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An Analysis Of The Attitudes Of Undergraduate Theology Majors Towards Members Of The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, And Transgender Community

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ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF THE ATTITUDES OF UNDERGRADUATE
THEOLOGY MAJORS TOWARDS MEMBERS OF THE
LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND
TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

by

Jephet Williams

Chair: David Sedlacek

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Thesis

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: AN ANALYSIS OF THE ATTITUDES OF UNDERGRADUATE
MAJORS TOWARDS MEMBERS OF THE LESBIAN, GAY,
BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

Name of researcher: Jepheth Williams

Name and degree of faculty chair: David Sedlacek, Ph.D.

Date completed: April 2017

Problem and Purpose

Research has identified students' attitudes towards the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community as being determined partly by the students' understanding of gender identity, and partly by a further mixture of variables that include religiosity, gender, and ethnicity. Most of this previous research has been undertaken in either secular or non-Adventist settings. This present study examines attitudes of undergraduate theology majors at two Adventist universities in North America and the Caribbean.

Method

A Likert Scale was constructed consisting of eight questions geared to elicit attitudes across a number of areas. Sixty-three students completed the questionnaire.

Participating students were enrolled at historically traditional theological Adventist universities in two countries.

Results

Results identified attitudes among students that were generally mirrored by attitudes in the broader society, as reflected in legislation. Gender and ethnic differences were indicators in student attitudes, with the former variable revealing slightly more conciliatory attitudes among females compared to the males, and the latter variable revealing far less conciliatory attitudes among Afro-Caribbeans than among students from North America.

Conclusions

The Adventist universities chosen for this research have historically adhered to a traditional stance on the biblical interpretation of gender identity and, as such, they provided a useful platform to observe any student divergence from the historical status quo. This study offers insights into the significant correlation between theology majors' ethnicity and their attitudes towards members of the LGBT community. The data obtained from administration of the survey instrument revealed this correlation.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

AN ANALYSIS OF THE ATTITUDES OF UNDERGRADUATE
THEOLOGY MAJORS TOWARDS MEMBERS OF THE
LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND
TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Jephet Williams

2017

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APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AU	Andrews University, based in Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA
General Conference	General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
NCU	Northern Caribbean University, based in Mandeville, Jamaica, West Indies
SDAKI	SDA Kinship International
SPSS	IBM Statistical Package for the Social Science, now officially marketed with the abbreviation SPSS, for manipulation and analysis of statistical data

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CHAPTER 1

THE ADVENTIST CHURCH AND THE LGBT COMMUNITY

Introduction

The Seventh-day Adventist Church (Adventist/SDA) has as its primary purpose the imperative of preaching the everlasting gospel to the world. The mission statement of the Adventist Church “is to call all people to become disciples of Jesus Christ, to proclaim the everlasting gospel embraced by the three angels’ messages (Rev 14:6-12), and to prepare the world for Christ’s soon return” (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists [General Conference], 2014a). The world into which this gospel has to be preached, however, is multi-faceted in terms of its cultural makeup, ideological perspectives, and its moral and sexual identities and propensities.

The area of sexual identity has become a divisive issue within Adventism, where debates have pitted members against one another. As potential future religious leaders in the Adventist Church, undergraduate theology majors should consider how their attitudes impact their understanding of and approach to the mission of the Church. In particular, the attitude of theology majors towards the LGBT community needs clarification so as to present a consistent platform for the Church’s mission of redemption.

Background to the Problem

From Old and New Testament times, it has been evident that God’s chosen people have existed in the presence of other communities, who often influenced them in matters

that were opposed to their divine commission. The Abrahamic dynasty existed within a non-Jewish, polytheistic environment (see Gen 12:1, 6, 10; 13:7, 12; 17:8; 19:14-16, 20, 30-38). The wilderness journey of the children of Israel from Egypt to the promised land was undertaken in the context of the existence and influence of other nations upon the “church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38; Num 25:1), and the history of the children of Israel as recorded in the historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament depicts the debilitating effect idolatrous practices, often borrowed from the practices of surrounding cultures, had upon God’s chosen people. Similarly, the New Testament records the fact that the general society can exert an influence on God’s church (see 1 Cor 5:1-2). The salient point here is that the church, in general, has never been immune to the mores and customs of its surrounding environment, even though it is essentially a distinct body of believers committed to following the teachings of its originator, Jesus Christ.

This trend is not completely lost in the debate over human sexuality and the Adventist Church. In this thesis, I will explore whether theology majors are more conciliatory towards members of the LGBT community in societies where relevant protective legislation exists. Conversely, in those societies where there is a lack of legal protection for members of the LGBT community, I will explore whether theology majors appear to be less conciliatory in their attitude towards this community. I will be careful, however, not to apply too hasty a judgment in this matter, as human behavior is not always actuated or circumscribed by society’s legislation.

Problem

At a recent four-day summit held in March 2014 in Cape Town, South Africa, representatives of the Adventist Church convened to address issues related to alternative

sexualities and related lifestyles. This summit was significant enough for all 13 divisions of the Adventist Church to send delegates to engage in discussion and listen to presentations aimed at improving the church's understanding of, and ministry to, those who identify with those particular lifestyles (Adventist Review/ANN Staff, 2014a). One delegate, a conference president within the Adventist Church, commented that, "We think it is about policies, politics and protocols, but it is about people" (Adventist Review/ANN Staff, 2014b, para. 10). He went on to pose the question, "Did Jesus die for [same-sex attracted people]? Does he want them to enter into a relationship with him? I would baptize them without too much hesitation" (para. 16). For the current president of the Adventist Church, the clarity of the gospel emphasizes that God can indeed transform any person, and "it is the first step toward a new life in Christ when each of us comes to the place where we admit that what God's Word says is absolutely true about us. We are all sinners, we are all broken" (Adventist Review/ANN Staff, 2014c, para. 9). Here, the president of the Adventist Church acknowledges several beliefs: (1) that the Bible is the precise descriptor of the human condition; (2) that confession of sin to God is essential for transformation; and (3) that God is able to heal broken lives. And this is where the problem lies. Many in the LGBT community are of the opinion that there is nothing "broken" about their sexual practices and there is little unanimity in the Adventist Church in terms of how the Church should relate to the LGBT community, both in and outside the Church.

Purpose

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the attitudes of undergraduate theology students at Andrews University in the USA and Northern Caribbean University in

Jamaica as these attitudes relate to members of the LGBT community. The aim here is to describe how these attitudes exhibit themselves over a range of prescribed responses and scenarios.

Research Questions

Because theology students have the potential to become future leaders in the Church, with influence in molding the opinions of church members, it is imperative to capture, at the earliest opportunity in the training of these students, the trajectory of thought in this area. Research questions will seek to discover the following:

1. What are the general attitudes held by theology majors at Andrews University (AU) and Northern Caribbean University (NCU) towards members of the LGBT community?
2. Are LGBT members discriminated against by theology majors at AU and NCU?
3. Are there any LGBT students among theology majors at AU and NCU?
4. Among theology majors at AU and NCU, are there attitudes towards the LGBT community that reveal trends in respect of age or gender?
5. Is there a cultural link between how theology majors at AU and NCU perceive members of the LGBT community?

Scope and Delimitations

This research seeks to describe the perception of undergraduate theology students enrolled at AU and NCU, as reflected in their responses to a survey recording their views and attitudes towards members of the LGBT community. Andrews University and NCU were chosen for this research because the former represents the senior academic center

for professional denominational pastoral learning within the North American Division, and the latter represents the same for the Inter-American Division of the Adventist Church. As of 2013, these two divisions comprised a total church membership of 4,870,650 (Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, 2014), clearly representing a significant and influential segment of the Adventist world church.

It is acknowledged from the outset that this research is not necessarily representative of the attitudes of all theology majors within the North American and Inter-American Divisions of the Adventist Church, neither does it reflect the views of all theology majors in other divisions of the Adventist Church. This research does not reflect or measure the views or attitudes held by all students enrolled at AU, NCU, or in other Adventist colleges/universities worldwide. This research does, however, provide a useful starting point for more in-depth research, discussion, and analysis of attitudes in relation to the research questions.

Conceptual Framework

In outlining the key inputs in this framework, I have been guided by the idea that the general community, through its laws, customs, and mores, impacts and influences the church. From this standpoint, I have conceptualized that Caribbean and North American societies are instrumental in affecting the attitude and behavior of their respective citizens, and perhaps even the attitudes and behavior of theology majors in Adventist universities. Of course, individuals are intrinsically autonomous agents, and as such are free to choose which laws to obey. I have therefore examined what other factors could influence the attitude of theology majors and have suggested several variables that may or may not contribute to attitudinal positions, namely, perception of Scripture, gender,

ethnicity, and age. In assessing their attitude to Scripture, I have been guided by the concept that religious conviction and religious interpretation have historically been the barometer behind traditional attitudes that have isolated those holding alternative views on human sexuality.

Method

The views of theology majors across two Seventh-day Adventist universities were obtained in relation to their attitudes, in specific areas, to members of the LGBT community. Undergraduate theology majors from NCU and AU completed a survey aimed at ascertaining their attitudes to members of the LGBT community. The survey consisted of eight questions, with each question designed to elicit explanatory responses from these students. The questions were designed to capture student attitudes to the LGBT community, the basis for those attitudes, each student's religious conviction, and to what extent these elements impacted student practice.

Student responses that failed to provide an explanation for their response were discounted as lacking in sufficient credibility, and were not counted in the research. Student attitudes relating to the official Adventist Church's position concerning the LGBT community was also captured through the questionnaire.

Definition of Terms

Conference refers to a sub-section of the structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Adventist/SDA), comprising several churches within a circumscribed region of a country, headed by a president, secretary, treasurer, and various administrative staff and regional officials.

Division refers to the grouping of several countries for the administrative purposes of the world church of Seventh-day Adventists. The Adventist Church is divided into 13 administrative regions worldwide. The two universities in this study are located in the areas designated the Inter-American and North American Divisions.

General Conference Session is the official world meeting of the Adventist Church, convened every five years to elect church world leaders, discuss and vote on changes to its constitution, policies, and Statement of Fundamental Beliefs, and hear world reports.

LGBT is a collective abbreviation used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons. It is sometimes expanded by using additional letters to incorporate all sectors of the alternative sexuality community and its allies.

Sola Scriptura (Latin ablative, “by Scripture alone”) is the Protestant Christian doctrine that the Bible is the supreme authority in all matters of doctrine and practice.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Scholarship Relating to Religion and LGBT Concerns

Previous studies have examined the underlying factors that have influenced the attitude and behavior of United States based heterosexual students in relation to the LGBT community. Such studies have found that religion, ethnicity, and race were not as significant in forming attitudes as were personal relationships with members of the LGBT community, which resulted in favorable attitudes (Woodford, Silvershantz, Swank, Scherrer, & Raiz, 2012). In slight contrast, Schulte and Battle (2004) argued that religion and ethnicity do feature, in varying degrees of importance, in the shaping of views among African and European Americans, relating to the LGBT community (pp. 127-142). Such conclusions are however not universally held (Deeb-Sossa & Kane, 2007). Describing the distinctive experiences of particular groups within the LGBT spectrum has raised the importance of hearing the voices of individuals who are sometimes marginalized (Worthen, 2012). Hearing these individual voices enables the personality and humanity of the individual to be valued as a person.

In analyzing the responses from both AU and NCU theology students, their voices were heard and, although it may be assumed that their voices are not identical to the marginalized voices in sectors of the LGBT community, nonetheless these student voices may indeed be voices on the margins of the Church. In this process, one had to be open to

the possibility that the responses from theology students may have reflected attitudes akin to the cultural norms of North America and the Caribbean, respectively. Research has shown that cultural factors may impact attitudes and behavior towards members of the LGBT community (Balkin, Schlosser & Levitt, 2009, pp. 420-427), but this is not exclusively the case. Similarly, published data seeks to assess the influence of biblical beliefs or personal spirituality on behavior (Deeb-Sossa & Kane, 2007). How does someone learn spirituality, and what are the factors that mold the spiritual mindset? These are considerations for Deeb-Sossa and Kane. Specifically, their data concludes that holding to the Bible as the rule of faith and practice has largely led such Bible students to hold negative attitudes towards members of the LGBT community. It has been argued that it is unreasonable to hold the Bible as the final rule of practice in a contemporary society, and that the key component in analyzing the attitude of theology students is to decipher their structured belief system as it relates to their belief in the primacy of the Bible (Deeb-Sossa & Kane, 2007, pp. 151-169).

Deeb-Sossa and Kane argue that it is essential to address the concepts of “Biblical literalism and Biblical infallibility/inerrancy” (Deeb-Sossa & Kane, 2007, p. 154) in order to ascertain what constitutes reasonable belief. They cited “numerous examples of Biblical inconsistencies, symbolisms, ambiguities, variant readings, multiple translations and possible subjective agendas of translators” as evidence that Scriptural comments regarding homosexuality were not always what they may appear. The work of Deeb-Sossa and Kane challenged me to address the basis of any traditional theology course. Is it fit for purpose? Is it teaching a defective logic? Is it misleading theologians and students, deceiving lecturers and ultimately duping the public? To address the points raised by these researchers, I would need to analyze biblical contemporary and historical

hermeneutics to determine biblical accuracy, the nature of biblical inspiration, and the history of biblical translation. I needed to analyze the alleged biblical inconsistencies as identified by Deeb-Sossa and Kane, to ascertain if they amounted to doctrinal inaccuracies or incidental scribal errors. This thesis will not address these matters, but it is important to be aware that those who hold to the Bible as their rule of faith and practice are open for challenge, and ought to be cognizant of the basis, relevance, interpretation, and applicability of Scripture as the primary guide for life's principles.

Undertaking a questionnaire-based survey on the intersection of religion and homosexuality is not a new phenomenon, as published research also addresses the process of how religion and homosexuality intersect (Hodge, 2005, pp. 207-218). My study presupposes that the heterosexual stance, at least in the Western hemisphere, marginalizes those of the homosexual perspective. However, Hodge argues that it may well be that heterosexual segments of Western society are marginalized by those identifying as LGBT. Hodge argues that LGBT persons were often depicted in the media as progressive persons, whereas non-LGBTs were viewed as holding onto orthodox worldviews. Orthodox worldviews would include traditional religionists. Hodge continued that progressives were often in positions of economic power, and usually over-represented in the media, whereas the orthodox were under-represented in the media and possessed less economic influence, thus a significant imbalance was present, slanted against the orthodox element. Hodge adds a degree of balance to this current study in that the negativity currently attributed to those who wish to voice the ideals of heterosexuality, such as opposite-sex marriage and the Scriptural teachings on the categorization of homosexual behavior as sinful, ought to be encouraged in voicing their beliefs, albeit with respect for the voice of others who may argue to the contrary.

Classroom-based discussions aimed at gauging the attitudes of students towards the LGBT community have already been undertaken, albeit in a non-religious setting (LePeau, 2007). In assessing the contribution of lecturers to the debate surrounding the treatment of the LGBT community, LePeau concluded that it was important for lecturers to be open minded, nonjudgmental, and honest in expressing their own faith journey in the context of attitudes towards the LGBT community (LePeau, 2007).

LePeau's qualitative research centered on reflections gathered from teaching two undergraduate college courses exploring religion/sexuality/sexual orientation and gender identity. Here, students were encouraged to discuss related themes and were challenged to address the nature and implications of their belief systems and worldviews. The lecturer utilized guest speakers who had taken the journey of self-exploration in terms of issues of sexual orientation and religion. "Each class was divided into two parts that included: (1) a presentation by a religious or non-religious leader who discussed his or her faith and homosexuality, followed by (2) small group discussions regarding the ideas shared by the presenter" (LePeau, p. 188).

This highlights a related question for the current study, namely, to what extent do theology lecturers influence the attitude of their students, particularly as it relates to the LGBT community? Should theology lecturers be open-minded enough to discuss, in class, their own religious/sexuality-based journey? What would be the impact on the student, the lecturer or the educational institution should the lecturer choose to disclose pro-LGBT sentiments, possibly disagreeing with the official stance of the college? Or would the theology establishment be willing to invite advocates of the LGBT community to address its theology students on matters of faith and practice as it impacts the LGBT community, in an effort to raise awareness of LGBT issues?

Leaving theology lecturers aside, at this juncture my research focuses on theology students, gauging their understanding and corresponding attitudes towards the LGBT community. As future potential religious leaders of the Adventist Church, my research addresses any ambivalence on the part of these respondents in their attitude, practice, and understanding of religious belief as it intersects with the LGBT community. I will, therefore, outline the cultural norms of American and Caribbean societies, and explore whether these norms are replicated in the respective groups of Adventist students. I will also pay close attention to any divergences in Adventist norms from these respective societal norms. Although previous research has examined the correlation between ethnicity, gender, and attitudes towards the LGBT community, there exists a paucity of research examining attitudes of theology majors in a cross-cultural context within the Adventist educational community. My research offers a bridge for this gap.

The Caribbean Context

The islands of the Caribbean comprise 28 countries and dependent territories (LGBT Rights by Country or Territory, n.d., 3.2.3 Caribbean) with a population of 42,499,000 as of 2012. Within this context, there exists a variety of legal stances in relation to the treatment of LGBT persons. Figure 1 shows the prevalence of anti-LGBT laws throughout the Caribbean.

To illustrate the flavor of such laws against homosexual practice, I refer to the wording of one such act in Jamaica, which is indicative in the wording of several similar acts throughout the Caribbean. “Whosoever shall be convicted of the abominable crime of buggery, committed either with mankind or with any animal, shall be liable to be imprisoned and kept to hard labour for a term not exceeding ten years” (Offences Against

 Cuba	✓ Legal since 1979 + UN decl. sign. ^[37]	✗ (Proposed).	✗ Constitutional ban since 1976.	✗	✓	✓ Bans some anti- gay discrimination. ^{[102][103]}	✓
 Curaçao (Autonomous country in the Kingdom of the Netherlands)	✓ Legal + UN decl. sign. ^[37]	✗/✓ Only unions performed in the Netherlands recognised.	✗/✓ Only same-sex marriages performed in the Netherlands recognised.	✗	✓ The Netherlands responsible for defence.	✗	✗
 Dominica	✗ Illegal Penalty: 10-year prison sentence or incarceration in a psychiatric institution + UN decl. sign. ^[37]	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
 Dominican Republic	✓ Legal since 1822 + UN decl. sign. ^[37]	✗	✗ Constitutional ban since 2010.	✗	✗ ^[104]	✗	✗
 Grenada	✗ Male illegal Penalty: 10-year prison sentence ✓ Female always legal. ^[37]	✗	✗	✗	Has no military.	✗	✗
 Guadeloupe (Overseas department of France)	✓ Legal since 1791 + UN decl. sign. ^[37]	✓ Civil solidarity pact since 1999.	✓ Legal since 2013.	✓ Legal since 2013.	✓	✓ Bans all anti-gay discrimination.	✓ Requires sterilization for legal change.


LGBT rights in:	Same-sex sexual activity	Recognition of same-sex unions	Same-sex marriage	Adoption by same- sex couples	LGB people allowed to serve openly in military?	Anti-discrimination laws concerning sexual orientation	Laws concerning gender identity/expression
 Anguilla (Overseas territory of the United Kingdom)	✓ Legal since 2000 + UN decl. sign. ^[37]	✗	✗	✗	✓ UK responsible for defence.	✗	✗
 Antigua and Barbuda	✗ Illegal Penalty: 15-year prison sentence. ^[37]	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
 Aruba (Autonomous country in the Kingdom of the Netherlands)	✓ Legal + UN decl. sign. ^[37]	✗/✓ (Pending) ^[98] Only unions performed in the Netherlands recognised.	✗/✓ Only same-sex marriages performed in the Netherlands recognised.	✗	✓ The Netherlands responsible for defence.	✗	✗
 Bahamas	✓ Legal since 1991 (Age of consent discrepancy) + UN decl. sign. ^[37]	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗
 Barbados	✗ Illegal Penalty: Life imprisonment (Not enforced). ^[37]	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
 British Virgin Islands (Overseas territory of the United Kingdom)	✓ Legal since 2000 + UN decl. sign. ^[37]	✗	✗	✗	✓ UK responsible for defence.	✓ Constitutional ban on discrimination.	✗
 Caribbean Netherlands (Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, Saba; Special municipalities)	✓ Legal + UN decl. sign. ^[37]	✓	✓ Legal since 2012.	✓ ^[99]	✓ The Netherlands responsible for defence.	✓ Bans all anti-gay discrimination.	✓

Figure 1—Continued

 Haiti	✓ Legal since 1986. ^[37]	✗	✗	✗	Has no military.	✗	✗
 Jamaica	✗ Male illegal Penalty: 10 years hard labor (Not enforced) ✓ Female always legal. ^[37]	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
 Martinique (Overseas department of France)	✓ Legal since 1791 + UN decl. sign. ^[37]	✓ Civil solidarity pact since 1999.	✓ Legal since 2013.	✓ Legal since 2013.	✓	✓ Bans all anti-gay discrimination.	✓ Requires sterilization for legal change.
 Montserrat (Overseas territory of the United Kingdom)	✓ Legal since 2000 + UN decl. sign. ^[37]	✗	✗ Constitutional ban since 2010. ^[105]	✗	✓ UK responsible for defence.	✓ Constitutional ban on discrimination. ^[106]	✗
 Puerto Rico (Commonwealth of the United States)	✓ Legal since 2003 + UN decl. sign. ^[37]	✓ Since 2015	✓ Legal since 2015. ^[107]	✓ Legal since 2015	✓ Since 2011.	✓ Bans hate crimes since 2002 and anti-employment discrimination since 2013. US hate crime laws also apply.	✓ Bans hate crimes since 2002 and anti-employment discrimination since 2013. US hate crime laws also apply.
 Saint Barthélemy (Overseas collectivity of France since 2007)	✓ Legal since 1791 + UN decl. sign. ^[37]	✓ Civil solidarity pact since 1999.	✓ Legal since 2013.	✓ Legal since 2013.	✓	✓ Bans all anti-gay discrimination.	✓ Requires sterilization for legal change.
 Saint Kitts and Nevis	✗ Male illegal Penalty: 10 years ✓ Female always legal. ^[37]	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
 Saint Lucia	✗ Male illegal Penalty: fine and/or 10-year prison sentence ✓ Female always legal. ^[37]	✗	✗	✗	Has no military.	✗	✗
 Saint Martin (Overseas collectivity of France since 2007)	✓ Legal since 1791 + UN decl. sign. ^[37]	✓ Civil solidarity pact since 1999.	✓ Legal since 2013.	✓ Legal since 2013.	✓	✓ Bans all anti-gay discrimination.	✓ Requires sterilization for legal change.
 Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	✗ Illegal Penalty: fine and/or 10-year prison sentence. ^[37]	✗	✗	✗	Has no military.	✗	✗
 Sint Maarten (Autonomous country in the Kingdom of the Netherlands)	✓ Legal + UN decl. sign. ^[37]	✗/✓ Only unions performed in the Netherlands recognised.	✗/✓ Only same-sex marriages performed in the Netherlands recognised.	✗	✓ The Netherlands responsible for defence.	✗	✗
 Trinidad and Tobago	✗ Illegal Penalty: 25-year prison sentence (Not enforced). ^[37]	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
 Turks and Caicos Islands (Overseas territory of the United Kingdom)	✓ Legal since 2000 + UN decl. sign. ^[37]	✗	✗ Constitutional ban since 2011. ^[108]	✗	✓ UK responsible for defence.	✓ Constitutional ban on discrimination.	✗
 United States Virgin Islands (Insular area of the United States)	✓ Legal since 1985 + UN decl. sign. ^[37]	✓ Since 2015	✓ Legal since 2015	✓ Legal since 2015	✓ Since 2011.	✓ The US hate crime laws also apply to all US external territories as well.	✓ The US hate crime laws also apply to all US external territories as well.

Figure 1. LGBT Rights by Country or Territory. Data from Wikipedia (LGBT Rights by Country or Territory, n.d., 3.2.3 Caribbean). Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_by_country_or_territory#Caribbean

the Person Act, 1864). And again, the law is clear as to the penalty for those who even attempt to commit buggery as may be seen from the following wording:

Whosoever shall attempt to commit the said abominable crime, or shall be guilty of any assault with intent to commit the same, or of any indecent assault upon any male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and being convicted thereof, shall be liable to be imprisoned for a term not exceeding seven years, with or without hard labour. (Offences Against the Person Act, 1864)

Clearly, the law here classifies the act of homosexuality as ‘abominable,’ a ‘crime,’ and ‘unnatural,’ but falls short of articulating the prohibition of same-sex activities between women. Overall, such laws throughout the Caribbean have had the effect of marginalizing and isolating LGBT groups within these countries and legitimizing the cultural stance of the majority who reject same-sex relationships, including theology students and traditional churches.

Many Commonwealth Caribbean countries have large Christian populations; public opinion against homosexuality is a significant barrier against the repeal of these laws as is governmental reluctance to give effect to the notion of equality before the law by according members of the LGBT community the same rights as heterosexual people. (Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, n.d., para. 3).

Although one could argue that these laws are antiquated and unenforceable in the modern democracy of these islands, the fact remains that their legacy, spirit, and influence have been replicated in island popular culture. This is particularly the case in the Jamaican music industry, where lyrics and everyday idioms have continued to invest same-sex activities with a negative connotation (Petridis, 2004, para. 22-25). Recognizing that many Caribbean islands maintain a homophobic legal backdrop and perpetuate similar attitudes (Mintz, 2013, paras. 1-17), the findings of a recent poll in Jamaica necessitates the question whether similar results would be found across the Caribbean. It is interesting to note that the poll, titled “National Survey of Attitudes and Perceptions of Jamaicans towards Same Sex Relationships,” conducted by the University of the West

Indies, concluded “that strong negative perceptions and attitudes towards homosexuals cut across all social classes, gender and social groups in Jamaica” (Boxill, Martin, Russell, Waller, Meikle, & Mitchell, 2011, p. 57). A picture thus emerges of a Caribbean steeped in religion with a legal framework largely against the wishes of its various LGBT communities and advocacy groups. Against this backdrop lies Northern Caribbean University, with its traditional interpretation of gender identity based on Scripture.

The North American Context

The process of establishing legal recognition and support for members of the LGBT community has been a growing quest for LGBT advocacy groups and members in the United States (see Figure 2). Prior to June 26, 2015, in the United States the legal status relating to same-sex couples was varied and at times confusing. Up until June 26,

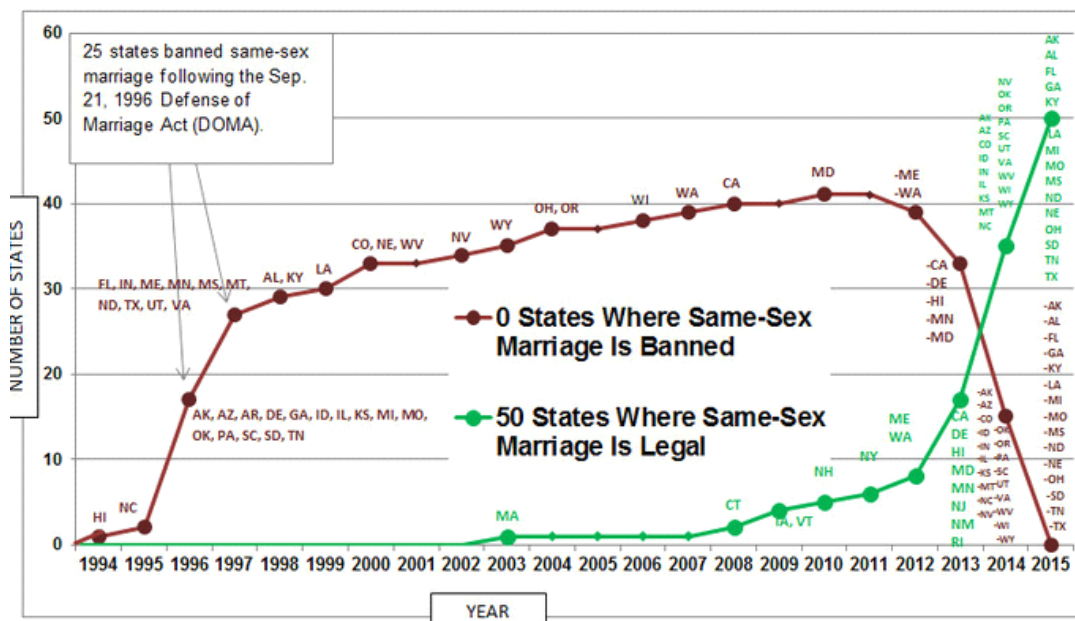


Figure 2. Timeline of Same-Sex Marriage Bans and Legislations by Effective Dates of Laws. Data from ProCon.org, retrieved from <https://www.pro.con.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=004857>

2015, same-sex couples could legally marry in some states, but their marital status would not be recognized in another state (Eeden-Moorefield, Martell, Williams, & Preston, 2011, p. 562). Adding to the complex nature of legal status of same-sex couples was the fact that “in 2013 the Supreme Court struck down the Defense of Marriage Act, which resulted in individual states already performing such marriages adding federal recognitions and benefits to their same-sex, legally married residents” (Lorber & Weiner, 2014, p. 1159). This was significant in that it created even more angst among those same-sex couples, who felt they were being economically penalized depending on their state of residence.

Prior to June 26, 2015, there was some anxiety among conservative Christian groups and individuals who felt that an impending Supreme Court ruling on whether to legalize same-sex marriage in all 50 states would have significant implications for “whether businesses [could] refuse to hire or serve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people on the basis of religious belief” (Sneed, 2015, para. 8). The concerns of the traditionalists was based on the fact that same-sex marriage was already legal in over 50 percent of the nation. These concerns were compounded when, on June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court voted in favor of legalizing same-sex marriage in all 50 states. Although the judgment acknowledged the significant history of traditional marriage, it was clearly not bound by the traditional understanding.

No union is more profound than marriage, for it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice, and family. In forming a marital union, two people become something greater than once they were. As some of the petitioners in these cases demonstrate, marriage embodies a love that may endure even past death. It would misunderstand these men and women to say they disrespect the idea of marriage. Their plea is that they do respect it, respect it so deeply that they seek to find its fulfillment for themselves. Their hope is not to be condemned to live in loneliness, excluded from one of civilization’s oldest institutions. They ask for equal dignity in the eyes of the law. The Constitution grants them that right. The judgment of the Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit is reversed. It is so ordered. (Obergefell v. Hodges, 2015, p. 28)

In contrast are the sentiments of dissenting Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito, who said:

Today's decision usurps the constitutional right of the people to decide whether to keep or alter the traditional understanding of marriage. The decision will also have other important consequences. It will be used to vilify Americans who are unwilling to assent to the new orthodoxy. In the course of its opinion, the majority compares traditional marriage laws to laws that denied equal treatment for African-Americans and women. E.g., ante, at 11–13. The implications of this analogy will be exploited by those who are determined to stamp out every vestige of dissent. Perhaps recognizing how its reasoning may be used, the majority attempts, toward the end of its opinion, to reassure those who oppose same-sex marriage that their rights of conscience will be protected. Ante, at 26–27. We will soon see whether this proves to be true. I assume that those who cling to old beliefs will be able to whisper their thoughts in the recesses of their homes, but if they repeat those views in public, they will risk being labeled as bigots and treated as such by governments, employers, and schools (Obergefell v. Hodges, Alito dissenting, 2015, p. 6)).

Here may be envisaged the possible marginalization of traditionally-minded individuals and groups whose voices may be ignored by the status quo, or deemed archaic and irrelevant in modern Western society. Against this legal backdrop lies Andrews University, with its traditional interpretation of gender identity based on Scripture.

The Official Adventist Position

With the increasing global debate on alternative sexualities and the demand for corresponding equal rights within the Church, the Adventist Church clarified its wording and stance on the matter in the following statement on same-sex unions.

Homosexuality is a manifestation of the disturbance and brokenness in human inclinations and relations caused by the entrance of sin into the world. While everyone is subject to fallen human nature, “we also believe that by God’s grace and through the encouragement of the community of faith, an individual may live in harmony with the principles of God’s Word.” We hold that all people, regardless of their sexual orientation, are loved by God. We do not condone singling out any group for scorn and derision, let alone abuse. Still, God’s Word that transcends time and culture does not permit a homosexual lifestyle. The Bible’s opposition to same-sex unions/marriage is anchored in God’s plan at creation for marriage (Gen 1:26-28;

2:20-24), in divine legislation (Lev 18:22; 20:13; 1 Cor 6: 9-11), and in Jesus' explicit confirmation of a permanent, monogamous, and heterosexual marriage relationship (Matt 19: 4-6). (General Conference, 2012, paras. 4-5)

Two years later, the Adventist Church expanded and further clarified its stance on homosexuality and alternative sexualities at its Spring Meeting in 2014, in which it affirmed its adoption of the 2012 decision and provided guidance on how this applied in real-life situations, such as in matters of employment and church membership relating to active LGBT persons (General Conference, 2014b, paras. 1-24).

The Adventist Church has embodied its beliefs in a series of 28 statements that relate to the nature of God, His intervention with humanity, and humanity's response towards God and towards one another. In *Fundamental Belief*, no. 23, the Adventist Church articulates its conviction on the nature of marriage and related elements and, by default, implies the exclusion of same-sex unions.

Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between partners who share a common faith. Mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility are the fabric of this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. Regarding divorce, Jesus taught that the person who divorces a spouse, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners are a man and a woman who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ through marriage may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church (General Conference, 2013, no. 23).

Due to language constantly changing in usage and meaning, the need to avoid ambiguity in language, and to utilize gender-inclusive language, the leaders of the Adventist Church agreed to recommend amendments to several of its beliefs to be voted at its General Conference session in July 2015. The suggested amendment to *Fundamental Belief*, no. 23 by Tami Boward substitutes the phrase "a man and a woman"

for the words “partner” and “marriage partner.” The word “partners” and the phrase “marriage partners” could be misused by those promoting homosexuality. The revision removes any ambiguity” (ADCOM, 2013b).

Equally important is the official Adventist position on the primacy of Scripture as the basis for faith, doctrine, and behavior. Recommended amendments by Artur Stele to *Fundamental Belief*, no. 1, emphasize the authority of Scripture and use appropriate gender-inclusive language (voted upon at the General Conference session in July 2015).

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration. The inspired authors spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the final, authoritative, and infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the definitive revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history (ADCOM, 2013a).

Stele explains in an explanatory note: “The word ‘definitive’ establishes an understanding of the Bible as its own standard, without implying that we evaluate the Bible’s role relative to a human assessment of rationality” (ADCOM, 2013a). It is important to note here that the official Adventist belief relating to the Bible is that of *Sola Scriptura*.

Alternatives to the Adventist Position

To ascertain what constitutes an alternative Adventist position on matters of human sexuality, a perusal of the Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International (SDAKI) website offers a clear picture of opposing views on LGBT issues. SDAKI, initially established as a support network for Seventh-day Adventists who were gay, has grown into an international organization spanning 80 countries, offering advice, expertise, and fellowship to many ex-Adventists and Adventists who identify as LGBT.

As a 501(c)(3) California nonprofit corporation, Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International cannot officially support (or condemn) any political issues or

candidates. However, as a volunteer support organization that champions human rights for all people and believes that no one should be mistreated or discriminated against because of their sexual orientation, SDA Kinship fully supports its LGBTI members who desire legal same-sex marriage and equal human rights within our society. (SDA Kinship International, 2010).

Or more emphatically:

SDA Kinship believes the Bible does not condemn, or even mention, homosexuality as a sexual orientation. Ellen G. White does not parallel any of the Bible texts, which are often used to condemn homosexuals. Most of the anguish imposed upon God's children who grow up as LGBT has its roots in a misunderstanding of what the Bible says (SDA Kinship International, 2008).

The contrast is clear here, in that the official Adventist Church's position does not favor same-sex unions, whereas SDAKI supports this stance and through its website celebrates the stories of those who declare that they are Seventh-day Adventists and homosexual. Whatever one's thoughts about alternative Adventist perspectives on LGBT issues, it is important to be open to the possibility that some individuals may have departed from the official Adventist position because they experienced bigotry and isolation within the Adventist community. Jeff Chu comments on Josh Cook's journey into an open practice of homosexuality and records that:

If there is one thing I miss, it's praying. It's kind of strange. I have no intellectual reason to pray anymore, but I've often gone and meditated, not in any particularly religious way, but just to sit in silence. As a Christian, I was so accustomed to praying. I do miss that. (Chu, 2013, p. 55)

It is worth remembering that there are aching souls on both sides of the Adventist LGBT debate who are aching for something above and beyond their lives, aching for meaningful contact with the ultimate and eternal Source of life and love. There should be no shirking away from the reality that same-sex attractions do exhibit themselves not only in society in general, but also in the Church. The problem lies in the view held by some with same-sex tendencies and their sympathizers that there is nothing wrong with

this frame of reference. “The enigma is that lesbian and gay Adventists have same-sex desires and fantasies, and no amount of prayer or force of will seem to change that fact” (Drumm, 2014, p. 573). In my opinion, the greater enigma is to limit the transformational power of the Creator, who has demonstrated His ability to heal and restore broken lives. The very name ‘Adventist’ speaks to this fact as it projects the mind towards the second return of the great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview

In formulating a methodology, I have acknowledged that my perspective is that of a heterosexual male who holds to a worldview that individuals were created morally, spiritually, and emotionally perfect in the image of God. My worldview admits to the presence of an aberration in God's creation, namely the presence of sin which has ruptured the original image of God in humanity. Nevertheless, humanity has the ability to make moral decisions and independent choices in the quest for objective truth.

My interest in this topic stemmed from the awareness that the Adventist Church convened a summit in South Africa in 2013 to discuss alternative sexualities and the Adventist Church's response to it. I was also aware of a variety of groups under the umbrella of Adventism who were arguing that the Adventist Church should offer greater acceptance to the LGBT community, particularly those LGBT persons who still identify as Adventist. I was equally cognizant of the official Adventist position on LGBT matters, and so postulated the question of whether the attitudes of up-and-coming religious leaders in the Adventist Church reflected the official Church position. In this quest to ascertain the truth about the attitudes of theology majors within the Adventist Church, I presupposed that respondents would be truthful and honest, even within an environment that could be perceived as censorious towards those diverging from the Church's official position.

Research Design

In constructing this design, I was guided by the literature that indicated a link between the variables of gender, age, and religiosity as it relates to attitudes towards LGBT persons. I surmised that, within the Adventist Church, there could be a correlation between ethnicity and culture and the attitude of theology majors toward the LGBT community. Where observed, the strength of religious belief in determining a person's attitude towards the LGBT community was both significant and marginal in research (Schulte & Battle, 2004, pp. 127-142). Consequently, my research questions and the chosen survey instrument were designed to obtain not only descriptive data, but also qualitative information, so as to contrast and correlate pertinent findings, and to assess whether the theoretical assumption of culture's influence on theology majors was indeed significant. Furthermore, describing the attitudes of Adventist theology majors towards the LGBT community was also a first, particularly in the context of a comparison between two major Adventist educational institutions, located in different cultural climates.

Research Questions

The research questions that informed this study focused on the following: what are the general attitudes held by theology majors towards members of the LGBT community? Here I wanted to capture the significance of this topic to theology majors, as it was a current issue within Adventism. This question sought to highlight these attitudes and chart their progression through more probing questions. The strength of this question lay in its directness and its focus on achieving a definitive goal. Its weakness lay in the possibility that some theology majors may not have historically addressed such matters and, faced with such a personal question, may have chosen to minimize their responses to

camouflage their lack of knowledge. One practical solution to this possible dilemma would be to utilize the art of reframing questions to achieve the initial goal.

The research question asking whether LGBT members were discriminated against by theology majors was constructed not only to challenge the practice of such students, but to discover if they possessed attitudes that caused theology majors to treat the LGBT community less favorably than others. An inherent weakness with this question is the fact that theology students are being asked to admit if they are acting in a discriminatory manner, which ultimately focuses on the issue of whether they are acting in a morally acceptable manner. I would suggest that most theology students would want to convey that they are morally correct in their actions and attitudes. A strength of this question is that it offers theology students the opportunity to be honest with their self-perception, spiritual growth, and morality.

Research questions that sought for a link between age, gender, ethnicity, culture, and attitudes towards the LGBT community were predicated on the belief that respondents would again be truthful and honest in recording such data. A failure to do so would severely limit the validity of the research. To counteract this possibility, respondents were verbally encouraged, at the outset of the task, to ensure they answered all questions. Again, the research questions to be addressed were:

1. What are the general attitudes held by theology majors towards members of the LGBT community?
2. Are LGBT members discriminated against by theology majors?
3. Are there any LGBT students among theology majors at AU and NCU?
4. Are there attitudes towards the LGBT community that reveal trends in respect of age or gender?

5. Is there a cultural link between how theology majors at AU and NCU perceive members of the LGBT community?

Survey Instrument

A questionnaire was constructed with eight questions using a Likert Scale. The eight questions were carefully worded and structured so as to obtain accurate responses aimed at meeting the goal of the study. Based on feedback from research and content advisors, the eight questions were restated and improved for the final draft to improve readability and ensure that the questions reflected an accurate understanding of the topic. The style, content, and arrangement of the questions contributed to the internal or content validity of the questionnaire. Its content was repeatedly checked by a panel of university-based experts who concurred that the questionnaire was fit for its intended purpose, by gradually enabling respondents to move from less personal to more personally probing questions. The use of the Likert scale and its design facilitated a fair and bias-free response as the values were mutually exclusive. Having at least five occurrences or response options in the various survey categories, and the fact that the surveyed group at AU and NCU were enrolled on similar theology courses to their counterparts, all contributed towards a fair and valid survey instrument and process.

The survey instrument was checked for its validity by the Institutional Review Board, which granted approval for this study and use of the survey instrument in April 2015. The process of approval was lengthy and at times tedious, but nonetheless necessary in terms of ensuring the confidentiality of the research participants and the credibility of the research proposal and its measures to obtain data. In April 2015, Paul Peterson, Chair of the Religion and Biblical Languages Department at AU, granted his

oral permission for the survey instrument to be administered to theology students. A month earlier, Delano S. Lewis, Director of Research at NCU granted permission for the survey to be administered to theology students at NCU.

The survey questions were chosen to elicit the attitude of the respondent on various aspects of the issue, and provided for a range of answers spanning from strongly agree to strongly disagree, with neutral options available. Respondents were afforded the opportunity to further explain their answers to the questions posed. Questions covered personal attitudes and how personal attitudes played out in real-life situations, e.g., singing in the church choir, teaching Sabbath School class, engaging in Bible studies, or listening to worship services. These questions covered the scope of the research questions. The strength of using this method lay in its uniformity, preciseness, and the scope of topics covered. The weakness of this method lay in the possibility that the respondent could methodically opt for neutral responses, resulting in inconclusive data. To address this possibility, anticipated neutral responses were countered with questions based on practical choices in specific situations, such as: would the respondent agree to a member of the practicing or non-practicing LGBT community singing in the church choir; teaching Sabbath School class; engaging in Bible studies; or listening to worship services. The respondent could not simply ‘sit on the fence’ in all of their responses, unless they chose not to answer questions.

The first survey question centered on the students’ view of Scripture as the final rule of faith and practice and, as such, sought to ascertain whether such students held to the traditional Adventist and Protestant view of Scripture. It was assumed that how the student viewed Scripture, particularly how Scripture addressed homosexuals and homosexual behavior, would be integral to their response to the remaining questions. The

second survey question asked for the students' personal attitude towards LGBT persons practicing their sexual orientation, and sought to crystallize the student's internal belief system and how it projects towards this group. Although the concepts behind this question might be considered offensive to members of the LGBT community, this survey question endeavored to analyze whether the respondent distinguished between loving the LGBT person as a person and abhorring the practice of same-sex intimacy.

The third question of the survey outlined the official Adventist attitude on a non-practicing and a practicing homosexual, asking whether the student agreed with this position. The rationale behind this question was to ascertain the respondent's understanding of this position and whether they held the Adventist Church's position as authoritative in this context. Understanding the rationale for the respondent's answer to this question could assist in bringing clarity to the reason(s) for their attitude to such persons.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth questions challenged respondents to question their knowledge base about the possible presence of LGBT persons either in their midst or the local community, and to own their general response towards them. These questions aimed at probing deeper into the thought pattern of the respondent to gain a greater awareness of how attitude and behavior intersect. The last two questions asked how students would respond to LGBT persons visiting the church, taking part in Bible studies, requesting to join the choir, and being responsible to teach Sabbath School classes. These questions broadened the response opportunity of the theology majors and again illustrated how attitude and behavior intersect. The idea driving these questions was to observe how far the respondent's attitude would be displayed, and in doing so this would add credibility to the respondent's stance.

The internal values on the Chi-Square Tests were consistently met thereby adding credibility to the survey instrument. Although no pilot study was conducted the consistent responses to the survey instrument indicated a uniformity of understanding across two countries and cultures.

Population and Sample

As the research was based on the analysis of the attitudes of undergraduate theology majors at AU and NCU, the subjects for this study were voluntary participants from that particular segment of the student body. The population chosen shared similar characteristics in that they were all enrolled in parallel academic programs under the auspices of the Adventist Church. It was determined that an uptake of at least 50 students was needed to make this study viable. The final uptake was 63 students (N=63).

The survey population was approached via email request for their participation in the research, followed up by departmental encouragement in both institutions. A copy of the email sent to the students has been attached as an appendix to this thesis.

To avoid bias, all students in the undergraduate theology programs at both AU and NCU were given the opportunity to participate in the research without the offer of monetary incentives or class credit for their participation. Following such a course, it was deemed, would protect the research against the potential charge that respondents may have embellished their survey answers to reflect gratitude for benefits received.

Method of Analysis

The first step in this process was to decide on a level of measurement that best addressed the collected data. Apart from nominal recorded data, such as gender and age, ratio and interval data measurements were used, which enabled the standardization of the

data and the use of a natural zero in ratio measurements. In analyzing the data, the computer-based software program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 22 was used. Analysis of variance was recorded via this software program, which enabled the highlighting of any significant differences in averages. The use of descriptive statistics to analyze the data was also employed, yielding useful averages and means, along with minimum and maximum values of the data. The responses from the survey instrument were codified and applied to the computer software program.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

A total of 63 respondents participated in the survey, with 26 from AU and 37 from NCU. Respondents were categorized in terms of their gender, age, and ethnicity, and responded to an additional eight questions, each of which was related to a research question. A significant percentage of the total respondents identified as male, while the gender divide across the universities amounted to 19 males at AU with 7 females, and 34 males at NCU with 1 female. Two respondents did not record their gender status, with no explanation offered for this omission.

What are the general attitudes held by theology majors towards members of the LGBT community? This research question was most directly addressed by the survey question 2, which asked, “What is your personal attitude towards LGBT students who are practicing their sexual orientation?” Table 1, corroborated by Table 2, revealed student frequencies of slightly over 50 percent who identified as having a rejecting attitude towards those who were LGBT. The formula $\chi^2(4) = 27.912$, $p \leq .05$ based on the data in Table 2 confirms that the results of Table 1 could be replicated, thereby adding credibility to these research findings.

Survey question 4, “How does the attitude of theology majors impact the lives of members of the LGBT community who practice homosexual behavior?” also linked into survey question 2, “Are LGBT members discriminated against by theology majors?”

Table 1

Personal Attitude to LGBT—Frequency

Attitude	Frequency	Percent
1 Accepting	7	11.1
2	3	4.8
3 Neutral	14	22.2
4	7	11.1
5 Rejecting	32	50.8
Total	63	100.0

Table 2

Personal Attitude to LGBT—Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df
Pearson Chi-Square	27.912 ^a	4
Likelihood Ratio	32.805	4
Linear-by-Linear Association	13.957	1
N of Valid Cases	63	

Note.^a 6 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5.

Student replies between the two universities reflected the general trend of being conciliatory toward the individual but uncompromising in adherence to biblical teaching on homosexuality. Some AU students' responses were, "Most LGBT students automatically assume we condemn them." "I believe it matters much how they see us, and how we see them. Every conversation we as majors have had, has been very kind. We accept and do not judge the individual but most certainly do not condone the action."

NCU student responses were, "Theology majors should point LGBT persons to the Scriptures so they can find Jesus and amend their ways." "The Word being expounded is the daily life of a theology major, the impact will be positive as it will point out the

wrong and lead them to the right, on the other hand, it will cause many to be rebellious, but the Word of God will stand as a witness against them; either way, it is a great impact.”

Are LGBT members discriminated against by theology majors? Survey question 5 directly addressed this research question by asking, “Are practicing members of the LGBT community discriminated against by theology majors?” The results in Table 3, corroborated by Table 4, reveal that there is a fairly even split between the total percentage of students who do and do not discriminate, 21 percent and 27.4 percent, respectively. That 37.1 percent of the total number of students are of a neutral opinion on this matter poses at least two questions: What is their definition of discrimination, and how uncomfortable are they with it?

Are there any LGBT students among theology majors at AU and NCU? This research question was addressed by survey question 6, “Are there LGBT persons who are theology majors?” There were no significant difference in answering this question based on ethnicity as evidenced by the Chi-Square Tests in Table 5. According to Table 6, the Afro-Caribbean, Hispanic, Other, and Afro-American groups all felt there certainly were LGBT students who were theology majors, whereas the percentage for Caucasians in this category was zero. The Caucasians however were open to the probability of LGBT students as theology majors by recording a 30 percent score in that category. In short, all ethnic groups were open to the possibility that LGBT students could be studying theology with them, with just over 50 percent across all ethnicities revealing their neutrality on the matter.

Are there attitudes towards the LGBT community that reveal trends in respect of age or gender? This question took into account the questionnaire-based demographics related to age and gender and was reflected in the seventh question of the survey instrument, which stated, “A member of the LGBT community who practices their sexual

Table 3

Theology Majors Discriminate—Crosstab

		Count/ Percentage	No 1	2	Neutral 3	4	Yes 5	Total
University	1 Andrews	Count	10	1	11	2	1	25
		% within University	40.0%	4.0%	44.0%	8.0%	4.0%	100.0%
2 NCU		Count	7	4	12	2	12	37
		% within University	18.9%	10.8%	32.4%	5.4%	32.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	17	5	23	4	13	62
		% within University	27.4%	8.1%	37.1%	6.5%	21.0%	100.0%

Table 4

Theology Majors Discriminate—Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df
Pearson Chi-Square	9.722 ^a	4
Likelihood Ratio	11.137	4
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.724	1
N of Valid Cases	62	

Note.^a 4 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5.

Table 5

Ethnicity: Any Theology Majors LGBT—Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df
Pearson Chi-Square	26.053 ^a	16
Likelihood Ratio	26.430	16
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.325	1
N of Valid Cases	59	

Note.^a 23 cells (92.0%) have expected count less than 5.

Table 6

Ethnicity: Any Theology Majors LGBT—Crosstab

		Count/ Percentage	No 1	2	Neutral 3	4	Certainly 5	Total
Ethnicity	1 Caucasian	Count	0	1	6	3	0	10
		% within Ethnicity	0.0%	10.0%	60.0%	30.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	2 Afro- American	Count	2	0	3	0	2	7
		% within Ethnicity	28.6%	0.0%	42.9%	0.0%	28.6%	100.0%
	3 Afro- Caribbean	Count	4	1	17	1	6	29
		% within Ethnicity	13.8%	3.4%	58.6%	3.4%	20.7%	100.0%
	4 Hispanic	Count	0	2	1	1	1	5
		% within Ethnicity	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	5 Other	Count	3	1	3	0	1	8
		% within Ethnicity	37.5%	12.5%	37.5%	0.0%	12.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	9	5	30	5	10	59
		% within University	15.3%	8.5%	50.8%	8.5%	16.9%	100.0%

orientation visits your church. How would you respond to them? Please respond in the following areas: (A) to listen to worship services, (B) to join your church choir, (C) to teach a Sabbath School class, (D) to request Bible studies?” Survey question 8 posed the identical question as that above, with the exception that it applied to “a member of the LGBT community who does not practice their sexual orientation.” Further survey questions that contributed to the assessment of this research question included survey question 3, “The current SDA position on LGBT persons is that being homosexual is not a sin, but practicing its lifestyle is sinful. Do you find yourself in agreement with this SDA position?” It also fed into the third research question, “Are there any LGBT students among theology majors at AU and NCU?” If theology majors accepted a distinction between practicing the homosexual lifestyle and an individual not engaging in

same-sex practices then maybe they would accept the possibility that there could be non-practicing LGBT persons amongst theology majors, and as an extension of this idea maybe straight theology majors would accept LGBT theology majors into the practice of church activities, as outlined above.

The general tenor from NCU students to this survey question is reflected in these statements: “I have no knowledge of this,” and “How can a person be homosexual but not practice it? This is not a sound statement.” Similarly, “I am neutral because I have no experience with LGBT as theology majors. I can’t speak for the general population.”

These comments contrast with those from AU, in which one student responded, “I want to say that there are, although I do not know any. I’m sure they are doing all they can to not practice this lifestyle.” Another student said, “We live in a sinful world and I do think people can be born gay or LGBT. I do not agree with those who practice it because it isn’t biblical.” I have chosen these comments from AU and NCU as representative of the responses because they convey the general trend of the sentiments expressed by the respondents. A note of caution is added here as these comments are not representative of all students. It is important to note that within each university there was some divergence from these trends.

In analyzing the impact of gender on attitudes towards the LGBT community, Table 7 depicts the gender profile of respondents and that there were only 8 females in the total survey, amounting to 12.7 percent of the total number of students surveyed. In analyzing the variable of gender it was discovered that females tended to be more conciliatory in their attitudes towards the LGBT community than their male counterparts. The responses of the females however, offer further insights into attitudes with a gender slant. Responses to survey question 3 recorded more than 60 percent of females as

Table 7

Gender Profile of Respondents—Frequency

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	1 Male	53	84.1
	2 Female	8	12.7
	Total	61	96.8
Missing	System	2	3.2
Total		63	100.0

accepting of the SDA position on non-practicing and practicing homosexuals, compared to only about 30 percent of their male counterparts, as depicted in Table 8. In registering her acceptance of the SDA position, one such female respondent stated, “Yes, because you can submit your temptations to Jesus and let Him handle that. To feel tempted is not a sin, but to yield to temptation is.” This response perhaps displays an understanding of a transformational Jesus, committed to the welfare of those He loves, and familiar with their particular temptations. It appears void of condemnation towards LGBT persons. In Table 9, the majority of males would not choose to have a practicing member of the LGBT community join their church choir, whereas a quarter of the female respondents accepted the idea. Fifty percent of females registered as uncertain on the matter, which in itself contrasted markedly with just 15.1 percent of neutral male respondents. This could reveal a more conciliatory female attitude towards the LGBT community in this context.

In Table 10, corroborated by Table 11 the female response was similar to that of males with both revealing majorities who rejected practicing LGBT members from teaching a Sabbath School class. I surmise that this may be explained by the equally-held belief that those who teach the Scriptures ought to emulate its teachings in principle and practice. I must repeat that this is my assumption. The Chi-Square Tests of Table 11 and

Table 8

Gender: Agree With SDA Position—Crosstab

Gender	Count/ Percentage	Rejecting 1	2	Neutral 3	4	Accepting 5	Total
1 Male	Count	21	0	12	4	16	53
	% within Gender	39.6%		22.6%	7.5%	30.2%	100.0%
2 Female	Count	1	0	0	2	5	8
	% within Gender	12.5%		0.0%	25.0%	62.5%	100.0%
Total		22	0	12	6	21	61
		36.1%		19.7%	9.8%	34.4%	100.0%

Table 9

Gender: LGBT Practicing/Join the Choir—Crosstab

Gender	Count/ Percentage	Rejecting 1	2	Neutral 3	4	Accepting 5	Total
1 Male	Count	35	3	8	2	5	53
	% within Gender	66.0%	5.7%	15.1%	3.8%	9.4%	100.0%
2 Female	Count	1	0	4	1	2	8
	% within Gender	12.5%	0.0%	50.0%	12.5%	25.0%	100.0%
Total		36	3	12	3	7	61
		59.0%	4.9%	19.7%	4.9%	11.5%	100.0%

Table 10

Gender: LGBT Practicing/Teach Sabbath School Class—Crosstab

Gender	Count/ Percentage	Rejecting 1	2	Neutral 3	4	Accepting 5	Total
1 Male	Count	39	5	6	1	2	53
	% within Gender	73.6%	9.4%	11.3%	1.9%	3.8%	100.0%
2 Female	Count	2	2	3	0	1	8
	% within Gender	25.0%	25.0%	37.5%	0.0%	12.5%	100.0%
Total		41	7	9	1	3	61
		67.2%	11.5%	14.8%	1.6%	4.9%	100.0%

Table 11

Gender: LGBT Practicing/Teach Sabbath School Class—Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df
Pearson Chi-Square	8.365 ^a	4
Likelihood Ratio	7.770	4
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.338	1
N of Valid Cases	61	

Note.^a 6 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5.

the data of Table 10 indicate a significant likelihood that similar results could be replicated.

In reporting these findings and analyzing them through the depiction and contrasts of tabled data, it can be observed that a correlation exists mainly between ethnicity and attitude towards the LGBT community. As humans are products of their environments it should be stated that other factors may also contribute to the attitudes of undergraduate theology majors towards members of the LGBT community.

The age of respondents were fairly similar across the age categories of 18 to 25 years between the universities, but were notably different between the age categories spanning 26 to 46+ years (see Table 12). There were eight times more NCU students in the age category 26 to 30 years than there were at AU, but three times as many AU students in the 46+ years category as opposed to those at NCU. The reason(s) for these age contrasts is unknown and was not investigated in this study, although a suggestion may be that the older students are persons making a career change in response to a calling or recall to ministry in midlife, perhaps more common in the American culture. An assumption could be made that older persons court more traditional views, whereas

Table 12

Student Age: NCU and Andrews University—Crosstab

			Age							
			Count/ Percentage	18-20	21-25	26-30	31-40	41-45	46+	Total
University	1	Count	8	10	1	2	0	5		26
	Andrews	% within University	30.8%	38.5%	3.8%	7.7%	0.0%	19.2%		100.0%
	2	Count	7	9	9	8	2	2		37
	NCU	% within University	18.9%	24.3%	24.3%	21.6%	5.4%	5.4%		100.0%
Total		Count	15	19	10	10	2	7		63
		% within University	23.8%	30.2%	15.9%	15.9%	3.2%	11.1%		100.0%

those who are younger are perhaps more unconventional and less traditional in their outlooks. However, as a variable there were no significant correlations found between the age of respondents and their attitudes towards members of the LGBT community.

Is there a cultural link between how theology majors at AU and NCU perceive members of the LGBT community? In addressing this research question, the survey-based demographic relating to ethnicity was analyzed in relation to survey question 1, “To what degree do you hold the Scriptures as the primary rule of faith and practice?”; survey question 2, “What is your personal attitude towards LGBT students who are practicing their sexual orientation?”; survey question 5, “Are practicing members of the LGBT community discriminated against by theology majors?”; survey question 6, “Are there LGBT students who are theology majors?”; and survey questions 7 and 8, as explained earlier. The majority of respondents identified themselves as belonging to one of four specific ethnic groups, with a minority choosing to classify themselves under *Other* as their ethnic option. Table 13 reveals that this group accounted for 14.3 percent of N.

Table 13

Student Ethnicity: NCU and Andrews University—Crosstab

		Count/ Percent	Ethnicity					Total
			Caucasian	Afro- American	Afro- Caribbean	Hispanic	Other	
University	1 AU	Count	9	5	2	4	6	26
		% within Univ	34.6%	19.2%	7.7%	15.4%	23.1 %	100.0 %
	2 NCU	Count	1	3	29	1	3	37
		% within Univ	2.7%	8.1%	78.4%	2.7%	8.1%	100.0 %
Total		Count	10	8	31	5	9	63
		% within Univ	15.9%	12.7%	49.2%	7.9%	14.3 %	100.0 %

The Afro-Caribbean ethnic group accounted for 49.2 percent of N, and 78.4 percent of the total respondents from NCU. The Caucasian ethnic category numbered 15.9 percent of N and 34.6 percent of the respondents from AU. Further data reveals that a correlation exists between ethnicity and attitudes towards the LGBT community, although it must be stated that other factors such as religiosity may also impact on ones' attitude towards this community.

The first survey question, "To what degree do you hold the Scriptures as the primary rule of faith and practice?" was linked to all the research questions in the sense that practice, intention, and attitude were inextricably linked to the student's belief or faith system. It was found, however, that although the majority of students at both universities held Scripture to be their primary rule of faith and practice, there was a marked contrast between the universities in the attitudes held by these students towards the LGBT community. Table 14 reveals that of the 63 respondents to this survey, 61 recorded that they fully held the Bible to be the primary rule of faith and practice, and 2

Table 14

Scripture as Rule of Faith: NCU and Andrews University—Crosstab

		Count/ Percentage	Neutral	4	Fully	Total
University 1	Andrews	Count	0	2	24	26
		% within University		7.7%	92.3%	100.0%
2 NCU		Count	0	0	37	37
		% within University		0.0%	24.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	0	2	61	63
		% within University		3.2%	96.8%	100.0%

respondents held this view, but not as fully. When contrasted to their responses to the second survey question regarding personal attitudes towards LGBT students who were practicing their sexual orientation, NCU students revealed percentages that far outstripped those of their AU counterparts in favor of rejection. Table 15 revealed marked differences between universities in that 73 percent of NCU students held a personal attitude that was termed *rejecting* of the LGBT community whereas this figure was only 19.2 percent for AU students.

How does one explain the findings in Table 15? Is it due to differences in biblical interpretation? Or are there other factors that contribute to this position? The students offer their own explanations. One NCU student stated: “This means that I’m not with [*sic*] his/her practices but at the same time I believe all sin is sin so I can’t isolate myself from them because they are in need of spiritual help.” In slight contrast with varying emphasis are the words of an AU student: “I accept the person, and love them but Scripture is very clear that the practice is wrong, and I do not condone it.” And again, “I accept them, because Jesus accepts them too as they are sinners. Nevertheless I don’t accept their sinful activities. Jesus loves the sinner but hates the sin” (AU Theology

Table 15

Personal Attitude: NCU and Andrews University—Crosstab

		Count/ Percentage	Accepting 1	2	Neutral 3	4	Rejecting 5	Total
University	1 Andrews	Count	7	0	8	6	5	26
		% within University	26.9%	0.0%	30.8%	23.1%	19.2%	100.0%
	2 NCU	Count	0	3	6	1	27	37
		% within University	0.0%	8.1%	16.2%	2.7%	73.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	7	3	14	7	32	63
		% within University	11.1%	4.8%	22.2%	11.1%	50.8%	100.0%

student). It is equally telling that almost identical numbers of students in both universities opted for the neutral response to this question, amounting for almost a third of the surveyed students at AU and almost one-sixth of those at NCU.

The unanswered question here seems to be, what is the reason that theology students who hold the Scriptures to be the final rule of faith and practice simultaneously hold attitudes that reject and accept members of the LGBT community? What or who has contributed to this variance of attitude between these two groups of students? This variance in attitude is noticeable across all ethnic groups in this survey, as outlined in Table 16, with the Afro-Caribbean group recording levels of rejection greater than all the other ethnicities combined, that is, 83.9 percent versus an aggregate 78.3 percent, respectively.

Table 17, presents data regarding student responses to the more direct question, “Do theology majors discriminate?” The responses revealed neutrality amongst most ethnic groups in the survey, apart from the Hispanic group, which scored the highest with 75 percent suggesting there is no discrimination. Afro-Caribbeans scored the highest in

Table 16

Ethnicity: Personal Attitude to LGBT—Crosstab

		Count/ Percentage	Accepting 1	2	Neutral 3	4	Rejecting 5	Total
Ethnicity	1	Count	3	1	1	5	0	10
	Caucasian	% within Ethnicity	30.0%	10.0%	10.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	2 Afro- American	Count	2	1	3	0	2	8
		% within Ethnicity	25.0%	12.5%	37.5%	0.0%	25.0%	100.0%
	3 Afro- Caribbean	Count	0	1	3	1	26	31
		% within Ethnicity	0.0%	3.2%	9.7%	3.2%	83.9%	100.0%
	4 Hispanic	Count	1	0	3	0	1	5
		% within Ethnicity	20.0%	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	5 Other	Count	1	1	4	1	3	9
		% within Ethnicity	11.1%	12.5%	44.4%	11.1%	33.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	7	3	14	7	32	63
		% within University	11.1%	4.8%	22.2%	11.1%	50.8%	100.0%

Table 17

Ethnicity: Theology Majors Discriminate—Crosstab

		Count/ Percentage	No 1	2	Neutral 3	4	Yes 5	Total
Ethnicity	1	Count	2	0	7	1	0	10
	Caucasian	% within Ethnicity	20.0%	0.0%	70.0%	10.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	2 Afro- American	Count	2	0	4	1	1	8
		% within Ethnicity	25.0%	0.0%	50.0%	12.5%	12.5%	100.0%
	3 Afro- Caribbean	Count	7	3	10	1	10	31
		% within Ethnicity	22.6%	9.7%	32.3%	3.2%	32.3%	100.0%
	4 Hispanic	Count	3	0	1	0	0	4
		% within Ethnicity	75.0%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	5 Other	Count	3	2	1	1	2	9
		% within Ethnicity	33.3%	22.2%	11.1%	11.1%	22.2%	100.0%
Total		Count	17	5	23	4	13	62
		% within University	27.4%	8.1%	37.1%	6.5%	21.0%	100.0%

affirming there is discrimination towards the LGBT community, with their neutral option mirroring the affirmative option.

There is a correlation between ethnicity and attitudes towards the LGBT community that appears less conciliatory amongst Afro-Caribbean's than amongst their counterparts in this survey. Although this observation may not wholly find its source in ethnicity, it may be a contributing yet not exclusive factor. More probing questions that sought for responses to student attitudes towards practicing and non-practicing LGBT members' participation in church-related activities such as teaching the Sabbath School class or joining the choir, reveal similar observations, as may be seen in Tables 18-20.

Tables 18 and 19 reveal high percentages (87.1 percent and 67 percent, respectively) of rejecting attitudes towards the LGBT community on the part of the Afro-Caribbean group, which was replicated by a correspondingly high attitudinal percentage based on university (NCU was 67.7 percent and AU was 15.4 percent, according to Table 20). To the survey question asking whether a practicing LGBT member could teach the Sabbath School class, the general sentiment amongst NCU students was, "They must first put away that habit or lifestyle before teaching others" and "I would not allow this because they would be teaching things that is not in accordance with the Bible and the church."

Table 18

Ethnicity: LGBT Practicing/Join Choir—Crosstab

		Count/ Percentage	Rejecting 1	2	Neutral 3	4	Accepting 5	Total
Ethnicity	1	Count	2	0	6	1	1	10
	Caucasian	% within Ethnicity	20.0%	0.0%	60.0%	10.0%	10.0%	100.0%
	2 Afro- American	Count	3	1	1	1	2	8
		% within Ethnicity	37.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	25.0%	100.0%
	3 Afro- Caribbean	Count	27	1	2	0	1	31
		% within Ethnicity	87.1%	3.2%	6.5%	0.0%	3.2%	100.0%
	4 Hispanic	Count	1	0	2	0	2	5
		% within Ethnicity	20.0%	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%	40.0%	100.0%
	5 Other	Count	5	1	1	1	1	9
		% within Ethnicity	55.6%	11.1%	11.1%	11.1%	11.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	38	3	12	3	7	63
		% within University	60.3%	4.8%	19.0%	4.8%	11.1%	100.0%

Table 19

Ethnicity: LGBT Non-practicing/Teach Sabbath School Class—Crosstab

		Count/ Percentage	Rejecting 1	2	Neutral 3	4	Accepting 5	Total
Ethnicity	1	Count	2	0	3	2	3	10
	Caucasian	% within Ethnicity	20.0%	0.0%	30.0%	20.0%	30.0%	100.0%
	2 Afro- American	Count	2	1	1	1	3	8
		% within Ethnicity	25.0%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	37.5%	100.0%
	3 Afro- Caribbean	Count	17	2	2	2	1	25
		% within University	68.0%	8.0%	8.0%	8.0%	8.0%	100.0%
	4 Hispanic	Count	1	1	0	1	2	5
		% within Ethnicity	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%	20.0%	40.0%	100.0%
	5 Other	Count	3	1	3	1	1	9
		% within Ethnicity	33.3%	11.1%	33.3%	11.1%	11.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	25	5	9	7	11	57
		% within University	43.9%	8.8%	15.8%	4.8%	19.3%	100.0%

Table 20

University: LGBT Practicing/Teach Sabbath School Class—Crosstab

		Count/ Percentage	Accepting 1	2	Neutral 3	4	Rejecting 5	Total
University	1 Andrews	Count	4	2	6	5	9	26
		% within University	15.4	7.7%	23.1%	19.2%	34.6%	100.0%
	2 NCU	Count	21	3	3	2	2	31
		% within University	67.7%	9.7%	9.7%	16.5%	6.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	25	5	9	7	11	57
		% within University	43.9%	8.8%	15.8%	12.3%	19.3%	100.0%

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In setting out on this research project, I aimed to analyze the attitudes of undergraduate theology majors towards members of the LGBT community. The purpose of this study was to observe whether negative or positive attitudes existed, and where and to what extent they existed. A related and significant purpose was to observe whether any trends existed in the attitudes of theology majors that correlated with the variables of age, gender, ethnicity, and culture. The attitudes of theology majors was deemed important as these majors will have a Christian duty to reach the LGBT segment of the community with the Gospel in their future ministry.

By using a Likert scale, data was collected and analyzed, revealing a correlation between ethnicity and attitude, particularly pronounced in the Afro-Caribbean ethnic group in its attitude towards the LGBT community. Further research within the Adventist educational community could corroborate whether the observations found here are reflected in other ethnic groups.

Discussion of the Findings

The survey revealed a variety of attitudes held towards the LGBT community by theology students at AU and NCU. In terms of gender it was found that female students

tended to record greater levels of acceptance towards the LGBT community, and that this acceptance was largely consistent across most areas covered by the research. It seems that the reason for this may lie partially in gender considerations as well as the fact that being friendly towards a marginalized group will build trust, openness, and a safe environment for personal disclosure. Perhaps the accepting attitude of the females in this survey is a reflection of a trust that has already been established with members of the LGBT community. Being themselves members of a minority group amongst the male-dominated theology schools at AU and NCU, the female theology students may have fostered a sense of compassion and understanding towards another minority group, namely the LGBT community. A possible extension of this compassion would be revealed in a more conciliatory attitude toward the LGBT group.

The literature review identified the limited correlation between ethnicity, gender, and religion on the formation of attitudes towards the LGBT community (Woodford et al., 2012). However my research has identified that ethnicity significantly factors into the negative attitudes held towards members of the LGBT community. The literature review identified “incorrect” biblical interpretation (that is, traditional biblical interpretation) as a crucial factor in the formation of negative attitudes towards the LGBT community (Deeb-Sossa & Kane, 2007), but my research has identified that individuals can equally hold to a traditional biblical interpretation of homosexuality and not exhibit negative attitudes towards the LGBT community. This was particularly evident in the female respondents in my research. My research has elucidated the importance of understanding the attitudes of theology majors towards the LGBT community, at the flagship Adventist universities of AU and NCU, and the need to ensure such students are equipped with knowledge, compassion, and spiritual awareness to ensure that the mission of the

Adventist church is effective in reaching all groups in society.

In this research I have chosen to incorporate those comments of theology majors that reflected the general sentiment of their colleagues within their respective universities. This was particularly the case where a significant majority of students responded in similar patterns to particular survey questions. Again, caution needs to be added here as these comments were not representative of all student responses. In each of the universities there were attitudes and opinions that diverged from the general trends.

This study revealed a correlation between ethnicity and attitudes towards the LGBT community, with the Afro-Caribbean group consistently recording a higher level of a rejection towards LGBT members. The consistently high percentages among members of the Afro-Caribbean group in registering attitudes of rejection towards the LGBT community suggests a strong conviction as to how one should relate to members of the LGBT community. How does the Afro-Caribbean community understand the LGBT community? What factors contribute to the formation of their attitudes? I would suggest that this trend toward rejection of the LGBT community may be understood through an analysis of the Afro-Caribbean's understanding of the primacy of the Bible, the Bible teaching on the subject of homosexuality, and the cultural norms of Afro-Caribbean society. In this process, one has to be open to the possibility that the responses from theology students from NCU may have reflected attitudes akin to the cultural norms of the Caribbean, as indicated by the prevalence of anti-LGBT laws in the Caribbean as represented in Figure 1.

The comparatively softer attitude of theology students at AU may be seen in part as indicative of the cultural influence of society in the United States in terms of its legal and general stance on LGBT matters. However it should be noted that this is far from

conclusive for both AU and NCU theology students, as human behavior is not always attributable to external forces.

This research has unearthed more questions than explanations, namely how do theology lecturers improve the attitude of their students towards members of the LGBT community? How do theology majors effectively minister to damaged and hurting members of marginalized communities? How does the Adventist Church create a safe place for those who identify as LGBT but who want to attend church? What is the role of a theology student in creating a welcoming atmosphere for all in church? How can the Adventist Church positively impact all members of the community and at the same time remain true to its biblically normed and mandated mission? How is it possible for theology students who, as a group, generally hold Scripture to be the final rule of faith and practice simultaneously as individuals within the group hold disparate attitudes of rejection and acceptance toward members of the LGBT community? What or who has contributed to this variance of attitude between these two groups of students?

These questions are in themselves areas for further research, but also for continuing discussion within the Adventist Church. Such questions and discussion within may lead to an improvement in attitude towards members of the LGBT community. The fact that the Adventist Church convened a summit in 2014 to discuss alternative sexualities and the Adventist response to the same is an indication that there was, and this research indicates that there still is, a need to better understand, connect, and reach out to those who identify as LGBT, both within and outside the church. Suggestions on how the church could improve its attitude in this area are outlined below in the Recommendations section. The barometer for improvement in this area will be judged by who chooses to attend the Adventist Church. Who does the church attract, and who should the church

attract? These are starting points to help gauge the church's improvement in fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20), and reaching out to broken humanity that encompasses the whole human race, including its LGBT members. The words of Jesus provide a deeper understanding of the Great Commission: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32). Adventist congregations need to rise to the challenge and the responsibility of understanding that the dysfunctional, different, and debased are in as much need of salvation as are regular church attendees. Even more, the regular church members need to understand that, in the sight of God, there is precious little difference between "regular" and "different" members of the human race.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this study, namely that this study did not consider the role of theology lecturers in shaping, informing, or influencing the attitudes of their undergraduate students. This may have yielded useful information and opened up the research to discover the particular faith journeys of the lecturers.

Among other limitations are the fact that this study only analyzed theology students at two Adventist universities and could be open to the criticism that it was limited in scope. Due to time constraints, however, it was not possible to extend this research to the entire student population of AU and NCU. This would be a mammoth task, but would produce more authoritative and generalizable data. Attitudes of theology students at more universities and colleges around the world would also be a worthwhile but challenging task. In addition, while the females in the population under study presented significant differences in attitude to the males, the small number of females reduced the statistical power of these findings.

A further limitation of this study lies in its failure to chart comprehensively the development of theology students' attitudes over the course of their undergraduate study in relation to their views toward members of the LGBT community. This would be useful in reflective assessments of teaching content. Monitoring any longitudinal changes of attitude among these students was not an aim in this study, but longitudinal research has been conducted, albeit at a secular college (Smith & Gordon, 2005), revealing a conciliatory change in the general attitude of the student body towards those identifying as LGBT. Given more time and expanding this research over the length of traditional undergraduate theology courses at AU and NCU could yield further data and provide useful pointers for church educators and administrators to apply to the content of teaching and practice.

Biblical Reflections

Following are some biblically inspired practical measures to improve the attitudes of future ministers, ministers, and members of the Adventist Church. Befriend those who are different from you by sharing a meal with them or playing a sport together; learn about the discrimination experienced by members of the LGBT community; seek to make your church a place that is welcoming to the LGBT community; be genuine and authentic in your respect for humanity; and be a lover of people as well as a lover of God.

In my opinion, holding a faith in Scripture should not cause one to marginalize the LGBT community, but to minister to them in the same way that Jesus ministered to the marginalized (e.g., the Samaritan woman at the well—John 4:4-42; and the ten lepers—Luke 17:11-19). The challenge as I see it is to incorporate a sound and balanced traditional interpretation of the Bible with a sensitive and spiritually effective demonstration of its teachings, specifically in relation to members of the LGBT community.

So what might this look like in reality? To answer this, I will briefly elucidate how the Scripture describes a church member. The members of the church, who were formerly living lives characterized by unrighteous actions, were later portrayed as having been made competent to be participants in the work of the body of Christ (the church) by the interposition of Christ in their lives (see 1 Cor 6:9-11). They were transformed by Christ and had become “new creations” (Cor 5:17), eager to “shew forth the praises of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).

Individuals who fail to meet the criteria of having been divinely transformed in mind and action should not seek to officiate in church life. Sadly, the reality is that church has become a melting pot of every type of doctrine and teaching, with polarized schools of thought existing under banners termed conservative, liberal, traditional, and contemporary.

Despite this reality in the Adventist Church, it still remains a biblical truth that God knows which members constitute the authentic church (see Heb 12:23). This biblical reality should particularly inspire Adventists, who claim to be looking forward to the “glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13), to “have grace to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (see Heb 12:28). Such a focus of service will increasingly lead church members in general, and theology majors in particular, to manifest non-condescending and redemptive attitudes towards members of the LGBT community.

Recommendations

Recommendations for improving the attitude of theology majors towards members of the LGBT community include inculcating the sentiments of the president of

the Adventist Church, who, speaking at a summit convened to discuss alternative sexualities, said, “We are more accustomed to other sins: we wink at pride, ignore gossip, tolerate hypocrisy and sometimes avoid dealing with lust, adultery and the often hidden sin of sexual abuse. . . . The uncomfortable but undeniable truth [is] that we are all sinners” (Adventist Review/ANN Staff, 2014c, para. 7). Embracing this truth and the reality that there is still a Savior who is “mighty to save,” and able to keep sinners from falling back into destructive mindsets and practices, should inspire all to heed the words of the Prophet Micah. This Old Testament sage not only asked the heart-searching question about what God expects of his followers, but he gave an all-important three-pronged answer: “What does the Lord require of you? It is, do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic 6:8).

Some practical steps that may be considered in applying these words of inspiration could include the following:

1. Introduce a compulsory module on LGBT issues at AU and NCU tailored for undergraduate theology majors to increase awareness and understanding of the issues and beliefs of the LGBT community, both within and outside the Church.
2. Introduce a compulsory module at AU and NCU that includes theology majors undertaking a short placement of supportive work with a marginalized group. This could be a health-focused initiative and would assist in dispelling any negative preconceived opinions held by such groups towards religious adherents.
3. Give all theology majors the opportunity to complete a research paper on how Jesus reached and spiritually restored marginalized individuals.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please circle the number that most closely reflects your position.

- To what degree do you hold the Scriptures as the primary rule of faith and practice?

Fully

Neutral

Minimally

5

4

3

2

1

Explain why: _____

- What is your personal attitude towards LGBT students who are practicing their sexual orientation?

Accepting

Neutral

Rejecting

5

4

3

2

1

Explain why: _____

- The current SDA position on LGBT persons is that being homosexual is not a sin, but practicing its lifestyle is sinful. Do you find yourself in agreement with this SDA position?

Accepting

Neutral

Rejecting

5

4

3

2

1

Explain why: _____

- How does the attitude of theology majors impact the lives of members of the LGBT community who practice homosexual behavior?

Little impact

Neutral

Great impact

1

2

3

4

5

Explain why: _____

- Are practicing members of the LGBT community discriminated against by theology majors?

Yes

Neutral

No

5

4

3

2

1

Explain why: _____

- Are there LGBT persons who are theology majors?

No		Neutral		Certainly
1	2	3	4	5

Explain why: _____

- A member of the LGBT community who practices their sexual orientation visits your church. How would you respond to them? Please respond in the following areas:

A) To listen to the worship services

1	2	3	4	5
Accepting		Neutral		Rejecting

Explain:

B) To join your church choir

1	2	3	4	5
Accepting		Neutral		Rejecting

Explain:

C) To teach a Sabbath School class

1	2	3	4	5
Accepting		Neutral		Rejecting

Explain:

D) To request Bible studies

1	2	3	4	5
Accepting		Neutral		Rejecting

Explain:

- A member of the LGBT community who does not practice their sexual orientation visits your church? How would you respond to them? Please respond in the following areas:

A) To listen to the worship services

1	2	3	4	5
Accepting		Neutral		Rejecting

Explain:

B) To join your church choir

1	2	3	4	5
Accepting		Neutral		Rejecting

Explain:

C) To teach a Sabbath School class

1	2	3	4	5
Accepting		Neutral		Rejecting

Explain:

D) To request Bible studies

1	2	3	4	5
Accepting		Neutral		Rejecting

Explain:

Please indicate which of the following demographics apply to you:

Your gender: ____male ____female

Age Range	Tick
18-20 years	
21-25 years	
26-30 years	
31-40 years	
41-45 years	
46+ years	

Your age:

Ethnicity	Tick
Caucasian	
Afro-American	
Afro-Caribbean	
Hispanic	
Other	

Your ethnicity:

Circle the number of years completed in ministerial preparation: 1 2 3 4

APPENDIX B

SPSS FREQUENCY TABLES

Frequencies

University

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Andrews	26	41.3	41.3	41.3
	2 NCU	37	58.7	58.7	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Male	53	84.1	86.9	86.9
	2 Female	8	12.7	13.1	100.0
	Total	61	96.8	100.0	
Missing	System	2	3.2		
Total		63	100.0		

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 18-20	15	23.8	23.8	23.8
	2 21-25	19	30.2	30.2	54.0
	3 26-30	10	15.9	15.9	69.8
	4 31-40	10	15.9	15.9	85.7
	5 41-45	2	3.2	3.2	88.9
	6 46+	7	11.1	11.1	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Ethnicity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Caucasian	10	15.9	15.9	15.9
	2 Afro-American	8	12.7	12.7	28.6
	3 Afro-Caribbean	31	49.2	49.2	77.8
	4 Hispanic	5	7.9	7.9	85.7
	5 Other	9	14.3	14.3	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Frequencies

Q1 Scripture as rule of faith

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	2	3.2	3.2	3.2
	5 Fully	61	96.8	96.8	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Q2 Personal attitude to LGBT

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Accepting	7	11.1	11.1	11.1
	2	3	4.8	4.8	15.9
	3 Neutral	14	22.2	22.2	38.1
	4	7	11.1	11.1	49.2
	5 Rejecting	32	50.8	50.8	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Q3 Agree with SDA position

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Rejecting	24	38.1	38.1	38.1
	3 Neutral	12	19.0	19.0	57.1
	4	6	9.5	9.5	66.7
	5 Accepting	21	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Q4 Theology majors impact practicing LGBT community

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Little impact	10	15.9	16.4	16.4
	2	1	1.6	1.6	18.0
	3 Neutral	17	27.0	27.9	45.9
	4	8	12.7	13.1	59.0
	5 Great impact	25	39.7	41.0	100.0
	Total	61	96.8	100.0	
Missing	System	2	3.2		
	Total	63	100.0		

Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1 Scripture as rule of faith	63	4	5	4.97	.177
Q2 Personal attitude to LGBT	63	1	5	3.86	1.390
Q3 Agree with SDA position	63	1	5	3.00	1.732
Q4 Theology majors impact practicing LGBT community	61	1	5	3.61	1.452
Q5 Theology majors discriminate	62	1	5	2.85	1.447
Q6 Any theology majors LGBT?	59	1	5	3.03	1.217
Q7p1 LGBT practicing - listen to worship service	63	1	5	4.63	.768
Q7p2 LGBT practicing - join choir	63	1	5	2.02	1.420
Q7p3 LGBT practicing - teach SS class	63	1	5	1.63	1.097
Q7p4 LGBT practicing - request Bible studies	63	1	5	4.65	.936
Q8p1 LGBT non-practicing - listen to worship service	57	1	5	4.60	.961
Q8p2 LGBT non-practicing - join choir	57	1	5	2.75	1.618
Q8p3 LGBT non-practicing - teach SS class	57	1	5	2.54	1.604
Q8p4 LGBT non-practicing - request Bible studies	57	3	5	4.75	.544
Valid N (listwise)	50				

Q5 Theology majors discriminate

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 No	17	27.0	27.4	27.4
	2	5	7.9	8.1	35.5
	3 Neutral	23	36.5	37.1	72.6
	4	4	6.3	6.5	79.0
	5 Yes	13	20.6	21.0	100.0
	Total	62	98.4	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.6		
Total		63	100.0		

Q6 Any theology majors LGBT?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 No	9	14.3	15.3	15.3
	2	5	7.9	8.5	23.7
	3 Neutral	30	47.6	50.8	74.6
	4	5	7.9	8.5	83.1
	5 Certainly	10	15.9	16.9	100.0
	Total	59	93.7	100.0	
Missing	System	4	6.3		
Total		63	100.0		

Q7p1 LGBT practicing - listen to worship service

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Rejecting	1	1.6	1.6	1.6
	3 Neutral	5	7.9	7.9	9.5
	4	9	14.3	14.3	23.8
	5 Accepting	48	76.2	76.2	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

APPENDIX C

LETTERS AND EMAILS

Email to Prospective Respondents in the Theology Program at NCU and AU

Dear Fellow Student,

I am a graduate student in the Religious Education Program at Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. I am proposing to conduct a piece of research into the attitudes of undergraduate theology majors towards members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community.

A questionnaire consisting of eight questions will be presented to your class and I would request your participation in completing these questions. The process should take no more than 30 minutes of your time. The questionnaire is anonymous, but I will ask if you would include your gender, age, and ethnicity on the form. Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary.

I wish to assure you that no identifiable data apart from the above will be recorded and that all questionnaires will be securely kept in a locked environment and then destroyed no longer than three years after the completion of the research.

Your participation in the research will ultimately assist the ministry of our church in providing sensitive and effective services to all members of our community including those who identify as LGBT. I will send you a follow-up email one week before the proposed survey as a reminder to participate.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at the address below, and thank you in advance for your cooperation in this project.

Sincerely,

Jephet Williams
jephetw@andrews.edu

**Email to Head of Undergraduate Theological Department
College of Arts and Sciences at Andrews University**

To Whom It May Concern

Subject: Request for Research

I am a postgraduate student studying Religious Education at Andrews University, and am in the process of conducting research on the sensitive topic of the attitudes of undergraduate theological majors towards members of the LGBT community. I would like to provide a questionnaire for undergraduate theological majors to complete, which consists of eight questions, and should take no more than 30 minutes to complete.

I would request your permission to administer this questionnaire during the first 30 minutes of class time during the third week of January 2015. The questionnaire will not include any identifiable data apart from the gender, ethnicity, and age of the respondent. All questionnaires will be securely stored at Andrews University and will be destroyed at the completion and presentation of the research project.

The benefit of this piece of research will be its contribution in providing a platform for future spiritual leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist church to provide a more compassionate ministry to all members of the LGBT community.

I would appreciate your response at your earliest convenience and am available, at the details below, for any queries on this matter.

Sincerely

Jephet Williams

Email: jephetw@andrews.edu

Telephone: (269) 471 6429

**Institutional Review Board Approval Letter
Northern Caribbean University**



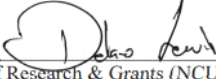
Office of Research & Grants

Telephone: (876)963-7416/7417/7744
Email: research@ncu.edu.jm

DATE: 24.03.2015

TO: Jepheth Williams
Tel: (269) 471-6429
Email: jepheth@andrews.edu

CC: Mordekai Ongo
Research Integrity & Compliance Officer
Office of Research & Creative Scholarship
Andrews University

FROM: Delano S. Lewis, Ph.D. 
Director of Research - Office of Research & Grants (NCUIRB Chair)
Assistant Professor - Bio. Chem., & Environ. Sci. Department
Northern Caribbean University, Mandeville, Manchester, Jamaica W. I.
Tel. No.: [876-963-7744](tel:876-963-7744), Email: delano.lewis@ncu.edu.jm

SUBJECT: IRB Approval for **"An analysis of the attitudes of undergraduate theology majors towards members of the LGBT community."**

I would like to advise you that the Institutional Review Board of Northern Caribbean University has reviewed your documents. Based on this review, the NCUIRB has determined that this research presents no more than minimal risk to participants. Ethics approval has been granted to conduct your research for one year from 24th March, 2015. We wish you all the best in your future endeavours and encourage you to publish your findings as soon as possible, providing this office with a copy.

**Email to Head of Undergraduate
Theology Department (NCU)**

Telephone: (269) 471 6429

To Whom It May Concern

Subject: Request for Research

I am a postgraduate student in the school of Religious Education at Andrews University, and am in the process of conducting research on the sensitive topic of the attitudes of undergraduate theological majors towards the LGBT community. I would like to provide a questionnaire for undergraduate theological majors to complete, which consists of seven questions, and should take no more than 30 minutes to complete.

I would request your permission to administer this questionnaire in person during the first 30 minutes of class time during the final week of January 2015. I am willing to attend NCU at my own cost to facilitate this questionnaire. The questionnaire will not include any identifiable data apart from the gender, ethnicity and age of the respondent. All questionnaires will be securely stored at Andrews University and will be destroyed at the completion and presentation of the research project.

The benefit of this piece of research will be its contribution in providing a platform for future spiritual leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist church to provide a more compassionate ministry to all members of the LGBT community.

I would appreciate your response at your earliest convenience and am available, at the details below, for any queries on this matter.

Sincerely,

Jephet Williams

Email: jephetw@andrews.edu

Telephone: (269) 471 6429

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VITA

Personal Data

Name: Jepheth K. Williams
Sex: Male
Birthplace: Amity District, Westmoreland, Jamaica, West Indies
Spouse: Arlene Williams, *nee* Bennett
Children: 3 children
Ministry: Ordination to ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2004
Address: Santa Cruz, Jamaica
Email: jephethwilliams@yahoo.com

Education

2017 MA (Religious Education), Andrews University, Berrien Springs, USA
(Family Life Education + Clinical Mental Health Counseling classes)
2003 Aids Intervention Counselling, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA
1999 Conflict Resolution Counselling Course, Jamaica Constabulary Force
1997 BA Theology, Northern Caribbean University, Mandeville, Jamaica
1986 Diploma in Catering, Saunders School of Catering, Kingston, Jamaica
1984 Diploma in Accounting, Eastern Academy, Kingston, Jamaica

Professional Experience

1997- Pastor, West Jamaican Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

- Pastoral Ministry: 32 churches since 1997 with total membership of 6500 persons
- Evangelism and Soul Winning: over 2000 persons brought to Christ through baptism
- Family and Gender Ministry: family relations, premarital counselling, separation and divorce issues, LGBT and gender-specific counselling

Areas of Interest

Family ministry
Reading
Travel