THE LINGUISTIC PERFORMANCE OF SEXUAL IDENTITY BY AN

OPENLY GAY CHRISTIAN MINISTER

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A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

San Diego State University

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Master of Arts

in

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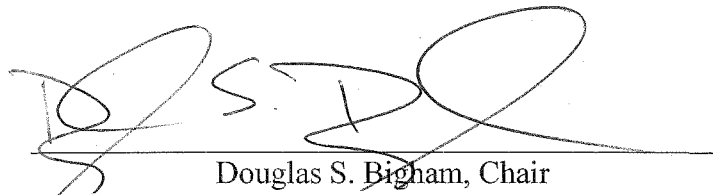by

Amanda J. Meza

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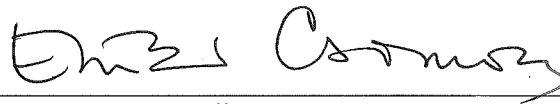The Undersigned Faculty Committee Approves the

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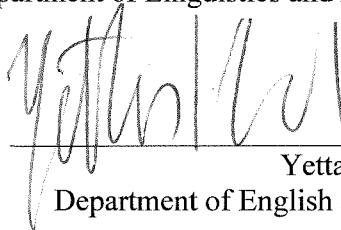The Linguistic Performance of Sexual Identity by an Openly

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For Stephen and all the life you shared.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Linguistic Performance of Sexual Identity by an Openly
Gay Christian Minister
by
Amanda J. Meza
Master of Arts in Linguistics
San Diego State University, 2013

This thesis examines the discursive practices of an openly gay Christian minister in a series of recorded sermons addressing the topic of human sexuality. After this minister publicly came out to his congregation as a gay man, he used these sermons to incorporate a growing number of gay and lesbian individuals into a church community that had not been previously affirming of openly homosexual church members. Through linguistic interpretation and framing of biblical narrative, this speaker constructs a community stance regarding homosexuality and religious practice, while actively reconciling seemingly disparate identities. Utilizing critical discourse analysis to examine these sermon texts provides insight into how this individual constructs discourses of reconciliation and change, particularly through the manipulation of recognized authority in order to subvert hegemonic ideology. While this minister attempts to decry heteronormative assumptions embedded in evangelical Christian ideologies, he still affirms practices of more conservative evangelical communities and positions his church against their local gay community on issues of sexual behavior. Thus, these sermons both deconstruct and recreate hegemonic ideologies regarding sexuality on various levels.

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Finally, to the JC — Ana and Sam — keep it TMT forever.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

This thesis examines sermons delivered by the pastor of an urban evangelical Christian congregation in Southern California, which will be called Northern Heights Church[1] throughout this study. In 2007, the public identity of this church shifted when Alan, the lead minister of this congregation, came out as a gay man during a weekly sermon. As a cisgendered white male in his early 40s, Alan came out after concealing his sexuality for over twenty years of his pastoral career. Several months after this public event, Alan candidly addressed the topic of homosexuality in a sermon series about human sexuality in relation to evangelical Christianity.

These sermons are instrumental to Alan's construction of a community ideology of sexuality, given that Northern Heights Church did not have an institutional stance concerning homosexuality nor did the congregation openly affirm gay and lesbian members prior to Alan coming out. Within this sermon series, biblical narrative and other scripture are central to Alan's arguments regarding sexuality and sexual behavior. Through the presentation and interpretation of narratives, Alan judges the actions and intentions of biblical characters to construct moral frameworks, which he then employs to frame and evaluate his church community.

Alan makes subversive commentaries on evangelical Christianity and its ideologies regarding homosexuality, using his authority as a minister to interpret the Bible for his congregation. By providing his own cultural and linguistic insights for the interpretation of biblical texts, Alan attempts to debunk the notion that homosexuality and the Christian faith are incompatible. In spite of this, Alan still defends many dominant beliefs regarding

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[1] All names of persons, locations, and institutions have been changed to protect the identity of the speaker and community mentioned in this thesis.

sexuality that are held by conservative evangelical Christians. This thesis will provide a critical analysis of Alan's use and interpretation of biblical text, relating his constructed ideology of sexuality to a discussion of language and power with respect to evangelical Christianity.

In Chapter One, literature will be discussed that is relevant to community and ideological formation, the nature of language and power, and the relationship between homosexuality and evangelical Christianity. Chapter One will also present theoretical perspectives on sexual identity and eroticism within the field of sociolinguistics and will discuss how queer linguistics and intersectionality theory – specifically Wong's (2010) application of Crenshaw's (1991) work to sociolinguistic research – relate to studies of religious identity. Within Chapter Two, data collection and transcription methods, summaries of the biblical narratives examined in this thesis, and the theoretical framework of critical discourse analysis (CDA) will be presented. Finally, using a CDA framework, Chapter Three will include an analysis of Alan's interpretations of biblical text. Chapter Three will also discuss the efficacy of Alan's discursive practices and the implications that this thesis holds for further work on language and sexuality.

1.2 OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter will present Wenger's (1998) community of practice framework as a theoretical model of community and shared ideology. Understanding Northern Heights Church as a community of practice is central to this investigation, since this congregation is an interactive body of individuals, defined by their active participation in ideologically negotiated practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Alan's position as a recognized authority figure within his church allows him the ability to use biblical text as a tool for incorporating his sexuality into the ideological framework of his community. Thus, literature that addresses the symbolic power of language and the agentive force that this speaker invokes in his sermons needs to be discussed. Because Alan critically examines the actions of biblical characters in order to distinguish sexual identity from sexual practice, a background on queer linguistics, especially with respect to sexual identity and eroticism is necessary for this chapter. Finally, literature that addresses the relationship of homosexuality to evangelical

Christianity is crucial for understanding the social significance of Northern Heights Church within the larger evangelical Christian church.

1.3 COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

The notion of situated learning within communities of practices has become an important theoretical construct within sociolinguistics, particularly through Eckert's (2000) application of this framework constructed by Wenger (1998) to linguistic research. According to Wenger (1998), three essential dimensions define communities of practice: mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire. Mutual engagement requires that members actually engage in actions or endeavors together; the meanings of these practices are negotiated through the interaction of the members of the community. This process of mutually acquired and sustained meaning through experience is called "situated experience" (Wenger, 1998) or "situated learning" (Lave &Wenger, 1991). As a joint enterprise, these people seek to accomplish a common goal, which in turn, inspires mutual accountability and collaboration between members (Wenger, 1998). In order to have a shared repertoire, a community of practice must engage in shared "ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence" (Wenger, 1998, p. 83).

Wenger (1998) emphasizes it is not the practices of the community that carry meaning in themselves, but the mutual interpretation of these symbols that is constantly interpreted and refashioned by these individuals. A community of practice is not encompassed by membership in a social category, nor it is defined as a group of persons who happen to know and regularly communicate with each other. Shared geographical or physical space is not sufficient to construct a community of practice; rather, it is through mutual engagement in activity that these communities emerge (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) argue that communities of practice are the social aggregates wherein gender emerges as a local construction, mediated by a number of practices. Gender is not a fixed identity according to this framework, and the manifestation and assumed power of gender vary according to the shared meaning of symbols within a particular community (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992). Like gender, sexual identity is also both locally and socially crafted in a community of practice (Eckert, 2000). Eckert's

(1996) work builds upon Hebdige's (1979) notion that identity can be expressed through a bricolage of symbolic resources (e.g. dress, gestures, physical adornments) and suggests that language a critical tool used in this process.

A key concept that Wenger (1998) highlights is that communities of practice are groups of people who are not necessarily homogenous in any sense. In fact, just because these members engage in regular practices with other people in their community does not mean that they explicitly agree with the values of the community. Wenger (1998) states, "disagreements, challenges, and competition can all be forms of participation. As a form of participation, rebellion often reveals a greater commitment than does passive conformity" (p. 77). According to this framework, persons with very little in common can engage in deeply meaningful interactions, which affect their everyday ways of living. This model also allows for persons who act as catalysts for change to emerge from such a community. Using the community of practice framework to understand Northern Heights Church is advantageous because this community, as described by Alan, has members of different ages, ethnicities, sexualities, and even religious views. However, these members are engaged in shared practices (e.g. prayer, scripture reading, communion, Bible studies, etc.), which are driven by and reify collective ideologies.

It is crucial to note that not all relationships between the members of a community of practice are equally grounded. Certain individuals in these groups may have specialized knowledge that is recognized by other members, giving them power over the information flow within the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Further, in the case that these privileged individuals challenge the status quo of the community's established practices, these persons can attempt to "change the community's regime so that it includes their experience" (Wenger, 1998, p. 138). While the meaning of shared practices is mutually and interactively negotiated, the influence that individuals hold over this interpretive process may not be entirely equitable in a community of practice. It is important to realize that Alan is not just a member of his religious community of practice; he is also a religious leader with specialized and revered knowledge. As an ordained minister, this speaker has a unique privilege and a suggestive power over the beliefs and behaviors of his church congregation. Alan not only holds the power to change the everyday practices of his community, he can also alter the ideological lens through which the church members view their behavior.

1.4 LANGUAGE, AUTHORITY, AND POWER

Among evangelical Christian churches, homosexual identities and practices are largely viewed as contradictory to Christian values, practices, and scripture (Stackhouse, 1998). In order to reconcile his sexual identity with the expectations of a Christian community of practice, Alan had to exercise his authority to "engage with people in new ways and transform the relations among people to be taken seriously" and "add new elements of the repertoire to their practice" (Wenger, 1998, p. 138). Thus, Alan's sermons serve as instruments for reaffirming his legitimacy as a church leader, which is a crucial aspect of this study. Due to the transformative process of coming out, Alan had no choice but to significantly change the practices and the ideological regime of his community, an act that only a person with authority could accomplish.

In order to demonstrate that language functions as a controlling force within social institutions, Bourdieu (1999) discusses how Roman Catholic priests serve as authorized agents of a church body. Bourdieu illustrates that clergy members are recognized delegates with the responsibility and privilege to speak on behalf of the church. Contrary to Austin's (1962) speech act theory[2], which states that words have power within and of themselves to alter realities and accomplish acts, Bourdieu claims that language has no inherent constructive ability. Instead, he argues that for all institutional delegates, "the spokesperson is an impostor, endowed with the skeptron" (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 109). According to Bourdieu (1999), the language used by clergy members does not establish their authority, since the church has already granted their illusory social status. Rather, the language of the clergy is merely a symbolic embodiment of institutionalized power, an observable token of privilege.

However, Bourdieu (1999) acknowledges that priests must carefully craft their rhetoric to maintain their elevated status and the trust of their followers. Through tacit acceptance of the religious delegate's authority, a priest becomes "the holder of 'a monopoly

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[2] It should be noted that Bourdieu's (1999) criticism of Austin's speech act theory is accompanied by a multitude of other critiques and expansions. Riley (2005) and Miller (2001, 2005) illustrate problematic aspects of Austin's work and have re-envisioned numerous facets of his theory, particularly regarding the social and political limitations of speech acts. Further reading, which extends beyond the scope of this work, can clarify the limitations of Austin's speech act theory and present more nuanced aspects of speech performatives.

in the manipulation of the goods of salvation" (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 115). The priest's judgments have lasting consequences, as individuals who are punished or ex-communicated from the church are considered spiritually inferior, while upstanding church members are bestowed with responsibility and status. The administration of certain religious rites, in the Roman Catholic tradition, gives priests the power to grant or deny access into eternal reward in the afterlife (Bourdieu, 1999).

Bourdieu (1999) also argues that authorized representatives of institutions are merely a "medium between the group and itself" (p. 116), as a number of felicitous conditions need to be fulfilled in order to validate the words and actions of such a delegate. The individuals whom a priest presides over must acknowledge the legitimacy and significance of the symbols manipulated in this religious sphere. Using what Bourdieu (1999) terms "rites of institution," empowered delegates create arbitrary distinctions in a world of discontinuity, and through symbolic authority, convince their followers that such boundaries are real and emerge from a so-called natural social order. Bourdieu's theory is important to understanding Alan's discursive practices because his sermon series delineates which sexual identities and sexual practices are condoned within his church community. Alan seeks to figuratively redraw the lines of sexual ideology in his community of practice through interpretation of the biblical text, the foundational source of social order within evangelical Christianity (Meigs, 1995). Yet in order to make his endeavor successful, Alan must convince his congregation that he is properly interpreting and applying Christian scripture to his teachings.

Although Austin (1962) does not discuss the social conditions that render the authoritative strength of language, he shares Bourdieu's (1999) view that words can have the ability to create vital distinctions, rendering identities that have both symbolic and formative implications for social actors. Echoing Foucault's (1979) notion that institutions impose discourses of "truth" to coerce individuals into conformity, Morrish (1997) argues that "discourse shapes not only ideology, but also identity and the sense of self" (p. 336). Thus, the effect of linguistic performatives (speech acts) can have real consequences for social behavior, which in turn, changes the expectations and representations of self, the foundations of identity (Jenkins, 1996).

Recognizing the inherent power of speech acts according to a Christian belief system is important to understanding an evangelical community of practice. As Peebles (2004) notes, in many religions, language is believed to have supernatural force, an ability to invoke divine power and change the course of reality. In evangelical Christianity, the "Word of God" (the Protestant Bible) is the supreme source of knowledge and carries an authority to create and change existence through mere utterance of the text (Meigs, 1995). Thus, an Austinian speech act framework (1962), which acknowledges the ability of language to shape the thoughts and actions of individuals, resonates with this language ideology that permeates evangelical Christianity. As a minister who presents the Bible to his congregation as the embodied words of God, Alan not only relies upon his knowledge and expertise regarding scripture to persuade his audience, he speaks to a community who assumes that he presents divinely-inspired texts.

Further, the performative power of coming out is also important to understanding the impetus for Alan's sermon series. Several authors (Barrett, 2002; Chirrey, 2003; Harvey, 1997) describe coming out as a speech act, which not only labels an individual as gay, but also invokes an entirely new existence for this person through the assumption of a marginalized sexual identity. Chirrey (2003) states that the linguistic act of declaring oneself to be gay creates a new selfhood both symbolically and in the state of reality. By taking on the identity of a gay man, Alan altered his social reality, which in turn, brought his legitimacy and established authority as a mediator between God and his congregation into question.

1.5 HOMOSEXUALITY AND EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY

Peebles's (2004) work on the construction of sexual identity among evangelical ex-gay and ex-ex-gay individuals demonstrates that sexual identity can be intentionally reconstructed through personal narrative and other practices that stem from a shared religious belief system. Although Wenger (1998) states, "shared beliefs […] are not what shared practice is about," Peebles (2004) provides evidence that some religious communities of practice, such as ex-gay support groups, exist solely from the assumption of a religious identity. In fact, a shared affirmation of religious beliefs regarding sexual practices, namely those that denounce homosexual acts, drives the formation of an ex-gay identity. While ex-

gay persons held a strict adherence to the authority of the Bible in Peebles's (2004) study, this commitment to scripture was far more varied among ex-ex-gay individuals (persons who formerly identified as ex-gay and later identified as gay or lesbian).

Wolkomir's (2001a, 2001b) sociological field studies of gay Christian men who met in organized Bible studies indicate that these groups engage in a collective revision of their ideology, particularly regarding the supremacy of Christian scripture. Wolkomir's work shows that these men were able to negotiate a distinct group identity that is simultaneously gay and Christian. While many of the men in her study denied the infallibility of the Bible, some believed that the divine power of the Bible could be preserved, but their identities as gay Christians relied upon extensive reinterpretations of biblical texts (Wolkomir, 2001b). Peebles (2004) and Wolkomir (2001a, 2001b) demonstrate that a stance toward scripture is central to the construction of sexual identity for gay Christians, which resonates with the fact that Alan's sermons are centered on the analysis of scripture. For Alan, biblical texts are primary tools that he uses to revise his community's ideology of sexuality.

Extensive ethnographic work conducted by sociologist Jodi O'Brien (2004, 2005) indicates that while gay and lesbian Christians can reconcile seemingly disparate aspects of self, they maintain an awareness that their religious and sexual identities exist in conflict. The perceived mismatch of being both gay and religious is acknowledged by gay Christians and other non-Christian queer communities (O'Brien, 2004). According to O'Brien (2005), gay and lesbian Christians face a "double stigma," as they do not easily identify with other Christian communities, nor are they fully understood by non-religious LGBT-identified persons and organizations. Further, gay and lesbian Christians may have a fear of sharing their joint sexual and religious identification because of negative personal experiences and the need to constantly defend their misunderstood identity (O'Brien, 2004).

Despite the fact that gay Christians receive frequent negative feedback from more conservative Christians, these individuals often view their sexuality as a spiritual strength. It affords an opportunity to share their experience with other Christians in order to encourage the acceptance of church members who are not heterosexual (O'Brien, 2005). Unlike churches that maintain predominantly gay and lesbian membership, Northern Heights Church has members of diverse sexualities, which makes an institutional stance regarding human

sexuality critical for this community to fully integrate members who exist outside of the evangelical heteronormative paradigm.

It is also important to remember that Northern Heights Church is not an isolated community; it exists within a larger community of evangelical Christians. On a broader level, evangelical Christianity has wide-reaching influence on the social discourse and political policies of the United States (Stackhouse, 1998). While Alan's sermons are targeted for a specific church community, his discursive practices not only challenge dominant notions of sexuality in the larger evangelical community, they are also relevant to broader social ideologies. Evangelical conceptions of family within an exclusively heterosexual paradigm are woven into the fabric of American political discourse. On a regular basis, politicians in the United States appeal to Christian beliefs to pass "pro-family" legislation which limits the legal rights of same-sex couples, based on a strongly-held notion that homosexuality is an aberration of a God-given social order (Jakobsen & Pellegrini, 2003). Therefore, Alan's sermons do not just challenge the norms of his church or the religious statutes of evangelical Christianity; he is going against the grain of a dominant American discourse of sexuality.

1.6 QUEER LINGUISTICS

The reality and importance of sexual identity has been a point of debate within sociolinguistics. Scholars such as Cameron and Kulick (2003) argue that sexual attraction and eroticism are of utmost importance to language and sexuality studies. According to this desire-based model, language and sexuality studies should veer away from identity labels, which differ greatly among individuals, and instead focus on how speakers express sexual attraction and objects of sexual desire (Kulick, 2000). Other researchers, such as Morrish and Leap (2003), argue that while sexual desire is a valuable construct, sexual identity labels are of paramount importance to understanding the experience of persons who are placed into these social categories by themselves and others.

Eckert (2002) takes a middle ground on the issue and argues that sexual identity and erotic desire are equally important components to sexuality studies, since sexual identity labels generally stem from individual erotic behavior and desires. Bucholtz and Hall (2004) also contributed to this contentious topic by clarifying the limitations of Cameron and

Kulick's (2003) desire-based model. They state that when theoretical notions of sexual identity are dismissed entirely, work in queer linguistics cannot address cannot address the complex phenomena that arise because of the interrelated nature of sexuality and social inequality. Moreover, Bucholtz and Hall (2004) claim that the "the new field of language and desire" forces researchers to narrowly redefine what sexuality entails (p. 507). Queen (2007) echoes this concern, because when sexuality is approached from this desire-based framework – as outlined in Kulick (2000) and Cameron and Kulick (2003) – the full gamut of sexuality is reduced to one important, but incomplete, component. According to Queen (2007), sex, gender, sexual orientation, and sexual identity are just as important to understanding sexuality as eroticism. Further, understanding sexuality in relation to feminist and queer theories requires that sexual identity be an integral part of power relations, since the recognition of "non-normative" sexualities leads to real-life marginalization for individuals (Queen, 2007).

Barrett (2002) also reacts to the lack of social theory present in sociolinguistic research, as the majority of language and sexuality studies ignore queer theory (or theories) both in methodology and analysis. Further, Barrett (1997) points out that the majority of work in queer linguistics assumes that their research participants are part of predictable and homogenous queer speech communities. In his work on the linguistic performance of African American drag queens, Barrett (1999) problematizes the idea that these individuals must follow the linguistic practices of straight African American men and/or gay white men. Rather, these individuals draw from a multitude of linguistic resources, including phonetic and lexical forms commonly used by African American men and women, gay white men, and straight white women (particularly to sarcastically voice racist and homophobic comments) (Barrett, 1999).

Barrett (2002) points out that it is not in the interest of queer linguistics to place speakers in fixed identity categories, as language and sexuality studies should focus on "deconstructing identity categories and pointing out their role in dominant discourse" (p. 25). Just as Barrett attempts to move sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology away from imposing static labels and expectations onto queer speakers, Wong (2010) stresses that intersectionality theory needs more attention in linguistic research. The intersections of identities or imposed social category labels (e.g. gender, ethnicity, class) lead to systematic

marginalization and discrimination (Crenshaw, 1991), which must be manifested in language practices (Wong, 2010). As Butler (1997) acknowledged, it is through regulatory discourse that compulsory heterosexuality is created, sustained, and imposed. It is also through discourse, according to Butler (1990), that the dangerous confounding assumptions that force individuals into stigmatized categories (e.g. the notion that males and females have essential, inescapable gender identities) can be broken and rendered powerless. As Fairclough (1995) argues, deconstructing dominant discourse is a systematic subversion of a hegemonic social order, a notion that is central to this investigation.

1.7 SUMMARY

This thesis aims to understand how Alan's discursive practices create a distinctive ideological space which supports the experiences of a gay Christian, as this intersectional identity carries stigma in both the gay and evangelical Christian communities (O'Brien, 2005). In order to integrate his own sexual identity into his evangelical community of practice, Alan had to convincingly exercise his authority to employ scripture in the formation a sexual ideology, relying on the implicit institutional power ascribed to the clergy (Bourdieu, 1999). This action was necessary because Alan's legitimacy as an ordained evangelical minister was threatened by the fact that his sexuality falls outside of a historically heterosexual norm in Christian evangelicalism (Stackhouse, 1998). The use and interpretation of biblical text is crucial to Alan's local reformation of normative sexuality, because within an evangelical Christian language ideology, it is the ultimate source of knowledge, a prescriptive force for the human experience (Meigs, 1995). Consequently, this sermons series carries the potential to profoundly change Northern Heights Church through Alan's redefinition of the boundaries of acceptable sexual behavior.

In these sermons, Alan is not just seeking to preserve his public image as a minister; he is attempting to undermine a hegemonic discourse of heteronormativity within the larger evangelical Christian church. Beyond the community of Northern Heights Church, Alan challenges tacit beliefs that evangelical Christians employ to shape the cultural practices and public policies of the United States (Hart, 1998). A discussion of critical discourse analysis in Chapter Two will present a theoretical approach to identifying the manipulation and subversion of discursive power within Alan's sermon series.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

2.1 DATA COLLECTION AND TRANSCRIPTION

The sermons analyzed in this thesis were downloaded as .wav sound files from publically accessible online podcasts. While these sermons are meant for public distribution, Alan's legal name and the site of this church have been withheld in order to protect the privacy of the speaker and this church community. Each of the podcasts obtained are part of a topical sermon series on human sexuality and spirituality produced by Northern Heights Church. The series consists of five total sermons, four of which were selected, since Alan did not deliver one of the sermons and it was thematically dissimilar from the rest of the series. In order to analyze the text of these four sermons, they were orthographically transcribed from the downloaded sound files. Uniform transcription notations were added for selections included in this thesis.

The transcribed recordings were time-stamped at every thirty-second mark for the researcher's reference. Speech disfluencies and errors were maintained in the sound file transcriptions to the greatest extent possible. Since the analysis of these sermon texts pertains to identity construction and performative efficacy, interactions from the audience (e.g. laughter and verbal responses) were also included in the transcription. The transcription of data to text is an interpretive process in itself and an important choice for the researcher (Ochs, 1979). Thus, in order to best maintain the integrity of the speaker's linguistic choices, utterances were minimally edited in the transcription process. All conventions for transcription notation are included in the Appendix.

2.2 SUMMARY OF THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVES

The cornerstone of Alan's discussion of Christianity and homosexuality is his account and interpretation of biblical narrative. Alan presents three particular narratives throughout his sermons: *Sodom and Gomorrah*, *The Old Man and the Levite,* and *The Roman Centurion*. The *Sodom and Gomorrah* narrative and *The Old Man and the Levite* are simultaneously

discussed by Alan to emphasize the vast similarities between the characters, plot, and themes in these stories. The summaries that follow are given to provide background on the narratives presented by Alan. Each summary is based on original texts in the New International Bible. Finally, background on a text in 1 Corinthians, which Alan discusses toward the end of his sermon series, will be presented.

2.2.1 Sodom and Gomorrah

A familiar biblical narrative regarding homosexuality, Alan begins his sermon series with a discussion of *Sodom and Gomorrah*. Reading from the book of Genesis, Alan introduces Abraham (also known as Abram earlier in the biblical text), a character who repeatedly pleads with God to save both of these wicked cities from judgment and destruction. After multiple negotiation attempts, God finally concedes that if Abraham can discover ten righteous persons in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, they will both be spared from ruin. In order to find these ten worthy individuals, God sends a team of angels to survey the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The angels appear as ordinary men and upon their arrival, they meet Lot, the nephew of Abraham and an Israelite who moved to Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot immediately offers to host the angels as guests in his home. While they initially refuse Lot, he persists and convinces them to dine and lodge with his family.

During a meal, a group of men surround Lot's house, pound on his door, and demand surrender of the guests, as the men wish to have sex with Lot's visitors. Appalled by this notion, Lot offers his virgin daughters in place of his guests. However, the men of Sodom and Gomorrah are not appeased by this suggestion. They continue to beat on the door until Lot's visitors suddenly strike the intruders with blindness, so that they could not find their way into the house. The guests then reveal to Lot that they are actually angels. They instruct Lot and his family to leave Sodom and Gomorrah immediately. Because God found these cities to be beyond redemption, they were destroyed. Abraham looks upon the destruction from his home.

2.2.2 The Old Man and the Levite

Located in the book of Judges, *The Old Man and the Levite* narrative focuses on a Levite man who makes his way to the city of Jebus (also known as Jerusalem) and cannot find a place where he and his family can stay for the night. An old man, who happened to be

in the city square of Jebus, notices the traveler and offers to host the Levite, his family, and his animals. While the old man and the Levite are enjoying a meal, a group of men from Jebus surround the old man's home and demand to have sex with the Levite. In an attempt to appease their demands, the old man offers his virgin daughter and the Levite's concubine to have sex with the men of Jebus instead. While the men do not accept these conditions, the Levite still sends his concubine out to them. The men of Jebus rape and abuse the concubine throughout the night, leaving her outside of the old man's house near daybreak. At dawn, the concubine struggles to return home, only to die at the doorstep of the old man's home. Once the Levite finds her, he steps over her body and demands that she get up so they can leave, but the woman does not respond. In the end, the Levite puts her on the back of his donkey and continues his journey home.

2.2.3 The Roman Centurion

The narrative of *The Roman Centurion*, from the book of Matthew in the New Testament, introduces a highly ranked Roman official who approaches Jesus for the healing of a male servant. Jesus asks the centurion if he should go to his home and heal the servant, but the centurion replies that he is not worthy to host Jesus in his home. The Roman centurion says that all Jesus has to do is "say the word" and the servant would be healed. Upon hearing this, Jesus states that he is astonished by the Roman centurion's faith and announces that no other person in Israel has faith equal to that of the centurion. Jesus states that there will be many from the people from the west of Israel (including the centurion) who would take their places "with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Jesus responds to the centurion and says, "Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would" (Mathew 8:11-13, New International Version). After these words are uttered, the centurion's servant is instantaneously healed.

2.2.4 The 1 Corinthians Passage

In the conclusion of this sermons series, Alan introduces a supporting text from the New Testament book of 1 Corinthians. This selection from 1 Corinthians does not include a narrative, but is a passage from a New Testament epistle, reportedly written by the apostle Paul to a Christian church in Corinth, Greece around 53 to 57 A.D. (Robertson & Plumber, 1911). In the ninth verse of the sixth chapter of this book, Paul states that "neither the

sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men, nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, New International Version). Paul expresses that some of the Corinthians used to be these types of persons, but are no longer because of their conversion to Christianity. Importantly, many evangelical Christians use this text to condemn homosexual behavior and relationships, despite the fact that numerous biblical scholars disagree regarding the translation and interpretation of this passage (Townsley, 2007).

2.3 CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is chiefly concerned with the means through which power, social dominance, and inequality are manifested in text (Gouveia, 2005). According to CDA, discourse is defined as the use of language as a form of social practice (Wodak, 2001). Unlike Saussure's extensively problematized notion that language exists on two separate form and functional levels – the so-called *langue* and *parole* – CDA assumes that the use of language is a social process in itself (Fairclough, 1995). Since Alan uses language in an attempt to deconstruct dominant ideologies regarding sexual practices and behavior established by evangelical Christian communities, the use of critical discourse analysis to analyze these sermon texts is advantageous.

As Fairclough argues, language is not an entity that simply relates to social institutions and hierarchy; rather, it is a vehicle through which ideological homogeneity is achieved (Fairclough, 2001). Further, discourse is confined by what Foucault describes as "orders of discourse," wherein all text is oriented within the context of other discourses, which have been shaped by powerful historical constraints on social practice (O'Halloran, 2003). Fairclough echoes Foucault in stating that "the order of discourse is the social order in its discoursal facet – or the historical impress of sociocultural practice on discourse" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 10). The influence of social order on discourse aligns with Jenkin's (1996) assertion that it language is the ultimate medium through which social institutions demand behavioral conformity. Because organizations have the power to allocate both tangible and symbolic resources according to the usefulness of individuals to the group, constraining behavior through hegemonic discourse ensures that only individuals deemed valuable receive the benefits of membership (Jenkins, 1996).

According to Fairclough's framework, CDA involves a three-part approach to textual analysis. CDA is not limited to any particular features of language, but within this thesis, CDA will be utilized according to Fairclough's approach. The micro-level of analysis describes the syntactic structure of sentences, use of metaphor, and rhetorical devices in the text itself. Shifting away from technical linguistic analysis, the meso-level of analysis aims to identify the production and consumption of the text, particularly in how discourse practices enable text to embody power relations between individuals and social and political institutions. Finally, at the macro-level, CDA focuses on the intertextual understanding of how each text is influenced by other historical and contemporary texts (Fairclough, 2001).

It is important to note that while Fairclough designates three aspects of textual analysis, CDA is not considered a singular methodological process, but rather a theoretical orientation toward language in general (Weiss & Wodak, 2003). Critical discourse analysis encompasses any textual approach that illuminates the means through which discourse reproduces or defies social and political domination (Fairclough, 1995). The goal of critical discourse analysis is ultimately to reveal assumptions that are tacitly embedded within text and to understand how the coherence of texts depends upon structured, implicit representations of how the world ought to be (ideologies) (Fairclough, 2001). This textual approach openly acknowledges that linguistic analysis is not a wholly objective, scientific endeavor, but that language is a practice governed by hierarchal social structures and is a tool for constructing, reifying and legitimizing power and dominance in immediate and global communities. While hegemonic discourses permeate large social institutions, they are still present at the level of Wenger's (1998) communities of practice, as every individual exists in a vast network of such communities. No community of persons is ever immune from pervasive regulatory discourses of expected behavior (Butler, 1997).

Crucially, CDA seeks to fill these gaps between micro and macro levels of analysis, focusing on how individual textual events (a speech made in Congress regarding "illegal immigration") can reflect and shape larger ideologies (racism toward ethnic minority immigrants) (van Dijk, 2003). The analysis of these sermon texts will identify power struggles between local and extra-local ideologies regarding human sexuality and will present a meta-analysis of Alan's critical examination of biblical text. These sermon texts

are informative for CDA analysis because the feedback of a live audience provides information regarding how consumers receive and interact with the text.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF TEXTS, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Example 3.1.1

1. To the holy text there is a lot more than just meets the eye. [...]
2. That as a church, we decided to go deeper, **we decided to read <u>betwee:n</u> the**
3. **lines.** […] The original writings are extremely important.
4. **As <u>progressive</u> Christians**, that we realize that there were those who wrote
5. the scriptures and there were those who later interpret the scriptures.
6. And as we go into that, **we need to also remember in the context in which**
7. **they were written, (?) the-, the <u>culture </u>that they were written to**.

The framing and (re)interpretation of biblical text is central to Alan's discussion of human sexuality within this sermon series. In each of these addresses to his congregation, Alan presents interpretations of scripture that challenge the notion that Christianity openly condemns homosexual relationships and identities. Disregarding a literal approach to biblical interpretation, Alan claims that his exegetical analysis is a hallmark of progressive Christianity (Ex. 3.1.1, line 3), as it considers the cultural and historical milieu of the writings (Ex. 3.1.1, lines 6-7). Through this contextualization, Alan will argue that he can achieve a more thorough understanding of the original intentions of the biblical authors.

Alan asserts that this interpretive framework is a specific to Northern Heights Church, a practice that he states is crucially important to progressive Christians who are cooperatively committed "to read between the lines" of these texts (Ex. 3.1.1, line 2). Although Alan deems this practice to be a manifestation of his church community's core belief system, he still affirms the divinely inspired nature of scripture (Ex. 3.1.2, line 1), a core characteristic of evangelical Christian theology (Meigs, 1995). Thus, while Alan sets his congregation apart as a group of "progressive Christians," he still ideologically anchors his church near mainstream evangelical Christianity through this shared belief of biblical infallibility.

Example 3.1.2

1. **I <u>absolutely</u> believe that the scriptures are God-inspired**. But I-, I-, also,
2. in my own personal journey, have watched scriptures be misinterpreted.
3. And so, our quest as followers of Christ, is to go beyond what lies just on the
4. surface of the pages, and then to apply <u>those</u> stories and <u>those</u> situations.

Relying upon his assertion that all biblical texts are divinely authoritative, Alan critically examines narratives and a passage in the New Testament to extract and teach moral lessons. The overt parallelism between biblical characters and members of his church congregation is a foundational premise for Alan's constructed ethical frameworks. Alan believes that part of the Christian journey is to find deeper meaning in scripture and "then to apply those stories and those situations" to everyday living (Ex. 3.1.2, lines 3-4). From contextualized evaluations of characters in the narratives, Alan crafts a sexual morality for his church community, which he then extends to Christian religious followers at large.

3.2 LOCAL INTERPRETATION OF BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

In order to forge a coherent ideology regarding homosexuality and Christianity for his congregation, Alan carefully selects and analyzes particular texts within his sermon series. Two of the narratives that Alan employs to address the topic of homosexuality are *The Old Man and the Levite* from the Old Testament book of Judges 19 (with introduction and support from text in Genesis 18-19) and *The Roman Centurion* from the New Testament book of Matthew 8 (with a cross-reference in Luke 7). Drawing upon the stories of *The Old Man and the Levite* and *The Roman Centurion*, Alan depicts several male characters that have, or intend to have, homosexual sex. Alan uses these two stories to distinguish erotic behavior from sexual orientation and identity, as he claims that the characters in these two texts have entirely different sexual orientations, identities, and intentions toward their sexual partners.

The story of *The Old Man and the Levite* concerns a group of unidentified men, whom Alan argues are heterosexual, and describes their attempts to engage in homosexual acts in order to demean another human being. Alan's negative evaluation of the actions of these men falls in sharp contrast to his portrayal of the Roman centurion and his servant, whom Alan describes as a loving, committed gay couple. Through his depiction of the characters in these narratives, Alan is able to tease out a moral perspective regarding sexual

relationships, which he uses to provide mandates regarding sexual behavior for his church congregation.

3.2.1 The Old Man and the Levite

To illustrate his progressive approach to biblical interpretation, Alan presents the *Sodom and Gomorrah* narrative from the book of Genesis so that he can parallel this iconic story to the narrative of *The Old Man and the Levite* in the book of Judges. Both stories begin with the introduction of travelers who intend to sleep in a city square and are offered shelter by a stranger. The repetition of the question "Sounds familiar, doesn't it?" (Ex. 3.2.2, lines 5, 8-9) demonstrates that Alan specifically wants to draw his audience's attention to the similar nature of the events in both of these narratives.

Example 3.2.1

1. Genesis Chapter 19. The two angels, they're just two men who are sent from
2. God, arrived at Sodom in the evening and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the
3. city. And when he saw them, he got up to meet them. […] "My lords," he said,
4. "Please turn aside to your servant's house. You can wash your feet and spend
5. the night and then go on your way early in the morning." And they answered,
6. "No, we will spend the night in the square." […] But he insisted so: strongly
7. that they would go with him and enter his house […] This was <u>not</u> a
8. common practice. **This <u>hospitality</u> was a practice of people who followed**
9. **Yahweh.**

Example 3.2.2

1. Judges. Chapter 19. We have a traveler. We have a Levite and a concubine,
2. and a young man and a wife. So, we have a guy who owns two women, his
3. wife and a concubine. Which again, <u>breaks</u> the heart of God. But it is the
4. culture at the time, and that's for another time. But they're traveling, and it's
5. getting late, and they cannot find a place to stay. **Sounds <u>familiar</u>, doesn't it?**
6. And in the evening, an old man in the hill country of Ephraim […] Okay, he's
7. coming in from the work-, from the fields. Because he wasn't welcome-, the
8. working man (?). When he looked and saw the traveler in the city square.
9. **Sounds familiar, doesn't it?**

In Example 3.2.2 (lines 1-4), Alan makes an ethical assessment by declaring that male ownership of wives and concubines "broke the heart of God." Through his appeal to a divine authority regarding the morality of these relationships, Alan presents his judgment as less subjective, more authoritative, and distinct from his personal views. While this evaluation is not directly addressing homosexuality, Alan establishes that he has the authority to speak on behalf of God's approval or disapproval with respect to the nature of sexual relationships.

In Example 3.2.3, Alan depicts the moral depravity in the stories of *Sodom and Gomorrah* and the *The Old Man and the Levite* as a blatant lack of hospitality, the importance of which is established in Example 3.2.1, lines 7-9. Alan's interpretation of these narratives completely disregards homosexuality as the focal point of these texts. This is in direct opposition to popular discourse surrounding *Sodom and Gomorrah,* a text that is so closely connected to the condemnation of homosexuality, it has been used to regulate sexual practices in Christianity, Judaism and Islam (Jordan, 1998). Rather, Alan highlights the primacy of hospitality as a deeply entrenched cultural value of the Israelites. A violation of this social practice would have been "a huge, huge sin at the time" (Ex. 3.2.3, lines 6-7). Sin, as defined by Alan, appears to be determined by the intentions of individuals according to the cultural norms under which they function. Thus, his interpretation of scripture is not only contextually dependent, but the moral lessons that Alan draws from these texts also rely on his extra-textual analysis. This is a clear demonstration of the institutional authority granted to clergy members, as described by Bourdieu (1999). Within Example 3.2.2, Alan allows an assertion of opinion to become an important part of his textual interpretation, reflecting that he is an authorized arbiter of Christian scripture.

Example 3.2.3

1. The old man asked, "Where are you going and where did you come from?"
2. And he answered, "We are coming from Bethlehem, in Judea, to a remote area
3. in the hill country where I live." This is <u>key</u>. "No one has taken me in for the
4. night." **You <u>see-</u>, do you <u>see</u> the spiritual practice that they constantly**
5. **believe in?** He's in the town square. And he's like, "I'm here with my family,
6. and no one-, <u>no</u> one-, has taken me in. Can you believe this?" **This was a**
7. **<u>huge</u>, <u>huge</u> sin at the time.** The old man said, "Let me supply with whatever
8. you need, only don't spend the night in the square." <u>Okay</u>, we're not reading

9. Genesis 19. This is Judges, this is a <u>whole</u> different story, but it sounds <u>ve:ry</u>
10. similar, doesn't it? So he took them into the house, and fed his donkeys, and
11. after he washed their feet.

Through the presentation of *The Old Man and the Levite*, Alan ascribes moral and spiritual attributes to a specific character and an entire community of people (Ex. 3.2.3, lines 4-8). Alan defines hospitality as a practice of those who are followers of God ("Yahweh") (Ex. 3.2.1, lines 8-9), and the old man presumably opens up his house to the Levite because of his faith in God. By stating that the residents of Jebus (the city where the Levite encounters the old man) lacked hospitality, Alan establishes that these persons were not "followers of Yahweh." This line of religious demarcation according to a distinctive practice aligns with Peebles (2004), which suggests that evangelicals use scripture to construct religious communities of practice, wherein the behaviors of the group are explicitly linked to spirituality.

Example 3.2.4

1. "While they <the men of Jebus> were enjoying themselves, <u>some</u>, not all, some
2. of the wicked men of the city surrounded the house."
3. **Sounds familiar, <u>doesn't</u> it?** Pounding on the door <makes knocking noise>,
4. and they shouted to the old man who owned the house, "Bring out the man
5. who came to your house." So we can have <u>what</u>? "Sex with him.
6. And the owner of the house went outside and said to them, "No, my friends,
7. don't be so vile, since this man is my guest.
8. **This is a spiritual practice of mine**. **<u>Don't</u> do this**."

Alan continues to emphasize parallels in *Sodom and Gomorrah* and *The Old Man and the Levite* by using "Sounds familiar, doesn't it?" as a repeated rhetorical device (Ex. 3.2.2, line 5; 3.2.5, lines 2-3). Once again, Alan emphasizes the spiritual nature of hospitality and argues that demanding to have sex with a stranger clearly violated the cultural and spiritual practice of accommodating guests. From Alan's presentation of this passage, he establishes his belief that sexual and spiritual practices are inherently interrelated.

Example 3.2.5

1. <u>Look</u>, this is where the story gets <u>crazy</u>. "<u>Look</u>, here is my virgin daughter
2. and this concubine. I will bring them out to you now and you can use them. (?)
3. Do to them whatever you wish, but as if for this man, don't do this outrageous

4. thing." **When we read this, we think to ourselves, is this <u>crazy</u>?**
5. Lot does the same thing. Lot offers his daughters, which we are not going to
6. actually get to today. **But Lot offers his daughters, which is <u>crazy</u>.**

Through his depiction of the old man in *The Old Man in the Levite* and Lot in the *Sodom and Gomorrah* narrative, Alan emphasizes that he believes the commodification of women to be entirely unfathomable. The offering of the old man's daughter and the Levite's concubine to be raped by the men of Jebus is so absurd to Alan that he appeals to the audience by asking, "We think to ourselves, is this crazy?" (Ex. 3.2.6, line 4). Alan uses this tag question to invite his congregation to subscribe to his morality by appealing to a sense of shared reason and disbelief (demonstrated by the speaker's stress of the word "crazy" in Ex, 3.2.6, lines 1,4,6). This judgment relies on Alan's implicit values regarding the treatment of women, which are not outlined in the text. Alan also invites his audience to share his moral perspective by using the inclusive pronoun "we," giving his audience the impression that Alan is not making this ethical judgment for them, but rather, with them.

Alan states that the offering of the daughter and the concubine as sexual objects may have been an acceptable practice for the characters in these narratives, but he considered this treatment of women baffling regardless of the contextualized cultural framework of this story. Alan uses this moral outage to maintain the relevance of these stories, while at the same time divorcing it from gay social actors. This is also a subtle exercise of his pastoral authority. While he emphasizes the importance of historical contextualization, Alan demonstrates his ability to override and judge the cultural practices found in the texts themselves. In Example 3.2.5, Alan is building a discourse of "truth," based on Foucault's (1969) notion that institutions and their delegates present their knowledge as an implicit, objective reality.

Example 3.2.6

1. <u>Well</u>, this is where God's heart is constantly broken. It was a custom that
2. women were property. Men were not. "<u>Hey</u>**,** don't do this.
3. This guy is a spiritual guest of mine. <u>Oh</u>, by the way, my daughter,
4. virgin, (yeah), come on out." <u>Now</u>, this throws out the theory once again,
5. because Lot does the same thing […] Lot offers his daughters, which is crazy**.**
6. **So that's another <u>hu:ge</u> indication that these men were not gay.**

7. **It's about domination. It's about <u>control.</u>**

Alan implies that the fact that the men of Jebus wanted to have sex with the old man's daughter and the Levite's concubine is crucial to the interpretation of this story. Alan argues that the men at Jebus were not gay, but were attempting to use sex as an act of control and degradation (Ex. 3.2.7, lines 5-7). The men's attempted sexual acts were not related to a sexual identity or an erotic desire; these characters only sought to humiliate outsiders to the city of Jebus. The sexualization of the Levite at Jebus is linked to a struggle for power, an imbalance inherent to the depersonalization of rape. The interpretive slant that Alan takes on this narrative minimizes the importance of sexuality identity within this story. Alan claims that the men of Jebus were not sexually attracted to the Levite and that they were not gay men (Ex. 3.2.7 lines 2-3). According to Alan's interpretation, the intentions of the characters – or at least his perception thereof – becomes paramount to understanding the moral implications of their actions.

Example 3.2.7

1. The men would not listen to him. So the men took the concubine. (?) […]
2. These men, who wanted to have sex with a man, <u>raped </u>her. So, they weren't
3. gay. **These two stories have <u>nothing</u> to do with homosexuality** […] **In fact,**
4. **most of the texts in the Bible have <u>nothing</u> to do with homosexuality**. It has
5. nothing to do with a gay man or a gay woman. This is what they did. They
6. raped her. They abused her.

By stating that the men of Jebus who raped the old man's concubine were not gay (Ex. 3.2.7, lines 2-3), Alan is effectively separating homosexual behavior from sexual identity. Since the men of Jebus clearly were interested in raping both men and women, Alan concludes that this eliminates any possibility that the men of Jebus were gay, because they did not have a homosexual orientation. This argument functions under an assumption that gay men would never engage in sexual intercourse with a woman. Following this reasoning, sexual orientation, not just sexual behavior, defines one's sexual identity. According to Alan, the men of Jebus were attempting to rape both men and women as an act of abuse and violation. From this text, Alan establishes his belief that individuals can engage in sexual behaviors that are distinct from their sexual identity or orientation, and that engagement in sexual acts does not define an individual's sexuality. A desire-based model of sexuality as

proposed by Cameron and Kulick (2003) would fail to fully explain Alan's interpretation of this narrative, since Alan assumes that sexual identity and orientation are not only important constructs, they are distinct and independent from erotic behavior. While the men of Jebus clearly express their desire to pursue the Levite as a sexual object, they have no sexual attraction toward him, from Alan's perspective.

Example 3.2.8

1. At daybreak, the woman went back to the house where the master was
2. staying […] She barely got back to the house, fell down, and holding the
3. doorknob, she died. <voice trails off> Why, why have we not heard this story?
4. Why have we heard so much about Sodom and Gomorrah and not about and
5. not about Judges, where a woman is literally thrown out, raped, and murdered
6. […] **Why have we built ministries against the gay community, and ignored**
7. **the fact that Sodom-, and the book of Judges-, is talking about the abuse of**
8. **children and women?**

The moral atrocities that Alan highlights in *The Old Man and the Levite* are the abuse of women and the lack of hospitality by the men of Jebus (Ex. 3.2.8, line 6-8). Alan explicitly denies that *The Old Man and the Levite*, *Sodom and Gomorrah*, and the majority of biblical passages have anything to do with homosexuality (Ex. 3.2.7, lines 3-4). Further, Alan dismisses this story as being related to the behavior of gay men, and he questions why the Christian church has been historically more concerned with the sexual activities of gay community than with "the abuse of women and children" (Ex. 3.2.8, lines 7-8). By asking why "we" have not heard the story of the concubine's rape and death (Ex. 3.2.8, lines 3-5), Alan's pronoun usage is a repeated linguistic mechanism that invites his audience to collectively adopt his morality.

Through his interpretation of this text, Alan creates an ethical hierarchy in which sexualized violence against women is more offensive than the sexual behavior of gay individuals. While Alan is once again creating a discourse of "truth" (Foucault, 1969) wherein his authorized opinion becomes fact, he is also using discourse to subvert an established "order of discourse" (Foucault, 1979). Alan discusses that in other popular discourses of sexuality, homosexuality is more harshly judged than sexualized violence (Ex. 3.2.8, lines 6-8), which he considers to be a grave mistake. Alan's exploration of *The Old*

Man and the Levite deconstructs an evangelical notion and that homosexual acts are inherently immoral, as Alan believes that this text has nothing to do with homosexuality and it only condemns abusive acts of rape. Alan's strategy to subverting evangelical ideologies of sexuality is to entirely remove their relevance to *The Old Man and the Levite* narrative. *The Roman Centurion* narrative, on the other hand, brings homosexuality to the forefront of Alan's discussion.

3.2.2 The Roman Centurion

In the third sermon of Alan's series on sexuality and spirituality, he analyzes and (re)interprets another biblical story from the New Testament book of Matthew. Alan describes a Roman centurion and his male servant who are in loving, committed relationship, according to the textual interpretation. Using a contextualized analysis of this narrative, Alan presents the example of the Roman centurion's relationship with his servant as a biblical affirmation of monogamous, loving homosexual unions.

Example 3.2.9

1. Now for the Romans-, especially **for the Roman centurions, they were**
2. **known for purchasing male lovers**. They were known for going to the
3. place, where you would purchase and they would see a male-, younger
4. than them mostly (?) […] "I want <u>that</u> one. That one's coming home
5. with me." And that's very, that was a very normal process at that time.
6. In fact, it was also very normal for people to be married at the age of
7. thirteen or fourteen or fifteen. And so when a Roman centurion would
8. go in and say, "I <u>like</u> that young man," **he could've been thirteen or**
9. **fourteen years old**. I know, <u>weird</u>, right? But that was the norm.
10. A guy, a straight guy, would go in, "I want her." **She could've been**
11. **thirteen or fourteen.**

Alan establishes that, like heterosexual marriage at the time of the scripture's writing, homosexual relationships between men were commonly established through the purchase of human property. By discussing both heterosexual and homosexual relationships using similar syntactic constructions (both wives and male prostitutes were purchased around "thirteen or fourteen years old") (Ex. 3.2.9, lines 8-9, 11), these relationships are treated not as similar, but as equal. Not only does Alan examine these relationships similarly on an

ideological plane, he presents them in an almost identical fashion linguistically. Alan's meaningful use of phrasal parallelism aligns with Fairclough's (2001) assertion that ideologies can be explicitly encoded in grammatical structure. While Alan provides no privilege to either heterosexual or homosexual relationships, he does argue that both heterosexual and homosexual relationships were fraught with problematic sexual practices in the culture that the Roman centurion lived (Ex. 3.2.10, lines 3-4).

Alan introduces the concept of partnership as a prescriptive solution to heterosexual and homosexual relationships established through the ownership (Ex. 3.2.10, lines 2-5). He extends the definition of partnership even further by discussing its centrality to the date of November 4th (Ex. 3.2.10, line 4). The discussion of November 4th is a specific reference to Proposition 8[3], a California ballot designed to make same-sex marriage illegal in the 2008 state elections. The election date for Proposition 8 occurred on November 4, 2008, several months after of the delivery of this sermon (Audi, Scheck, & Lawton, 2008).

Example 3.2.10

1. Can you say <u>Amen</u> with me and thank God that we have evolved? <u>Right</u>?
2. And the scriptures have evolved. If anything, the scriptures are pulling us
3. forward and saying, "Don't <u>think</u> like that, it's not about property, it's about
4. partnership." **November 4th. It's about <u>partnership</u>.** <audience laughs>
5. **Mmkay? It's about love. And devotion. And commitment.**

Making a reference to November 4th extends Alan's analysis of *The Roman Centurion* beyond the biblical text and makes an explicitly political statement. Interestingly, Alan does not make use the terms "gay marriage" or "marriage equality," he simply presents November 4th as an issue of partnership, defined by love, devotion, and commitment (Ex. 3.2.10, lines 4-5). Alan considers these to be the defining features of healthy relationships for both heterosexual and homosexual couples. Thus, Alan introduces a discourse of inclusion through his treatment of all romantic relationships as fundamentally and inherently the same. Alan does not use separate lexical items to differentiate between gay and straight

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[3] In 2008, Proposition 8 was passed in the state of California. However, it was considered unconstitutional by California state courts in 2010. Following appeals and a judgment by the Supreme Court of the United States on June 26, 2013, Proposition 8 no longer holds legal standing in federal or state courts and same-sex marriages are legal and recognized in the state of California (Mears, 2013).

relationships, as discussions of "gay marriage" might assume that such unions are qualitatively different from heterosexual unions.

    Example 3.2.11

1. When Jesus entered Capernaum, a Roman centurion came to him asking for

2. help. Most likely fell to his knees and he said, "<u>Lord</u>, my servant lies at home,

3. paralyzed, suffering-, suffering terribly. In the original Greek of this story, this

4. author-, he used the word "<u>pais</u>" for the word "servant." **Now, the "pais"**

5. **means- and can mean, three different things**. A boy, a servant, and most

6. likely-, for this story, a particular type of servant. That was the word that Luke

7. wrote. <u>Alright,</u> which means, this is very key to this story. **Which <u>means</u> "the**

8. **loved, a special servant." Hear me out. One of endearment. <u>Male.</u> <u>Lover.</u>**

    Shifting his focus back to *The Roman Centurion* narrative, Alan highlights a specific term, "pais," that he claims fundamentally changes the interpretation of the this story. Through intertextual borrowing from the New Testament book of Luke, another account of this same narrative, Alan claims that "pais" translates as "male lover" in Luke (Ex. 3.2.11, line 6-8). According to Alan, this translation would suggest that the Roman centurion was specifically referring to his servant as his romantic partner. This affirms Alan's claim that his church is a community that "can read between the lines" (Ex. 3.1.1, line 2).   Alan also presumes that he has the right to make this kind of interpretive judgment, an act of religious authority according to Bourdieu (1999). The lexico-semantic importance of "pais" establishes that Alan takes an approach to this text that is heavily dependent on cross-linguistic translation and interpretation. Relying on the power of scripture as the source of all moral knowledge (Peebles, 2004), Alan's interpretation of *The Roman Centurion* implies that this text explicitly addresses homosexuality, because Alan believes the Roman centurion is a gay man.

    Alan posits that when the centurion mentioned his "pais," others would have recognized the sexual symbolism related to this term. It would have been act of desperation for this centurion because it was a public declaration of his sexuality and the nature of the relationship he had with his servant (Example 3.2.12, lines 5-9). In addition, Alan presents his own theory that the Roman centurion carefully considered his use of words, realizing that this lexical decision would have serious consequences. To Alan, this linguistic choice of

"pais" was an explicit act of identity. The only way that the Roman centurion could convey his despair over his partner's illness, according to Alan, was to identify himself as a gay man.

Example 3.2.12

1. What Luke is-, what <u>Matthew</u>'s author are seeing is that "<u>pais</u>", the <u>servant</u>-, a
2. unique servant of the centurion- […] special endearment, <u>male </u>lover is at home
3. dying. He goes to Jesus, falls to his knees, and says, "He's home. He's dying."
4. Now as he's approaching Jesus-, this is Alan's theory, as he's approaching
5. Jesus-, he's thinking to himself**, "<u>What </u>words should I use**?**"** But I know of
6. this guy, I've heard the Jewish leaders talk of this guy, and if this guy is who
7. he says he is, (and) if it's true what he does, he will see right through me. So,
8. that's what happened. **He <u>literally</u> was coming out to Jesus. He had nothing**
9. **to lose.**

Alan uses his interpretation of the Roman centurion as a gay man coming out to Jesus as an opportunity to address the gay members of his congregation (Ex. 3.2.13, lines 1-4). In this appeal to his church members, Alan parallels the struggle of the Roman centurion in revealing the truth about his relationship with his lover to the shame that many gay members of the Northern Heights Church feel regarding their own sexualities. Alan employs Jesus's alleged acceptance of the Roman centurion as an impetus for his gay church members to acknowledge their sexuality to God and to their community (Ex. 3.2.12, lines 3-5). Because his audience responds with a lengthy applause to his appeal (Ex. 3.2.13, lines 9-10), Alan's suggestion appears to be well received by his church community. This kind of exhortation is dependent upon a notion that these words are a speech act (Austin, 1962), as Alan has created a space, both symbolic and likely literal, wherein the gay members of his church can openly come out. Further, this kind of linguistic performative demonstrates that discourse, especially within a religious context, has the power to change social norms and identities within a community of practice.

Example 3.2.13

1. <u>Church</u>, we are not a <u>gay</u> church, we are not a <u>straight</u> church. We are followers
2. of Jesus. But I always-, not always, but (?) sometimes-, I like to talk directly to
3. a subculture within this church. **To the gay community of Community**
4. **Christian Church-, it is time for you to come out to God.** It is time for you
5. to not be ashamed and to be <u>free</u>. It is time for you to kneel down to Jesus.

6. Push away the facades of a very screwed up culture, and allow yourself to step

7. into healthiness. I speak, and I preach from experience. To step into

8. healthiness and to be loved and accepted by the kingdom of God, and by the

9. people of God. <u>Mmkay</u>? <audience loudly claps> That's what-, that's taking

10. place here. <Lengthy and loud applause>

Example 3.2.14

1. Jesus looks at them and says, "**I am <u>amazed</u> at this man's faith. […] If this**

2. **theology is correct-, Jesus said to the Roman centurion who was a gay man,**

3. **"Go, let it be done, just as you believe it would."** Then his servant, his "<u>pais</u>,"

4. his endeared lover-, male lover was healed that very hour. This strong man,

5. runs home-, just as you would to your lover who was dying. Your married

6. partner. He ran home believing, and he went to the door and he looked in-, and

7. he saw this young man that he purchased, that he fell in love with-, which was

8. common, and he said, "I am <u>well</u>, I am <u>well</u>." **The theory that Jesus has never**

9. **dealt with a gay person in the gospels-, for me, is not true.**

According to Alan's analysis, when the Roman centurion came out to Jesus, he was openly accepted, evidenced by the fact that his male lover was healed from his sickness (Ex. 3.2.14, lines 1-3). This is significant according to Alan because it not only demonstrates that Jesus approved of the relationship between the Roman centurion and his servant, but that Jesus considered the centurion's spiritual condition to be exceptional (Ex. 3.2.14, line 1). Further, Alan also finds this story important because he states that others do not believe that Jesus ever encountered a gay man in the Bible (Ex. 3.2.14, lines 8-9).

Example 3.2.15

1. No more "what ifs." **This is where I'm at-, as a church, may we stand up,**

2. **<u>straight</u> and gay, may we stand up. If we have to get on our tippy toes, on**

3. **this table and scream out, "Jesus died and lives for <u>all</u>."** For <u>all</u>. I am sure

4. that the Roman centurion-, obviously, had doubts. But he went home with a

5. miracle. Come to this table. Come to this place of grace. Anticipate a miracle.

6. Anticipate forgiveness. Anticipate being loved.

Alan's interpretation of *The Roman Centurion* narrative suggests that the centurion was openly gay and he was fully accepted by Jesus. This implies that the sexual identity and practices of the Roman centurion were not an issue of moral contention at all in this story,

and as Alan implies, it is possible for a gay person to also be a practicing Christian. Reaffirming his notion that Northern Heights Church is not defined by the sexual orientation of its members, Alan challenges his church to stand up "as a church straight and gay" (Ex. 3.2.15, line 2) and proclaim the inclusiveness of their belief system as he states that "Jesus died and lives for all" (Ex. 3.2.15, line 3). Alan makes a final parallel between the Roman centurion narrative and his gay church members by acknowledging that while the centurion was afraid to come out, he received a miracle and his congregation members can anticipate the same (Ex. 3.2.15, lines 3-5).

The presentation of *The Roman Centurion* narrative assumes a great amount of interpretive liberty on the part of Alan. He even acknowledges this by hedging many of his claims, particularly when he says things like "this is Alan's theory" (Ex. 3.2.12, line 4) or "if this theology is correct" (3.2.14, lines 1-2). While the definition of "pais" as "male lover" is the most central element of his interpretation of *The Roman Centurion* narrative, Alan even admits that "pais" "means, and can mean, three different things" (Ex. 3.2.11, lines 4-5). This is certainly an example of how institutional leaders, as noted by Bourdieu (1999), can create moral certainty in a world of endless possibilities. While Alan does not even claim that his interpretation of *The Roman Centurion* is absolutely accurate, he still creates real-life applications of this textual analysis by encouraging the gay members of his church to embrace their homosexuality (Ex. 3.2.13, lines 3-5). While this interpretation of *The Roman Centurion* promises spiritual freedom for gay and lesbian members of Northern Heights Church, Alan will use the biblical text in 1 Corinthians to re-affirm boundaries on appropriate sexual behaviors for his congregation.

3.3 THE 1 CORINTHIANS PASSAGE

Example 3.3.1

1. This is Paul-, **now Paul is addressing a <u>very</u> sexually charged group of**
2. **individuals.** The new church was exploding, and they were dealing with so
3. many issues. And in this letter, he goes from dealing with lawsuits-, this-, these
4. new believers were suing each other on the most ridiculous issues and we <u>still</u>
5. haven't changed on that. And then he all a sudden stops-, talk about lawsuits
6. and goes into <u>sex</u>.

In support of the biblical narratives presented in his previous sermons, Alan discusses a passage from the New Testament book of 1 Corinthians in his final sermon of this series on human sexuality. This text is important because Alan creates allusions between the Corinthian church and his congregation. Alan mentions that the Apostle Paul wrote this book of the Bible to a church in the city of Corinth, and that the individuals in this new church community were "very sexually charged" (Ex. 3.3.1, lines 1-2). Alan highlights the sexual practices of the Corinthians as a central issue among many problematic practices of this church body (Ex. 3.3.1, lines 2-5).

Example 3.3.2

1. "Or do you know that wrongdoers will <u>not</u> inherit the kingdom of God?
2. Do not be deceived, brothers and sisters, <u>neither</u> sexual immorality, immoral,
3. nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes-, which was a <u>hu:ge</u> issue at
4. this time-, nor practicing homosexuals." <u>Okay</u>. Let's stop real quick […] We
5. know most people will not go beyond and dig deeper into this translation. **We**
6. **<u>now</u> know that Paul was not addressing a gay community, what Paul <u>was</u>**
7. **addressing was straight people doing gay acts in temple worship.**

As Alan reads the 1 Corinthians text, he lists groups of individuals that the apostle Paul condemns because of their sexual behavior, including "practicing homosexuals" (Ex. 3.3.2, lines 2-4). Before continuing with this passage, Alan states that while others take this text at face value, he believes that Paul was not actually addressing a homosexual community in Corinth. Rather, Paul's criticism was directed toward straight persons engaging in gay sex acts as a part of religious ritual (Ex. 3.3.2, lines 5-7). Alan highlights that this biblical passage, which appears to reprove homosexual behavior, actually admonishes sexual acts as part of pagan worship (Ex. 3.3.3, lines 2-4). Once again, Alan proposes that additional contextualization is necessary for a correct translation of this biblical text, which he expands in Example 3.3.3.

Example 3.3.3

1. What Paul was addressing-, **notice he put "male prostitute" and <u>not</u> the word**
2. **"homosexual-,"** at least the translation put it like that-, and what he is
3. addressing is that in the temple is people who were practicing basically in a
4. form of-, through idolatry, pagan sex. Let me just say it like this-, we're all
5. adults here. **They were having <u>orgies</u> in the temple**. **This is a very primitive**

6. **time.** Okay? <u>Very</u> primitive. And so, that was the situation. That was what

7. he's addressing.

In Example 3.3.3 above, Alan presents his own linguistic and historical context for his interpretation of the Corinthian epistle. He proposes that the Greek word used in this text actually translates as "male prostitute" and not as "homosexual" (lines 1-2). Thus, the individuals whom Paul rebuked in the 1 Corinthians text were not just engaging in homosexual sex, they did these acts in exchange for monetary compensation. Moreover, Alan states that the individuals that the Apostle Paul addressed in this text were partaking in orgies inside of religious temples (Ex. 3.3.3, line 5). Alan calls these behaviors morally "primitive" (Ex. 3.3.3, line 5-6), and argues that Paul's target audience in this passage was rather narrow. According to Alan's analysis, Paul did not intend for this passage to address all gay persons in Corinth. Once again, Alan's judgment of the cultural climate and behaviors of peoples in this scripture reflects his authority to interpret the Bible on behalf of his community. His conclusion that this text does not condemn homosexuality is also based on a lexical interpretation (Ex. 3.3.3, lines 1-2), which is information that Alan provides for his congregation, indicating the kind of linguistic control that Alan has over the presentation of the biblical text.

Example 3.3.4

1. <u>That's</u> a crazy church. That's <u>his</u> church. People who were involved in some

2. orgies in the temple, drunks, swindlers-, that means there was lawyers in the

3. church. <audience laughs> <u>Alright</u>, anyway, so-, so that's a really, really

4. interesting church. **We can <u>all</u> relate to this church**. That-, that was the

5. church back then and <u>hello,</u> it's the church today. We just dress a little

6. differently, may be a little bit more sophisticated, and we have craigslist now.

7. <u>Right</u>? **That was the church then and this is the church today.**

8. **People who are struggling.**

In Example 3.3.4, Alan acknowledges that he considers the social practices of the Corinthian "crazy" (line 1), and that his church community can relate to this group of people (line 4). While his congregation dresses differently and has more sophisticated technology, they still have comparable spiritual struggles to the church in the 1 Corinthians passage (Example 3.3.5, lines 5-7). Although Alan does not include homosexuality in Paul's list of

spiritual shortcomings, he does recognize the relevance of this text, as his congregation still deals with timeless struggles of moral behavior.

Example 3.3.5

1. I know that I am preaching this morning to a congregation-, that many of us
2. have become slaves to our whims of sexuality, and our struggles. **And I'm**
3. **speaking to the married, I'm speaking to the <u>gays</u>, and I'm speaking to the**
4. <u>**straights**</u>. **We're <u>all</u> in the same boat here. None of us are better than**
5. **anyone else in this room**. And that's what makes us a great church is that we
6. are okay with that. We accept that. I know it's a struggle.
7. <u>Now</u>, in closing, I want to talk about love, devotion, and commitment.
8. Love. Devotion, and commitment. […]"There is more to sex than mere skin on
9. skin." **In other words, (???) Sex is as much a spiritual mystery as a**
10. **physical fact.** As it is written in the scripture, "the <u>two</u> become <u>one</u>." Since
11. we want to become spiritually one, **we must not pursue the kind of sex-, that**
12. **listen-, that avoids commitment and intimacy**.

In this text from Example 3.3.5, Alan acknowledges that there are persons in his congregation who have dysfunctional sexual relationships, but he states that these individuals are both gay and straight (lines 1-4). Even though all of his church members have flaws in their sexual behavior, sexual identity has no part in the moral shortcomings that Alan describes. As in the narrative of the Roman Centurion and Jesus, wherein marriages were established through the purchase of property (Ex. 3.2.10), Alan claims that sexual relationships for both gay and straight members of his church are less than perfect, as he states "none of us are better than anyone else in this room" (Ex. 3.3.5, lines 4-5). In order address the sexual practices of his congregation that he deems problematic, Alan presents the nature of sexual acts as dually physical and spiritual. According to Alan, sex is more than just physical contact or "skin on skin" (Ex. 3.3.5, lines 8-9); it is a unifying spiritual act as well.

In order for "the two to become one" during sexual experiences (Ex. 3.3.5, lines 10-11), Alan asserts that there must be mutual commitment between the two partners. He also instructs the members of his church to avoid any kind of sex that is void of love and commitment, as it would eliminate the spiritual aspects of sexual intimacy that he deems so important (Ex. 3.3.6, lines 5-6). When Alan addresses "the married" (Ex. 3.3.5, line 3), he

does not designate that these members are gay or straight, which further establishes his notion that marriage is an institutional accessible to all persons in his church, regardless of the sexuality of the partners involved. It should be noted that at this point in the sermon, Alan completely departs from his textual interpretation and begins an analysis that relies entirely upon his own judgments, an act which requires that Alan speak from an assumed objective truth (Foucault, 1969). This kind of linguistic freedom is only afforded to the authorized delegates of an institution because of their prerequisite authority (Bourdieu, 1999).

Example 3.3.6

1. Sex is a <u>spiritual</u> act. It is a spiritual connection-, and in that moment,
2. spiritually-, these individuals are one. **And he said <u>two:</u>-, and he said <u>two:</u>-,**
3. **church-, <u>not</u> three**. What a day we live in. **Marriage evolved from property**
4. **and sex, <u>remember</u>-**? **Marriage evolved through Paul-, first through Jesus**
5. **and then Paul's like-, it needs to be two**. There needs to be commitment, and
6. there needs to be two people coming together and believing-, and there needs to
7. be healthiness and that ownership-, and that need just for pleasure-, that
8. emptiness of having several people in your life, theologically and spiritually
9. Jesus and Paul were like, "<u>Stop that.</u>" Be healthy. Make it two because you
10. become one.

In the example above, Alan firmly establishes that he believes that sexual relationships should be exclusively monogamous. Alan assumes that through sexual intimacy, only two persons become spiritually one (lines 9-10). He also recaps the evolution of marriage throughout his sermon series (Ex. 3.3.6, lines 3-5). Alan used *The Roman Centurion* narrative to condemn relationships established through ownership (Ex. 3.2.9), and he concludes that sexual connections must be between two persons in order to have a healthy spiritual union. Yet again, Alan is introducing a mainstream evangelical ideology of sexuality, wherein monogamous relationships are the default ideal (O'Brien, 2004). While Alan does not believe that sexual orientations or identities should be of any concern to Christians, sexual practices are not beyond an evangelical moral framework. In Example 3.3.7, Alan explicitly states the sexual practices that he ascribes to the gay community are harmful for his congregation.

Example 3.3.7
1. Not <u>three</u>. Not <u>four</u>. **This open relationship thing within the gay community,**
2. **is an-, it is-, a <u>sickness</u> that will hurt our community. It will hurt the**
3. **Christian-, or just-, whatever-, just the gay community in general**. <u>Now</u> the
4. thing about straight individuals, when pornography is a part of (that), it is more
5. than two. <u>Boy:</u>, is this heavy. It's <u>heavy</u>. God wants more for you. <u>Straight</u> or
6. <u>gay</u>. God wants more for you. It's <u>not</u> skin on skin.

Alan not only reiterates his clear preference for monogamous relationships in this final segment of the 1 Corinthians text; he sets his church community apart from the gay community on this very issue (Ex. 3.3.7, lines 1-3). What is interesting is that when Alan deems open relationships to be "a sickness that will hurt our community" (Ex. 3.3.7, line 2), he appears to have an "identity crisis" when it comes to defining a social space wherein his church belongs. When Alan says "it will hurt the Christian, or just whatever, the gay community in general" (Ex. 3.3.7, lines 2-3), his hesitations demonstrate that Alan is uncertain whether "our community" (line 2) falls within the Christian or the gay community. In this text, he does not resolve where this community of gay Christians fits in this landscape of identity. However, Alan does clearly argue that monogamy is a moral standard for his congregation, an assertion that makes him hesitate to associate his church within the gay community because he makes the assumption that acceptance of open relationships emerges from "within the gay community" (Ex. 3.3.7, line 1-2).   Finally, Alan states that for both gay and straight members of his church, he believes sexual acts amount to more than just physical relationships. Because Alan claims that sexual relationships are inherently spiritual unions, they should be approached according to divine guidelines, regardless of whether his church members are straight or gay (Ex. 3.3.7, lines 5-6).

3.4 CONCLUSION

Throughout Alan's sermon texts, his distinctions between sexual identity and eroticism illustrate that desire-based models of sexuality (Cameron & Kulick, 2003; Kulick, 2000) are not adequate to describe this pastor's ideology of sexuality. It becomes clear that Alan's understanding of sexuality demonstrates that erotic behavior and sexual identity are two crucial and yet distinct components of sexuality, aligning largely with Eckert's (2002) perspective. Alan's moral stances on sexuality ultimately reflect evangelical notions of

sexual policing, a belief that sexual acts ought to be confined to Christian behavioral norms. This comes from a persistent evangelical discourse, which proposes that while individuals have the right to "be gay," that doesn't mean they should be able to "do gay" in the ways they see fit (Jakobsen & Pellegrini, 2003). While Alan does not dismiss the right to engage in homosexual relationships, he clearly defines sexual standards, rooted in evangelical beliefs, that both gay and straight individuals must adhere to. This thesis supports, as Peebles (2004) noted, that religious beliefs about erotic behavior are essential to the sexual ideologies of evangelical Christians.

In accordance with Peebles (2004), the community of Northern Heights Church also confirms her conclusions that the use and interpretation of scripture is the ultimate basis for the sexual identities of Christians, even if those Christians are also gay. Alan's reverence for the infallibility of the Bible and his commitment to monogamy in sexual relationships (which he contrasts with the alleged sexual norms of the gay community) might suggest that his identification as an evangelical Christian takes precedence over his identity as a gay man.

The importance of intersectionality theory (Wong, 2010) is highlighted by the centrality of religious beliefs to this construction of a gay Christian identity. If Alan and members of his congregation were merely viewed as a gay community and not as a gay Christian community, it would be impossible to understand the complex facets of this intersectional group. For Northern Heights Church, understanding the centrality of Bible-based religious beliefs is the only way to analyze Alan's ideological negotiation of sexual identity. Intersectionality theory has implications for linguistic studies of others persons who maintain compositional identities, which are central to their self-identification and treatment by others (Wong, 2010). What's more, these intersectional identities carry the potential to place individuals in distinct positions of social marginalization. For example, gay Christians are sexual minorities within the larger evangelical Christian community, but are also sidelined within the gay community because their religious views are considered to be incongruous with their sexuality (O'Brien, 2005). This social isolation could lead to the formation of intersectional communities of practice, which are bound to develop their own linguistic practices and repertoires.

Because Alan had to negotiate his identity as a gay man in a public way as a means of establishing his authority as a head pastor, discussions of language and power are prominent

in this thesis. While it appears that Alan has the support and approval of his congregation in these sermons, as indicated by the extended applauses from the audience, it would require further ethnographic work to determine if this sermon series actual had a real impact on the everyday practices and the membership of this community. However, Alan's ability to subvert the heteronormative discourses of evangelical Christianity in his sermons can be evaluated from the data in this chapter.

According to Bourdieu (1999), in order for a dominant discourse order to be fully subverted, it must be entirely replaced by a new ideological order. Although Alan certainly questions evangelical assumptions about sexuality, he still maintains that monogamous sexual practices are important components of his sexual ideology, which are also core beliefs held by conservative evangelical Christians (O'Brien 2004). This suggests that Alan was not entirely successful in replacing this evangelical discourse, but that he simply reproduced this ideological paradigm and used his interpretation of scripture to graft his sexual identity into this framework. According to Wenger's (1998) community of practice model, however, this is a successful manipulation of authority within a community of practice. Alan had no intention of fully replacing evangelical beliefs about sexuality, but he did work to alter them enough that his church community would accept his own sexual identity. Thus, for Alan's purposes, it appears that his discursive work might have been entirely successful.

As Fairclough (1995) notes, it is important to acknowledge what is crucially omitted in discourse studies. While Alan affirms the identity and practices of monogamous gay and lesbian members of his church, he never once addresses any other sexually marginalized identities and he only refers to the "gay community," not the LGBT or queer community, in his sermons. It is significant that Alan does not include any other queer identity within the framework of his discursive work. While Alan does not explicitly address gender in his sermons series, his exclusive invitation for gay and lesbians members of his church might also exclude persons who are not cisgendered from authorized membership in Northern Heights Church. In the analysis of these sermons, Alan makes an elaborate defense for the inclusion of gay and lesbian persons into his church community; however, his discourse of equality may not extend to everyone.

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APPENDIX

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

The notational conventions employed in the transcriptions are listed below:

. A period indicates the end of a sentence and/or an extended pause.

? A question mark indicates rising intonation and/or the use of a question.

(?) A question mark in parentheses indicates indiscernible speech, and the number of question marks corresponds roughly to the number of words missed in the transcription.

, A comma indicates a brief pause that is not restricted to a sentence boundary.

: A colon indicates lengthening of the preceding sound, proportionate to the number of colons listed.

- A single hyphen after a word, part of a word, or a single sound indicates a quick cut-off, self-interruption or correction.

"" Enclosed quotations marks indicate when the speaker is quoting another text or voicing another character or person.

word Underlining a word or a part of a word indicates stress or emphasis on the underlined segment by the speaker.

<word> Words enclosed within a combination of "less than" and "more than" symbols represent explanatory comments.

(word) A word or portion of a word within parentheses indicates uncertainty on the part of the transcriber.

bold Bold-faced text highlights portions of the transcript that are most relevant to the discussion within the text and are not part of the original transcription or indicative of the speaker's emphasis.

[...] Square-bracketed ellipses indicate that a portion of the transcript has not been included for length considerations. The sequential ordering within the excerpts is not altered through the use of ellipsis.