Understanding the Experiences of Asian American Side B Sexual Minority

Christians

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Abstract

Research dedicated to understanding the experiences of Asian American sexual minority Christians have been largely unexplored. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the experiences of Asian American sexual minority Christians who hold to the historic Christian sexual ethic, which maintains that same-sex marriage and sexual relationships are not theologically permissible. A total of 12 participants were included in this study. I implemented an interpretive qualitative design and used semistructured interviews, questionnaires, and field notes to understand how this population (a) describe their experiences of sexual identity development and related milestone events, (b) describe their experiences with religion and religious faith communities, within the context of sexuality identity, and (c) describe the experiences with ethnic/racial identity, within the context of religious and sexual identity. I coded and analyzed the data for themes by using thematic analysis and identified the following themes: Sexual Identity Development, The Process of Coming Out to Others, Early Faith Community Experiences, The Role of Religion, Community Attitudes Toward Sexuality, and Navigating Multiple Identities. Findings and implications from this study can provide guidance for clinical practice in understanding the complex and nuanced interplay of an individual's sexual identity, religious identity, and ethnic/racial identity.

Keywords: Asian American, Christians, sexual minorities, Side B, thematic analysis, sexual identity, religious identity, ethnic identity

Chapter 1

Background

Sexual Minority Christians

Christian teaching on marriage and sexuality has historically asserted same-sex romantic and sexual relationships are not "theologically permissible" (Creek, 2013). Therefore, individuals navigating same-sex attractions within a traditional Christian upbringing often report experiencing distress and conflict between their sexual and religious identities. Some individuals reconcile this conflict by affiliating with a Christian denomination or church that adopts an *affirming* Christian sexual ethic that views same-sex romantic and sexual relationships as theologically permissible (Creek, 2013). In these cases, sexual minority Christians may self-label or use the term *Side A* (SA) to communicate their theological position to others (Snow, 2018).

In contrast, *Side X* (SX) refers to a theological position that not only views same-sex romantic and sexual relationships as morally impermissible but asserts solely experiencing these attractions and desires is of "moral concern" (Yarhouse & Zaporozhets, 2019). Therefore, individuals who hold the SX position, or sometimes referred to as ex-gay, have been associated with sexual orientation change efforts to pursue heterosexuality (Creek, 2013; Freeman-Coppadge & Horne, 2019; Yarhouse & Zaporozhets, 2019).

Although most people may be familiar with the SA and/or SX narratives, the *Side B* (SB) position has recently gained the attention of those in research (Creek, 2013; Freeman-Coppadge & Horne, 2019; Yarhouse et al., 2017) and mainstream media (Boorstein, 2014; Nicols, 2018; Refinery29, 2019; Urquhart, 2014). In contrast to those

who hold a SA position, those who hold to the SB position adhere to the traditional

Christian sexual ethic. Additionally, the SB position is distinctly different from those who

hold to a SX position (Creek, 2013) as SB sexual minority Christians (SB-SMC) do not

anticipate or participate in efforts to pursue heterosexuality (Yarhouse & Zaporozhets,

2019). Additionally, SB-SMC do not believe experiencing enduring same-sex attractions

is immoral (Creek, 2013; Yarhouse & Zaporozhets, 2019). Furthermore, some sexual

minority Christians who adopt a SB position may pursue celibacy and therefore are either

referred to or self-identify as celibate gay Christians (Creek, 2013; Yarhouse &

Zaporozhets, 2019).

The Invisibility of Minority Identities

In the context of research, the term *invisibility* can refer to how certain groups of

individuals, particularly among those who live within the intersections of multiple

minority identities, receive limited attention in the literature (Moradi et al., 2010). For

instance, although the exploration of religious and sexual identity conflict has been well

documented in research, most of these participants have resolved conflicts by either

leaving the Christian tradition or adopting a different position that theologically aligns

with SA (Subhi & Geelan, 2013). Therefore, studies highlighting the experiences of SB-

SMC have generally been invisible in the literature.

Also, most studies on SB-SMC have been on participants who identify as White

(Creek, 2013; Freeman-Coppadge & Horne, 2019; Garner, 2016; Yarhouse &

Zaporozhets, 2019). Therefore, in addition to the limited attention given to SB-SMC in

the literature, the distinct experience of ethnic and/or racial minority group members who

identify as SB-SMC have been largely unexplored. In fact, Asian Americans have been

generally invisible in lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) studies as well as LGBT studies

on sexual minority Christians (Ocampo & Soodjinda, 2016). Although both Asian

American and non-Asian American sexuality minority Christians may share similar

experiences and understandings, the distinct intersection of ethnicity/race, sexual

orientation, and religion among Asian American SB-SMC may present itself with unique

experiences and challenges (Sung et al., 2012) that have yet to be explored in research.

Literature Review

The following section will include an overview of relevant research on cultural

attitudes and values among Asian American culture and the impact of psychological and

environmental stress among Asian Americans and sexual minorities. Additionally, I will

highlight various identity-related experiences as it relates to the intersection of Asian

American identity, Christianity, and/or same-sex sexuality and describe the role of

celibacy among SB-SMC.

Cultural Attitudes and Values

Asian Family Values and Attitudes

Asian culture encompasses a variety of distinct ethnic groups with unique

languages, histories, and traditions. Despite the diversity among these groups, studies

have also explored how Asian cultures share certain values and attitudes. For example,

based on Confucian principles generally adopted within East Asian groups, *filial piety*

refers to the duty of demonstrating obedience and respect to one's parents and elder

family members (Md-Yunus et al., 2017). Similarly, Asian culture is often characterized

as collectivist or communitarian, which refers to the high importance of prioritizing the

goals of the group or community over one's freedom and well–being (Kim, 2010). The

literature also presents other commonly shared values among Asians in the United States such as having control of one's emotions, the family unit, family recognition through achievement, and gender roles (Szymanski & Sung, 2013).

According to Chen (2006), individuals of different family histories and ethnic/racial backgrounds may choose to identify as Asian Americans. For example, people who immigrate to the United States from Asia may find identifying as Asian American is most fitting. Others may be born in the United States but are descendants of individuals from Asia (Kim & Omizo, 2005). Therefore, the conceptualization of Asian culture among Asian Americans is complex as this group is exposed to diverse values, attitudes, and norms, which may impact how one adheres to Asian cultural values.

Research on Asian Americans has focused on how individuals navigate differences of cultural beliefs and expectations within Asian and Western values (Chen, 2006; ChenFeng et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2015). For example, the terms *acculturation* and *enculturation* have been used to describe the phenomenon of navigating different, and at times conflicting, cultural norms, values, and ideas (Zhang & Moradi, 2013). Zhang and Tsai (2014) described *acculturation* as the change that often occurs when an individual comes into consistent contact with a different culture. During this time, ethnic minorities may assimilate to the mainstream western U.S. culture by embracing its values and in turn rejecting the values of their culture of origin (Kim et al., 2015). In contrast, *enculturation* refers to the "retention of or cultural socialization of one's culture of origin" (Yoon et al., 2013, p. 16). Kim et al. (2009) explained the phenomenon of acculturation and enculturation can be measured by assessing changes in people's values, identity, knowledge, and behaviors.

Furthermore, research has suggested first–generation Asian Americans tend to hold to Asian cultural values more strongly than following generations (Kim et al., 2005). As a result, these generational differences may contribute to challenging family dynamics (ChenFeng et al., 2015). For instance, a study among first– and second–generation Chinese Americans found intergenerational tension and disconnection were significant themes among participant interviews (ChenFeng et al., 2015). More specifically, the authors indicated both first– and second–generation participants expressed experiencing conflict and tension with the other generation due to differences in values, perceptions, and upbringings (ChenFeng et al., 2015).

Similarly, research has revealed a significant discrepancy between parent-child Asian cultural values may contribute to challenges in family relationships. For example, Kim et al. (2009) found, among Korean American families, a significant gap between a child's and parent's adherence to Asian values was positively correlated with the child's report of conflict related to expectations in the family relationship.

Considering Asian culture encompasses various ethnic groups, studies have suggested variability in how strongly certain Asian groups adhere to Asian cultural values. Kim et al. (2001) found, on a measure assessing the degree to which one adheres to Asian cultural values, East Asian populations (i.e., Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Americans) more strongly adhered to Asian values compared to Filipino Americans. Results from this study also found Japanese Americans scored higher on Asian cultural values compared to other groups (Kim et al., 2001). Similarly, Kim (2010) found East Asians and South and Southeast Asians exhibited varying attitudes toward Asian cultural values.

Christians Among Asian Americans

According to the Pew Research Center (2012), Asian Americans affiliated with the Christian faith (42%) at a higher rate compared to those who were unaffiliated with a religious group (26%), Buddhist (14%), Hindu (10%), Muslim (4%), other religion (2%), and Sikh (1%). When assessing religious commitment among Asian American Christians, this study found 64% of this group indicated religion was an especially important aspect of their lives, expressed by attending worship services at a higher rate compared to the general public (Pew Research Center, 2012).

Additionally, study results suggested varying rates of affiliation with the Christian religion among different Asian American subgroups (Pew Research Center, 2012). For example, the majority of Chinese Americans identify as unaffiliated (52%), and 22% identify as Protestant (Pew Research Center, 2012). In contrast, 65% of Filipino American Christians identify as Catholic and 21% identify as Protestant (Pew Research Center, 2012). Among Korean American Christians, most (61%) identify as Protestant, and 11% of Indian American Christians identify as Protestant (Pew Research Center, 2012).

Christian Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Sexuality

Cultural dimensions, including religion, have an influential role in shaping people's beliefs and attitudes on sexuality (Hernandez et al., 2014). Christians have historically maintained a traditional sexual ethic that encompasses theological assertions regarding the purpose of marriage and human sexuality and its implications for sexual expression (Grenz, 1997). For instance, Grenz (1997) explained Christians have historically taught same-sex romantic and sexual relationships are not consistent with

God's purpose for marriage and sexual expression. At the same time, this topic has been a source of debate among Christians as a growing number of denominations have adopted an affirming stance (Pew Research Center, 2019). This shift also parallels recent changes in societal attitudes toward same-sex marriage among Americans, which may contribute to increasingly diverse beliefs and attitudes about same-sex sexuality within Christian contexts (Yarhouse & Zaporozhets, 2019).

Although this may be true, the literature also presents a spectrum of attitudes and pastoral approaches among Christian pastors who hold to a traditional sexual ethic. For example, some pastors may teach being gay and Christian is compatible. Also, some may consider being gay as an "abomination to God" (Subhi & Geelan, 2012) or that being gay means you are destined for hell (Beagan & Hattie, 2015). In contrast, a different study found some Christian pastors indicated they are in the process of learning and working toward ways to better support and understand individuals experiencing same-sex attractions within their congregation while maintaining a traditional position on same-sex sexuality (Yarhouse et al., 2018).

Psychological and Environmental Stress

Research has suggested sexual minorities are at higher risk of experiencing impairments in their physical, emotional, mental, and social health compared to those who identify as heterosexual (Doyle & Molix, 2016; Rice et al., 2019; Semlyen et al., 2016). To explain these health disparities, the *minority stress theory* suggests sexual minorities distinctly experience excess levels of social stress due to their marginalized and stigmatized status in society (Meyer, 2013). More specifically, Meyer (2013) proposed persistent and perpetual exposure to negative social experiences in one's

environment leads to heightened risks to these health disparities. These negative social experiences may include encounters of stigma, discrimination, and prejudice (Meyer, 2013).

Exposure to negative attitudes and stigmatized messages can have varying impacts on LGB people's sense of self and well–being (Szymanski et al., 2008). The persistent exposure to these external messages from society and/or people can then be internalized by LGB people (Szymanski et al., 2008). As a result, LGB individuals may develop negative attitudes and beliefs about their own sexual orientation (Szymanski et al., 2008). This phenomenon is referred to as *internalized heterosexism* or *internalized homophobia*, which research has suggested is related to psychological distress (Puckett et al., 2015). More specifically, this relationship was found to be mediated by increased levels of self-criticism and decreased engagement with the LGB community (Puckett et al., 2015).

Nevertheless, navigating lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) spaces can be complex for celibate gay Christians who hold to traditional views on sexuality and marriage (Yarhouse & Zaporozhets, 2019). Although most celibate gay Christians self-identify as gay, their decision to express their sexuality through celibacy can be perceived as self-denial (Yarhouse & Zaporozhets, 2019) or a form of repression (Freeman-Coppadge & Horne, 2019) by others. One study found some SB-SMC indicated they had been characterized as "judgmental" or "narrow-minded" (Creek, 2013).

Societal Attitudes Toward Asian Americans

Asian Americans are also susceptible to experience psychosocial distress related to racial prejudice, stigma, and racism (Szymanski & Gupta, 2009). For example, *microaggressions* refer to "brief, commonplace, and daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental slights and indignities directed toward specific groups of people" (Platt & Lenzen, 2013, p. 1012). Experiencing racial microaggressions has been associated with increased risk of mental health issues (Choi et al., 2016). For example, Choi et al. (2016) found racial microaggressions were significantly correlated to experiencing symptoms of depression. At the same time, the researchers found having an established ethnic identity (measured by higher endorsement of exploring one's ethnicity group and committing / identifying with one's group) significantly moderated the relationship between racial microaggressions and symptoms of depression (Choi et al., 2016). This suggests having an established and committed ethnic identity can be a protective factor against the impact of racial microaggressions among Asian Americans (Choi et al., 2016).

Identity-Related Experiences

Sexual Identity Development

Sexual identity development broadly refers to the process of developing an increased sense of awareness regarding one's sexual attractions (Mustanski et al., 2014). Historically, sexual identity development models provided a universal sequence of stages through which individuals progress to establish and accept one's sexual identity. Cass's (1979, 1984) theoretical model of *homosexual identity formation* remains one of the most cited gay and lesbian identity development frameworks to date (Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014). According to Cass (1979), individuals come to embrace and adopt a gay or lesbian

identity by progressing through a series of six stages: identity confusion, identity

comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride, and identity synthesis.

Other established models have similarly outlined a linear stage sequence for

conceptualization gay and/or lesbian identity development (Coleman, 1982; Troiden,

1988).

However, a critique of these stage models is the absence of addressing cultural

factors that may contribute to unique differences in sexual identity development (Chun &

Singh, 2010; Hernandez et al., 2014; Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014). As a result,

contemporary approaches to understanding sexual identity development have focused on

identifying shared milestone events that contribute to the formation and integration of

one's sexual orientation and identity. More specifically, milestone experiences that

contribute to *identity formation* may include gaining awareness of same-sex attractions,

questioning one's sexual orientation, and exploring same-sex sexuality through sexual

experimentation and activities (Rosario et al., 2004). *Identity integration* refers to

experiences such as accepting and committing to one's sexual orientation, disclosing

one's sexual identity to others, and participating in LGB-related groups (Rosario et al.,

2011). To note, identity formation and integration may occur simultaneously, and these

milestone events may be experienced in diverse ways within their respective contexts

(Rosario et al., 2011).

Multicultural Considerations

To approach sexual identity development from a multicultural framework,

ethnicity and race have been addressed in the literature. Rosario et al. (2004) researched

White, Black, and Latino sexual minority youth and found sexual identity development

milestones related to identity formation occurred at similar ages among all racial groups (Rosario et al., 2004). This similarly reflects previous findings that adolescents among various ethnicities do not significantly differ in the timing of sexual identity development milestones (Dubé & Savin-Williams, 1999). In contrast, distinct ethnic/racial differences were present in milestone events related to identity integration (Rosario et al., 2004). According to Rosario et al. (2004), Black sexual minority youth were less engaged in "gay-related social or recreational activities (e.g., attending a gay bar, bookstore, organization)" (p. 219), despite finding no differences on the timing of which Black and White youth were initially involved with these activities. Researchers hypothesized this discrepancy could be attributed to feelings of discomfort about disclosing their sexual orientation or having experienced race-related discrimination or prejudice during these activities (Rosario et al., 2004). Overall, ethnicity and race does not hinder identity formation, but these factors may delay certain aspects of identity integration (Rosario et al., 2004).

Dubé and Savin-Williams (1999) assessed sexual identity developmental milestones among sexual minorities from varying ethnicities. The authors reported gay and bisexual Asian American teenagers engaged in sexual activity later compared to other ethnicities, with some delaying until early adulthood. Additionally, although other ethnic-minority teenagers engaged in sexual activity prior to self-labeling as gay or bisexual, most Asian American teenagers did not engage in sexual activity until after self-labeling (Dubé & Savin-Williams, 1999).

Identity Conflict

There are complex challenges associated with navigating same-sex attractions and sexuality among those who belong to Christian communities that hold to the historical Christian teachings on same-sex sexuality. For instance, experiences related to identity-formation can be particularly challenging and complex for those raised in religious settings that communicate negative message about same-sex sexuality (Beagan & Hattie, 2015; Gibbs & Goldbach, 2020). This conflict can begin as early as childhood, especially as adolescents raised in Christian households develop their sense of emerging religious and sexual identity (Beagan & Hattie, 2015; Gibbs & Goldbach, 2020; Yarhouse & Tan, 2005).

Additionally, sexual and religious identity conflict has been well-documented throughout the literature (Anderton et al., 2011; Beagan & Hattie, 2015; Cole & Harris, 2017; Levy, 2012; Ream & Savin-Williams, 2005; Sherry et al., 2010; Snow, 2018; Subhi & Geelan, 2012; Yarhouse & Tan, 2005). Subhi and Geelan (2012) researched possible areas of conflict between their participant's Christian beliefs and experiences of same-sex attraction. Most of the participants indicated experiencing intrapersonal conflict between their sexual identity and religious identity (Subhi & Geelan, 2012). Although specific experiences varied among participants, these conflicts were primarily related to beliefs that homosexuality is a sin and should be condemned within the Christian faith (Subhi & Geelan, 2012). On the other hand, most participants also reported wanting to hold to both their Christian identity and sexual identity, suggesting the importance and value of integrating both components among those navigating this conflict (Subhi & Geelan, 2012).

Experiencing conflict between one's sexual identity and religious identity has been associated with psychological, emotional, and interpersonal distress. This includes depression, self-blame/guilt, anxiety, alienation, and suicidal ideation (Subhi & Geelan, 2012). Additionally, low levels of identity integration among lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth was found to be associated with higher levels of psychological distress and lower levels of self-esteem (Rosario et al., 2011).

In addition to experiencing conflict between one's sexual and religious identity, Asian cultural values can also contribute to distinct challenges and conflicts experienced by Asian American sexual minorities. For example, identifying as gay or lesbian may be seen as a rejection of Asian cultural values related to filial piety and "traditional family roles" (Chan, 1989, p. 17). In addition, Asian American sexual minorities who are raised in religious and conservative homes may present with additional complex considerations. For instance, Nadal and Corpus (2013) interviewed Filipino Americans who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender and found religion to be an important theme among multiple narratives. Many of the participants discussed how the Catholic religion is "culturally embedded" in Filipino culture and families (Nadal & Corpus, 2013). Results also indicated many of the participants expressed "being Filipino, gay, and Catholic were competing identities that could not be reconciled" (Nadal & Corpus, 2013, p. 169).

Strategies for Conflict Resolution

Furthermore, resolving sexual identity and religious identity conflict has been positively associated with well–being (Lefevor et al., 2019). There are various ways in which people experiencing sexual and religious identity conflict attempt to find

resolution. For instance, some may choose to completely reject and disaffiliate from the Christian religion to embrace and maintain their sexual identity (Anderton et al., 2011; Rodriguez & Ouellette, 2000; Sherry et al., 2010; Wood & Conley, 2014).

In contrast, some may reject their sexual orientation to maintain their religious identity and values (Rodriguez & Ouellette, 2000; Wood & Conley, 2014). Therefore, some may increase religious practices, activities, and attendance (Anderton et al., 2011). In other cases, studies have suggested individuals have pursued attempts to become heterosexual by engaging in controversial efforts to change one's sexual orientation (Anderton et al., 2011; Rodriguez & Ouellette, 2000). Among celibate gay Christians, many have endorsed having previously grappled with whether their sexual orientation could change, with some having previously participated in ex-gay ministries (Freeman-Coppadge & Horne, 2019; Yarhouse et al., 2017; Yarhouse & Zaporozhets, 2019). Some individuals have willingly volunteered themselves to participate in such efforts, and some were sent (Freeman-Coppadge & Horne, 2019).

Another resolution strategy includes compartmentalizing one's religious beliefs and sexual orientation by attempting to keep both identities rigidly separate from one another (Rodriguez & Ouellette, 2000). For example, individuals may choose to conceal their gay and/or religious identity depending on the setting.

Lastly, conflict resolution may be achieved by integrating one's religious beliefs and sexual orientation (Rodriguez & Ouellette, 2000). Factors such as community and peer support as well as reinterpretation of previously held Christian teaching have been found to be important aspects to support the integration of identities among some participant samples (Anderton et al., 2011; Beagan & Hattie, 2015; Gattamorta &

Quidley-Rodriguez, 2019; Sherry et al., 2010; Wedow et al., 2017). One way this is achieved is by adopting a SA position (Anderton et al., 2011; Beagan & Hattie, 2015). Furthermore, SB-SMC have reported having a "theological journey" in which they explored and potentially considered adopting a SA position prior to integrating their identities by arriving at a SB position (Yarhouse et al., 2017; Yarhouse & Zaporozhets, 2019).

Coming-Out and Disclosure Conversations

The metaphorical term of *coming-out of the closet,* or *coming-out* for short, refers to the important milestone event of disclosing an individual's sexual orientation or identity to others (Emetu & Rivera, 2018; Reed et al., 2020). This process can be a complex and challenging experience for sexual minority Christians as they navigate various intrapersonal and interpersonal factors of disclosing their sexual orientation and/or identity within their cultural context. For instance, SMC may be reluctant to disclose their same-sex attractions, sexual orientation, and/or sexual identity for various reasons (Reed et al., 2020). According to Shurts et al. (2020), homonegative messages and stigma among some Christian communities and families may contribute to fear of family rejection or "being condemned to hell" (p. 22) for the feelings they have about the same sex.

Contextual factors, such as a family's sociocultural or conservative Christian beliefs about same-sex sexuality, may contribute to negative parental reactions during disclosure. Reed et al. (2020) explored the experiences of disclosure to parents among LGB Christian college students and found disclosure conversations were sometimes challenging, awkward, or described as very negative. Additionally, some participants

who initially experienced negative disclosure conversations reported positive post-disclosure experiences such as developing more authentic parent-child relationships (Reed et al., 2020). Overall, the coming-out process appears complex and distinct to each individual as factors such as attachment styles and relationship dynamics within the family can uniquely contribute to one's experience (Reed et al., 2020). Although this study was conducted on a predominantly White sample with no Asian identified participants, it provides a broad understanding of how some LGB individuals experience disclosure conversations within a conservative Christian context.

According to Szymanski and Sung (2010), the coming-out process among Asian American sexual minorities presents with complex challenges and unique experiences related to cultural values, expectations, and norms. For instance, disclosing one's sexual orientation may be perceived by one's family or community as an explicit rejection of expected roles and obligations as it threatens "the continuation of the family line" (Szymanski & Sung, 2010, p. 852). As a result, Asian American sexual minorities may experience anxiety and ultimately decide to not come out to family members or individuals within their race and/or ethnic community (Szymanski, 2008). In addition, one study found an overwhelming majority of lesbian or gay Asian American participants first disclosed to a sibling or a non-parental family member, with a low percentage of participants having disclosed to their parents (Chan, 1989).

Furthermore, a strong desire to actively prevent or avoid disclosure is referred to as *concealment* (Goh et al., 2019; Schrimshaw et al., 2013). For example, concealment efforts may include dating individuals of the opposite sex to prevent disclosure of one's sexual orientation (Gattamorta & Quidley-Rodriguez, 2019). Although concealment

provides an adaptive function that may protect sexual minority individuals from experiencing prejudice (Goh et al., 2019), it has also been associated with high rates of depression, anxiety, and minority stress (Schrimshaw et al., 2013).

However, research on concealment efforts on specific cultural groups have found this phenomenon may be more complex than an avoidance of prejudice. For instance, Thomsen (2019) explored the intersection of religion, ethnicity/race, and family among Korean gay men in the United States as most Korean Americans in the United States are affiliated with a Christian church. This study specifically explored the role of *narratives of convenience* which refers to the phenomenon of disclosing one's sexual identity to family and together creating "a story that projects a heteronormative image of the self" (Thomsen, 2019, p. 2). The author explained, within the participant's contexts, this is employed as an adaptive strategy to maintain one's role and membership within their "social and wider-familial structures" (Thomsen, 2019, p. 14). The researchers found although participants demonstrated diverse perspectives and experiences, narratives of convenience were commonly used by individuals and their family members within structures that included extended family members, Korean American church communities, and the general Korean American community (Thomsen, 2019). For example, one participant reported his mother shared with her Korean American church community that her son's husband is a roommate and the children in their home are adopted children in need that they care for together (Thomsen, 2019). The participant "complied" with his mother's narrative to protect and preserve his mother's role within the church as well as "his identity as a Korean son" (Thomsen, 2019, p. 15). According to Thomsen (2019), the results suggest disclosure and outness appeared to not be based on

"individualistic agency alone" but an assessment of "relationship preservation and building" (Thomsen, 2019, p. 17) for not only oneself but the individual's family. As a result, Thomsen indicated the phenomenon of narratives of convenience demonstrates the complex interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics of navigating sexuality, faith, ethnicity, and social community.

Labels and Level of Outness

Disclosing one's sexual identity with someone does not necessarily assume the individual feels comfortable to freely and publicly disclose this with others (Creek, 2013). Therefore, some may choose to keep their sexual orientation and/or identity private from certain people or within specific settings, varying their *level of outness* or the degree to which they have come out to others. For example, Yarhouse, Dean, et al. (2017) studied sexual minority students on Christian college campuses and found significant differences in how students choose to self-identify privately versus publicly. More specifically, although half the participants identified as heterosexual in public, a small percentage identified as heterosexual in private (Yarhouse, Dean, et al., 2017). Similarly, although 20% of the students publicly identified as lesbian or gay, almost 47% of the students identified as such privately (Yarhouse, Dean, et al., 2017).

In addition, Yarhouse and Zaporozhets (2019) conducted a study on celibate gay Christians and found most of their 300 participants did not publicly identify as gay and 76% of their participants maintained a private gay identity. Another study on celibate gay Christians found they experienced challenges with publicly identify as gay due to negative assumptions of "living a promiscuous lifestyle" (Gardner, 2017, p. 41). At the same time, some disapproved the label *same-sex attracted*, which is commonly used

among Christian churches or institutions, due to its emphasis on sexual attraction as

opposed to one's identity (Gardner, 2016). Furthermore, others have come to terms with

embracing a gay identity label as it provides an "evangelistic tool" to engage with secular

contexts (Gardner, 2016).

Understanding Celibacy Among SB Sexual Minority Christians

Celibacy refers to the "abstinence from marriage and sexual relations" (Aune,

2009, p. 118). Celibacy has been historically practiced among various religious contexts

and is commonly associated with clerical celibacy in the Roman Catholic church (Aune,

2009). In recent years, many SB-SMC have adopted the self-label of *celibate gay*

Christian to demonstrate their identification as sexual minorities while holding a SB

position toward same-sex sexuality (Freeman-Coppadge & Horne, 2019; Yarhouse et al.,

2017). Yarhouse and Zaporozhets (2019) conducted the largest study on celibate gay

Christians and defined this population as

> people who experience same-sex attraction to such a degree that they would think
>
> of themselves as oriented toward the same-sex, and they align themselves with the
>
> Christian faith in such a way that they have concluded that same-sex
>
> relationships are morally impermissible; as a result, they have committed
>
> themselves to refraining from same-sex genital intimacy. (p. 84)

Although research on this population remains in its early stages, some studies have

explored the ways in which SB-SMC experience celibacy and make sense of their

decision. Overall, the limited literature has suggested navigating celibacy can present

itself with both benefits and challenges related to identity integration and well–being.

Perceived Benefits of Celibacy

Yarhouse et al. (2017) found some SB-SMC believe they can be a "gift to the church" by providing education within their Christian community by sharing their experiences and stories. Additionally, some participants also addressed their unique ability to work toward "bridging the gap between the LGBTQ community and the church" (Yarhouse et al., 2017, p. 57). Other studies also have suggested adopting celibacy can provide a sense of evangelistic purpose and meaning among SB-SMC (Gardner, 2016).

Celibacy can also provide SB-SMC with relationship benefits related to "relational stability," "relating better with others," and "availability to others" (Yarhouse et al., 2017, p. 56). In other words, participants expressed not being in a romantic relationship allows celibate gay Christians to have a sense of freedom and avoid emotional challenges related to being in a romantic relationship (Yarhouse et al., 2017). Although this qualitative study offers in-depth perspectives and experiences of celibate gay Christians, the results are not necessarily generalizable to represent all celibate gay Christians (Yarhouse et al., 2017). Additionally, among the eight participants for this study, six participants identified as White, one participant identified as Asian, and one participant identified as biracial (Yarhouse et al., 2017). Therefore, the limited ethnic/racial diversity among the study's participants may not necessarily consider how celibate gay Christians who also identify as a member of an ethnic or racial minority group experiences celibacy.

Impact on Mental Health

Literature addressing mental health and well–being among SB-SMC presents with varying results. Yarhouse and Zaporozhets (2019) found most of their participant sample of self-identified celibate gay Christians endorsed typical or normal levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. At the same time, celibate gay Christians who are celibate from all sexual relationships appear to be distinctly more at risk to depression and social anxiety compared to celibate gay Christians who are celibate from solely same-sex relationships or celibate gay Christians who are married to someone who identifies as heterosexual (Yarhouse & Zaporozhets, 2019). Studies have suggested this could be attributed to the shared experiences of loneliness among celibate gay Christians (Freeman-Coppadge & Horne, 2019; Yarhouse et al., 2017).

Furthermore, Freeman-Coppadge and Horne (2019) found some current and former gay or lesbian celibate Christians endorsed that adopting celibacy was also accompanied by "new-onset or worsening depression, anxiety, and suicidality" (p. 8). On the other hand, the study's heterogeneous participant sample consisted of individuals who both formerly as well as currently identify as a gay or lesbian celibate Christian. Additionally, the authors indicated participants had varying experiences with sexual orientation change efforts, which could be a contributing factor to psychological harm as opposed to the direct impact of celibacy (Freeman-Coppadge & Horne, 2019).

Rationale of Study

This overview of literature presents varying understandings and positions related to the dynamics of sexual identity, ethnicity/race, and religion. In short, research has revealed Christians navigating same-sex sexuality experience a variety of distinct

intrapersonal and interpersonal challenges within their environments. However, previous studies on this topic are limited as few have specifically explored how these challenges are experienced by SB-SMC. In addition to this limitation, past research on SB-SMC has not specifically explored how Asian American SB-SMC experience and perceive identity-related experiences and conflict. Because ethnicity and/or race related factors may have an influential role in shaping the experiences and perceptions of Asian Americans, it is essential to continue to expand the field's literature of SB-SMC by studying Asian American SB-SMC. As a result, research targeting this population can help support mental health professionals who work with this unique subgroup of Christian sexual and ethnic/racial minorities.

Research Questions

To address the gap in the literature, this study highlighted the experiences of individuals that generally lack visibility in the literature: Asian American Side B sexual minority Christians. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a detailed understanding of the experiences and perceptions of individuals who identify as an Asian American sexual minority and hold to a SB theological position. Therefore, the following research questions guided this study:

1. How do Asian American SB-SMC describe their experiences of sexual identity development and related milestone events?

2. How do Asian American SB-SMC describe their experiences with religion and religious faith communities, within the context of sexual identity?

3. How do Asian American SB-SMC describe their experiences with ethnic/racial identity, within the context of religious and sexual identity?

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of relevant literature that presents the complex dynamics of navigating sexual orientation and/or identity, religious identity/background, and ethnic and/or racial background. This section also detailed the rationale, purpose, and research questions that guided this study. In the following chapter, I discuss this study's methodology and research procedures.

Chapter 2

The previous chapter presented an overview of relevant research related to religious identity, ethnic and/or racial background, sexual orientation, and sexual identity. To address the gap in the literature on SB-SMC, the purpose of this study was to understand the detailed experiences and perceptions of Asian American SB-SMC. This chapter includes this study's methodology and procedures for recruitment, data collection and analysis, promotion of validity, reliability and credibility, as well as protection of participants.

Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative research is applied when seeking to explore how individuals create meaning from their lived experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, using a qualitative approach for this study addressed the purpose of this research in understanding the detailed experiences and perceptions of Asian American Side B sexual minority Christians.

Additionally, regarding the study's research design, I implemented an interpretive qualitative design, a popular approach used across various disciplines (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). In short, this inductive approach aims to explore and understand "(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24). As a result, I gathered a "rich, descriptive account" in understanding the experiences and perceptions of Asian American SB-SMC (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Although most qualitative studies are aimed toward understanding how individuals make sense of their

experiences, the primary objective of an interpretive qualitative study is to reveal and interpret the meaning of the participant's experiences (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Philosophical Worldview

A study's philosophical worldview informs how qualitative research approaches reality, also referred to as ontology, and the "nature of knowledge," also referred to as epistemology (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This study used an interpretive framework that employed *social constructivism*. Social constructivism assumes reality is constructed based on an individual's subjective interpretation of experiences, which is often shaped by contextual factors related to sociocultural and historical components (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, adopting a social constructivist approach for this study offered a framework in gaining insight into how Asian American SB-SMC experience life within the intersections of sexuality, faith, and ethnicity/race and how they make meaning from those experiences within their distinct cultural contexts.

Research Design and Strategy

Participants and Sampling

This study researched a homogenous participant sample achieved through criterion-based selection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, to be eligible to participate in this study, participants had to self-identify as a Christian and Asian American. Additionally, eligible participants must have reported experiences of enduring attractions to the same sex and hold to a traditional Christian sexual ethic on same-sex sexuality (SB position). Eligible participants were also single, celibate, or in a mixed orientation marriage. Lastly, to participate in this study, participants must have been an adult age of 18 or older and be able to speak and read English fluently.

Regarding the number of participants for this study, sampling participants typically ends when no "new" content is put forth from the qualitative data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This indicates saturation of data or redundancy has been achieved and no new or relevant information is expected from future sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, predicting the point of redundancy, or establishing a definite number of participants for qualitative studies, can be challenging, if not impossible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Considering the purpose of this study was not to provide results that are generalizable but present the understanding of the detailed experiences of this population, this study aimed to interview at least 10 participants.

Purposeful sampling is a recruitment strategy typically applied in qualitative research when seeking to sample a specific group of individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, purposeful sampling was applied to recruit potential participants who met the specific criterion listed previously. More specifically, I advertised this study on online social media platforms (e.g., Twitter) to recruit potential participants (see Appendix A), which can be an effective strategy in accessing "difficult-to-reach populations" (O'Connor et al., 2013). The online advertisement included a brief description of the study and directions to access the direct link to the prescreening survey and my contact information. In addition, snowball/network sampling is helpful to locate individuals of specific populations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, research participants were asked to forward the study's information to anyone who may fit the criterion and/or may be interested in participating. Furthermore, I contacted organizations, institutions, and individuals that have access to this population by messaging or emailing (see Appendix B) an invitation that provided a description of the study, the inclusion criteria for

participants, information about the participation incentive ($50 Amazon gift card), and

my contact information. However, when using snowball/networking sampling strategies,

it is essential to consider methods that minimize risk and protect participants. Therefore, I

communicated that I could not confirm or deny any participant's involvement in the

study, nor would individuals or groups be compensated for assisting in the recruitment of

participants.

Protection for Special Populations

Due to the various health disparities and risks in the LGB population, it is

essential to apply best practices that minimizes risk and prioritizes protection of this

study's participants. Therefore, I actively fostered rapport and trust with participants by

maintaining a "warm/friendly manner" with individuals (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Other

strategies I employed were considering the sequence and wording of interview questions

(Braun & Clarke, 2013). Additionally, because the nature of the interview questions

involved asking participants to disclose sensitive information related to family dynamics

and sexuality, I included a short description of the type of questions that may be asked in

the interview within my informed consent. I also strongly emphasized the participant's

right to withdraw their participation from the study at any time at the start of the study

and checked-in with participants if they needed a short break during the interview.

Data Collection Process and Procedures

As indicated on the research advertisement and personal email invitation

mentioned above, individuals interested in participating in the study were directed to

follow the available link to learn more about the study and review the eligibility criteria

for participants (see Appendix C). The prescreening page was created through Qualtrics,

a web-based survey platform where users can design, administer, and analyze survey

data. More specifically, the page listed all the eligibility requirements to participate in

this study. If interested individuals confirmed their eligibility for the study, they were

guided to the study's informed consent page on Qualtrics (see Appendix D). At the end of

the informed consent page, individuals were presented with instructions to either consent

to or not consent to moving forward in participating. If given consent to move forward

with the study, participants were asked to complete a brief demographic survey (see

Appendix E) and provide their contact information (see Appendix F) to schedule the

interview. All participant information was stored through Qualtrics, which operates in

compliance to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

standards.

Survey

As stated previously, participants were asked to provide brief demographic

information as well as complete a short identity survey (see Appendix E) related to their

ethnic/racial, religious, and sexual identities. The survey assessed the importance

participants place on their various identities and whether the identities have posed

challenges in their experiences as Asian American, Side B, sexual minority Christians.

More specifically, participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they agree or

disagree with the statement. Retrieving participant responses through these means

provided additional data to understand and interpret other data sources to ensure the

study's results were valid and reliable.

Semistructured Interview

Due to the risks and restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, semistructured interviews were conducted through doxy.me, a HIPAA compliant video conferencing platform. A structured set of questions (see Appendix G) guided the interviews, but the participants were also invited to discuss other relevant information as needed. The interview questions were based on established assessment questions to understand people's experiences with sexual identity and religious identity development (Yarhouse, 2019). To address identity-related experiences and factors concerning the participant's ethnicity and/or racial background, I incorporated additional questions that integrated the role of ethnicity and race. Moreover, interviews were audio recorded and lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

Research Journal

During the data collection and analysis phase, I recorded essential notes and reflections in a research journal. To explain, the interpretive qualitative design approach conceptualizes the research as an "instrument" in the research process as the researcher is responsible for formulating the interpretation of the data that is derived from the data sources (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). These written observational notes and impressions of participants are referred to as *field notes* (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These notes can serve as an essential data source in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). During the interview, I recorded observational notes as well as my personal impressions on a word document. Following the interview, the notes included descriptive and reflective accounts of the interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These notes included direct quotes from the interview, descriptions of what was occurring in the environment, and my

personal comments and reactions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These notes also included

important reflections, impressions, and hypotheses during the data analysis phase.

Promoting Credibility, Validity, and Reliability

Reflexivity Statement

As the primary research of this study, it is essential to reflect and identify

potential areas of bias to promote the credibility and trustworthiness of this study. As a

second-generation Korean American Christian heterosexual cis female, my experiences

have informed the belief that cultural values from one's ethnic/racial background and

religion may have an influential role in shaping an individual's perceptions, experiences,

and identity. At the same time, my training as a doctoral student in a counseling

psychology program has shaped my understanding that distinct cultural groups are not

entirely monolithic and individuals who belong to the same cultural groups can have

distinct and diverse experiences.

Member Checking

Member checking was employed for this study to ensure validity of the data

(Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Therefore, as mentioned in the informed consent, each

participant was offered the opportunity to receive an electronic copy of their transcribed

interview by email and review for accuracy and final approval (see Appendix H).

Peer Debriefing

The purpose of peer debriefing was to enhance the credibility of this qualitative

study (Spall, 1998). The peer debriefer for this study was a licensed psychologist with a

background in both quantitative and qualitative research methodology, with a level of

expertise in sexual minorities and sexual and gender identity development. For this

process, the peer debriefer reviewed a transcript I selected at random. Afterwards, the peer debriefer and I discussed the overall themes. The peer debriefer also asked questions related to specific quotes from the transcript and inquired about my process in coding and developing themes for those quotes.

Intra-Rater Reliability

Intra-rater reliability can be used to measure a researcher's self-consistency or level of agreement in analyzing and coding the data (Gwet, 2008). For the intra-reliability process, I recoded a transcript at random after several months from initial coding. Based on the initial coding and recoded transcripts, a weighted kappa analysis was performed that yielded an intra-rater reliability coefficient index of $\kappa = 0.97$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.921, 1.022]. This value indicates a strong and near perfect intra-rater reliability agreement.

Adequate Engagement in Data

Active and adequate engagement in the data allowed me to monitor for saturation of data. Therefore, I transcribed and began analyzing the data within 72 hours after the interview and continuously reviewed and evaluated the data for new information and understanding. During this time, I also considered how the data may "support alternative explanations" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 248), which enhanced the credibility and validity of the study's findings

Triangulation of Data

To enhance the reliability and validity of this study, I incorporated multiple sources of data that addressed the research questions and used the data to verify merging results and findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used three different sources of data: the

survey, the interview, and the content from the research journal. By doing so, I was able to cross-check the data across multiple sources to ensure the study's findings were valid and consistent.

Protection of Participants

Prior to recruiting participants for this study, I waited on an official approval from Northwest University's Institutional Review Board. Additionally, to protect participant confidentiality and data, I used pseudonyms in my written dissertation and excluded from sharing any identifying information as well as specifically naming institutions, organizations, churches, or individuals associated with the participant. Furthermore, potential participants were presented with an informed consent outlining the benefits and risks associated with participating in this study. Due to some of the risks involved in discussing some sensitive topics, a list of services for crisis help was provided to the participants. The research data were also protected by requiring a password to access all digital files and folders. Additionally, audio recordings of interviews were transferred to a password protected digital file following the interview and then immediately deleted off the recording device.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

This chapter provided a summary of the study's qualitative approach and philosophical overview. I also presented the sampling strategies in recruiting the specific participant population for this study. I also outlined the study's research design and strategy as well as methods for data analysis. I also provided a description of how I promoted credibility, validity, reliability, and protection of participants for this study.

Chapter 3

The previous chapter outlined the study's methodology and procedures that aimed to understand the experiences of Asian American Side B sexual minority Christians. This was accomplished by applying an interpretive qualitative design guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Asian American SB-SMC describe their experiences of sexual identity development and related milestone events?

2. How do Asian American SB-SMC describe their experiences with religion and religious faith communities, within the context of sexual identity?

3. How do Asian American SB-SMC describe their experiences with ethnic/racial identity, within the context of religious and sexual identity?

This chapter presents a summary of the study's findings based on data gathered from semistructured interviews and surveys with 12 participants. Data were also gathered from a research journal that included descriptive field notes and observations.

Data Analysis and Procedures

Interpretive qualitative designs most commonly use data analysis strategies that apply open codes and thematic analysis (Lim, 2011). Therefore, this study applied a *thematic analysis* strategy that involved "identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes" from the data (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 2). This versatile approach to data analysis was ideal for this study as it provided a way to gain a "rich and detailed" understanding of the data, particularly when studying perspectives and experiences of participants (Nowell et al., 2017). More specifically, I applied the 6–phase approach to thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The first phase of applying the thematic analysis strategy involved familiarizing and engaging with the research data by personally transcribing all the interviews, thoroughly reading through the transcript several times prior to formally coding, and producing descriptive field notes from those interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this time, I also noted any initial impressions or ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Secondly, after receiving participant approval of the transcribed interviews, the document was analyzed for initial codes by creating brief labels within the data that related to the overarching research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An open coding approach was also applied.

Thirdly, after establishing initial codes, the data was reviewed again to generate categories and broader themes. This involved reviewing the various codes for possible themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To organize this process, I used visual tables and/or mind maps (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During data analysis, I also used a comparative method to consider similarities and differences among the different interviews. I also made notes during the data analysis process to record initial observations, thoughts, and speculations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, although the research questions ultimately guided this study, I considered codes and themes from the data that were not directly relevant to the established research questions (Nowell et al., 2017). Furthermore, data was managed and organized using the coding software, ATLAS.ti, to organize the codes and themes.

Fourthly, once potential themes were identified, I continued to analyze the data (both codes and initial themes) to ensure all identified codes appropriately fit with the assigned themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This involved organizing a code into a different

theme or finding that a theme did not adequately "capture the contours of the coded data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). Next, the fifth phase involved generating detailed definitions and names for each theme. The final phase of this process involved drafting the written report of the final data results (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Member Checking

Participants were offered the opportunity to participate in member checking to ensure the validity of the data. If participants agreed to participate, they were provided an electronic copy of their transcribed interview that was password protected with an agreed upon password. A total of three participants requested to participate in member checking and all three participants provided approval of the written transcripts.

Description of Participants

To be eligible in participating in this study, individuals were required to self-identify as Asian American and Christian. In addition, participants must have agreed they experience enduring attraction to the same sex and hold to a traditional Christian sexual ethic on same-sex sexuality (SB position). Furthermore, participants must either be single, celibate, or in a mixed orientation marriage. Eligible participants were also required to be of an adult age of 18 and be able to speak and read English fluently.

This study included a total of 12 participants who all met the eligibility requirements and completed all required components of this study. Regarding age, 10 participants were between the ages 18 and 29 and two participants were in their 30s. All participants identified as being Asian, with three of those individuals also identifying as mixed. Regarding ethnicity, most seven participants identified as Chinese, two participants identified as Vietnamese, two participants identified as Filipino, and one

participant identified as Korean. Furthermore, regarding gender identity, seven participants identified as male, four participants identified as female, and one participant identified as genderfluid. Lastly, seven participants identified as gay, three participants identified as bisexual, and two participants identified as queer. To protect participant confidentiality and avoid deductive disclosure of this distinct population, the description of the participant sample was presented more broadly.

Theme 1: Sexual Identity Development

Experienced Milestone Events

During the semistructured interviews, participants referred to their experiences with milestone events occurring during sexual identity development. These specific milestone events were coded as (a) attractions to the same sex, (b) exploration of sexuality, and (c) disclosure of sexual orientation.

Attractions to the Same Sex

All 12 participants in this study described experiences with attractions toward the same sex. More specifically, participants were asked to describe their initial experiences with attractions to the same sex and/or opposite sex. Several participants referred to experiences with a childhood crush. Participant C stated, "I think my first crush was in kindergarten and it was a boy. But around the same time, I was getting very cognizant of beautiful women." Participant B also explained, "I think there were times when I was 7 years old that I could recall just having this . . . inclination . . . toward women or girls." Furthermore, Participant I shared, "The earliest that I can think of would be in third grade . . . I had crushes on my friends . . . there was one boy . . . but then I also had other crushes on girls too."

Exploration of Sexuality

A total of 10 participants described experiences in exploring their sexuality through relationships, dating, pornography use, and/or sexual activity. Participant J shared about questioning their faith at a certain point and was "far from [their] faith." During that time, Participant J shared, "And so I think that's when I did the most exploring when it came to dating and relationships." The participant continued to explain, "I did have I guess what modern-day teenagers call flings or things with people that weren't like an official thing." Additionally, Participant F stated, "And then I've been on dating apps before and also kind of had flings."

Participant C referred to their experience with dating men and shared, ". . . with each passing year and realizing I don't want to go on dating apps to date guys. Why is that? Why do I feel like cringing whenever I think of that?" Participant C also shared, "If a guy tried to put an arm around me when we were on a date . . . I just didn't feel any kind of attraction to him or like a desire to like take things any further."

Disclosure of Sexual Orientation

All 12 participants indicated having disclosed their sexual orientation to another individual. Most participants experienced initial disclosure of their sexual orientation as adults. Participant C shared, "It was this year that I finally came out to some close trusted friends." Participant D stated, "I think I was 18 when I first came out." Participant L also shared, "I first came out in college . . . like sophomore or junior year . . . it started off with like one person but it immediately became everybody." Similarly, Participant A began disclosing their sexual orientation to others in college.

Furthermore, 10 participants in this study reported their initial disclosure occurred with someone outside of their immediate family. These participants indicated having initial disclosure conversations with a friend or religious leader. Participant A shared, "I came out to my friends many, many years before I came out to my own family."

Navigating Confusion Surrounding Attractions

When discussing attractions, participants described their experiences in navigating confusion surrounding their attractions. This included discussions related to the complex nature of attractions as well as ways in which participants responded to these attractions.

Complexities of Attractions

As participants discussed their experiences with being attracted to another individual, all 12 participants also described the complexities in understanding these experiences with attractions, particularly as it relates to attraction to the same sex. More specifically, some participants indicated feeling confused by their initial experiences with being attracted to the same sex. Participant K reported they "definitely felt confused" over initial experiences with attractions with the same sex. Participant J also characterized initial attractions toward the same gender as "confusing" due to not understanding what those attractions meant to them. Additionally, Participant F stated, "I didn't know it was possible to have crushes on people of the same sex until like after sixth grade." Participant J also shared:

> I was very confused. I did not really have a label or an identity yet because I did
> not know what it was because I did not know if I was bi, I did not know if I was
> straight. I did not know if I was gay. I did not know those terms either for the

longest time. And so, I was very confused. I was scared in the sense of I did not

know what it meant. And so, I did not know how to approach the conversation or

how to talk about it.

Participant C also described their confusion in making sense of the different types

of attractions. Participant C stated:

If you feel you have a connection with a person you feel attracted to . . . is that a

romantic attraction? Is it a sexual attraction? Is that a platonic attraction? And

where do those things intersect if it is more than one?

Similarly, Participant G shared, "There wasn't like a lot of terminology or concepts that I

was equipped with to understand. Like what [does] attraction really mean? Like what is

intimacy?"

Identity Conflict

Participants also discussed ways in which they experienced conflict or tension

between their or their family's religious beliefs and their attractions to the same sex.

When asked to describe the relationship between their sexual identity and religious

identity growing up, Participant B responded:

I definitely kept them at arm's length on each side and didn't really intersect

them . . . like the Christianity and the religious . . . that was good. And sexuality

was bad and they were constantly at odds with each other and I had to choose

between one or the other which I think really is where a lot of that tension came

from because . . . I had to choose myself or myself because they were both like a

part of who I was so it kind of like split myself in half.

Furthermore, Participant I responded to the question by sharing, "I do feel like they were

conflicting. I sensed a conflict between what the church would say about being gay and

then like my feelings and what I was going through in middle school." Similarly,

Participant J shared:

> And then from 15 to 18 really I had a very love-hate relationship with myself
>
> because I didn't know what I wanted to be and I felt like I was torn between being
>
> who I am to being who I'm supposed to be. And I was stuck in this place of the
>
> common *pray the gay away* kind of mentality.

Additionally, Participant K said:

> I think most of the time they have been in conflict. Like I could not be a sexual
>
> person and be a Christian . . . ever. Like those just didn't work out. And yet, both
>
> of those are true about me. And so how are those related? I think just a lot of
>
> conflict, constantly. Like I always feel like anytime I felt a certain way, I had to
>
> push that down, especially about a guy.

Response to Attractions

Participants described ways in which they responded to or dealt with experiencing

enduring attractions to the same sex. Some reported responding with the attractions with

self-denial. Participant C stated, "Even in that confusion there was definitely self-denial

of like . . . no, this can't be true of me . . . there was definitely a lot of reason for me to let

that self-denial take over." Participant D also shared, "There's also maybe a bit of denial

like I didn't want to acknowledge that I was attracted to the same sex." Participant E also

shared, "[I] was mortified and quickly suppressed it. Just like trying to erase that and like

suppress that." Similarly, Participant E also added, "For a long time, [my attractions]

were just like compartmentalized and disregarded entirely. I thought it was something I could control." Furthermore, Participant H responded, "I tried as hard as I could to keep them segregated growing up."

Some participants chose to keep their attractions and feelings a secret from others. Participant B shared, "I didn't talk to her about it or anybody else for a while. It was just something that I kept to myself." Participant H also said, "It was like trying to keep this super secretive . . . like my sexual identity super in the dark and secretive." Furthermore, some participants responded to the attractions by thinking the attractions were temporary or just a phase. Participant C recalled believing, "It's just a phase of like I'm just not feeling men right now." Participant B also indicated initial awareness of their attractions could be "a phase." Participant A also shared:

> I kind of just tried to hide it away from other people . . . and to myself too. And it
> took me some time for me to come out to myself and realize that these feelings
> are not just something that is a phase, but it is a part of me.

Theme 2: The Process of Coming Out to Others

Experiences With Coming Out to Others

Participants described varied experiences in having disclosure conversations with others. These experiences consist of both accounts of negative disclosure experiences and positive disclosure experiences.

Negative Disclosure Experiences

Findings from this study indicated nine participants described negative experiences when disclosing their sexual orientation to others. Participant D recalled their disclosure experience with their parents:

> That was a very difficult experience and I felt like they really didn't take it that well. They were very silent and then I showed them a video too and there was just kind of a lot of blame . . . my mom made comments like . . . if you want to go be gay, just go be gay. That's your life, not my life. I don't care.

Some participants identified silence or a lack of response from others after disclosure as being particularly hurtful. Participant B shared, "Even if they aren't outwardly hateful, their silence and not wanting to talk about it at all is really just as harmful." Participant C also reported it has been "complete radio silence" because she disclosed her sexual identity to her best friend.

Some participants also described negative disclosure experiences where individuals responded to the disclosure with comments related to theology. Participant E shared, "In the beginning, the responses were not great or it would be like, 'Thank you so much for telling me, but you know that's a sin, right?'" Participant K also shared about having received negative responses that have messages related to "pray to be straight."

Positive Disclosure Experiences

In this study, 10 participants also referred to positive experiences with disclosure conversations. Some accounts focused on having an empathic and supportive presence when disclosing their sexual orientation. More specifically, Participant B shared about their experience disclosing to a friend who was open to hearing them and shared, "She didn't shame me and didn't try to fix me. She was just there to listen and wanted to really understand . . . that experience." Participant D also described an experience of coming out to a pastor:

> I didn't really have that many people to go to. I remember crying with him and
> then he started crying too. I remember him saying that I don't really know what to
> say, but God still loves you. I think that was really big for me . . . and then slowly
> I started to come out to more.

Participant A also explained his family's response of "love and acceptance . . . meant the world to [him] because it meant being accepted."

Barriers to Coming Out to Others

Participants are faced with various barriers in coming out to others. These factors include the fear of negative perception and reaction from others and the social impact coming out can have on family members.

Fear of Negative Perception and Reaction

A total of seven participants described either past or present fears of receiving negative perceptions and reactions if they were to come out to others. Negative perception and reaction included a variety of fears including rejection, being seen differently by others, changes in close relationships, and/or repercussions in Christian settings. Regarding fears of rejection, Participant A shared:

> I had not shared that with [my family] for a long time because I didn't want to be
> rejected. Now, did I really think even at the worst times that my mom would kick
> me out or my brother would stop talking to me? No. But . . . it's the unknown.

For Participant J, fears about coming out were related to attending a Christian school that upholds lifestyle expectations related to student conduct. Participant J shared:

If somebody else were to out me, then it can be misinterpreted. And so I had a lot

of fear . . . that just the wrong people would find out and I would be in trouble for

things that I didn't have control of.

Similarly, Participant C tearfully shared, "Will I lose opportunities to serve in church

over this?" In this case, Participant C feared coming out as a sexual minority would put

them at risk for losing opportunities to volunteer at church. Furthermore, when asked to

discuss the most significant barrier in coming out to others, Participant C explained:

Like knowing how other people in my life would respond . . . the fear of rejection

from people I love . . . from people who are supposed to love me unconditionally.

I think that was my biggest barrier.

Social Impact on Family

Two participants discussed reservations about coming out to others due to the

potential social impact among family members. Participant D shared:

I don't want to be as open as I am because I don't want that to affect my

parents . . . I don't want my parents to be seen a different way or like my sibling

either because of who I am. . . . So, I can't share at church . . . or be as open

because it would affect my whole family, not just me.

Participant K also explained:

I think there's a lot of . . . shame-based behavior that happens in especially

Chinese and Asian families . . . there is this heavy sense of you represent your

family and your choices impact everyone so growing up and coming to terms of

[being] gay . . . that meant a lot of dishonor. . . . And that still comes up today

when I talk to my mom. She is just uncomfortable with talking about me being gay because of how that might be perceived by her friends and her family.

Theme 3: Early Faith Community Experiences

Raised in Christian Setting

Participants described their early faith experiences in being raised in a Christian setting. These experiences include reference to growing up in the Christian church and a conservative church upbringing.

Grew Up in the Church

All 12 participants in this study indicated attending Christian churches as a child. Participant G indicated, "I was raised as a Christian." Participant H also shared, "I did grow up going to church." In addition to attending, some participants described having an active participation in the church. For instance, Participant E stated, "I really grew up in the church and had leadership roles." Similarly, Participant I shared, "I was very involved with that church."

Conservative Church Upbringing

Most participants described their church upbringing as conservative. Some participants referred to their churches or church's denomination as conservative. For example, Participant L shared: "I just remembered them kind of being like ultra-conservative." Participant K said:

I am from a very conservative Christian background and then churches I went to growing up had a strong Protestant Southern Baptist root and so what that meant was a lot of the underlying beliefs included incredibly conservative traditional values.

Participant I also shared, "It's like a non-denominational church, but then is very heavily Baptist theologies, very heavy Southern Baptist influences in terms of theology and interpretation . . . I think they just had a very conservative view on sexuality."

Asian or Ethnic-Specific Churches

The majority of participants indicated having attended an Asian majority church or an ethnic-specific church (e.g., Chinese church). Participant E shared:

My parents joined church when I was little . . . I attended this like Chinese Church. And I guess it's a multi-generational church with a Chinese English congregation. I was in the English congregation and I had a pretty Baptist evangelical view of everything.

Participant F similarly described:

I grew up in a Chinese Church that was like immigrant parents and their kids. So there was one Mandarin service for the adults and then English service for the kids so it was very small. Yeah I feel like the two churches I've been to, the Chinese churches, can be described as non-denominational, but Baptist leaning. Yeah, definitely conservative for sure.

Lack of Belonging at Church

Participants were asked to describe their experiences in their faith and religious communities.

Lack of Close Faith Community

Some participants described a lack of close relationships and friendships in their faith communities. Participant D shared:

Like my church group was actually the most hurtful for me I think . . . I think

church is good because it gives you an opportunity for community, but it's only

good if that community is good and healthy . . . I felt like outcasted or not really

belonging there."

Furthermore, Participant G said, "I didn't talk to a lot of people. I did not hang out with

people a whole lot and so faith community there was very lacking." Similarly, Participant

H stated, "I wasn't super close with a lot of people at youth group . . . also don't think I

had a great community or like mentorship or discipleship or anything at the church that I

grew up at."

Theme 4: The Role of Religion

Development of Christian Sexual Ethics

Participants discussed ways in which they were exposed to teachings about

dating, marriage, sex and same-sex sexuality within a Christian context. Participants

described (a) the process of navigating one's theology on sexuality, (b) being exposed to

various Christian resources, (c) receiving a sex talk at church, and (d) receiving teaching

on same-sex sexuality in the church.

Figuring Out One's Theology on Sexuality

Most participants described the experience of processing or figuring out one's

theology on sexuality. Participant I shared, "The biggest challenge was trying to

discern . . . what God's view of homosexuality is, both in terms of attraction and also

sexual activity as well. So that was something that I really had to wrestle with over the

years." Similarly, Participant H described questions he wrestled through when processing

his sexuality and theology. Participant H shared, "I think in college . . . I think there were

times of questioning like what about Side A? Or like . . . could I date guys? Could I do things like that?" Participant G also shared:

> I kind of went through a trajectory that landed on Side B. I never went to Side A at any point, but more and more as I learned more about what Side B stood for, I was also at the same time kind of becoming more progressive in my theology.

Exposure to Christian Resources

Some participants indicate exposure to Christian resources related to sexuality. This includes Christian speakers, books, conferences, and sermons. Participant F shared, "I think that Christian books about it that aren't ex-gay . . . has been very helpful and just like reading online spaces where you can find people who feel the same way or had similar experiences has been helpful." Participant I also reported reading blogs about celibate partnership that "really kind of opened [his] eyes." Participants also referred to listening to well-known Christian speakers who discuss their experiences with navigating faith and sexuality. Participant E shared:

> I think it was formative when Christopher Yuan actually came and spoke at my church growing up and I think the way that I saw him then is different from how I think of him now . . . just as my own views of sexuality have evolved a bit.

Sex Talk at Church

A total of nine participants discussed having received general teaching on sex, dating, and/or marriage at church. Participant B shared:

> I think I would definitely describe it as a little more traditional . . . and this is particularly in the area regarding sexuality, but there was definitely like this purity culture growing up . . . like once a year in youth group we would have this

> conversation of dating, and marriage, and sex . . . and it was kind of just a one
>
> night thing. It was never like this ongoing conversation . . . there was a lot of
>
> pressure for me that I felt to date and or marriage.

Participant F also stated:

> In terms of marriage, I think growing up I did have the idea that like . . . sex is this
>
> trophy that you win when you get married type of thing, which is pretty toxic. But
>
> that's the kind of impression I got.

Additionally, Participant G shared, "Whenever faith and sexuality comes up, it's usually
about like . . . men's fellowship groups. Like oh, don't you know that like lusting after
women, watching like pornography, which they really mean straight pornography, was
like wrong."

Teachings Related to Same-Sex Sexuality at Church

Most participants described instances where LGBTQ-related topics were taught or
mentioned at church. Participant A shared:

> At least from what my church had always taught, and it's from the Catholic
>
> tradition, that people who have same sex attraction are to be treated with dignity
>
> and respect. And the one difference is in how Christian chastity is lived out. And
>
> so for the gay man, or the lesbian woman, that would mean celibacy.
>
> In contrast, for some participants, teachings related to same-sex sexuality was

primarily focused on being a sin. For instance, Participant C described learning about
topics of same-sex sexuality from the pulpit. Participant C shared, "But from the pulpit,
there was definitely . . . the homophobia . . . the kind of detail that was preached about
from the pulpit about the 'gay agenda' or . . . homosexuality being an abomination."

Similarly, Participant E said, "I don't really think I was really taught that if you're gay, you're going to hell explicitly from the pulpit. It was more like everything is a sin, but homosexuality is definitely a sin." Participant K also stated:

> The question of homosexuality would come up every now and then. The pastor would always just shake his head and sigh and tell us that he had a gay [family member] and that was really sad. And we would be, okay . . . but what do we do with that information? There was just no elaboration besides it's wrong and bad and you should avoid it, if possible.

Protective Factors

Participants discussed aspects of their relationship with God and spiritual experiences as a resource in navigating challenges. In addition, participants described their experience in faith communities as a resource.

Relationship With God

Some participants reflected on the positive role of God, Jesus, and/or their faith, particularly as it related to navigating challenges. Participant K shared:

> God loves you because he does and so my faith has been a resource because I know that no matter how bad I am, God loves me and I can always search the Bible for those verses that say that and so that's been kind of an unfailing sense of support for me.

Participant C described:

> Like knowing that I have that foundation of love in God has . . . it carries me through . . . it really does. And I see glimpses of that in the people who I have

been able to be open and honest with . . . and so in that sense my faith has really

carried me through.

Participant I also stated:

And then in terms of my faith being a resource for questions . . . once I came to

that place of reconciliation, it was something that helped me draw closer to God

in terms of just really relying on him for my needs.

Participant B said:

It has been just figuring out what is Jesus actually think about me and what does

he have to say about all these experiences I have had and all the shame that I have

harbored in my heart. And just undoing all of that seeing this is how he really sees

me and it is very different from how I have seen myself or how other people have

seen me.

Participant A also identified spiritual practices that were resources in navigating

questions regarding sexual identity. Participant A shared:

Participating both in the private and public prayer of the church, the delving into

the writings of those who have gone before me in the faith, particularly for me in

the monastic writings. Reading the experiences of men who have lived out or

wrote about their own struggles and ways that they have lived out trying to live a

chaste, celibate life. You know sexual orientation is not a part of those writings,

but I do delve into those a lot to try to get inspiration that I am not the only one in

this struggle and that it is possible to live a chaste life, which for me being

celibacy.

Participant responses on a survey also revealed all participants either agreed (two participants) or strongly agreed (ten participants) their religious identities were an important aspect of their identities.

Positive Impact of Faith Community

Some participants identified their experience in faith communities as a resource or positive experience. When asked if aspects of faith had been a resource in navigating sexual identity, Participant B stated:

I think I probably experience that most in community and other people who are also in a relationship with the Lord . . . of just being able to be surrounded by others that share the same faith . . . that's probably been the most important part as it comes to where my faith intersects with my sexuality.

Participant F similarly shared, "I think there have been some people in my faith community . . . people who have been supportive . . . I feel like my main support system has always been Christian people." Participant I also reflected on having an "environment of somewhere [he] did feel accepted and where [he] was able to serve and contribute as well."

Some participants identified positive experiences of their faith communities specifically related to mentorship or discipleship. Participant A shared, "Probably the major support system that I had was my mentor . . . because he was the first adult figure . . . that I came out to." Similarly, Participant D described his relationship with a pastor and said, "He was like . . . a mentor figure . . . he cared about me a lot and I'd have talks with him sometimes and I didn't really have that many people to go to." Participant J also said:

I had good moral support . . . in a sense of my mentor and my friends. I had good

Christian individuals in my corner who were there for me to navigate through this

of constantly reminding me that my worth was not in my identity and reminding

me that who I am doesn't change my character . . . and so I felt very grounded in

that.

Other participants also discussed positive relationships and experiences with the

Christian LGBTQ community, including the Side B community. Participant E shared,

"The Side B community helps a lot." Several participants discussed being a part of online

communities, workshops, and conferences where they met and communicated with other

Side B Christians. For instance, Participant K discussed friendships with LGBTQ

Christians that primarily exist online. Participant K shared:

It's interesting. Most of my Christian LGBTQ friends are online . . . I have quite a

few friends. We are actually going to meet today. They are all part of the online

groups that I am a part of with gay Christians. It is kind of a rare opportunity to be

with people who come from similar walks of life and believe the same things you

do and know how it feels to be the object of scorn in both Christian and gay

circles and so we always got that going for us.

Theme 5: Community Attitudes Toward Sexuality

Negative Attitudes

Study participants discussed experiences with encountering negative attitudes

related to sexuality within their community and the taboo nature of topics such as

sexuality and same-sex sexuality. This category consists of codes related to negative

community messages toward sexual minorities and taboo.

Negative Community Messages Toward Sexual Minorities

Many participants discussed ways in which they received negative messages toward sexual minorities within their communities. Participant C shared about how her family responded to a family member coming out. They said, "With regards to my family, I think my earliest recollection of a gay person was a [family member] . . . that was real formative for me seeing how they negatively responded to that and essentially ostracized her."

Other participants shared negative messages received within their faith communities. Participant K described messages of "gay people need to repent and find healing form their gayness in order to be legitimate." Participant I also shared:

> The Chinese church that I grew up in . . . it was conservative and I think comparing it to other churches that I went to after, I feel like it was conservative, but then for homosexuality, it was kind of like they were grossed out by it and then they used the Bible to sort of justify that visceral feeling. That was the sense that I got.

Participant C also said, "[the pastor] will decide to go on a rant against this group or . . . GLAAD or whoever. He'll just like pick a subject and then tear it apart and then throw in some Bible verses." Another participant discussed the impact of these messages. Participant K shared:

> I am realizing how much they impacted me now. I think I am still trying to unlearn some internalized homophobia because of those messages . . . just a lot of unhealthy ways of seeing sexuality and myself, in relation to other people. And just my identity because when you are taught early on that what you have is a

disorder or is evil somehow . . . it's really difficult for you to open up to people normally and feel seen, heard, and loved because you are not making that part of yourself visible. So, there are definitely a lot of last impacts from that kind of teaching.

Taboo

Ten participants discussed how sexuality was not a topic openly discussed within their communities. When asked how her faith community addressed topics such as sexuality, Participant J shared, "I think I have actually never ever attended a church that has ever . . . bluntly addressed the topic of sexuality or at least have . . . heard a sermon within a church context about that topic." Similarly, Participant I stated:

But I think that was just an element of maybe even just conservative church culture in general . . . just not talking about sexual things . . . just the idea of purity culture and just not wanting to have a conversation at all . . . but then that really pushes adolescents and teens to learn it through other ways through the internet or through friends. So that's sort of the environment that I grew up in.

Participant B also said, "Like growing up and up until then, I was . . . I had it like pretty ingrained into my mind that this is something that we just don't talk about."

Some participants attributed being a part of an ethnic-specific church when discussing how sexuality was not something addressed within their communities. Participant H explained, "And I don't think I had great resources available to me in the Chinese church. It wasn't really something that was talked about . . . like sex or sexuality, or gender or any of these kinds of things." Participant D also shared, "And I also grew up

in an Asian American church and we didn't really talk about sexuality that much."

Similarly, Participant J said:

> But like the Asian Christian Community is like . . . we don't even acknowledge
> the thing. Like we're not even going to talk about it. And I feel like it's very
> common in Asian culture and in general to not talk about things at all.

Theme 6: Navigating Multicultural Identities

Identity Integration

Participants discussed the process of integrating multiple cultural identities related
to their religious identity, sexual identity, and ethnic and racial identities. These include
integrating sexual identity and managing desires through a religious lens.

Integrating Sexual Identity

Participants shared about integrating their sexual identity and attractions as a part
of their identity, particularly as it relates to their religious beliefs. Some participant
explained this experience through the process of self-labeling. For example, Participant A
said:

> It took me some time for me to come out to myself and realize that these feelings
> are not just something that is a phase, but it is a part of me. And to be okay with
> that . . . I do not say . . . there is my gay self and then there is me. I know when it
> comes to Christian language, they say, "have same-sex attraction." They do not
> use identifiers as much, but I do. I have no problem identifying myself as gay.
> And so, for me, it is just one of the many descriptors of me . . . being a son of my
> parents, being a [student], being someone who is very much a theology nerd . . .
> these are one of the many descriptors of me.

Similarly, Participant D shared:

> I think in the beginning I was part of a ministry that . . . said it was like you are
> somebody who struggles with things like same-sex attraction versus identifying as
> gay because to identify as gay would be identifying as a sin . . . but then I think
> now I have come to identify that this is okay. This is a part of who I am . . . just
> because I am gay does not mean I act sexually or I am pursuing a romantic
> relationship.

Participant C also stated:

> I would say I am a bisexual who submits that part of her identity to Christ . . . my
> faith is the most important thing to me and so . . . I view any part of my identity
> whether that is my race, whether that's my sexual identity, or my personal traits. I
> still view all of that with the ultimate lens that I am a Christian. I follow Christ . . .
> There are definitely some voices in the Evangelical church that balk at the idea
> of . . . claiming that as part of your identity as if to label yourself as gay inherently
> is sinful or inherently is going to mean that you are elevating that above your
> Christian identity . . . and I do see that I am a Christian before many of those
> things, but I think it is still important that I say that I am still those other
> things . . . I need language for this and the language is that I have experienced that
> kind of experience that would be related to a bisexual person.

When asked what their attractions meant to them today or how they make sense of their attractions, Participant E shared, "I kind of just feel like it's just a part of me right now. Just like my speech is a part of me, my attractions are just a part of me." Participant B shared, "My sexuality is not my whole identity. It is a part of me."

Managing Desires Through Religious Lens

When discussing challenges related to holding to a Side B position and managing desires for relationships, participants shared ways in which they are making sense and managing these challenges from a religious context. For example, Participant C shared:

If I really believe in who [Jesus] says he is . . . if I really believe in all of that, which I do, there is nothing that is too much that God can ask of me. And if what he is asking of me is to recognize [I] have been made and [I] have this tendency that is different . . . or [I] have this struggle and that will affect [my] relationships and that will affect [my] life and that [he wants me] to abide by certain things . . . then that is really not too much if I really believe that Jesus sacrificed all that he did.

Participant B also said:

There are definitely times where I do wish that I were dating somebody or on the road to be married. Like it's still something that I think about a lot and I grieve that. So definitely those desires have not gone away, but like learning how to embrace the church and embrace my friendships and other relationships that are fulfilling and not just focusing too much on . . . not having a girlfriend or not getting married in the next year. So definitely the feelings are still there, but the way I have approached them has improved. . . . And I think also more personally just learning what it really means to be a Christian and how surrendering like my desires to dating and getting married and really like constantly having to choose Jesus over my own desires. I think that being a sexual minority has been a really

concrete, tangible example of what that looks like and how I think we are all

called to give up something in our lives.

Additionally, Participant I said:

I think a lot of the conflict and just with kind of dealing with a lot of those

issues . . . once I came to that place of reconciliation, it is something that helped

me draw closer to God in terms of just really relying on him for my needs and

especially with a heteronormative society having very defined life stages,

including church settings. Like very specific life stages that we are expected to go

through and then for me not necessarily having that life stage of college to

working to marriage and to family life. I think for me that has also been

something where I've been able to just kind of rely on God . . . to just place in

God's hands.

Participant D discussed how their faith has been a resource in navigating their sexual

identity. Participant D shared:

I feel like it has given me a lens of like what is the purpose of sexual identity

because if I did not have religion, then I could just be gay and just have a

boyfriend or whatever. But I think it has allowed me to see my purpose and that I

am doing this for God and I love God and I know that there is no marriage in

heaven . . . I love [God] and I want to know him and be with him. So, I feel like

without the religious piece, it would be really hard for me.

Cultural Values and Expectations

Participants discussed their experiences with navigating cultural values and expectations within their families and communities. These include (a) family shame and honor, (b) importance of family, and (c) conformity to family and societal norms.

Family Shame and Honor

Participants referenced experiences related to the value of avoiding family shame. One participant shared about a challenging disclosure experience with a family member. The participant said:

> I think the most impactful though was [a family member]. One time [the family member] told me [my] choice to be gay like dishonors the family because [I] won't be able to have another generation and I think [that] was a hard experience for me because I felt like [the family member] didn't really understand and it wasn't like my choice.

Participant F also shared about challenges in coming out due to his ethnic background:

> The ethnic like cultural aspect just makes it harder to like tell other people because . . . I mean part of it is like the image . . . I have to seem perfect to other people. So, there's that aspect of being too ashamed because I feel like when someone told me that like Chinese culture or East Asian culture is like an honor versus shame culture, like everything made sense. So, I feel like that aspect of shame was very prominent for me.

Participant H also said, "And I think there's less shame associated with the queer part of my identity. I think in my head like I think there is still like family shame . . . but I don't think I feel as much shame."

Importance of Family

Some participants discussed the cultural value of the importance of family. Some responses focused on the challenges of the importance of family. One participant shared:

And the reason why I keep changing my mind about the future is that I want to make sure that my [parents] are okay. But I don't think that I am going to have kids. I really don't want to get married. But I can't just think about myself. I have to have that collectivist mindset and not an individualistic mindset, even though I live in an individualistic society. Just thinking through that, in light of my sexuality, is really challenging . . . but you should be thinking about your family and not just you.

Participant I also stated:

I think the main challenge would be the aspect of family focus. And I think what relates to that as well is within the Asian Church . . . having so much emphasis on family. It can be hard as a single person . . . but as a celibate person and like a single person who is expected to stay single . . . it's hard to know like what church involvement will look like in that sort of traditional church setting . . . I think as I get older and as more of my friends like settle down or get married, that's something I'll probably be dealing with more in the future.

On the other hand, some discussions related to the importance of family were viewed more positively. One participant shared:

I think the fact that I do have close cousins who I could come out to versus [family members] . . . the fact that there is an emphasis on these relationships that maybe if you were a White American you wouldn't barely know your cousins . . .

I have maintained these relationships, in part, because I've been encouraged to

because I'm Filipino.

Conformity to Family and Social Norms

Participants also described ways in which conforming to family and social norms

were an important value in their communities. Participant L shared:

[My family] also wonder what people think about them and so what you do

reflects on them. And so they kind of want to make sure you fit like a status mold

or just kind of being successful and being gay is not one of those things.

Another participant discussed challenges in navigating sexual identity due to pressures to

conform to social and family norms that stem from Filipino culture:

Yes, it was something experienced, at least in my experience growing up Filipino,

a strong machismo culture. So, when the uncles are talking to you, it's always 'do

you have a girlfriend yet?' The aunts do that too, but with the older men in the

family . . . it's always the whole macho man kind of deal. Even men who would

not be overtly masculine . . . they would be made fun of. And I kind of felt like I

was in that category because I have the same sex attractions and I'm not going to

tell anyone and I don't have a girlfriend to show.

Navigating Relationships

Participants described ways in which they were navigating relationships. More

specifically, there was a pattern of discussion surrounding the process of figuring out

relationships.

Figuring Out Relationships

Participants discussed experiences in figuring out relationships (e.g., romantic relationships, partnerships, marriages, and/or friendships) while holding to Side B beliefs. Participant B shared:

I have not dated. And I think I'm still kind of wrestling with it, but as of right now I have chosen to live out like this Side B way of living which is that we embrace that we are sexual minorities, but we still follow the sexual biblical ethic.

Another participant described their experience with dating and then recommitting to celibacy. The participant explained:

With [the] guys I had gone out with . . . I wanted to be very transparent from the beginning that . . . I was struggling with living as a Christian and how I'm trying to reconcile living as a Christian . . . in the way that I think God has called me to live. But at the same time, trying to fulfill my need of . . . wanting to be loved in a specific way. In an exclusive way . . . by the near end of our relationships, I really wanted to live out my Christianity in the way that I understood it, in a much more intentional way. And so that's when I said that I wanted to recommit myself to celibate chastity. And so that would have to be the end of our relationship.

Two participants discussed navigating celibate partnerships or spiritual friendships. One of the participants shared, "I was like starting to date but I think it was kind of like a spiritual friendship thing, which is something that's like hush-hush in the Side B community." The other participant stated:

So my theology is Side B, but my perspective is that it is possible to have sort of like a celibate relationships or a relationship that doesn't have the physical

component and that's something that would be glorifying to God . . . to be two

Side B Christians in that kind of relationship dynamic and there's some other like

blogs that I read about celibate partnerships that really kind of opened my eyes.

Some participants discussed having a range of openness to marrying the opposite sex.

Participant H shared, "So I think I am open to the idea of marrying someone of the

opposite sex. I think it's just really challenging though to think about what that would

actually look like." Participant E shared:

> My parents always wanted me to always marry a good Christian guy . . . I do not
>
> want to really date . . . I might consider it for the sake of my Mom but I'm not
>
> sure . . . like at one point I said I was committed to celibacy, but I guess . . . I do
>
> not think so but I also don't really want to marry a guy . . . we will just see what
>
> happens.

Additionally, Participant I discussed being open to celibate partnerships, but shared

complexities in seeking a celibate partnership as Asian American. Participant I said:

> I think one of the aspects for myself as an ethnic minority is that issue of shared
>
> culture in terms of like being in a relationship with someone. So, for me being
>
> open to celibate partnerships, but then like not necessarily knowing if I would
>
> connect to maybe like a non-Asian person the same way as an Asian person in
>
> terms of cultural heritage and things like that. I think that has been a consideration
>
> for me in terms of just seeking that . . . it just seems that it is a lot less likely
>
> because of that . . . to find someone who matches all the characteristics . . . so like
>
> Christian and gay and Side B and Asian.

Summary

This chapter presented the study's results derived from semistructured interviews, surveys, and my notes. Through thematic analysis, six themes were generated: (a) Sexual Identity Development, (b) The Process of Coming Out to Others, (c) Early Faith Community Experiences, (d) The Role of Religion, (e) Community Attitudes Toward Sexuality, and (f) Navigating Multicultural Identities. The next chapter includes an interpretation of the themes and the clinical implications. Additionally, I discuss limitations and recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 4

This interpretive qualitative study aimed to understand the experiences of Side B Asian American sexual minority Christians in the United States. The purpose of this study was to address the gap in the literature on Side B sexual minority Christians and highlight the detailed experiences and perceptions of Side B sexual minority Christians who identify as Asian American. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do Asian American SB-SMC describe their experiences of sexual identity development and related milestone events?

2. How do Asian American SB-SMC describe their experiences with religion and religious faith communities, within the context of sexual identity?

3. How do Asian American SB-SMC describe their experiences with ethnic/racial identity, within the context of religious and sexual identity?

Philosophical Worldview

This study applied an interpretive framework that used a social constructivist worldview. By using a social constructivism framework, I assumed participants' reality was based on their subjective and unique perspectives and experiences informed by their distinct contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These contexts are shaped by sociocultural and historical factors (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Experiences With Sexual Identity Development and Related Milestone Events

The process of sexual identity development generally refers to the experience of having an increased sense of awareness about one's sexual attractions (Mustanski et al., 2014). Approaches to conceptualizing the sexual identity development process focus on the formation and integration of one's sexual identity based on experiencing shared

milestone events (Rosario et al., 2011). Consistent with the literature, the findings from this study suggest participants experienced aspects of identity formation, which includes milestone events related to increased awareness of one's same-sex attractions, questions surrounding one's sexual orientation, and exploration of sexuality through experimentation (Rosario et al., 2004). When discussing attractions, one significant theme was the complexities in understanding the meaning of their attractions toward the same sex. More specifically, participants endorsed feelings of confusion over initial experiences with attractions toward the same sex. Some participants in this study attributed this confusion to a lack of knowledge and language about attractions and sexuality and were unsure as to how to make sense of their feelings. For example, differentiating sexual attractions, emotional connections, intimacy, and platonic feelings presented with challenges in understanding one's sexual orientation. Additionally, participants reported sexuality and same-sex sexuality as a taboo topic and therefore did not receive guidance and support in making sense of these attractions and feelings. This builds on previous research that highlights confusion over same-sex attractions as a shared milestone experience among sexual minorities (Cass, 1979; Rosario et al., 2004; Yarhouse, Dean, et al., 2017).

Furthermore, all participants in this study described experiencing conflict between the attractions they experienced and their religious beliefs about same-sex sexuality. These results build on existing findings that Christian sexual minorities experience intrapersonal conflict with their sexual and religious identity (Anderton et al., 2011; Beagan & Hattie, 2015; Levy, 2012; Subhi & Geelan 2012; Yarhouse & Tan, 2005). For this study, participants described that their sexuality and religious convictions would

often be at odds with one another, creating tension and intrapersonal conflict. Furthermore, Subhi and Geelan (2012) found most of their participants described wanting to maintain both their Christian identity and sexual identity during this conflict, which suggested the high value of integrating both identities. Participant responses on a survey similarly revealed participants in this study highly value both their religious and sexual identities.

Individuals experiencing identity conflict pursue a variety of methods to resolve or cope with the conflict. Rodriguez and Ouellette (2000) identified a variety of strategies including rejecting their religious identity to maintain their sexual identity, rejecting their sexual identity to maintain their religious identity, compartmentalizing identities, or integrating identities. Similar to the literature, participants in this study described responding to the conflict with self-denial and therefore compartmentalizing their attractions. One participant specifically said they felt mortified by their initial attractions to the same sex and quickly attempted to suppress those feelings. In addition, participants in this study also made attempts to conceal or keep their attractions a secret from others. This resulted in not seeking support from others when experiencing distress surrounding the attractions.

Some participants described experiences related to integrating one's sexual identity and religious identity. For instance, some participants described coming to terms or accepting their attractions or sexual orientation as a part of their identities and a part of themselves that could not be changed. In addition, participants were able to accept their attractions while also maintaining their religious identity by distinguishing attractions and behavior as two separate entities. This suggests adopting a Side B position and

conceptualizing their attractions, behaviors, and identities in this way assisted participants in reconciling their identities. Therefore, participants were able to simultaneously identify as LGBQ and Christian as opposed to choosing one identity over the other (Ream & Savin-Williams, 2005).

Moreover, a major theme of this study was the process of coming out to others where participants discussed both positive and negative disclosure experiences. Positive disclosure experiences generally included empathic, supportive, and loving responses. In contrast, a lack of response, silence, or a theological response was typically interpreted as a negative and harmful response. At the same time, each disclosure experience was unique to each individual as participants discussed their own family relationships and dynamics. This aligns with the literature that highlights the complexities of the coming-out process and the guiding force of individual factors related to attachment styles and relationships dynamics within the family (Reed et al., 2020).

Experiences With Religion and Religious Faith Communities

All participants in this study were raised in the Christian church, with majority of the participants describing their faith communities as conservative. With most participants reported being raised in the Christian church and being a part of a Christian faith community for most of their lives, this likely provided a site for participants to form and integrate their religious identity and establish values and beliefs.

When asked to describe their experiences in their faith communities, many described experiencing a lack of belonging within their communities and not feeling close with others. Furthermore, within the context of sexual identity, many participants discussed their harmful experiences with negative community messages and attitudes

about the LGBTQ community. Although these messages were generally not explicitly

directed toward participants, exposure to such messages and teachings appeared to inform

the way participants developed their own understandings and ethics regarding sexuality.

Notably, all participants in this study endorsed holding to a traditional Christian sexual

ethic. Based on participant responses, it did not appear that the teaching of a traditional

stance toward marriage and sexuality itself was interpreted as harmful, but the manner in

which the theology was taught and approached by church leadership or fellow

congregants. Previous research also found negative messages about same-sex sexuality

were focused on it being sinful, wrong, or an abomination (Gibbs & Goldbach, 2020;

Subhi & Geelan, 2012). On the other hand, one participant highlighted more positive

messages from his faith community, which focused on treating sexual minorities with

respect and dignity. As a result, the participant indicated this early teaching facilitated an

openness to accept their attractions and sexual orientation.

At the same time, faith communities can play an important role in providing

individuals and families with social support (Stone et al., 2003) and a sense of belonging

(Stroope, 2011). Some participants in this study identified their faith communities as a

source of support, mentorship, and discipleship, which included both past and current

faith communities. In addition, participants shared about the support they received within

online communities with other LGBTQ Christians, including Side B Christians. This also

provided a source of support in navigating questions related to identity integration,

relationships, theology, and more.

Moreover, all participants from this study indicated their religious identity was an

important part of their identity. Additionally, several participants discussed the positive

role of God or referred to their relationship with God or Jesus as a supportive factor in navigating challenges. For example, when participants experienced negative interactions within their faith communities, participants leaned into their personal relationships with God for support. This implies experiences in one's personal faith and one's faith community are two distinct and separate factors that may contribute to experiences with religion. More specifically, religion and spirituality can be experienced both individually and communally (Rodriguez, 2010).

Experiences With Ethnic/Racial Identity

Factors such as ethnicity can have an impact on sexual identity development among sexual minorities (Dubé & Savin-Williams, 1999; Rosario et al., 2004). Szymanski and Sung (2010) discussed ways in which the coming-out process can present unique challenges and experiences for Asian American sexual minorities. Participants in this study highlighted the significant role of Asian cultural values and expectations. In addition, many participants strongly agreed their ethnic and racial identity were an important aspect of their identity. Furthermore, the importance of family and maintaining family honor played an important part in the coming out process. To explain, the value of importance of family can be viewed as having a sense of commitment and obligation to the needs and well-being of one's family, even if it requires individual sacrifices (Kim et al., 2011).

Participants in this study discussed how coming out to others could have social implications to their families within their religious and/or ethnic-specific communities. This included negative views on their parents or family as a result of coming out as a

sexual minority. As a result, this presented as a barrier to coming out to others within their families and communities.

In addition to the coming out process, racial/ethnic identity and Asian cultural values and expectations appear to permeate into other aspects of the participants' lives. Participants in this study referenced their racial/ethnic identity or family background when discussing their past and current faith communities as well as future plans regarding relationships, marriage, and childbearing. More specifically, some participants described feeling stressed and/or confused about future plans as they balance the cultural expectations of marriage, child-bearing, and caring for elderly parents and their personal desires of being single and/or celibate. This implies the important and influential role Asian cultural values and family expectations can have in presenting barriers and protective factors in the experience of Asian American Christian sexual minorities.

Thomsen (2019) researched the intersection of religion, ethnicity/race, and family among Korean gay men in the United States and observed how individuals and their families used adaptive strategies to navigate their sexual identity within their social contexts including the Korean church community. Results from this study revealed the complex interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics of navigating sexuality, faith, ethnicity, and social community. For example, the majority of the participants in this study described attending Asian or ethnic-specific churches (e.g., Chinese church). Based on participant responses, these communities were often described as multigenerational, close-knit, and theologically conservative. This context presents a unique system that intersects both religious and ethnic-specific cultures and therefore creates a dynamic interaction of values, beliefs, and traditions. For example, participants in this study

discussed how topics related to sexuality and same-sex sexuality were taboo. Some participants specifically attributed this to being raised in an ethnic-specific church where both the Christian culture and ethnic-specific culture have conservative leanings.

Additionally, most participants stated they belonged to online groups specifically for Side B Christians as well as Asian American Side B Christians. Participants described these spaces as a source of friendship, support, and educational resource. Rodriguez (2010) discussed sites that provide a space for identity integration among individuals reconciling sexual and religious identities. For these participants, these online and in-person Side B communities provided resources and support in helping participants integrate their multicultural identities. These spaces appeared to be especially important as some participants described wrestling through identity conflict and tension in isolation and confusion and finding other individuals with shared experiences and beliefs provided relief. Participants also highlighted the usefulness in having a specific space for Asian American Side B Christians and discussing challenges and shared experiences as Asian Americans. Therefore, not only did these sites provide support in integrating religious and sexual identities, but it also helped integrate their ethnic and racial identities in relation to their religious and sexual identities.

Clinical Implications

Sue (2006) defines *cultural competency* as "the assumption that therapists and mental health providers should possess cultural knowledge and skills of a particular culture to deliver effective interventions to members of that culture" (p. 237). The practice of cultural competency therefore focuses on gaining knowledge and skills to work with diverse populations. In the case of working with Asian American Side B

sexual minority Christians, it is essential to recognize how diverse values, expectations, and beliefs that may stem from their various identities may inform their experiences. Therefore, mental health providers should work to be culturally sensitive to how religious identities and racial/ethnic identities can inform the experiences of sexual minorities. Because Asian American Side B sexual minority Christians do not exist as a monolithic population, mental health providers can allow clients to have an open space to share about their unique experiences, values, and attitudes. Furthermore, increasing cultural competency can include having an increased awareness of the complexities religious identity and ethnic/racial identity can have on the coming out process. For example, when discussing the coming-out process, the role of family and Asian cultural values can have an important role in creating barriers and challenges in disclosing one's sexual identity.

Furthermore, the practice of cultural humility may be a helpful framework for clinicians in not only understanding the beliefs and values of Side B sexual minority Christians, but to help clinicians self-evaluate and -reflect on their own beliefs and identities (Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2012). This may be especially important as values, beliefs, and attitudes regarding sexuality can vary among individuals. Because Side B Christians hold to what may be perceived as more conservative or traditional beliefs on sexuality, clinicians are encouraged to practice cultural humility to foster "nuance, sensitivity, and authentic curiosity" (Sadusky & Yarhouse, 2020, p. 107). More specifically, this involves "a process of reflection and lifelong inquiry, involves self-awareness of personal and cultural biases as well as awareness and sensitivity to significant cultural issues of others" (Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2012, p. 8). This may be

especially important when exploring an individual's motivation for holding to a Side B position and navigating life as a Side B Christian.

Results from this study can also help inform clinicians about the diversity of beliefs, values, and experiences among Christian sexual minorities. Identifying as LGBQ and holding to the historic Christian sexual ethic may not be a widely recognized and understood experience within the field of psychology. For instance, within this population, shared challenges included identity conflict, disclosure conservations, understanding their experiences with attractions, value conflict, and social stress. More specifically, the integration of multiple identities can be a challenging and isolating task as individuals attempt to reconcile conflicting values, beliefs, and needs influenced by cultural factors from different identities (Aijian & Wang, 2020).

Therefore, findings from this study could provide some context and insight into how some Side B Christian sexual minorities navigate the dynamics of religious identity, ethnic and racial identity, and sexual identity. Based on these findings, exploring a client's values and beliefs as it relates to their identities may provide important insight for clinicians in understanding their client's experiences and perceptions.

Study Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

A limitation of this study was the small sample size of 12 participants. Additionally, all 12 participants in this study are in early adulthood. Although the number of participants was acceptable for this qualitative study, results from this study should not be interpreted to be representative to the experiences of Asian American Side B sexual minority Christians. Conducting a study with a larger sample size could provide more

generalizable findings that could provide more insight and understanding to the experiences of this population that generally lacks representation in the literature.

Another limitation to this study was the lack of diverse Asian ethnicities among the participants. Most participants for this study identified as East Asian while the rest identified as Southeast Asian. Although this study researched Asian Americans as one homogeneous group, Asian culture includes many distinct ethnic groups that each have their own traditions and histories. Therefore, future studies may want to include a variety of Asian subgroups to more accurately represent different Asian cultures. In addition, studies may want to study individuals from a distinct Asian subgroup or ethnicity to explore the role of language, traditions, and histories distinct to that ethnic group.

Additionally, this study was limited to the experiences of Asian American Side B sexual minority Christians and did not explore the experience and perspectives of their family members. Future research should explore how family members of participants navigate the coming out process within their multicultural beliefs and values.

Conclusion

This interpretive qualitative study aimed to understand the experiences of Asian American Side B sexual minority Christians. The study of Side B sexual minority Christians remains a new area of research and the study of Asian American sexual minorities is often underrepresented in the literature. Therefore, this study focused on not only exploring the role of religious identity and sexual identity among Side B sexual minority Christians, but it also explored the role of ethnic and/or racial identity. Findings from this study provided detailed understanding of how the participants experienced sexual identity development and the coming-out process. More specifically, participants

highlighted the experience of confusion in making sense of initial experiences of attraction. In addition, participants experienced deep ambivalence and tension between reconciling their religious and sexual identities. In addition to these identities, cultural values stemming from one's ethnic or racial identity posed additional complexities in navigating identity integration. Participants also shared about their early experiences in faith communities and how religion informed their sexual ethics and provided a source of support through challenges. Discussions related to community attitudes toward sexuality revealed negative community attitudes toward sexual minorities and the taboo nature of sexuality within their communities. Social considerations and cultural values were also important themes.

Findings from this study provide guidance for clinical practice and understanding the complex interplay of an individual's sexual identity, religious identity, and ethnic/racial identity. It is important to continue research with this understudied population to better understand the complexities of multicultural identities, values, and perspectives of Side B Christians to provide culturally sensitive care for this population.

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Appendix A

Study Online Advertisement

Are you...
Side B Christian + Asian American
+ Gay/SSA ?

Inviting *Side B Asian American Christians who identify as either being gay or same-sex attracted (SSA) and hold to the historic/traditional Christian sexual ethic for a research study.

Please consider participating to help us learn more about the experiences and perceptions among Side B Asian Americans.

Interested in participating?
Go to *[INSERT LINK HERE]*
to learn more about this study and how to sign-up to participate in this research. Participants will be compensated with a $50 Amazon gift-card.

If you have any questions, please contact the principal investigator at diane.shin@northwestu.edu

*While the term Side B can be understood and defined in different ways, this study broadly defines the term as the theological position that marriage is to be expressed between one man and one woman.

Appendix B

Invitation Email

Hello [NAME OF RECIPIENT],

My name is Diane Shin and I am working toward completing my dissertation study on understanding the experiences of Side B sexual minority Christians who identify as Asian. I would like to invite you to participate in this study as I hope to use this study to provide mental health professionals with important information in working with not only Side B sexual minority Christians, but those who also identify as Asian. Participants will also be compensated with a $50 Amazon gift-card for their time.

Who is eligible to participate in this study?
Eligible participants must endorse all of the following:
- 18 years of age or older.
- Self-identify as Asian American (regardless of multiracial or multi-ethnic identity).
- Self-identify as Christian.
- Experience enduring romantic and sexual attraction to the same sex.
- Hold to a traditional Christian sexual ethic on same-sex sexuality and marriage (Side B position). For this study, the Side B position is defined as the belief that same-sex sexual relationships are not theologically permissible.
- Speak and read English fluently.

What is involved by participating in this study?
You will be asked to complete a brief prescreening questionnaire and review the consent form that will provide information on the study as well as the associated risks and benefits. If consent is provided, you will be contacted to schedule a video interview through *doxy.me*, an online HIPAA compliant videoconferencing platform. The interview is expected to take approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are able to withdraw from the study at any time. Please note that the interview questions will ask you to describe your experiences and perceptions that relate to sexual identity development (e.g., awareness of sexual and/or romantic attractions, disclosure conversations), religious background, and ethnic/racial background.

How do I move forward in participating in this study?
If you are eligible and/or interested in participating in this study, please go to [LINK] to complete the brief pre-screening questionnaire and review the consent form.

Additionally, please feel free to forward this invitation to others who may be eligible and interested in participating in this study.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at xxxxx@northwestu.edu or my research chair, Dr. Robert Campbell, at robert.campbell@northwestu.edu.

Best regards,

Diane Sora Shin, MA
Doctoral Student in Counseling Psychology, College of Social and Behavioral Science
(XXX) XXX-XXXX, xxxxx@northwestu.edu

Appendix C

Prescreening Step

Welcome to *Understanding the Experiences of Asian American Side B sexual minority Christians*, a research study that seeks to understand the experiences and perceptions of Asian American Christians who identify as either being gay or same-sex attracted and hold to a Side B position. This study is being conducted by Diane Shin, a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at Northwest University.

Prior to moving forward, please confirm that you meet the eligibility requirements for this study (see below). If so, please select "Next" to review the study's informed consent which provides detailed information about this study.

- I am 18 years of age or older.
- I am a Christian.
- I self-identify as Asian American (regardless of multiracial or multi-ethnic background).
- I experience enduring romantic and sexual attraction to the same sex.
  I hold to a traditional Christian sexual ethic on same-sex sexuality and marriage (also referred to as a Side B position). For this study, the Side B position is defined as the belief that same-sex sexual relationships are not theologically permissible.
- I am currently single, celibate, and/or in a mixed-orientation marriage.
- I can read and speak English fluently.
- I live in the United States.

Appendix D

Informed Consent

Understanding the Experiences of Asian American Side B Sexual Minority Christians
Northwest University
College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

Informed Consent

Welcome to *Understanding the Experiences of Asian American Side B sexual minority Christians*, a research study that seeks to understand the experiences and perceptions of Asian American Christians who identify as either being gay or same-sex attracted and hold to a Side B position. This study is being conducted by Diane Shin, a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at Northwest University.

To be eligible for this study, participants must:
(1) be an adult age 18 or older,
(2) identify as Asian American,
(3) experience enduring sexual and romantic attraction to the same sex,
(4) hold to a traditional Christian sexual ethic on marriage and sexuality (Side B position), and
(5) read and speak English fluently.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to
(1) complete a brief online survey,
(2) participate in a semistructured interview by online videoconferencing, and
(3) review a transcribed copy of the interview to approve for accuracy and receive any additional feedback within one week of receiving the transcribed document (please note that participants may choose to decline this opportunity).

It is estimated that your participation in this entire study may take approximately 60 to 120 minutes. The interview will be conducted on doxy.me, a HIPAA-compliant video conferencing platform and will be audio recorded. Therefore, to protect your privacy, it is requested that you do not include any identifying information (e.g., your full name, church's name) during the interview. However, any information, including identifying information, that you may provide will be kept confidential and stored in a secure environment at the researcher's residence. Any digital files will be password protected and physical documents will be kept in a secure environment with a password protected code. All research data will be destroyed after 5 years upon the completion of this study.

Furthermore, as part of the study, you will have the opportunity to review a written transcript of your interview to verify for accuracy and approval. By doing so, the researcher will email a password protected document of the written interview transcript. However, participants have the option to decline the invitation.

The dissertation is public record and results from this study could be published in an academic journal or presented within a variety of informal or formal forums. Additionally, direct quotes from the interview may be referenced to in this dissertation, but any identifying information will be omitted to protect confidentiality. At the same time, although the written dissertation will exclude the specific names of any mentioned organizations/churches/institutions/individuals from

the interview, there is a risk of being identified based on the unique experiences or characteristics that you may indicate during this process.

The Northwest University Institutional Review Board has approved this study. No deception is involved, and participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. For instance, there are some risks to confidentiality. Despite putting forth reasonable effort to ensure privacy, someone could overhear the interview. Therefore, although the interview will occur remotely, it is recommended you complete the interview in a secure and comfortable location where privacy can be maintained and distractions are minimal. The use of a headset device can also provide additional protection.

Some participants may experience emotional distress when answering questions about challenging experiences related to faith, sexuality, and/or family. If content of this questionnaire causes you significant distress, please call the National Alliance of Mental Health helpline at 1-800-950-6264 (or text 741-741) or the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255. Participation in this study is voluntary and you may elect to discontinue at any point during the study for any reason. You may also print this consent form for your records.

A benefit of participating in this study is the opportunity to participate in the research process as a research participant. Additionally, participants for this study will also be gifted a $50 Amazon gift card for their time. After completing the study, the principal research will send an email with a PDF copy of the gift card and code so that you may choose to input that information into your own Amazon account.

By signing this form, you are giving your permission to use the information you provide for this study. However, you may choose to withdraw from the study at any point. You may choose to decline right now as well as withdraw at any point during the study.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact the principal researcher, Diane Shin at xxxxx@northwestu.edu. If you have further questions, please contact my faculty dissertation chair, Robert Campbell, Psy.D. at robert.campbell@northwestu.edu. You may also contact the Chair of the Northwest University IRB, Dr. Cherri Seese at cherri.seese@northwestu.edu or (425) 285-2413.

Before moving forward with this study, please read this consent form in full. If you understand all information contained in this form and agree to freely participate in this study, please click the "I Agree" button. Please note that the principal researcher will print out this agreed upon informed consent form to store as a hard copy and appropriately stored in a password protected safe.

If you choose to decline the invitation to participate in this study, you may exit out of this window.

Thank you for considering participation in this study.

Diane Sora Shin, MA
Doctoral Student in Counseling Psychology, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
(XXX) XXX-XXXX; xxxxx@northwestu.edu

Robert Campbell, PsyD
Assistant Professor, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
(425) 889-5222; robert.campbell@northwestu.edu

Appendix E

Demographic Survey

Please enter your age.
o [Enter Response]

Please describe the following:

Your racial identity.
o [Enter Response]

Your ethnic identity.
o [Enter Response]

Your sexual orientation.
o [Enter Response]

Your sex assigned at birth.
o [Enter Response]

Your gender identity.
o [Enter Response]

Your identified pronouns.
o [Enter Response]

Based on the scale provided, please select the option that most accurately reflects your experience with the statement.

My racial identity is an important aspect of my identity.
o Strongly Agree
o Agree
o Neutral
o Disagree
o Strongly Disagree

My ethnic identity is an important aspect of my identity.
o Strongly Agree
o Agree
o Neutral
o Disagree
o Strongly Disagree

My ethnic/racial identity has posed challenges in my experience as an Asian American, Side B, sexual minority Christian.
o Strongly Agree
o Agree
o Neutral
o Disagree

o Strongly Disagree

My religious identity is an important aspect of my identity.
  o Strongly Agree
  o Agree
  o Neutral
  o Disagree
  o Strongly Disagree

My religious identity has posed challenges in my experience as an Asian American, Side B, sexual minority Christian.
  o Strongly Agree
  o Agree
  o Neutral
  o Disagree
  o Strongly Disagree

My sexual identity is an important aspect of my identity.
  o Strongly Agree
  o Agree
  o Neutral
  o Disagree
  o Strongly Disagree

My sexual identity has posed challenges in my experience as an Asian American, Side B, sexual minority Christian.
  o Strongly Agree
  o Agree
  o Neutral
  o Disagree
  o Strongly Disagree

Appendix F

Participant Contact Information Form

1. Please enter your full name.

2. Please enter your e-mail address:
Please enter your phone number:

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. I appreciate your willingness and time to further the field's understanding of Side B Asian American sexual minority Christians. I will be contacting you by email to schedule the interview within 24-48 hours. Please be sure to check your junk or spam mailbox if you notice that you have not received a response from me within that timeframe.

If you would like reach out to me directly for any reason, you may email me at xxxxx@northwestu.edu.

I look forward to connecting with you soon!

Appendix G

Interview Guide

Adapted from Yarhouse (2019) Assessment Protocols

Time of Interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewee ID:

Assessment: Milestone Events

1. How old were you when you first felt attraction to the same sex? What did your same-sex attractions or same-sex sexuality mean to you? How did you initially make sense of it?
2. Some people report feeling confused by their initial experiences of same-sex attraction. Has that been part of your experience?
3. Who have you disclosed your experiences of same-sex attraction (or gay identity) to?
    o Peers
    o Youth minister/religious leader
    o Siblings
    o Parents
    o Other
4. What do your attractions meant to you today?
5. Some people use different sexual identity labels to capture how they think about themselves. These labels include gay, lesbian, straight, bisexual, questioning, queer, no label, same-sex attracted, and so on. Does any specific sexual identity label resonate with you today?
6. Similarly, people use sexual identity labels to communicate their experiences to others. Again, there are many available labels: gay, lesbian, straight, bisexual, questioning, queer, no label, same-sex attracted, and so on. How do you identify yourself to others?
7. Describe your experience with same-sex dating/relationships.
8. Some people who experience same-sex attractions may date people of the opposite sex or pursue heterosexual sexual behavior. Has this been part of your experience? If so, please describe.
9. Describe your experiences with the broader LGBTQ+ community.

Assessment: Religious and Spiritual Identity

1. How would you describe the religious or spiritual faith tradition you were raised in?
2. How would you describe your local religious faith community growing up?
3. How much of what you experienced at home and in your local religious faith community is part of your life today?
4. How would you describe how your religious faith tradition addressed the topics of same-sex sexuality, sexual identity, and so on?
5. In what ways has your religious faith been a challenge for you (or potentially harmful to you) as you navigate questions about your sexual identity?
6. In what ways has your religious faith been a resource to you (or potentially beneficial to you) as you navigate your sexual identity?
7. How would you describe the relationship between your sexual identity and your religious identity growing up?
8. How would you describe the relationship between your sexual identity and your religious identity today?

<u>Assessment: Ethnic and Racial Identity</u>

1. How would you describe your ethnic and/or racial background?

2. In what ways has your ethnic/racial background been a challenge for you (or potentially harmful to you) as you navigate questions about your sexual identity?

3. In what ways has your ethnic/racial background been a resource to you (or potentially beneficial to you) as you navigate your sexual identity?

4. How would you describe the relationship between your sexual identity, religious identity, as well as your ethnic/racial identity growing up?

5. How would you describe the relationship between your sexual identity, religious identity, as well as your ethnic/racial identity today?

<u>Motivational Probes:</u>
- Could you provide an example of that?
- Can you share more to that?
- How does your past experience of that compare to your experience today?

Questions in red were added by the researcher and not included in the original assessment questions developed by Yarhouse (2019).

Appendix H

Member Checking Email

Hello,

Thank you again for your participation in this study. As previously mentioned, you have agreed to review the transcribed interview document for accuracy and approval. I have attached the document to this email. Please note that the document is password protected with the agreed upon password during our interview.

Please respond within the week with your response. If I do not receive a response, I will assume that you approve of the document and move forward with the research process. If for require more than a week to review the document, please feel free to let me know.

Thank you again for your tie and participation in this study.

Best regards,

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