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FEMINIST READINGS OF EVANGELICALISM: VIEWS ON GENDER AND SEXUALITY FROM EVANGELICAL PERSPECTIVES

Rubi Elizabeth Cibrian Llamas

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FEMINIST READINGS OF EVANGELICALISM:
VIEWS ON GENDER AND SEXUALITY FROM EVANGELICAL
PERSPECTIVES

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Social Sciences and Globalization

By
Rubi E Cibrian Llamas
August 2021

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ABSTRACT

There are approximately over 10,000 distinct religious practices in the world, some of these religions are either a variation of each other or very different. Historically and presently, certain religions are positioned in a popular discourse as not fit for our times or too conservative for example, evangelicalism and Islam have often been two religions that are viewed as ‘too traditional’ and in need of a modernization of their ‘extreme’ beliefs.

This typically gets reduced to specific ideologies and viewpoints revolving around feminism and LGBTQIA+ identity. Ideologies regarding the treatment and place of women have been backed up by ‘evidence’ presented in the Bible placing religious beliefs in a negative light. The history of religion and LGBTQIA+ issues is not a new or unknown one. There are many court cases depicting the fight between justice and religion. However, these views are not so black and white as depicted in popular media.

Instead of criticizing these religions, this project uses semi-structured interviews to understand how believers of evangelicalism express their views on gender and sexuality. For example, what does it mean to be a part of the LGBTQIA+ community and still uphold religious beliefs and practices? What might these interviews reveal about the fluidity of religious practice? And finally, how can these narratives disrupt reductive two-dimensional definitions of religion presented to the world?

With the use of interviews, surveys, and secondary literature this project centers the stories and experiences of evangelical women and LGBTQIA+ to analyze how their stories complicate the perception of evangelical religions as rigid and strict.

Key Words: Gender, Evangelicalism, Feminism, LGBTQIA+ Community, Interpretation, Bible

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I would also like to thank my participants for trusting me with their personal stories and allowing me to share them. Without them this project would not have been possible.

DEDICATION

Este proyecto es dedicado a mi mama y mi papa que me han apoyado en todos los aspectos de mis estudios.

A mi abuelita Florencia, la quien se preocupó de mi en todo y me recordaba de ir a comer cuando se me olvidaba y oraba por mí.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In our society gender assignment starts before a baby is even born. Gender reveals have become a norm in which many parents go to the extreme to make these elaborate and unique parties to reveal their child's gender to their friends and family. Heartwarming as these videos might seem, there is one thing that is always in the back of my mind with the gender reveals. I observe gender reveal events and parties in my own life. I notice the ways socially constructed gender roles are reinforced and the ways they are inscribed onto a baby who will now be expected to follow these norms based on their gender. In other words, gender assignation leads to gender roles. Many people still believe that as a girl you are dressed in dresses, bows, and pink clothes, and as a boy you are dressed in what is considered "boy colors"¹. These gender roles might seem innocent, but they go further in depth. Gender does not just determine dressing style but the way a person should behave, the associated household roles, how emotions are expressed, and much more. Cultural practices may also affect the ways in which gender roles are constructed and passed down. Using personal

¹ Although this might be true in some cases, most people are trying to dismantle these binaries. These binaries can also connect to the sexual preference that these babies 'should' adhere to, again also being dismantled.

stories and literature from scholars I will examine cultural and religious impacts on gender and sexuality.

The Mexican culture view of gender tends to be constructed in a binary of machismo and femininity. In simple words machismo is usually defined as extreme male pride. But some scholars disagree with this definition, according to Emily Wentzell, machismo is more than just male pride and ideologies on what men should be like. Actually, goes deeper than that in which machismo was formed at the root of colonialism. "This understanding of Mexican manliness is actually quite recent; in the 1950s, poet Octavio Paz asserted that Mexican men were inherently emotionally remote and sexually aggressive because they were the product of coercive unions between conquistadors and indigenous women" (Wentzell, p. 67). Meaning that machismo is not just about upholding this extreme sense of what a man is and should be, but it is in part due to the past down emotional turmoil that was colonization. With regards to femininity, it is defined as the outdated definition of what femininity is in the United States. It is usually associated with the women being weaker, sensitive, loving, caretaker, submissive to husband and so forth. These outdated beliefs on gender and their roles can result in complex dynamics between men, women, and members of the LGBTQIA community.

Growing up in a Mexican Household

I was born to Mexican parents and lived in Mexico up until my family and I moved to California. We were not the typical Mexican family though, in that, my parents were born and raised Christians, not Catholic like most Mexicans. This had an impact in the way I was raised. Religion determined the boundaries that we used to navigate our gender roles often resulting in conflict.

Growing up in a Mexican household can be tricky because you are expected as a kid to help contribute to the house in whichever way you can but growing up the eldest daughter adds more responsibility. For a bit of context, I am the eldest daughter of five kids, with my youngest siblings being 18 years younger than me. As an oldest child I help my mother with the household cleaning, cooking, childcare, and role model and as the 'role model' for my younger siblings. It was up to me to do well in school and lead by example meaning my behavior always had to be at its best, because my younger siblings will see me and replicate that behavior. We were not allowed to disagree with our parents because then we are considered disrespectful, and our parents were considered to be in the right.

This is tied to the concept of Familism which is defined as placing the family needs over the individual's needs (Ingoldsby, 1991, p. 57). For example, in my own life taking care of my siblings was a priority over doing schoolwork or hanging out with friends. Having to be on me best behavior over being able to express my own emotions to my parents and siblings. This sense of familism can

be hard on kids because you are deemed as selfish or disrespectful for not wanting to help your family out and doing what you want instead. This can bring forth a lot of trauma and emotional abuse that can turn a family into a toxic environment.²

Because I grew up as a Mexican who was Christian, the gender ideologies reinforced themselves in both aspects of my identity. Religion tended to aid the familism aspect of my Hispanic life, in the sense that religion dictates what you can do with your own body and how to hold yourself as a woman. Familism is not just about putting family first but also allowing your parents to control parts of your life, like choosing whom you could date, whether they are part of the same culture and religion³. In the case with dating someone within our religious system is largely due to the beliefs that are upheld. For example, a women and man must practice abstinence until marriage, which is something that is expected from familism. If both partners do not agree on this it can cause them to fall into sin. My dad was a minister since I was about the age of 3 and that is a place of importance in our religion. Meaning I not only had to lead as an example in my own house but also to people in our greater community as well as to the whole congregation. This had me participating in two forms of familism, one within my own family and one that the church had ordained. The conditions under which I

² This is not at all generalizing a whole population, not all families experience this to such an extent, but it is predominately known that familism is very popular in Latin families.

³ Dating outside the culture aspect is no longer important as it once was, but it is still widely more accepted among family members. I am currently dating a Salvadorean, and both my parents tell me how weird and different they are than 'us'.

grew up often resulted in disagreements with my parents on issues related to gender and gender roles.

Because You are A Girl

I was in band class in 8th grade, and I was playing the flute, but I really liked the trumpet. When the year was over, I asked my parents if I could make the switch to the trumpet. My dad was not supportive of this decision, and he stated that it is “because you are a girl and that’s a boy instrument” it was here when I thought how can an object be for just boys? Another instance was when I was not allowed to sleep over at my friend’s house, and I was 13 years old, and my brother (10 at the time) was able to sleep over. When I asked my parents why he could go, and I could not I was given the same response “. because you are a girl” which did not make sense because my friends were girls. In 2011 when the Captain America movie first came out, I was so excited to see it and then the Avengers followed, and I was obsessed. My dad began to question my mom and me “Why does she like superheroes? She’s a girl”.

Began to Question the Gender Norms

The same cycle continued, I would ask why I had to or could not do something, and the answer was always the same “because you are a girl”. It began to annoy me, and I would argue with my mom, why is being a girl a just reason to have to do something or not do something. And that is where I began to make my case. I would question my parents all the time, telling them why is it that I had to be the only one to clean and not my brother. Why was I not allowed

to do certain activities or like certain things? I began to think how it was not fair that because of my gender my actions and likes were predetermined for me, and I could not change them and if I did try to question them, I was told I was being disrespectful.

Gender was not the only issue I began to question, During the 2012 elections I remember my mom and dad were worried about one of the presidential candidates, Barack Obama. Race was not as central to their concern as was Obama's support of the at LGBTQIA community and him stating he would fight for their rights. It was a big deal for everyone in my community and especially for the congregation. I remember ministers preaching about how being gay was bad and that they were horrible people. I was in 10th grade when I met a member of the LGBTQIA+. My mom was late to pick me up from my club meeting and I saw a friend and we started talking. As we were speaking, I realized he was gay. We talked about the boys we liked, and he gave me advice about my crush, when my mom came my friend said bye with a hug. Before I could even put my seat belt on my mom said, "why did that boy hug you? Is he your boyfriend? You know you cannot have a boyfriend" I replied "no, he is not he likes boys". My mom's body language changed, and she told me "Don't be friends with him that is bad". I told her "How was that bad he was a nice and kind person just because he liked boys does not make him a bad person".

Once Obama was elected the topic of LGBTQIA+ folks became popular in youth services, camps, and conferences. Every preacher had something to say

about this topic, how it was bad, and they would go to hell. Even young people were getting into the debate on Instagram when they saw that the LGBTQIA+ members decided to use the rainbow as their logo. The comment section under these posts on Instagram were filled with so much hate. The significance of the rainbow in the bible can be seen in Genesis after the flood in which God showed a rainbow as he promised to never flood the world again with rain⁴. Many Christians were outraged that the LGBTQIA+ community was taking the rainbow and degrading its significance. This caused a great divide and I wondered how some people can be so hateful. People who are supposed to be loving and kind to all. The bible does say to be kind to your neighbor not that you have to agree with them. All of these aspects of my life began to add to the concept of how gender is formed in my own culture and reinforced by my religion. But why is it that I do not feel 'oppressed' by my religion and claim to be a feminist?

During College. During college, I met other individuals who made me realize that I am not the only girl/women upset about gendered stereotypes and with the treatment of LGBTQIA+ folks within my religion and culture. It was in college when I was introduced to feminism in a new light. As a kid I was always told feminism was bad because it was about women wanting to be above men

⁴ The bible story mentioned above is known as the story of Noah. It is addressed in the book of Genesis chapters 6-9. This story talks about how the world was corrupt and full of sin and God wanted to start fresh with his creating but one man was doing God in his eyes. God told Noah to build an ark because he was going to flood the world and to preach to the people to repent. None of them believed him causing Noah and his family to be the only ones that were saved.

and that went against the bible based on the verse in Ephesians 5:22-24⁵. The view of the LGBTQIA+ community was heavily based on the preaching's I received as a young kid. However, college revised that narrative and introduced me to gender studies. I learned how gender not only influenced the norms and rules for cisgender people but also affected members of the LGBTQIA+. The more I learned the more I began to understand that people are all different and that they should not be forced to conform to one certain area. I began to voice my opinions about gender ideologies with people and soon enough my views began to clash with my parents. One time my mom and I were talking about gender roles on our way home from a store and I remember her telling me "I'm going to tell your dad to pray for you because you are a feminist". This struck me, I never considered myself a feminist before she said this to me. I just saw myself as someone who wanted to be treated the same as my sibling. I thought why it was such a bad thing that prayer had to be involved. Prayer meant religion was involved and that it was not okay, for me to be a feminist. What if I was a feminist? what did that mean? Why was that a bad thing?

With the knowledge of feminism and gender studies, I decided to take a look at gender in religion from a new perspective, my own perspective. Not the interpretations I was told by someone else. Upon my research religion told me a different story, there were women leaders in our church. They led the women's

⁵ "22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. ²⁴ Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything."

department, lead the kid's department. Even lead in the ministry department. The church's treasurer and secretary were women. The women I was taught as a child were in positions of power, smart, courageous, and even defied the rules and customs for the good of others. How could this be wrong for me to fight for what I think is not fair if the women in the bible I grew up hearing about were doing the same thing?

Finding my own interpretations of the biblical teachings and personal experiences took me to further investigate what evangelical women and LGBTQIA folks were experiencing as well. How do women evangelical women navigate their own life and adhere to their own beliefs and be a feminist? How do LGBTQIA+ community adhere to a religion that seems to disapprove of them.

Research Problem and Hypothesis

All of these questions led me to my current the research project. The research focuses on what women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community have to say when it comes to their evangelical beliefs. How do they interpret the biblical text when reading the Bible? Is there a feminist reading of the evangelicals Bible? Is the interpretation of the text different dependent on which members of the community you ask?

One of the most controversial topics in religion concerns women's autonomy. A misunderstanding of feminism positions it as a fight between the sexes with women vying for the number one position subordinating men to

number two. However, feminism has always been about creating equality between the two genders not a hierarchy. But how does that play in a religion that is often represented as placing 'the man as a head of the household'.

Historically, homosexuality was listed as a mental illness in 1952 (2017 History.com Editors). Because it was considered a mental illness it would be treated as such, and many individuals classified as 'gays' were taken to hospitals or conversion camps to 'cure' them from such illness. They were even banned from acquiring federal jobs since homosexuality was now against the law. It was not until 1969 when the Stonewall Riots created the space for people to participate in movements that addressed the abuse, resulting in a period in the 1970s where more liberating views around sexuality circulated in the mainstream. This was painfully disrupted with the outbreak of the HIV/AIDS epidemic that disproportionately impacted the LGBTQIA+ community and scared the rest of the world. The outbreak of HIV/AIDS proceeded to marginalize and pathologize folks in the LGBTQIA+ community. After many years of trials and tribulations, marriage for same sex couples was legalized by the supreme court in 2015 granting them all the rights of a married couple, including joint taxes. Many important factors like views on the LGBTQIA+ community, abortion, feminism, and political preference (hence why many religious people voted for Trump) have been considered controversial due to what is said in the bible and other religious texts.

This research is divided into two sections, the first section focuses on the experiences of women in an evangelical setting. If I have interpreted the women in the bible stories as feminist have other women as well? How do they change the narrative that evangelical religions are not too traditional. The second section focuses on the voices of LGBTQIA+ community. How do members of the LGBTQIA+ community feel as practitioners of the evangelical faith. With the acceptance and support of LGBTQIA+ community from the Catholic Pope, and many claiming to be part of the catholic faith. This changes the conversation or stereotype that LGBTQIA+ folks and religion do not mix. If there are members of the LGBTQIA+ community who identify with one religion do they identify as part of a denomination that is viewed as too traditional? And how does that look like?

Methods

One of the first steps that went into building the foundation of this paper was to look into past scholars who have laid down the groundwork in regard to gender studies and religion. The use of scholarly articles, news articles, personal books, and pew research were used for this project. Because this paper focuses on the experience of women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community interviews were required. The interviews were semi-structured, this means that the questions were previously made and were to follow an order but at the same time if a certain topic needed to go further in depth more questions were asked and then the following questions were asked. This pattern was followed until the end of the questions. The research also included a small survey that the participants took at

the end of the interviews. The interview questions and the survey all helped with the hypothesis.

The sources used to build the foundation for this research dealt with defining certain concepts. Scholarly articles were found to define gender, feminism, the relationship, and history of women and LGBTQIA+ with religion. Other sources like books and websites about the Evangelical faith were used to define what evangelicalism is and its beliefs. The use of scholarly work done with the Islamic faith were used for support and application. If this religion has these interpretations can my own faith, have it as well.

Main Topics Discussed

This paper focuses on two different communities and how they navigate themselves within their religion. However, there are some differences that each community might talk about. For woman, the main topics that will be touched on deal with their own experiences in a religion that has them “oppressed”. Discussions are based on the ideologies of gender, gender roles, and feminism and how that aligns with their beliefs and what the bible says. Feminism and what the woman of the bible did plays an important part of the research and the hypothesis. As for the LGBTQIA+ community the main topics discussed are on issues of bible verse interpretation by others and themselves, chosen families, church attendance, faith, and relationship with God.

Hypothesis

Based on the scholarly research and personal experience the hypothesis for this research is that based on the answers to the interviews and surveys the participants will either be placed in two categories: modern traditional evangelical and liberal evangelical. Modern Traditional evangelical is not defined as the traditional sense that does not approve of feminism and LGBTQIA+ folks, but it means that those who fit into this category still hold some beliefs to be true in the traditional form but when it comes to feminism and gender roles, they have changed their positions. Those who are positioned in the liberal evangelical category still hold evangelical principles but have a more liberal opinion to certain topics like feminism and LGBTQIA+. These terms will be defined in more depth later on in the research. The second hypothesis focuses on women in evangelical faiths do not feel oppressed as the outside world sees it but rather that they found ways to be feminist and uphold their religious teachings.

The third hypothesis focuses on the LGBTQIA+ folks, it is believed that they will either move to a church that is more inclusive but still holds the same beliefs or that they will base their faith and relationship with God on a personal level instead of depending on what others might say their relationship with God should look like.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars View on Gender

The definition of gender, which varies depending on the scholarly orientation, is important when it comes to discussing issues like feminism, LGBTQIA+ communities and sexuality. In *Distinguishing Sex and Gender*, Rose McDermott, and Peter Hatemi state that there are three components of gender that are distinct but also overlap. The first one is biological sex which can be described as form, second is traits of gender, which are categorized as either feminine or masculine, and the last one is sexual preference (2011, P. 89). This first is the most basic definition of sex or gender most people are familiar with, it can be identified by genitalia and is usually detected by 4 or 5 months into a pregnancy. The second one can be described as behaviors associated with masculinity or femininity, examples including that of wearing dresses and using makeup versus using pants and playing sports, the former associated commonly with femininity and the latter with masculinity.

The final point deals with sexual preference and attraction. Although McDermott and Hatemi describe these as overlapping traits, they are also distinct. Sex can be defined as “a determination made through the application of socially agreed upon biological criteria for classifying persons as females or males” and gender as “the activity of managing situated conduct in the light of

normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex" (1987 West and Zimmerman P. 127). What West and Zimmerman are saying is that sex is socially constructed, and biological arguments are used to confirm sex. Gender is not a "fixed or static identity but is a product that is constructed and performed in interaction" (Berkowitz et al, 2010, p.133). This explains why scholars view gender as something that is socially constructed and not set-in stone, and since it is a social construction, each society will have its own norms and ideals. In 2016, the YouTube channel Thetalko released a video of 10 gender variances that people can affiliate themselves with, further expanding the scholars' views and findings that gender is not some fixed point on a binary line but a combination of dots on various lines. Because gender is expressed as fluid by many scholars, I bring the attention to evangelical perspectives on what gender is and the gender roles that these religions bring forth.

Before diving into what evangelical ideologies on gender are, it is important to take a look into what it means to be an evangelical. Because this project focuses on evangelical women and LGBTQIA+ communities it is significant to look at what Evangelical's tenets are before discussing their views on gender and sexuality.

Religion

Evangelicalism is a branch of Christianity. Christianity is known to be part of the Abrahamic religions, along with Islam and Judaism. The Abrahamic religions are predominantly known for viewing Abraham as the first prophet or father. Christian based religions believe in the 3 in 1, meaning the father, son and holy spirit. These all are 3 different versions of God, but they are all the same things. (Fairchild 2021). The father means God himself the son is Jesus who came down to earth to save humankind from their sins, and the holy spirit is the spirit of God himself which can come down and manifest in human life with the evidence of speaking in tongues. The major divisions of Christianity are Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox and Protestantism. Just like Christianity was divided into three main branches the branches have also divided into different denominations.

Evangelicalism

Evangelicalism is a denomination of Protestantism, and according to Altman Evangelicalism came out of a need to differentiate from the Catholics (P. 78). Evangelical comes from the Greek and can be roughly translated to 'God's messenger' (Hahn 2017) and is known to be gospel focused⁶. The main goal of an observing evangelical is to spread the gospel of God or share the message of God and forming a relationship with God.

Faith and Beliefs. The main ideology of evangelicalism is the same as its roots. Just like Protestantism, evangelicals also believe in the father Abraham

⁶ Being gospel focused is focusing on spreading the word of God.

and the 3 in 1. However, evangelicalism has expanded to include 4 main doctrines: Conversion, activism, biblicism, and crucicentrism (P. 79). These four main doctrines are the basis for all evangelical branches.

Timothy Hall gives a brief definition of all 4 doctrines. Conversion is the belief that salvation comes from a personal experience and connection with God. One must repent and vow to never go back to their past life of sin. Once a repentance is made then the person now can convert or be baptized and therefore is a new being. Not in the literal way but more a metaphorical way as in a new being that will no longer sin and walk with God.

Activism is about spreading the gospel or the word of God, again referring to the definition of evangelicalism. There is a verse that says, "He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation'" (Mathew 16:15). This is the main verse that is used in the to follow the second doctrine. Most people who have come to an evangelical faith have done so through evangelism⁷ meaning someone from the church is appointed to go and spread the word of God. This is done in the form of bible studies or bringing friends and family members to services. In evangelical religions the bible is used as a guidance for one's life. It is like a handbook that one must follow. If you need advice on marriage, life, sexual desires, bad habits etc., the bible has it all. And

⁷ Evangelism is a form of activism; it is in which a person who is an evangelical goes around in houses or parks and talks to the people there to introduce them to the word of God. This is a way of bringing people into the church. It involves the use of bible studies and fellowship with other people.

all of the advice in the bible must be taken as truth since the word is inspired by God.

Crucicentrism is focusing on Gods sacrifice for the world (P. 38). In John 3:16 the bible mentions “He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation’”. Meaning Jesus came to the world and died on the Cross for the sins of the world. This is remembered during widely observed holidays known as Easter. Easter is the remembrance of Jesus dying and coming back to life. Most Evangelical religions do not refer to this holiday as Easter because of its secular connotations and so many evangelicals refer to this day as Resurrection Sunday.

Evangelical View on Gender

Now that we know more about what Evangelical’s beliefs are let us get to their ideologies around gender. Looking at Evangelicals gender ideologies provides the knowledge in which the ‘oppressive’ narrative is perceived. Before disrupting these narratives, we need to know what the narrative is and how it came to be. Due to the importance of the bible in the lives of evangelicals it is essential to take a look into some of the verses that are prominent for the creation of the gender narrative. Evangelicals tend to be conservative when it comes to their gender ideologies. In Genesis, it states that God created man and women in God’s image. Because women and men are made in Gods image it is believed that we are perfect beings because God is perfect, and this has resulted in the understanding by many that there are only two genders. Because God

made man (Adam) first some people believe that men have the authority over women. It is also believed that because it was Eve that was deceived by the snake⁸ that women are too gullible and weak to resist temptation. In Genesis 2:18 says, "The LORD God said, it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him'." In this verse it is stated that one of the roles of the woman is to be a helper to the man. This can be interpreted in many ways. We can see here that this verse can be used to justify women's roles associated with helping men around the house with cleaning, feeding, child caring, and so much more. Not only does the bible give information about gender but many scholars have become intrigued by the religion's ideologies of gender to learn more and analyze the views of gender through their eyes.

Scholars Analysis of Evangelicals Perspectives on Gender

Evangelical religions according to Anneke Stasson Headship is essential to the evangelical identity since it was one way to distinguish themselves from the rest of the world (2014, P. 101). Headship follows the popular breadwinner model in which the husband is the one who works and brings the money home while the wife is in the domestic space taking care of the home and children. If there is a variance in the gender identities, it disrupts this model that is further endorsed by Genesis 1:27⁹. Many evangelicals view gender as operating on a binary. Perry

⁸ In the Garden of Eden, God gave Adam and Eve a commandment to not eat from the forbidden tree. The devil used this knowledge and tricked Eve into eating and feeding Adam from this tree. This was the first sin committed in the world.

⁹ "So, god created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

mentions in his article that there are certain places where a woman is allowed to participate and where she is not (2013, P. 403). This can be affirmed by my own church in which the man is the leader of the church, called a Pastor, while his wife is just his helper; her title is simply "Pastor's wife". When the pastor at our church died, she lost the title of 'Pastors Wife' and became a normal member of the congregation. This is important in seeing how the division of gender is affirmed in some evangelical religions.

Evangelical youth's views are being questioned and even changing when it comes to the relationship between gender and their faith. When interviewing young evangelicals that are dating, Courtney Irby found that there are three different gendered ideologies within her participants. The first is the idealists, which are the ones who view gender roles as God-given (2014, P. 272). The second group include those who are the independents who view gender roles as a 50/50 partnership (2014, P. 275-276). The last view was the ambivalent group which stated that it was a case-by-case bases, depending on each relationship (2014, P.277). The way in which a young evangelical might feel about gender ideologies can stem from background in education, their religious conviction, as well as their parental influence.

It is important to note the cultural, religious, and economic differences among women when it comes to fighting for gender inequalities. Feminism is known as the movement fighting for equality among the sexes. This interpretation of feminism tends to be mixed into all spaces, even in places that do not agree with

the movement. This can be seen in the example of religion when feminist use some of the verses mentioned above as examples of why religion can be overbearing to women. With the policing and control over the woman's body and autonomy mentioned in the bible it is no wonder that feminist try to implement their ideologies into these spaces, however this is not always received well.

Feminism

The Western feminist movement is deeply attached in our historical memory to the suffrage movement and since then has been through a variety of changes through the years. Lori Cox Han and Caroline Heldman describe the 4 waves in which feminism has changed (2018 Han & Heldman Pg. 12-27). The first wave can be defined as a suffrage movement, which dealt mostly with the private and public spheres. The second wave dealt with the political sphere and equality, with the main focus being getting rid of the 'cult of domesticity' that came out of the baby boomer's era during the 1950's. This wave also focused on the Roe v Wade case which dealt with reproductive rights. The third wave fought with the inclusion of women in traditional male dominated areas. Another important aspect of the third wave was the inclusion and introduction of the complex issue's women of color face. The last wave of feminism describe in Han and Heldman's book addresses the political and social inequalities that are still present and due to the technological advances as a result of globalization. Some of the issues that can be present in this wave would be the gender pay gap and

how it is still persistent to this day. The 4 waves of feminism indicate the fluidity of feminist ideology as well as the ways feminism is shaped locally and globally.

Western feminists always try to save women who suffer injustices in other countries, without ever looking into the cultural aspects of each country, including religion. In the western world the fight is for women to dress in any way they want, and men should be responsible for controlling their own worldviews and behavior. This ideology [western feminism] is then taken to be true in a universal setting which can have certain repercussions for some women whose cultures do not fit the western mold.

This thinking that feminism is the same can be harmful because it does not take into consideration other women's backgrounds as well as their identities and how they see themselves. Western feminism is then taken to be true in a universal setting which can have certain repercussions for some women whose cultures do not fit the western mold. One example of this can be seen in religious feminism.

Religious Feminism

Before feminism was introduced in the United States during the start of the suffrage movements, feminism had some roots in religion in Europe. Bernard of Clairvaux was known to be the first woman to oppose gender stereotypes. She began by preaching the word of God at a time when only men were allowed to preach. The English woman Julian of Norwich also faced backlash for preaching about God by stating, "Just because I am a woman, must I therefore

believe that I must not tell you about the goodness of God?" (Walters 2005, p. 7.). She continued to preach stating that if God chose a woman to birth his only son, then why could a woman not talk about his greatness. By the late 16th century women began to fight for more rights in accordance with the bible. Many more women began to advocate for their rights to speak and participate in church functions and services. The way this was done was by reading and interpreting the bible verses in a way that advocated for women's right instead of infringing them. By 1645 more churches became inclusive of women's participation in services, however, women in medieval Europe are not the only ones advocating for their rights in the margins of their religion.

European women are not the only ones to fight for their rights in the context of religion. Muslim women have also made a new wave of feminism within their religious framework. They uphold their religious teachings while also fighting for equality in their culture and religious systems. It is not a dismantling of the religious belief but more of an interpretation of the Qur'an.

Muslim Feminist

In the example of Muslim women, mainstream discourse often centers around the veil, hijab, and all the other forms of dressing. The veil is often represented as oppressing women because it is understood to restrict women's sexuality. In contradiction, some Muslim feminists are trying to provide an alternative representation of feminism. Zaynab al-Ghazali was one of the instrumental women in bringing this blend of feminism and Islamic belief together. Her idea

was not to “seek equality with men in the secular western sense but gender equity that she believes is granted in Islam. In her opinion, jihad ¹⁰ is not intended for men alone but women too” (Uthman 2010, p. 71). This blend is known as Islamic feminism which Bakhshizadeh defines as a reclaiming of an “ethical vision of the Qur’an that liberated women and insistently enjoins equality and justice” (2018, p. 25). Many Muslim women instead of moving away from their religion are looking into the Qur’an for ways to interpret what their text is saying in favor of women. This methodology requires looking at the historical context in which the text was written, holistic/intra-textual reading, tawhidic¹¹ paradigm which focuses on the “sameness of all human creatures of God, treating them as equal capable moral agents” (Hidayatullah 2009, p.94). Meaning because God made them all the same, then male and female should be treated the same. While there are some verses in the Qur’an that Muslim feminists have a difficult time finding interpretations that promote gender justice, they are committed to finding ways to do this.

Using the Muslim feminist framing of a new alternative feminism, research went into trying to find an Evangelical feminist framework. The question was having evangelical women taken the time to create a space for them to fight for

¹⁰ Jihad according to the BBC is the believers fight to live the Muslim faith as true to what is it presented as in the Qur’an; it is sometimes seen as a struggle but not always is. ([BBC - Religions - Islam: Jihad](#)).

¹¹ This is the idea that there is only one God and that is Allah. ([Paper 1 The Role of TP in TMS.pdf \(iium.edu.my\)](#)).

equality within their religious ideologies, have scholars found the Evangelical feminism?

The Foundation of An Evangelical Feminism

In light of the Muslim feminist research, I wanted to see if evangelical women had their own version of feminism within their religion ideology. Pat Gundry defines biblical feminist as “one who is committed to the authority of the scriptures and whose feminism follows from that conviction” (Cochran 2005, p.45), this meaning later became the foundation for what is now known as Evangelical feminism. Some evangelical leaders reject the notion of any type of feminism within their church members because it goes against what the bible says, especially in the book of Ephesians where it mentions the male being the head of the household. However, some scholars believe that evangelicals have adopted some feminist ideologies without even realizing it. One example was described in the article written by Stasson on evangelical headship and how the current economic situation allowed women to go out and work as well because it was necessary. There are other places in which women have taken the Bible not as a literal translation but instead pay attention to the historical context much like the Muslim feminists mentioned in the previous section.

Religion and LGBTQIA+ Community

Religious ideology does not just affect women and gender ideologies, but it also has affected other aspects of life. Depending on the religion that you ask

the reaction and acceptance of LGBTQIA+ community might vary, with some being accepting and others against it. Christianity tends to be the one most heard of when it comes to those who oppose the movement. Some have used scripture like Leviticus 18:22 which says “Do not practice homosexuality, having sex with another man as with a woman, both men have committed a detestable act. They must both be put to death, for they are guilty of a capital offense” to bolster their views (Bible Gateway 2020).

Some Evangelicals are known to take the bible as the literal word of God to be true in meaning and not up to interpretation (Hill et al 2004, p. 60). This verse can explain why evangelicals have a hard time accepting the fact that there are people out there who love across the gender spectrum. Because evangelical’s belief that gender is a binary having individuals being in array of genders and loving all genders on the spectrum go against the belief systems of evangelicals. The only acceptable form of a relationship is that between a man and a woman. There is a famous line that says “its Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve” adding to the belief that homosexuality is not something that people are born with, but it is a choice, since God made Eve as Adams companion not Steve.

One of the biggest landmark cases the Supreme Court took to address the issue was the Obergefell V Hodges. This was the case that banned all states from prohibiting same sex marriage. This was a consolidation of six different cases that all went to different courts for the same issue. With all these 6 couples

they took their case to the supreme court and filed a suit. The Supreme Court ruled that marriage applied to them for four reasons: the right to marry is a personal choice tied to the concept of personal autonomy, it is a two-person union, it creates children and families and gives the rights to childbearing, procreation, and education, the last reason is that marriage is in our social order. Same sex marriages still comply with the four principles of marriage and hence it would be violating the 14th amendment to prohibit such unions.

Many religious folks were against same sex marriage because the bible stated that marriage was a union between a man and a female and allowing same sex couples to marry defied the 'sanctity' of marriage. This can be affirmed by what Krista McQueeney said in her article "for most conservative (i.e., fundamentalist, and evangelical) Christians, God's will is expressed in a heterosexual family in which male and female are complementary and the primary purpose of sex is procreation" (McQueeney, 2009, p. 151). The union of the same sex couples defies the aspect of what gender roles each married partner must follow in terms to Evangelical beliefs. With the absence of the male or female in either relationship who will cover the gender norms required for each gender. This is one of many verses in which Christians use to say that marriage is not for same sex couples.

Changing Attitudes Among Religious People.

With time the attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ folks within the religious community have changed. With a focus on 29% of white evangelical protestants

becoming accepting of same sex relationships and other members of the LGBTQIA+ community (Pew Research 2014). This change in attitude comes from a more accepting society and changes in views from leaders of prominent religions. Even the Pope claimed to accept LGBTQIA+ members in the catholic faith. Not only has the Pope recognized folks of the LGBTQIA+ community but many other denominations have as well. According to Gaychurch.org there are approximately 43 affirming denominations in the United States, this means that there are a number of churches in which a member of the LGBTQIA+ community can go and still participate in religious activities and not be condemned. Even the attitudes of LGBTQIA+ folks about church have changed as well with about 5.3 million LGBTQIA+ adults stating they are religious (Conron et al. 2020). This is interesting to see that not only churches are changing their minds about the treatment and acceptance of LGBTQIA+ community but they are also changing the way religion is being viewed.

This change in attitude can be feeding off each, since more religions are affirming, and more people are willing to participate in religious services and activities because they are inclusive to all folks and not just a certain few. This can also be seen in the case of an Evangelical Lutheran church which elected its first ever LGBTQIA+ bishop (Bowman 2021). Megan Rohrer has become the first openly transgender bishop overseeing over two hundred different churches in the Bay Area. It is crucial to note that bishops are voted by the people and not chosen by a select few. This means that there is an increase in acceptance of

LGBTQIA+ individuals in religion that must be recognized. What is left is to hear and amplify the voices of the folks who are not only members of the LGBTQIA+ but also belong to an Evangelical faith. What do they have to say about observing a faith that is typically not accepting towards them. How do they observe this faith and transform it without compromising who they are and what the beliefs are?

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The purpose of this paper is giving voice to the women and LGBTQIA+ folks who are part of the evangelical faith. What do women and LGBTQIA+ members have to say about their beliefs in their own words? I wanted to put into conversation the voices of the people who are seen as ‘oppressed’ because of the faith they choose to practice. What does feminism mean to them? Are there feminist readings of Evangelicalism, in the ways there have been feminist readings of other faiths, like Islam? What does it mean to be a part of the LGBTQIA+ community and be an evangelical? ¹²

In order to answer the questions above I decided to use mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative because I wanted to get most data possible that did not just involve interviews. The qualitative methods consisted of gathering background information for the thesis, this meant going into the library and reading scholarly work that furthered the knowledge on the subject related to the thesis. Scholarly work was not the only use of library sources. The use of autobiographies, Evangelical books, and online news articles were also used.

This background research was done to get insight into how the evangelical faith could be applied to academic conversations on the issue. Additional qualitative research took place in the form of interviews and surveys

¹² In this paper the term women mean a woman who identifies as cisgender and not part of the LGBTQIA+ community.

which provided data that could be analyzed. Quantitative approach consists of the interview and survey responses used to make a visual representation of the data. The visual data will consist mostly of the responses from the surveys which was used to see where each participants perspective fit into the larger scope of the thesis.

The methods for this thesis had to be changed due to the unexpected events of 2020. Covid-19 altered the first initial approach intended for this paper and was modified to fit Covid-19 Restrictions implemented by the government. Due to that participant observation was not permissible and interviews were strictly done through online modalities.

Research Design

The area of study chosen was evangelical faith-based churches and those who observed the faith. The reason for this selected area of study is in part due to the stereotypes and data presented in the introduction. Most people view evangelicalism to have a strict view on women and LGBTQIA+ community. In part this community was selected due to the researchers own personal experience identifying as a feminist and an ally (to the LGBTQIA+ community) and not feeling oppressed by my faith.

Before starting the process of data collection, research was done to back my own experience. Many other religious faiths have changed their views concerning members of the LGBTQIA+ changing their views to be more inclusive

of everyone. Academic articles and books were used to start the preliminary research on what scholars were finding out about gender, feminism, LGBTQIA+, and religion embedded within each of the related topics. It was important to read books about LGBTQIA+ folk who were or are part of a religion navigating themselves through the changing of attitudes and accepting their identity and faith. This allowed me to form the questions that I used in my participants. Other non-academic material consisted of online news articles and landmark case summaries.

Research Procedures

Before beginning any part of the research, I obtained CITI training and certification in order to qualitative research. The next step was to focus on getting IRB approval due to the fact that this thesis is heavily based on human personal stories. A proposal was formulated and sent for IRB approval. The research was approved on March 19, 2021. Although approval was granted in March, the interview process did not start until April 19, 2021, and lasted until May 27, 2021. The information given to the IRB office included the interview questions, consent forms, survey questions, and the recruitment flyer¹³.

After all questions and IRB certification was received it was time to search for participants that would be willing to cooperate with the research. Participation was purely voluntary, and incentives were not given in part due to the fact that

¹³ All of the material mentioned here will be available in the appendix pages.

funding was not used for this research and secondly all the research was voluntary and done remotely.

Population Sample

The population sample selected for this research were women and people who identified as LGBTQIA+. The individuals chosen were those who had or still belong to an evangelical faith-based religion. When referencing women, it means cisgender (heterosexual) women who are evangelical not including women who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community. When referencing LGBTQIA+ folks it means people who identify as LGBTQIA+. There were two types of methods for acquiring the population sample.

The first method was the snowball sampling method. Because I am a part of the evangelical community. I found that it was better to start with those who I know or am acquainted with. This form of sampling helped when finding Evangelical women participants. The second form of sampling was convenience sampling and the use of online platforms.

Selected Sampling

The selected sample did not include cisgender male in evangelical religions due to the fact that their perspectives lie beyond the scope of this research. I focused on those who identified as 'women,' because women are usually viewed as the 'oppressed' gender in evangelical religions or controlled by the men. The addition of LGBTQIA+ community was done so because of the

recent inclusion in LGBTQIA+ folks in religions. The inclusion of LGBTQIA+ community is interesting to see because of the deep history between the LGBTQIA+ movement and religion. However, not all denominations have fully accepted the LGBTQIA+ folks into their spaces.

The sample size consists of 10 individuals including 5 cisgender women and 5 LGBTQIA+ folks. The age group between the sample size was between the ages of 18-70. The women participants were asked individually if they would like to participate. Once the researcher was ready to begin, consent forms were sent and discussed with each participant and signed. The process of recruiting participants in this case study was effortless. All women that were asked responded back and were glad to help.

The LGBTQIA+ participants were recruited from an online based platform that will not be named in order to protect the identity of the participants. I posted my recruitment flyer onto this online platform and stated the thesis questions as well as provided information such as the institution's name, how it was approved by IRB, the data collected, the type of interview, the age requirement, how their identity would be protected, and that it was strictly voluntary. Finding participants for this case study was different and more challenging than the first case study. Because of the use of an online platform there is the possibility that the people who were recruited live in a different time zone or might not respond. At first there were multiple participants who were opened to help but as I sent them more information and began the consent form process the number of participants

died down. After having 5 initial candidates only 1 made it through to the interview process.

Due to this fact, I decided to do a follow-up Post and see if I could reach new people. It was stated in the post that they could message me privately if they wished to participate, but I am assuming some people did not mind because they replied right then and there. It was from this post where I got most of my participants People began responding to my post and I messaged them privately with more information. Not all people were happy with my post and receive comments that were not so welcoming. Some did not want to participate and stated that they felt uneasy about their post being watched and studied. This made me feel uncomfortable not for my research but for the potential participants. I did not want to make anyone feel like that in anyway, I stated that I was not watching or reading other publications but my own. In the end I decided to delete my post and protect the privacy of those who use the online platform. I had no intentions of hurting others I just wanted to tell peoples stories and their experiences. Even though the post was deleted those who had seen it and were willing messaged me and decided to participate. Some thought it was a good idea to have their voices be herd and participate in such study.

These experiences taught me that the methods process is not easy and there are many aspects to take into consideration when using qualitative methods. One of the biggest issues with qualitative research is in regard to ethics. In my case, when the community got offended with my post, it became

clear to me that telling your personal stories to a complete stranger is not as easy as it seems. It is difficult to decide whether to compromise the research or protect the privacy of the community. Of course, protecting the community was my initial thought and is why I deleted the post, but I did wonder how I was going to finish my project if people were not okay with it. A second struggle with qualitative methods is the interview process and the technology problems present due to low internet connection. Overall, all of these experiences have been a good lesson for what to do and not do for the future.

Data Collection Methods

The data collected is comprised of interview answers and survey answers. The interviews were semi-structured as stated before to allow more data to be given as possible. The participants had the option to have their interviews recorded with just their voice or video feed as well. Most of the participants opted out of the video recording and just chose audio recording. Because the interviews were through zoom, they were recorded on my personal phone and placed in a secure folder with a password and kept safe. Once the thesis was done, the interviews and all data were deleted from all devices. During the interviews I took notes on an iPad that is password protected. These notes taken included keywords or sentences said by the participants that were attention grabbing.

Interview Questions and Surveys

The questions formulated for this thesis were carefully thought out and reviewed by the advisor so that participants would not be harmed or offended in anyway. These questions were made to get the participants to speak about their own points of views and knowledge about their gender identities tied with religion. Some questions were open ended to keep the conversation going and allowing the participants to speak as much as possible about their experiences. The survey questions were used to help further the analysis and make an evaluation of each participant and see where on the Traditional Evangelical to Liberal Evangelical spectrum they fall. Due to the participants speaking predominately Spanish the questions and surveys were given to said participants in Spanish. This thesis is a two-case study with the focus on women and LGBTQIA+ folks in evangelical religions. The interview consisted of 18 questions for the first case study and 14 questions for the second case study. The first 8 questions were given to both groups and the rest of the questions were directed to each group specifically.

Once these interviews were done, they were transcribed using Microsoft Word transcription as well as reviewed by myself to make sure the transcriptions were correct. 3 of the participants interviews were done in Spanish and had to be transcribed on an app and checked. These answers were not translated to English during the transcription process because I am fluent in Spanish. The surveys consisted of 14 questions that were sent to the participants after the

interviews were done and consisted of questions in the form of free response, multiple response, and Likert scales. The survey was made using Qualtrics which does not collect personal information and has the added feature to stop anyone from doing the survey unless consent is given. Both the questions and surveys were translated to Spanish.

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions all interviews were done using zoom services. Once I received the signed consent form, the zoom meeting was set, and a link was emailed to them. The zoom link had a passcode that participants had to put in order to enter into the meeting this was done to ensure that only the participant and I were in the meeting. The participant was reminded of their right to withdraw from participating and the use of pseudonym.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Women and LGBTQIA+ folks express their views on what being evangelical means for them. The two groups interviewed talked about similar and distinct topics. The topics that were discussed among the two groups had similarities between them but also distinct to each group. The similar topic that both groups covered was on how the bible is interpreted. However not everyone in the two case studies agreed on gender ideologies, meaning they all did not agree to a one certain gender ideology.

The answers to these questions helped form the topics mentioned above which will be discussed later on in this chapter. The surveys were used to add supplemental data to the discussion. The results of the survey also revealed that the age group included those who were between 18-44 years old and those who were between 65-74 years old. This age gap between the participants allowed there to be a variety of answers based on age shaped by generational ideologies. Political views of the participants were also asked, and I found that the view they hold politically also holds a connection to the religious ideologies' participants might hold.

Participants Responses

Evangelical Women

Peggy. Peggy chose to remain anonymous, and I have chosen this name as her pseudonym. Peggy is 31-year-old women who has been a part of the evangelical religion all her life. She states that she started going to church at the age of 3 but did not begin to understand what the religion was about until she was the age of 10. Before COVID-19 Peggy had gone to church frequently and resumed going once it was safe again. When asked about her views on gender roles Peggy stated that there should be no distinction between the male and the female duties in a heterosexual relationship, there should be no specific duties for each gender.

However according to Peggy, the church's view on gender is quite different. During our interview, she stated, "The bible does do a kind of separation of men do this or in be in a certain position and women as well" (Peggy 2021). She does not agree with this view of gender. In fact, Peggy agrees that the treatment of women in the bible can be harsher on women than men. She explained, "as far as our organization goes women have more rules and for men its more lenient" (Peggy 2021). In her eyes, the gender ideologies expressed in the church are similar to those who view it as harsher to women than men. This led to the question of what it was like to be a woman in her faith, and the answers were around roles associated with femininity. Roles such as being teachers, counselors, aspiring to marriage, being a good wife and giving

support to the husband, and eventually raising kids were all aspects of femininity that are upheld by the community.

However, Peggy feels that this view does not apply to her and, she does not feel the pressure to be a teacher or marry. Most people in evangelical faiths typically marry young and her being 31 years old makes her stand out in comparison to the married young people whose ages can span between 19-23 years old. She feels left out of this typical model for women in the faith however, despite this she is not inspired to follow this trajectory. With this in mind we began talking about feminism, which Peggy defined as “having equality between both men and women, any gender really”. With the topic of feminism in mind I asked Peggy if the women in the bible could be considered feminist, and her answer was “yes to a certain extent” (Peggy 2021), however she does not feel as though these women could be a role model for her because she does not fit the typical model of an evangelical women. It is interesting to see that even though she is an observer of the evangelical faith, she still understands that in some ways she stands outside of its norms.

Nery. Neri describes herself as a woman who was born into the religion per say but did not really join until 30 years ago. Neri considers the bible to be a guide for her life so when asked about her view on gender she replied with “God created male and female and that should be the only thing” (Neri 2021). When it comes to the view of bible being harsh on women, Neri believes that some women might believe that they are put aside but God made things perfect. She

believes that women are the helpers to the husband. For example, during our conversation she states, “But I believe women and men are equally important in their respective roles” (Neri 2021). According to Neri the respective goals of a women in her faith are to help the husband (being a mother who is important in her point of view), caretaker and living up to other gender stereotypes associated with women.

For her it is easy to find women role models in the bible, Mary being her favorite. This is tied to the role she is associated with as Jesus’s mother. For her the stories of women were incorporated to demonstrate that women are not just help for the husband, but they are capable of doing many things. When asked about feminism, Neri believes that feminism is about women who represent women. Due to her definition of feminism, she said it is possible that the women in the bible would be considered feminist because they stood up against cultural norms to protect their families and other women.

Samara. Samara is 18-year-old women who has been part of the evangelical religion since she was born. This is a religious identity that dates back to her grandparents. Samara stated that to her the bible is a guide for her life because of the commandments and rules mentioned in them to follow. Which lead to the question around gender ideologies. To Samara, gender roles associated with the man are that of protector, i.e. man of the house and the woman in the partnership is considered to be more maternal. This however in her mind can vary by households because they can be different. She mentions that

there is a fine line with the gender roles in which one gender can take advantage of the other, and that is not okay. When it comes to what the bible says, “the beliefs go hand in hand with worldly beliefs” (Samara 2021).

To her the Bible when interpreted literally it can be seen as though it is harsh on women, but when taking a closer look, it also tells us how husbands should properly treat their wives and condemn treatment directed at wives. To Samara being a woman in her faith is someone who follows what the Bible says. By this she means that the women in the Bible were shown to represent woman of God should and that we should reflect that. With this in mind the next topic discussed was feminism. According to Samara feminism means “woman sticking up for women” (Samara 2021). In other words, it is fighting for equal rights and not going beyond a certain extent; however, she does believe feminism is tied to the experiences of a woman’s life. In her opinion, the women in the bible can be feminist because they “stuck to their true self and did not go beyond that they stayed in their own path” (Samara 2021),

Leilah. Leilah is 41-year-old women who asked to remain anonymous. She like most of the women I interviewed, have been a part of this spiritual community since she was born but did not accept it until the age of 13. Leilah considers the bible to be a guide for her life in a spiritual and secular way. When it comes to gender ideologies, she believes that men and women complement each other due to their biological differences but they are also similar.

According to Leilah gender roles are mutually discussed and accepted between the couples, but they both are valued equally and intellectually. The bible describes gender as both made according to God's image and that they should submit to one another, not one more than the other. When it comes to the treatment of women in the bible, Leilah says that it is all misinterpreted. "What was mentioned was about the time period in which that portion was written, Jesus did not discriminate against women, he actually went against cultural beliefs of that time and talked and used women" (Leilah 2021). Women in her faith even preach, teach, lead, and pray for the sick.

She considers the women in the bible to be models for her to follow as they were included as key figures of the time, and also show the representation of God's love towards them. This led to the discussion around feminism in which Leilah discussed "feminism in recent times has become radicalized" (Leilah 2021). In her opinion women have gained too many rights and have gone to a point where they want to be superior to men. It is for this reason she does not believe that women in the bible could be considered feminist. They were fighting for a cause with the guidance of the holy spirit and under God.

Heidy. Heidy is a woman in her 40's, who compared to the previous women, was not born into the religion but came to it 15 years ago. But just like the previous women, she considers the bible to guide her life by giving us teachings to follow and stories to guide us. Her perception of gender roles is similar to the other women in that she views gender as men being the head of

the household and the women supporting and caring for their husbands. When asked what the bible says on gender, her point of view differed from the other women. According to her, men have the responsibility to instruct their household and know how to lead it in God's path, and the women should submit to their husbands according to the word of God.

When it comes to the treatment of women in the bible, she says that the bible is harsh on all, but that it is a guide for us to follow however she states, "the word of God does take women into consideration, they are there for us to learn" (Heidy 2021). For Heidy, the women in the bible are role models, especially Abigail, who acted wisely in order to save her husband and her town. When asked about feminism, Heidy was unsure of what this means but defined it as "a women defending a cause" (Heidy 2021). With this definition in mind, she considered women in the bible to be feminist. However, Heidy was unaware of what feminism could really mean as she never come across that word.

Evangelical LGBTQIA+

Peter. Peter is a man in his 70's who identifies as gay. He has been a part of the faith for about 50 years. He considers prayer to be an important aspect of his life even though he does not attend church. He left the church due to his sexuality and not being accepted. He found other churches that were close to his beliefs in the sense that there are no extreme beliefs, a church that does not tell others what it does not believe or agree in. However, this church became focused on being gay instead of what a church should be, which is a place to

learn about God's love and forming a relationship with him, in the end he decided to leave. He eventually found Anglican church that accepted him for who he was and taught teachings closely to the ones he held, however eventually this group ceased to exist and now he currently does not attend a church. During his life as a Christian, he found it difficult to maintain his faith because of the church's viewpoints around homosexuality. Pete explained, "My faith was affected. It made me hate, no, despise the church even more" (Peter 2021).

However, this never made him feel like giving up on his faith because he later explained, "I'm surprised that I haven't. Uhm, Secondly, I have never felt that God condemned me, only that the church did not like me. I have always felt the support and love of God and the acceptance of God. I have sometimes even said to myself: God and I are right in this, and the church is wrong." His faith was tied to his own connection with God not the church. When talking about the verses used to condemn LGBTQIA+ folk he said, "this is hard to answer because so much of it depends on the interpretation of the Bible with the issues that condemn homosexuality. I find that it is condemning something, but not committed faithful same-sex relationships. The Bible would not have known about those and so would not condemn them. Now it's possible that I'm interpreting the Bible to suit myself." (Peter 2021). As for the reason he maintained his faith all these years the answer was simple; he just ignored those restrictive ideas around faith and practice and just focused on his relationship with God.

Marie. Marie is a 21-year-old who identifies as a pansexual but is okay being called bisexual. She grew up in a Methodist church but now attends the universal church of Christ. Marie considers praying to be important and calming to her. For her, the bible is a guide for her life but not meant to be taken literally. She believes that taking the bible as literal can be harmful. Ever since she was 11 years old, she began to question her sexuality and had a troubling experience when a young youth leader came out as gay at a church event and was asked to be spoken to in private and then never seen again. This memory made a mark in her life as to how the church viewed LGBTQIA+ folks. Due to this experience, her faith was affected greatly. She began to distance herself from the church and felt that she could not open up to the people from her church due to their religious beliefs. Just because she distanced herself from the church community did not negatively impact her relationship with God. Marie stated that her relationship with God now is individually based, just her and God instead of depending on the whole community to build a relationship with God.

Carol. Carol chose to remain anonymous during the interview. Carol identifies as a bisexual woman who recently fully accepted her sexual orientation and even told her husband who was in full support. She began to question her sexuality when she was in high school and struggled due to the church's position on different sexualities. During college she gave up on her faith due to the bitterness and lies the church was spreading about LGBTQIA folks. She eventually stopped going to church until she had a revelation that she could not

deny who Jesus was. She explained, “God is not about the dos and the don’ts. He’s about having a relationship with him” (Carol 2021). Now that she is older, she is focused on having a relationship with God and growing it every day.

According to her, God does not teach us about same sex relationships, however the bible is very clear on sexual relations outside the prospects of marriage. She believes that this refers to any sexual relations outside of marriage whether it is the same sex or opposite sex. “God provides marriage for that purpose, to enjoy our sexual desires”, Carol stated, and went on to explain how relationships are not based on the genders of the couple. When it comes to biblical teachings, she considers them a guide from a different perspective. Carol stated, “I think the big thing is just looking at the teachings of Jesus and just living like how he lived, so uhm a big one is just how he loved people and so I try to model just loving people regardless, even if I don't agree with them or not of their background. So just try striving to love them (Carol 2021). Carols views on gender do not differ from the many other people. She believes that gender is fluid, and that people do not fit into pre-ordained boxes.

Rachel. Rachel is a 19 year women who grew up Methodist with evangelical influences mixed into it. She, like some of the participants was born into the religious community and has been a part of it ever since. To Rachel, prayer holds more significance in her life than reading the bible, due to the harsh text that the bible can present when it comes to its viewpoint on LGBTQIA+ identities. Instead, she views the bible as a book with lessons and themes to be

taught and learned from rather than a literal guide. For her it is more important to listen to the God that she feels in her life. She expressed that her faith has definitely waivered due to the way the bible expresses views about same sex relationships.

This experience caused her to experience self-hate. As she grew up however, she found the spaces needed to help her, such as online communities filled with people similar to her. Even though her faith was shaken a bit she never felt the need to give up on. During our conversation, she stated, “it has actually been the opposite, where rather than feeling like giving up on my faith because I was like born into a Christian family, I feel like I have always felt this, like holy presence around me with like God and Jesus, who like watches my daily life. I have never felt pushed back from my faith, but I have felt like I needed to do something to basically fix and correct myself by like self-conversion therapy. When I was younger” (Rachel 2021). She expressed that she never went to conversion therapy but because she grew up being told something, she did struggle with her sexuality internally. However now it is changed due to the fact that her belief is more focused on having a relationship with God. “I feel like I can see God through those good moments where he wants me to feel happy” (Rachel 2021). She feels as though her relationship with God is based off the beautiful things in this world that exist despite the chaos. To Rachel there is more to God than just the bible.

Elijer. Elijer chose to keep his identity anonymous. Elijer like most of the participants also grew up in an evangelical Christian household, however, his story is a little bit different. About his childhood he said, “so, in preschool my preschool teacher had us ask God into our hearts so uhm, I think that is a definitive time. We can say so I would have been about four” (so, 2021). Unlike the rest of the participants Elijer's religious influences were also taught to him at school. He went to a religious based school from the age of preschool all the way to high school. Going to this school was not great for him due to other personal struggles aside from being LGBTQIA+.

To Elijer prayer is more important than reading the bible, reading the bible brings up trauma from his past that he would rather not experience again. Because of this Elijer has changed his views on the bible being a guide for his life explaining, “I don't think its 100% accurate” (Elijer 2021). While exploring his sexuality he says the bible is more something that haunts than brings support. Due to this his faith has been heavily affected, this was due to scriptures addressing being gay in the bible. He began to wonder if he should leave the church all together to explore his sexuality and then come back. This had him question God but mostly the church. Elijer considered God to be someone he could receive support from rather than relying on his peers. Being gay for Elijer triggered a destabilization in his faith that had to be rebuilt. However, he never gave up, and stated “it's easier to rationalize giving up my life than giving up my faith” (Elijer 2021). He says faith has been a big support in his life, but he is not

sure if it is because it was conditioned into him to think this way. In the end Elijer says that exploring his sexuality has made him turn away from the church. If he were to find that he fully agreed with their stance with LGBTQIA+ and mental health issues, then he would be willing to return, but at the moment he does not feel he is sinning and thinks he is the way he is and he walks with God. Elijer is not sure if he will ever turn away from God, he is still trying to find God from a different perspective, one that is not in the Evangelical light.

Discussion

As mentioned above the similar topic discussed among both groups was about issues around gender ideologies and the bible interpretation. The topics discussed among the evangelical women were around feminism and women in the bible. The topic discussed among the Evangelical LGBTQIA+ were about a relationship with God and the importance of prayer. And even though there was a variation of responses, the overall thinking of the groups had parallels. The overall idea from both case studies was that although the bible is or can be a guide for their life it is also something that should not be taken literally and should instead be interpreted and the way that the bible is interpreted varied among the participants.

Evangelical Women

Evangelical Women Gender Ideologies

Evangelical women's viewpoint when it came to gender ideologies and gender roles was closely based to what the bible depicts about gender however, there were a few differences. The women who were raised in the church were either more critical about their views on gender and in fact somewhat liberal, thinking that it is a mutual agreement and that both genders are equal, whereas the one who came later in life believed the gender roles to be the way they were ascribed in the bible. Most of the women agreed that gender roles are predominately agreed upon by the couples, but within the realms of their religious belief, meaning male headship. The term male headship meant that men are supposed to be the leaders and provide economically. However, during the economic crisis in the 1970's the traditional ideology of headship began to shift. Evangelical leader's viewpoint in headship had to change to a more egalitarian view in which still had biblical authority. The author Anneke Stasson says in her article headship became centered on responsibility and 'servant leadership'. (2014, p. 114). This meant that instead as seen as the provider for women they became focused on the male responsibilities of the home and being a servant who still leads his home. This view changed genders to a more egalitarian perspective. The male responsibilities were focused on more interaction with the family and kids. This is evident in Heidi's perspective; the male is responsible for leading the family and instructing them on the right path. In order for the male to

instruct their kids and family in the right path they must be able to know what is going on with their own kids, they have to interact with them and spend time with them, which is not typical of a male gender role. This is what Stasson calls 'emotional work' (2014, p. 115), this meant that with the definition of headship changing it also changed the roles/ stereotypes of what a man's duties were, adding more of an emotional support to women and their kids. Creating this sense of egalitarian view of gender, with both genders working and being responsible for the kids, the gender roles seem a bit more neutral, and the idea of headship becomes more symbolic than literal.

When it comes to the views of gender roles the women all fit into one of the three categories listed in Courtney Irby's article. She mentions three different categories in which young evangelical fit into when discussing their views on gender: idealist, independent and ambivalent. The first category is idealist "believe gender differences embody larger spiritual and God-given distinctions" (2014, p.272), the women who fit this category is Heidi and Leilah. Heidi fits this with her view of gender ideologies, which is strictly based on what the bible says, she described gender roles of the man as the head of the household the one who is to lead his house, and the women should be submissive to their husbands. This is the literal word for word that is describe in the bible. There is no interpretation of the bible verses, and Heidi believes them to be true this way. As for Leilah, she fits the category more on her perspective of what gender (being a male and female) is. She stated that both males and females have distinctions

between them biologically but that they are also the same, which is why she does not fully fit into this category. The second category is independent which is defined as “focused on gender egalitarianism” (2014, p.274) which means that there is no distinction between the genders, they should both be equal. I would place Neri, Peggy, and Leilah into this category. Neri describes the genders as both being ‘equal in their respective roles’ (Neri 2021), even though she does mention ‘respective goals’ she does believe that the genders are equal. Peggy mentions that both genders should be equal in all of their duties, meaning no one gender should have a specific duty to do. As far as Leilah’s perspective goes she does mention that gender roles and ideologies are something that can be agreed upon by both genders when entering a relationship. With all of these three women agreeing that both genders and gender ideologies are equal they adhere to what Irby defined as independent. This view of gender egalitarianism is aligned with the idea that both genders act in a sense of mutual respect. This gender egalitarian view comes from the exposure of many evangelicals who have been raised in the religion and experienced gender roles observed from their parents. Which is why independents tend to have a more egalitarian view on gender norms. The last category is the ambivalent which is defined as the ones who stand between both idealist and independents. This category tends to be the individuals who position their gender ideologies in both the biblical inspired view or based on equality of the genders. The only women who fits this category is Samara, she stated that gender roles tend to be based upon what the couples

decide, however she later states that the male is the head of the family, the provider and that the female is the caretaker and the one in charge of the home and just like the independent, her gender ideology is based upon what she observed from her parents, but instead of changing her viewpoints like independents did, she stayed with this ideology of gender norms, because like the idealist this is what the bible says gender roles are.

The next topic of discussion among Evangelical women dealt with what feminism was and how it was interpreted by them. This topic led to the inclusion of important women figures and whether they could be considered feminist. When it comes to feminism almost all the women agree that feminism is about fighting for women's equality. When discussing the topic of feminism most women agreed that feminism was equality centered and, in the space, designed by God.

Evangelical Feminism?

The most revealing information about the interviews was that according to the participants, the bible never mentions anything about feminism. Not once did it mention that it was against women fighting for a cause that they believed to be an injustice. In fact, the women believed that the inclusion of such powerful and amazing women in the bible is to illustrate women are more than capable of doing things and that fighting for a cause is good. It is to show that God does include women into his word (the bible).

As mentioned in a previous chapter, biblical feminism is defined as “one who is committed to the authority of the scriptures and whose feminism follows from that conviction” (Cochran 2005, p.45) this form of feminism is present even in the bible with the powerful women who fought against certain injustices within the scope of the evangelical beliefs. These stories present women the space to know that they are capable of more than just being a ‘helper’. According to Margret Lamberts Bendroth most evangelicals do not notice that evangelical observers have “unconsciously internalized feminist attitudes” (1993, p.119). This is evident with the participants interviewed in this project when, for the most part they stated that the genders should be or are equal. When it comes to identifying as feminist most of the participants did not specifically state they are feminist but that they do agree with the certain ideologies. Most of the women belong to what Elaine Storkey calls Biblical feminist, they are defined as women who “hold tenaciously to the authority of the scriptures, although [they] challenge many attitudes and ideas which people claim to have derived from them” (Bruland 1989, p. 144). Meaning that these women are ones who still hold the bible to be true and comes from God but that there are also certain ideas that must be taken into interpretation. Most people view the bible as ‘oppressive’ to women and most of the women who were interviewed said that it is not the case, and that the reason the verses are looked at from that viewpoint is because they are not looking into the cultural aspects of the time. Leilah is the one participant who shares her ideologies on feminism vividly. Although her view of feminism now is

that it has become radicalized, in the past she would consider herself a feminist from a Biblical feminist standpoint. As stated above, she views feminism as women trying to be better than man and this goes against biblical teachings, but she does agree that there should be gender equality among the sexes. And the interpretations of certain bible verses 'oppressing' women are taken out of their cultural context and fit one narrative. Even though she agrees with this point of view, she still views the bible as a guide to follow. Most women in the project position themselves within the biblical feminist framework. This is evident in most of the women participants explaining that the women in the bible could be feminist because they fought for injustices within a biblical context, meaning they did not go beyond their boundaries, which is what biblical feminism is. The only one who did not fit this category was Peggy, she fits more in the second framework known as the broadly Christian feminist, this category is defined as "those who reserve the right to 'select' from the biblical writings and tradition and those who feel there is little left to select from" (Bruland 1989, p. 144). For her the bible can be harsher to women than it is to men. For her the bible does not leave much to interpretation in which the verses can be interpreted in a new light that might not seem as 'oppressive' to women. For her feminism is about equality among all genders. for her the women of the bible would be considered feminist due to the fact that she does not see any verses or stories in which feminist aspect could be applied to.

All of the participants responses to feminism contradicts what Bruland that most evangelical feminist position themselves in the broadly Christian feminism. Even though broadly Christian feminist still regard the bible as significant they differ in the authority the bible holds. With the participants in this study, it is noted that most agree that the authority of the bible is highly important to them but so is gender egalitarian within the boundaries of biblical teachings. Meaning that the evangelical women in this project based their feminist definition on what biblical feminist believe in. However, one interesting comment mentioned in the interviews was that one of the women had no clue as to what feminism was, this could be due to what Margret Lamberts Bendroth said that some evangelicals do not notice the feminist ideals implemented within their religion, especially when they work in the public spheres and have held positions of power in the church before.

Evangelical LGBTQIA+

When it came to the LGBTQIA+ Evangelicals stories the major theme presented was forming and maintaining a relationship with God. Instead of trying to make relationships with people who do not fully agree or accept them, Evangelical LGBTQIA+ turned their attention to what is important which is keeping a connection with God. This means connecting with him in the various ways that a person can connect, which is mostly done through prayer. Prayer

was the second most discussed topic within this community, the bible was not as important for them due to the verses which are used to condemn their identities.

A Relationship with God Formed Through Prayer

All participants in the LGBTQIA+ community stated that forming a relationship with God is very important for their faith to stay strong. This relationship with God is not dependent on what others say it should be but instead focuses more on the individual and God. This relationship is important because it is formed through the use of prayer. Prayer is known to be one of the ways in which people communicate with God and he responds through what we see in life. Many people can form a relationship with God this way and maintain it even though other aspects of their life might not be the greatest. Mathew Vines states in his book “God and the Gay Christian” that as human beings we are created in God’s image that includes all people, and because of this God’s nature to form relationships is presented in us. Keeping a relationship is important to all because it is in our nature to have a relation with God, Mathew Vines states “that covenant-keeping capacity is essential to who we are as creatures made in God’s image. God created us so that we could be in a covenant with him” (2014, p. 337). A covenant can be briefly defined as a formalized relationship with certain blessings if the relationship is kept. Meaning that if we as humans have a formalized relationship with God, we are going to receive blessing from this relationship. Rachel describes that this blessing from keeping a relationship with God can be seen in all the wonderful things she experiences in her life. She

knows her relationship with God is good because good things happen around her. If bad things were to occur, she would know that her relationship with God needs some remedy. When the topic of giving up on their faith came up almost all of the participants said that they at one point thought about giving up or had given up, however the ones who said they never gave up their answers were because of the relationship with God that was forged.

All of the participants stated that having a relationship with God is what maintained them from not giving up. This relationship with God could be forged in different ways but they are all connected to the idea that the covenant with God is in our nature. Most of the participants stated they kept a connection with God through prayer. Others stated that their relationship with God maintained stable because they knew God was with them and saw this throughout aspects of their life, like Rachel mentioned above. Others stated that if they were wrong their relationship with God would not have been the same.

Forming a strong relationship with God is important because in most cases, evangelical LGBTQIA+ cannot form relationships with other members of their congregation due to differences in beliefs. Almost all evangelical communities are known to be families, they even refer to themselves as brother and sisters, daughters, and sons of God. When it comes to LGBTQIA+ this is not the case, as seen in Carols', Marie's, and Elijers narratives, not all people are welcoming to Evangelical LGBTQIA+ identities and causes them to leave a community that did not want to form a covenant with them. Instead, a covenant is

formed with someone who will not reject them. This God is someone whose love and acceptance is not based on what Evangelical say a covenant with God should look like but represents what it actually should resemble. A God who according to the participants is faithful, loving, fair, merciful, righteous, Inconceivable, boundless, accepting, caring, supporting.

Importance of Reading the Bible

One interesting theme across all evangelical LGBTQIA+ was the low importance in reading the bible. When reading the bible most of the participants either said they did or did not read it. For the most part the participants all had similar issues when it came to reading the bible, because the bible was and is sometimes still used by conservative evangelicals to justify the treatment of LGBTQIA+ communities. All the participants had conservative evangelical upbringing and this upbringing forged a negative relationship with the bible. Most associate the bible with a traumatic experience in which they do not want to ever experience again. Due to this, most evangelical LGBTQIA+ do not consider the bible to be a guide for their life. Instead, their guide for their life is the relationship they hold with God that is reinforced through their daily interactions with people and nature. The participants who do not associate the bible with a traumatic experience say it is due to the fact that all those verses that are used to condemn certain sexualities are just misinterpreted. Without taking a look into the cultural context of the time the verses were written can create interpretations that can create harm to certain communities.

Bible Interpretation

The interpretation of the bible is a topic that was addressed in both the evangelical women and LGBTQIA+ groups. There are two ways in which the bible can be looked at. One way is known as inspiration which is claiming “the scripture is to believe what the Bible says is true” and the second way is through interpretation which “involves explaining what this Word means to us on a human level” (Cochran 2005, p.47). Both these two ways to look at the bible have affected the way in which the treatment of women and LGBTQIA+ folks have been determined. Those who view the bible as inspired from God and take the word of God for literal translation can have certain ideologies on what gender and their respective roles should be and would condemn certain sexual preferences. It is clear that many people view the bible in this way and have used biblical passages to defend horrible actions like slavery, treatment of women, and LGBTQIA+ folk.

Looking at the bible in a form of interpretation is two-fold. For the most part what the bible says is dependent on what the human who read it believes it says, this can be damaging because someone can choose to interpret the bible in the literal way and the consequences are the same as inspiration read. But the second option is if a person who reads the bible and takes a look into the historical context in which the certain verses were written, someone who looks at the translations and tries to get as accurate to them, will have a different

perspective as to what the bible says when it comes to women and LGBTQIA+ communities.

Summary of Results

Table 1: Displaying Beliefs Around the Interpretation of the Bible.

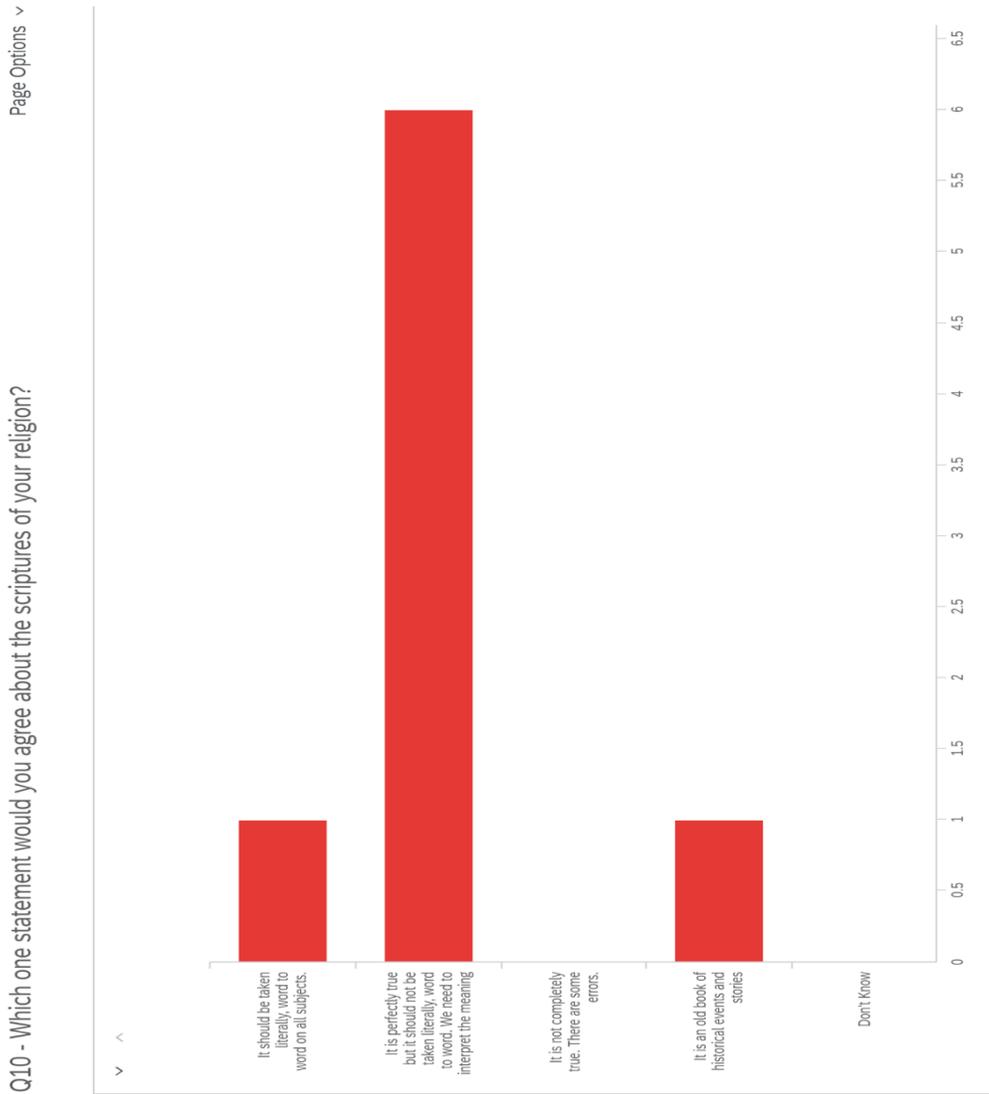


Table 2: Should the Bible Adapt to Modern Times.

	Yes	No
Peggy	X	
Samara		X
Leilah		X
Neri		X
Heidy		X
Marie	X	
Elijer	X	
Rachel	X	
Peter	X	
Carol	X	

Table 3. Participants Descriptions of Who God Is.



CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research Question

As stated, before the research question was “How do evangelicals interpret the biblical text when reading the Bible? Is there a feminist reading of the evangelicals Bible? Is the interpretation of the text different dependent on which members of the community you ask? This research came from a struggle in dealing with my own personal ideologies and with what religion says. The results of the research revealed many topics across both groups. As mentioned in the previous chapter the topics discussed were on gender ideologies, feminism, biblical interpretation, keeping a relationship with God, and the importance of prayer.

The hypothesis for this research was three-fold the first hypothesis dealt with the evangelical women group and stated that the women do not feel oppressed as the outside world sees it but rather that they found ways to be feminist and uphold their religious teachings. The second hypothesis was for the Evangelical LGBTQIA+ community which stated that Evangelical LGBTQIA's would either move to a church that is more inclusive but still holds the same beliefs or that they will base their faith and relationship with God. The last hypothesis stated that the participants will either be placed in two categories:

modern traditional evangelical and liberal evangelical. The first two hypothesis in my initial research were correct, the women stated that they did not feel oppressed by their religion and formed a feminist ideology rooted in evangelicalism. In regard to the Evangelical LGBTQIA's responses, my initial hypothesis was correct most of the participants stated that they chose to form a personal relationship with God, and only one participant stated they formed a personal relationship with God and joined a religious community which accepted them.

The last hypothesis stated that the participants would fit either in modern traditional evangelical or liberal evangelical mindset. All the participants stories told a narrative in which could position them in the modern traditional or the liberal evangelical perspective. The modern traditional evangelical is the one who believes in some certain traditional evangelical ideologies in respects to gender and feminism, but also align to a more modern view of gender and feminism. Meaning that they still use the bible to determine their views on gender, feminism, and sexuality but it is based on interpretation. The liberal evangelical perspective aligns more to liberal ideologies on gender, feminism, and sexuality, they still hold evangelical views but in an egalitarian way. Meaning all aspect of gender feminism and sexuality are not specifically dependent on what the bible says. Most of the women participants fit into the Modern Traditional Evangelical with the exception of Peggy. Peggy seems to fit in the black and gray area

between Modern Traditional and Liberal Evangelical. As for the Evangelical LGBTQIA+ folks, they all align with the perspectives of Liberal Evangelicals.

Overall Theme

The overall theme in both groups dealt with the way in which the bible was interpreted when it came to the mention of certain verses. Both groups mention that looking into the historical context of which a verse was written is crucial when determining what verse is supposed to say rather than what it actually says. When it comes to the Evangelical women's perspective about submissive verses mentioned in the bible, they replied that the historical context is important to look at. If the verses mentioned were supposed to be taken as literal translation than the women mentioned in the bible would not have the narrative of them breaking societal standards, holding positions of power, and fighting for injustices. These women were placed in the bible to serve as the Evangelical feminist perspective. They fought for injustice in a religious framework and in the space, God provided for them.

In regard to Evangelical LGBTQIA+ community the Bible interpreted as literal text can be damaging to the mental health of those in this community that is why it is important to look at the historical context of these verses used to condemn them. However, unlike Evangelical women LGBTQIA+ folks do not hold the Bible as important to them due to their traditional Evangelical upbringings and being told that this was wrong.

Limitations

There was a variety of limitations in this study, The biggest limitation in this research were the events and restrictions surrounding COVID-19. The initial process of this research was to interview different religions about the views on gender and LGBTQIA ideologies. However, gaining access to different religions was not possible due to the time limit of the research and also Covid-19 restrictions. With stay-at-home orders for most of the 2020-year, participant observation was no longer an option. This is an important part of the methods often implemented by anthropologists and something I was not able to pursue. During participant observation one can introduce themselves to the selected audience, participate in certain activities that are related to the participants and make connections. Having all communication done online can be risky and scary to participants because they have no idea who the researcher is. How can someone tell all the details of their life to an individual they just met online? Being able to attend an affirming church would have been great in order to see how these services might differ from those that are not as accepting.

A second limitation was having all interviews be done through zoom. Interviews in person can offer more information that online meetings cannot offer. Being able to see the body language of participants can be crucial to identifying what questions might need more elaboration but also might be a sensitive topic and find a way to move on from that question on to the next. With online interviews, there is the need to have a good internet access, which in the case of

the researcher was not so. there were moments when the internet was unstable and what was said by participants was not heard or recorded. Being solely online also limits the pool of participants in which can be interviewed. Not everyone has access to the internet or can use such applications and technology equipment. One last limitation in this research what is the small sample size. It would be interesting to see if a larger sample size would affect the results and hypothesis of this research. Would there be a variety of topics discussed in a larger group or would they stay the same? Increasing the sample size would also include a variety of ages predominantly in older generations.

Future Research

Future research would involve taking this project a step further and involving men into to the participant pool. what do men have to say about gender ideologies and feminism. it would be interesting to even do couple interviews and see how they both interact with each other when asked these topics. Another implementation that would be interesting to add in both groups would be the used of focus groups. would the responses change if they are in a larger group discussing such issues or would the same topics be brought up. I would also like to go to affirming churches and be able to interview church officials, pastors, or anyone in a position of power and ask them questions. The questions asked will be similar to the ones asked to the participants in this study but as well as questions on how they transitioned two in affirming church. It would also be

interesting to see how those who are in charge of preaching the word of God in an affirming church have to say about bible interpretation.

Concluding Remarks

In the end this research project revealed that Evangelical women align their feminist beliefs according to what Pat Gundry defines as biblical feminist and that an Evangelical feminist reading of the bible is still forming. Establishing an Evangelical feminist reading of the bible will not be easy, but it is possible. With regards to Evangelical LGBTQIA+ folks the project revealed that a relationship with God is the main focus in keeping your faith strong even when other members of the Evangelical community disagree with them.

APPENDIX A:
INSTRUCTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



March 19, 2021

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Expedited Review

IRB-FY2021-224

Status: Approved

Ms. Hareem Khan and Prof. Rubi Cibrian Llamas
CSBS - Anthropology, CSBS - Geography
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San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Ms. Llamas and Prof. Khan:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Controversial Topics in Evangelical Religions. View on Feminism, Sexuality, LGBTQ+, and Masculinity " has been reviewed and reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of CSU, San Bernardino. The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk and benefits of the study except to ensure the protection of human participants. Important Note: This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional campus approvals which may be required including access to CSUSB campus facilities and affiliate campuses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Visit the Office of Academic Research website for more information at <https://www.csusb.edu/academic-research>.

The study is approved as of March 19, 2021. The study will require an annual administrative check-in (annual report) on the current status of the study on March 19, 2022. Please use the renewal form to complete the annual report.

If your study is closed to enrollment, the data has been de-identified, and you're only analyzing the data - you may close the study by submitting the Closure Application Form through the Cayuse IRB system. Please note the Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is due for renewal. Ensure you file your protocol renewal and continuing review form through the Cayuse IRB system to keep your protocol current and active unless you have completed your study. Please note a lapse in your approval may result in your not being able to use the data collected during the lapse in your approval.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following as mandated by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) federal regulations 45 CFR 46 and CSUSB IRB policy. The forms (modification, renewal, unanticipated/adverse event, study closure) are located in the Cayuse IRB System with instructions provided on the IRB Applications, Forms, and Submission Webpage. Failure to notify the IRB of the following requirements may

APPENDIX B:
CONSENT FORM IN ENGLISH

INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to understand how observers of Evangelicalism express their views on gender and sexuality. This study is being advised by Dr. Hareem Khan a professor of Anthropology at California State University; however, the research will be conducted by Rubi Cibrian Llamas, Master's student in the Social Science and Globalization program at California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this study is to hear the voices of women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community who uphold Evangelical beliefs. The central aim of this work is to explore how the women and LGBTQIA+ FOLKS potentially disrupt the stereotypes present in media. This project is going ask questions about your experiences in the faith that relate to gender and sexuality in order to form a new conversation around topics that, to the outside world seem 'too conservative'.

DESCRIPTION:

As a participant of this study, you will be asked about your experiences of being a woman or a member of the LGBTQIA+ community in Evangelicalism. The interview will be audio and video recorded using Zoom technology. The study is part of an MA thesis that explores religious identity and global discourses around feminism and sexuality.

PARTICIPATION:

You may refuse to participate in the study at any point in the process. If you change your mind about being involved in the study, it is your right to quit before as well as after the interview is recorded.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

The information collected in this study will be used towards the student's thesis. It will not be provided to any external agencies. If you choose to opt out of the interview, all of the data from the recordings will be permanently destroyed from all possible storage sites. The researcher is the only individual who will have access to the audio and video recording and the recording, itself, will never be shared in any public space. Once this project is completed, all recordings will be saved in a secure location that is password protect and only accessible by the researcher. Please note that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, since research documents are not protected from subpoena.

DURATION:

Your participation in the interview will take approximately 45 minutes. If more time is needed, additional interviews may be scheduled separately with consent.

RISKS:

While there are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this project, if you experience any discomfort or inconveniences from the time spent with the researcher, you may opt out of the interview at any time. If they are any emotional distress expressed to the researcher for participating, I will share resources to which they can communicate with. I offer the LGBTQIA+ national hotline [national hotline - GLBT NATIONAL HELP CENTER \(glbthotline.org\)](https://www.glbthotline.org) as well as the women in distress national hotline [24-Hour Crisis Hotline | Women In Distress](https://www.womenindistress.org).

BENEFITS:

There are no benefits to the study other than letting the voices of the women and LGBTQIA+ community members be heard by those who view their religion as 'oppressive'.

VIDEO/AUDIO RECORDING:

As part of this project, the researcher would like your permission to keep audio and video recordings for research purposes. Please indicate below the use of the audio/video recordings to which you are willing to consent. This is completely voluntary and up to you. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings, and they will not be shared with other individuals or groups.

- Yes, you may audio record me during the interview.
- No, you may not audio record me during the interview.
- Yes, you may video record me during the interview.
- No, you may not video record me during the interview.

CONTACT:

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

Dr. Hareem khan
Department of Anthropology
Program of Ethnic Studies
California State University, San Bernardino

Hareem.khan@csusb.edu

Or the researcher:

Rubi Cibrian

Department of Social Science and Globalization

Master's Program

California State University, San Bernardino

rubisthesis@gmail.com

If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the Institutional Review Board Compliance Officer at CSU San Bernardino at 909.537.7588.

RESULTS:

The results of this study will be incorporated into the researcher's MA thesis and portions of the findings may be presented in classroom seminars and symposiums. The confidentiality and anonymity of the individuals interviewed will be strictly adhered to.

CONFIRMATION STATEMENT:

I have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

X

Charlie Doe

APPENDIX C:
CONSENT FORM IN SPANISH

Consentimiento Informado

Está invitado a participar en una encuesta en línea basada en la web Sobre puntos de vista sobre género y sexualidad desde perspectivas evangélicas. Este es un proyecto de investigación que está llevando a cabo Rubi Cibrian, estudiante de CSU San Bernardino. Debería tardar aproximadamente entre 10 y 15 minutos en completarse.

PARTICIPACIÓN

Su participación en esta encuesta es voluntaria. Puede negarse a participar en la investigación o salir de la encuesta en cualquier momento sin penalización. Puede negarse a responder cualquier pregunta en particular que no desee responder por cualquier motivo.

BENEFICIOS

No recibirá ningún beneficio directo por participar en este estudio de investigación. Sin embargo, sus respuestas pueden ayudarnos a recopilar los datos necesarios para crear los datos cualitativos requeridos.

RIESGOS

Existe el riesgo de que algunas de las preguntas sean delicadas.

CONFIDENCIALIDAD

Las respuestas de su encuesta se enviarán a un enlace en Qualtrics donde los datos se almacenarán en un formato electrónico protegido por contraseña. Qualtrics no recopila información de identificación como su nombre, dirección de correo electrónico o dirección IP. Por lo tanto, sus respuestas permanecerán anónimas. La encuesta pregunta por su, que solo es visible para el investigador. En el proceso de entrevista, el investigador le preguntará si le gustaría usar un pseudo-nombre para el propósito del trabajo de tesis, que estará escrito en un lugar seguro y protegido con contraseña. Nadie podrá identificarlo a usted ni a sus respuestas, y nadie sabrá si participó o no en el estudio.

CONTACTO

Si tiene preguntas en cualquier momento sobre el estudio o los procedimientos, puede comunicarse con mi supervisor de investigación, el profesor Hareem Khan a través de la dirección de correo electrónico en Hareem.khan@csusb.edu o con el investigador en rubisthesis@gmail.com

Si cree que no ha sido tratado de acuerdo con las descripciones en este formulario, o que sus derechos como participante en la investigación no se han respetado durante el curso

de este proyecto, o si tiene alguna pregunta, inquietud o queja que desee dirección a otra persona que no sea el investigador, puede ponerse en contacto con el asesor del proyecto:

Dr. Hareem Khan
Departamento de Antropología
Programa de estudios étnicos
Universidad Estatal de California, San Bernardino
Hareem.khan@csusb.edu

Oh la Investigadora:
Rubi Cibrian
Departamento de Ciencias Sociales y Globalización
Programa de Maestría
Universidad Estatal de California, San Bernardino
rubisthesis@gmail.com

CONSENTIMIENTO ELECTRÓNICO: Seleccione su opción a continuación. Puede imprimir una copia de este formulario de consentimiento para sus registros. Hacer clic en el botón "Aceptar" indica que

- Ha leído la información anterior
- Aceptas participar voluntariamente
- Tiene 18 años o más.

Estoy de Acuerdo

No estoy de Acuerdo

X

Signature

Fecha: _____

APPENDIX D:
RECRUITMENT FLYER

Views on Gender and Sexuality from Evangelical Perspectives research

- **Are you 18 and older?**
- **Do you want others outside of your faith know about your experiences in an evangelical religion?**

If you answered yes to both of these questions, you may be eligible to participate in an IRB approved research project that is designed to include and uplift the voices of those who are seen as “marginalized” in their faith when it comes to topics around gender and sexuality. This project will be carried out by Rubi Cibrian, an MA student in the Globalization and Social Sciences Program at California State University, San Bernardino.

You will be asked to participate in an interview where you will be asked to share your experiences. This research will support continued work done on the intersections of religious, gender, and LGBTQIA+ identities.

If you would like to learn more or if you wish to participate in the study, please contact Rubi Cibrian at rubithesis@gmail.com

ALL INTERVIEWS WILL BE DONE THROUGH ZOOM

APPENDIX E:
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH

Questions for Research

1. What is your name and age for the purpose of this interview. As stated in the consent form, you will remain anonymous in any writing produced from this research and your identity will be protected to the best of my ability.
2. Do you identify as male, female, non-binary, or other?
 - How else do you identify?
 - Do you identify as part of a religious or spiritual community?
 - what are your pronouns?
3. How long have you have been an observer of XYZ faith?
 - Follow up question: how far back does this religious identification go in your family?
4. Is reading the bible and praying important to you?
 - How often do you read the bible/ pray?
 - Do you read in a group or alone and why?
 - Do you attend church? Pre and during COVID?
5. How is the bible a guide for the way to lead your life? How so?
6. Could you explain what conviction means to you?
7. What are your beliefs on gender roles?
8. What do you believe the bible say about gender?
9. To some the bible is seen as harsh on women and in favor of men? How do you respond to those people?
10. What does it mean to be a woman in your faith? What roles are most associated with womanhood/femininity?
11. Are there any woman figures in the bible who are your role models? And why?
12. Why do you think God incorporated stories of women like Ruth, Esther, and others?
13. In your opinion, can a women lead in the church. Why or why not?
14. What does feminism mean to you?
15. What does the bible say about feminism?
16. Do you think feminism could mean different things?
17. Do you consider Ruth, Esther, Noemi, Abigail, or any other major women in the bible to be feminist?
18. Do you think religious practices/ideologies should adapt to modern times? For example, should the bible be interpreted to uplift feminism and gender inclusivity?

Questions specific for LGBTQIA+ Community.

The following questions from above will be included in interviews with members of the LGBTQIA+ Communities along with ones listed below.

1. What is your name and age for the purpose of this interview. As stated in the consent form, you will remain anonymous in any writing produced from this research and your identity will be protected to the best of my ability.
2. Do you identify as male, female, non-binary, or other?
 - How else do you identify?
 - Do you identify as part of a religious or spiritual community?
 - what are your pronouns?
3. How long have you have been an observer of XYZ faith?
 - Follow up question: how far back does this religious identification go in your family?
4. Is reading the bible and praying important to you?
 - How often do you read the bible/ pray?
 - Do you read in a group or alone and why?
 - Do you attend church? Pre and during COVID?
5. How is the bible a guide for the way to lead your life? How so?
6. Could you explain what conviction means to you?
7. What are your beliefs on gender roles?
8. What do you believe the bible say about gender?
9. Do you identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ Community?
 - Specifically, how do you identify?
 - Has been LGBTQIA+ affected your relationship with your faith?
 - If it did, how did it shape your relationship with the church moving forward?
 - [if participant left the church] Would you ever consider going back?
10. When did you first realize you were queer (or part of the LGBTQIA+ community?)
11. Did you ever feel like giving up on your faith?
12. Some Christians say the bible disapproves of LGBTQIA+ Folks. How do you feel about this?
 - What are your interpretations of the bible and verses used to condemn particular sexualities?

13. Do you still have ties to people in the community? Have you developed alternate "chosen families?"
14. How did the church react?

APPENDIX F:
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN SPANISH

Preguntas para la investigación

1. ¿Cuál es su nombre y edad a los efectos de esta entrevista? Como se indica en el formulario de consentimiento, permanecerá en el anonimato en cualquier escrito producido a partir de esta investigación y su identidad estará protegida lo mejor que pueda.
2. ¿Se identifica como hombre, mujer, no binario u otro?
 - ¿De qué otra manera te identificas?
 - ¿Se identifica como parte de una comunidad religiosa o espiritual?
 - ¿Cuáles son tus pronombres?
3. ¿Cuánto tiempo ha sido un observador de la fe XYZ?
 - Pregunta de seguimiento: ¿hasta dónde se remonta esta identificación religiosa en su familia?
4. ¿Es importante para usted leer la Biblia y orar?
 - ¿Con qué frecuencia lees la Biblia / oras?
 - ¿Lees en grupo o solo y por qué?
 - ¿Asistes a la iglesia? ¿Pre y durante COVID?
5. ¿Cómo es la Biblia una guía para el camino a seguir en su vida? ¿Cómo es eso?
6. ¿Podría explicar qué significa para usted la convicción?
7. ¿Cuáles son sus creencias sobre los roles de género?
8. ¿Qué crees que dice la Biblia sobre el género?
9. ¿Para algunos la Biblia es vista como dura para las mujeres y a favor de los hombres? ¿Cómo respondes a esas personas?
10. ¿Qué significa ser mujer en tu fe? ¿Qué roles están más asociados con la femineidad / femineidad?
11. ¿Hay figuras femeninas en la Biblia que sean sus modelos para seguir? ¿Y por qué?
12. ¿Por qué crees que Dios incorporó historias de mujeres como Rut, Ester y otras?
13. En su opinión, ¿puede una mujer liderar en la iglesia? ¿Por qué o por qué no?
14. ¿Qué significa el feminismo para ti?
15. ¿Qué dice la Biblia sobre el feminismo?
16. ¿Crees que el feminismo podría significar cosas diferentes?
17. ¿Consideras feminista a Ruth, Esther, Noemi, Abigail o cualquier otra mujer importante en la Biblia?
18. ¿Crees que las prácticas / ideologías religiosas deberían adaptarse a los tiempos modernos? Por ejemplo, ¿debería interpretarse la Biblia para elevar el feminismo y la inclusión de género?

APPENDIX G:
SURVEY QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH

Survey Questions.

1. What is your name?
2. Would you like to remain anonymous throughout the research? If yes, would you like to choose your own pseudonym?
3. what is your age?
4. what is your religion?
5. How often do you pray/ read the bible?
6. Do you consider yourself to be committed to your religious teachings?
7. To what level, do you consider yourself to be religious?
8. Which one statement would you agree about the scriptures of your religion?
9. In your opinion, how will you describe God? (You can choose multiple options)
10. Do you believe there is a place for people after death, who have done good deeds (heaven) and for those who have done bad (Hell)
11. If you wish to answer what is your political party preference?
12. Would you consider yourself a conservative?
13. Highest level of education?

APPENDIX H:
SURVEY QUESTIONS IN SPANISH

1. ¿Cuál es tu nombre?
2. ¿Le gustaría permanecer anónimo durante la investigación? En caso de que si, ¿le gustaría elegir su propio seudónimo?
3. ¿Cuál es tu edad?
4. ¿Cuál es tu religión?
5. ¿Con qué frecuencia ora / lee la Biblia?
6. ¿Se considera comprometido a sus enseñanzas religiosas?
7. ¿Se considera usted religioso?
8. ¿Cuál frase está de acuerdo con las escrituras de su religión?
9. En su opinión, ¿cómo describiría a Dios? (Puede elegir varias opciones)
10. ¿Crees que hay un lugar para las personas después de la muerte, que han hecho buenas obras (cielo) y para las que han hecho mal (infierno)?
11. Si desea responder, ¿cuál es su partido político preferido?
12. ¿Se consideraría conservador?
13. ¿Nivel de educación más alto?

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