Addressing the Unaddressed

Changemakers' Hopes for the Future around Issues of Sexuality in Catholic Higher Education—Theological Insights

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Abstract

Issues of sexuality in Catholic higher education often go unaddressed, under examined, or handled with inadequate care. In a larger study of the experience of 31 changemakers at 17 different Catholic colleges and universities, participants discussed how they effected change around an issue of sexuality at their university. At the end of the interviews, participants were asked about what hopes they had for the future of sexuality in Catholic higher education. This article is an exploration of the emergent themes in their answers to future hopes, as well as insights and support from the Catholic theological tradition.

Keywords: Catholic higher education, Catholicism, sexuality, organizational change, universities

There are many facets to sexuality as it relates to higher education. On the institutional level, the college or university is impacted by its policies (e.g., whether or not orientation and gender identity is included in the school's non-discrimination policy) around sexuality for students, faculty, and staff, and can be intimately tied to the school mission (Tierney 1988, 10–11; Morey and Piderit 2006, 7, 21). On the micro level, the resources available (e.g., sexual health information, or support and social groups) to students, faculty, and staff can be influenced by these institutional regulations (Kezar 2014, 32). It may include the way sexuality is taught in a variety of departmental courses such as psychology, theology, or women's and gender studies (Myerson 1992, 149–50); sports; and Title IX information such as gender equity and sexual harassment or discrimination (Rubin and Lough 2015; Francis 2016; Lhamon 2015,

15–18); gendered bathrooms (Sausa 2002; Greytak, Kosciw, and Diaz 2009, 1–2, 45–46, 48); or living arrangements of students (Buckner 1981; Erlandson 2014, 13–17). Sexuality can also include student sexual activity and the sex lives of students (McAnulty 2012, 1–18, 91–118), the way a university views LGBTQ+ individuals (Cramer 2002), how sexual assault is addressed on campus (Ottens and Hotelling 2001), where to find resources for sexual health information or counseling (Eisenberg et al. 2012), and in some cases morality clauses for employees that can terminate a job based on ambiguous definitions (Fleming, Cooley, and McFadden-Wade 2009).

In the case of Catholic institutions of higher education, the teachings of the Catholic Church strongly influence the rules and regulations of the college or university and, as a result, the resources available to students, faculty, and staff (Morey and Piderit 2006, 21–23). This reality may foster a lack of knowledge about sexuality on many different levels, often recounted in personal reflection (Anonymous 2013). Basic sexual health information may elude those in the Catholic educational system as a result of scarce or non-existent sexuality information in earlier educational years (Pagni 2014). These realities impede the sexual awareness of people impacted by this interplay between Catholic teaching and institutional regulation (McCarthy 2015).

Catholic higher education institutions often are stereotyped as oblivious to their students' sexual lives, as evidenced by bloggers (Siebert 2014; Anonymous 2013; Pagni 2014) and supported by research (Riley 1990; Ross 2018, 133–97). Students' perceptions of their administrators' lack of awareness about sexuality issues has been present in Catholic colleges and universities since the 1980s (Riley 1990). There have been calls from those in academia and college life for Catholic colleges and universities to address sexual assault and violence (Greiner 2015), the culture of discrimination toward LGBTQ+ individuals (Love 1997, 381–83), and restricted academic freedom around sexuality (McCarty 2014). These calls for sexual inclusivity or awareness seem to target administrators and other academic changemakers—those who bring about or effect change—in hopes of enacting change efforts.

In a larger qualitative study of thirty-one employees from Catholic colleges and universities across the United States, I asked faculty, staff, and administrators about their experience of effecting change around sexuality on their college or university campus. The data presented here—and its subsequent theological insights—is part of that larger study examining several aspects of change around sexuality at seventeen different Catholic institutions (Levand 2018). I examined "sexuality" as a broad concept using Dennis Dailey's (1981) Circles of Sexuality—a more holistic model of sexuality to move beyond reproductive health, STIs, and sexual orientation and gender identity to include other topics like sexual assault, intimacy, messages about gender, relationships, trust, biological sex, etc. This model divides sexuality into five circles with various components of sexuality in each. These circles or groups are: **sensuality** (experiences that involve the senses, sexual fantasy, things that feel good in our body), **intimacy** (liking, loving, relationships, trust, sharing, etc.), **sexual identity** (biological sex, gender ID/role, orientation), **sexual and reproductive health** (anatomy, contraception, conception, behavior and dysfunction), and **sexualization** (advertisements, flirting, withholding sex, seduction, rape, and sexual harassment). I used Dailey's (1981, 315–29) model of sexuality because it is commonly used in the field of sexuality scholarship and education today (see, e.g., Turner 2020, 306–7) and because its broad scope of sexuality

encompasses issues many people do not initially identify as relating to sexuality (i.e., beyond genitals and orientation). I incorporated it into the present study to examine commonalities in how matters of sexuality—broadly defined—are managed in Catholic higher education.

In the larger study, I explored higher education changemakers' perceptions of the key areas of change, successes and barriers they encountered, what methods of communication they used to make these changes, their motives, and other emergent themes. At the end of the interviews, I asked about their efforts and hopes for the future: why did they advocate for change? What role did they play? And what did they hope their institutions or the Catholic Church might do in the future to more holistically address the topic of sexuality? The information that follows will be a brief background on the study and why I decided to study this topic, a brief look at the emergent themes, and a subsequent discussion of theological insights from the Catholic tradition that support a more holistic approach to all issues of sexuality in Catholic higher education.

Background of the Study

This study was undertaken to examine what faculty, staff, and administrators at Catholic institutions of higher education felt needed to change around sexuality at their given institutions. These individuals were identified as people who effected change (thus were changemakers) in some way around sexuality at their institutions. When faculty and staff members at Catholic colleges and universities attempt to implement change around sexuality, the outcome may be successful, or the attempt may be met with resistance (McEntarfer 2011). This resistance to effecting change around the sexual culture on Catholic campuses is problematic both theologically and practically (Galarneau and O'Neill 2015; Keenan 2015). When framed as a social issue, the lack of change around sexuality in Catholic higher education indicates incongruent ideologies in Catholic theology and the practice of managing these institutions (Cuddeback-Gedeon 2015; Greiner 2015; McCarthy 2015). Practical problems result in preventing people in the college or university community from receiving services, pastoral care, support, or the protection from institutional discrimination necessary for an educational experience. In what little literature exists (Getz and Kirkley 2006; McEntarfer 2011; Love 1997; Love 1998), minimal attention is given to the institutional context, the challenges therein, and the process of creating change, resulting in a failure to describe the structural components that encourage or discourage change.

To describe this change, I conducted thirty-one qualitative phone interviews with employees involved in changemaking at seventeen different Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. This study was a composite case study, or a series of case studies examining change at these institutions. An ecological psychological theory informed this study, seeing employees as interconnected with the institutional environment, influencing their perception and behavior (Jacob 1987, 4). This theory focuses on studying naturally occurring human behavior in relation to their surrounding environment (Schoggen 1978, 40). Developers of this approach, Barker and Wright (1955, 9), examined behavior patterns in the context of the environment, including how that behavior is attached to the milieu, forming a synomorphic relationship. Ecological psychology guided the focus of the interview questions as well as the data analysis portion of this research. To explore change in these Catholic

institutions, I examined individual behaviors in the context of institutional culture, steps, rules, and regulations that impact the change process.

Because creating change around issues of sexuality in Catholic higher education can be a sensitive topic, I used snowball sampling to help assure participants that I was trusted by previous referrals (see Penrod et al. 2003, 101–3; Noy 2008, 335; Meyer and Wilson 2009, 25–27). While a limitation of this sampling method is that it retains ideological similarities, without it the data collection on such a sensitive topic may not have yielded sufficient qualitative data.

Phone interviews lasted 60–90 minutes, were transcribed, and were coded using inductive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006, 83–84). I coded the data three different times, ensuring no themes were missed. The last question of the interview—discussed in this article—on the hopes that changemakers have for the future relationship between sexuality and Catholic higher education was designed to gather information on their beliefs and insights about the value of sexuality in the forum of Catholic higher education, and note any themes in their responses.

Background of the Question

Previous studies about similar change only describe one or two university contexts. After participants described the barriers and supports they encountered in the change process (Levand 2021), and how they navigated those barriers (Levand forthcoming), I wanted to assess what the participants—experts in this type of change process—might feel is necessary for future change. Individuals who have worked with issues of sexuality in Catholic higher education have experienced knowledge about what needs to change to address these issues more holistically. The responses are based on years of experience in the context of Catholic higher education compiled to offer a consistent picture of these experts' concerns and hopes for the future of sexuality in Catholic higher education.

There are three immediate concerns when it comes to changemaker's hopes for future change: (1) college is an incredibly important developmental time for students to be given information about sexuality; (2) discussion around issues of sexuality may be stifled or discouraged in a culturally Catholic setting; and (3) this leaves students unprepared to deal with matters of sexuality in both personal and professional settings. To the first concern, developmental theorists such as Erikson (1968) and Levinson (Levinson et al. 1978; Levinson and Levinson 1996), and student developmental theorists like Chickering and Reisser (1993, 43–52) and Arnett's (2000, 470–79), all support the developmental need to discuss sexuality in Catholic higher education. Regardless of religious affiliation, students are curious and feel uninformed about the topics discussed in class. Many students receive their first positive experience of discussions around sexuality in college classes. This is true of both secular and religiously oriented institutions of higher education, but anecdotally seems to be most salient with students from Catholic educational backgrounds. Many students from Catholic institutions appear to have higher rates of fear or shame around sexuality that is not often reflected in the same way in secular populations. Theorists and researchers in the social sciences tell us that social development around sexuality can be a confusing time for many young adults (Erikson 1968, 94; Moreira, Halkitis, and Kapadia 2015, 160).

Regarding changemakers' second concern, policing and fear around sexuality in Catholic higher education is well documented. Richard McCarty (2014), associate professor of religious studies at Mercyhurst University, authored an article chronicling such activities on sexuality scholarship in the Catholic world. He discusses the Catholic hierarchy's censoring of scholars like Todd Salzman, Michael Lawler, and Margaret Farley, and occasions of firing LGBTQ+ people or rescinding job offers in Catholic higher education based on scholarship around sexuality. McCarty was concerned with the way that fear infringes upon academic freedom around sexuality scholarship. McCarty (2014, 28) concludes that "the Roman Catholic hierarchy has created a silence-inducing culture of fear through its own moral and theological anxieties. We can only wonder how many scholars have abandoned projects, whether to spare their college or university embarrassment, to spare their administration 'trouble,' or even to avoid a feared loss of job security." In scholarship over the years, the theme of fear around sexuality and the silencing of that discussion is fairly evident. Not just with LGBTQ+ individuals or censoring scholars, but we also see this "silence-inducing culture of fear" around other issues of sexuality, such as mishandling sexual assault reporting at a number of Catholic institutions and the pressure applied to health centers on Catholic campuses to refuse medical information on contraception, abortion, or trans-affirming medical interventions. Of course, there are some universities that have these conversations well, but they are not the norm for Catholic educational culture.

To the final concern, given the fact that students need this information combined with avoiding issues of sexuality, it may be no surprise that such information suppression leads to students who are ill-prepared to understand both themselves as sexual persons and how to interact with others around issues of sexuality, in both sexual and non-sexual ways. When we stifle conversations about sexuality, students and others cannot get answers to questions about what to do with their unaddressed shame; how to have conversations with partners around sexual activity with which they are comfortable; how to intelligibly discuss topics like sexual orientation, biological sex, and gender identity; or how power structures impact the sexual media they might consume. While the list of shortcomings that this yields is long, I will outline the problem for the current paper thus: if a Catholic university supports whole-person development and cannot have a conversation about an essential aspect of personhood, it does not, as stated in the most recent Vatican regulations on Catholic higher education (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*), "enable students to acquire an organic version of reality" (John Paul II 1990, 20), or make them "ready to undertake weighty responsibilities in society" (Paul VI 1965c, 10), as found in Vatican II's teachings on education (*Gravissimum Educationis*). In regards to sexuality, weighty responsibilities go beyond the moral gravity of sexual decision-making and expand into the institutional management of sexual assault reporting; organizational safety of individuals who are diverse in their gender, gender expression, and sexuality; being well informed about topics of sexuality when engaging in political conversation about sexual and gender identity; sensitivity to others' sexual trauma; and much more.

Given that stifling such conversations leave members of Catholic colleges and universities unprepared, unprotected, and underdeveloped around issues of sexuality in relation to the world around them, asking changemakers about their hopes for the future may offer some projected insight into how things might be different moving forward. I was interested in the space where the Catholic tradition intersected with the hopes of changemakers who had first-

hand experience in the institutional process of change around issues of sexuality. If these changemakers have years of knowledge about how to navigate issues of sexuality in Catholic higher education, the themes that arose for the hopes of future change should be indicative of deficits in the change process.

Results/Themes

When asked about how they conceptualize their role in the changemaking process, participants discussed giving a voice to the voiceless, protecting others from harm, caring for humanity, and upholding the Catholic tradition. When asked about hopes they have for the future of sexuality in Catholic higher education, their answers often related to the nature of fear around sexual issues as well as the need for ongoing study or dialogue. Participants gave answers that were both explicit, concrete action steps as well as broad, theoretical answers.

Concrete Responses

The concrete responses were often administrators suggesting a generalized need of the particular project they were working on at the time: operationalize inclusivity by increasing funding, creating offices, and institutionalizing the change—whichever change they were addressing on their campus, they felt should be applied to all Catholic higher education. Many of the administrators spoke as if they were selling themselves or their topic of change.

Theoretical Responses

The broader, theoretical responses often came from participants who saw a need in Catholic higher education and tried to articulate the root of this issue. I have grouped these responses into three themes: be not afraid, continue dialogue/study, and be a resource.

Be not afraid. In at least a third of the interviews, participants expressed a plea to overcome fear of engaging in discussions of sexuality. One faculty member identified that Catholic higher education, "not be afraid of talking about sexuality and I think that's one of the biggest things is that Catholic higher education is oftentimes afraid to open up the conversation, because they don't know where it's going to go." This participant further mentioned the fear of conversation about sexual behavior, "most of the problems around talking about sexuality . . . has everything to do with the sexual behavior of anybody and so the minute you talk about sexuality in Catholic higher education, it is not just focused on one group [i.e., gay students or straight students], but it is on everybody." This faculty member discussed the restrictiveness in Catholic dialogue about sexuality around orientation and thought that once the church more honestly begins including the sexual behaviors of all people, there might be growth in understanding.

Another concern shared by participants was the polarizing and excluding rhetoric. One participant discussed the results of a university climate study, identifying students feeling marginalized—both their LGBTQ+ students as well as their more conservative students:

> I think we have a responsibility as a church to engage these conversations. It is one of the kind of pressing and just popular issues of the time and that's what we need to have—engage and not be afraid . . . and unfortunately it's turned into a very huge polarized kind of a conversation where people on all sides sometimes don't feel comfortable even in the classroom speaking about

it because they don't necessarily think that they will be safe and respected in their opinion. . . . We've got our LGBT community who feel marginalized, but our traditional Catholic community also came up [as marginalized] in the climate survey.

A select few participants also identified that the Catholic context along with the American context were particularly detrimental to conversations about sexuality with statements like "the whole talk of sexuality needs to be opened up, not just in Catholic higher education, I think in general, we are just afraid of that topic."

Continue dialogue/study. Almost unanimously, participants called for an ongoing dialogue on or study of human sexuality. Participants noted the importance of the responsibility of Catholic higher education to both continue and improve conversations around sexuality. Participants suggested three ways to go about this: (1) a "Catholic self-reflection" of the university, defined here as the need for examination of the institution's Catholic identity and how the university is dealing with issues related to sexuality; (2) participants called for universities to have a healthier understanding of sexuality; (3) some of the more radical responses called for leaving Catholic teachings behind and continuing the dialogue in a non-Catholic direction.

The Catholic self-reflection theme was present in statements like, "I think that Catholic universities have to face the fact that it can't be true to their identity as Catholic, as institutions of higher learning, if there's this area of the human experience which is a 'no go area' for them [in] the courses . . . they're offering." This theme was similarly present in a request for the institution to reflect on its mission and identity in relation to how it actually deals with issues of sexuality—asking the question, "is how we are handling this topic reflective of our institutions values?" One administrator said:

It is really trying to understand what are the values and mission of the institution and how do they respond to these different issues, these different needs of diversity, sexuality and Title IX etcetera, and how these institutions live their values, and if that's something that resonates with them or not. I think that's very critical.

Whether it involved critical analysis of identity or simply the acknowledgement of broader sexual diversity, participants called for an ongoing dialogue. One participant concisely summarized this need by saying, "if it were up to me, there would be an increasingly open discussion on issues of sexuality and acknowledgment of complexity and diversity."

The healthier sexuality theme appeared in participants' call for a more holistic understanding of sexuality. One participant discussed moving the conversation beyond "don't have sex, don't use birth control, don't have an abortion" by saying:

[T]he real conversation that I think the church invites us to which is: healthy sexuality is very full—it's a wholeness. It's about your relationship to yourself to another and to God. And it is congruent with your thoughts and your behaviors and actions and it requires responsibility and respect . . . as well as love and connection and desire and all that other stuff.

Similarly, another participant outlined the issue in terms of its systemic roots.

> I think just talking about sex in a positive way is something that's missing from a lot of Catholic higher education. . . . If you're only going to talk about [sex] as how you avoid bad occurrences of this [i.e., sexual assault], and you don't offer many examples of what healthy relationships look like or healthy communication or healthy sex looks like, I think that could be just as damaging as failing to teach on what sexual assault is. And a lot of these students that go to Catholic schools many of them come from Catholic K-through-high-school education where sex is also rarely talked about as a sex-positive thing…. [And] if they're coming from more conservative areas and then going to Catholic higher education—they're really lacking the skill-set to have a…healthy sexually communicated relationship with partners and so that can only aid to a lack of understanding [about sexuality]. As well as possibly leading to harmful relationships, harmful situations.

Occasionally, participants identified Catholicism as a frame of thought that would never engage in the discussion and that Catholic higher education should leave the institutional Catholic Church behind. "Because it's pretty clear that the Church is out of step with the realities of human lives and human experiences," as one participant said. This view of the Catholic Church being obsolete was not a common theme, but was mentioned with strong feelings when it arose in the interviews. Whether viewing the Catholic Church's teaching as having no value or having significant worth, participants expressed a need for Catholicism to more practically re-evaluate its teachings on matters of sexuality.

Be a resource. Some participants described the seemingly untapped ability of Catholic higher education to be a resource for people on matters of sexuality. One faculty member identified the way Catholic institutions of higher education could act as a "point of better and a more adequate understanding of this faith in relation to human sexuality— that [it is] part of Catholic institutions and Catholic higher education."

Another participant identified the resource Catholic higher education could be for the *formation* of college students—that Catholic institutions can provide a space for allowing students to explore, engage, and understand some of the pieces they are questioning. Acting as a resource for student empowerment was often mentioned, one participant saying, "[we] need to empower our students to be able to identify—to feel proud of their sexual identity really early on and to be able to use that as a way to support them academically." Whether acting as a resource for the Catholic faith itself or for the formation of students, participants said that Catholic higher education must become a resource of useful information about sexuality.

Discussion of Themes/Theological Insights:

When examining this data for theological themes, there are clear issues from the institutions that can be described as a Catholic erotophobia—a fear of or distancing from the topic of sexuality. There are salient themes in Catholic theology and doctrine that support the changes called for by participants. Theological concepts of "bringing into the light what was

in the dark," moral obligation, and Catholic Social Teaching (CST) offer insights into how we can best address sexuality in higher education in a holistic way through the Catholic tradition.

Of the three coded responses, "be not afraid" and "continuing the dialogue" were the most frequently mentioned. When asked *what* in Catholic higher education should change around sexuality, one participant laughed out loud and jokingly responded "everything." He quickly followed this statement with expressing the need for the Catholic Church not to be so afraid of having conversations about sexuality. This sentiment was shared by many other participants. These responses support McCarty's (2014) description of a Catholic silence-inducing culture of fear. The desire to eradicate fear—in this case, from the Catholic discussion of sexuality—is a strong theme in Christianity. There is a scriptural basis for bringing light to hidden topics (Luke 12:2, 8:17; Mark 4:22) and a long tradition of theologians who engage with the topic of sexuality advocating the same. In her book on sexual ethics, Margaret Farley (2006, 8) wisely says about fear: "It is, after all, a good thing to move beyond fear and shame generated by irrational taboos and beyond complacency built on ignorance." The fear of discussing topics of sexuality and the barriers that exist in the shadows of silence should be brought to the light for honest discussion.

In morality, themes of the primacy of conscience and helping form and inform the consciences of others is a root cause for changemaker motivations. Catholic moral theologian William Mattison (2008, 106) describes conscience as "your ability to make judgements about whether a particular act is right or wrong, and the particular judgment you make in a certain circumstance." When participants described what continuing the dialogue looks like, they included the concept of how Catholicism has a *duty*, which I consider here as a moral obligation, to better articulate the human experience of sexuality. These changemakers are acting in accordance with their conscience (afforded a primacy in Catholic thought; see Paul VI 1965a, 3; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1800). Participants are following their consciences in a moral obligation to address matters of sexuality that unjustly leave others confused, feeling excluded from the community, or suffering from pain and anxiety. This obligation is, however, not only the responsibility of the administrators, but of the school culture and larger Catholic Church as well.

Tightly tied to this concept of moral obligation are the CST concepts of human dignity, common good, and social sin. The doctrinal position on Catholic education touts the importance of whole-person development (John Paul II 1990, 20) along with the integral nature of sexuality to human personhood (CDF 1975, 1). Catholic social teaching has long extolled a value of human dignity—we see this riddled throughout the documents of Vatican II and can be found in any foundational text on Catholic Social Teaching (see, for example, Thompson 2010, 58–59). Operating with an incomplete, fragmented, or dissonant understanding of sexuality in this formative environment works against the common good as described in *Gaudium et Spes* (Flannery 1996, 191): the "sum total of social conditions which allow people . . . to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily." If addressed in a holistic way, on a surface level, students would be able to intelligibly discuss topics of sexual assault, trauma, and other types of sexuality information. In a deeper sense, discussions on sexuality can help people understand themselves as sexual persons in a more holistic, integrated way. These are essential components of fulfilment with both individual and communal implications. These participants not only saw their work as moral, but there was also a sense of social

responsibility. We see through *Gaudium et Spes* (Paul VI, 1965b) and other documents from CST (e.g., Paul VI 1967, 17) that Catholics are encouraged to have a social role in engaging the human community and forming others around them.

Structural sin is the name given to the sinfulness of human social structures. Fred Kramer (2004, 107) describes the dynamics of structural sin as, "human beings structure the sinfulness into a social system or arrangement, and the system or structure coercively shapes the behaviors of individuals." The culture of ignorance and avoidance around topics of sexuality can amount to social, structural, or what Megan McCabe calls "cultural" sin (Ross, McCabe, and Wilhelm Garbers 2019, 346–51). The way of discussing moral culpability for large, cultural issues like sex and sexuality is just now being discussed in a new light by scholars like Bryan Massingale (2010, 74-78) and McCabe (Ross, McCabe, and Wilhelm Garbers 2019, 346–51). For my purposes here, I am less concerned with the culpability of the structural sin of avoiding issues of sexuality and more concerned with naming this avoidance and ignorance as a sinful injustice according to Catholic thought.

In describing a culture of sin, McCabe focuses the discussion on cultural factors that permit the normalization of sexual violence, which allows a wide range of unjust sexual violence to take place—often called rape culture. Similarly, the omission, avoidance, and disciplinary silencing around topics of sexuality constitute a culture of sin that violates one's "inalienable right to education" (upheld in Paul VI 1965c, 1; see also John XXIII 1963, 13; Paul VI 1967, 1, 6)—an inalienable right that surely extends to education about issues of sexuality. This culture of silence around sexuality is a structural sin in that it is difficult to remove, grows stronger, and is a source of other sins by influencing people's behaviors. In the words of John Paul II (1987, 36) in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, structural sin is "always linked to the concrete acts of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them and make them difficult to remove. And thus they grow stronger, spread, and become the source of other sins, and so influence people's behavior." Silence around issues of sexuality can create confusion and shame, influencing how people address injustices around issues of sexuality.

One suggestion for continuing the dialogue on sexuality consisted of abandoning Catholic identity and dogma altogether. While this may seem detrimental to the Catholic nature of a university, I propose that it is actually an area of insight for how Catholic universities can better serve their constituents. The Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE 2019, 8) said in their recent document on gender theory, "the primary outlook needed for anyone who wishes to take part in *dialogue* is *listening*." In listening, we can better hear the unmet needs of others, or in which ways our institutions and communities might be causing unjust harm. Listening is called for as a catalyst for dialogue. Through listening to those who are hurt and ready to leave the Catholic Church, Catholic institutions might find a need that can be addressed through pastoral care and humility that might otherwise be overlooked when holding tightly to less pastoral institutional responses.

Many different models of navigating one's faith and sexual identities have a paradigm for rejecting one of those two identities (Love et al. 2005, 198–203; Lapinski and McKirnan 2013, 854; Pitt 2010, 44–50; Schuck and Liddle 2001, 76). Love et al. (2005: 202–3) used particualrly relevant language for this paradigm, "undeveloped spiritual identity," that they defined simply as not being interested in having a spiritual life and thus rejecting one's religious identity. I find

this language pertinent to the participant responses that suggest rejecting the Catholic tradition, seeing it as an immovable barrier to discussions on sexuality insofar as they do not seem interested or invested in the religious identity. A deeper examination of the reasons people see Catholicism as a fixed obstacle warranting rejection may yield theological and pastoral gaps that leave people feeling hurt, alienated, uncared for, ignored, dismissed, or rejected. If people want to leave a Catholic identity behind on an institutional level, perhaps this is a place to begin listening to how adminstrators and members of the Catholic faith can bring acceptance, love, and dialogue to these discussions of sexuality.

Related to Catholic identity and healthy sexuality, some participants identified the need for Catholic higher education to be a resource for knowledge and intellectual dialogue. Some participants felt the converse was happening with episcopal intervention, at times stifling the academic conversation on sexuality. Findings from the present study reinforce the need for Catholic universities to be useful sources for information on sexuality through academic dialogue, rather than avoiding the complexities of the topic.

Conclusion

What can all of this tell us about sexuality in Catholic higher education—and in some respects, Catholicism as a whole? This reflection leaves with the question: if these changemakers see their work as deeply Catholic, how then can people best use their wisdom to inform interventions around sexuality and sexual formation in the context of Catholic higher education? From the above data, it would seem that these individuals are prime examples of following one's conscience, having hope for the future, how to love the Catholic Church with critical diligence, and encouraging further dialogue on a topic some would rather sweep under a rug or ignore. They are living models of Catholic theology in that they are addressing injustices, preventing unjust harm from being done, and in some cases, giving a voice to the voiceless. These individuals are currently bringing about change in a world that is otherwise unfriendly toward that change. Risking their job security in a world where the unethically common rapid descent into perpetual poverty is more salient than it has been in recent U.S. history, these employees are truly acting in accordance with their conscience, in line with the Catholic tradition, to effect change with a hope for a *metanoia* on an institutional level for the goal of social support as all Christians are called to do.

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