



# Hearing the Unheard: Understanding the Lived Religious Experiences of Queer LDS Women in Utah

Maiya Johnson, Dr. Joseph Hellweg & Dr. Sonia Hazard  
Department of Religion, Florida State University



## Introduction

- ❖ LDS Church openly condemns homosexuality through anti-queer doctrine and cultural standards
- ❖ Heterosexual marriage is required to achieve a happy afterlife
- ❖ LDS conversations around homosexuality largely revolve around men only
- ❖ Queer women are left out of the narrative entirely
- ❖ Women's organizations in the LDSC reinforce heterosexual marriage and motherhood
- ❖ **Queer LDS women trapped in the margins of Mormonism**
- ❖ Two million LDS members in Utah
- ❖ Salt Lake City (SLC) houses LDS headquarters
- ❖ SLC is home to a large, vibrant LGBTQ+ community
- ❖ Utah Pride Festival draws in over 100,000 participants every year
- ❖ Received an IDEA Grant from FSU to travel to Utah over summer 2024
- ❖ Participated in Utah LGBTQ+ community (volunteering)
- ❖ Partnered with Flourish Therapy and Dr. Lisa Hansen to locate research participants
  - ❖ Participation requirements: 18+, participated in the LDSC at some point in their lives, identify as LGBTQ+, and identified as a woman during their participation in the LDSC

## Research Questions

- ❖ What kinds of trauma/comfort do queer women experience in the LDS Church?
- ❖ What does support inside or outside of the LDS Church look like? Who is participating in which forms of support?
- ❖ How do queer LDS women categorize themselves concerning the LDS Church?
- ❖ How do queer LDS women correlate their lived religious experiences with their chosen forms of support?



## Methodology

- ❖ Participant observation
- ❖ Informal interviews
- ❖ Network sampling
- ❖ Focus groups
- ❖ **Individual semi-structured focused life history interviews**



## Interview Themes

- ❖ Internalized shame regarding sexuality based on LDS experiences
- ❖ Compulsory heterosexuality
- ❖ Femininity=motherhood and wifehood
- ❖ LGBTQ+ organizations are where queer LDS women find support
- ❖ Difficult to remain in the LDSC if you're a queer woman

## Discussion

### LDS topics

- ❖ 12 out of 13 participants left the LDSC
- ❖ Various identifications regarding Mormon identity ("ex-Mormon," "post-Mormon," "unaffiliated," etc.)
- ❖ Development of shame during teenage and young adult years about queer sexuality
- ❖ Repression to fit the LDS perfectionist "mold" – heavily influenced by dense LDS culture in UT
- ❖ Keystone moment caused participants to leave LDSC (ex. Participant was told she could not stay overnight at Girls Camp because she was at risk for misconduct with other girls)
- ❖ Social and political reasons for leaving the LDSC (Proposition 8, 2015 Exclusion Policy, anti-queer talks by LDS leaders, etc.)
- ❖ Feelings of perpetual shame, guilt, confusion, and worthlessness while active in LDSC

### LGBTQ+ topics

- ❖ Highly supportive LGBTQ+ network across UT
- ❖ Queer community became a significant support system after leaving the LDSC
- ❖ LGBTQ+ mental health care was extremely impactful on participant's lives
- ❖ Being involved and attending queer community events helped participants feel seen and heard in their community
  - ❖ Love, joy, optimism, support, and community felt while participating in the UT queer community

## Validity

- ❖ Researcher bias as a strength
- ❖ Queer LDS women of color
- ❖ Gender non-conforming/nonbinary participants
- ❖ Triangulation
- ❖ Respondent validation

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## References

