

# PURITY CULTURE OUTCOMES



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Modest Clothing

Virginity as a Fragile Gift



Binary Gender Performance



Sexual Exploration as Dangerous



Heteronormativity

# What Is Purity Culture?

An Evangelical Christian Abstinence-Based Approach  
To Teaching Kids About Sex



Abstinence-  
Only Sex Ed

Moral Disgust

Sexual Shame

Purity Pledges

LGBTQ and  
Religion

Non-  
Academic  
Publications

What Do We Know?

Related Literature



# Our Research Question:



How did LGBTQ folks experience purity culture, and how are they being impacted by it today?





## Recruitment

- Snowball sample
- Flier distributed via social media
- 796 Surveys collected to date
- Diverse participants from around the world



Did you grow up believing that  
**True Love Waits?**

Was **Christian purity culture** an important part of your upbringing? If so, we're doing a research study and are looking for participants to take an online survey and/or participate in an interview.

[PurityCultureOutcomes.com](http://PurityCultureOutcomes.com)

## Methodology



## Interview Participants For Current Research: *Fourteen Persons Assigned Female at Birth*



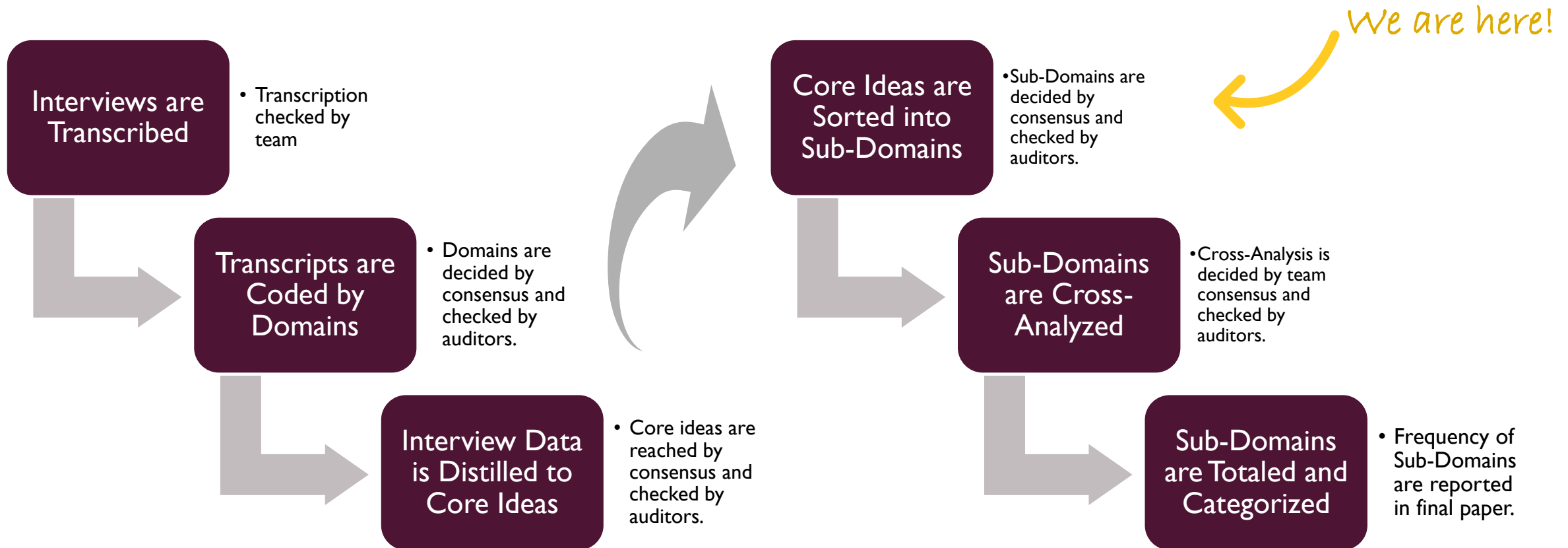
- Volunteered via Survey
- Sexuality Impacted by Purity Culture-Yes
- Semi-Structured Interviews
- 26 minutes – 1 hour 30 minutes



Sexual Orientation/Identity	n	%
Queer	11	79%
Bisexual	10	71%
Pansexual	4	29%
Polyamorous/Non-Monogamous	3	21%
Homosexual	2	14%
Demisexual	2	14%
Lesbian	1	7%
Bi-Romantic	1	7%
Race		
White	10	71%
Black	1	7%
Latinx or Hispanic	1	7%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	7%
No Response	2	14%
Sex/Gender		
Assigned Female at Birth	14	100%
Genderqueer	2	14%
Non-Binary	1	7%
Genderfluid	1	7%



# Analysis Using CQR: Consensual Qualitative Research



# Domains Based On Feminist Therapy



1. Experiences Of Oppressive Systems
2. Internalization Of Message Of Oppression
3. Symptoms As Resistance To Oppressive Systems
4. Somatic Power
5. Spirituality And Meaning-making
6. Internal Power
7. Relational And Social Power





# Experiences Of Oppression

- Early introduction
- Information depravation
- Heteronormativity
- Special rules for females
- Fear as a tactic
- Noncompliance=shunning or ostracization
- Panopticon: someone is always watching
- Hiding or ignoring orientation is expected
- Concealing body is required
- Limited physical activities

“...so I had three older brothers, and they were all allowed to do pretty much anything they wanted to do. And the expectation for me was to be good and small.”  
-Interviewee



# Symptoms as Resistance to Oppression

## Attempts at Managing Oppression

- Over or under-eating
- Risky sexual behavior
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Fervent religious involvement

## Reclamation of Power

- Eating healthy, balanced diet
- Safe and consensual sexual behavior
- Treatment-Alcoholics Anonymous, etc.
- Deconversion from faith of origin and/or re-defining relationship with the divine and faith

“...because I was so... messed up in my thinking around sex, the only way I could have sex was with alcohol. Um, and again, like part of that is because I was in the closet and like, so deep in the closet, I was in Narnia [laughs] but, you know, in sobriety, oh, well actually no, pre-sobriety being with women, it was still the same thing because of that disconnect because of that shame, because there is like, I feel like there's something dirty and wrong with me...” -Interviewee



# Somatic Power

## Absence of Power

- Physical pleasure is sinful
- Clothing: focus on not revealing body
- Sexual desire is dismissed/repressed
- Mistreatment of body
- Lack of ability to consent

## Presence of Power

- Physical pleasure is enjoyed
- Clothing: focus on comfort or preference
- Sexual desire is celebrated
- Positive treatment of body
- Consent is mandatory

“... so much, uh, discussion about what we were wearing, um, and how we would be leading boys astray and men would look at us...it was really disturbing as a 12 or 13 year old to be told that, you know, adult men are going to stray from the path because my shoulders are revealed. And so I really covered my body. Um, I mean I was also covering my sexuality at the time as well, um, I could barely name it.” -Interviewee



# Uniquely LGBTQ Results



Performance of heterosexuality

Difficulty recognizing own sexual orientation

Delayed coming out

Persistent fear of damnation

Loss of significant relationships (family, friends, church)



# Why does purity culture matter?

## It's Wide-Spread

- Millions of people grew up immersed in purity culture.
- Impacts such as sexual shame and revulsion linger into adulthood.
- Persons who grew up in purity culture are seeking counseling, therapy and support.

## It's Still Present

- Abstinence-only sex ed is still required in many schools.
- LGBTQ adolescents are still taught that being gay is a sin.
- Girls and women are still routinely shamed for their clothing choices.

## It Impacts Policies

- Laws about sexual assault
- Sex education policies
- Dress codes
- Trans student rights such as bathroom use
- Anti-Marriage Equality bills
- Equal rights in the workplace





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