CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Promoting the Inclusion of LGBTQ+ Students: The Role of the Honors College in Faith-Based Colleges and Universities

Paul E. Prill
Lipscomb University

This chapter explores how honors college deans and directors at faith-based colleges and universities can facilitate the inclusion of the LGBTQ+ students who attend their universities. The essay will outline the particular problems that faith-based institutions confront when working with sexual minority students, and then it will suggest some remedies, both in climate and curriculum, for creating a more inclusive environment for those honors students. Before this essay deals directly with those issues, some introductory material related to the climate at faith-based schools will help frame the unique situation that honors deans and directors face.

Perhaps the main differences between faith-based universities and their secular counterparts are, first, faith-based schools are generally more mission driven than secular schools; second, faculty at faith-based schools often share a common commitment to a set of orthodox beliefs regarding the faith of that institution; and third, their students engage in a conversation about the ways that claims of faith and claims of academic disciplines support and critique each other. (In using the term "faith-based," I am restricting my focus to Christian universities with honors colleges and programs and thus have not explored institutions tied to other faith traditions, like Judaism, Islam, or Buddhism, that may engage in honors education.)

While every university has a mission statement, those declarations are often generic. For example, the University of Tennessee is guided by the following broad statement: "Serving all Tennesseans and beyond through education, discovery and outreach that enables strong economic, social and environmental well-being" (University of Tennessee). Contrast that with the two-page mission statement of the University of Notre Dame, which details its commitment to freedom of inquiry, to excellence in teaching and scholarship, and to the fostering of an academic community grounded in Catholic teaching (University of Notre Dame). Likewise, Southern Methodist University (Southern Methodist University) and Texas Christian University (Texas Christian University) pledge a commitment to academic excellence and freedom of inquiry, with a nod to the ethical and moral claims of their respective religious polities.

As one moves to the evangelical and fundamentalist universities, mission statements become more pointed in their reference to Christianity and its practice. For example, Azusa Pacific University's reads, "Azusa Pacific University is an evangelical Christian community of disciples and scholars who seek to advance the work of God in the world through academic excellence in liberal arts and professional programs of higher education that encourage students to develop a Christian perspective of truth and life" (Azusa Pacific University). Liberty University states that it "develops Christ-centered men and women with the values, knowledge, and skills essential for impacting the world. Here we *Train Champions for*

Christ" (Liberty University). Such mission statements presume that all administrators, faculty, and staff will be active disciples in their faith traditions and will work to foster discipleship in students in the attempt to integrate faith and learning in the classroom and in campus life.

This integration of faith and learning also constitutes a fundamental difference between faith-based schools and their secular counterparts (Holmes). On its website, the University of Notre Dame claims that one of its distinctive goals is "to provide a forum where, through free inquiry and open discussion, the various lines of Catholic thought may intersect with all the forms of knowledge found in the arts, sciences, professions, and every other area of human scholarship and creativity" (University of Notre Dame). An examination of mainline Protestant colleges and universities reveals similar commitments to an integrative approach. Even the schools attached to the most fundamentalist religious traditions aspire to offer the very best in higher education (Laats; Swezey and Ross), though for the evangelical and fundamentalist colleges and universities that sense of integration runs the gamut from "defender of the faith/considerable indoctrination" to "seeker of the truth/intellectually open" with the preponderance of evangelical schools falling in the latter category (Ringenberg xx).

The mission statement also serves as a standard for determining policies for staff and students about behavior and dress and in some cases for determining how particular subjects may be discussed inside an academic discipline. Some schools, like Liberty University, adhere to a "young earth" position, that the universe was created in six historical days and that humans were created, not evolved. Many promote a complementarian view of male and female relationships, believing that the Bible assigns church leadership only to men. Nearly every more theologically conservative school affirms that marriage is between one man and one woman. So long as these views are spelled out in public documents that prospective faculty acknowledge as a condition of employment, those schools are not in violation of the guidelines for academic freedom as expressed by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

Since a faith-based school cannot possibly lay out all the areas it might at some future time deem troublesome, problems arise. For example, Wheaton College recently faced accusations of violating the academic freedom of Professor Larycia Hawkins, who wore a hijab to class to express solidarity with Muslim women and who reminded students that Muslims, like Christians and Jews, were monotheistic and shared much in common with the Christian community (Flaherty). Faculty at Wheaton expressed considerable concern that the reasons for the firing were not tied directly to any published proscription. Peter Walhout, chair of Wheaton's chemistry department, said he does not know how Hawkins breached that contract and worries that she has been punished based on a particular interpretation: "I am concerned that there may be many more unspoken interpretations and ramifications of the statement of faith that faculty don't know about and could unwittingly transgress" (Pashman). Likewise, Michael Mangis, a psychology professor since 1989, said he worries that faculty are being measured against the "social taboos of evangelical subculture" rather than the school's twelve core beliefs (Pashman).

If any issue falls within the social taboos of Christian subculture, it is the issue of sexual minorities, which potentially impacts the ability of honors colleges to recruit and retain students. Difficulties in denominations can influence the ways faith-based schools are perceived. For example, Pink Menno advocates for LGBTQ+ persons in general in the Mennonite Church as well as bringing pressure to bear on schools like Goshen College. The roilings in the United Methodist Church over the past six years and the ambiguities in other mainline Protestant denominations, such as the Christian Reformed Church, create similar uncertainties for their colleges and their employees and students. The theological commitments of each religious tradition determine to a large extent the nature of the challenge created by ambiguities. Many mainline Protestant denominations (United Church of Christ, Presbyterial Church USA, Episcopal Church, Disciples of Christ) have allowed local churches to determine whether or not to hire LGBTQ+ priests/ministers (single or married) and to perform same-sex weddings. Typically, universities affiliated with these groups provide extensive

support systems for their LGBTQ+ students and hire LGBTQ+ faculty. The schools affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church present a mixed bag. The doctrinal position of Catholicism is that same-sex attraction is an intrinsically disordered desire, requiring those who experience such attraction to live celibate lives (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2357–59). Most recently, Pope Francis has reaffirmed Catholic opposition to priests blessing same-sex marriages despite his compassionate language about LGBTQ+ persons (Harlan and Bailey). Nevertheless, over 130 Catholic institutions, both large and small, offer support services for their LGBTQ+ students (New Ways Ministry). In 2013, 307 of 682 faith-based schools had approved LGBT+ groups on their campuses, and 375 schools had statements of non-discrimination inclusive of sexual orientation (Coley), a figure that has likely risen in the past decade.

The struggles in the denominations and churches spill over to struggles in the colleges and universities. The decade of the 2010s was especially tumultuous for evangelical and fundamentalist faith-based institutions on practices associated with sexual minorities (Wheeler; Wolff et al.). Many schools made the news after protests by students about campus policies or after the firing of faculty on their campuses. Those schools included Biola University, Azusa Pacific University, George Fox University, Gordon College, Wheaton College, North Park University, Baylor University, Belmont University, Calvin University, Eastern University, Pepperdine University, and Whitworth University. A 2011 Dear Colleague letter sent by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to schools across the nation encouraged letting transgender students use restrooms fitting their gender identity. In 2015, the Supreme Court decision *Obergefell v. Hodges* legitimized same-sex marriage in all 50 states. These actions prompted many faith-based schools to apply for Title IX exemptions; their justification was that schools should not be forced to hire sexual minority faculty or staff in contradiction to their expressed religious convictions about marriage and homosexuality (Bader; Buzuvis and Newhall; Campbell; Hammill; Stack; Zylstra). Around the same time, two Mennonite schools, Eastern Mennonite University and Goshen College, decided to leave the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU),

a consortium of mainly evangelical institutions, after they decided they would hire sexual minority faculty, single or married. Two other schools, Union University and Oklahoma Baptist University, also chose to leave the CCCU.

The pressure on faith-based schools has not abated in the 2020s. In response to the conflict in the CCCU, the organization crafted a piece of legislation in 2021 entitled "Fairness for All" (HR 1440), which would require including the language "sexual orientation and gender identity" in statements of nondiscrimination, and it would protect religious institutions that have as an article of faith that marriage is between one man and one woman and that sexual intimacy should only be practiced inside a married relationship (Council of Christian Colleges and Universities; Shellnutt). In response to the "Fairness for All" language about sexual orientation and gender identity, 53 Christian colleges, universities, and seminaries formed the International Alliance for Christian Education in 2021.

In March 2021, the Religious Exemption Accountability Project (REAP) filed a class-action suit on behalf of 33 plaintiffs against 25 Christian colleges and universities for alleged Title IX discrimination against their LGBTQ+ students (Redden, "Religious"; Religious). In April 2021, the faculty at Seattle Pacific University voted "No Confidence" in the Board of Directors (72% in favor) after the Board refused to change the hiring standards to include sexual minority persons (Takahama). A subsequent protest by students over the policy culminated in a fundraising effort to support a lawsuit against the university. As many faith-based colleges and universities continue to navigate the tensions between their historic positions and their sexual minority students, positive shifts in public opinion and Christian opinion about same-sex marriage and discrimination against sexual minorities have created additional challenges for recruitment and retention (Pew Research Center; Public Religion Research Institute).

All these social tensions surrounding sexual minority students have highlighted problems such students regularly face, chief among them being the struggle to reconcile two seemingly opposing identities, sexual minority and Christian. While the treatment of homosexuals by churches alternated between relaxed and severe

during the Middle Ages and Renaissance (Boswell; Johansson and Percy), most churches, until recently, have taken an aggressively negative view of any sexual expression outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. And while many adolescents struggle to accept their sexual orientation/gender identity, those with a strong religious affiliation have an even greater struggle (Gibbs; Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry). Catholic theologian James Allison put it in these graphic terms, "The Christian story was specifically presented to us as one within which we could only inscribe ourselves by agreeing to mutilate our souls" (49).

The resultant impact of this struggle on physical and mental health has been documented for years with, unfortunately, very little change in the statistical likelihood of harm (Wolff and Himes). A meta-analysis of over 25 published studies revealed that LBG persons were twice as likely as their heterosexual peers to attempt suicide (King et al.; Lytle et al.). In 2012, the Surgeon General found that 30% of sexual minority adolescents compared to 8–10% of all adolescents reported suicide attempts (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). A 2020 report by the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (GAP) entitled *Faith Communities and the Well-Being of LGBT Youth* found that sexual minority students are about twice as likely to be bullied or use illicit drugs, more than twice as likely to feel persistently sad or hopeless, more than three times as likely to inject illegal drugs and consider suicide or make a suicide plan, and more than four times as likely to attempt suicide. Among youth aged 10–19 who died by suicide from 2003–2017, LGBT youth were five times more likely to have been bullied than their non-LGBT peers (20.7% vs. 4.4%); among LGBT youth aged 10–13 years who died by suicide, 67.7% had been bullied. The proportion of sexual minority youth who have attempted suicide has increased in recent years to nearly 40%. National homeless organizations estimate that up to 40% of homeless youth are LGBT (Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry).

For transgender youth, the numbers are worse. Grant et al. found that 41% of transgender persons had reported a suicide attempt. The GAP report noted rates of suicidal thoughts two to four times higher than their peers who are not transgender and rates of suicide

attempts three to six times higher. Transgender youth experience two to three times the risk of physical and sexual assault compared to their peers. Given such sobering statistics, honors college faculty and staff must be proactive in instituting intentional programming in support of their LGBTQ+ students.

Importantly, religion by itself is not an issue for any of the national LGBTQ+ advocacy groups as long as sexual minority students are treated the same as all other students. Shane Windemere of Campus Pride told *The Christian Post* that the Campus Pride Shame Index focuses not on whether or not a school considers homosexuality a sin: the more fundamental question is how LGBTQ+ students are treated on campus. He noted particularly that Notre Dame, despite its clear teaching that homosexuality is inherently disordered desire, recognizes its LGBT+ student group and does not single out these students for any special discriminatory action (Gryboski). The Human Rights Campaign, the largest of the national advocacy groups, has opposed the Fairness for All legislation (Human Rights Campaign), but at the same time it has endorsed the "Do No Harm" amendment to the Religious Freedom Act (Berg-Brousseau). Finally, the *Faith Communities and the Well-Being of LGBT Youth* report concludes that "when LGBT youth experience acceptance and support by family and faith communities, they are more likely to have positive health outcomes and be protected from risks such as suicide, depression, and substance abuse. Acceptance improves self-esteem in LGBT youth and allows them to believe they can live happy adult lives" (Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry 8). While balancing historical doctrinal positions with empathy for sexual minority students poses significant challenges (New; Noble), many universities have paved the way for broader acceptance without compromising their beliefs about marriage between one man and one woman and sexual expression outside of marriage.

If religion can play a significant role in helping sexual minority students manage their college experience, how can honors college faculty, staff, and administrators at faith-based colleges and universities assist in supporting those students' academic and personal journeys? Recent data collected by REAP suggest there are scores of

students who need such support: its survey found that "11 percent of students attending Christian colleges identified as non-heterosexual," 22% admitted to a same-sex attraction, while 2% identified as gender nonconforming (Redden, "Being"). First and foremost, honors colleges at faith-based institutions should be a safe space for honors sexual minority students, and, for that matter, for all sexual minority students. In an ideal world, all universities would be open to having a recognized LGBTQ+ group. Among those colleges and universities who are part of the evangelical CCCU, Calvin College, Campbell University, Eastern University, North Park University, and Pepperdine University have student organizations for their sexual minority students. Eastern Mennonite University and Goshen College both also have student groups (Noble) and, as cited above, over 50% of faith-based schools have some kind of school-sanctioned services, including groups, for their sexual minority students. Some schools such as Samford University, an evangelical school in Birmingham, AL, have instituted a campus-wide safe spaces program where faculty undergo training and then post a sticker on their door. Other schools such as Gordon College and Biola University have online alumni groups, none sanctioned by their schools, where current students can converse or meet up with local alumni if they are looking for an understanding ear (Robin). In fact, in a recent article examining the increasing role alumni are playing in supporting such students, Liam Knox notes that because "LGBTQ alumni of Christian institutions often felt isolated and traumatized during their college years," they now want to work "to make sure current students have it better."

If a school does not have a safe spaces program and will not likely create one, deans and directors can still identify faculty across the campus who are allies for sexual minority students. In every one of the universities mentioned earlier, students were able to find one or more faculty members on their campuses to whom they could turn, faculty who were not trying to "talk about their sin" or "pray the gay away" or who, without the student's permission, would pass their names on to the counseling center or to student life or share it with other faculty and thus risk potential disciplinary action due to their identities (Linley and Nguyen). Since normative

controls in faith-based institutions are extensive and often intrusive—for example, LGBTQ+ students may feel policed by faculty or other students—it is important to provide signaling for students so they can identify true allies. (A related challenge for employees is the potential risk associated with being an ally.) Calling attention to National Coming Out Day (October 11) and Transgender Day of Remembrance (November 20—a day to remember all transgender persons who died either at their own hand or because of violence against them) will also let students in an honors college know that that element of their personhood is seen and acknowledged.

Knowing what policies exist on campus with respect to sexual minority students is critical. As faculty, we know or we find out what policies govern our behavior and our likely prospects for tenure and promotion. If the school wants evidence of continuing Christian commitment, we want to know exactly what evidence suffices (e.g., church attendance, community and/or missional service, writing for popular Christian publications). Do we know whether the university's statement of non-discrimination includes the terms "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" in addition to gender, race, and religion? Do we know whether statements about sexual behavior among students on or off campus include specific language about homosexual acts? Do we know whether statements about appropriate dress might apply to transgender or gender non-binary students by making it a violation for a person to wear clothing typically worn by the opposite sex? Do we know if the university has applied for a Title IX exemption for sexual orientation and/or gender identity? Universities typically do not communicate these matters to the faculty, nor do they post it on their web pages. One can locate that information on the Department of Education web page, although the DOE did not report such details during the Trump administration and that page has not yet been updated during the Biden administration (U.S. Department of Education). If this information is hard to find, the campus attorney will know about it because that person is responsible for doing the filing. Another important area is knowing if the university counseling center has a check box for sexual minority students on their intake form and if counselors practice reparative therapy for those students. Several of

the schools named in the REAP 2021 lawsuit have been accused by student plaintiffs of still practicing reparative or conversion therapy; several states have passed laws exempting religious institutions (churches, K–12 schools, and colleges) from a ban on the practice; and several more conservative faith-based schools are now returning to conversion therapy.

Once the honors college community operates as a secure space, it can offer a battery of resources for sexual minority students, especially those who may not have access to such information via their other communities on campus. One resource is creating a list of accepting/affirming churches or religious support groups for sexual minority students through resources such as gaychurch.org. On its webpage "Faith Resources for Christians," PFLAG offers a list of organizations in nearly every faith group that support sexual minority members. Other resources are available through the Reformation Project and CenterPeace. In addition to providing resources online, many of these groups sponsor retreats/conferences that students can attend to find support for the intersection of their identity and their faith. Research has also shown that online communities can sometimes provide LGBTQ+ youth more support than in-person communities, reduce their sense of isolation, and put them in touch with educational and medical resources (Charmaraman).

Assembling a small group of books in the honors college library is another positive step. Several autobiographical works can help students appreciate their own struggles with their sexual identities. Justin Lee's *Torn* is one of the first books written by a Christian trying to come to grips with his persistent same-sex attraction (2012). Poignant and honest, Lee runs through the gamut of activities like "pray the gay away" to acceptance and the search for community. In *Washed and Waiting*, Wesley Hill details his determination to be celibate after coming to grips with his same-sex attraction (2016). Sally Gary's two books, *Loves God, Likes Girls* and *Affirming: A Memoir of Faith, Sexuality, and Staying in the Church*, trace her journey to acceptance of her sexual orientation and finally to her belief that she could, as a faithful Christian, marry a same-sex partner.

Several academic books insist that same-sex attraction is neither chosen by the individual nor transient, contrary to popular opinion in many more conservative and some mainline and Roman Catholic churches. While arguing that attraction is not wrong, but practice/behavior is, the authors in this category conclude that sexual minorities must practice celibacy or have a mixed-orientation, heteronormative marriage in order to live as faithful Christian disciples. Robert A. J. Gagnon's *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* provides the most encyclopedic treatment of the topic of same-sex attraction in its historical theological context. Christopher Yuan—ex-gay, Professor of Bible at Moody Bible Institute, and author of *Giving a Voice to the Voiceless* and *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel*—offers the perspective of celibacy from someone who is same-sex attracted. Mark Yarhouse, Director of the Sexual and Gender Identity Institute at Wheaton College, offers a sociological analysis of the topic in *Listening to Sexual Minorities: A Study of Faith and Sexual Identity on Christian College Campuses.*

Other academic books advocate for same-sex marriages. Matthew Vines, founder of the Reformation Project, offers in *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships* an argument written for a more popular audience. David Gushee, Professor of Ethics at Mercer University and a past president of the American Academy of Religion, makes his case to a more academic audience in *Changing Our Mind*. Finally, Robert Song's *Covenant and Calling: Towards a Theology of Same-Sex Relationships* argues for same-sex marriage within a more traditional understanding of marriage as between a man and a woman.

Assembling resources will begin the process of making the invisible visible; it acknowledges the presence of sexual minority students on our campuses and in our honors colleges. But acknowledgment is not inclusion. Acknowledgement only documents a commitment to diversity. Inclusion gives those of diverse backgrounds a voice in policy making and in our classrooms (Chang). One student described creating invisibility for sexual minority students in the negative: "All they had to do was not talk about gay as if it was real. All they had to do was talk about heterosexual families. All they had to do was only address men and women relationships" (Sanders 126). One of

my Hispanic students once told me more directly in the mid-2010s, "Dr. Prill, not only do I not see anyone who looks like me in positions of leadership, I don't *read* anyone who looks like me in my classes." Just as our courses and reading lists used to be dominated by dead white men and their ideas until the canon started opening up with the inclusion of women, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), and non-Western voices, today's courses and reading lists and class discussions too often create a culture of silence by implicitly reinforcing heteronormativity at every turn (Dennis). Beginning with the Stonewall riots in 1969 and the election of Harvey Milk, the first openly gay elected official in the United States, and the appointment of a gay Secretary of Transportation and a transgender Secretary of Health and Human Services, the meaning of the term "homosexual" and the place of sexual minority persons in society have become increasingly contested. (Alonso; Ambrosino). Certainly, *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015), legalizing gay marriage across all 50 states, and *Bostock v. Clayton County*, *GA* (2020), prohibiting employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, have opened up more opportunities, perhaps even created imperatives, for faith-based schools to talk more openly about the changes that have occurred in American society, giving voice and identity to our sexual minority students.

One of the purposes of honors education, according to the National Collegiate Honors Council's "Definition of Honors Education," is to "include a distinctive learner-directed environment and philosophy" in a way that is consistent with the mission of the university. Since deans, directors, and faculty of honors colleges generally have more flexibility in determining curricular offerings required inside the college, we are in a pivotal position to reduce the silence around sexual minority issues on our campuses and create more inclusive environments. Most of us will not, admittedly, have the luxury of creating a full-blown curriculum, although DePaul University, the largest Catholic university in the U.S., became the first faith-based school to offer a queer studies program (DeRose). Nonetheless, we can integrate the very best of academic research within a commitment to a Christian worldview, finding spaces inside of existing courses, advising students about contract

or thesis research topics, or creating a course designed to feature this research (Linley and Nguyen). Indiana Wesleyan University has a graduate-level counseling course (cns520) with an LGBTQ+ component, and Seattle Pacific University has a continuing education course (EDCT 5714) entitled "Letters of Equality (LGBTQ Plus)." The often-interdisciplinary nature of honors curricula and use of practices such as honors contracts that create flexibility in course design suggest honors colleges are particularly rich spaces for students to explore issues related to queer studies. Creating courses or topics within courses and encouraging independent student research does not require that either faculty or an institution become affirming of same-sex behavior or same-sex marriage or of transgender identity if those are the doctrinal positions of the university. But if we are serious about the integration of faith and learning, we should welcome the opportunity to open up a conversation that includes our sexual minority students.

In that spirit, based on research by Linley and Nguyen, here are some topics or modules that might be incorporated into our regular curricular offerings. Since almost all faith-based schools have a religion requirement that may or may not include a study of the Bible, these courses provide a natural and easy opportunity for raising contested questions that have an impact on LGBTQ+ students. The American Bible Society estimates that, starting with the first English translation of the Bible by William Tyndale in 1526, there are almost 900 translations and paraphrases of the Bible in English (American Bible Society), although only about 50 have substantial use (Antonio). Students typically get some instruction about how translators wrestle with original languages and the original cultural context in an effort to produce a version both readable to the audience and faithful to the Hebrew and Greek. The apostle Paul uses a neologism in 1 Corinthians (*arsenokoites*). That word now appears as "homosexuals" in most English translations, but that translation first appeared in English in the 1946 Revised Standard Version where it was challenged in committee, with a few members expressing concern that it would be used to persecute gays and lesbians (White; Jordan). In the past 30 years, scholars across the theological spectrum have argued whether Paul is talking only about the rape/

shame culture in existence since before the days of Sodom and the pederasty that was also present in Paul's day or whether Paul intends for consensual same-sex relationships also to be condemned. Arguing for the latter are Robert Gagnon (2001) and William Webb (2009), while James Brownson (2013), David Gushee (2015), Sarah Ruden (2010), Robin Scroggs (1983), and Karen R. Keen (2018) argue that Paul does not condemn consensual relationships. Since almost all students and faculty rely on translations to understand how Christianity should respond to social events as well as to personal matters of salvation, the ambiguities around this term seem like a good conversation for honors students seeking to integrate faith and the best scholarship available to us. This topic could easily be incorporated into an introductory course in religion or a course on the world of the Bible. Likewise, the current debate about the theology of marriage could become a subtopic in several Bible courses (Song; Williams; Wolterstorff). Further scholarship on the issue of the theology of sexuality can be found in *The Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality, and Gender* (Thatcher).

Biology offers a second avenue for asking questions inside the intersection of faith and learning. The most common understanding of "God created them male and female" would suggest a sexual dimorphism that challenges *prima facie* the notion of sexual minority status. Indeed, until genetic information about men and women became available, most scientists supported a male-female genetic binary (Messer; Johnson). Most Roman Catholics and evangelical and fundamentalist Christians support that binary. Genetics has helped us to see that the male (XY chromosomes) and female (XX chromosomes) provide a typical but incomplete picture of human sex characteristics. Anne Fausto-Sterling has suggested that as many as 2% of births evidence some phenotypic (physical presentation) or genotypic anomaly (true hermaphroditism, Klinefelter Syndrome, Turner Syndrome, and congenital adrenal hyperplasia). While the implications of these anomalies for sexual orientation and gender identity are incomplete (Sax), they do raise questions about how we nuance discussions of assigned sex at birth, one of the major issues in the current public debate about the rights of transgender persons. They also raise ethical questions for parents

and surgeons about whether to assign a sex early in a child's life. A current debate about gender assignment surgery in newborns and adults is taking place (Danker et al.) in the medical community and in the division of bioethics in the National Institutes of Health.

Just as genetics occasions nuance for the expression "male and female" in Genesis, discoveries in zoology invite similar questions for Paul's statement in Romans 1 that homosexuality is "against nature." Historically that phrase has been understood as an affirmation of procreation as the natural end of intercourse, a description of natural "fittedness" between male and female genitalia (Gagnon; Blackford), and the absence of observed homosexual activity in the natural world. While zoology does not address the first two issues, it certainly has weighed in heavily on the last one, with studies over the past two decades documenting the presence of same-sex behavior in most of the phyla in the animal kingdom. (Bagemihl; Kamath et al.). While few scholars make an immediate leap from scientific observation to moral reasoning in favor of homosexuality, those observations have been used in legal arguments challenging the sodomy laws (Owen).

Psychology offers ample opportunities for conversation about issues of concern to sexual minority students. The debate about consensual homosexual relationships does not begin until the mid-to-late nineteenth century (Ulrichs; von Krafft-Ebing) and continues through the Kinsey studies of 1948 and 1953. It was not until 1974 that the American Psychological Association discontinued calling homosexuality a disorder and not until 1987 that it dropped out completely from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (Burton; Drescher). Moreover, debates about the efficacy of reparative or conversion therapy continue today (Lambert; Mallory et al.), especially among more conservative denominations and the universities affiliated with them (Robertson; Rodriguez).

This brief overview of recent scholarship could extend for several more pages. The aforementioned Supreme Court cases along with the appointment of Pete Buttigieg and Rachel Levine and the recent controversies in states seeking to regulate whether or not teens who self-identify as transgender can obtain hormone blockers offer numerous opportunities for discussion in political science.

This politics of sexuality (sodomy laws and HIV/AIDS) extends those opportunities into history. Research on same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex couples can be introduced into religion, sociology, and social work courses. Literature, including graphic novels (Vernon), music, and the arts provide copious options for introducing students to sexual minority voices.

Co-curricular programming can also provide a rich host of opportunities for breaking the silence. Films such as *The Imitation Game*, about how Alan Turing developed one of the first computers to break the secret code used by the Nazis, would appeal to a wide variety of students across disciplines. The film hints at Turing's sexual orientation throughout before openly declaring it, reminding viewers that Turing's suicide was brought on by his forced sterilization. Likewise, *Rent* and its reimagining of Puccini's *La Boheme* invite questions about intertextuality in literature and the politics of AIDS in the 1980s. *Milk* also explores the politics of AIDS, and the documentary *Pray Away* explores the well-documented problems with conversion/reparative therapy practices, a theme also in the films *The Miseducation of Cameron Post* and *For the Bible Tells Me So*. And *1946: The Mistranslation that Shifted a Culture* traces the history of the Revised Standard Version committee and the decision to use homosexuals as a dynamic equivalent of *arsenokoites*, with the feared consequence of widespread religious persecution of LGBTQ+ persons. Other relevant co-curricular programming might include support for student diversity councils, "Pizza with Profs" meetings with faculty conducting research on relevant topics, and place-based learning opportunities, such as City as Text™, that have LGBTQ+-themed itineraries.

I will close with two stories about my students. In the late 2000s, I took a student to an NCHC national conference in Washington, D.C. He informed me that he was going to attend all the sessions on queer studies and queer theology because he knew he would never hear any of that material discussed on the Lipscomb University campus. Perhaps that was a result of self-censorship on the part of the faculty, uncertain at the time about how openly discussing LGBTQ+ literature and issues would be received by their colleagues and by the administration. Things have changed quite

a bit since that conference. The university has a staff person in the Office of Student Life who is a liaison with sexual minority students; our counseling program has a set of well-trained counselors prepared to assist students with whatever anxiety, stress, depression they are feeling as a result of their sexual orientation/gender identity; and several faculty members make at least some mention of issues raised in the above discussion in courses in Bible/theology, sociology, and psychology. Sexual minority students meet as a group informally off campus, albeit without any formal recognition as yet by the administration.

This past year, another student, John Broadwell, completed a Master of Arts degree in public history at Middle Tennessee State University. His thesis was an oral history of the experiences of sexual minority students at Lipscomb University, his alma mater. He interviewed students from the 1960s to the present to see how the climate might have changed. Not that much as it turns out. Shame, guilt, anxiety, closeting, trauma, even suicide attempts and suicides can all be part of being gay, especially at faith-based schools. Broadwell reminds us that LGBTQ+ students have always been on faith-based campuses and always will be. Consistent with mission statements that affirm a commitment to the development of individuals and to the integration of faith and learning, honors deans and directors at faith-based schools should work diligently and compassionately to ensure that our sexual minority students feel fully a part of the community we are trying to create across the campus and inside our honors colleges.

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