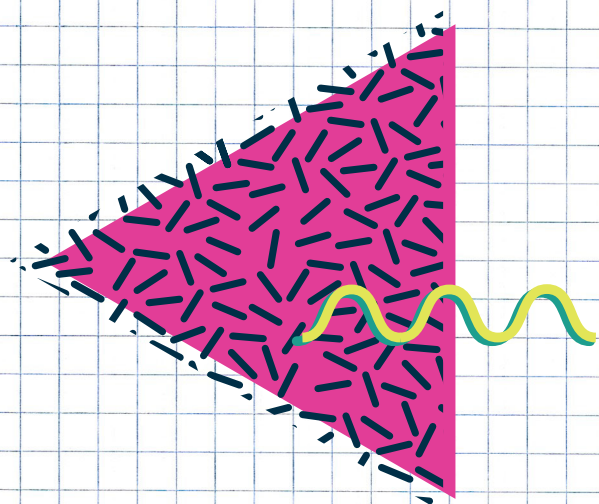


KNOW

RE-SETTING THE MOOD
ON SEXUAL LITERACY AND FAITH
WITH LDS SINGLE ADULTS



MFA DESIGN FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION THESIS
School of Visual Arts, New York City 2020

Designed by Danielle Skinn



**TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE BORN
SHAME BECAUSE OF AN INHERENT
PART OF THEIR IDENTITY.**

PREFACE

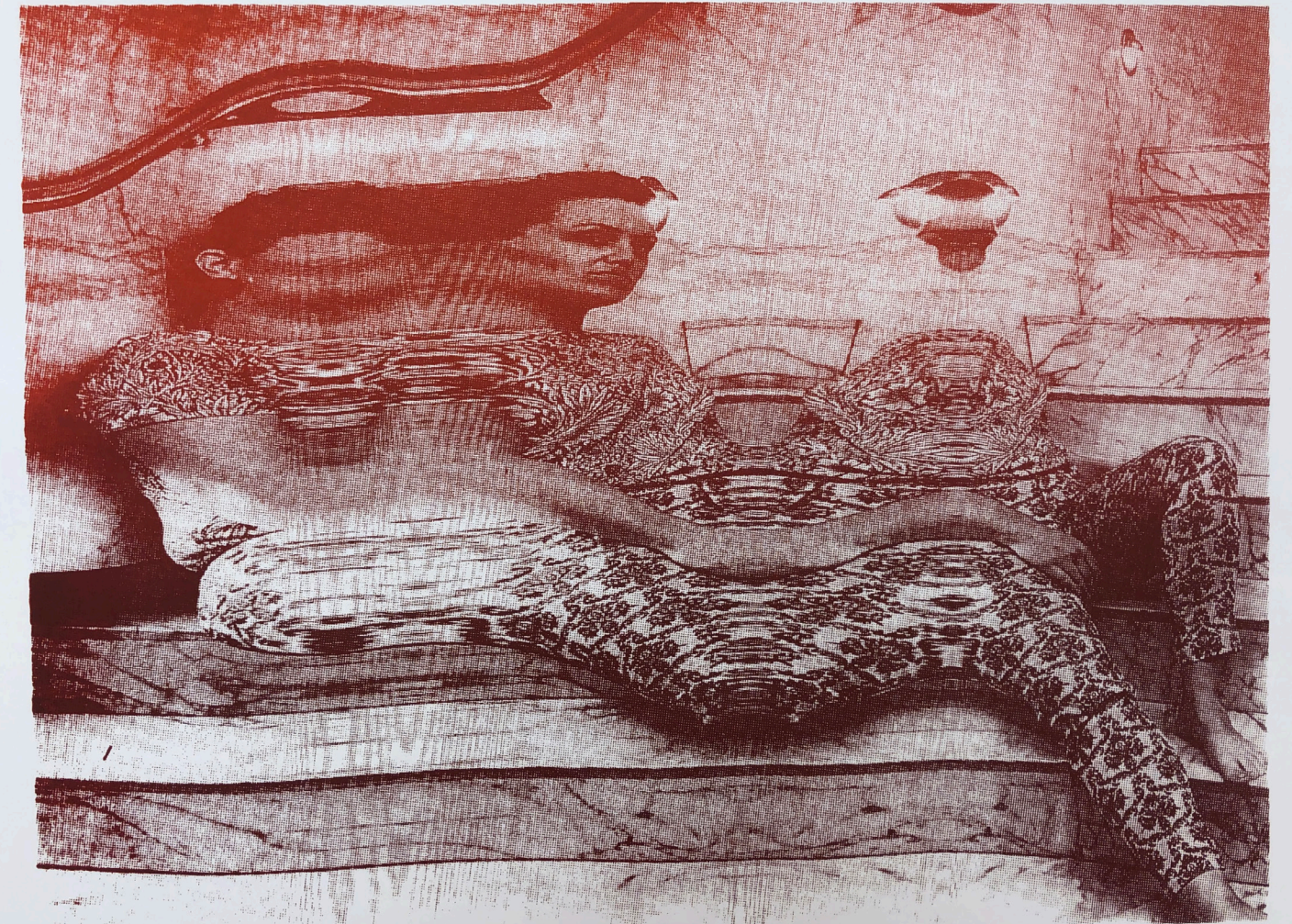
This is a reporting on the process of a thesis project years in the making; my own journey toward sexual wholeness and through the eyes of single members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (or Mormon Church) in New York City.

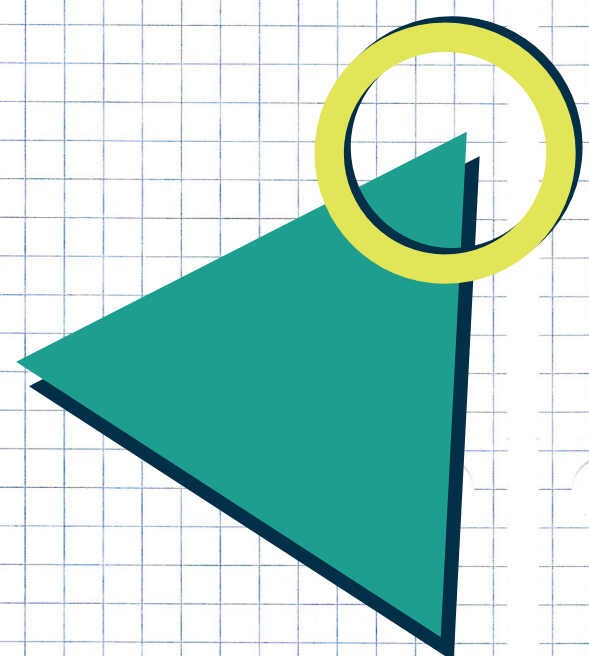
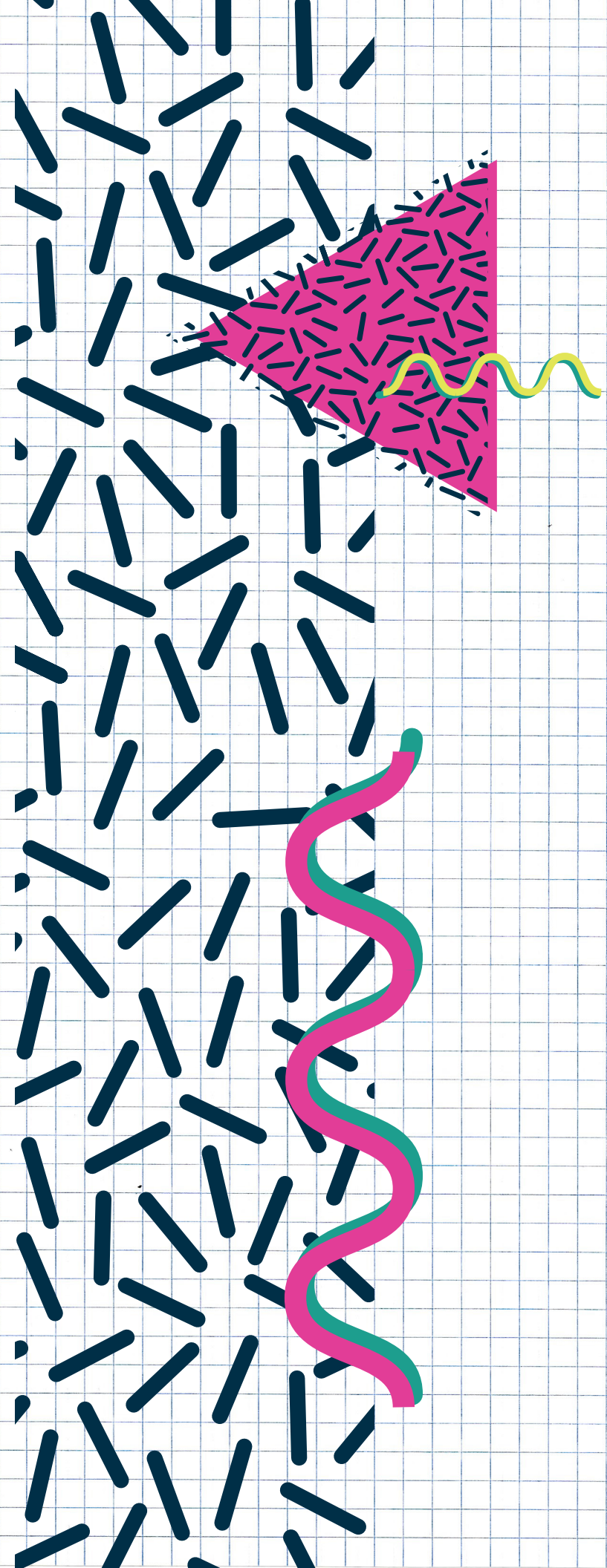
I am a 35, single, actively participating member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I grew up in a inter-faith home; my mom a born and raised Latter-day Saint (Mormon) and I still can't remember to this day if my dad claims Presbyterian or Lutheran. The Latter-day Saints' teaching on sexual morality is abstinence before marriage and complete fidelity within marriage. In 5th grade, I ran away from my mom when she sat me down to have "The Talk." As a normal, waxing and waning teenager, when I heard the messages about abstinence at church, I left feeling like I would lose all control over myself if I ever got in a sticky situation. It instilled in my growing adolescent brain a lack of confidence that I would be powerless over a man's desire and my body if I ever went too far.

Marriage is a central focus of the Church of Jesus Christ and alongside the lessons of abstinence during my teenage years were messages about my future preparing to be a wife and a mother. It would be the highest potential and means for the greatest happiness on earth I could find. I attended a Latter-day Saint owned university and although I never wanted to be a young bride, I was sad I left without a husband. I attended congregations of single members in Montana, Utah, and New York City until I was 31 and was asked, per normal custom, to move on to the next age bracket of single members, which I would be asked again to leave the "older singles congregation" if I didn't find a spouse by 45. On my own volition, I left at 33 because the unhealthy dynamic of feeling othered.

Self-doubt and almost undetectable self-worth wrecked me. As I began to really interrogate my belief system and my behavior in relationships, I started putting the pieces together that my beliefs about sexuality were uninformed. I still felt deep trepidation about pursuing this thesis topic, expanding the story beyond my own. Some of the stories about sexual identity were tragic, infuriating and yet others were hopeful.

Searching for my identity, I got lost in my own fear. Little did I know, fear emerged as a common theme among participants. Fear, not only in our own insecurities but also in the fear-based sexual education driven by the United States government. Although fear began as an obstacle, it's constant begging to be acknowledged was key in navigating the root issue that lead us to finding community and channels for change.





CONTENTS

8 *INTRODUCTION*

10 *FEAR*
Process overview | Building Context |
Community Research

22 *FEAR > TRUST*
Community Building | Barriers &
Insights | Problem Statment Map
Singles & the LDS Church | Intervention
Ideaation | HMW

34 *TRUST > ACTION*
Co-creations | Known - a conference
for singles | Theory of Change |
Conference Approval | The beginning of
a new direction | Manifesto

50 *REFLECTIONS, WHY THIS MATTERS &
THANK YOU*

INTRODUCTION

I met Amy almost a decade ago in a congregation of single adults in Utah (I'll refer to the church or its members as Latter-day Saints from here on out). Now we met again, both still single, living in New York City. She approached me with a passion project she wanted to pursue and it fit right along the lines of what could and did become this thesis project.

Interviewing single adults in the NYC area about how they experienced being a Latter-day Saints, Amy and I swapped listening to each other's interviews to find themes. When she showed up at my apartment a week later, I was nervous to admit intimacy and sex were the prominent themes I heard but she found the same. Many people were experiencing the same disconnect between sexuality and themselves and others. As we chatted, we were careful not to make this choice based on our own experiences, even though we were in these stories too. We found a disconnect in creating real, healthy intimacy in this community and we wanted to know why.

Designing for social innovation, interrogating systems, and mindsets while listening and validating each person's experiences is at its core. This project comes down to the contexts in which information is accessible and exchangeable. It's about understanding what keeps single adults of the Church of Jesus Christ from feeling safe to incorporate their natural, sexual identity into who they are, married or not. It's about knowledge, identity, agency and human rights.

"I REALLY WISH THAT IN THE CHURCH, ESPECIALLY IN THE YOUTH PROGRAMS, THAT WE WOULD TALK ABOUT SEX IN A REAL WAY."

Female member, 34

"HAVING OPEN CONVERSATIONS LIKE THIS, YOU'RE BASICALLY JUST REMOVING ANY TABOOS ABOUT SEX OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR OF ANYTHING THAT YOU FEEL LIKE HAS TO BE HUSH HUSH."

Male member, 27



FEAR } TRUST } ACTION

HOW WE GOT HERE

Attack the Problems of Adolescent Sexuality

Editorial against chastity "Chastity Is Not Virtuous," must have surprised others as

not wish to create and pro-Government ideology about wish to change the ideology Government is promoting, which you apparently agree. Gov-should not endeavor to come parent and child on issues of sexuality. But that is what Government does.

In the past decade, we have spent on of taxpayers' money on planning." What have we pur-er America's adolescents?

1000 clinics provide "family teen-agers

part; The of portion of Adolescent Family Life Continues 27 pilot prog were set up to prov to pregnant adolescents cent parents. Parts of the age parents and their ado dren to work together, parental permission befo are provided.

according to this mentality, virtually all pregnancies are unwanted), abortion is the only logical alternative.

The deep pocket of government has funded this intervention between parents and their children in schools and clinics for 10 years; it is little wonder that problems of adolescent sexual activity grow worse.

Partially as a consequence of these activities, abortion for women under 20 is rising dramatically; there probably be over 500,000 abortions performed on teen-agers this year. Out-of-wedlock births to women under 20 are increasing. The percent of never-married teen-agers in U.S. cities who have experienced sexual intercourse doubled between 1971 and activity among 16-year-old group is up by 80 per-

problems. What a pleasant change that will be from government interference, which seems to make the problems worse.



What if I want to have sex before I get married?



Well, I guess you just have to be prepared to die.



I had hope

to go to party with my friends

to graduate High School

to enjoy being young

I did NOT hope to get pregnant

PORTAL TO SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL IDENTITY IS THROUGH MARRAIG



To Attack the Problems of Adolescent Sexuality

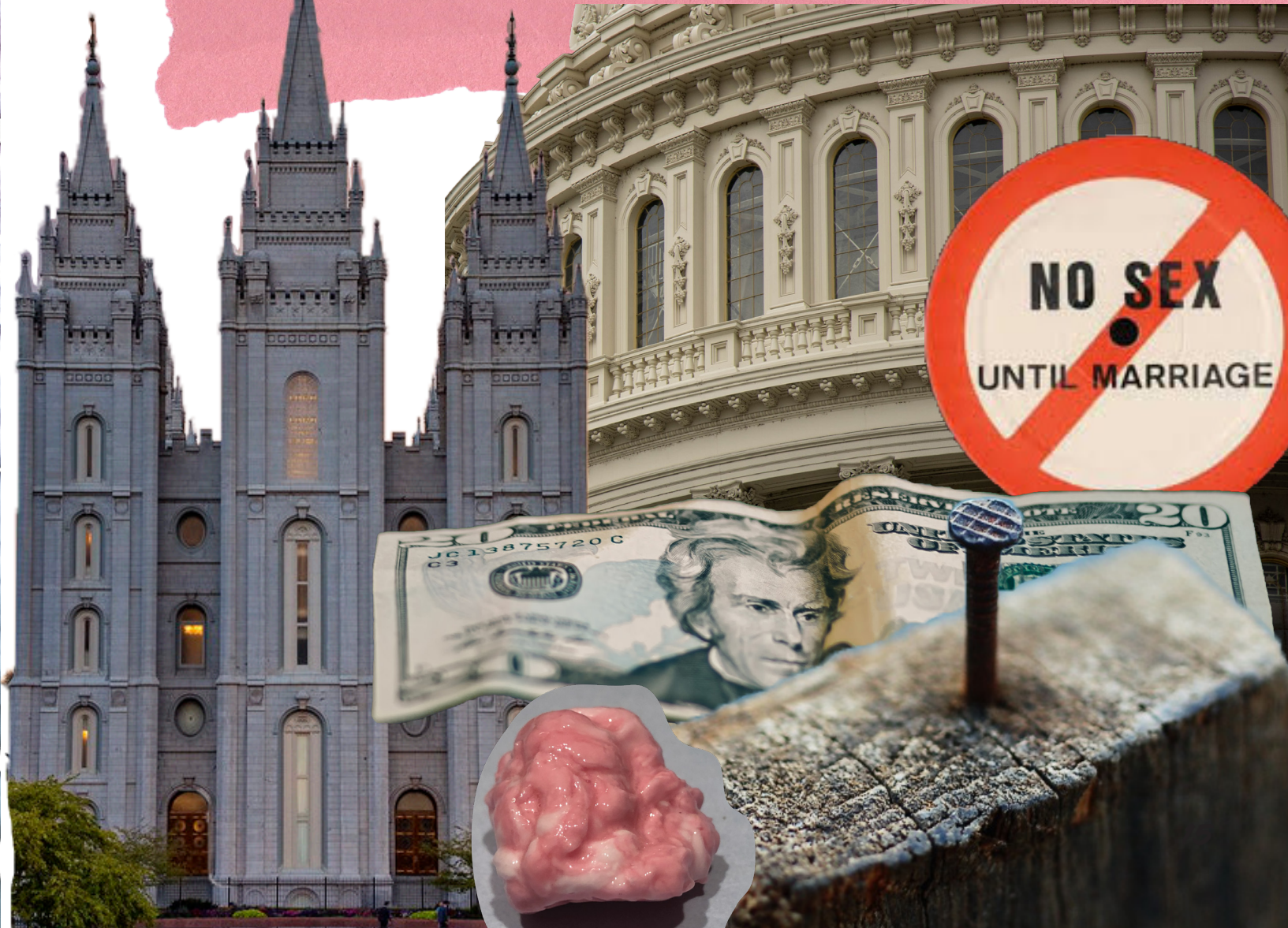
Adolescent Family Life legislation,

ORRIN HATCH
U.S. Senator from Utah
JEREMIAH DENTON
U.S. Senator from Alabama
Washington, June 12, 1981

The Adolescent Family Life Act passed in 1981 with the aim to reduce teen pregnancy and disease transmission by focusing on “abstinence-until-marriage” sexual education curriculum in U.S. schools.

In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, this was and is the same. The analogies often heard by youth in the 80s and 90s about the impacts and personal consequences for having pre-marital sex were fear-producing: being compared to a piece of chewed gum, a crumpled, dirty passed around \$20 bill, a nailed board.

The number of teen pregnancies has consistently gone down since that time, but these messages that were intended to protect, left a wake of shame and fear.



WHAT IS HEALTHY SEXUALITY?

My assumption was that singles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were disconnected from their sexuality. To understand the next set of questions to ask members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I wanted to know if I could find a definition for healthy sexuality to set as a barometer.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Sexual health is a state of physical, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality. It requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.

Sexuality incorporates eroticism, intimacy, pleasure, reproduction, and one's own gender identity, and it is manifested in sexual behaviors, wishes, desires, fantasies, attitudes, roles, and relationships. The WHO also views sexuality as inherently multidimensional, integrating biological, cultural, social, economic, psychological, ethical, and spiritual factors.

Positive or healthy sexuality, then, requires that individuals have adequate freedom and knowledge to pursue safe and satisfying sexuality.

DO ADULTS OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST EXPERIENCE DISCONNECTION IN THEIR SEXUAL IDENTITY?

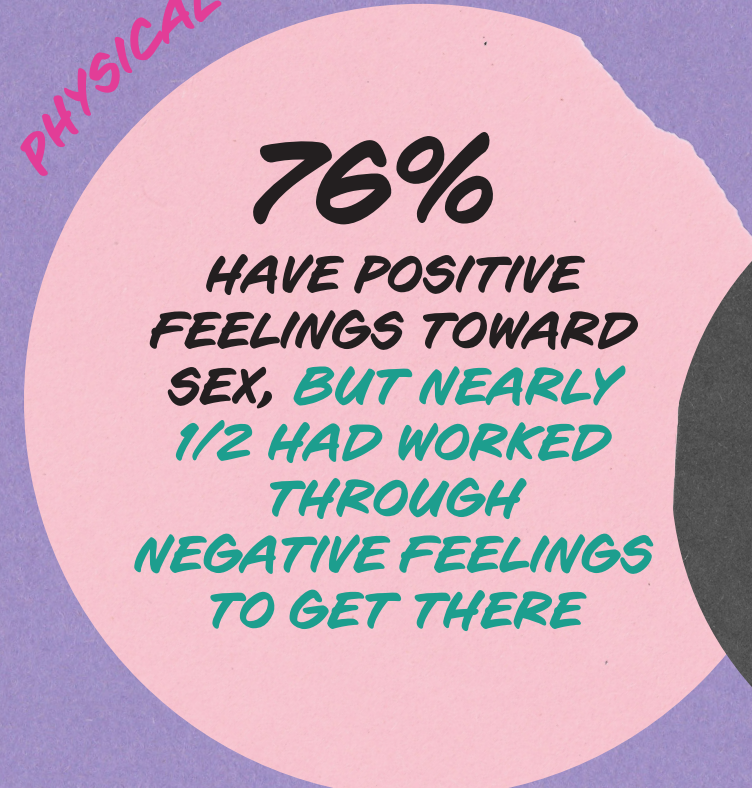
ACTIVITIES & INSIGHTS

45 single adults from the Harlem single adult congregation participated in the survey. I also sent the survey to members of my congregation in Inwood, most of whom are married. Their answers were similar; I will explain why I decided to stick with the single population as my main community.

Because most participants leaned toward having positive feelings toward sexuality, I wondered if those who did respond were those who felt comfortable enough with sex to participate.

Emotional intimacy was statistically more difficult because of communication. Because we were still exploring a focus on healthy sexuality or healthy relationships, we decided to ask more questions around emotional intelligence.

PHYSICAL



SPIRITUAL



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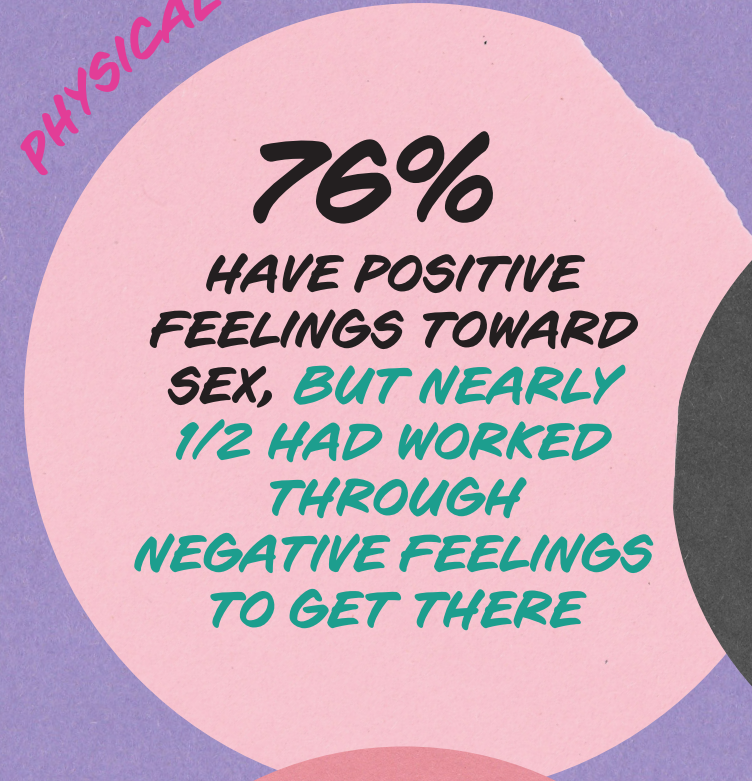
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PHYSICAL



SPIRITUAL



WHAT BARRIERS DO LATTER-DAY SAINT SINGLES EXPERIENCE IN CREATING EMOTIONALLY INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS?

ACTIVITIES & INSIGHTS

From the surveys, we were able to connect with four female participants to interview.

All of them expressed fear in creating or picturing themselves in a romantic relationship. Other themes included gender roles in dating, relationships and portrayals of sexual expectations, having a negative view of themselves and the possibility of intimate relationships.

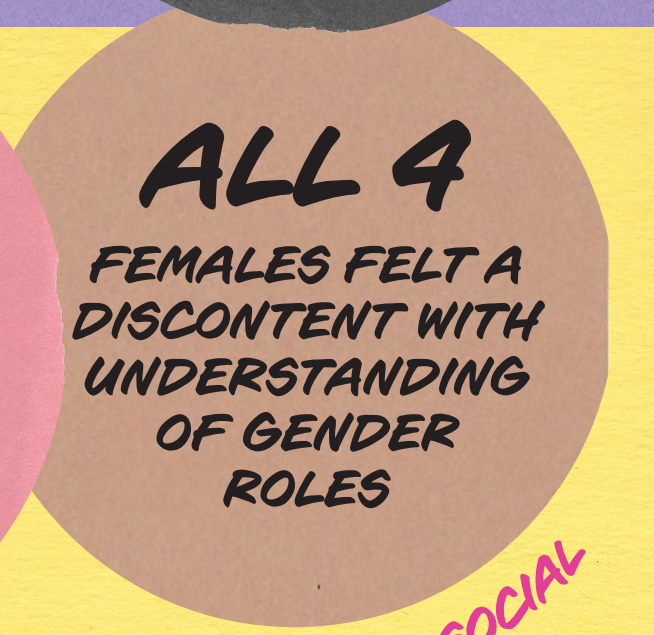
Social disconnect: One participant quote about gender constructs and socializations:

"I think sometimes women grow up in the church saying that like, we don't have a sex drive. We just like don't talk about it. It's kinda like women are so pure and virtuous and then you have to like help the guys keep it together. Cause they're just like these greedy horny machines. They can't control themselves. And so I feel like the guy's perception that they need to be more sexual than they are or be like constantly interested in sex with, they're not very masculine."

EMOTIONAL



SOCIAL



FEAR > TRUST

“At the core of community are shared experiences. They create culture and help to be a beacon for your tribe.”

SLOAN LEO

I was fortunate enough to join a book club with a few members of Harlem single adults. They are brave visionaries and committed community creators. Growing up in the faith all over the U.S., they are now hustling in New York as artists, publishers, UN workers, medical professionals, and educators. They volunteer in their Harlem congregation as leaders of organizations, teach weekly lessons, organize community events, and collaborate with local and regional leadership on new inclusion initiatives, especially for LGBTQ+ members. They emerged as a group of courageous, determined singles, becoming an integral part of the research.

BOOK CLUB



This was an opportunity to meet with a group of single adults, one I knew quite well, another I interviewed a few months earlier and just a couple of others. They were already fairly tight because they met regularly for church activities. Trust came naturally, especially as many opened up about their journeys with sexuality with someone they just met. It surprised me, but I think it was because it was hard to find someone who DIDN'T think it was a good idea to get this conversation started.

BARRIERS

Being a single member of the Church of Jesus Christ is conflicting. And the messaging from their adolescence puts a lens on the way they view the world and themselves. Here's what I heard:

1. SHAME: for some, in just thinking or talking about sex. And it's everywhere.

2. LACK OF SUPPORT: Integrating sexuality healthily into their lives because old mindsets and beliefs about singles and sexuality conflict with new truth and even practices.

3. LACK OF CONFIDENCE: They are afraid to ask questions (fear of unclear consequences) and making decisions because expectations are for them to follow the youth guide sends message that they are still youth, not adults.

INSIGHTS

1. BEING A SINGLE MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS IS

CONFLICTING: Singles want to stay active in the faith, but lack support to ask questions because of fear of bishop roulette and unreliability of unclear consequences. Not having transparency with leadership/guidelines makes incorporating their sexuality difficult/conflicting with wondering if they are in limbo with the Church's guidelines.

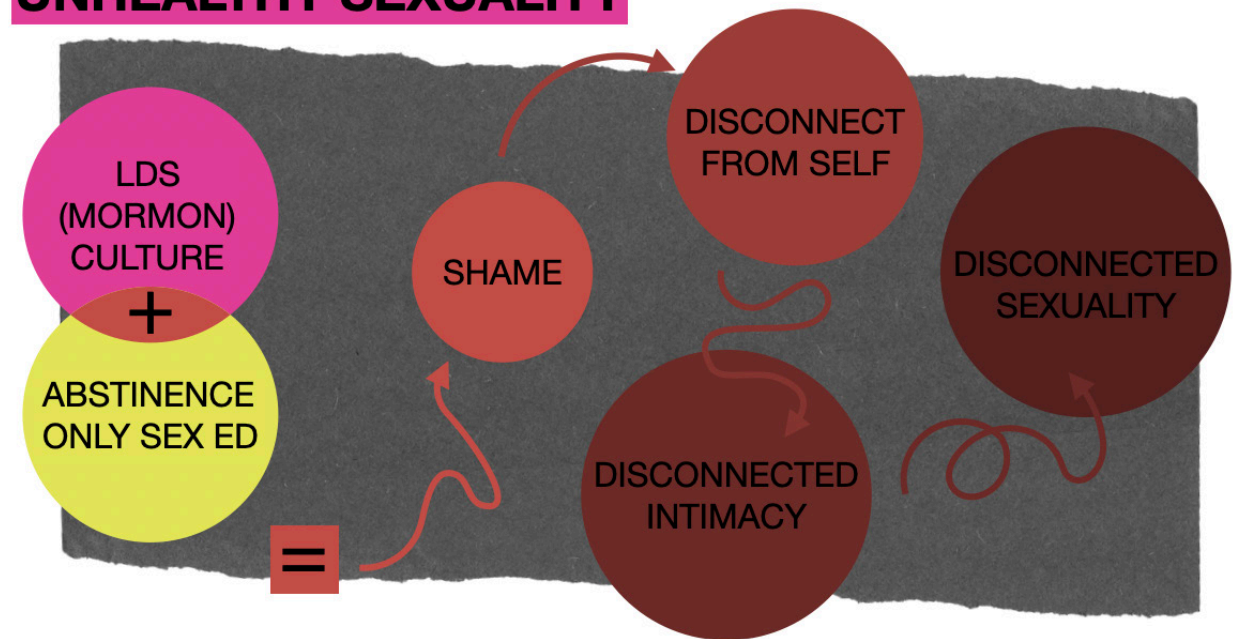
2. BEING A SINGLE ADULT IN THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST CAN BE MARGINALIZING:

What it boils down is a lack of knowledge and space to talk about their sexuality is not only frustrating, it makes them feel devalued and disconnected from their own identity and the Church.

3. THERE WAS NO REAL TRUST TO BEGIN WITH:

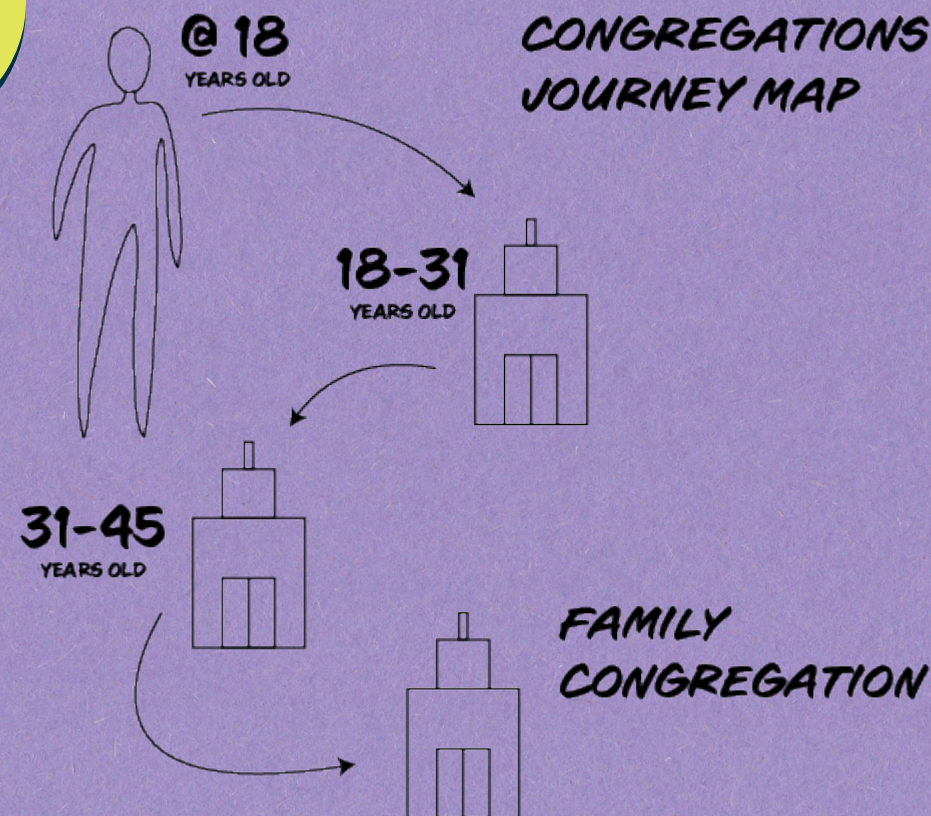
The impacts of abstinence-only sex education and lessons at church were fear, shame and guilt. Those systems were built on incomplete and limiting beliefs about our capacities as human beings.

UNHEALTHY SEXUALITY



HOW DO SINGLES FIT INTO THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST?

SINGLES' CONGREGATIONS JOURNEY MAP



WHY CAN'T THEY TALK ABOUT SEX?

THE MESSAGE:

NON-MARRIED LDS MEMBERS AREN'T ALLOWED TO HAVE A SEXUAL IDENTITY: You won't be able to control yourself. Don't go there.

THEY'RE NOT SEXUAL BEINGS. If they are not sexual beings, then a part of their natural identity is denied them.

NO REASON FOR THEM TO TALK ABOUT SEX IF YOU CAN'T HAVE SEX. If there is no reason for them to talk about it, then they cannot be full agents to themselves, having the knowledge or communication skills to make informed decisions about who to partner with, how to communicate their desires and how to protect themselves (examples of all came up in my conversations with singles).

And not having knowledge puts you at risk of choosing unhealthy partnerships, lack of ability to communicate desires and potentially sexual assault (as found in my research).

YOU'LL FIGURE IT OUT WHEN YOU GET THERE:

I remember hearing, feeling, and interpreting messages like that and in that way. Maybe it was connected to the "do not participate in discussions or media that arouse sexual feelings" from the For the Strength of Youth pamphlet.

But if you can't talk about it, how will you know what and how to communicate when you get there? You're reliant on your piecemeal and societal construct of what sex is and should be.

THERE IS ANOTHER GAP:

REMEMBER I SURVEYED MARRIED MEMBERS?

Their responses weren't all that different from the singles. From books I read, podcasts I listened to and even workshops I attended (one in January 2020 with Dr. Jennifer Finlayson-Fife, a sex therapist who is also a member of the Church of Jesus Christ), the messages in Sunday School lessons and church camps were all the same, married or single. The difference for them (an obvious one) they are permitted to have sex and thus can access information that they can handle and employ. Many struggle with the same mental models, so "access" is also relative.

The Church of Jesus Christ recognizes the issues couples are having and the effects of behavioral-based lessons on youth, and they are changing the conversation.



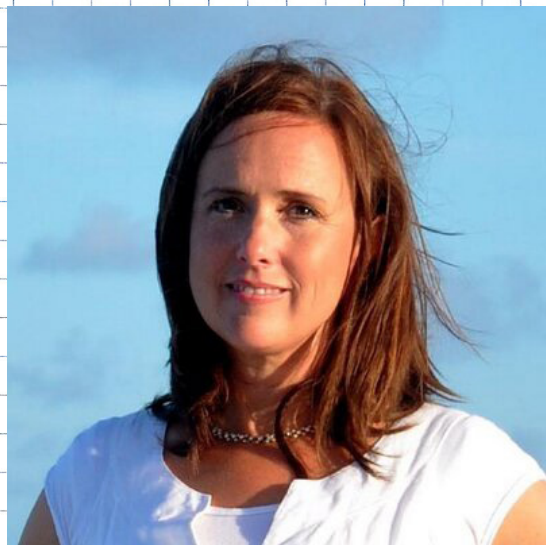
Dr. Finlayson-Fife reported in January she was asked to write an article for an official Church publication about equal pleasure within couples intimate relationships.

For singles, the dynamic of being separated from married members and the residual belief system about singles and sexuality causes a systemic avoidance of bringing singles to the table of the conversation about sexuality.

AND YET, IT'S ALSO AN OPPORTUNITY.

TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGIN'

Since things really are changing, I wanted to talk with a couple of academics who work the intersection of sexuality and Latter-day Saint singles. Both teach at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. I wanted to get their perspectives on promoting healthy attitudes toward intimacy and sexuality for single adults in the LDS Church while respecting the law of chastity and agency. I also wanted to hear their experiences on the subject and the LGBTQ+ community at a conservative Christian university.



DR. CHELOM LEAVITT, PhD
Professor of Human Sexuality at Brigham Young University

"As members we need to understand that what we're asking people to do who are trying to stay in the church and yet still feel the inclination; we are asking them to live a very lonely life. We all could step in and be much more loving and appreciative of the example of humble members, be supportive of people in LGBTQIA+ community and empathetic to what it is step out of church."

DR. LEAVITT OFFERED TO SPEAK IN NYC FOLLOWING A PHILADELPHIA SPEAKING GIG

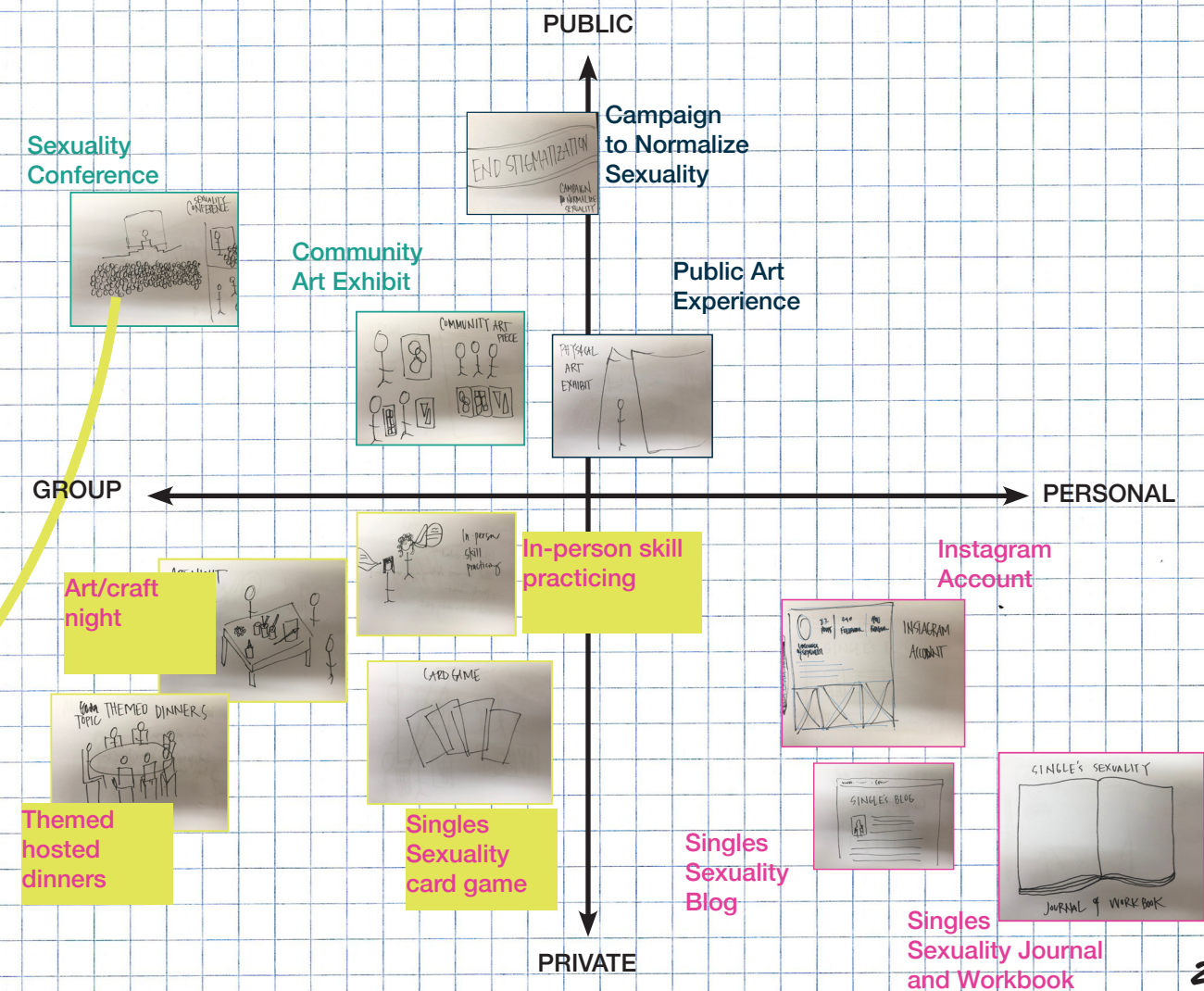


DR. MICHAEL GOODMAN, PhD
Professor of Religious Education at Brigham Young University

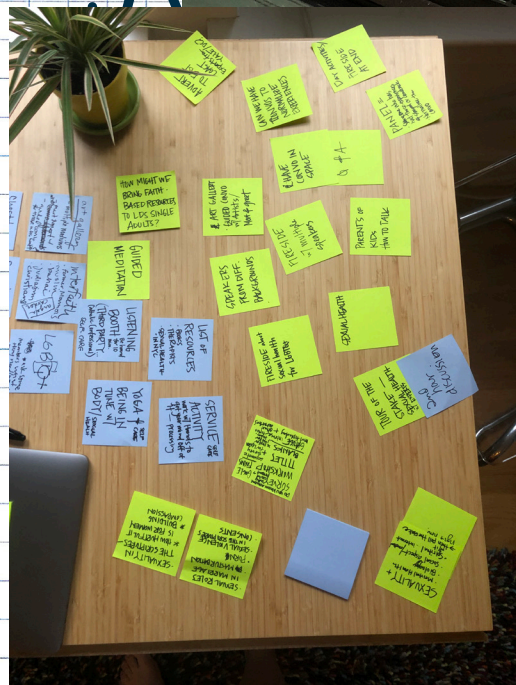
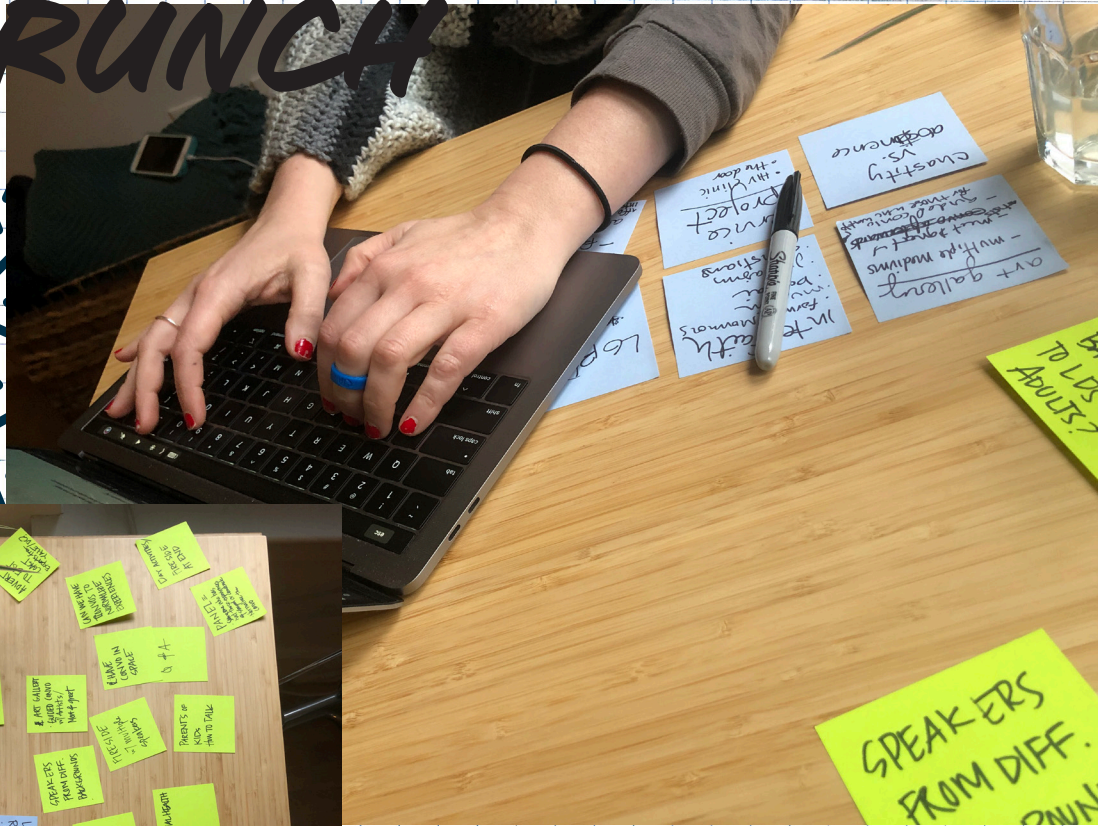
"There are no policies that would prohibit appropriate conversations on sexuality – just a challenge with tens of thousands of volunteer church leaders/teachers to teach it well."

IDEATING INTERVENTIONS

Ideating for an intervention by thinking about my skills, interests and the needs of the community: something that requires knowledge (learning and expertise), requires communication (they need a space to talk and share openly), something that brings people together (destigmatization sexuality in this context needs a group). Thinking about metaphors and Mormon culture, ideas for individuals, small groups and large groups. Getting it out on paper and stretching myself to think of ways to incorporate fun into this very delicate, complex and individual subject.



INTERVENTION BRAINSTORMING BRUNCH



The first brainstorming session, which we had over brunch at my apartment, drew us to the idea of a conference. Dr. Leavitt would be speaking to a married congregation in Philadelphia and offered to come up to NYC and speak to the single adults. This required really starting to entertain the idea of including church leadership in the conversation.

A conference made sense. Growing up in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, camps and conferences are abound from the time one turns twelve. Latter-day Saints prize education, thus conferences around various topics occur year round. It's a large enough space that singles could stay anonymous, but be together in community. a variety of topics could be addressed and it could be a signal from leadership that they acknowledge singles' sexuality in the context of being a member of the faith.

INSIGHTS FROM BOOK CLUB NITE 2

"WE WERE TOLD, GROWING UP, WE WERE TOLD WITH UNEQUIVOCAL AUTHORITY CERTAIN THINGS, SO YOU ALMOST NEED THAT AUTHORITY TO CORRECT THOSE THINGS."
FEMALE MEMBER, 29

"HELPING PEOPLE RECOGNIZE WHAT ARE CREDIBLE SOURCES AND FIGURE OUT THEIR OWN SEXUALITY AND WHAT FEELS RIGHT TO THEM."
FEMALE MEMBER, 24

"JUST TRY IT AND SEE IF IT WORKS. JUST THROW ANYTHING OUT THERE AND SEE WHAT STICKS AND WHAT HELPS. WE WON'T KNOW WHAT WORKS UNTIL WE TRY."
FEMALE MEMBER, 25

"ANY MOVEMENT FORWARD IS MOVEMENT FORWARD. IT'S ABOUT THE INTENT, BUT DO SOMETHING."
MALE MEMBER, 30

NEEDS

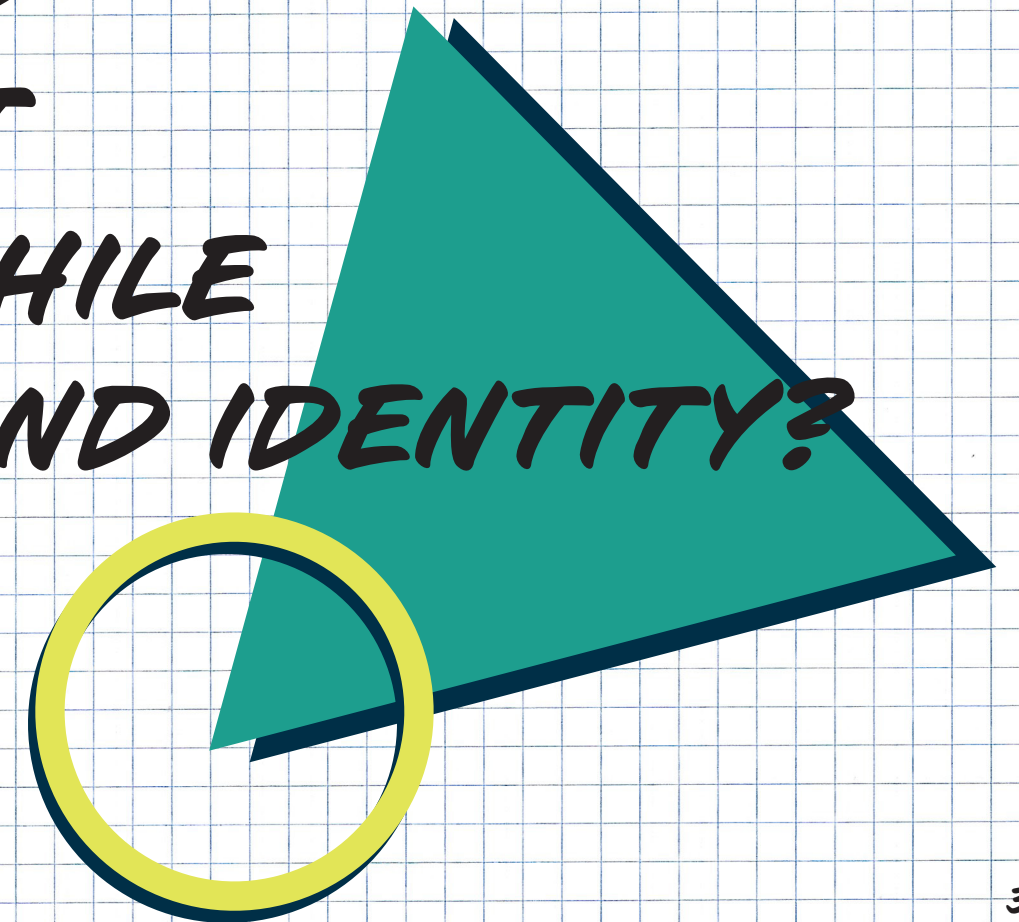
1. Openness with resources
2. Advocates/allies
3. Self-confidence: to make choices to get info, understand their bodies,
4. Critical thinking and decision making skills
5. They need a signal of some kind to incorporate their sexuality so they can be healthy humans and develop healthy desires and intimacy
6. Support to integrate sexuality into their lives
7. Acknowledgment of the truth about their bodies and sexuality
8. Knowledge > Sister Leavitt

INSIGHTS

This project is about changing the conversation around sexuality, because accessibility to information is intrinsically linked to the ability to exchange, a.k.a. converse. It is also about identity and being recognized that single adults of the Church of Jesus Christ are sexual beings worthy of being trusted with truthful information.



**HOW MIGHT WE BUILD PERSONAL AGENCY
OF SINGLE ADULT MEMBERS OF
THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF
LATTER-DAY SAINTS (MORMON CHURCH)
TO ACCESS INFORMATION AND
HOLD CONVERSATIONS ABOUT
HEALTHY SEXUAL LITERACY WHILE
SUPPORTING THEIR VALUES AND IDENTITY?**



TRUST > ACTION

“I feel like the only reason we can have this conversation is because church leaders have proven that they do listen and that things can change, right? If things never changed, if policy never improved or if you never or if I never felt that when we make our voices heard, the church leaders listen to that and they take it seriously, then I don’t think there even would be a point to having a conversation. Cause otherwise we’d just be complaining about something that can never change.

But the fact that the church has shown repeatedly that they can change for better or for worse, but when they do change for the better, it’s inspiring to see that a lot of those changes came from the grassroots movements of people being able to share their experiences with church leaders. And say, this is my experience and these are the hardships that came from that experience. And some of those hardships came from how this church is run. And I think we’ve got a very positive and powerful thing.”

FEMALE INTERVIEWEE, 31



CO-CREATING A CONFERENCE

By the second book club gathering, there emerged a core group of singles with experiences, voices and hearts to give so much to working together on crafting a meaningful conference experience for single adults in the tri-state area (New York, New Jersey and Connecticut).

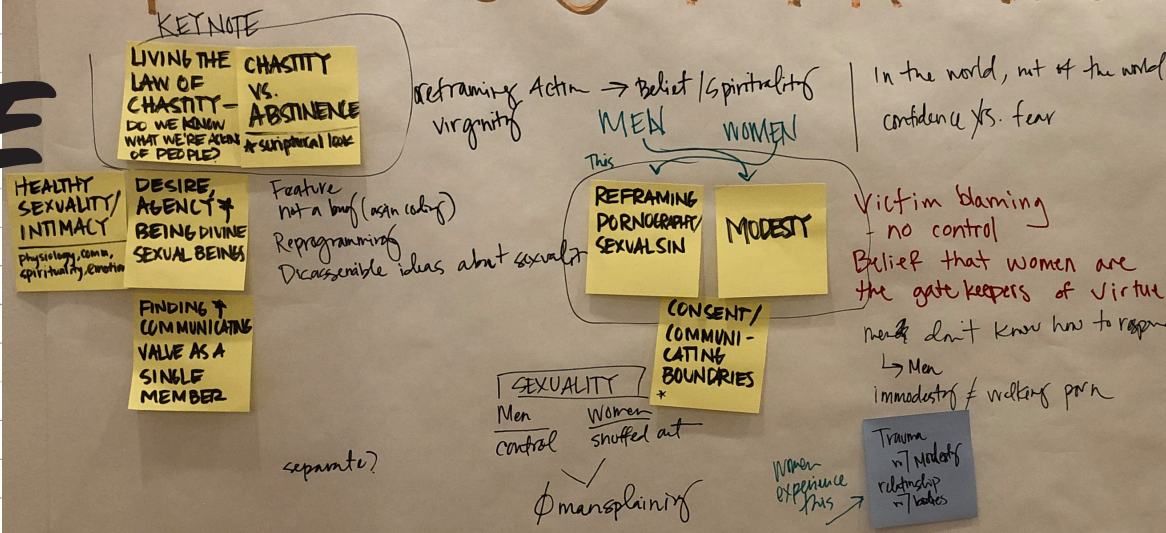
I pulled out all of the original conference ideas from the brainstorming brunch to workshop three elements of the conference:

1. Flushing out rating the topics
2. How might we deliver these topics in a way that singles can relate to?
3. How might we brand this conference in a fun, relatable way?

Combing topics made the most sense. Making sure accessibility to the conference was top priority; recording and posting the addresses for people to access later. The name needed to be trustworthy, both so that singles would feel comfortable knowing they could learn about sexuality, but not risk ending up at an orgy. Also, a name that would make it approachable to the wider population of single adults and their experiences as well as buy-in from leadership.



FLUSHING OUT & RATING THE TOPICS



HOW MIGHT WE DELIVER THESE TOPICS IN A RELATABLE WAY

- Fireside series → do on our own @ school
- Very informed
- Very young
- Professionals
- Authority

What is the thing that only this can provide?

- * Comfortability
- * Reducing the taboo - destigmatizing
- * Build a bridge between feminist beliefs & church / spirituality
- Spiritually based
- What is okay & what isn't okay
- Providing tools → info on how to do that → resources handout

Checking for singles in the 21st century

Classification standards

PANEL: box of questions / anonymity, LGBTQ+ POCs → address open discussion curb the chronic talkers

Live stream / recorded version + transcript → option to watch on your own for people who can't attend

with friends @ a house / dinner

what evil thought did you have last...

Have a text to work from... pre-work → point to refer to

How might we brand fireside in a fun, LDS idiom

UNDER the COVERS: snip of the quilts

Jello: We thought it was a good idea

Tugging Spiritie Canning

Adult night → putting away ~~box~~ of childish thoughts - things

Reframing Sex

Adam & Eve → Knowledge → KNOWNT: Prof divine design, divine sexual being, coming here to learn, within gospel counseling, multi-dimensional, knowing each other, the purpose of being here and we're becoming like God, a part of becoming

tree of knowledge

Christmastime moment

canning, volunteer local community garden, ecofriendly - food desert volunteerism → Bishop's storehouse, clothing drive - A & E were clothed

Adults @ Church

Show the need: people are talking about it, surveys - focus groups, we can do it or ~~we~~ they can go find out about it elsewhere, graduate student - prof helping me

NOT A SEX UNIT

- BYU prof → get name from Tony
- As TSAs have certain needs → this can do REAL good
- specific to non-married adults
- if you really want to do something for us.

Part of these are just basic human development

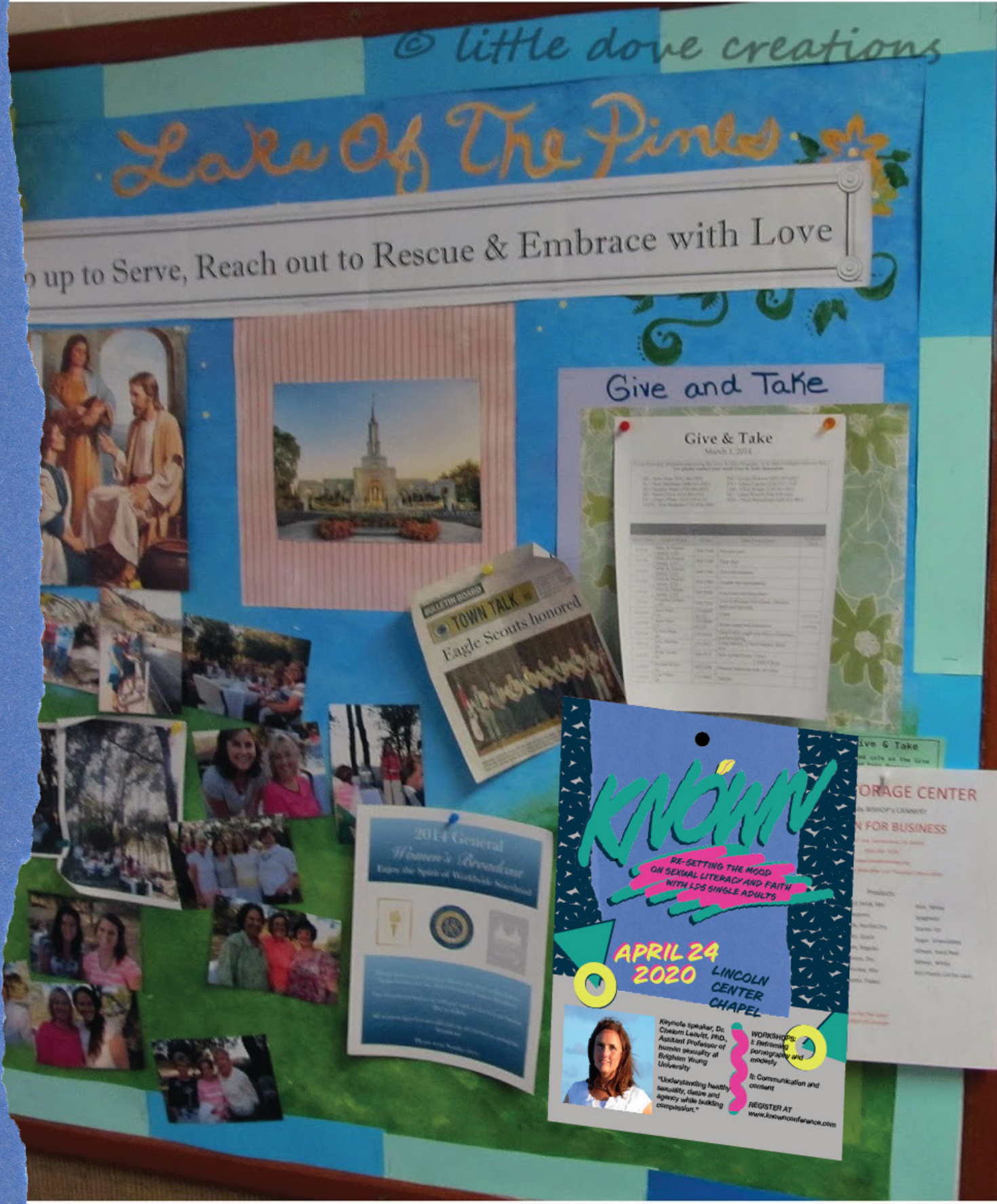
KNOWN

RE-SETTING THE MOOD
ON SEXUAL LITERACY AND FAITH
WITH LDS SINGLE ADULTS

A half day conference style gathering to open the door for Mormon singles in the tri-state area to learn and talk about sexuality and faith. The goal is to quite literally open the door for singles to reprogram their belief about sexuality and build sexual wholeness.

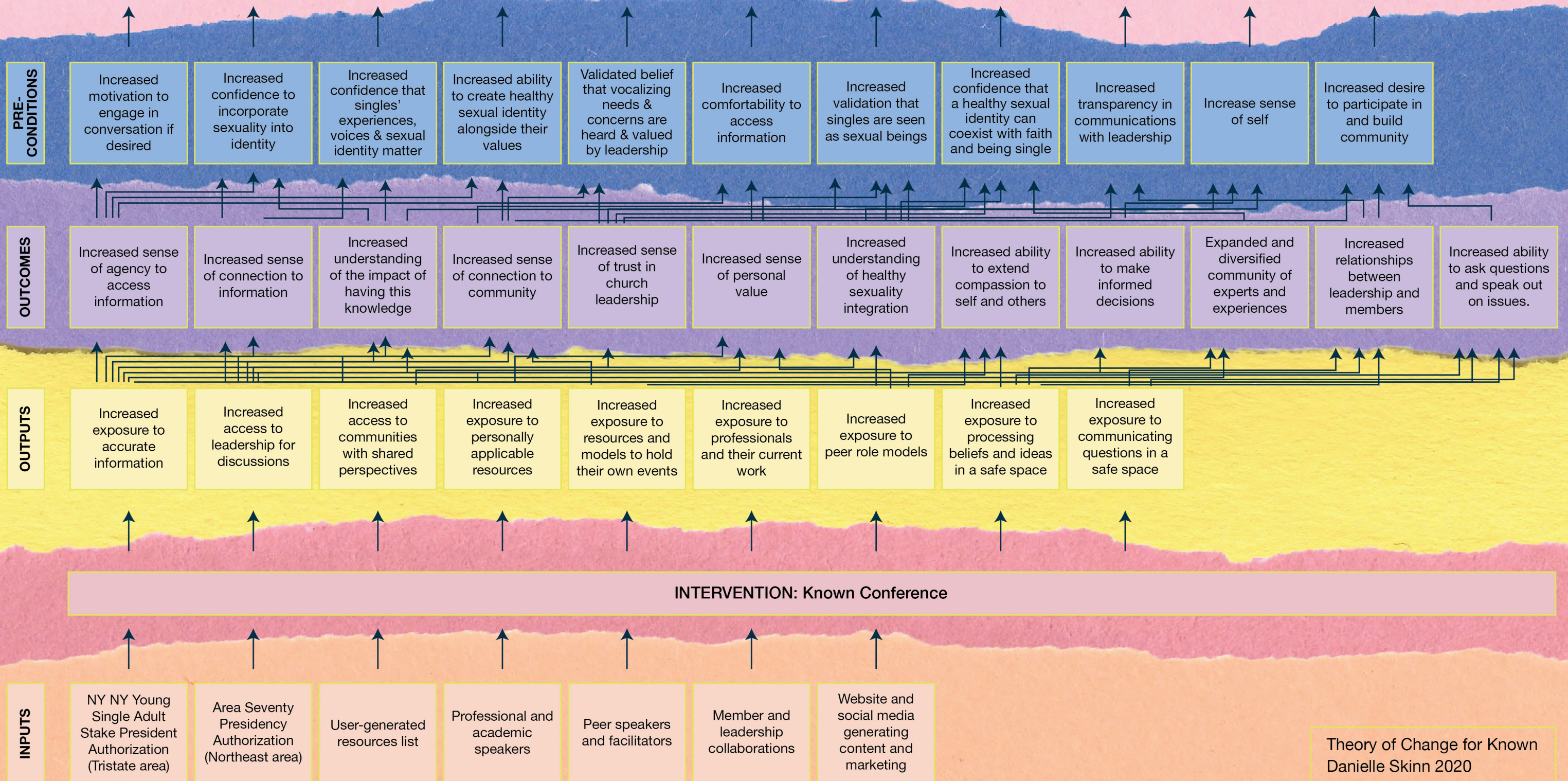
Our keynote speaker, Dr. Chelom Leavitt, PhD., a professor of human sexuality at Brigham Young University (a Mormon owned institution) I interviewed in the fall will focus her address on understanding healthy sexuality, desire and agency while building compassion. Smaller workshops aim to reframe messages of pornography and modesty while another focuses on communication and consent. We will livestream and record the sessions so they can be posted online and be accessible on a website for those who can't make it and those who come across the site later. The site will include resources crowdsourced by attendees and beyond.

1. REFRAMING ACTION TO BELIEF AND SPIRITUALITY
2. MOVING FROM FEAR TO CONFIDENCE (THROUGH KNOWLEDGE AND NORMALIZING)



GOAL: Increase confidence for single members to create and maintain sexual wholeness and intimacy in relationships

THESIS GOAL: Increase personal agency of single members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to access literature and conversations about healthy sexuality.



Theory of Change for Known
Danielle Skinn 2020

MEETING WITH THE NY SINGLE ADULT REGIONAL PRESIDENT

Holding a church-sponsored event of this size requires regional leadership to get on board. I met with the NYC regional head over singles, Joel Weist, and although he was timid initially, he understood the need to change mindsets about desire. He supported the pursuit to seek buy-in from the next level of leadership and to host Dr. Leavitt.

His sentiments were in support: one of the greatest gifts we've been given is the body. It's how we learn, how we become wise. Sexual appetites are no different than others like hunger, connection, love, recognition.

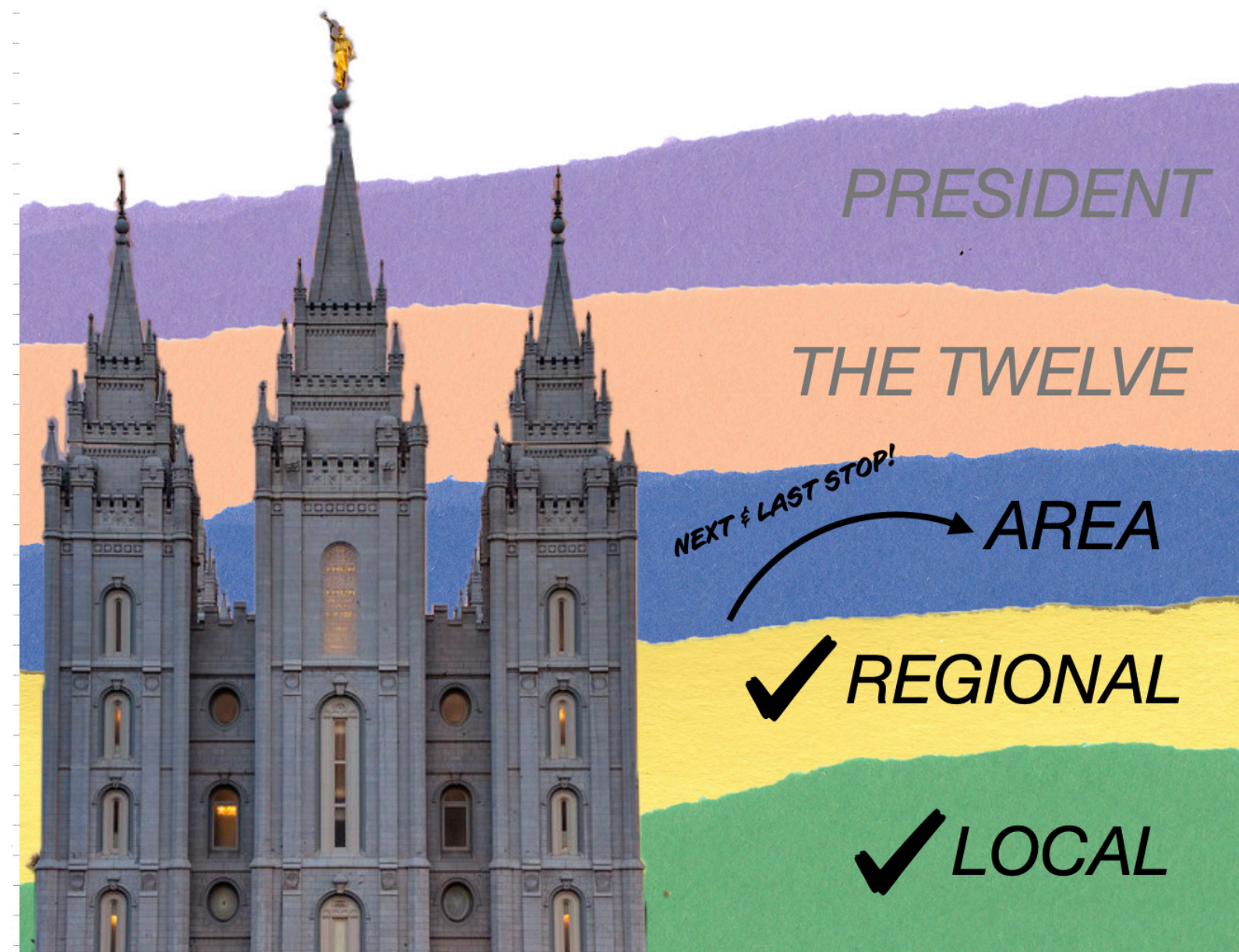
I contacted the Philadelphia regional president to gather more information on how they got approval for Dr. Leavitt to speak in their stake.

DESIRE IS NOT THE ISSUE. RATHER INCREASE YOUR DESIRES AND STOP SETTLING FOR LESS.

SUMMARIZING A QUOTE FROM C.S. LEWIS

THE NEXT LEVEL

For Dr. Leavitt to speak in for the regional area, the Area Seventy leadership of the Church has to review and provide authorization. Philadelphia decided to size down their event to a local audience, thus not needing the next level of approval.



A CHANGE NO ONE COULD HAVE PREDICTED

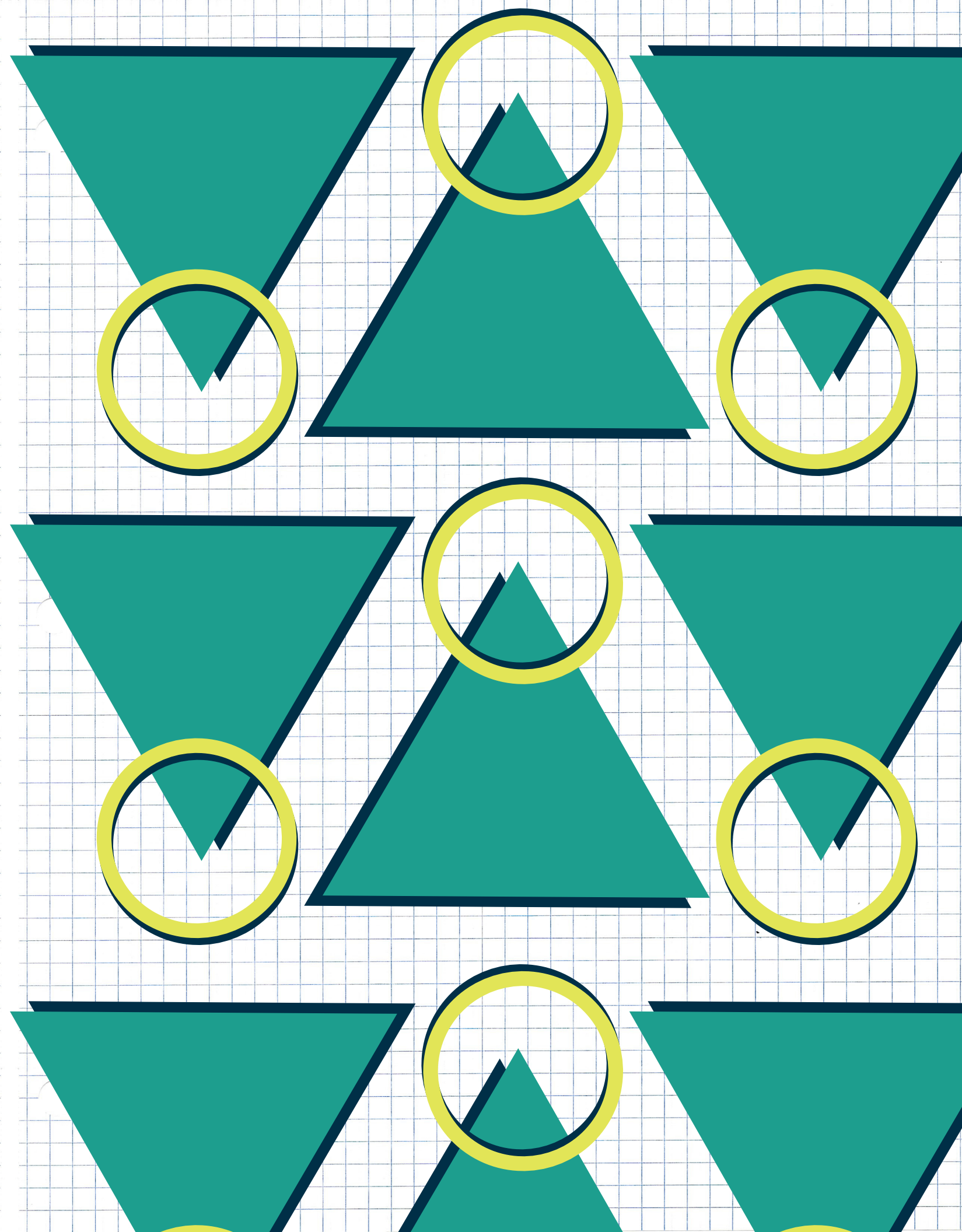
I left for spring break to make pillows for Fast Track and never went back to NYC.

COVID-19 has changed the world dramatically, including delaying Known, but it's not going away, especially since disconnected sexuality hasn't magically disappeared. In fact, isolation and loneliness is showing up even more, especially in people in their 20s and 30s. On the flip side, the dating app, Bumble reported a 23% increase in use in NYC after the national emergency was declared. Being connected to your sexuality is essential to making choices about who to enter into a relationship with and creating healthy intimacy. The conference feels even more relevant and needed now because to be able to connect well with others, we have to be connected well with ourselves.

I asked Dr. Leavitt if she would be interested in doing an online webinar, but seeing the audience is integral to reading the room when speaking on such a sensitive subject.

I aimed to meet with my group of singles to hold one of the smaller workshops. We did on April 16th, but something better came out of it.

The effects of being at home and living in a completely different universe, it's also been a fruitful place of reflection and caring. We may be in these circumstances of social distancing for awhile. Connecting digitally has already improved significantly and will likely continue to evolve. This gives us a great opportunity to build a strategy and frame who we are and how we will co-create an even stronger conference.



MANIFESTO

On our Zoom call, Karen's class came flooding back: if we are going to design and lead something that matters, we need values. Lo and behold someone on the call said the same thing. Throughout our conversations and gatherings over the last year, the openness and vulnerability of revealing and trudging through fear built trust and hope in each other and what is needed out of this project. It made putting a draft of values, vision, mission statement and the beginnings of where we could start into a document. Our next step is to pick it apart together and nail down our goals to kick it off.

Who we are

A bunch of singles who saw and felt the need from the wider LDS singles community to widen the A group of singles navigating our own journeys of faith and sexuality with hope and desire to change. A bunch of singles who went through (and still are) their own journey of reconciling their sexuality about together and we knew you were too or wanted to but felt like you couldn't. Most of us felt t

Vision

For LDS single adults to access information about healthy sexuality, heal from shame in a safe cor intimacy in relationships while preserving their faith.

**Why are we doing this? Show word results from interviews and surveys.*

Mission Statement

Restore the doctrinal, loving and exalting nature of sexuality and eliminate cultural inaccuracies th accurate conversation.

Values

Make information and conversation accessible to all. No topics are judged or dismissed. Inclusive and compassionate.

Codes of Conduct

Make information and conversation accessible to all. No topics are judged or dismissed. Honoring anonymity and privacy. Bias checking. Respect and compassion for one another.

Also, a disclaimer like this:

I borrowed this from Mormon Women for Ethical Government for inspiration: MWEG is not affiliated with or endorsed by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We do, however, honor and sustain the Church's doctrines and leaders.

What does this project do?

- Gather and share resources that span the spectrum of professionals, academics, singles, podcasters, both inside and outside the Church
- Share people's stories
- Research (further down the line...?)
- Lesson supplements to "Come Follow Me" and Elders Quorum and Relief Society lessons
- Resources for leaders for holding sensitive conversations/trauma informed
- Safe and anonymous space to ask questions and get answers from peers (and professionals)

How does this project do this?

- Instagram: Content and posting DM'ed questions
- Website
 - Resources
 - Potential blog
 - Video stories of individuals
 - Live and recorded panel discussions with fellow singles, professionals, leadership? (Also us? What if we just had a conversation tog specific topic and people could tune in? Between Two Ferns style? Or a dinner group style discussion online?)
 - Workshops and creative reflections (i.e. using Kate's language: thought exercise on reframing the commandment around the body in agency-centered way? Same with writing a For the Strength of Single Adults?)
 - Conference

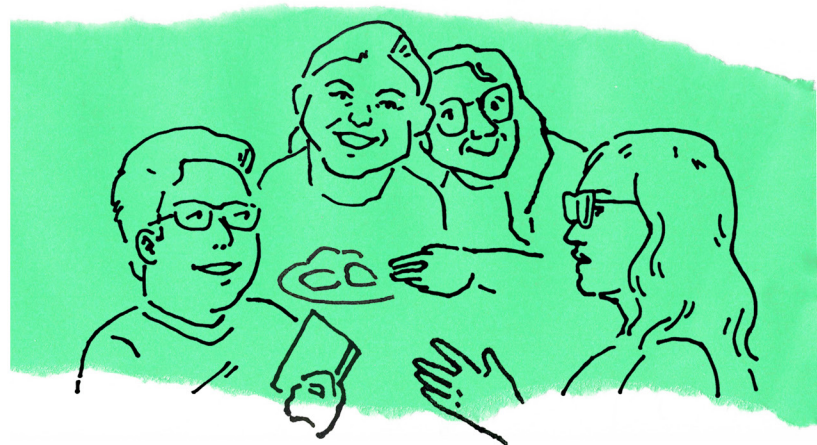
**Have you heard of Desk Lunch? They could be inspo for us: <https://www.desklunchnewsletter.com/>*

Who is our audience?

- LDS singles of all gender identities, sexual orientations. All levels of participation in the Church and in their journey of understanding hea and intimacy, who are willing to abide by our codes of conduct.
- Leaders?

Who to connect with to get the word out?

- Established Instagram accounts
- Professionals in applicable fields
- Church leaders



MEETING TOGETHER PROVED THIS CONFERENCE COULD WORK

This proved that it could work in a small group. **100%** of respondents said meeting together to talk about sexuality helped them find community and connect with people with similar feelings. Hope that thing could change was also a response from everyone.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE: HOPE

In the words of one of the members of the group, the vision is this:

"MEETING TOGETHER AND DISCUSSING THIS TOPIC MADE ME HOPEFUL THAT WE CAN GET MORE PEOPLE TALKING/INTERESTED IN THE TOPIC, WHICH HOPEFULLY WOULD PROVIDE MORE RESOURCES TO PULL FROM AND EVENTUALLY CHANGE THE WAY CHURCH CURRICULUM TEACHES CHASTITY."

FEMALE PARTICIPANT, 27

REFLECTIONS

The way we think about ourselves and other people shapes the systems we make. Even when we intend to do good, there is potential and perhaps a likelihood that it can create harm. To me, that is the result of the Adolescent Family Life Act. I had a hard time when I learned a practicing member of the faith I belong to made that bill. Yes, teen pregnancy has gone down in the United States, but not with many other things coming down with it.

That's why I do this. Because I know when something doesn't feel right, I feel it deep in my bones and it keeps calling until I listen. That something is usually a thing that holds me back - this time it was fear. Doing this project brought me so close to fear; my own, the Latter-day Saint singles in Harlem, our former youth leaders, our parents, and our lawmakers. We are all humans, we will not get it right everytime. Checking what is driving what I want to create is a gift of becoming vividly aware of how it feels to be afraid. It has also given me perspective on choosing what I create.

I am incredibly grateful to have designed alongside such brave, intelligent and hopeful people. So much love - D.



**THIS MATTERS
BECAUSE THE WAY
WE THINK ABOUT
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SHAPES THE
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IN TURN AFFECT
OTHER PEOPLE.**

THANK YOU

Amy Allen, you deserve great credit here. Everyone who got me through this. My parents, Mallory, Chip, Tito and Theo, Karalee, Geneva, Chuck, Henry, KATE, lil D and Big D, Holly, Amanda, Jennie, Leslie, Michelle, Kent, Hayden for the perfect illustrations, style, love and support, Raquel, Jess (UFF was perfect timing), Corina, Liz and Carter, Stella, Jeralyn, Laura, Jamie (as always, our karaoke is a sanctuary!).

Jeff for your patience and encouragement. From one overthinker to another, thank you.

A great thanks to Cheryl Heller who listened when I was barely getting by, but wanted more and saw a way.

Miya - you've lead through transition and this pandemic with the best weapons; honesty, compassion and hope.

Larry - your classes changed everything for me.

I doubted my way through this entire degree, but I think that was part of the point of doing it - to show me vividly my fear and come off conquerer.

To ALL the cohorts! Especially this 2020 one; your kindness and belief in everyone was what a gift you are to me. <3

