could have negative consequences for you. I recommend that you take the survey in a private place and erase your browser history and cookies when you're done with the survey. If you want to avoid this risk completely, you should consider not taking this survey.

BENEFITS

Taking this survey might benefit you directly because you can share personal experiences that you haven't had the opportunity to share with your family or faith community. Taking this survey might also benefit you indirectly because your answers will help me create teaching materials about sexuality that your faith community may use one day in the future.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your answers in this survey are anonymous, so I won't ask you for your name and contact information. I will ask you about your age, gender, and what state you live in, but this won't be linked to your name or identity in any way. IMPORTANT: When you answer the survey questions, please don't write any information that could identify you or someone else (such

as a person's name, the name of a faith community, or the name of a city). If you accidentally write any of that, I will delete it from your answers so that I can protect everyone's privacy. It's also a good idea for you to take the survey in a private place and to erase your browser history and cookies when you're done with the survey. All of this is to protect your privacy.

COST/PAYMENT
You don't have to pay any money to take this survey, and I am not paying you any money to take this survey.

RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW
You can decide not to take this survey, or you can change your mind about taking it and quit at any time. You can also choose to answer some questions and not others.

QUESTIONS
If you have questions about the survey or if you think you may have been hurt as a result of your participation, please contact me:

Shawn Warner-Garcia
warnergarcia@umail.ucsb.edu

If you have any questions regarding your participation in this research survey, you can contact the Human Subjects Committee at (805) 893-3807 or hsc@research.ucsb.edu, or write to the University of California, Human Subjects Committee, Office of Research, Santa Barbara, CA 93106-2050.

By clicking "Yes" below, you agree to participate in this survey.
- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q29 In the first section of this survey, you will be asked about your participation in faith communities.

Q30 Are you a Christian?
- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Appendix B

Survey Instrument for Ages 13-14

Answer If Are you a Christian? Yes Is Selected

Q31 What denomination (or type) of Christianity are you a part of? (You can choose more than one.)

- ❑ Baptist
- ❑ Catholic
- ❑ Episcopalian/Anglican
- ❑ Lutheran
- ❑ Methodist
- ❑ Nondenominational
- ❑ Orthodox
- ❑ Pentecostal
- ❑ Reformed
- ❑ I don't know
- ❑ Other: _____

Answer If Are you a Christian? No Is Selected

Q32 Do you participate in a different religion other than Christianity? If so, what is it?

Q33 Are you currently part of a church or another faith community (like a youth group or a faith-based group at your school such as the Fellowship of Christian Athletes)?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Answer If Are you currently part of a church or another faith community (like a youth group or a faith-based group at your school such as the Fellowship of Christian Athletes)? Yes Is Selected

Q34 How often do you participate at your church or faith community?

- ❍ 1-2 times a year
- ❍ Less than once a month
- ❍ 1-2 times a month
- ❍ 3 or more times a month
- ❍ 1-2 times a week
- ❍ 3 or more times a week

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Survey Instrument for Ages 13-14

Answer If Are you currently part of a church or another faith community (like a youth group or a faith-base... Yes Is Selected

Q35 Please tell me a little bit about your FAITH COMMUNITY. For example, you can talk about what types of things are important to your faith community, who leads your faith community, whether you have a youth program or Sunday School, etc.

Q36 Please tell me a little bit about YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR COMMUNITY. For example, you can talk about whether you are part of a big or small family, whether you live in a big or small town, what are some important values in your community, etc.

Appendix B

Survey Instrument for Ages 13-14

Q37 In this next section, you will be asked about how people in your life talk about sexuality. There are no right or wrong answers, just answer each question honestly from your own experience.

Answer If Are you currently part of a church or another faith community (like a youth group or a faith-base... Yes Is Selected

Q38 How does your FAITH COMMUNITY talk about sexuality, if at all? For example, is sexuality talked about or taught about in sermons, Sunday School classes, small groups, youth group meetings, etc.? Remember: For this survey, I am defining "sexuality" pretty broadly to include things like sexual practices, body image, sexual orientation, romantic relationships, sexual desires, sexual limit-setting, and sexual violence. When you answer questions in this survey about sexuality, your responses can talk about any of these issues or others that you think are related to sexuality.

Q39 How does your FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND/OR COMMUNITY talk about sexuality, if at all? For example, do your parents talk to you about sex, does your school have a sex education program, etc.?

Answer If Are you currently part of a church or another faith community (like a youth group or a faith-base... Yes Is Selected

Q40 In your FAITH COMMUNITY, are there some topics related to sexuality that seem off-limits or that people don't want to talk about? If so, what are they and why do you think people don't want to talk about them?

Q41 In your FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND/OR COMMUNITY, are there some topics related to sexuality that seem off-limits or that people don't want to talk about? If so, what are they and why do you think people don't want to talk about them?

Appendix B

Survey Instrument for Ages 13-14

Q42 Who is the main person (or people) that talks to you about sexuality? If you have questions about sexuality, who do you go to?

Q43 Is there anything about sexuality that you wish you could learn about or talk about? If so, what?

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Survey Instrument for Ages 13-14

Q44 The next section will ask you some specific questions about your sexual experiences. In this part of the survey, I intentionally use descriptive and specific language about sex and sexual activities so that I can better understand the types of experiences that people have had and I can draw more accurate conclusions in my research. Remember that this survey is confidential and anonymous. You can answer some questions and skip others, you can share as much or as little information as you want, and you can stop taking the survey at any time.

Appendix B

Survey Instrument for Ages 13-14

Q45 SEXUAL EXPERIENCES – PAST & PRESENT If you don't want to answer questions about sexual experiences, you can select "I'd like to skip this section" in order to go to the next section.

Q46 Have you ever had sex?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No
- ❍ I'd like to skip this section

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Have you ever engaged in sexual activ...If I'd like to skip this section Is Selected, Then Skip To BODY IMAGE & SELF-ESTEEM

Q47 How old were you when you first had sex?

Q48 How many people have you had sex with?

Appendix B

Survey Instrument for Ages 13-14

Q49 Have you ever engaged in sexual activity (which can include activities like kissing or touching another person's body in a sexual way)? For this question, only think about sexual activities that don't include actually having sex.

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To BODY IMAGE & SELF-ESTEEM

Q50 How old were you when you first engaged in sexual activity (which can include activities like kissing or touching another person's body in a sexual way)? For this question, only think about sexual activities that don't include actually having sex.

Q51 How many people have you engaged in sexual activity with that didn't involve actually having sex?

Q54 Are you currently sexually active?

- ❍ No, I'm not engaging in sexual activity or having sex
- ❍ Yes, I engage in sexual activity (such as kissing, sexual touching, or oral sex) but I'm not having sex
- ❍ Yes, I am having sex
- ❍ Other: _____

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Survey Instrument for Ages 13-14

Q52 Have you ever been forced to do any kind of sexual activity when you didn't want to?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No
- ❍ I don't know

Answer If Have you ever been forced to do any kind of sexual activity when you didn't want to? Yes Is Selected Or Have you ever been forced to do any kind of sexual activity when you didn't want to? I don't know Is Selected

Q53 If you would like, you can use this space to share more about any experiences where you have been forced to engage in sexual activity you didn't want to. You may also talk about how these experiences affect your sexuality now.

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Survey Instrument for Ages 13-14

Q55 SEXUAL HEALTH

Q56 What method, if any, do you or your current sexual partner (or most recent sexual partner) use to prevent pregnancy and/or sexually transmitted infections (STIs)? Select all that apply.

- ❑ I am not sexually active right now
- ❑ Birth control pill
- ❑ IUD (such as Mirena or ParaGard)
- ❑ Condom
- ❑ A shot (such as Depo-Provera)
- ❑ Birth control ring (such as NuvaRing)
- ❑ Tubal ligation
- ❑ Vasectomy
- ❑ Natural family planning (such as withdrawal or rhythm method)
- ❑ Neither my partner nor I use birth control
- ❑ Other: _____

Q57 How often do you use any method of pregnancy prevention and/or STI prevention?

- ❍ I am not sexually active right now
- ❍ Never or almost never
- ❍ Sometimes (25% of the time)
- ❍ Half the time
- ❍ Most of the time (75% of the time)
- ❍ Always or almost always
- ❍ Other: _____

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Survey Instrument for Ages 13-14

Q58 BODY IMAGE & SELF-ESTEEM

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Q59 Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
All things considered, I am satisfied with the way my body looks.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I feel that my body has a number of good qualities.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I wish I could have more respect for myself.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I take a positive attitude toward my body.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
There are many things I wish I could change about my body.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I feel that I am a person of worth.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

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Survey Instrument for Ages 13-14

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Q60 PORNOGRAPHY & EROTIC MATERIAL In this section, "pornography" and "erotic material" refer to any materials (such as words, photos, or videos) that contain descriptions or images of sexual activity or sexual areas of the body. There are many different reasons that people use pornography and erotic materials, including being curious about sex, to feel sexually excited, and to learn more about sex. If you don't want to answer questions about pornography and erotic material, you can select "I'd like to skip this section" in order to go to the next section.

Q61 Have you ever used pornography or other erotic material?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No
- ❍ I'd like to skip this section

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To SEXUAL ORIENTATIONIf I'd like to skip this section Is Selected, Then Skip To SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Q62 How often do you use pornography or other erotic material?

- ❍ I don't currently use pornography or other erotic material
- ❍ Less than once a month
- ❍ Once a month
- ❍ Several times a month
- ❍ Once a week
- ❍ Several times a week

Q63 What types of materials do you use? Select all that apply.

- ❑ I don't currently use any pornography or other erotic material
- ❑ Online pictures with sexual content
- ❑ Online videos with sexual content
- ❑ Hard copies of pictures or videos with sexual content
- ❑ Sex tapes I have made by myself or with a partner
- ❑ Nude or erotic photos of myself and/or my partner
- ❑ Erotic books, magazines, or stories
- ❑ Social media (Facebook/Twitter)
- ❑ Other: _____

Appendix B

Survey Instrument for Ages 13-14

Q64 SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Q65 Do you think of yourself as:

- ❑ Heterosexual (Straight)
- ❑ Lesbian
- ❑ Gay
- ❑ Bisexual
- ❑ Queer
- ❑ Questioning
- ❑ I don't know
- ❑ No label
- ❑ Other: _____

Appendix B

Survey Instrument for Ages 13-14

Q66 This last section asks you to think about how your faith and your sexuality relate to each other.

Q67 Do you have any thoughts about how your faith and your sexuality relate to each other? Have you had any personal experiences that connect your faith and your sexuality? If so, what are they? These can be positive, negative, or neutral experiences. For example, do you make decisions about your own sexuality because of your faith, or have you had sexual experiences that you think some faith communities might not approve of? You can talk about your own experiences or those of people you are close with, but remember not to include any identifying information such as someone's name.

Q68 Do you think churches and other faith communities should talk about sexuality? If so, how do you think they should talk about it?

Q69 Is there anything else you want to talk about that I didn't ask in the survey?

Q127 This section asks for some final demographic information.

Q128 What is your gender identity?

- ❍ Female
- ❍ Gender Fluid, Gender Nonconforming, or Genderqueer
- ❍ Intersex
- ❍ Male
- ❍ Transgender, Transsexual, or Trans
- ❍ Other: _____

Appendix B

Survey Instrument for Ages 13-14

Q129 What state do you currently live in?

- ❍ Alabama
- ❍ Alaska
- ❍ Arizona
- ❍ Arkansas
- ❍ California
- ❍ Colorado
- ❍ Connecticut
- ❍ Delaware
- ❍ Florida
- ❍ Georgia
- ❍ Hawaii
- ❍ Idaho
- ❍ Illinois
- ❍ Indiana
- ❍ Iowa
- ❍ Kansas
- ❍ Kentucky
- ❍ Louisiana
- ❍ Maine
- ❍ Maryland
- ❍ Massachusetts
- ❍ Michigan
- ❍ Minnesota
- ❍ Mississippi
- ❍ Missouri
- ❍ Montana
- ❍ Nebraska
- ❍ Nevada
- ❍ New Hampshire
- ❍ New Jersey
- ❍ New Mexico
- ❍ New York
- ❍ North Carolina
- ❍ North Dakota
- ❍ Ohio
- ❍ Oklahoma
- ❍ Oregon
- ❍ Pennsylvania
- ❍ Rhode Island
- ❍ South Carolina

- South Dakota
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Utah
- Vermont
- Virginia
- Washington
- West Virginia
- Wisconsin
- Wyoming
- Other

Appendix C

Survey Instrument for Ages 15-17

TEST Survey on Faith and Sexuality Among Christians in the United States

Q1 My name is Shawn Warner-Garcia, and I am a graduate student in the Linguistics Department at the University of California, Santa Barbara. I do research on language, sexuality, and religion, and I am currently conducting this anonymous online survey as part of my dissertation project on how Christian youth and adults talk about and engage with sexuality. Having grown up in a Baptist church in Florida, I'm excited to be able to combine my background with my research interests! If you'd like to find out more about me, you can visit my website here.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked some questions about yourself, your faith community, and your experiences with faith and sexuality. The survey asks you to reflect on how you have encountered discussions of sexuality in the faith communities that you grew up in or are currently a part of. You will also be asked questions about your current and past sexual experiences. For this survey, I am defining "sexuality" pretty broadly to include things like sexual practices, body image, sexual orientation, romantic relationships, sexual desires, sexual limit-setting, and sexual violence.

As you take the survey, you might think about or write about experiences you've had that make you feel uncomfortable or upset. You should only share as much as you feel comfortable. I also encourage you to take the survey in a private and secure location to make sure that your answers remain anonymous. You can decide not to take this survey, or you can change your mind about taking it and quit at any time. You can also choose to answer some questions and not others.

To take this survey, you need to be at least 13 years old and live in the United States. Please answer the next two questions so that I know you're eligible to participate.

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Survey Instrument for Ages 15-17

Q2 What is your age?

- ❍ 0
- ❍ 1
- ❍ 2
- ❍ 3
- ❍ 4
- ❍ 5
- ❍ 6
- ❍ 7
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- ❍ 75
- ❍ 76
- ❍ 77
- ❍ 78
- ❍ 79
- ❍ 80+

Appendix C

Survey Instrument for Ages 15-17

Q3 Do you live in the United States?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Answer If Do you live in the United States? No Is Selected Or What is your age? 0-12 Is Selected

Q4 Thank you for your time and interest. However, based on your responses to the two previous questions, you are not eligible to participate in this survey.

If Thank you for your time and... Is Displayed, Then Skip To End of Survey

Appendix C

Survey Instrument for Ages 15-17

Answer If What is your age? 15-17 Is Selected

Q6 This survey is part of a research project and will be used for research purposes. Here is what you need to know before you decide to participate or not:

PURPOSE

You are being asked to participate in this anonymous online research survey about faith and sexuality. The goal of the survey is to assess the current state of discussions and practices of sexuality in Christian communities in the United States. Your responses will be used to help develop curriculum and materials on the connections between faith and sexuality.

PROCEDURES

If you decide to participate, you will be asked a series of questions about yourself and your experiences with faith and sexuality. The survey asks you to reflect on how you have encountered discussions of sexuality in the faith communities that you grew up in or are currently a part of. You will also be asked questions about your current and past sexual experiences. The format of the questions will be yes/no, multiple choice, and free response. Your responses are completely anonymous. The survey should take about 30 minutes to complete, although if you have a lot to say, you can take as long as you'd like. It's important that you complete the survey in one sitting since I'm not collecting any personal identifying information from you and you won't be able to save your responses and return later.

RISKS

There is a slight risk that you might experience emotional discomfort or distress while taking this survey. You are encouraged to only share your experiences to the extent that you feel comfortable. If you decide to take the survey and someone else finds out (like your parents or your friends), it's possible that they might not approve and this could have negative consequences for you. I recommend that you take the survey in a private place and erase your browser history and cookies when you're done with the survey. If you want to avoid this risk completely, you should consider not taking this survey.

BENEFITS

By taking this survey, you may experience some direct benefits – such as being able to talk about personal experiences that you may not otherwise be able to express with your family or faith community – or indirect benefits – such as contributing to the knowledge base that will be drawn on to develop sexual ethics curriculum that may be used by your faith community in the future.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your participation in this survey is anonymous, so your name and contact information will not be collected. The demographic information that you may choose to provide (age, gender, and current state of residence) is confidential and will not be linked to your identity

in any way. IMPORTANT: Please do not include any identifiable information in your survey responses (such as your name or anyone else's name, the name of a particular faith community, or the name of a particular city). Any identifiable information that you include in the survey will be stripped before any data is stored. In order to ensure your privacy, it is also recommended that you take the survey in a private location and that you erase your browser history and cookies when you are finished.

COST/PAYMENT
There is no cost or compensation associated with taking this survey.

RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW
You may refuse to participate in this research survey, or you may change your mind about participating and decide to quit at any time after you have started the survey. You may also choose to answer some questions and not others.

QUESTIONS
If you have any questions about this research project or if you think you may have been injured as a result of your participation, please contact:

Shawn Warner-Garcia
warnergarcia@umail.ucsb.edu

If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Committee at (805) 893-3807 or hsc@research.ucsb.edu, or write to the University of California, Human Subjects Committee, Office of Research, Santa Barbara, CA 93106-2050.

By clicking "Yes" below, you agree to participate in this survey.
- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q70 In the first section of this survey, you will be asked about your identification and participation with faith communities.

Q71 Do you consider yourself a Christian?
- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Appendix C

Survey Instrument for Ages 15-17

Answer If Do you consider yourself a Christian? Yes Is Selected

Q72 What denomination(s) of Christianity do you consider yourself a part of? (You may choose more than one if you feel like you are part of multiple denominations.)

- ❑ Baptist
- ❑ Catholic
- ❑ Episcopalian/Anglican
- ❑ Lutheran
- ❑ Methodist
- ❑ Nondenominational
- ❑ Orthodox
- ❑ Pentecostal
- ❑ Reformed
- ❑ I don't know
- ❑ Other: _____

Answer If Do you consider yourself a Christian? No Is Selected

Q73 Do you consider yourself to be part of a faith tradition or belief system other than Christianity? If so, what is it?

Q74 Are you currently part of a church or another faith community (like a youth group or a faith-based group at your school such as the Fellowship of Christian Athletes)?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Answer If Are you currently part of a church or another faith community (like a youth group or a faith-base... Yes Is Selected

Q75 How often do you attend services, fellowships, or other gatherings in your faith community?

- ❍ 1-2 times a year
- ❍ Less than once a month
- ❍ 1-2 times a month
- ❍ 3 or more times a month
- ❍ 1-2 times a week
- ❍ 3 or more times a week

Q76 Were you raised or are you currently being raised in a faith community?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Appendix C

Survey Instrument for Ages 15-17

Answer If Were you raised or are you currently being raised in a faith community? Yes Is Selected

Q77 Please briefly describe the FAITH COMMUNITY that you were raised in or are currently being raised in. For example, you can talk about what types of things are important to your faith community, who leads your faith community, whether you have a youth program or Sunday School, etc.

Q78 Please briefly describe the FAMILY SETTING AND CULTURAL CONTEXT that you were raised in or are currently being raised in. For example, you can talk about whether you are part of a big or small family, whether you live in a big or small town, what are some important values in your community, etc.

Appendix C

Survey Instrument for Ages 15-17

Q79 In the next section, you will be asked about how you have encountered discussions about sexuality growing up. There are no right or wrong answers, just answer each question honestly as it relates to your own experience.

Answer If Were you raised or are you currently being raised in a faith community? Yes Is Selected

Q80 How does your FAITH COMMUNITY address issues of sexuality, if at all? For example, are issues of sexuality talked about or taught about in sermons, Sunday School classes, small groups, youth group meetings, etc.? Feel free to compare how your faith community informally talks about sexuality versus how it officially teaches about sexuality. Remember: For this survey, "sexuality" is broadly defined and includes things like sexual practices, body image, sexual orientation, romantic relationships, sexual desires, sexual limit-setting, and sexual violence. When you answer questions in this survey that ask about sexuality, your responses can address any of these issues or others that you think are related to sexuality.

Q81 How does your FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND/OR COMMUNITY address issues of sexuality, if at all? For example, do your parents talk to you about sex, does your school have a sex education program, etc.?

Answer If Were you raised or are you currently being raised in a faith community? Yes Is Selected

Q82 In your FAITH COMMUNITY, are there questions or topics about sexuality that seem off-limits, that you are hesitant to ask about, or that you are actively discouraged from talking about? If so, what are they and why do you think these questions or topics are restricted?

Q83 In your FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND/OR COMMUNITY, are there questions or topics about sexuality that seem off-limits, that you are hesitant to ask about, or that you are actively discouraged from talking about? If so, what are they and why do you think these questions or topics are restricted?

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Survey Instrument for Ages 15-17

Q84 Who is the main person (or people) that talks to you about sexuality? If you have questions about sexuality, who do you go to?

Q85 Is there anything about sexuality that you wish you could learn about or talk about? If so, what?

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Q86 The next section will ask you some specific questions about your sexual experiences. In this part of the survey, I intentionally use descriptive and specific language about sex and sexual activities so that I can better understand the types of experiences that people have had and I can draw more accurate conclusions in my research. Remember that this survey is confidential and anonymous. You can answer some questions and skip others, you can share as much or as little information as you want, and you can stop taking the survey at any time.

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Survey Instrument for Ages 15-17

Q87 SEXUAL EXPERIENCES – PAST & PRESENT If you don't want to answer questions about sexual experiences, you can select "I'd like to skip this section" in order to go to the next section.

Q88 Have you ever had sexual intercourse (which is sexual contact between individuals involving penetration)?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No
- ❍ I'd like to skip this section

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Have you ever engaged in sexual activ...If I'd like to skip this section Is Selected, Then Skip To RELATIONSHIP STATUS

Q89 At what age did you first have sexual intercourse?

Q90 How many sexual partners have you had sexual intercourse with in your lifetime?

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Survey Instrument for Ages 15-17

Q91 Have you ever engaged in sexual activity other than sexual intercourse (which can include stimulation of the breasts, genitals, or other erogenous areas through activities such as such as kissing, touching, and oral stimulation)?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To RELATIONSHIP STATUS

Q92 At what age did you first engage in sexual activity (including stimulation of the breasts, genitals, or other erogenous areas through activities such as such as kissing, touching, and oral stimulation)?

Q93 How many sexual partners have you had non-intercourse sexual activity with in your lifetime?

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Q94 SEXUAL EXPERIENCES – PAST & PRESENT (continued)

Q95 Please select all of the following sexual activities that you have engaged in (with a current sexual partner or past sexual partners).

- ❑ Kissing or making out
- ❑ Masturbation (self-stimulation)
- ❑ Mutual masturbation (stimulating a partner's genitals)
- ❑ Use of sex toys (such as a vibrator or dildo used on yourself or a partner)
- ❑ Groping and other sexual touching (giving)
- ❑ Groping and other sexual touching (receiving)
- ❑ Frottage (rubbing one's genitals against another person's body, sometimes called dry humping)
- ❑ Anal sex
- ❑ Oral sex (giving)
- ❑ Oral sex (receiving)
- ❑ Sexual intercourse (involving penetration)
- ❑ Digital sex (e.g. phone sex, sexting, Internet chat, etc.)
- ❑ Group sex (involving more than two participants)
- ❑ Other: _____

Q96 How often do you engage in sexual activities (including intercourse, masturbation, or other sexual activities) that lead you to orgasm?

- ❍ Several times a week
- ❍ Once a week
- ❍ Several times a month
- ❍ Once a month
- ❍ Less than once a month
- ❍ I have never had an orgasm

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Q97 Have you ever been forced or coerced to engage in sexual activity when you didn't want to?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No
- ❍ I don't know

Answer If Have you ever been forced or coerced to engage in sexual activity when you didn't want to? Yes Is Selected Or Have you ever been forced or coerced to engage in sexual activity when you didn't want to? I don't know Is Selected

Q98 If you would like, you can use this space to share more about any experiences where you have been forced to engage in sexual activity you didn't want to. You may also talk about how these experiences affect your sexuality now.

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Q99 SEXUAL HEALTH

Q100 What method, if any, do you or your current sexual partner (or most recent sexual partner) use to prevent pregnancy and/or sexually transmitted infections (STIs)? Select all that apply.

- ❑ Birth control pill
- ❑ IUD (such as Mirena or ParaGard)
- ❑ Condom
- ❑ A shot (such as Depo-Provera)
- ❑ Birth control ring (such as NuvaRing)
- ❑ Tubal ligation
- ❑ Vasectomy
- ❑ Natural family planning (such as withdrawal or rhythm method)
- ❑ Neither my partner nor I use birth control
- ❑ I am not sexually active right now
- ❑ Other: _____

Q101 How often do you use any method of pregnancy prevention and/or STI prevention?

- ❍ Never or almost never
- ❍ Sometimes (25% of the time)
- ❍ Half the time
- ❍ Most of the time (75% of the time)
- ❍ Always or almost always
- ❍ I am not sexually active right now
- ❍ Other: _____

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Q102 Do you drink alcohol or use recreational drugs when you engage in sexual activity?

- ❍ Never or almost never
- ❍ Sometimes (25% of the time)
- ❍ Half the time
- ❍ Most of the time (75% of the time)
- ❍ Always or almost always
- ❍ I am not sexually active right now
- ❍ Other: _____

Q103 Do you have or have you had any of the following sexually transmitted infections (STIs)? Check all that apply.

- ❑ Chlamydia
- ❑ HPV (human papilloma virus)
- ❑ Hepatitis B
- ❑ Herpes
- ❑ Gonorrhea
- ❑ Syphilis
- ❑ HIV/AIDS
- ❑ I don't know
- ❑ I have never had an STI
- ❑ Other: _____

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Q104 SEXUAL PLEASURE & SATISFACTION

Q105 Are you currently sexually active?

- ❍ Yes, I am having sexual intercourse
- ❍ Yes, I engage in sexual activity (such as kissing, sexual touching, or oral sex) but I'm not having sexual intercourse
- ❍ No, I'm not engaging in sexual activity or having sexual intercourse
- ❍ Other: _____

If No, I'm not engaging in sex... Is Selected, Then Skip To What do you like MOST about the sexua...

Q106 All things considered, how satisfied are you with your current sexual relationship?

- ❍ Extremely unsatisfied
- ❍ Very unsatisfied
- ❍ Somewhat unsatisfied
- ❍ Neither unsatisfied nor satisfied
- ❍ Somewhat satisfied
- ❍ Very satisfied
- ❍ Extremely satisfied
- ❍ N/A (I am not currently in a sexual relationship)

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Q107 What do you like MOST about the sexual activity you participate in (currently or in the past)? Check all that apply.

- ❑ Feeling empowered
- ❑ Physical closeness
- ❑ Emotional closeness
- ❑ Physical release
- ❑ Sexual playfulness and variety
- ❑ Romance
- ❑ It feels good
- ❑ Affirmation (loving words, praise, etc.)
- ❑ A sense of accomplishment
- ❑ Other: _____

Q108 What do you like LEAST about the sexual activity you participate in (currently or in the past)? Check all that apply.

- ❑ Intercourse hurts
- ❑ Sexual practices or positions that my partner insists on
- ❑ The focus is on my partner's desires/wants and not my own desires/wants
- ❑ I worry about pregnancy or STIs
- ❑ It's awkward
- ❑ I get sexually bored
- ❑ The inconvenience or trying to find the time
- ❑ It's messy, dirty, or smelly
- ❑ Lack of emotional closeness
- ❑ I am not sexually satisfied by the sexual activities I engage in
- ❑ I don't want my partner to see my body
- ❑ I don't want to see my partner's body
- ❑ I feel shame or guilt about our sexual activity
- ❑ I can't express my likes/dislikes during sexual activity
- ❑ Sex is difficult because of negative sexual experiences in my past
- ❑ Other: _____

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Q109 Have you ever had a sexual or romantic relationship with a person while you were in a committed relationship with someone else? Check all that apply.

- ❑ Never
- ❑ This past year
- ❑ In the previous two to five years
- ❑ Five or more years ago
- ❑ Other: _____

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Q110 RELATIONSHIP STATUS

Q111 What is your current relationship status?

- ❍ Single
- ❍ Single, but hooking up
- ❍ Casually dating
- ❍ In a committed relationship, but not married
- ❍ Married
- ❍ Divorced
- ❍ Other: _____

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Q112 BODY IMAGE & SELF-ESTEEM

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Q113 Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
All things considered, I am satisfied with the way my body looks.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I feel that my body has a number of good qualities.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I wish I could have more respect for myself.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I take a positive attitude toward my body.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
There are many things I wish I could change about my body.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I feel that I am a person of	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

worth.							

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Q114 PORNOGRAPHY & EROTIC MATERIAL In this section, "pornography" and "erotic material" are used to describe any material (text, visual, or other) containing explicit descriptions or displays of sexual organs and/or activity that is intended to stimulate erotic or sexual feelings. If you don't want to answer questions about pornography, you can select "I'd like to skip this section" in order to go to the next section.

Q115 Have you ever used pornography or other erotic material?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No
- ❍ I'd like to skip this section

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To SEXUAL ATTRACTION & SEXUAL ORIENTATIONIf I'd like to skip this section Is Selected, Then Skip To SEXUAL ATTRACTION & SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Q116 How often do you use pornography or other erotic material?

- ❍ Several times a week
- ❍ Once a week
- ❍ Several times a month
- ❍ Once a month
- ❍ Less than once a month
- ❍ I don't currently use pornography or other erotic material for sexual stimulation

Q117 What types of materials do you use? Select all that apply.

- ❑ Online pictures with sexual content
- ❑ Online videos with sexual content
- ❑ Hard copies of pictures or videos with sexual content
- ❑ Sex tapes I have made by myself or with a partner
- ❑ Nude or erotic photos of myself and/or my partner
- ❑ Erotic books, magazines, or stories
- ❑ Social media (Facebook/Twitter)
- ❑ I don't currently use any materials for sexual stimulation
- ❑ Other: _____

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Q118 SEXUAL ATTRACTION & SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Q119 Please rate your levels of attraction below.

	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Extremely
I am emotionally or romantically attracted to people of the OPPOSITE sex.	❍	❍	❍	❍
I am physically or sexually attracted to people of the OPPOSITE sex.	❍	❍	❍	❍
I am emotionally or romantically attracted to people of the SAME sex.	❍	❍	❍	❍
I am physically or sexually attracted to people of the SAME sex.	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q120 During your life, with whom have you had sexual contact? Please select all that apply.

- ❑ Females
- ❑ Males
- ❑ I have never had sexual contact
- ❑ Other: _____

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Q121 Do you think of yourself as:
- ❍ Heterosexual (Straight)
- ❍ Lesbian
- ❍ Gay
- ❍ Bisexual
- ❍ Queer
- ❍ Questioning
- ❍ I don't know
- ❍ No label
- ❍ Other: _____

Q122 How would you describe how others think of you (your public sexual orientation label)?
- ❍ Heterosexual (Straight)
- ❍ Lesbian
- ❍ Gay
- ❍ Bisexual
- ❍ Queer
- ❍ Questioning
- ❍ I don’t know
- ❍ No label
- ❍ Other: _____

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Q123 This last section asks you to synthesize your experiences and attitudes related to faith and sexuality.

Q124 Please tell me about any personal experiences (past or present) that have shaped your understanding of how your faith and your sexuality relate to each other. These can be positive, negative, or neutral experiences. For example, have your religious beliefs led you to make certain decisions about sexuality, or have your sexual experiences led you to seek out certain types of faith communities? You can talk about your own experiences or those of people you are close with, but please remember not to include any identifying information such as a person's name.

Q125 What do you think the role of faith communities should be in addressing topics of sexuality?

Q126 Is there anything else that you would like to add on the topic of faith and sexuality that wasn't asked about in this survey?

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Q127 This section asks for some final demographic information.

Q128 What is your gender identity?

- ❍ Female
- ❍ Gender Fluid, Gender Nonconforming, or Genderqueer
- ❍ Intersex
- ❍ Male
- ❍ Transgender, Transsexual, or Trans
- ❍ Other: _____

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Q129 What state do you currently live in?

- ❍ Alabama
- ❍ Alaska
- ❍ Arizona
- ❍ Arkansas
- ❍ California
- ❍ Colorado
- ❍ Connecticut
- ❍ Delaware
- ❍ Florida
- ❍ Georgia
- ❍ Hawaii
- ❍ Idaho
- ❍ Illinois
- ❍ Indiana
- ❍ Iowa
- ❍ Kansas
- ❍ Kentucky
- ❍ Louisiana
- ❍ Maine
- ❍ Maryland
- ❍ Massachusetts
- ❍ Michigan
- ❍ Minnesota
- ❍ Mississippi
- ❍ Missouri
- ❍ Montana
- ❍ Nebraska
- ❍ Nevada
- ❍ New Hampshire
- ❍ New Jersey
- ❍ New Mexico
- ❍ New York
- ❍ North Carolina
- ❍ North Dakota
- ❍ Ohio
- ❍ Oklahoma
- ❍ Oregon
- ❍ Pennsylvania
- ❍ Rhode Island
- ❍ South Carolina

- South Dakota
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Utah
- Vermont
- Virginia
- Washington
- West Virginia
- Wisconsin
- Wyoming
- Other

Appendix D

Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

TEST Survey on Faith and Sexuality Among Christians in the United States

Q1 My name is Shawn Warner-Garcia, and I am a graduate student in the Linguistics Department at the University of California, Santa Barbara. I do research on language, sexuality, and religion, and I am currently conducting this anonymous online survey as part of my dissertation project on how Christian youth and adults talk about and engage with sexuality. Having grown up in a Baptist church in Florida, I'm excited to be able to combine my background with my research interests! If you'd like to find out more about me, you can visit my website here.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked some questions about yourself, your faith community, and your experiences with faith and sexuality. The survey asks you to reflect on how you have encountered discussions of sexuality in the faith communities that you grew up in or are currently a part of. You will also be asked questions about your current and past sexual experiences. For this survey, I am defining "sexuality" pretty broadly to include things like sexual practices, body image, sexual orientation, romantic relationships, sexual desires, sexual limit-setting, and sexual violence.

As you take the survey, you might think about or write about experiences you've had that make you feel uncomfortable or upset. You should only share as much as you feel comfortable. I also encourage you to take the survey in a private and secure location to make sure that your answers remain anonymous. You can decide not to take this survey, or you can change your mind about taking it and quit at any time. You can also choose to answer some questions and not others.

To take this survey, you need to be at least 13 years old and live in the United States. Please answer the next two questions so that I know you're eligible to participate.

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Q2 What is your age?

- ❍ 0
- ❍ 1
- ❍ 2
- ❍ 3
- ❍ 4
- ❍ 5
- ❍ 6
- ❍ 7
- ❍ 8
- ❍ 9
- ❍ 10
- ❍ 11
- ❍ 12
- ❍ 13
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- ❍ 68
- ❍ 69
- ❍ 70
- ❍ 71
- ❍ 72
- ❍ 73
- ❍ 74
- ❍ 75
- ❍ 76
- ❍ 77
- ❍ 78
- ❍ 79
- ❍ 80+

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Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q3 Do you live in the United States?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Answer If Do you live in the United States? No Is Selected Or What is your age? 0-12 Is Selected

Q4 Thank you for your time and interest. However, based on your responses to the two previous questions, you are not eligible to participate in this survey.

If Thank you for your time and... Is Displayed, Then Skip To End of Survey

Appendix D

Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q7 This survey is part of a research project and will be used for research purposes. Here is what you need to know before you decide to participate or not:

PURPOSE
You are being asked to participate in this anonymous online research survey about faith and sexuality. The goal of the survey is to assess the current state of discussions about and practices of sexuality in Christian communities in the United States. Your responses will be used to help develop curriculum and materials on the connections between faith and sexuality.

PROCEDURES
If you decide to participate, you will be asked a series of questions about yourself and your experiences with faith and sexuality. The survey asks you to reflect on how you have encountered discussions of sexuality in the faith communities that you grew up in or are currently a part of. You will also be asked questions about your current and past sexual experiences. The format of the questions will be yes/no, multiple choice, and free response. Your responses will be completely anonymous. The survey should take about 30 minutes to complete, although if you have a lot to say, you can take as long as you'd like. It's important that you complete the survey in one sitting since I'm not collecting any identifiable information from you and you won't be able to save your responses and return later.

RISKS
There is a slight risk that you might experience emotional discomfort or distress while taking this survey. You are encouraged to only share your experiences to the extent that you feel comfortable.

BENEFITS
By taking this survey, you may experience some direct benefits – such as being able to talk about personal experiences that you may not otherwise be able to express with your family or faith community – or indirect benefits – such as contributing to the knowledge base that will be drawn on to develop sexual ethics curriculum that may be used by your faith community in the future.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Your participation in this survey is anonymous, so your name and contact information will not be collected. The demographic information that you may choose to provide (age, gender, and current state of residence) is confidential and will not be linked to your identity in any way. IMPORTANT: Please do not include any identifiable information in your survey responses (such as your name or anyone else's name, the name of a particular faith community, or the name of a particular city). Any identifiable information that you include in the survey will be stripped before any data is stored. In order to ensure your privacy, it is also recommended that you take the survey in a private location and that you erase your browser history and cookies when you are finished.

COST/PAYMENT
There is no cost or compensation associated with taking this survey.

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RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW
You may refuse to participate in this research survey, or you may change your mind about participating and decide to quit at any time after you have started the survey. You may also choose to answer some questions and not others.

QUESTIONS
If you have any questions about this research project or if you think you may have been injured as a result of your participation, please contact:

Shawn Warner-Garcia
warnergarcia@umail.ucsb.edu

If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Committee at (805) 893-3807 or hsc@research.ucsb.edu, or write to the University of California, Human Subjects Committee, Office of Research, Santa Barbara, CA 93106-2050.

By clicking "Yes" below, you agree to participate in this survey.

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

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Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q8 In the first section of this survey, you will be asked about your participation in faith communities when you were growing up and how you encountered discussions about sexuality. There are no right or wrong answers, just respond to each question honestly as it relates to your own experience.

Q9 Were you raised in a Christian faith community?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Answer If Were you raised in a Christian faith community? No Is Selected

Q10 Were you raised in a faith tradition or belief system other than Christianity? If so, please specify.

Answer If Were you raised in a Christian faith community? Yes Is Selected

Q11 What denomination(s) of Christianity were you raised in? (You may choose more than one if applicable.)

- ❑ Baptist
- ❑ Catholic
- ❑ Episcopalian/Anglican
- ❑ Lutheran
- ❑ Methodist
- ❑ Nondenominational
- ❑ Orthodox
- ❑ Pentecostal
- ❑ Reformed
- ❑ I don't know
- ❑ Other: _____

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Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Answer If Were you raised in a Christian faith community? Yes Is Selected

Q12 Please briefly describe the FAITH COMMUNITY that you were raised in. For example, you can talk about your faith community's belief systems, how leadership was structured, whether there was an educational component (such as Sunday School), etc.

Q13 Please briefly describe the FAMILY SETTING AND CULTURAL CONTEXT that you were raised in. For example, you can talk about whether you grew up in a big or small family, whether you grew up in a big or small town, what were some important cultural values in your community, etc.

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Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Answer If Were you raised in a Christian faith community? Yes Is Selected

Q14 Growing up, how did your FAITH COMMUNITY address issues of sexuality, if at all? For example, were issues of sexuality talked about or taught about in sermons, Sunday School classes, small groups, youth group meetings, etc.? Feel free to compare how your faith community informally talked about sexuality versus how it officially taught about sexuality. Remember: For this survey, I am defining "sexuality" pretty broadly to include things like sexual practices, body image, sexual orientation, romantic relationships, sexual desires, sexual limit-setting, and sexual violence. When you answer questions in this survey about sexuality, your responses can talk about any of these issues or others that you think are related to sexuality.

Q15 Growing up, how did your FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND/OR COMMUNITY address issues of sexuality, if at all? For example, did your parents talk to you about sex, did your school have a sex education program, etc.?

Answer If Did you grow up in a faith community? Yes Is Selected

Q16 Growing up, were there questions or topics about sexuality that seemed off-limits, that you were hesitant to ask about, or that you were actively discouraged from talking about in your FAITH COMMUNITY? If so, what were they and why do you think these questions or topics were restricted?

Q17 Growing up, were there questions or topics about sexuality that seemed off-limits, that you were hesitant to ask about, or that you were actively discouraged from talking about in your FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND/OR COMMUNITY? If so, what were they and why do you think these questions or topics were restricted?

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Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q18 Growing up, where did you primarily learn about sexuality? If you had questions about sexuality, who did you ask?

Q19 Is there anything about sexuality that you wish you had learned growing up? If so, what?

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Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q20 In this next section, you will be asked about your current identification with and participation in faith communities.

Q21 Do you currently consider yourself a Christian?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Answer If Do you currently consider yourself a Christian? No Is Selected

Q22 Do you currently consider yourself to be part of a faith tradition or belief system other than Christianity? If so, please specify.

Q23 Are you currently part of a church or other Christian faith community?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To This next section will ask you questi...

Answer If Were you raised in a Christian faith community? No Is Selected And Are you currently part of a church or other Christian faith community? Yes Is Selected

Q24 At what age did you first join a Christian faith community?

Q25 What denomination(s) of Christianity are you currently part of? (You may choose more than one if applicable.)

- ❑ Baptist
- ❑ Catholic
- ❑ Episcopalian/Anglican
- ❑ Lutheran
- ❑ Methodist
- ❑ Nondenominational
- ❑ Orthodox
- ❑ Pentecostal
- ❑ Reformed
- ❑ I don't know
- ❑ Other: _____

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Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q26 How often do you attend services, fellowships, or other gatherings in your faith community?

- ❍ 1-2 times a year
- ❍ Less than once a month
- ❍ 1-2 times a month
- ❍ 3 or more times a month
- ❍ 1-2 times a week
- ❍ 3 or more times a week

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Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q27 How does your current faith community address issues of sexuality? If applicable, how does it differ from the faith community you were raised in? For example, are issues of sexuality talked about or taught about in sermons, Sunday School classes, small groups, etc.? Feel free to compare how your current faith community informally talks about sexuality versus how it officially teaches about sexuality.

Q28 In your current faith community, are there questions or topics about sexuality that seem off-limits, that you are hesitant to ask about, or that you are actively discouraged from talking about? If so, what are they and why do you think these questions or topics are restricted? If applicable, how does this differ from the faith community you were raised in?

Q86 The next section will ask you some specific questions about your sexual experiences. In this part of the survey, I intentionally use descriptive and specific language about sex and sexual activities so that I can better understand the types of experiences that people have had and I can draw more accurate conclusions in my research. Remember that this survey is confidential and anonymous. You can answer some questions and skip others, you can share as much or as little information as you want, and you can stop taking the survey at any time.

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Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q87 SEXUAL EXPERIENCES – PAST & PRESENT If you don't want to answer questions about sexual experiences, you can select "I'd like to skip this section" in order to go to the next section.

Q88 Have you ever had sexual intercourse (which is sexual contact between individuals involving penetration)?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No
- ❍ I'd like to skip this section

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Have you ever engaged in sexual activ...If I'd like to skip this section Is Selected, Then Skip To RELATIONSHIP STATUS

Q89 At what age did you first have sexual intercourse?

Q90 How many sexual partners have you had sexual intercourse with in your lifetime?

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Q91 Have you ever engaged in sexual activity other than sexual intercourse (which can include stimulation of the breasts, genitals, or other erogenous areas through activities such as such as kissing, touching, and oral stimulation)?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To RELATIONSHIP STATUS

Q92 At what age did you first engage in sexual activity (including stimulation of the breasts, genitals, or other erogenous areas through activities such as such as kissing, touching, and oral stimulation)?

Q93 How many sexual partners have you had non-intercourse sexual activity with in your lifetime?

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Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q94 SEXUAL EXPERIENCES – PAST & PRESENT (continued)

Q95 Please select all of the following sexual activities that you have engaged in (with a current sexual partner or past sexual partners).

- ❑ Kissing or making out
- ❑ Masturbation (self-stimulation)
- ❑ Mutual masturbation (stimulating a partner's genitals)
- ❑ Use of sex toys (such as a vibrator or dildo used on yourself or a partner)
- ❑ Groping and other sexual touching (giving)
- ❑ Groping and other sexual touching (receiving)
- ❑ Frottage (rubbing one's genitals against another person's body, sometimes called dry humping)
- ❑ Anal sex
- ❑ Oral sex (giving)
- ❑ Oral sex (receiving)
- ❑ Sexual intercourse (involving penetration)
- ❑ Digital sex (e.g. phone sex, sexting, Internet chat, etc.)
- ❑ Group sex (involving more than two participants)
- ❑ Other: _____

Q96 How often do you engage in sexual activities (including intercourse, masturbation, or other sexual activities) that lead you to orgasm?

- ❍ Several times a week
- ❍ Once a week
- ❍ Several times a month
- ❍ Once a month
- ❍ Less than once a month
- ❍ I have never had an orgasm

Appendix D
Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q97 Have you ever been forced or coerced to engage in sexual activity when you didn't want to?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No
- ❍ I don't know

Answer If Have you ever been forced or coerced to engage in sexual activity when you didn't want to? Yes Is Selected Or Have you ever been forced or coerced to engage in sexual activity when you didn't want to? I don't know Is Selected

Q98 If you would like, you can use this space to share more about any experiences where you have been forced to engage in sexual activity you didn't want to. You may also talk about how these experiences affect your sexuality now.

Appendix D
Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q99 SEXUAL HEALTH

Q100 What method, if any, do you or your current sexual partner (or most recent sexual partner) use to prevent pregnancy and/or sexually transmitted infections (STIs)? Select all that apply.

- ❑ Birth control pill
- ❑ IUD (such as Mirena or ParaGard)
- ❑ Condom
- ❑ A shot (such as Depo-Provera)
- ❑ Birth control ring (such as NuvaRing)
- ❑ Tubal ligation
- ❑ Vasectomy
- ❑ Natural family planning (such as withdrawal or rhythm method)
- ❑ Neither my partner nor I use birth control
- ❑ I am not sexually active right now
- ❑ Other: _____

Q101 How often do you use any method of pregnancy prevention and/or STI prevention?

- ❍ Never or almost never
- ❍ Sometimes (25% of the time)
- ❍ Half the time
- ❍ Most of the time (75% of the time)
- ❍ Always or almost always
- ❍ I am not sexually active right now
- ❍ Other: _____

Appendix D

Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q102 Do you drink alcohol or use recreational drugs when you engage in sexual activity?

- ❍ Never or almost never
- ❍ Sometimes (25% of the time)
- ❍ Half the time
- ❍ Most of the time (75% of the time)
- ❍ Always or almost always
- ❍ I am not sexually active right now
- ❍ Other: _____

Q103 Do you have or have you had any of the following sexually transmitted infections (STIs)? Check all that apply.

- ❑ Chlamydia
- ❑ HPV (human papilloma virus)
- ❑ Hepatitis B
- ❑ Herpes
- ❑ Gonorrhea
- ❑ Syphilis
- ❑ HIV/AIDS
- ❑ I don't know
- ❑ I have never had an STI
- ❑ Other: _____

Appendix D

Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q104 SEXUAL PLEASURE & SATISFACTION

Q105 Are you currently sexually active?

- ❍ Yes, I am having sexual intercourse
- ❍ Yes, I engage in sexual activity (such as kissing, sexual touching, or oral sex) but I'm not having sexual intercourse
- ❍ No, I'm not engaging in sexual activity or having sexual intercourse
- ❍ Other: _____

If No, I'm not engaging in sex... Is Selected, Then Skip To What do you like MOST about the sexua...

Q106 All things considered, how satisfied are you with your current sexual relationship?

- ❍ Extremely unsatisfied
- ❍ Very unsatisfied
- ❍ Somewhat unsatisfied
- ❍ Neither unsatisfied nor satisfied
- ❍ Somewhat satisfied
- ❍ Very satisfied
- ❍ Extremely satisfied
- ❍ N/A (I am not currently in a sexual relationship)

Appendix D

Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q107 What do you like MOST about the sexual activity you participate in (currently or in the past)? Check all that apply.

- ❑ Feeling empowered
- ❑ Physical closeness
- ❑ Emotional closeness
- ❑ Physical release
- ❑ Sexual playfulness and variety
- ❑ Romance
- ❑ It feels good
- ❑ Affirmation (loving words, praise, etc.)
- ❑ A sense of accomplishment
- ❑ Other: _____

Q108 What do you like LEAST about the sexual activity you participate in (currently or in the past)? Check all that apply.

- ❑ Intercourse hurts
- ❑ Sexual practices or positions that my partner insists on
- ❑ The focus is on my partner's desires/wants and not my own desires/wants
- ❑ I worry about pregnancy or STIs
- ❑ It's awkward
- ❑ I get sexually bored
- ❑ The inconvenience or trying to find the time
- ❑ It's messy, dirty, or smelly
- ❑ Lack of emotional closeness
- ❑ I am not sexually satisfied by the sexual activities I engage in
- ❑ I don't want my partner to see my body
- ❑ I don't want to see my partner's body
- ❑ I feel shame or guilt about our sexual activity
- ❑ I can't express my likes/dislikes during sexual activity
- ❑ Sex is difficult because of negative sexual experiences in my past
- ❑ Other: _____

Appendix D

Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q109 Have you ever had a sexual or romantic relationship with a person while you were in a committed relationship with someone else? Check all that apply.

- ❑ Never
- ❑ This past year
- ❑ In the previous two to five years
- ❑ Five or more years ago
- ❑ Other: _____

Appendix D

Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q110 RELATIONSHIP STATUS

Q111 What is your current relationship status?

- ❍ Single
- ❍ Single, but hooking up
- ❍ Casually dating
- ❍ In a committed relationship, but not married
- ❍ Married
- ❍ Divorced
- ❍ Other: _____

Appendix D
Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q112 BODY IMAGE & SELF-ESTEEM

Q113 Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
All things considered, I am satisfied with the way my body looks.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I feel that my body has a number of good qualities.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I wish I could have more respect for myself.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I take a positive attitude toward my body.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
There are many things I wish I could change about my body.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I feel that I am a person of worth.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Appendix D

Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Appendix D

Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q114 PORNOGRAPHY & EROTIC MATERIAL In this section, "pornography" and "erotic material" are used to describe any material (text, visual, or other) containing explicit descriptions or displays of sexual organs and/or activity that is intended to stimulate erotic or sexual feelings. If you don't want to answer questions about pornography, you can select "I'd like to skip this section" in order to go to the next section.

Q115 Have you ever used pornography or other erotic material?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No
- ❍ I'd like to skip this section

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To SEXUAL ATTRACTION & SEXUAL ORIENTATIONIf I'd like to skip this section Is Selected, Then Skip To SEXUAL ATTRACTION & SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Q116 How often do you use pornography or other erotic material?

- ❍ Several times a week
- ❍ Once a week
- ❍ Several times a month
- ❍ Once a month
- ❍ Less than once a month
- ❍ I don't currently use pornography or other erotic material for sexual stimulation

Q117 What types of materials do you use? Select all that apply.

- ❑ Online pictures with sexual content
- ❑ Online videos with sexual content
- ❑ Hard copies of pictures or videos with sexual content
- ❑ Sex tapes I have made by myself or with a partner
- ❑ Nude or erotic photos of myself and/or my partner
- ❑ Erotic books, magazines, or stories
- ❑ Social media (Facebook/Twitter)
- ❑ I don't currently use any materials for sexual stimulation
- ❑ Other: _____

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Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q118 SEXUAL ATTRACTION & SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Q119 Please rate your levels of attraction below.

	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Extremely
I am emotionally or romantically attracted to people of the OPPOSITE sex.	❍	❍	❍	❍
I am physically or sexually attracted to people of the OPPOSITE sex.	❍	❍	❍	❍
I am emotionally or romantically attracted to people of the SAME sex.	❍	❍	❍	❍
I am physically or sexually attracted to people of the SAME sex.	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q120 During your life, with whom have you had sexual contact? Please select all that apply.

- ❑ Females
- ❑ Males
- ❑ I have never had sexual contact
- ❑ Other: _____

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Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q121 Do you think of yourself as:

- ❍ Heterosexual (Straight)
- ❍ Lesbian
- ❍ Gay
- ❍ Bisexual
- ❍ Queer
- ❍ Questioning
- ❍ I don't know
- ❍ No label
- ❍ Other: _____

Q122 How would you describe how others think of you (your public sexual orientation label)?

- ❍ Heterosexual (Straight)
- ❍ Lesbian
- ❍ Gay
- ❍ Bisexual
- ❍ Queer
- ❍ Questioning
- ❍ I don’t know
- ❍ No label
- ❍ Other: _____

Appendix D

Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q123 This last section asks you to synthesize your experiences and attitudes related to faith and sexuality.

Q124 Please tell me about any personal experiences (past or present) that have shaped your understanding of how your faith and your sexuality relate to each other. These can be positive, negative, or neutral experiences. For example, have your religious beliefs led you to make certain decisions about sexuality, or have your sexual experiences led you to seek out certain types of faith communities? You can talk about your own experiences or those of people you are close with, but please remember not to include any identifying information such as a person's name.

Q125 What do you think the role of faith communities should be in addressing topics of sexuality?

Q126 Is there anything else that you would like to add on the topic of faith and sexuality that wasn't asked about in this survey?

Appendix D

Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q127 This section asks for some final demographic information.

Q128 What is your gender identity?

- ❍ Female
- ❍ Gender Fluid, Gender Nonconforming, or Genderqueer
- ❍ Intersex
- ❍ Male
- ❍ Transgender, Transsexual, or Trans
- ❍ Other: _____

Appendix D

Survey Instrument for Ages 18+

Q129 What state do you currently live in?

- Alabama
- Alaska
- Arizona
- Arkansas
- California
- Colorado
- Connecticut
- Delaware
- Florida
- Georgia
- Hawaii
- Idaho
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Kansas
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- Maine
- Maryland
- Massachusetts
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Mississippi
- Missouri
- Montana
- Nebraska
- Nevada
- New Hampshire
- New Jersey
- New Mexico
- New York
- North Carolina
- North Dakota
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- Oregon
- Pennsylvania
- Rhode Island
- South Carolina

- South Dakota
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Utah
- Vermont
- Virginia
- Washington
- West Virginia
- Wisconsin
- Wyoming
- Other

Appendix E
Petition to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

A LETTER TO THE ILLUMINATION PROJECT

No issue has more divided the contemporary church in America than sexuality. In the past several decades, we have seen tremendous shifts in cultural and religious understandings of sexual orientation and gender identity. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship has also reached a tipping point of sorts on this matter. The 2000 policy that precludes CBF from knowingly hiring or funding a "practicing homosexual" has become a flash point for many in our denominetwork.

We offer up the following petition to the Illumination Project as a collective expression of diverse CBF voices all calling for the removal of the discriminatory hiring and funding policies and for a return to CBF's heritage of church freedom. CBF admirably seeks a resolution to this issue that allows Cooperative Baptists to remain in fellowship despite deep differences. Likewise, the Illumination Project is committed to a deliberative process that is respectful and redemptive. We share those commitments. And so, the signatories say, "[w]e commend the ambitious intent of the Illumination Project and commit ourselves to participate in it." Our goal for CBF is inclusion – of people with diverse orientations and identities, but also those who cannot fully affirm that diversity. Because CBF embraces soul-competency and local-church autonomy, there is enough room and enough grace for all of us to make this journey together.

We hope you will take the time to carefully read the petition and the messages from its signatories. On this preliminary list of signatories, you will find the names of lifelong Baptists and new community members. They are pastors, educators, laypersons, missionaries, CBF leaders, and 12 former national moderators.

Most represent voices from within CBF who want justice and hospitality for all people. Some represent those who have been marginalized to the sidelines of CBF life. Others believe the Bible supports gender diversity and inclusion and should not be used to inflict spiritual abuse on LGBTQ believers. Still others mourn that the door of discrimination has excluded them from CBF's "beloved community." All of these signatories are the voices that the Illumination Project has committed itself to hearing.

We are confident that you will do more than listen. We trust you will reflect, integrate, and ultimately act in response to the messages they impart. The health, future, and integrity of our theological home depend on the success of your efforts. We pray to that end.

In trust, in faith, in Christ,

[4 lead signers]

Appendix E
Petition to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

A LETTER TO THE ILLUMINATION PROJECT OF THE COOPERATIVE BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

At rare but crucial points in the life of the Church, long-standing beliefs must face new scrutiny in light of fresh insight. Such occasions led us to denounce our support of slavery, racism, bibliolatry, the subjugation of women, and an earth-centered cosmology.

Today the truths of science, voices of reason, witness of experience, and a fresh hearing of Scripture all compel us to live a wider mercy and extend gospel justice to those excluded by their sexual or gender identity.

We commend the ambitious intent of the Illumination Project and commit ourselves to participate in it. We, the undersigned, believe it is now imperative for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship to remove its discriminatory hiring policy. As it stands, this policy infringes on the autonomy of local churches to seek the mind of Christ regarding sexual and gender diversity. It also disenfranchises one particular social minority. This calls into question CBF's stated commitments to "offer radical hospitality" and "transform oppressive structures."

Because of the cherished Baptist principles of soul-competency and local-church autonomy, all CBF Baptists can remain in fellowship while we seek clarity on this issue and other deep mysteries of our faith. As followers of Christ, we know that such a journey is best made together. It is our deepest hope that, by God's grace and with God's peace, the Fellowship becomes a "beloved community" for all God's children.

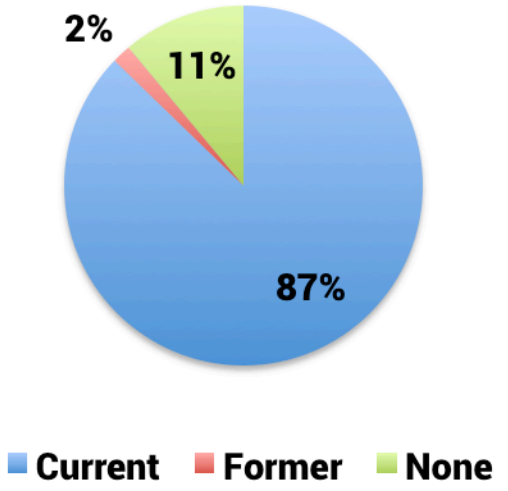
Appendix E
Petition to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

SUMMARY

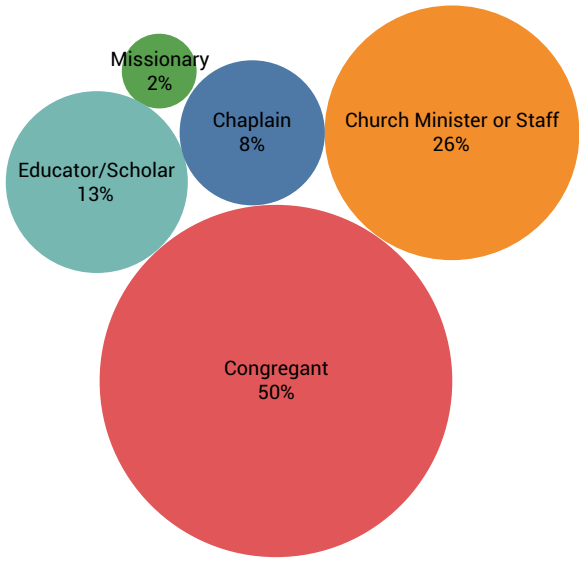
NUMBER OF SIGNATORIES

562

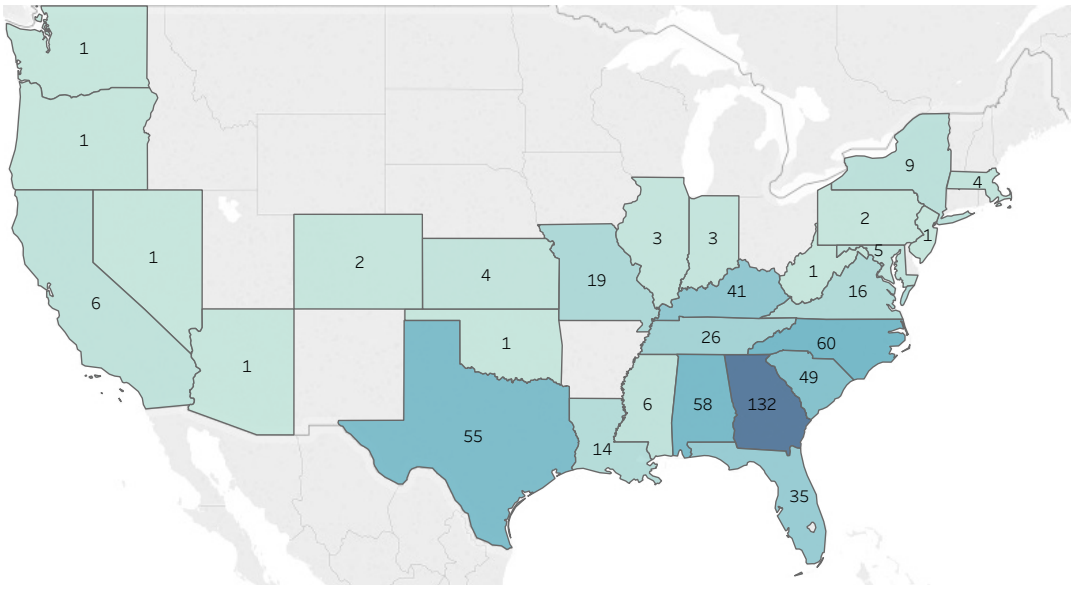
SIGNATORY AFFILIATION WITH CBF



SIGNATORY AREA OF MINISTRY



LOCATION OF SIGNATORIES



Appendix F

Email to the Illumination Project

Dear members of the Illumination Project,

First of all, I want to thank each of you for your dedication and discernment as part of the Illumination Project committee. I know that much of the labor you do goes unseen, and I want to express my gratitude for the unsung work I know you all are doing.

I met several of you at General Assembly this past June, but for those I didn't get the chance to meet, I'll start with a short introduction. I am a linguistic anthropologist who works on issues of sexuality and religion. At GA this year, I gave a workshop about some of my current research as well as my vision for an ongoing project that provides educational resources to churches who are discerning how to address issues of sexuality in their faith communities. Moreover, having grown up in CBF life – as a member of the CBF church Hendricks Avenue Baptist and later as a summer missions intern through Student.Go – I feel personally invested in the health of the CBF community and all of its members. Not surprisingly, then, I care very deeply about the work of the IP, and I hope that I can be an ally and a resource for your committee as you continue in this process.

Based on what I've read about IP, what I've learned at General Assembly, and what I've heard from CBF stakeholders, I have great hope that CBF will be able to move through what can often feel like a contentious process and emerge as an organization that continues to work toward radical hospitality and transformative justice. I would also like to share some of my more specific hopes for what that journey will look like.

1. **I hope that the IP process remains intellectually rigorous and methodologically sound.** As a social scientist, I was intrigued to learn about the unique approach that the IP is taking to address potentially divisive discussions. It was apparent to me at GA that the committee had been deeply and fruitfully engaged in the Integrative Thinking process for the past year. However, it felt like the IP's preliminary report and personas did not accurately reflect the depth of this process. For one, I wasn't sure how the committee had systematically coded the extensive interviews and listening sessions in order to reach a saturation point that warranted the creation of the personas that were presented. This resulted in several oversimplifications and gaps, such as the dichotomization of scripture and experience, and most importantly the complete omission of a biblical case for LGBTQ inclusion. While I recognize that this report was meant to be preliminary, I worry that it may have further perpetuated some of the polarization and marginalization that has characterized this conversation so far and ultimately deepened the hurt of the CBF LGBTQ community who continue to be treated as an "issue" rather than as beloved community members. The type of research that the IP is endeavoring to do is very complex and sophisticated, and I pray that the committee is open to collaborations with scholars and researchers who can make the discernment process even more robust and representative. I count myself among a number of such scholars who are ready and wiling to bring our training and expertise to this area.

Appendix F
Email to the Illumination Project

2. **I hope that the IP committee continues to be responsive to the diversity of voices within the CBF body, but I hope that it is ultimately committed to the core principles of what it means to be a Cooperative Baptist.** Within an institution as rich and complex as CBF, there often emerge gray areas over how its leaders and its members are beholden to each other. CBF has established itself as the theological home for many diverse types of Baptists who are devoted to missions and justice, and I admire its commitment to keeping these issues at the fore. If CBF is to continue carrying the torch for soul-competency and local-church autonomy, it is imperative that its internal policies do not erect barriers that prevent churches and individuals from living out their calling. Being in fellowship with congregations that affirm sexual or gender diversity does not threaten the convictions or autonomy of congregations that do not. But asking the national CBF staff to discriminate against a marginalized social minority threatens the integrity of every CBF congregation.

3. **I hope that CBF affirms the reality and integrity of our churches as they already exist.** Presently, there are countless LGBTQ individuals who minister in our churches, serve in our communities, and faithfully live out their calling in the face of continued marginalization. When we determine the validity of a person's calling by their sexual or gender identity as opposed to their giftedness and devotion, we do irreparable harm not only to our LGBTQ siblings in Christ but to all of our faith communities.

4. **I hope that CBF is able to recognize, repent from, and repair the harm that is done through discriminatory policies and practices.** Speaking more personally now, it grieves me immensely to see the pain that is caused by discrimination based on sexual and gender identity. This cuts especially deep when it is done by people of faith. No matter how much one cloaks it in Bible language, condemning people for who they are or who they love is a violent act. And when there is violence being done – actual violence and theological violence – it must be addressed with honesty and bravery. We have to hear the hurt, and we must respond with compassionate action. We cannot let fear of retaliation or discomfort with tough topics prevent us from moving toward reconciliation and justice.

On the Friday afternoon of General Assembly this past summer, a group of us met to discuss the current state of affairs for CBF LGBTQ and ally members. We anticipated that perhaps a handful of people would turn out to this impromptu and last-minute gathering, but we were heartened when over 40 people showed up to share their stories, their hurts, and their dreams about a more inclusive beloved community. From this meeting, we decided that we wanted CBF and the Illumination Project to hear the breadth and unity of the voices calling for the removal of the discriminatory hiring and funding policy. So as a group, we created and circulated a petition. We are planning to deliver this petition and its signatures to you by the end of the month, but you are welcome to read the content of the statement and see the growing list of signatures here if you would like: www.tinyurl.com/cbf-petition

Appendix F
Email to the Illumination Project

Many of those that have signed the petition are the very people who have been damaged by the painful apathy and outright hatred they've endured from professed followers of Christ, most prominently Baptists. These signatures are more than names on a page. They are your family, your friends, your neighbors – all with hopes of finding loving acceptance from a community of Christians. How remarkable and powerful would it be for them to find what they seek – what they deserve – from a people called Cooperative Baptists?

Peace and Grace,
Shawn Warner-Garcia
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Linguistics
University of California, Santa Barbara

Appendix G
Positively Sex Concept Sheet

Positively Sex is a sex-positive space for Christians who want to cultivate a healthy sexuality in their lives.

This interactive online community offers education and resources to help you reclaim sex as grace and gift. Bring your whole self – your mind, your body, your experiences, your beliefs – and un-learn the shame, secrecy, and silence we are often taught about sex.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Knowledge is Power

When people have more information, they make better decisions. Positively Sex believes that radical transformation is only possible through radical understanding. We are committed to providing comprehensive, relevant, and compelling information about the topics you care about most – whether it's the church's response to the #MeToo movement, evolving understandings of sexual and gender identity, or how different people experience sexual pleasure. The only agenda we have is empowering people to make choices that are healthy for them and their communities.

Sex is Good

When we operate from the basic assumption that sex is a good and sacred gift, we are able to be more wholly ourselves and also more closely connected with the divine. At Positively Sex, you are encouraged to be curious, because curiosity is an antidote to sexual shame. Ask questions. Engage honestly. Let go of fear. Sex is your sacred birthright. It's time to claim it!

Community is Essential

We all need safe spaces to reflect, process, and heal. Empowering individuals means connecting them to community. When you engage with Positively Sex, you are welcomed into an active and supportive community that is learning alongside you. Wherever you find yourself in life, you can count on the Positively Sex community to hold space for your growth.

LEARN
Expand your horizons with interactive lessons designed to help you deconstruct and re-learn what you've been taught about sexuality.

HEAL
Reclaim your sexual integrity through self-exploration with the help of experts trained in sexual trauma, healing, and discovery.

PLAY
Integrate your mind, body, and spirit with guided experiences that promote mindfulness, body awareness, and self-care.

GROW
Connect and share with your fellow sojourners in a moderated online space that supports honesty, bravery, and transformation.

Appendix H
Positively Sex Lesson on Consent

Appendix I

List of transcription conventions

Meaning	Symbol
Intonation unit	{line break}
Final intonation	.
Continuing intonation	,
High-rising intonation	?
Speech overlap	[ ]
Truncated intonation unit	--
Laughter pulse	@
Timed pause (in seconds)	(0.0)
Dubious transcription	#
Emphatic speech	Underline
Embodied action	*Italics*