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A Place to Belong: Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education

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by

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ABSTRACT

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A growing number of gay and lesbian children attend Catholic schools throughout the United States; and an untold number of gay and lesbian children in Catholic schools are experiencing harassment, violence, and prejudice because of their sexual orientation or gender non-conformity. Whether due to their size, strong sense of community, or making special considerations for vulnerable students, Catholic schools seem to be the best equipped to address these issues, but all of the research points to such schools enacting policies of silence and suppression. This study specifically explores why Catholic teachings on sexuality and social justice have may have been unable to compel Catholic schools to do more to understand and support gay and lesbian children. In addition to looking at traditional Catholic teaching, this project also engages non-traditional approaches to scholarship and theology, with an eye towards creating a new theoretical framework that can serve as the basis of a new pedagogical space within Catholic schools in which gay and lesbian children can affirm both their sexual identity and their Catholic identity.

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I would also like to thank Professor Darder. She has been my mentor and guide throughout this process. Whenever I began to compromise my voice, entertained doubts, veer off course, or give up on the project all together she was there... her belief in my abilities and her commitment to my project kept me on the right path. I truly believe that if it were not for her uncompromising commitment to our gay and lesbian children in Catholic schools this project would not have happened.

Finally to Frank, for staying out of my way, reminding me about the consequences of not sticking to a 3-year dissertation timeline, taking care of the dogs, pretending to listen to my ideas, consistently suggesting my entire project was one big lit review, and patiently sticking around on the off chance I would take a break from writing. Well, Frank, I'm finally done.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to all of my Catholic school colleagues who are courageously fighting for a vision of Catholic Social Justice in their classrooms so that all children will come to appreciate their Catholic faith as an unending source of love, hope, and forgiveness.

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CHAPTER ONE

ANSWERING QUESTIONS WITH SILENCE

> The proper reaction to crimes committed against homosexual persons should not be to claim that the homosexual condition is not disordered. When such a claim is made and when homosexual activity is consequently condoned, or when civil legislation is introduced to protect behavior to which no one has any conceivable right, neither the Church nor society at large should be surprised when other distorted notions and practices gain ground, and irrational and violent reactions increase. (Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, 1992, para. 7)

Over the last two years, I served as the mentor to our school's science teacher, so it was no surprise when he approached me one morning with a student concern. He caught up with me in the middle of the corridor between passing periods and pulled me aside. He had an urgent look on his face, as his students were leaving his class for their next subject.

He spoke in a hushed voice about a student that I will call Donny. "I think Donny is gay. You might need to speak with him." After a short moment of surprise, I asked him to tell me why he thought Donny was gay. The science teacher explained that he had overheard students discussing a news article they had read about a gay student being bullied and murdered. According to the science teacher, the boys who were talking about the article were laughing, but he could not make out what they were saying or if they were laughing about the topic of the article. However, before he could get a handle on the situation, Donny, seated close to the group of boys, looked up with an angry face. He raised his voice louder than anyone else in the room and said, "What does it matter if he's gay? He is still a human being! He didn't deserve to die."

The noisy classroom fell silent and, according to the science teacher, everyone in the classroom stopped working and looked over at Donny, then they looked over at the teacher, since he was the only adult in the classroom. The science teacher, uncertain about how to address the incident, simply instructed them to get back to work. Yet, he felt conflicted, since not addressing the issue failed to show support for Donny's concern. Torn by what had transpired, the science teacher asked me for help, or rather, to help Donny. I looked at him and saw a genuine look of both concern and fear on his face. The teacher knew what he wanted to say to Donny, but was not sure how to say it without causing an upset in this small Catholic school community.

I reflected for a moment and then reminded my colleague that even though Donny had made a statement against homophobia, this did not necessarily confirm he was gay. However, to the other students, this line of thinking meant very little. For them, Donny was gay until proven otherwise. Until then, as a school community, we had never addressed the issue of sexual orientation. Since there had not been any open conversation about gays and lesbians, the students were making assumptions about Donny without context or pedagogical guidance.

The science teacher and I understood only too well the nature of this dilemma within a Catholic school. How could we show Donny that we support his opinion and ultimately his sexual orientation, whatever that may be? As Catholic educators, what would be the appropriate pastoral response towards Donny? How do we contextualize this experience for students in a way that supports the Christian values of inclusion, openness, and generosity of spirit? Ironically, as Catholic school educators, we should be the best prepared to handle these situations but, unfortunately, we lag behind many public schools on this issue. At any other school, there would be faculty training on how to handle this issue, support mechanisms in place for students,

or at the very least a policy that would inform the school community of the school's position on issues of sexuality. In sharp contrast, we seldom talk about sexuality—least of all homosexuality—at our school. Moreover, there is no staff training, student support, or official policy on this issue. So, it is no surprise, then, to learn that when Donny made a remark that challenged homophobia, it caught everyone unprepared, including the science teacher.

In response to the teacher's concern, I called Donny to my desk during my next free period. I offered him a chair and he sat down anxiously. I told him that I wanted to speak to him about the event that happened in science class earlier that morning. "What event?" he asked. I shifted in my seat a little and was not sure if I should or was even allowed to say any more than he was willing to share, but I thought it was important that this issue be dealt with openly.

"The science teacher told me that you shared your opinion about a gay student who was being bullied."

"Oh," he said looking away, "I remember."

"I just want you to know that you are right. Bullying is bad no matter who it is. Your science teacher and I want to acknowledge that and let you know that we support everything you said."

He was looking at the door. He looked uncomfortable and perhaps even scared. It was as if he was hoping I would release him quickly from this mutually awkward moment, but was not certain as to what he needed to say to get out of my classroom.

"Ok," he mumbled.

"If you need to talk about anything else, your science teacher and I are always here and like I said before, we are very proud of you for saying the right thing. We agree, there is nothing wrong with being gay."

"Ok." He replied.

I gave him a nod and he stood up and walked out of my classroom. I watched him get caught up in the stream of students in the hall outside my door and I reflected on the moment. I am a well-liked teacher. I have earned a reputation for being fair, open-minded, and non-judgmental. I have earned the confidence and trust of many students, including Donny; but seeing him shift back and forth in his seat, refusing to make eye contact with me, forced me to reconsider the true nature of our relationship.

What made this topic so awkward for both of us? Why did Donny feel unable to open up and say what was on his mind? When did my classroom suddenly become unsafe and uncomfortable for Donny? Is this also the norm at other Catholic schools when the issue of homosexuality is raised?

Statement of Problem

Donny's story illustrates the conditions gay and lesbian students face in our Catholic schools. This is not to say that Donny was necessarily gay, which is not the point here. Rather, the point is that the mere idea of him possibly being gay or even supportive of gay students was enough to make him uncomfortable. This, unfortunately, is not a surprising. In a recent climate study of public high schools in the United States, Joseph G. Kosciw, Emily A. Greytak, Elizabeth Diaz, and Mark J. Bartkiewicz (2010) found that the majority of gay and lesbian students report experiencing both verbal and physical harassment because of their sexual

orientation or gender expression. In addition to harassment, the study also found that nearly 20% of gay and lesbian students reported being physically assaulted. These conditions have led to higher absenteeism among gay and lesbian students and over 60% of these students feeling unsafe at their school because of their sexual orientation. Donny probably did not have the benefits of research to confirm why he should feel apprehensive; sadly, he did not need it—he already seemed to know that life was hard for gay and lesbian students.

In another study, Anthony R. D'Augelli, Neil W. Pilkington, and Scott L. Hershberger (2002) assert that victimization had a statistically significant affect on the mental health and overall academic achievement of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students. D'Augelli et al. note "that one-quarter of the LGB youths said they had missed school in the last month because of fear, compared to 5% of the non-LGB youths" (p. 149). In their analysis of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Russell, Seif, and Truong (2001) note LGBT students had lower GPAs, less positive attitudes about school, and more "school troubles" (p. 118). Another report also notes that "the high incidence of harassment and assault is exacerbated by school staff, if ever, intervening on behalf of the LGBT students" (Kosciw et al., 2010, p. xvi). Shane Martin and Edmundo Litton (2004) posit, "In many instances, it is much easier for students who are (or perceived to be) lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered, to simply withdraw from activities in school" (p. 74).

This literature is a powerful reminder of what is at stake for LGBT students. The overarching concern of this study is the overwhelming and painful silence, and, hence, the dearth of appropriate pedagogical practices, educational research, and institutional assessment, that characterize the existing school climate for gays and lesbians in Catholic schools.

Silence in Catholic Schools

In his study of gay and lesbian issues in Catholic high schools, Michael J. Maher (2007) notes that in "the response of [Catholic] schools to the topic of homosexuality, the strongest theme noted by researchers and other writers is silence" (p. 453). In a different study, Maher and Sever (2007) report that Catholic schools rarely, if ever, address issues of sexual orientation among students or staff. As a direct consequence of this lack of discussion or absence of explicit policies to protect LGBT students, their study found that "students in Catholic high schools were rarely 'coming out' to anyone there, including their friends, their families, or their school counselors" (p. 81).

This phenomenon makes it difficult to conduct any direct research or assessment on the issue of Catholic school climate for gays and lesbians, let alone provide supportive services to these students. This silence, however, does not necessarily mean Catholic high schools cannot address or support issues of sexual orientation. In fact, Gerald D. Coleman (1995, 1997) has repeatedly used the teachings of the Vatican and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) as a rationale to support the notion that Catholic schools should address the needs of the gay and lesbian students; however, it is important to note that all of the literature cited since Coleman's work in the 1990s seems to indicate that little progress has been made. This does not mean there are no practices that address the issue; rather, what it suggests is that examples of current practices with LGBT students in Catholic high schools are difficult to find or are not discussed openly.

Despite sporadic efforts to consider the impact of Church teachings on Catholic gays and lesbians children or gay and lesbian students who are in Catholic schools, there still remains a

huge barrier—whether institutional, theological, or pedagogical—that prevents open dialogue about the needs of gay and lesbian students in Catholic schools. In fact, the original purpose of this research was to conduct a school climate survey of gay and lesbian students in Catholic high schools. Unfortunately, the intense reticence I experienced from Catholic schools forced me to give up on that idea of a climate survey and, instead, explore theoretically the barriers that prevented me from following my initial plan of study. A critical part of understanding the barriers that prevented the initial study entailed a critical examination of the traditional view of the Church on sexuality. The ultimate goal is as David T. Ozar (2001) writes: "To extend our hand to these, as Jesus did to the leper, we must reject the systems of concepts we are familiar with and construct concepts that include them and their ways of experiencing life in the human family" (p. 266). So what are "the systems of concepts" that prevent gay and lesbian Catholic school students from "experiencing life in the human family?" If we are to contend seriously with the research conducted in public schools, then we must consider that gay and lesbian students in Catholic schools are also not being served and, therefore, there is a very real possibility that their needs are not being met.

In addition to understanding these "systems and concepts" this study insists that any ministry must adhere to Church traditions, or otherwise risk censure by the Vatican (Coleman, 1999). So what does the Church teach regarding gays and lesbians, and is it possible to counter homophobic inequities within Catholic education? Such questions point clearly to the need for a new critical conceptualization of Catholic education policies and practices that are tied specifically to a pedagogical approach that supports the needs of gay and lesbian students, while still remaining faithful to the heart of Catholic education and the core values of the Church.

Ultimately, this study will demonstrate that there are compelling theological arguments, particularly in the name of social justice and unconditional love, that educational and spiritual leaders can draw on to think differently about the gay and lesbian children in their care. This can signal the first steps in the creation of a pedagogical space, which humanizes the experience of gay and lesbian students and reminds everyone that they are children who must suffer in silence, within the very schools that are supposedly built upon the unconditional love of Jesus Christ and the social justice mission of the Church.

Research Questions

This study explored the following research questions:

1. In what ways can Catholic Social Teaching, Catholic Social Justice, and the Mission of Catholic Schools inform social justice approaches to gays and lesbians in the Church?
2. What concepts from queer theology inform a socially just Catholic understanding of gay and lesbian issues and spirituality?
3. What constitute the foundational principles for a Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education?

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The primary purpose of this research was to develop an innovative pedagogical understanding of Catholic teaching about gays and lesbians in Catholic education. The methodology encompassed an interpretive theoretical approach that critically examined the literature on the Mission of Catholic Schools, Catholic Social Justice Theory, Queer Theological

Theory, and Critical Pedagogy, with the specific goal of integrating these perspectives into the development of a Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education.

Interpretive Theoretical Approach

In concert with the critical engagement and synthesis of disparate bodies of literature to develop a new perspective, this study utilized an interpretive theoretical approach. This approach was selected principally because of systemic barriers that prevented use of qualitative or quantitative inquiry into the problem at the time of the study. With this in mind, Bruce H. Rowlands (2005) asserts that the interpretive theoretical approach follows a specific assumption about knowledge:

> Foundation assumption is that knowledge is gained, or at least filtered, through social constructions such as language, consciousness, and shared meanings. In addition to the emphasis on the socially constructed nature of reality, interpretive research acknowledges the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being explored, and the situational constraints shaping this process. (p. 81)

The methodology for interpretative research differs substantially from that of a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods study. Rowlands describes this difference in the following way:

> In terms of methodology, interpretive research does not predefine dependent or independent variables, does not set out to test hypotheses, but aims to produce an understanding of the social context of the phenomenon and the process whereby the phenomenon influences and is influenced by the social context. (pp. 81-82)

As a consequence this theoretical framework and methodology aims to deconstruct Church teachings about education, sexuality, and theology, and, thus, inform the articulation of a

Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education. Toward this end, each body of literature was critically analyzed together, as in a funnel. The funnel represents the manner in which a critical interpretive theoretical methodology informed the study, focusing on the essential elements of each theoretical framework in order to distill a Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education (see Figure 1.1).

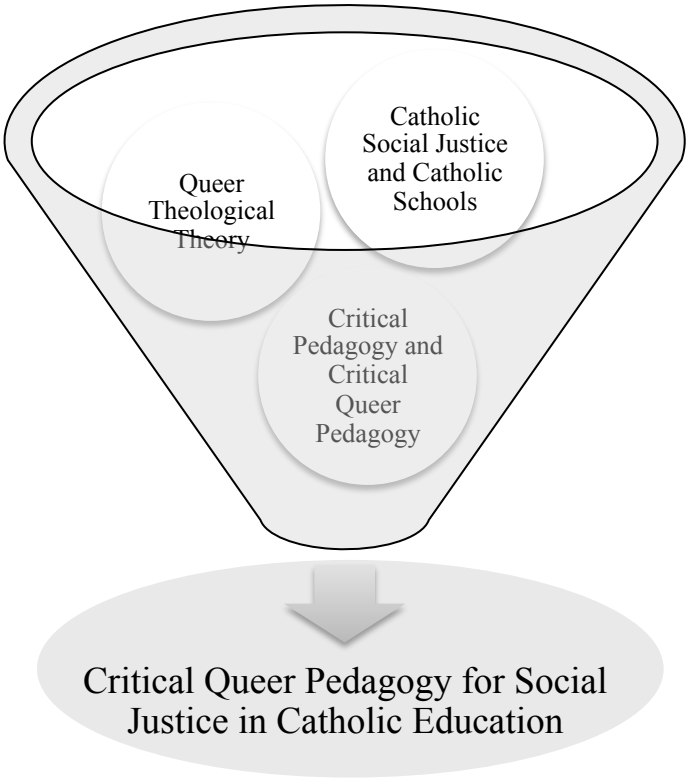

Figure 1.1. A Graphic Representation of the Methodology and Frameworks.

The Bodies of Literature

Mission of Catholic Schools

The role that Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education can play in Catholic schools must be based on an understanding of the purpose of Catholic education. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) has defined the Mission of Catholic Schools

in multiple ways, but all dimensions of the Mission of Catholic Schools define Jesus as the center of Catholic education. More specifically, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education describes Jesus's role in the Mission of Catholic Schools in the following manner:

> The Catholic school is committed thus to the development of the whole man, since in Christ, the Perfect Man, all human values find their fulfillment and unity. Herein lies the specifically Catholic character of the school. Its duty to cultivate human values in their own legitimate right in accordance with its particular mission to serve all men has its origin in the figure of Christ. He is the One Who ennobles man, gives meaning to human life, and is the Model which the Catholic school offers to its pupils. (para. 35)

Accordingly, the Mission of Catholic Schools, particularly the role and values of Jesus as "the Model which the Catholic school offers" were juxtaposed against how gays and lesbians experience that mission and analyzed critically in this study in an effort to forge a critical pedagogical approach that is in concert with social justice principles.

Catholic Social Justice

The Church's presence in the secular world and particularly in controversial social issues has been defined, promoted, and justified by a number of Church traditions that can be understood theoretically within the larger conceptual term of Catholic Social Teaching. The idea of social *justice* brings forward the idea that the Church should be involved actively in the world to correct inequity and the practices that support injustice. Padraig Corkery (2007) describes the basis of this action-oriented idea of Catholic Social Teaching:

> The Church's involvement in social action and teaching flows from its self-understanding as a community centered on the person of Christ and the call of the Gospel to "do

likewise". The Christ of the Gospels was concerned for the welfare of those he met and he encouraged his disciples to imitate his ways. (p. 17)

The connection between Catholic Social Justice and the Mission of Catholic Schools was explored in this study with respect to the social inequalities experienced by gay and lesbian students. Critical analysis of the literature focuses on contradictions that exist between the goals of Catholic Social Justice and the policies and practices within Catholic schools. The study will conclude that this tension between what ought to be done versus what is really being done originates from Catholic understandings of sexuality from sacred Scripture and Catholic tradition. Moreover, this critical analysis has sought to forward the argument that calls for the integration of literature that speaks specifically to queer theological questions, within the context of Catholic orthodoxy.

Queer Theological Theory

Literature that focuses on a queer theological framework brought to this study a cultural and temporal definition of sexuality and gender that is far more fluid than previously held understandings within the Catholic Church. Patrick Cheng (2011) defines the conceptual tenets of queer theology in the following way:

> Queer theology challenges the essentialist notions of sexuality and gender identity, and it argues that these concepts are not so much "fixed" but rather socially constructed through language and discourse. A constructivist view of sexuality and gender identity doesn't deny the fact that there are individuals who are born with same-sex attractions and/or gender variant identities. It does mean, however, that the cultural meaning and

> significance of such sexual attractions and gender expressions are fluid depending upon a particular time and place. (pp. 35-36)

Queer theological theory was employed to explore tensions between the sources of the Catholic Church's constructivist views of sexuality, Catholic Social Justice, and the Mission of Catholic Schools. The research presents key pieces of literature that suggest Catholic teaching on sexuality may be out of sync and, hence, serve to create barriers that can undermine the pastoral work of the Church. Ultimately, within this tense interaction between Church teaching and the counter narrative of queer theology, a new radicalized notion of Christian love is introduced. This radicalized notion of love, through a contemporary understanding of Christ, is applied in a new theoretical construct supported by Critical Pedagogy (Cheng, 2011; Darder, 2002; Freire, 1970).

Critical Pedagogy

By confronting the apparent contradictions that exist between Queer Theology, Social Justice Theory, and the Mission of Catholic Schools with the realities of gay and lesbian students, this study confronts what Catholic schools perceive is happening versus what is actually being experienced by LGBT students. Paulo Freire (1970) describes the role of confrontation as an important first step in critical pedagogy:

> The pedagogy of the oppressed, as a humanist and libertarian pedagogy, has two distinct stages. In the first stage this confrontation occurs through change in the way the oppressed perceive the world of oppression; in the second stage, through the expulsion of the myths created and developed in the old order. (pp. 54-55)

This study also sought to create the necessary conditions to expel "the myths created and developed in the old order," thus providing a pedagogical space for a Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education to unfold. In concert, Antonia Darder (2002) speaks to the revolutionary role critical pedagogy can have within the context of education:

> Rather than placing emphasis strictly on the directive quality of instructional methods (e.g., lecture, worksheets, vocabulary list, science manuals, etc.) that may be employed for the introduction of required content in different subject areas- an absolutely legitimate and necessary component of teaching and learning—a revolutionary practice is concerned with the underlying intent and purpose of knowledge that is being presented and the quality of dialogical opportunities by which students can appropriate the material to affirm, challenge, and reinvent its meaning in the process of knowledge production. (p. 112)

Through a critical analysis and synthesis of the literature on Catholic social doctrine, Catholic education, and critical pedagogy, the research carefully demonstrates "the underlying intent and purpose of knowledge that is being presented" (Darder, 2002, p. 112). Moreover, critical pedagogy serves here to engage "the quality of dialogical opportunities by which students can appropriate the material to affirm, challenge, and reinvent its meaning in the process of knowledge production" (p. 112). In the end, the study affirms the potential of a critical pedagogy of love as an effective emancipatory approach in the education of gay and lesbian students who may find themselves oppressed by the current climate of heteronormativity in Catholic schools and well-meaning educators who unknowingly sustain it.

Terminology

In *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective,* Martti Nissinen (1998) highlights the challenges terminology plays when discussing the topic of sexuality when he writes, "Throughout human history, as both historical and anthropological sources reveal, different cultures have known same-sex erotic sexual interaction. Response to this behavior, which, since the late nineteenth century, has been called "homosexuality," has varied in different cultures" (p. 1). This study draws from the same texts that inform Nissinen's work and, therefore, this study faces the same challenges of comparing and analyzing translated texts that span thousands of years from multiple cultures and countries. Moreover these texts, even if they are from the same country, culture, and time, may also have varying socio-political agendas and historical contexts that make any modern assumptions or claims highly problematic. To avoid having to refer to my own positionality within each piece of text and to accurately represent the intentions of the authors, this study will utilize the actual terminology (e.g., queer, gay, homosexual, same-sex attraction, homoeroticism) employed by authors in their writings. Additionally, whenever the analysis of the study requires certain assumptions be made about authors' intentions because of the use of certain terminology, the study will note these assumptions and substantiate it from within the text.

The study also does not assume that when the same word is shared between two authors that the meaning is necessarily the same. That is why this section also refrains from defining terms that appear on a regular basis in the study. Each term will be defined as it is presented in the study, within its own unique context. If the study encounters a limitation in the analysis,

because of the problematic nature of terminology used within the text, then these limitations will be acknowledged as they arise.

Dissertation Framework

As stated previously, the research employed a conceptual design that critically examined existing bodies of literature in several areas key to this topic, including: (a) Catholic Social Justice teaching and the Mission of Catholic Schools, (b) Catholic doctrine on homosexuality, (c) the emerging field of queer theology, and (d) critical pedagogical principles. Through careful examination of major works in these areas of study, this research identified ways to place salient ideas from these three bodies of literature in conversation with one another in an effort to forge a framework of queer critical pedagogy for Catholic education.

To develop a logical progression in the engagement of the literature and its analysis toward salient conclusions, the structure for the study was developed based upon the following chapter format.

Chapter One: The introduction and statement of the problem is offered, with descriptions of the theoretical framework and methodology, as well as the structure of the study.

Chapter Two: Here, the study explores the historical, political and cultural basis of the Catholic Church's traditions on sexuality, looking specifically at scriptural passages regarding homosexuality. A critical interpretative methodology is used to analyze assumptions within Church literature on issues of homosexuality and point to the affects of the Church's teaching on the lives of gays and lesbians, including but not limited to the Catholic school context. This is followed by an exploration into Catholic Social Justice teaching and its role in Catholic schools.

The potential of Catholic Social Justice teaching and its limitations with respect to for gay and lesbian students is also discussed.

Chapter Three: This chapter critically explores the theological underpinnings of Catholic Tradition regarding sexuality through the lens of queer theology. The chapter continues to explore the adequacy of Catholic Social Justice as a means for addressing gay and lesbian issues in Catholic Schools. Through an analysis of Catholic Tradition and Queer Theology, a radicalized notion of love that transcends sex and sexuality as a potential theological justification for a new theological approach to the issue of sexuality in Catholic schools is proposed.

Chapter Four: In this part of the study the work of Paulo Freire and the major concepts of Critical Pedagogy are introduced: dialogue, praxis, consciousness, and love. Each concept will be connected with Catholic literature from the Mission of Catholic Schools and Catholic Social Justice teaching. Ultimately, the chapter will conclude that there are potential limitations to current understandings of Critical Pedagogy, particularly when it comes from a queer perspective, and in order for the project to move forward critical pedagogy must be reread with a queer lens.

Chapter Five: The study will critically examine each concept of Critical Pedagogy: dialogue, praxis, consciousness, and love in relation to Queer theory and suggest a possible way in which Queer theory can appropriate Critical Pedagogy to create a Queer Dialogue, Queer Praxis, Queer Consciousness and Queer Love. The chapter then combines Critical Queer Pedagogy with Catholic literature to create a Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education a pedagogical approach that can serve gay and lesbian children in Catholic schools and is at the heart of this study.

Chapter Six: This study concludes with a discussion about the potential implications this new pedagogical approach will have for gay and lesbian students in Catholic schools, Queer Theology, and Catholic Social Justice.

CHAPTER TWO

THE VOICE OF THE FAITHFUL

Before I delve into Church teaching and its literature, it is important to step back for a moment and understand the current cultural and political context of the Church in the United States. Many Catholics believe that the Church is under attack and traditional values are being threatened. In *The Church and the Culture War,* Joyce Little (1995) demonstrates the charged cultural and political atmosphere that exists in the Church, Catholic schools, and the conditions that gays and lesbians are experiencing within these institutions. Little describes the "new language" appearing in contemporary society as a "deliberate attempt to find pleasing ways to characterize nasty things in order to rationalize the doing of those things" (p. 56). She then goes on to list some of the major social issues facing the Catholic Church and how it has been co-opted by this "new language":

> Lust is free love, adultery is open marriage, homosexuality is a lifestyle, masturbation is safe sex, pregnancy is disease, abortion is termination of that disease, procreation is reproduction, birth prevention is birth control, natural mothers are surrogate mothers, unborn children are embryos, embryos are property, murder is mercy killing, mercy killing is assisted suicide, and suicide is death with dignity. (p. 56)

Little is not alone in defining the Church as an oppositional force to modern culture and politics, particularly in opposition to gay and lesbian efforts to secure equal rights in different areas of society. The issue of same-sex marriage can be used as an example. A recent "survey confirms a significant change in American attitudes toward same-sex marriage—with support rising to 53% today from 42% eight years ago and 27% in 1996" (Newport, 2012, para. 5). Yet, the

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB, 2011) advises that traditional marriage—the marriage between a man and a woman—"should be defended and strengthened, not redefined or undermined by permitting same-sex unions or other distortions of marriage" (para. 46). The choice of words that the USCCB employs appears to strengthen the perception of a coordinated attack on the Church and Christian values, a perception that creates and reinforces the perception of a *gay agenda*. In a 2012 press release, the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights charges:

> The New York State officials sought to impose the gay agenda by (a) refusing to hold public hearings on homosexual marriage, and (b) refusing to allow the voters to decide this issue in a referendum (the way most states have). Owing to sleuth, deception, and a wholesale disregard for the democratic process, the right of a Catholic entity not to recognize something that nature never ordained—the union of two people of the same sex as a married couple—has wound up in the courts. (paras. 4-5)

Similarly, the Catholic News Agency, via an interview with Princeton law professor Robert P. George (as cited in Jones, 2011), claims that "instead of allowing religious freedom, marriage laws and anti-discrimination laws are being used as instruments to whip dissenters from the laws into line in order to change people's views and to advance an agenda" (para. 28).

The Church, or at least those who feel they represent Church interests, appears to be on the defensive (Little, 1995; Lovatt, 2012). As a consequence, the Church has become embroiled in a highly public political and cultural debate, focusing on issues such as abortion, contraceptives, and same-sex marriage. It can be argued that the conversation has gone to such an extreme, focusing on such specific issues, that it has supplanted and obstructed key

conversations about the pastoral role of the Church (Lovatt, 2012). Even Pope Francis (as cited in Spadaro, 2013) states:

> We cannot insist only on issues related to abortion, gay marriage and the use of contraceptive methods. This is not possible. I have not spoken much about these things, and I was reprimanded for that. But when we speak about these issues, we have to talk about them in a context. The teaching of the church, for that matter, is clear and I am a son of the church, but it is not necessary to talk about these issues all the time. (p. 26)

If the issue of same-sex marriage is removed from the current cultural and political context and the Church looks at the issue with a different lens, the tone and content of the conversation could change dramatically. In discussing his book, *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus,* Obery Hendricks (as cited in Center for American Progress, 2007) remarks:

> There is no real way to use the teachings of Jesus to oppose or to put focus on same-sex marriage. I am supposed to love my neighbor as myself. It's hard for me to turn my back on a gay person trying to do right. (para. 6)

Hendricks words suggest that there can be another lens to approach contentious issues, in order to look beyond the issue and directly to the needs of the total person. Pope Francis (as cited in Allen & Messia, 2013) also affirms this notion in an interview regarding gay priests, "When I meet a gay person, I have to distinguish between their being gay and being part of a lobby. If they accept the Lord and have goodwill, who am I to judge them?" (para. 15).

Jesus Christ, the source for the core values of Church Tradition, has always been seen as a figure of openness, compassion, and forgiveness. The Church's defensive tone in its emphasis

on specific issues may have potentially contributed to the discrimination and the sense of marginalization experienced by of a number of Catholics, including gays and lesbians. I am not suggesting that I disagree with Church teaching – rather I am reminding us that this is a possible perception of gay and lesbian Catholics, whether right or wrong. To gay and lesbian Catholics this appears to contradict the consistently held notion that Jesus's mission was intended precisely for those who have been marginalized, discriminated, or hurt by general society. Speaking to this notion, Terry Eagleton (2008) writes:

> [Jesus] is presented as homeless, propertyless, peripatetic, socially marginal, disdainful of kinfolk, without a trade or occupation, a friend of outcasts and pariahs, averse to material possessions, without fear for his own safety, a thorn in the side of the Establishment and a scourge of the rich and powerful. (para. 18)

In an interview Pope Francis (as cited in Allen & Messia, 2013) again affirms the Catechism of the Catholic Church regarding gays and lesbians, and although he condemns "what he described as lobbying by gay people," he does affirm that homosexuals "shouldn't be marginalized. The tendency to homosexuality is not the problem they're our brothers" (para. 15).

Gays and Lesbians in Catholic Schools

The aforementioned example of same-sex marriage demonstrates one of the many conflict-laden issues for gays and lesbians in the Church. For students in Catholic schools, this conflicted climate manifests itself in multiple ways. Hence, students in Catholic schools experience two distinctive worlds. The first world is filled with hundreds of thousands of children who experience the joys and struggles of growing up in the tradition of Catholic school. The second world is filled with hundreds, possibly thousands of gay and lesbian students who

experience the same struggles, but must also struggle with their sexuality, which must remain hidden and unacknowledged. Many gay and lesbian Catholic school students suffer quietly, alone with their developing sexuality, fearful of embarrassment, assault, abuse, harassment, social isolation, or abandonment. In contrast, Martin and Litton (2004) argue:

> In a just and caring environment, no individual must feel invisible and despised because of sexual identity. Catholic educators often struggle with this issue. However, in any response to issues of sexual orientation in schools, educators need to remember that there is a real young person behind all these issues. (p. 76)

This struggle of feeling (and remaining) "invisible," as experienced by most gay and lesbian Catholic school students, appears to be happening despite that fact that Catholic tradition explicitly states that homosexuals "must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided" (Catholic Church, 1994, para. 2,358). Therefore, at least theoretically, gays and lesbians should not experience any type of discrimination and should, instead, know only respect, compassion, and sensitivity; yet, the reality can be very different. Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton (2001) observes, "there is still the risk of being rejected by others, especially by the most significant people in their lives—parents, siblings, the Church, teachers, friends, etc." (p. 5) for simply being gay. Why is this so, if Church teaching is explicitly against such outcomes?

This negative reaction to homosexuality may be connected with another section of Church Tradition:

> Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically

> disordered." They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved. (Catholic Church, 1994, para. 2,357)

If the Church cannot separate homosexual acts it considers "intrinsically disordered" from the homosexual person, then it condemns not only the act, but also, by permitting a pervasive silence in the Church and in school, the homosexual person as well. Even if, theoretically, this should not be the case, there is strong evidence that the Catholic Church has varying and, at times seemingly contradictory, responses to a number of social issues, and the impact of these variations in doctrine have been debated (Little, 1995), so it should be of little surprise that Catholics vary widely in terms of how they view homosexuality. Even Pope Francis (as cited in Spadaro, 2013) remarks on this inconsistent approach to Church teaching on controversial issues: "The dogmatic and moral teachings of the church are not all equivalent. The church's pastoral ministry cannot be obsessed with the transmission of a disjointed multitude of doctrines to be imposed insistently" (p. 26).

Unfortunately, this "transmission of a disjointed multitude of doctrines" that have been "imposed insistently" has had a negative impact on gays and lesbians. According to Maher (2007), the Church's response to homosexuality has had an almost wholly negative impact on gays and lesbians, particularly on gays and lesbians in Catholic schools. In addition to gay and lesbian Catholic school students hearing that homosexual acts are "intrinsically disordered," they also hear that any love between homosexuals "do not proceed from a genuine affective…complementarity" (Catholic Church, 1994, para. 2,357), construing the very act of loving another person of the same sex as less than that of a heterosexual love. This presents

potential implications for Catholic youth who are still trying to develop a better understanding of their sexuality and spirituality and who also belong to a vulnerable youth population that is more than three times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers (Garofalo, Wolf, Kessel, Palfrey, & DuRant, 1999). As a result of interviews with gay and lesbian Catholic high school students, Maher (2007) reveals that religion and spirituality are a source of conflict:

> Most of the subjects said that the topic of homosexuality was rarely or never discussed in the curriculum. On those few occasions when it did enter the curriculum, however, it was often in religion class, and often cast in a negative light. Retreats tended to focus on opening up and sharing personal thoughts and feelings with their peers, but they did not feel safe sharing their personal thoughts and feelings with their peers. For about half of the subjects, especially for women, feeling that religion or religious beliefs were being forced on them was extremely uncomfortable. Also the examples of priests, nuns, and brothers sometimes had a negative effect on their views of religion. A few of the subjects perceived vowed religious who worked in their schools as both homosexual and homophobic. The majority finished Catholic high school with an intense anger toward religion. (pp. 463-464)

Again, there seems to be no reason why "religion and spirituality should be a source of conflict" for gay and lesbian students. As mentioned earlier, the Catholic Church does not appear to have an issue with homosexuals themselves, but, rather, with homosexual acts, because they perceive these acts as "intrinsically disordered" and "contrary to the natural law" (Catholic Church, 1994, para. 2,357). To that end, the Catholic Church (1994) goes on to describe how homosexuals can

comply with Church teaching by asserting, "Homosexual persons are called to chastity" (para. 2,359).

A challenge emerges because even when gay and lesbian Catholic school students are living lives of chastity by not engaging in homosexual acts, they *still* appear to be subjected to a lack of respect, absence of compassion, and insensitivity (Maher, 2007; Martin & Litton, 2004). Gay and lesbian Catholic school students are also exposed to other examples of Catholic doctrine being applied in seemingly negative ways. There are examples of children being denied access to the sacraments and parochial education simply because of the sexual orientation of their parents, whose sexual activity and martial status appear to be either unknown or in compliance with Church teaching (Ruben & Lobdell, 2005; Wolf & Torres, 2010). In another example, a Catholic school student was prevented from receiving a $40,000 scholarship named after a gay student who was killed because of his sexual orientation because it was issued by an organization that promotes gay and lesbian rights (Omer, 2012). When the student was interviewed he said "everybody at the school has always been very accepting and extremely encouraging toward me. That's why the latest turn of events has been such a surprise—I feel invalidated and unaccepted" (Omer, para. 2, 2012).

These examples are simply used to demonstrate the Church's response to gays and lesbians. I am not in disagreement with any course of action that is faithful to Church teaching, rather I am suggesting that some courses of action with respect to this matter may appear to be less than pastoral, lacking full understanding of the situation. To some people they may ask, if the Church takes issue with homosexual acts and, yet, there appears to be no direct evidence of

these acts, then how is the Church's position demonstrating respect, compassion, and sensitivity by allowing such betrayals of human dignity to happen?

At the other end of the argument, when the Church is confronted with gays and lesbians who violate their call to chastity and become *sinners*, there still remains a problem with the current climate of the Church with respect to gay and lesbian students in Catholic schools. The Church's reaction to these sinners appears to be misaligned to some of the teachings of Jesus, such as: "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" (New American Bible, John 8:7). It could be suggested that Jesus believed that everyone is guilty of sin and no one has the right to pass judgment.

At this point do not want to suggest that the Church does not have the right to express its particular understanding of sexuality, as passed down over the centuries. In fact some might suggest that telling gays and lesbians the *truth*[1] about the deviant nature of homosexual acts does not constitute passing judgment but is simply meant to be informative, and, in turn, they are demonstrating their love for the homosexual by clarifying Church teaching. However, it is worth noting that any notion that gays and lesbians are not aware of Church teaching and should be required to hear it as often as possible seems to be a false presupposition. If gays and lesbians were not aware of the *truth*, then they certainly would not be reporting the stress their sexuality is causing or how they are struggling with their spirituality. It could even be argued that what has been defined as *truth* is often at the root of such conflict, no matter how well intentioned they may be (Lovatt, 2012). This is not meant to argue about the truth of Church teaching, in that this

[1] Truth as it is referred to here is how some would characterize the Church's teachings on homosexuality. Truth is italicized to suggest that this characterization of Church teaching is still subject to extensive debate outside of the Church and has not been universally accepted by some biblical scholars.

study is in no position to suggest the Church's teachings are not true. Rather the purpose of this argument is to suggest that the way in which teachings are delivered can potentially have a long lasting and damaging affect on how a gay or lesbian student sees the Church and their spiritual faith. As such, for some gays and lesbians, it would appear that simply reminding gay and lesbians about the *truth* has supplanted any sense of social responsibility Catholics have for supporting their homosexual brothers and sisters and has closed down the possibility of participating in any meaningful dialogue. Pope Francis (as cited in Spadaro, 2013) describes the dangers of this pastoral response thusly: "The rigorist washes his hands so that he leaves it to the commandment" (p. 24).

This is unfortunate, given the overwhelming evidence of homophobia experienced by gay and lesbian students in public schools (Kosciw et al., 2010). Catholic schools have an amazing opportunity to provide a pastoral response that public schools cannot. However, if we were to say that the Church has shown its love by simply speaking the *truth* and allowing silence to persist, then Catholic schools are missing an important opportunity for a truly just pastoral response (McNeill, 1993). Again, it would appear that the primary pastoral response seems to be limited to educating gay and lesbian Catholics about Church teaching, without offering them the psychological, social, and spiritual support enjoyed by their heterosexual counterparts (Coleman 1995; Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, 1986).

Automatically Sinful

The belief that homosexuals should be loved, but that their sexuality, if acted upon, is sinful and subject to disapproval, creates a contradiction that does not bode well for gay and lesbian students in Catholic schools: not because the teaching is not consistent with Catholic

tradition, but rather because the faithful are unable to separate the person's sexuality from their sexual activity. The notion that gay or lesbian individuals should be automatically treated as sinners appears to be seldom challenged publicly (Coleman, 1995; Jung & Coray, 2001). This attitude, however, appear to be changing, given recent the response of Pope Francis (as cited in Spadaro, 2013) to homosexuality:

> A person once asked me, in a provocative manner, if I approved of homosexuality. I replied with another question: "Tell me: when God looks at a gay person, does he endorse the existence of this person with love, or reject and condemn this person?" We must always consider the person. Here we enter into the mystery of the human being. In life, God accompanies persons, and we must accompany them, starting from their situation. It is necessary to accompany them with mercy. (p. 26)

Pope Francis appears to be able to separate the person from the sexual orientation and by doing so seem to signify a shifting attitude to the *love the sinner, but hate the sin* pastoral approach that the Church has been known to practice. *Love the sinner, but hate the sin* is the paraphrased quote originally attributed to the early Church and to Church fathers like St. Augustine (1476/2003) because of a passage in his book *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans.* In it he writes, "Towards those who are evil; that is to say, he should not hate the person because of the fault, nor should he love the fault because of the person. He should hate the fault, but love the man" (p. 23). This quote is one of many ways the Church has described the Christian understanding of the sinner. What makes this quote or its paraphrased version important is that "anti-gay Christians often use this slogan to force LGBT people to change their sexual orientations and gender identities" (Cheng, 2011, para. 1). Although greater theological

discussion about the concept of sin, the different types of sins, or the historical development of these ideas is beyond the scope of this study, suffice it to say that this pastoral approach is problematic because, according to Church doctrine, everyone is considered a sinner, not just the homosexual. Church doctrine clearly states, "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves" (Catholic Church, 1994, para. 1,847). In the same vein, when Pope Francis was asked by an interviewer on how he would describe himself, Pope Francis (as cited in Spadaro, 2013) remarked, "Yes, but the best summary, the one that comes more from the inside and I feel most true is this: I am a sinner whom the Lord has looked upon" (p. 16).

Although everyone in the Church is considered a sinner, including the Pope, this standard seems to have different consequences for gays and lesbians. This, of course, is not to say that gays and lesbians may not be sinful or should not face consequences for violations of Church teaching, but rather that some critics make it a point to repeatedly raise examples of gay and lesbian sinfulness, categorically applying these to the entire community (Lovatt, 2012). This practice has profound implications for gay and lesbian students in Catholic schools because it is disingenuous and reflects a crude attempt to selectively apply narrow definitions of morality upon *the other*. In the guise of pious accountability (Farley, 2006; Jung & Coray, 2001; Lovatt, 2012), it directs students whose sexual identity is still forming into an almost adversarial relationship with the Church by applying generalizations that have no basis in fact.

This state of affairs begs the question, if the Church only condemns homosexual *acts* and homosexuals themselves are to be treated with the same dignity and respect that everyone else deserves, then why are gay and lesbian students perceived by some as inevitably sinful or undeserving of support in Catholic schools?

Double Standard of Morality

An inconsistent standard of moral accountability seems to reinforce the perception that gays and lesbians somehow do not deserve the same respect, compassion, and sensitivity as their heterosexual peers, which contributes to the difficulties faced by gay and lesbian students in Catholic schools (Litton, 1999). Gay and lesbian students are often afraid of the consequences of revealing their sexual orientation, which stands in stark contrast to the consequences that many heterosexual Catholics face if they reveal that they have been divorced, masturbate, or have sexual relations outside of marriage—all of which are also condemned in similarly strong terms by Church doctrine (Gumbleton, 2001). Some may say that the condemnations of the Church apply to all; however, this statement fails to recognize the daily vulnerability and struggles of gay and lesbian students (Kosciw et al., 2010).

In fact, it appears that Catholic tradition regarding the sexual ethics of the Catholic Church have somehow set gay and lesbian Catholic school students apart from the rest of the community by allowing a moral standard to be used broadly to pass judgment automatically on a category of people based simply on sexual orientation. The consequence of this double standard is, as Martin and Litton (2004) write, that these students navigate a perilous environment filled with prejudice, discrimination, violence, and intimidation.

It appears to some outside of the Church that gays and lesbians are only welcomed into the Church so long as they are celibate and silent about their sexuality; for gays and lesbians to do otherwise can endanger their ability to be fully active members of the Catholic community. This perception is obviously not true, but little has been done to counter this viewpoint. For those seeking to blame the Church for this situation, they argue that it is precisely the sexuality

of gay and lesbians that threatens their sense of belonging and at-home feeling that all Catholics should ideally experience within the Church community. The viewpoint expressed by this same group, that gay and lesbian students within Catholic schools are being marginalized or discriminated against, appears to contradict what Pope Francis (as cited in Spadaro, 2013) asserts is the mission of the Church:

> This church with which we should be thinking is the home of all, not a small chapel that can hold only a small group of selected people. We must not reduce the bosom of the universal church to a nest protecting our mediocrity. (p. 22)

Assuming all members of the Church are sinners and Pope Francis vision of a larger and more welcoming Church, it seems to be the responsibility of the Church community to recognize that gay and lesbian students are no more or less culpable then the students who are not gay, and should be made just as welcome. Unfortunately, gay and lesbian Catholic school students appear to be in limbo between specific have interpretations of Catholic teaching, shaped by "what critics see as an obsession with sexual ethics" (Speciale, 2012, para. 4), and a call for a more effective pastoral response to the issues of gays and lesbians in Catholic schools. Even in the most superficial understanding of the notion of *love the sinner, but hate the sin*, it appears as though Christians who judge gays and lesbians fail to accept the challenge of looking at their own sinfulness first before applying their judgment on others. Jesus himself took the time to comment on the apparent contradiction that he noticed during his ministry, stating:

> How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye," when you do not even notice the wooden beam in your own eye? You hypocrite!

> Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye. (New American Bible, Luke 6:42)

This conflict is unfortunate; the question of homosexuality should be viewed as an important invitation to engage everyone in a more robust pastoral ministry (Lovatt, 2012). This may be what Pope Francis (as cited in Spadaro, 2013) is referring to when he describes a new opportunity for dialogue: "Instead of being just a church that welcomes and receives by keeping the doors open, let us try also to be a church that finds new roads, that is able to step outside itself" (p. 24).

Dealing with differences should present an opportunity to call all members of the Church to holiness, not just one group. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Catholic Church, 1994), "Jesus invites sinners to the table of the kingdom. He invites them to that conversation without which one cannot enter the kingdom, but shows them in word and deed his Father's boundless mercy for them" (para. 545). If Jesus is the core of Catholic teaching, then gay and lesbian students must be included at "the table" so that the Church may achieve its mission to the fullest potential, with the opportunity to demonstrate an understanding of Jesus's teachings in deeper and more meaningful ways. In order to fulfill this promise, we must better understand how the Catholic Church views sexuality, go to the source of its interpretation in both scripture and tradition, and study how that interpretation is lived out in both Catholic Social Justice teaching and in the mission of Catholic schools.

Sexuality, Tradition, and Scripture

It is imperative to examine critically the literature that has informed Catholic Church teaching on sexuality in order to better identify and explore those ideological and social

structures that, wittingly or unwittingly, enable some to perpetuate a certain understanding of Catholic teachings that contributes in some way to the inequality and systematic marginalization of gays and lesbians children within Catholic schools. In conducting this inquiry into the social order, the goal is not to damage or harm the significance of Church teachings, but rather it is conducting in the same spirit of questioning that Jesus himself engaged expressed during his lifetime on earth. Hendricks (2006) reminds us that Jesus the prophet routinely engaged social orders that he perceived to promote inequity:

> There has never been a conservative prophet. Prophets have never been called to conserve social orders that have stratified inequities of power and privilege and wealth; prophets have always been called to change them so all can have access to the fullest fruits of life. (p. 28)

Taking the example of Jesus, efforts to explore Catholic tradition regarding gays and lesbians is akin to Jesus's approach to "social orders that have stratified inequities of power and privilege" (p. 28). This exploration is made with deference to the larger mission of the Church and the Gospel. In regards to this, Pope Francis (as cited in Spadaro, 2013) acknowledges the need to ask questions, both of ourselves and the Church:

> How are we treating the people of God? I dream of a church that is a mother and shepherdess. The church's ministers must be merciful, take responsibility for the people and accompany them like the Good Samaritan, who washes, cleans and raises up his neighbor. This is pure Gospel. God is greater than sin. The structural and organizational reforms are secondary—that is, they come afterward. The first reform must be the attitude. The ministers of the Gospel must be people who can warm the hearts of the

> people, who walk through the dark night with them, who know how to dialogue and to descend themselves into their people's night, into the darkness, but without getting lost. The people of God want pastors, not clergy acting like bureaucrats or government officials. The bishops, particularly, must be able to support the movements of God among their people with patience, so that no one is left behind. But they must also be able to accompany the flock that has a flair for finding new paths. (p. 24)

A recent study conducted in the United States underscores the urgency of this introspection, demonstrating that more Christian Americans are rejecting all forms of organized religion and showing signs of becoming less religious than at any other time in history (Kosmin & Keysar, 2009). Pope Francis (as cited in Spadaro, 2013) suggests a way to turn this trend around:

> Proclamation in a missionary style focuses on the essentials, on the necessary things: this is also what fascinates and attracts more, what makes the heart burn, as it did for the disciples at Emmaus. We have to find a new balance; otherwise even the moral edifice of the church is likely to fall like a house of cards, losing the freshness and fragrance of the Gospel. The proposal of the Gospel must be more simple, profound, radiant. (p. 26)

This exploration of Church teaching, then, is an attempt to return to the "essentials" or "necessary things" in order to understand how Church teaching regarding sexuality was formed and in the end understand how the essentials of this teaching, rooted in the Gospel, will help reconcile gays and lesbians with the Church and within Catholic schools.

The Vatican and the American Bishops

Maher (2007) notes that in the past 40 years a number of documents have been written by the Vatican, various American bishops, and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) regarding homosexuality (Archdiocese of Los Angeles, 2011; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1986; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], 1997, 1998). Maher (2007) argues,

> While all documents touch on a number of issues, those from the American bishops tend to place greater emphasis on the pastoral care of gay and lesbian people while those from the Vatican tend to place greater emphasis on the immorality of homosexual sexual activity. (p. 449)

Pope Benedict XVI's response to gay and lesbian issues seems to underscore a more conventional understanding of the values of the Church. During his pontificate, the Vatican had been advocating for a return to traditional core beliefs of the Church (Castellanos, 2012). In a series of documents, decisions, and statements, the Catholic Church, led by then Pope Benedict XVI, took what could be considered a more conservative approach to its interpretation of scripture, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and Canon Law (Schmiesing, 2005). The end result of this push for a more conservative interpretation of Church doctrine appeared, at least on the surface, to give tacit permission to Catholic schools to scrutinize and judge the personal lives of their gay and lesbian Catholic families or to respond to the needs of gay and lesbian students with silence.

For example, as a consequence of this increased scrutiny, children of gay and lesbian parents were not being permitted to attend Catholic schools (Aiello, 2010; LaVictoire, 2011;

Wolf & Torres, 2010). Gay and lesbian educators are being dismissed from Catholic schools (Holland, 2012; Markoe, 2013). A potential consequence of these public actions is the increase in the collective anxiety among gay and lesbian Catholic families and students, who know that because of their sexual identity they might potentially be be placed under greater scrutiny and their sexual orientation used to scandalize, embarrass, or punish them. Moreover, this may also lead to the loss of their profession, families, church, friends (Litton, 1999) and faith. Tangentially, Jordan (2000) has observed the consequences of what appears to be an enforced institutional silence within the Church regarding any discussion about homosexuality:

> Homosexuality has been silenced so successfully in the Catholic Church that we do not have the kinds of evidence required for a convincing answer. A subject that Catholic theologians cannot discuss during centuries except with thunder, derision, or disgust is not a subject on which Catholic theology can speak. (p. 3)

To some, these examples may appear to be the extreme, but for many they are the public face of the Church. In its silence, the leadership of the Church appears to have given tacit permission for the actions of certain groups within the Church to reinforce an image of the Church that may not fully depict the nuanced and thoughtful pastoral response the Church truly had in mind for gay and lesbians. To understand the position of the Vatican regarding gays and lesbians, it is important to understand what informs the Catholic understanding of sexuality, particularly homosexuality. To grasp Catholic instruction on homosexuality, we need to first engage the scripture that is at the root of the teaching (Boersma, 2011).

Scripture

There are many translations of the Bible. I have selected the 2011 edition of the *New American Bible* because it was edited by the USCCB and is the approved English translation of the Bible by the Catholic Church. Scripture or the Bible has two main references to something akin to *homosexuality*. The first one I will look at comes from when Saint Paul writes a series of letters to early Christians in Rome. In one of these letters he writes,

> Their females exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the males likewise gave up natural relations with females and burned with lust for one another. Males did shameful things with males and thus received in their own persons the due penalty for their perversity. (Romans 1:26-27)

Many biblical scholars would interpret this verse from Romans as Saint Paul's condemnation of homosexuality. However, Ron Way (2011), along with more progressive biblical scholars, challenges the more widely accepted interpretation of Saint Paul's letter and the relevance of that interpretation in today's modern society. He notes that the same Saint Paul "had zero basis in the biblical Jesus, just as he had no foundation in Christ for his forbidding women to speak in church except through their husbands, or his tacit approval of slavery" (para. 12). Some biblical scholars feel that just as slavery and the status of women have evolved in their meaning since biblical times in ways that have brought our compassion and understanding of humanity closer to the gospel of Christ, so should Saint Paul's judgments about homosexuality be reformulated with a more contemporary understanding (Farrell, 2011). To be objective, this does not necessarily mean Saint Paul would have approved of modern

homosexuality and a small group of scholars should not outweigh the long tradition and scholarship that existed before. In fact, John Boswell (2005) writes:

> While Saint Paul did not specifically comment on gay feelings or lifestyles, he would have disapproved of any form of sexuality which had as its end purely sexual pleasure, and he might have disapproved of relationships directed chiefly at the expression of erotic passion. He clearly regarded licit sexuality as that contained within a permanent and monogamous relationship. (p. 115)

Another argument is that Saint Paul considered the main purpose of "a permanent and monogamous relationship" was for procreation, thus suggesting that the only legitimate relationship is a heterosexual one; however, "he did not suggest any connection between sexuality and procreation—a link created by a later age" (p. 115).

Saint Paul's letters to the Romans follow an even older text in the Bible. The book of Leviticus features "over 600 laws…described as The Holiness Code, which was given to protect the Israelites from idolatry and to distinguish them from pagan cultures" (Canon, 2008, p. 31). Two verses in two different chapters of the Book of Leviticus refer to something that can be interpreted as homosexuality. The first reference states, "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; such a thing is an abomination" (Leviticus 18:22). The other verse in Leviticus states, "If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them shall be put to death for their abominable deed; they have forfeited their lives" (Leviticus 20:13).

However, some biblical scholars remind us to place these condemnations in context. Way (2011) contends that, by focusing on the verses regarding homosexuality, we are exercising a sort of unfair selectivity in ignoring the many other rules stated explicitly in Leviticus. As an

example, a biblical scholar can point out the many other condemnations in chapters 19 and 20 of Leviticus that are no longer taken literally, such as preventing anyone who is blind, is lame, or has a skin infection or a disfigurement from approaching the altar; banishing men who have sex with menstruating women; prohibiting the wearing of clothes made of more than one fabric; or allowing different kinds of crops in the same field or different kinds of cattle to graze together (Leviticus 19-20). Daniel A. Helminiak (2006) confirms the problematic practice of taking verses of Leviticus out of context:

> Throughout these ancient Jewish prohibitions, religious and cultural concerns, not sexual-ethical concerns, were at stake, yet the practical effect was the same. Even today fundamentalist groups rip these passages out of their cultural context and cite them to condemn contemporary homosexuality, which is very different from what the ancient text addressed. (p. 38)

These modern concerns about biblical selectivity, cultural context, and historical relevancy, offer opportunities for the Catholic Church to explore its current interpretations of scriptural passages as part of the basis of Catholic teaching on homosexuality, and continue a conversation about this topic that has developed over the course of hundreds of years (Catholic Church, 1994). Some are surprised, with the number of potential errors and scriptural interpretations, which has caused some scholars to suggest that interpretations of Bible's stance on the issue of homosexuality may require some reconsideration.

For example, Reverend John T. Farrell (2011) points out that the difference of a single word or article may seem insignificant, but certain words and articles are nuanced and, if changed, have a profound ability to alter the entire meaning of the verse. For example, Genesis

Chapter 19 has been used to suggest God's *anger* towards *homosexuality*. In this story God communicates to Abraham his plans to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because of their many *sins*. Abraham convinces God to spare the city, should he find at least 10 righteous people therein. The story continues with God's messengers being received by a man named Lot who provides them both with food and shelter. As the evening draws near, the house is surrounded by townsfolk who threaten Lot and his guests when they ask, "Where are the men who came to your house tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have intimacies with them" (Genesis 19:5). Lot, the host who is protecting the angels, offers his daughters instead:

> I beg you, my brothers, not to do this wicked thing. I have two daughters who have never had intercourse with men. Let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you please. But don't do anything to these men, for you know they have come under the shelter of my roof. (Genesis 19:7-8)

The situation is resolved when the messengers incapacitate the crowd and warn Lot to take his family out of Sodom. The fifth verse in Genesis 19 has been understood to represent the townsfolk's preference for homosexuality, which some believe should be considered one of if not the primary *sins* or forms of *wickedness* that had angered God to begin with. However, Boswell (2009) argues:

> There is no word in classical Hebrew or Greek for "homosexual," and there is no evidence, linguistic or historical to suggest that either *kadēshim* of the Old Testament or the *δρσενοκοιταχ* of the New were gay people or particularly given to homosexual practices. On the contrary, it is clear that these words merely designated types of

> prostitutes: in the case of the former, those associated with pagan temples; in that of the latter, active (as opposed to passive) male prostitutes servicing either sex. (p. 114)

Indeed, nothing in Genesis specifically mentions which sins or forms of wickedness had angered God. In fact, when taken from a wider context, not just from a single verse, the matter of hospitality seems to be the real concern:

> Two of the references to Sodom in other parts of Scripture (Ezekiel 16:49-50; Matthew 10:14-15) support the interpretation that Sodom's sin had nothing to do with homoerotic acts, but was instead the sin of inhospitality to strangers. This "alternative interpretation" is held by many scholars, who say that the story of Sodom was told to illustrate the evil of violating the ancient laws of hospitality: In a nomadic culture, a stranger's life might depend on the hospitality of a stranger's care. Hospitality laws were sacred in the Hebrew Bible. Thus, God's condemnation of the people of Sodom in the Genesis story is about their xenophobic inhospitality. (Higgs, 2011, p. 23)

This is not to say that everyone agrees Genesis has nothing to do with homosexuality. The *Jewish Study Bible* (Berlin, Brettler, & Fishbane, 1999) seems to concur that this passage makes reference to homosexuality, yet even though the *Jewish Study Bible* suggests it might reflect a condemnation on homosexuality, it also notes that the chapter presents "a gross violation of the conventions of hospitality. According to one opinion in the Mishnah, a lack of generosity is characteristic of Sodom" (p. 41). Other scholars such as Boswell (2005) complicate matters even more by offering another interpretation of what the purpose of the story might be:

> The notion that Genesis 19—the account of Sodom's destruction—condemned homosexual relations was the result of myths popularized during the early centuries of

> the Christian era but not universally accepted until much later and only erratically invoked in discussion of morality of gay sexuality. Many patristic authors concluded that the point of the story was to condemn inhospitality to strangers; others understood it to condemn rape; most interpreted it in broadly allegorical terms, only tangentially related to sexuality. (pp. 113-114)

The main point here is simply to suggest that there is not as strong a consensus among scholars about the purpose of the passage as some might believe. While all seem to agree that the focus of God's anger is of improper relationships, there is some contention about the nature of the relationship, whether it was sexual or not. However, for the sake of argument, if we were to assume the story was indeed sexual in nature, it still remains problematic for some scholars in the field. Take for example the word *yadha*, which The *New American Bible* describes as *intimacies*, the *New International Version Bible* says is *sex*, and the *King James Bible* translates as *that we may know them*. All three of these translations of *yadha* are slightly different and support what Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler (2008) argue in their work:

> The word *yadha* is critical for understanding what the men of Sodom were asking. Yadha is the ordinary Hebrew word for the English *know*, as it is translated in the Revised Standard Version, but is also used on occasion to mean specifically sexual intercourse. The question then is which meaning is intended in the text. The Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament notes that yadha is used 943 times and in only 10 of those instances it is used with any sexual connotation. (p. 218)

The other meaning of *yadha* or *yada* used in the Scripture indicates the ability to:

> …know, learn to know, to perceive, to perceive and see, find out and discern, to discriminate, distinguish, to know by experience, to recognise, admit, acknowledge, confess, to consider, to know, be acquainted with, to know how, be skillful in, to have knowledge, be wise, to be made known, be or become known, be revealed, to make oneself known, to be perceived to be instructed, to cause to know, to cause to know, to be known, known, one known, acquaintance, to make known, declare, to be made known, to make oneself known, reveal oneself. (Brown, Driver & Briggs, 1996, para. 2)

In addition to questions about the intentions of the authors and the accuracy of translation, biblical scholars have made a very recent push to re-evaluate the use of modern definitions, values, and cultural contexts when analyzing and translating ancient texts, particularly with regard to complex issues like homosexuality. Take as an example the continuation of the same story from Genesis, in which Lot eventually escapes and unknowingly commits incest with his two daughters, who end up bearing him children. These children then become the founding members of two tribes that come into socio-political conflict with the ancient Israelites. A footnote to Genesis 19:30-38 in the *New American Bible* state:

> This Israelite tale about the origin of Israel's neighbors east of the Jordan and the Dead Sea was told partly to ridicule these ethnically related but rival nations and partly to give popular etymologies for their names. The stylized nature of the story is seen in the names of the daughters ("the firstborn" and "the younger"), the ease with which they fool their father, and the identical descriptions of the encounters.

Suddenly, this story of an angry God bent on destroying homosexuality becomes less of a story of hospitality and more of an origin narrative designed for the socio-political purposes of the ancient Israelites.

In fact, Jeremy McGinniss (2010) writes that many of the judgments modern readers perceive as against homosexuality are potentially inaccurate when they take into account the context of the time. Biblical scholars like McGinniss argue that once modern notions of sexuality are removed and we take into account the cultural context, the intended audience, and the goal of the writer, it may well be that the passage has little to do with modern notions of sexuality. J. Harold Ellens (2006) summarizes the position that certain biblical scholars take regarding homosexuality in the Bible when he asserts, "The message of the Bible on homosexuality is neither clear nor conclusive" (p. 103).

The Church's Response to these Scholars

Despite efforts to bring forth a discussion on particular interpretations of the Bible, Bishop Robert H. Brom (2004) adamantly objects to biblical scholars who claim the bible is ambiguous about homosexuality:

> Some homosexual activists have argued that moral imperatives from the Old Testament can be dismissed since there were certain ceremonial requirements at the time—such as not eating pork, or circumcising male babies—that are no longer binding…. While the Old Testament's *ceremonial* requirements are no longer binding, its *moral* requirements are. God may issue different ceremonies for use in different times and cultures, but his moral requirements are eternal and are binding on all cultures. (paras. 7-8)

Unfortunately to some, Brom's argument that declares definitively what God believes to be "eternal" and what can change to reflect "different times and cultures,", appears to be the very same selective interpretation that he himself considers problematic. Brom, along with other scholars have suggested that the Church's position has a deeper more nuanced relationship that combines scripture with other sources. He, like many other scholars in the Church, opposes the reinterpretation of Scripture, but because they cannot use scripture alone to justify their position, they turn to these sources to assert the "eternal" or consistent nature of the Church's position on homosexuality by stating that:

> The supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, sacred Scripture, and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively (Paul VI, 1965c, para. 10)

This demonstrates that the Church's teachings are intertwined with many other sources that are not directly found in Scripture alone, such as that which is considered tradition. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1986) states:

> An essential dimension of authentic pastoral care is the identification of causes of confusion regarding the Church's teaching. One is a new exegesis of Sacred Scripture which claims variously that Scripture has nothing to say on the subject of homosexuality, or that it somehow tacitly approves of it, or that all of its moral injunctions are so culture-bound that they are no longer applicable to contemporary life. These views are gravely erroneous and call for particular attention here. It is quite true that the Biblical literature owes to the different epochs in which it was written a good deal of its varied patterns of

> thought and expression. The Church today addresses the Gospel to a world that differs in many ways from ancient days. But the world in which the New Testament was written was already quite diverse from the situation in which the Sacred Scriptures of the Hebrew People had been written or compiled, for example. What should be noticed is that, in the presence of such remarkable diversity, there is nevertheless a clear consistency within the Scriptures themselves on the moral issue of homosexual behaviour. The Church's doctrine regarding this issue is thus based, not on isolated phrases for facile theological argument, but on the solid foundation of a constant Biblical testimony. The community of faith today, in unbroken continuity with the Jewish and Christian communities within which the ancient Scriptures were written, continues to be nourished by those same Scriptures and by the Spirit of Truth whose Word they are. It is likewise essential to recognize that the Scriptures are not properly understood when they are interpreted in a way which contradicts the Church's living Tradition. To be correct, the interpretation of Scripture must be in substantial accord with that Tradition. (paras. 4-5)

This appeal to tradition, however, is a complicated one. Boswell (2005) suggests that sexuality was rarely, if ever, a topic of interest for the early Church:

> There is in fact little reason to assume that the specific objections of influential theologians played any major role in the development of antihomosexual feelings in Christian society. The fact that an opinion was held or taught in some quarters is no proof that it was generally believed: it is hardly likely that Clement of Alexandria and Saint John Chrysostom insisted so vehemently on the sinfulness of homosexual acts because this was the majority opinion in their day; the reverse would be a more cogent

inference. The attitude of Ausonius is probably a better index of general Christian feelings: the causal indifference and candor with which he alludes to the subject that he felt no need to defend his opinions. (p. 164)

John J. McNeill (1993) argues that when the early Church did respond to topics of sexuality, it was less about the modern duality of heterosexuality and homosexuality, but rather the duality of love as opposed to lust:

> The Fathers consistently rejected homosexual activity. The argument for this rejection was based on the order of creation and the Epistle to the Romans. Sodom is the cautionary example of the punishment to be expected or the clear sign of the lawlessness of such activity…Although the fierceness of the condemnation can be better understood in terms of anti-Hellenic and apologetic motives, and although the Fathers speak mostly against the lust pederasty and of perverted and self-perverting heterosexuals, yet implicitly they condemn all homosexual activity as contrary to the order of creation. We can conclude from both the biblical and patristic heterosexual image of man that the Fathers had no understanding of the difference between homosexuality as a subjectively moral expression of love or as an egotistical expression of lust. (p. 76)

In fact, this idea of love versus lust carried over into the Middle Ages, most notably in relation to heterosexual relationships. Boswell (2005) writes:

> The most popular manual of moral doctrine in the Middle Ages cited both Pythagoras and Saint Jerome as insisting that "a man who loves his wife very much is an adulterer. Any love for someone else's wife or too much love for one's own is shameful. The upright man should love his wife with his judgment, not his affections." Pleasure, even during an

> act aimed at procreation, was sinful in the opinion of many members of the early church. Such a philosophy, in which human relationships are justified solely by their function, might denigrate homosexuality, but not necessarily. At many points in Christian history even ascetics have valued homosexual feelings as conducive to the sort of love which Jesus evinced toward his followers. (p. 164)

These are just a few examples of the complicated viewpoints the early Church Fathers held regarding homosexuality and even heterosexuality. This is not to suggest that there was no consensus on the topic; in fact, it would appear that homosexuality, in general, was not an accepted practice, but it is important to understand that the motivations for this prohibition appear to be neither consistent nor eternal.

This is not to say that, over time, the Church's teachings did not eventually condemn homosexual activity. The biological complementarity and the functional product of procreation eventually contributed to the belief that heterosexuality follows a divine instruction or "natural law," while as homosexuality does not, and therefore can be considered "intrinsically disordered" (Catholic Church, 1994, para. 2,357). Teachings like this, whose basis in scripture is not explicitly stated and must draw on tradition, ultimately become codified and enforced by an institution. The *Code of Canon Law* describes the set of regulations that govern the Church as adopted by the Church through its various councils over hundreds of years (Boudinhon, 1910). The *Code of Canon Law* (Catholic Church, 1983) defines the source and ultimate authority of Church teaching:

> A person must believe with divine and Catholic faith all those things contained in the word of God, written or handed on, that is, in the one deposit of faith entrusted to the

> Church, and at the same time proposed as divinely revealed either by the solemn magisterium of the Church or by its ordinary and universal magisterium which is manifested by the common adherence of the Christian faithful under the leadership of the sacred magisterium; therefore all are bound to avoid any doctrines whatsoever contrary to them. Although not an assent of faith, a religious submission of the intellect and will must be given to a doctrine which the Supreme Pontiff or the college of bishops declares concerning faith or morals when they exercise the authentic magisterium, even if they do not intend to proclaim it by definitive act; therefore, the Christian faithful are to take care to avoid those things which do not agree with it. (can. 750, 752)

Canon law continues by defining "heresy" as:

> The obstinate denial or obstinate doubt after the reception of baptism of some truth, which is to be believed by divine and Catholic faith; apostasy is the total repudiation of the Christian faith; schism is the refusal of submission to the Supreme Pontiff. (Catholic Church, 1983, can. 751)

In *Lumen Gentium*, Pope Paul VI (1964) asserts the teaching role of the Church and the responsibility of the faithful to follow the instructions of the Church:

> Bishops, teaching in communion with the Roman Pontiff, are to be respected by all as witnesses to divine and Catholic truth. In matters of faith and morals, the bishops speak in the name of Christ and the faithful are to accept their teaching and adhere to it with a religious assent. This religious submission of mind and will must be shown in a special way to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking ex cathedra; that is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is

> acknowledged with reverence, the judgments made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will. His mind and will in the matter may be known either from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking. (para. 25)

In *Ad Tuendam Fidem,* Pope John Paul II (1990) considers the matter of false doctrines and the lack of fidelity on the part of the faithful so concerning during his pontificate that he added or modified four different canons in Canon Law to address this issue.

> Whoever denies a truth which must be believed with divine and Catholic faith, or who calls into doubt, or who totally repudiates the Christian faith, and does not retract after having been legitimately warned, is to be punished as a heretic or an apostate with a major excommunication; a cleric moreover can be punished with other penalties, not excluding deposition. In addition to these cases, whoever obstinately rejects a teaching that the Roman Pontiff or the College of Bishops, exercising the authentic Magisterium, have set forth to be held definitively, or who affirms what they have condemned as erroneous, and does not retract after having been legitimately warned, is to be punished with an appropriate penalty. (paras. 20-21)

Scripture also supports the importance of supporting doctrine:

> I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingly power: proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate

> teachers and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths. (New American Bible, 2 Timothy 4:1-4)

In an earlier passage, Jesus himself appears to be affirming the authority of the Church in all matters:

> And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (New American Bible, Matthew 16:18-19)

Patricia Jung (2001) agrees that "theological disagreement in regard to some noninfallible Church teachings run the risk of fostering confusion among some Catholic lay people" (p. xxiv). However, with that said, Jung also suggests that discussions that risk theological disagreement can have a role in fostering a deeper understanding of Church teaching:

> Bishops and theologians alike make prudential judgments about whether the risks that may be realistically associated with scholarly investigations such as this outweigh their potential contributions to the further development of moral theology and their educational benefits. They must consider in their calculus the dangers and costs associated with the stifling of all forms of public theological debate. In the United States most Catholic lay people, and certainly the secular world to which the Church is also called to bear witness, are confused and disturbed, indeed scandalized, by the sounds of enforced silence. The credibility of Church teachings is most surely eroded when scholarly arguments that foster honest inquiry into and respectful debate about them are not tolerated. (p. xxiv)

This study, with full deference to the teaching authority of the Church, continues in that same spirit of "honest inquiry and respectful debate." To continue in this inquiry into the root of Catholic teaching regarding homosexuality, it would be important, then, to not only to understand scripture sources or the early church fathers' position on the topic, but also explore the contemporary Church teaching and be clear about what the modern Church requires of its faithful.

Church Teaching

At this point in the study I will suggest that Church teaching and *Tradition* are one in the same, and that this understanding of tradition defines and organizes the Scripture into practical terms for Church use. Catholic tradition is communicated to the faithful in many ways, such as the aforementioned *Code of Canon Law* (Catholic Church, 1983), as well as Papal Encyclicals, Pastoral Letters, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Catholic Church, 1994).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Catholic Church, 1994) is an important document because it is often cited in Church responses to controversial issues such as homosexuality. Pope John Paul II (as cited in Catholic Church, 1994) highlights the importance of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in modern Catholic doctrine in his introduction to the text:

> The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which I approved June 25th last and the publication of which I today order by virtue of my Apostolic Authority, is a statement of the Church's faith and of catholic doctrine, attested to or illumined by Sacred Scripture, the Apostolic Tradition, and the Church's Magisterium. (p. 5)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Catholic Church, 1994) reflects hundreds of years of traditions, documents, and teachings that have been handed down over the generations.

It is a highly complex document that combines scripture and tradition and is organized into four parts; each part is divided into sections, each section is divided into articles, and each article is divided into paragraphs.

Before examining what the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Catholic Church, 1994) says about homosexuality, it is worth noting how to locate the relevant paragraphs, since the search in and of itself already suggests modern Catholic Church views on homosexuality. The reader would have to look for the part of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* entitled "The Ten Commandments," then find the section entitled "Thou Shall Not Commit Adultery." Among the various articles found under "Thou Shall Not Commit Adultery"—rape, fornication, pornography, prostitution—one would have to locate the section entitled "Chastity and Homosexuality" (see Figure 2.1).

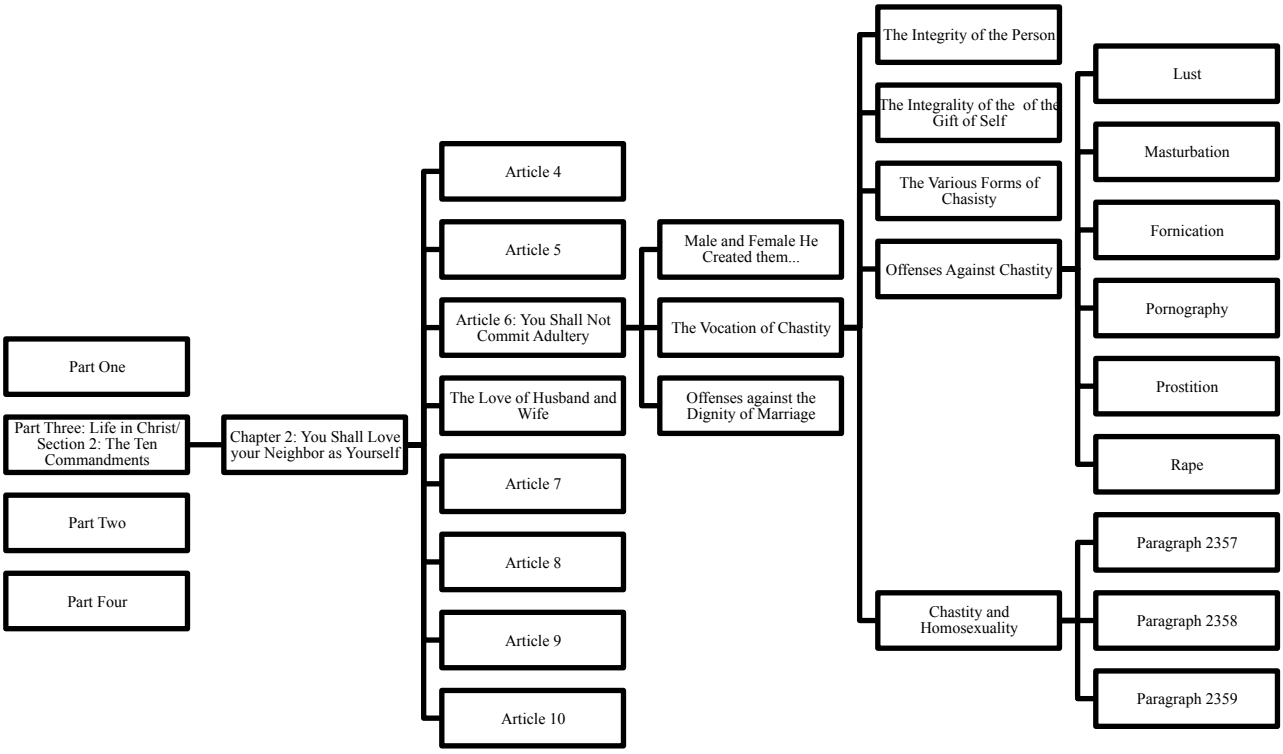

Figure 2.1. Flow chart of the Catechism of the Catholic Church where Catholic teaching regarding homosexuality can be found. Adapted from *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2nd ed., p. xv), by the Catholic Church, 1994, Cittá del Vaticano, Italy: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Copyright 1994 by the author.

The purpose of presenting the different organizational levels of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Catholic Church, 1994) is to illustrate on a macro level how the modern Church has implicitly contextualized its teaching on homosexuality. It is also worth noting that all of the politically and theologically charged assertions made about homosexuality in recent years surprisingly come from a mere three paragraphs, out of a possible 2,865 paragraphs within the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

The first of the three paragraphs on homosexuality starts by connecting the idea of homosexuality to scripture, stating, “Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents

homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that 'homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered'" (Catholic Church, 1994, para. 2,357). The first paragraph in the article continues to describe homosexual activities as contrary to natural law, asserting that "under no circumstances can they be approved" (para. 2,357). The second paragraph reminds members of the Church about how homosexuals should be treated, stating, "They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided" (para. 2,358). The third paragraph ends the section on homosexuality by stating, "Homosexual persons are called to chastity" (para. 2,347).

As the personal lives of gay and lesbian Catholics are scrutinized in every detail, others who engage in activities also considered "intrinsically and gravely disordered," like masturbation and fornication, do not appear to receive the same level of attention and condemnation or face the same repercussions to their social standing, relationship with the Church, or opportunity for support. Within the same section entitled "Thou Shall Not Commit Adultery," masturbation is mentioned as "an intrinsically and gravely disordered action" (Catholic Church, 1994, para. 2,352), fornication as "the carnal union between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman…[that] is gravely contrary to the dignity of persons" (para. 2,353), and pornography as worthy of condemnation because it "offends against chastity because it perverts the conjugal act" (para. 2,354).

In addition to the gravely disordered activities mentioned already, artificial insemination and fertilization, "even in a legitimate heterosexual marriage" are seen as "perhaps less reprehensible, yet remain morally unacceptable" because "they dissociate the sexual act from the procreative act" (Catholic Church, 1994, para. 2,377). The Church also defines divorce as a

"grave offense against the natural law" and as "immoral" because it "introduces disorder into the family" (paras. 2,384-2,385). The last three examples from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* may only apply to heterosexuals in the Church, since heterosexual marital unions are the only ones recognized by the Church, but these circumstances seem to be rarely condemned to the same degree of intensity and consistency as the perceived *violations* of which homosexuals are accused, even when simply being vocal or public about their sexual orientation. Even if heterosexuals are held accountable for these and other acts, the stigma associated with these condemnations do not seem to have the same ramifications that scandalize gays and lesbians who are fearful of embarrassment, assault, abuse, harassment, social isolation, or abandonment in the Church (Blumenfeld, 2010).

In addition to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Catholic teaching can be seen in the *Code of Canon Law* (Catholic Church, 1983). The *Code of Canon Law* describes the set of regulations that govern the Church, as adopted by the Church through its various councils over hundreds of years (Boudinhon, 1910). Canon law covers aspects of the daily life of the Church. While it does not explicitly discuss homosexuality, it does give the Church the ultimate authority to decide on the issue for lay Christians:

> The lay Christian faithful have the right to have recognized that freedom which all citizens have in the affairs of the earthly city. When using that same freedom, however, they are to take care that their actions are imbued with the spirit of the gospel and are to heed the doctrine set forth by the magisterium of the Church. In matters of opinion, moreover, they are to avoid setting forth their own opinion as the doctrine of the Church. (Catholic Church, 1983, can. 227)

This statement in canon law gives the Church broad powers to enforce Church doctrine and dissuades members from creating their own interpretations of scripture. The purpose of bringing the *Code of Canon Law* into this study is to understand how the "freedom which all citizens have in the affairs of the earthly city" intersects with the "doctrine set forth by the magisterium of the Church," particularly in Catholic schools that are dealing with issues of homosexuality.

Catholic Schools

There are a variety of examples where the Church's doctrine on homosexuality has been enforced in Catholic schools. In Costa Mesa, California, parents organized a letter writing campaign to the Archdiocese of Orange to remove the two sons of a gay couple from an Archdiocesan school because they felt the parents' relationship violated Church teaching (Ruben & Lobdell, 2005). A Catholic school in Boulder, Colorado, did not allow a preschooler to return the following year because the student's parents were homosexual (Wolf & Torres, 2010). In a recent issue of the *Huffington Post*, Lauren Markoe (2013) reports:

> A fifth-grade teacher at St. Joseph's Catholic School in Moorhead, Minn., for 11 years. The school fired her in June 2012 after she told school officials that she supports gay marriage, though she keeps her views out of the classroom. (para. 10)

A Catholic school in New South Wales, Australia denied a kindergartener re-entry when they found out that her parents were in a same-sex relationship (LaVictoire, 2011). A Catholic schoolteacher in St. Louis was fired after Church officials learned that he planned to marry his partner of 20 years (Holland, 2012). A physical education teacher in "an Ohio Catholic school for 18 years and was fired in March after her mother's obituary disclosed that Hale had a female partner" (Markoe, 2013, para. 12). In an interview with the Columbus Dispatch regarding the

termination, Bishop Frederick Campbell states that it is his responsibility to maintain the Catholic identity of institutions he oversees (Markoe, 2013). In Canada, a Catholic schoolteacher was fired when parents at the school found out her same-sex partner was having a baby (Melloy, 2010). In Seattle, a vice-principal was fired after a colleague notified his superiors that he had married his long time partner (Young, 2013). An 8-year old boy's application to a Catholic school in Massachusetts was withdrawn after the school "learned the boy's parents are lesbians" (Aiello, 2010, para. 1). A Catholic bishop prevented a gay advocacy group from presenting a $40,000 scholarship to high school senior Keaton Fuller because the bishop felt that the organization's politics were inappropriate; the scholarship was named after Matthew Shepherd, a boy killed in a hate crime because of his sexual orientation (Omer, 2012). Kathianne Boniello (2013) reports on the expulsion of Amanda Acevedo from a Catholic high school in New York:

> Dean Joseph De Bona began targeting Amanda when she came to her sophomore-year dance with a girl on her arm, the suit says. Although she had permission to bring the date, Amanda says, De Bona pulled them aside at the end of the event, separated them and grilled Amanda, asking how they met, where the girl went to school, whether the two were "more than just friends" and warning against "any funny business." (para. 5)

Understandably, these examples are extreme and do not constitute the whole of responses that Catholic schools have made regarding gay and lesbian issues. Moreover, sharing these examples does not condemn these Catholic schools; in fact, if anything these responses are consistent with Church teaching. However the unfortunate outcome of these responses is that it presents only one aspect of Catholic teaching and only serves to strain the relationship between the gay and

lesbian community and the Church. It extinguishes any pastoral possibilities and establishes an oppositional relationship that may not have needed to exist. Reporting on a movement in Seattle-area Catholic high schools to form Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs, Zachariah Bryan (2013) describes the unofficial underground movements led by gay students and concerned straight allies as a positive and necessary step to provide much needed help and support for gay students. Unfortunately, in an interview with a recently graduated student organizer, she states that organizing the GSAs has not been easy: "it was hard for the underground, unofficial GSA to find potentially LGBTQ students who were in need of help and support" (para. 8). Kristen M. Young (2013) reports that the firing of Mark Zmuda, the former vice principal of Eastside Catholic School, because he married his longtime partner forced the Catholic high school to close soon after:

> Hundreds of students—alerted by Twitter—walked out of class to call for his reinstatement, joined by their peers at Catholic schools in neighboring cities. They filled gym bleachers to overflowing. They crowded together in school commons. They cut and colored "We Love You Mr Z" into rainbow-hued banners. Still, he is unlikely to return as their leader—unless church doctrine changes. Michael Patterson is an attorney for the Eastside Catholic high school and the Archdiocese of Seattle. Speaking on behalf of the school, Patterson said Friday that Zmuda resigned after the school was alerted about his marital status by some of his colleagues. "He was an excellent administrator," Patterson said, adding that the school supports his future employment elsewhere. (paras. 3-5)

The school continued to deny that the vice principal was fired because he was gay, but when they were pressed for more details, school officials simply stated they had no control over

the teachings of the Church (Young, 2013). For hundreds of students in local Catholic high schools in the Seattle area, the lack of official support by Catholic high schools seems to be at odds with the mission of the Catholic Church: to provide pastoral support for all its members, including gays and lesbians, and particularly children who have no control of their circumstances but appear to be judged either because of their sexual orientation or, in the case of some earlier examples, the sexual orientation of their parents. For the students at Eastside Catholic high school, this contradiction has a clear solution, Young (2013) writes:

> Holding hand-lettered signs calling themselves "21st Century Catholics for a 21st Century Church" and promoting the Twitter campaign to #KeepMrZ2013, students chanted "God is love, stop the hate" and "change the church". More than 18,000 people have signed a Change.org petition calling for the church to reconsider its stance on same-sex marriage in light of Zmuda's humanity and Christ's message of unconditional love. (para. 18)

The responsibility of the Church to support all of its members, especially gays and lesbians, is clearly stated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Catholic Church, 1994), which states, "Homosexuals must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided" (para. 2,358). Therefore, an apt question might be, how can Catholic high schools justify their lack of support for gay and lesbian students, parents, and organizations?

Interestingly, the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith (1986) might provide an answer. In its letter describing the pastoral response to homosexuals, it makes clear that the

Church, and tangentially its schools, must avoid any appearance of condoning homosexual activity:

> We wish to make it clear that departure from the Church's teaching, or silence about it, in an effort to provide pastoral care is neither caring nor pastoral. Only what is true can ultimately be pastoral. The neglect of the Church's position prevents homosexual men and women from receiving the care they need and deserve. (para. 15)

Hence, this leaves us with important questions to address if we are to ensure an emancipatory educational process for all students in Catholic schools: Do Catholic schools see the support of gay and lesbian organizations as somehow condoning homosexual activity? If it does, then how can we support gay and lesbian children in Catholic schools, fulfilling the Church's responsibility to provide pastoral care for all of its members, while still avoiding any appearance of supporting violations with Church teaching? What has prevented Catholic schools and the Church from finding a solution to this issue? To answer these questions, the following section explores the Mission of Catholic Schools and uncovers possible reasons why they are unable or unwilling to provide support for gay and lesbian students.

The Values of Catholic Schools

To understand the unique role of Catholic schools in the Church the study explored the documents that support the Mission of Catholic Schools. The Church has a high regard for education and the role that education can play in both religious and intellectual formation. Pope Pius XII states in his 1942 Christmas message, "He should uphold respect for and the practical realization of the following fundamental personal rights; the right to maintain and develop one's corporal, intellectual and moral life and especially the right to religious formation and education"

(para. 40). The belief that education is an inalienable human right is furthered in *Gravissimum Educationis* by Pope Paul VI (1965a), who proclaims, "All men of every race, condition and age, since they enjoy the dignity of a human being, have an inalienable right to an education" (para. 1).

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles, a Catholic school system serving a large Catholic community in Southern California, continues this long tradition. One of its major objectives is the belief that their Catholic schools should "encourage all students towards excellence, but most importantly to use their gifts and talents in service to others" (The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Los Angeles, 2012c, para. 7). Similarly, Pope John XXIII (1963) speaks of the responsibility to educate students properly so that their potential gifts and talents can benefit society. In *Pacem in Terris,* he writes:

> He has the natural right to share in the benefits of culture, and hence to receive a good general education. Furthermore, a system must be devised for affording gifted members of society the opportunity of engaging in more advanced studies, with a view to their occupying, as far as possible, positions of responsibility in society in keeping with their natural talent and acquired skill. (para. 13)

Anthony S. Bryk, Valerie E. Lee, and Peter B. Holland (1993) concur with this concept of Catholic education:

> Education involves nurturing both mind and spirit, with equal concern for what students know and for whether they develop the disposition to use their intellectual capacities to effect a greater measure of social justice. This is the Catholic conception of an education of value for human development and democratic citizenship. (p. 302)

If the goal is to allow students to reach their fullest potential, then any condition that prevents students from achieving this should be of great concern. According to Martin and Litton (2004), safety is one of the greatest concerns for gay and lesbian students. They argue that, as a consequence of gay and lesbian students feeling unsafe, "homophobia 'locks all people into rigid gender roles that inhibit creativity and self-expression'" (p. 75). These safety concerns are one of the chief reasons why many gay and lesbian students achieve lower educational attainment, have a disproportionate number of truancies, and face myriad mental and psychological reactions (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, 2007; Murdock & Bolch, 2005; Russell et al., 2001).

There appears to be a tension between the role Catholic schools play in society and in the Church. On the one hand, the Mission of Catholic Schools calls all school to maximize the potential of every human being, but on the other hand it is also expected to enforce Church doctrine by doing what it can to avoid any appearance of condoning homosexual activity, this would include activities that have nothing to do with homosexuality, but might be perceived as homosexual on the surface. Richard Garnett (as cited in Markoe, 2013), a University of Notre Dame law professor who writes about religious freedom, appears to be alluding to the tension Catholic schools experience when contending with the issue: "Your typical Catholic school does have a mission and asks their teachers to be exemplars of what the schools are trying to do. They're trying to teach the church's values about sexual ethics and morality" (para. 4). The problem might be that the current pedagogical space is too narrow; Catholic high schools are unable to negotiate their role in both serving the Church and the needs of gay and lesbian students. This is not to say that these aims must be mutually exclusive, but rather, in the current

state of affairs, as Catholic high schools avoid any perception of supporting homosexual activity, they invariably do very little or nothing to support the gay and lesbian students in their schools.

Using the documents introduced earlier regarding the role of Catholic schools in the Church and in society, we can derive three major themes for Catholic schools: to promote cooperation and intellectual diversity, to become an advocate for the powerless, and to be an active force for good in the community. Using these three themes, I will demonstrate the possibility of how this narrow pedagogical space can be widened, but ultimately in the end the current paradigm of Catholic education still does not permit Catholic schools to address the concerns of gay and lesbian students.

To Promote Cooperation and Intellectual Diversity

The idea of cooperation with others, particularly those who have a different way of thinking and being, is an important value of Catholic schools. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) supports this respect for difference in its work:

> Whether or not the Catholic community forms its young people in the faith by means of a Catholic school, a Catholic school in itself is far from being divisive or presumptuous. It does not exacerbate differences, but rather aids cooperation and contact with others. It opens itself to others and respects their way of thinking and of living. (para. 57)

This quality of Catholic schools is even more crucial at the high school level. As Shannon E. Wyss (2004) emphasizes, "High schools are institutions that provide a location for dynamics among various groups to play themselves out, and adolescence in the USA is a period in life when many teens become increasingly aware of the differences between them" (p. 709). Unfortunately, Warren J. Blumenfeld (2000) asserts that homophobia "inhibits appreciation of

other types of diversity, making it unsafe for everyone because each person has unique traits not considered mainstream or dominant. Therefore, we are all diminished when any one of us is demeaned" (p. 274).

One may argue that outright homophobia does not exist in Catholic schools, but, again, as Maher (2007) notes, "silence is the overall response to the topic of homosexuality," and in some cases "schools also reinforce in more subtle ways a preferential status for heterosexuality" (p. 454). This lack of intellectual openness flies in the face of the intellectual diversity espoused by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977), described in *The Catholic School.* Bryk et al. (1993) interpret *The Catholic School* thusly: "When combined with the ethos of 'freedom in what is doubtful and charity in everything' the spirit of *The Catholic School* invites not submission but dialogue and encounter" (p. 54), neither of which appears to be occurring.

To Become an Advocate for the Powerless

Historically, "Catholic schools admit and work with those the Bible calls the *anawim*, those who are voiceless, powerless, and unacceptable in society" (Buetow, 2002, p. 54). Bryk et al. (1993) confirm that "the social justice mission of Vatican II is tangibly manifested in the daily work of faculty and staff—caring for and educating some the least advantaged in society" (p. 340). Martin and Litton (2004) also acknowledge this role of Catholic schools:

> Catholic values are rooted in the Gospel values that Catholic educators have inherited from the Christian Scriptures. If we look to the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, we see that he embodied these values. Jesus was available to all, yet he took a special option for those who were marginalized in the society of his day—the tax collector, the prostitute, the leper, and women. (p. 22)

Sadly, gay and lesbian students in Catholic schools still report experiencing physical violence, verbal harassment, and a hostile climate, and, as one of the "unacceptable" groups in society (Maher, 2007, p. 461), they appear to be the very "voiceless and powerless" individuals that Catholic schools (Buetow, 2002, p. 54) are supposed to support. If Catholic schools are to be truly prepared to serve the "voiceless, powerless and unacceptable in society," then they must be prepared to serve gay and lesbian students. Unfortunately, as Maher (2007) discovered in interviews with gay and lesbian Catholic high school students, the schools do not appear to be responding:

> The subjects described being disconnected from their schools as institutions in a number of ways. Overwhelmingly, they stated that homosexuality was never or only very rarely mentioned in their high school curriculum. They saw many of the faculty as generally judgmental people and as people who would not (or did not) protect them from peer harassment. (p. 462)

To Be an Active Force for Good in the Community

The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) confirms that:

> The Catholic school community, therefore, is an irreplaceable source of service, not only to the pupils and its Other members, but also to society. Today especially one sees a world which clamors for solidarity and yet experiences the rise of new forms of individualism. Society can take note from the Catholic school that it is possible to create true communities out of a common effort for the common good. (para. 62)

Asserting this commitment to community within the context of Catholic high school programs, Bryk et al. (1993) note:

> Service programs thus represent another deliberate attempt by Catholic schools to act out their commitment to community. The programs often start with people voluntarily helping one another within the school. Such activity demonstrates the shared commitment to the forming of persons-in-community. Moving out beyond the confines of the school, these programs reach out to strangers in need in the larger community. (p. 139)

Often times community connections are intended to help the school and its students meet and engage people who are *different* or otherwise would never have the opportunity to meet if it not through the service of others (Bryk et al., 1993). In concert, there are examples of Catholic high schools reaching out to and connecting with the gay and lesbian community (Cepeda, 1998). In the case of the Archdiocese of Oakland, Teresa Cepeda (1998) writes, "With helping from a willing bishop, John Cummings of Oakland, Schexnayder and his group have made the diocese's nine Catholic high schools gay-friendly" (para. 4). Unfortunately, the encounters referred to in Cepeda's article could not be corroborated with any other evidence and, aside from this article, there are no other clear examples of Catholic elementary or high schools working within their communities to create a safer place for gay and lesbian students in California.

This is not to suggest that there have not been similar movements in other states as well. Sister Mary Ellen Gevelinger and Laurel Zimmerman (2006) write about their experiences organizing in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. With the help of the Schools Team they invited "a representative, counselor, or campus minister from each of our 11 high schools to join a Study Group on Pastoral Care and Sexual Identity" (para. 8). They met multiple times and held workshops to train teachers and administrators on how to build a *safe staff*. They also

created a mission statement that read: “The Pastoral Care and Sexual Identity Study Group in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis exists to support competent and compassionate pastoral care for all students, families, and staff in the Catholic schools communities” (para. 9). This, unfortunately, still seems to be an isolated development and there are no recent articles regarding the progress of this initiative.

According to Bryan (2013), there is evidence of community building in Catholic high schools in the Seattle, but not through the school:

> While in many cases students have already formed underground Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs in Catholic schools across the country, the ability to meet is compromised when students cannot talk about it aloud. (para. 2)

Eve Tushnet (2012) suggests that Catholic-school-sponsored GSAs can promote particular Catholic teachings and provide another way the Church can provide a pastoral response to gays and lesbians. Given a lack of examples of GSA practice within Catholic Education, the following excerpt seems pertinent to the discussion, in that it provides a sense of the dynamics of group dialogue and the conditions in which gay and lesbian students must negotiate conflicts between the dictates of their faith and their sexuality:

> Well, for one thing, its relationship to the adults around it would not need to be antagonistic. The school chaplain or a local priest could attend some of the meetings, and talk with the kids about any misconceptions they may have about the faith. They could be encouraged to see that all forms of love come with characteristic sufferings and lonelinesses: Every form of love has its own kind of cross. These priests and teachers could seek to learn from the kids, from their fears and questions and experiences, and

> encourage the kids to learn from the adults. (I do think straight adults often underestimate the loneliness—and fear of even greater future loneliness—of gay Christian teens.) The solidarity implied by the "alliance" name could become *more* vivid and realistic—and more Catholic. None of this is likely to happen in a hidden, covert group. (paras. 7-9)

Regrettably, whether one agrees with the particulars of Catholic teaching regarding homosexuality or not, it seems that school sponsored GSAs and the promise of dialogue will not be happening, at least in the near future.

If Catholic schools are unable to make the paradigm shift that would permit them to see that the need of gay and lesbian students to feel safe, accepted, and fully human is by far more important than the fear of appearing to condone homosexual activity, then what other options are available? Is it possible to look outside of Catholic school themes and appeal to other aspects of Catholic teaching?

Catholic Social Teaching and Social Justice

The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) recognizes the role of Catholic schools in promoting social justice as "motivated by the Christian ideal, the Catholic school is particularly sensitive to the call from every part of the world for a more just society, and it tries to make its own contribution towards it" (para. 58). Catholic schools, as a significant institution of the Catholic Church, are called not just to promote Catholic Social Justice, but to live it. This call to action forces Catholic Schools to accept a certain level of responsibility to respond to injustice and "does not stop at the courageous teaching of the demands of justice even in the face of local opposition, but tries to put these demands into practice in its own community in the daily

life of the school" (para. 58). However, it is significant to note here that Catholic Social Justice is distinct from Catholic Social Teaching. This distinction is important in forging a deeper dialogue between social teaching, social justice, and Catholic schools and their relationship to addressing the needs of gay and lesbian students.

Building Blocks of Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic Social Teaching is an area of study that is quite extensive. To begin an exploration of Catholic Social Teaching, William Byron's (2009) article, "Ten Building Blocks of Catholic Social Teaching," is most useful in that it divides themes of Catholic Social Teaching into 10 key principles. Byron's principles connect with the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, the primary document for Catholic Social Justice (along with its supporting documents), and emphasize links to Catholic education. The principles are: Human Dignity, Respect for Human Life, Association, Participation, Preferential Protection for the Poor and Vulnerable, Solidarity, Stewardship, Subsidiarity, Human Equality, and Common Good.

Of the 10 principles that Byron (2009) identifies, five of these appear to pertain to the issues of gay and lesbian students within the context of Catholic schools: The Principle of Human Dignity, The Principle of Participation, The Principle of Preferential Protection for the Poor and Vulnerable, The Principle of Solidarity, and The Principle of Human Equality. These are described in the following sections.

The principle of human dignity. The principle of human dignity "is the foundation of all the principles of [Catholic] social teaching" (USCCB, 1998, para. 20). It is based on the idea that all human beings are born with an "inherent dignity" (para. 20) that can never be taken

away. This principle is an important cornerstone in Catholic Social Justice and the pastoral response to gay and lesbian Catholics.

The principle of participation. Schools are fundamentally communities based around learning. The principle of participation supports the "Catholic tradition that teaches that human beings grow and achieve fulfillment in community" (USCCB, 1998, para. 21). Students who "withdraw from activities in school" (Martin & Litton, 2004, p. 74), often because of the stigma associated of their sexual orientation, will have a challenging time to grow and achieve fulfillment in our Catholic community.

The principle of preferential protection for the poor and vulnerable. This principle of preferential protection for the poor and vulnerable asserts that "people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable" (USCCB, 1998, para. 21). Students, particularly gay and lesbian youth, should be considered some of the most vulnerable, since their precarious status in society due to their sexual orientation and their age (Kozik-Rosabal, 2000). They deserve to participate in the world on their terms, rather than to have to hide or exist in isolation and shame.

The principle of solidarity. The principle of solidarity is inherently tied to Catholic Social Teaching, which "proclaims that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers" and that we must "practice the virtue of solidarity," which means "learning that loving our neighbor" is fully practicing the values of the Gospel (USCCB, 1998, para. 25).

The principle of human equality. To practice the principle of human equality does not mean that every member of the community must agree with each other, but rather we are expected to remember that "we are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic,

economic, and ideological differences" (USCCB, 1998, para. 25). There is an equality that comes from our membership in the larger human community.

From Catholic Social Teaching to Catholic Social Justice

In *Catholic Education and Social Justice,* James Heft (2009) describes the transition from social teaching to social justice in the following manner:

> As the body of the Church's social teachings developed since the late 19th century, it has set forth several fundamental positions: first, that the Church has something to say to the wider world about what is just and fair; second, that people of good will, not just Catholics, could benefit from these teachings; and third, that morality encompasses not just personal matters, but social matters as well. (p. 13)

In 1971, a refocusing of our understanding of social justice within the church occurred, based on the proclamation made by the World Synod of Bishops (1971) in *Justice in the World* regarding the Church's mission:

> The mission of preaching the Gospel dictates at the present time that we should dedicate ourselves to the liberation of people even in their present existence in this world. For unless the Christian message of love and justice shows its effectiveness through action in the cause of justice in the world, it will only with difficulty gain credibility with the people of our times. (para. 35)

The belief that social justice must be achieved through an active process represented a profound step forward in modern Church history. Donal Dorr (2012) identifies two major assertions made in *Justice in the World* (1971) as examples of the modern Church's move from social teaching to social justice:

> One crucially important element was its assertion that action on behalf of justice is a *constitutive* dimension of the preaching of the gospel. Another was its insistence that the Church must practice justice in its own life and structures. (p. 151)

The Church was no longer a passive lens through which to see the world, but rather an active voice with a responsibility to respond to injustice. The Church sees that "social justice is not limited with what individuals might do by themselves, but also with persons as they are affected, helped or hindered, by institutions" (Heft, 2009, p. 15). This becomes important as gay and lesbian students face challenges in Catholic schools. The notion that social justice in the Church is continually evolving, based on the "passing of time and the changing of social circumstances" and, consequently, "will require a constant updating of the reflections on the various issues raised here, in order to interpret the new signs of the times" (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, para. 9), seems to be an unusually timely point as the awareness of issues that pertain to gay and lesbian students continues to rise.

Using Byron's (2009) five principles of social teaching discussed previously, two useful themes emerge that can help connect the principles to the experiences of gays and lesbians. The first group of principles helps us to acknowledge the inherent right of gay and lesbian students to be treated with dignity and respect and worthy of support in their efforts as members of the Catholic Church. The second group of principles points to the responsibilities of the Church, Catholic schools, and society to work together to improve the conditions faced by gay and lesbian students in Catholic schools. This second group of principles is particularly important because, in the spirit of social justice, it strengthens the relationship between the Catholic schools, society, and gays and lesbians. Bryk et al. (1993) highlight this connection:

> A commitment to the pursuit of truth, human compassion, and social justice is essential to society's well-being. Fostering such a commitment makes serious demands on schools. If they are to teach children how they should live in common, they must themselves be communities. The school must be a microcosm of the society—not as it is, but as it should be. (p. 289)

Moreover, the Church asserts that "the dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God" (Catholic Church, 1994, para. 1,700). The source of the Church's understanding of human dignity comes from scripture, which states, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27). If all human beings have been made in the image of God, then they all essentially have the same *level* of dignity as one another. In the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (2004) supports the notion that "every person is created by God" and confirms the equality between every person by the assertion that every person is equally "loved and saved in Jesus Christ" (para. 35). Again, moving from a social teaching to social justice stance, every person should then be offered equally, the dignity that comes from being human. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Catholic Church, 1994), defines this responsibility of human beings to one another thusly:

> Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. Further, he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead. (para. 357)

For gays and lesbians, this idea of human dignity and equality is supported in a letter written by the USCCB (1997). In *Always Our Children,* the Bishops write,

> every person has an inherent dignity because he or she is created in God's image. A deep respect for the total person leads the Church to hold and teach that sexuality is a gift from God…. Respect for the God-given dignity of all persons means the recognition of human rights and responsibilities. (paras. 33, 38)

This social teaching is not incompatible with the core of Church teaching regarding gays and lesbians, as reflected in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Catholic Church, 1994), which states, "They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust, discrimination in their regard should be avoided " (para. 2,358).

Hence, the social justice idea that all gays and lesbians deserve respect and compassion because of their inherent dignity as human beings and should not be subject to discrimination should provide gays and lesbians equal status in the Church and the right to participate in both society and within Catholic schools. Again, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Catholic Church, 1994) connects these principles of human dignity, equality, and participation:

> Created in the image of the one God and equally endowed with rational souls, all men have the same nature and the same origin. Redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, all are called to participate in the same divine beatitude: all therefore enjoy an equal dignity. (para. 1,934)

Ultimately, gay and lesbians "endowed with rational souls" have the right for self-determination and as Pope Francis (as cited in Spadaro, 2013) states:

> I said that if a homosexual person is of good will and is in search of God, I am no one to judge. By saying this, I said what the catechism says. Religion has the right to express its opinion in the service of the people, but God in creation has set us free: it is not possible to interfere spiritually in the life of a person. (p. 24)

This social justice imperative, to support as a community the human dignity of every individual to fulfill his/her God-given potential, does not simply serve the interests of gays and lesbians; rather, it compels Christians to actively forge relationships between all human beings and thus serves a larger common good.

Social Justice in Support of the Common Good

One of the most important sources for the Church's understanding of the common good comes from Scripture, which argues that the only associations between human beings considered legitimate in the eyes of God are those that serve the common good:

> Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. (Romans 13:1-4)

This scripture passage suggests that whatever is considered a decision made for the common good comes from God. However, this does not suggest that wise decision making for the common good is easy or automatic. The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*

(Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004) underscores this sentiment when it states, "The social nature of human beings does not automatically lead to communion among persons" (para. 150).

The Church does not believe that solidarity and the common good are necessarily apparent or easy to establish. In fact, the Church suggests that there is resistance to the common good because the "consequences of sin, man, already born with a bent toward evil, finds there new inducements to sin" and it is only thorough "strenuous efforts and the assistance of grace" (Paul VI, 1965b, para. 25) that human beings can overcome their nature and work together for the betterment of every person. Therefore, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (2004) stresses that the common good is something for which all parts of society must strive:

> In fact, the common good depends on a healthy *social pluralism*. The different components of society are called to build a unified and harmonious whole, within which it is possible for each element to preserve and develop its own characteristics and autonomy. (para. 151)

The importance of working actively towards the common good is, in essence, a service for the betterment of society, but the benefits are not just limited to the social sphere; the common good can serve the individual as well. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Catholic Church, 1994) makes a clear connection between the common good and the socialization of the individual:

> This socialization also expresses the natural tendency for human beings to associate with one another for the sake of attaining objectives that exceed individual capacities. It

> develops the qualities of the person, especially the sense of initiative and responsibility, and helps guarantee rights. (para. 1,882)

The Church's support for the common good of society is unequivocal, and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1986) states clearly the connection between human dignity and the common good:

> Such treatment deserves condemnation from the Church's pastors wherever it occurs. It reveals a kind of disregard for others, which endangers the most fundamental principles of a healthy society. The intrinsic dignity of each person must always be respected in word, in action and in law. (para. 10)

Unfortunately, Martin and Litton (2004) remind us, once again, "In a just and caring environment, no individual must feel invisible and despised because of sexual identity;" yet, they often do feel a sense of "shame of ridicule and the fear of attack make school a fearful place for gay and lesbian students" (p. 76). In fact, current pedagogical space provided to gay and lesbians in Catholic schools prevents everyone, not just gays and lesbians, from experiencing the benefits of the common good. It is important to recall the words of Blumenfeld (2000), who asserts that homophobia "inhibits appreciation of other types of diversity, making it unsafe for everyone because each person has unique traits not considered mainstream or dominant. Therefore, we are all diminished when any one of us is demeaned" (p. 274).

This understanding of the common good, its link to the goals of the Church and society, and its relationship to the individual are not new to the Church. Wherever Catholic Social Teachings of human dignity, participation, protection of the poor and vulnerable, solidarity, and equality are not occurring, it becomes a social justice issue. The Church and her schools have an

active role in ensuring that Catholic Social Justice prevails, not just for the individuals suffering injustice, but also for the common good of all of society. With all of the reasons that should compel the Church to address human inequalities in the name of social justice, why do social injustices to gay and lesbian students continue to remain unaddressed? Can Catholic Social Justice still fulfill its purpose in regards to gay and lesbian students or is there a need to look beyond Catholic Social Justice for something new?

Beyond Catholic Social Justice

This chapter has sought to provide evidence that although Catholic Social Justice can advance the common good, it appears to have failed to embrace gay and lesbian students fully in Catholic schools. Maher and Sever (2007) assert:

> Although numerous schools are revising their curricula to educate students about diversity, prejudice, and oppression, many schools have been selective about which minorities are given attention, often neglecting to teach about sexual minorities and anti-gay prejudice and violence. With the exception of few schools, educators continue to teach only heterosexuality in health classes and refuse to discuss homosexuality in the curriculum. (p. 84)

This demonstrates that, although Catholic schools can be guided by principles based on Catholic Social Justice, they can still succumb to the same prevailing social forces that prevent it from pursuing the common good.

This finding should not be surprising. In *Gaudium et Spes*, Pope Paul VI (1965b) suggests that even in a religious context, circumstances of injustice can sometimes arise:

> Even in its religious dimensions, it cannot be denied that men are often diverted from doing good and spurred toward and by the social circumstances in which they live and are immersed from their birth. To be sure the disturbances which so frequently occur in the social order result in part from the natural tensions of economic, political and social forms. But at a deeper level they flow from man's pride and selfishness, which contaminate even the social sphere. (para. 25)

This is not to say that some believe that by holding the line, by denying resources to gay and lesbians, they are indeed serving the common good. In a letter entitled, *Some Considerations Concerning the Response to Legislative Proposals on the Non-Discrimination of Homosexual Persons,* the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1992) suggests that some circumstances of inequity against homosexuals can be justified in the name of the common good:

> "Sexual orientation" does not constitute a quality comparable to race, ethnic background, etc. in respect to non-discrimination. Unlike these, homosexual orientation is an objective disorder and evokes moral concern. There are areas in which it is not unjust discrimination to take sexual orientation into account, for example, in the placement of children for adoption or foster care, in employment of teachers or athletic coaches, and in military recruitment. Homosexual persons, as human persons, have the same rights as all persons including the right of not being treated in a manner, which offends their personal dignity. Among other rights, all persons have the right to work, to housing, etc. Nevertheless, these rights are not absolute. They can be legitimately limited for objectively disordered external conduct. This is sometimes not only licit but obligatory. This would obtain moreover not only in the case of culpable behavior but even in the case

> of actions of the physically or mentally ill. Thus it is accepted that the state may restrict the exercise of rights, for example, in the case of contagious or mentally ill persons, in order to protect the common good. (paras. 10-12)

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1992) continues by proposing to pastors that discrimination can be avoided if homosexuals remain silent about their orientation:

> The "sexual orientation" of a person is not comparable to race, sex, age, etc. also for another reason than that given above which warrants attention. An individual's sexual orientation is generally not known to others unless he publicly identifies himself as having this orientation or unless some overt behavior manifests it. As a rule, the majority of homosexually oriented persons who seek to lead chaste lives do not publicize their sexual orientation. Hence the problem of discrimination in terms of employment, housing, etc., does not usually arise. (para. 14)

The implications of these assertions are startling as evidence of violence, threats, and harassment facing gay and lesbian students mounts, combined with the unofficial silence on the part of the school to sanction a repressive and disabling environment for all students who are different or do not conform with socially prescribed gender stereotypes. Chris Mayo (2009) argues that if "schools do not address issues of concern to sexual minority students or to students at all curious about sexuality then sexual minority students are simultaneously damaged by official silence and harassing talk" (p. 263).

If gays and lesbians in Catholic schools still cannot seek help, be afforded support, or be provided an equitable educational experience unless they remain silent about their identity, they will remain a vulnerable population in Catholic schools. If Catholic schools do not feel

compelled to support this vulnerable population because of their own obligations as Catholic institutions, then they should respond, at the very least, in the name of social justice. If Catholic high schools cannot use their own understanding of social justice, then a move beyond Catholic Social Justice may be justified, because the "research shows that gay and lesbian adolescents need support from their schools" and that "Catholic schools are no exception" (Maher & Sever, 2007, p. 87).

CHAPTER THREE

QUEER THEOLOGY: SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS IN UNFAMILAR PLACES

As suggested in the previous chapter, Catholic Social Justice does not appear to sufficiently compel Catholic schools to address the needs of gay and lesbian students. This chapter explores the concept of Queer Theology as a possible bridge between Catholic Social Justice and Catholic teaching regarding sexuality. With that said, it is the hope of this study that once the Church looks at Queer Theology with "attentive study, active concern and honest, theologically well-balanced counsel" (Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, 1986, para. 2) it will find compelling evidence for Catholic schools to serve gay and lesbian children better.

Toward this end, as the chapter continues, Queer Theology will be used to explore the issue of sexuality in Catholic Tradition, and in so doing underscore the tension between Catholic teaching of sexuality and social justice, in an effort to highlight places where both can come to an agreement. Finally, using Queer Theology, a new theological conceptualization of *love* as a politically transgressive act that can be applied to Catholic teaching on sexuality and Catholic School practice is presented as the precise tool needed to open up a pedagogical space for gay and lesbian Catholic school students.

Appropriating "Queer"

The concept of Queer Theory is derived from a rich body of research that critically engages LGBT experiences. However, at the onset, it is important to make clear that this body of literature asserts itself to be distinct from gay and lesbian studies and does not make any claims of a unified theoretical formulation of queer thought. In *Cultural Theory: The Key*

Concepts, Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick (2007) confirm this relationship between early research and Queer Theory today:

> Since the early 1970s, there has been a steady and significant development in the study of gay, lesbian and bisexual experiences. While the term "queer theory" may usefully be taken to embrace that body of research it cannot be characterized by any simple methodological or disciplinary unities. (p. 277)

Thus, to understand the transition from gay and lesbian research to Queer Theory, it is essential that the term *queer* be fully understood within the context of the gay and lesbian community and in academic articulations.

Queer Theory began to emerge around the same time that the term queer was being reclaimed by the gay and lesbian community. Interestingly, this move to reclaim the word *queer* has not gone unnoticed in mainstream society. For example, Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines queer as "worthless, counterfeit," "questionable, suspicious," "eccentric, unconventional," and "often disparaging: homosexual" ("Queer," 2008, paras. 1-2). However, Merriam-Webster also notes that the word has recently been reclaimed by gays and lesbians:

> The older, strongly pejorative use has certainly not vanished, but a use by some gay people and some academics as a neutral or even positive term has established itself. This development is most noticeable in the adjective but is reflected in the corresponding noun as well. (para. 4)

Similarly, the Oxford English Dictionary defines queer as "strange; odd" or "informal, derogatory of a man homosexual" ("Queer,", 2012, para. 3); however, similar to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, it notes:

> The word queer was first used to mean "homosexual" in the early 20th century: it was originally, and usually still is, a deliberately offensive and aggressive term when used by heterosexual people. In recent years, however, gay people have taken the word queer and deliberately used it in place of gay or homosexual, in an attempt, by using the word positively, to deprive it of its negative power. This use of queer is now well-established and widely used among gay people (especially as an adjective or noun modifier, as in *queer rights*; *queer-bashing*) and at present exists alongside the other use. ("Queer," 2008, para. 5)

Very few terms in the English dictionary consistently require or receive additional notation as does the word queer, but the fact that these dictionaries are compelled to include these footnotes underscores how quickly the term has made a dramatic shift in meaning.

The politicization of the term queer coincides with the scholarly movement of Queer Theory that "seeks to place the question of sexuality as the centre of concern and as the key category through which other social, political and cultural phenomena are to be understood" (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2007, p. 277). As a consequence, the word queer has been reclaimed and "grounded in the academic discipline known as queer theory, which arose in the early 1990s" (Cheng, 2011, p. 6). The literature, however, is inconclusive about the origins of the word queer and the development of Queer Theory. That is, did it emerge from the civil rights movement of the late 1960s and 70s, or from the scholarly work on identity politics of the 1980 and 90s, or a combination of both? What is clear is that the terms queer and Queer Theory are now widely accepted as legitimate linguistic and conceptual appropriations by the gay and lesbian

community, and that the related fields of thought examine a whole range of topics, including but not limited to history, sociology, and philosophy (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2007).

Queer Social Theory

In *Theorising Heterosexuality,* Diane Richardson (1996) describes historical developments within Queer Theory. More specifically, social structures are at the center of her analysis. She explains that more recently there have been significant attempts by both feminists and proponents of queer theory to interrogate the way that heterosexuality encodes and structures everyday life, and to recognize the impact that ignoring or excluding heterosexuality has had on the development of social theory. Richardson rightly affirms here that central to the development of Queer Theory is a conceptual framework that has successfully anchored itself to an understanding of sexuality "as a meaningful activity or achievement that is continually undergoing negotiation and dissemination, rather than as a mere natural (let alone medical fact)" (p. 277).

Inherent in the idea that sexuality is continually undergoing negotiation are the terms we use to describe sexuality and common sexual practices. One of the reasons for appropriating the term queer within this context is the problematic implication of the traditional use of the terms *homosexual* and *homosexuality*. In fact, Cheng (2011) asserts that "Queer theory rejects the traditional view that categories of sexuality (that is, homosexual vs. heterosexual) and gender identity (that is, female vs. male) are 'natural,' absolute, essentialist, or fixed" (p. 7). Sam Killermann (2013) in *The Social Justice Advocate's Handbook: A Guide to Gender* uses a picture of a gingerbread man to describe the various characteristics that make up our identity (see Figure 3.1) challenging the natural, absolute, essentialist, or fixed constructs of the past. For

Killermann, as with other queer theorists, our growing understanding of human beings through the modern fields of biology, psychology, and social science demands that we renegotiate all of our previously assumed knowledge, up to this point, based on a false understanding of gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation.

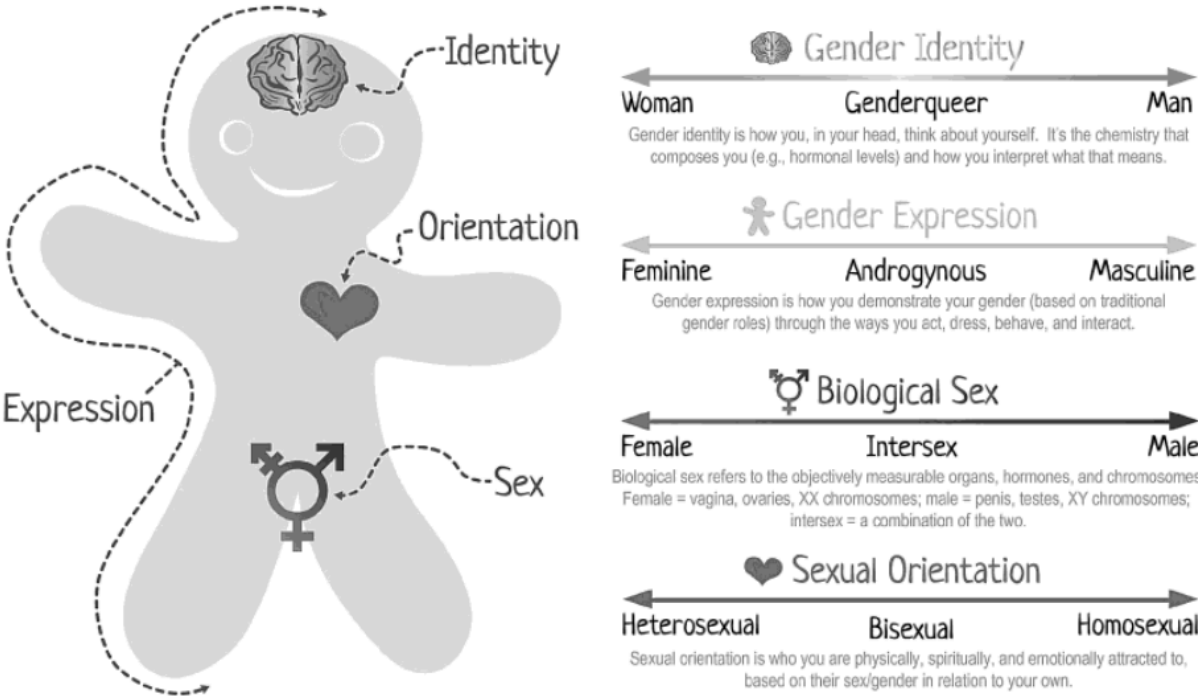

Figure 3.1. Drawing describing the relationship between gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation. Adapted from The *Social Justice Advocate's Handbook: A Guide to Gender* (p. 60), by Sam Killermann, 2013, Austin, TX: Impetus Books. Copyright 2013 by the author.

This approach from queer theory, of applying a modern lens on long held assumptions, appears to be consistent with the approaches some theologians of Queer Theology have made regarding modern scriptural interpretations, particularly those that require an understanding of

the socio-political context of the time period in which they were written. To demonstrate this point, it can be noted that the use of the term *homosexuality* did not emerge until 1892 (Halperin, 1989). In his book, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love,* David Halperin (1989) discusses the evolution of the term and its implications:

> It is not exactly my intention to argue that homosexuality, as we commonly understand it today, didn't exist before 1892. How, indeed, could it have failed to exist? The very word displays a most workmanlike and scientific indifference to cultural and environmental factors, looking only to the sexes of the persons engaged in the sexual act. Moreover, if homosexuality didn't exist before 1892, heterosexuality couldn't have existed either (it came into being, in fact, like Eve from Adam's rib, eight years later), and without heterosexuality, where would all of us be right now? (p. 17)

Halperin's reference to the story in Genesis and the creation of woman from man cannot be ignored here. Whether he was being ironic or simply employing simile, he suggests that heterosexuality and homosexuality are neither mutually exclusive nor dictated by God. To him they are social constructs that serve a very specific need to categorize and not the theological purpose for which they have been appropriated. Halperin asserts that the terms are dialectical and, thus, need each other in order to exist; their sole purpose was to define human beings by linking their identity to their sexual practices. The term does precisely what Catholic schools are struggling to undo. As discussed earlier, Catholic schools struggle to respond to gays and lesbians students because they are incapable of separating their support for the person without appearing to validate the sexual activity they have been told not to condone.

This interpretation does not fault Catholic high schools. In his writings, Simon LeVay (1997) associates traditional notions of homosexual and heterosexual with social constructivism:

> The categories of "homosexual" and "heterosexual" have emerged from the social, political, and scientific debate about sexuality that has taken place over the past century or so, and that these categories have then been applied as labels to unsuspecting citizens, in effect *making* them homosexual or heterosexual. This is "social constructivism," a school of thought in which concepts like "representation," "significance," "discourse," and "power" are more important than the details of individual development. (pp. 55-56)

This is not to say, however, that these labels have not served an important purpose. Cheng (2011) concedes the practicalities of the term homosexual: "Although in some ways it may be helpful for a minority group (such as "homosexuals") to identify itself in essential terms for purposes of achieving greater political or legal power" (p. 7).

In *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction,* Michel Foucault (1990) also asserts that the term provides an opportunity for homosexuals to respond as a group. He argues that the term homosexuality:

> Made possible the formation of a "reverse" discourse; homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or "naturality" be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified. (p. 101)

Nevertheless, Foucault also recognizes a problem with the term, particularly as it was used in the 19th century:

> There is no question that the appearance in nineteenth-century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty, and "psychic hermaphrodism" made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of "perversity." (p. 101)

Cheng (2011) agrees that "ultimately such classifications are problematic because, as Foucault points out such classifications are actually a means by which society circumscribes and exercise power and control over the classified group" (p. 7).

Foucault's (1990) writings not only reveal how the term was used to control the classified group, but also challenge the notion that any type of discourse is possible contending within the asymmetrical power relations that currently exist between homosexuals and heterosexuals:

> There is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite it, another discourse that runs counter to it. Discourse are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourse within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy. We must not expect the discourse on sex to tell us, above all, what strategy they derive from, or what moral divisions they accompany, or what ideology—dominant or dominated—they represent. (pp. 101-102)

Foucault posits two questions that one must ask in order to begin to understand the underlying moral or ideological premise hidden within a discourse. The first is the "tactical productivity (what reciprocal effects of power and knowledge they ensure)," and the second is "their strategical integration (what conjunction and what force relationship make their utilization necessary in a given episode of the various confrontations that occur)" (p. 102).

Grounded in Foucault's (1990) inquiry on *discourse* of power or hidden curriculum (Darder, 2012), the following critical questions about the relationship of the Church to the gay and lesbian community emerge: What constitutes the hegemonic discourse of the Church and what type of power and knowledge does this discourse ascribe the dominant group? What strategic value does the dominant view of sexuality have for the Church, and what is the rationale for utilizing doctrine and scripture to protect this view?

The literature presented in the next sections will address these questions—questions that are among the many fundamental ones that Queer Theology seeks to answer. Toward this end, it is useful to begin with a more detailed account of the intellectual movements that led to the development of Queer Theology.

Queer Theory and the Emergence of Queer Theology

Two separate, but equally important, theoretical traditions were evolving prior to the formulation of a Queer Theology. One of those traditions evolved from Queer Theory, which attempts to "study both the active embracing and articulation of alternative experiences and lifestyles, and their repression, marginalization and suppression" (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2007, pp. 277-278). Similarly, Queer Theology attempts to study the context of religion and spirituality in an effort to unveil "the otherwise concealed and denied presence of gay and lesbian protagonist and activities" (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2007, p. 278), but within the narrative of the Church.

Queer Theology questions modern notions of "sexuality," asserting that they are "ultimately social constructions" (Cheng, 2011, p. 7) and, thus, challenging the belief that the understanding of sexuality is timeless and that the ancient texts regarding sexuality can be understood easily in modern terms.. Queer Theology asks "fundamental questions about the

political nature and even coherence of the supposedly normal and dominant categories of heterosexuality" (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2007, p. 278).

The second discourse arose from gay and lesbian theologians who were not necessarily questioning how terms or concepts have been appropriated, but rather how they have been used by authority. In *Gay and Lesbian Theologies: Repetitions with Critical Difference,* Elizabeth Stuart (2003) discusses how important this aspect of the inquiry is for gay and lesbian theologians:

> Along with all other liberal theologians to downplay and be suspicious of the authority of external authorities such as scripture, tradition and ecclesiastical hierarchies. Tradition along with all other external authority is placed in the dock under the scrutiny and judgment of experience. (p. 24)

The scholarship in Queer Theology emerged in the early 1990s on the heels of Queer Theory, which began to flourish in the late 1980s. Mandy Merk (2005) explains that "Queer theory, like so much of twentieth-century sexual politics was first articulated in the United States of America. Moreover, it was developed at a clearly identifiable period, the late 1980s" (p. 187). Hence, the seminal works of Queer Theory in the early 1990s can shed light on the later development of Queer Theology.

One of the first and most renowned scholars in the field of Queer Theory is Judith Butler (2007), whose book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,* first published in 1990, "sought to counter those views that made presumptions about the limits and propriety of gender and restricted the meaning of gender to received notions of masculinity and femininity" (Butler, 2007, p. viii). Butler asserts that "sanctions and taboos" regulate and determine

"masculine and feminine identification" and sexuality (p. 85). Reminiscent of Foucault's discourse on power, she goes on to expose a hegemonic institutional structure that systematically enforces both gender identity and heterosexuality:

> This prohibition sanctions and regulate discrete gendered identity and the law of heterosexual desire. The resolution of the Oedipal complex, affects gender identification through not only the incest taboo, but, prior to that, the taboo against homosexuality. Indeed, the stricter and more stable the gender affinity, the less resolved the original loss, so that rigid gender boundaries inevitable work to conceal the loss of an original love that, unacknowledged, fails to be resolved. (p. 86)

Mandy Merk (2005) describes Butler's (2007) work as an "extraordinary influential combination of Foucauldian theory of productivity of prohibition with a psychoanalytic positing of sexual difference as signification to develop a performative theory of gender" (p. 187). In light with this viewpoint, Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick (2007) call for problematizing and complicating stereotypical conceptualizations of gender:

> The concept of "gender" is typically placed in opposition to the concept of "sex". While our sex (female/male) is a matter of biology, our gender (feminine/masculine) is a matter of culture. Gender may therefore be taken to refer to learned patterns of behavior and action, as opposed to that which is biologically determined. Crucially, biology need not be assumed to determine gender. This is to suggest, while what makes a person male or female is universal and grounded in laws of nature, the precise ways in which women express their femininity and men express their masculinity will vary from culture to culture. Thus, qualities that are stereotypically attributed to women and men in

> contemporary Western culture (such as greater emotional expression in women; greater tendencies to violence and aggression in men) are seen as gender, which entails that they could be changed. The literature of cultural anthropology gives many examples of difference expressions of gender in non-Western societies. (p. 139)

Edgar and Sedgwick also note the reductive implications of gender: "The reduction of gender to sex (which would be to see gender differences as themselves biologically determined) may be understood as a key move in the ideological justification of patriarchy" (p. 139).

However, sociology and philosophy are not the only fields touched by Queer theorists (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2007). Queer Theory entered the field of music studies in 1994, when the book *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* was first published. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary Thomas (1994) speak thusly to the purpose of their book:

> As a group of mostly gay and lesbian scholars whose sexual preferences and acts (or support for diversity in such matters) gives us a special relation to and perspective on our society, the contributors to this book choose to incorporate ourselves as subjects in our work, including those parts of ourselves that been kept invisible and through unacceptable and unspeakable, both by ourselves and others. To bring new insights and intuitions to the study of music, we have needed to unearth our personal, private, and pleasurable relations with the musical and sexual in order to "queer" our own business with music. (p. viii)

Two other examples come from the field of cultural studies. In Alexander Doty's (1993) *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture,* his approach to culture studies can be best illustrated through the manner in which the book is organized:

> Taken together, the sections of this book suggest that queerness of mass culture develops in three areas: (1) influences during the production of texts; (2) historically specific cultural readings and uses of text by self-identified gays, lesbians, bisexuals, queers; and (3) adopting reception positions that can be considered "queer" in some way, regardless of a person's declared sexual and gender allegiances. (p. xi)

In their 1995 anthology, *Out in Culture: Gay, Lesbian and Queer Essays on Popular Culture,* Corey Creekmur and Alexander Doty (1995a) describe this new queer movement:

> For many members of a generation coming to political consciousness haunted by AIDS but collectively strengthened by AIDS activism, the term queer has become an attractive and oppositional self-label that acknowledges a new cultural context for politics, criticism, reception-consumption, and production. Queer writers not only resist mainstream definitions of sexuality and identity but put themselves in positions to question gay and lesbian orthodoxies that, for example, continue to marginalize black gay men or Chicana lesbians, or that isolate gay men from lesbians, or that have strict and narrow political positions on controversial issues. (p. 6)

These examples are intended to highlight the breadth of work queer theorists have undertaken. As mentioned earlier, Queer Theory is a composite of theories and theorists, Queer Theology being one such theory. In her discussion of Queer Theory, Suzanna Danuta Walters (1996) describes the scholarship in the early 1990s and attempts to explain how Queer Theory has expanded in scope:

> Queer theory in the academy is curiously placed. Clearly, most queer theory takes place in the context of women's studies and/or lesbian and gay studies, even as it attempts to

> move outside those parameters. And most queer theorists, I have no doubt, themselves embrace (albeit uneasily) the identity "gay." Nevertheless, there is a disturbing trend in which queer theory has become disassociated from gay identity. Indeed, this disassociation is often celebrated as the necessary adjunct to the disassociation of gender and sexuality. One of the interesting aspects of this phenomenon of queer theory in the academy is that you do not have to be gay to do it; in fact it is much better if you are not. Queer (as opposed to gay or lesbian) lets you off the identity hook the way gender studies has vis-à-vis women's studies, while cashing in on the trendiness of postmodernism. (p. 9)

As noted earlier, both Queer Theory and Queer Theology had much earlier roots. Queer Theology, many scholars agree, arrived on the scene in the early 1990s as part of a larger movement reflected in Queer Theory (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2007). The scholarship in Queer Theory may have helped to legitimate many of the formulations of Queer Theology, but this does not mean that there was not already a distinctive body of research that was already contributing to discourses of gay and lesbian spirituality. Gay and lesbian studies, specifically on spirituality, were already "suspicious of the authority of external authorities such as scripture, tradition and ecclesiastical hierarchies" (Stuart, 2003, p. 24), the difference being that it was not necessarily anchored to the same radical principles or political agenda. This, however, does not negate its importance; without the prerequisite foundational work of gay and lesbian theologians, Queer Theology and the future work of queer theologians would not have been possible.

In 1976, John McNeill published *The Church and the Homosexual*. McNeill, a Jesuit priest, "had published a number of articles on homosexuality and Catholicism going back as far

as 1970, but this book led to his silencing by the Vatican and his ultimate dismissal from the Jesuits" (Cheng, 2011, p. 29). Elizabeth Stuart (2003) notes, "In McNeill's theology a despised and beleaguered group of people become the bearers of the gospel to their fellow Christians" (p. 24). His work was critical in what would become Queer Theory because he directed "lesbian and gay readers to a sacred space outside the realm of Vatican authority, a space where it is possible for the lesbian and gay person to hear the voice of God speaking directly to them" (pp. 23-24). Again, this and his other works appeared to be contrary to Church teaching, but it did not prevent McNeill (1993) from advocating the need for a reappraisal of the Church's moral theological tradition:

> What is the need of a reappraisal of the position of traditional moral theology on the question of homosexuality within the Roman Catholic community at this time? That need has become evident in recent years to many Roman Catholic priests and laypersons engaged in pastoral counseling. They have become progressively aware that the two exclusive aims of traditional pastoral counseling—conversion to heterosexual orientation or total abstinence from all sexual expression—are no longer practical pastoral aims in a majority of the cases with which they deal. (p. 1)

He even goes so far as to suggest that that gays and lesbians "ironically demonstrate themselves to have a faith much more mature and healthy than many of their fellow Christians" (Stuart, 2003, p. 24). McNeill's work was important not only in content, but also in its ability to reveal the extent the Church was willing to engage in dialogue as an institution of power:

> McNeill was overly optimistic, and, in 1977, the Vatican ordered him into silence on the topic of homosexuality, an order he followed for almost a decade. Under Pope John Paul

> II, the institutional Church employed an increasingly strident voice in addressing homosexuality. In 1986 and again in 1992, the Vatican issued letters to bishops instructing them about "pastoral" approaches to Catholic homosexuals. A 1986 Halloween letter, issued by Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, reiterated the definition of homosexuality as objectively disordered and oriented toward evil. It suggested that homosexuals seeking civil rights afforded to heterosexuals invited violence against them. When Rev. John J, McNeill broke his Vatican-imposed silence to protest the 1986 letter, he was dismissed from the priesthood. The 1992 Vatican letter asserted that it was neither unjust nor undesirable to discriminate against homosexuals in certain employment situations like teaching, housing, adoption, and service in the military. (Frawley-O'Dea, 2007, p. 110)

McNeill's book was provocative for its time because he gave gays and lesbians "space" and permitted them to trust "their experiences" (Stuart, 2003, p. 24). However, his work does not transcend the boundary from gay liberation to Queer Theology because, according to Stuart, McNeill's perspective:

> Represents the later stages of the gay liberationist movement when much of the original radical sexual agenda had been jettisoned in favor of a more reforming approach based upon an ethnic-minority model of identity. This ethnic-minority model comes out in McNeill's constructions of the lesbian and gay community as a community in exile, not quite belonging to the world around them. Nevertheless the exile is necessary in order to preserve identity and the virtues and gifts that accrue to such an identity. (p. 24).

The Vatican's censure and condemnation of McNeill did not encourage dialogue between the official views of the Church and the theologians, scholars, and activists who shared in McNeill's belief "that the Church was read to acknowledge that the evidence coming from the fields of scriptural studies, history, psychology, sociology, and moral theology, seriously challenged, every premise on which the traditional teaching was based" (Frawley-O'Dea, 2007, p. 110). McNeill's book and subsequent censure only accelerated the momentum that was building in the academy to look at sexuality and spirituality in a new way, in 1978, Letha Dawson Scanzoni and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott (1994) wrote *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor? A Positive Christian Response*. In the book's preface, Scanzoni and Mollenkott explain succinctly the sustaining goal of the original 1978 edition and the more recent edition, published in 1994:

> As with the first edition, we hope that individuals, church study groups, and students in institutions of higher learning will find this book helpful in dealing with the inevitable questions surrounding a subject so misunderstood and, consequently, so often perceived as threatening. (p. vi)

The book is organized into sections that include science, the bible, and American culture. Ultimately, Scanzoni and Mollenkott propose a "Homosexual Christian Ethic," where "a shift from one model of viewing a theologically based ideal for human expression to another model in which there is no less a desire to know what is pleasing to God and to live accordingly" (p. 141). While Scanzoni and Mollenkott do present reinterpretations of biblical passages and question authority, they do not necessarily question the nature of sexual identity, the origin, or the purpose and structure of institutions or the politics/power struggles that are inherent to a queer theological

analysis. The book, however, does "challenge Christians to accept homosexuals as their neighbors, just as Jesus had accepted the Samaritans, who were outcasts in their day" (Cheng, 2011, p. 29). *The Church and the Homosexual* and *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor? A Positive Christian Response* represents early examples of gays and lesbians theorizing spirituality. However, the 1990s marked the emergence of a scholarship in the field that was dramatically different from past articulations of gay and lesbian questions within theology.

Queer Theology

As posited previously, the scholarship in Queer Theology began to erupt in the 1990s. Christ and his inherently political nature, along with the four major sources of Queer Theology—scripture, tradition, reason, and experience—informed the early studies in the field (Cheng, 2011). Whether early efforts to politicize gay and lesbian theology was a reflection of a larger movement in Queer Theory or the unavoidable evolution of gay and lesbian spirituality or a combination of both is not clear. Whatever the case, the fact that "Queer theology sometimes borrows terminology and methodological background from queer theory, resisting and interrogating heteronormativity (that is, the notion that heterosexuality is the best or only way for every individual and for societies) in specifically theological terms" (Cornwall, 2011, para. 5) suggests that the literature in Queer Theory had an impact on the gay and lesbian spirituality of the early 1990s.

Cheng (2011) cites Robert Williams's *Just as I Am: A Practical Guide to Being Out, Proud, and Christian*, written in 1992, as an example of "the gay liberation strand of theology" (p. 31) emerging in the 1990s. Cheng points to Williams's assertion that "only lesbians and gays can determine for themselves what constitutes sin and morality" and that "any straight cleric's

attempt to define sin for gays and lesbians is patriarchal and condescending and ultimately blasphemy" (p. 31). Another similar example of the early 1990s literature that would mark a change in gay and lesbian writing about theology is found in Robert Shore-Goss' (1993) *Queering Christ: Beyond Jesus Acted Up.* Cheng (2011) describes this work as a "fundamentally transgressive enterprise," where Shore-Goss "argued that transgression should be seen as a central metaphor for queer theologies" (pp. 5-6). Cheng (2011) engages critically with the radical intent of Shore-Goss' queer theological position when he writes: "For Shore-Goss, the term 'queer' is used to describe an action that 'turns upside down, inside out' that which is seen as normative, including 'heteronormative theologies'" (p. 6).

In 1995, Richard Cleaver writes about going beyond the assimilation approach of early literature in *Know My Name: A Gay Liberation Theology*:

> We waste out time trying to become respectable enough to be accepted by the majority, as assimilationists do today. Our tasks are harder: analysis and strategy, what nowadays is being called "queer theory." The first and central step is the process we call "coming out." (p. 42)

Cleaver rejects earlier attempts at trying to assimilate or be accepted by the majority, and instead suggests the first step in a more radical stance requires academics and theologians to *come out* and engage the literature more intensely, rejecting many of what he would consider fallacious assumptions of the past. This move represents a significant departure from previous gay and lesbian theologians who advocated an analysis of scripture that could accommodate gays and lesbians *within* a thoroughly heterosexual interpretation of the Bible.

In Jay Michaelson's (2011) book, *God vs. Gay? The Religious Case for Equality,* he explicitly credits this *coming out* as the basis for his book:

> I want to be clear about what this book is, and what it is not. It is a religious case, not a political one. It is affirmative, not negative. It is neither biblical apologetics nor an apology for acceptability of sexual diversity. And it embraces hard truths, not easy answers. (p. xvii)

Despite his effort to define his book as "a religious case, not a political one," there is no question that Michaelson's scholarship, by its very nature, is an example of the politicized discourse that gay and lesbian theology has embraced more forcefully in recent years. Michaelson is just another example of the maturation of gay and lesbian studies into Queer Theology. In fact, Michaelson asserts boldly, "God versus Gay isn't just a false dichotomy. It's a rebellion against the image of God itself" (p. xv).

In *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics,* a Catholic nun, Margaret Farley (2006), a member of the Sisters of Mercy religious order and professor *emerita* of Yale Divinity School, draws on a number of theorists who question traditional concepts of desire, gender, and sexuality, and the relationship of these concepts to Western thought and colonialism. Farley insists that she has "taken seriously the role of social and cultural construction in all of our understandings of body, gender, and sexuality" (p. xii). Even then, Farley's (2006) expressed goal is not to question everything, but she remains adamant in her view of sexuality and the need for change within the Church:

> The possibilities for human flourishing in general are nurtured or hindered by the ways in which we live our sexual lives. Everyone is aware of not only the fulfillment and joy

> promised through human sexuality, but the harm, violence, and stigma that unjust actions, relationships, and attitudes bring to our sexual selves. Perhaps never before have words of healing and hope been so needed, especially from the churches. This book offers a challenge in this regard, even as it attempts to provide ways of thinking about sex and sexuality that will be useful for individuals and social institutions. (p. xi)

The response to Farley's book by Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (2012) in their letter entitled the *Notification on the Book Just Love: A Framework For Christian Sexual Ethics by Sr. Margaret A. Farley, R.S.M.* only challenges Michaelson's insistence that God versus gay is a false dichotomy:

> Having completed an initial examination of the book *Just Love. A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2006) by Sr. Margaret A. Farley, R.S.M., the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith wrote to the author on March 29, 2010, through the good offices of Sr. Mary Waskowiak—the then President of the *Sisters of Mercy of the Americas*—enclosing a preliminary evaluation of the book and indicating the doctrinal problems present in the text. The response of Sr. Farley, dated October 28, 2010, did not clarify these problems in a satisfactory manner. Because the matter concerned doctrinal errors present in a book whose publication has been a cause of confusion among the faithful, the Congregation decided to undertake an examination following the procedure for "*Examination in cases of urgency*" contained in the Congregation's *Regulations for Doctrinal Examinations* (cf. Chap. IV, art. 23-27). Following an evaluation by a Commission of experts (cf. art. 24), the *Ordinary Session* of the Congregation confirmed on June 8, 2011, that the above-mentioned book contained

> erroneous propositions, the dissemination of which risks grave harm to the faithful. On July 5, 2011, a letter was sent to Sr. Waskowiak containing a list of these erroneous propositions and asking her to invite Sr. Farley to correct the unacceptable theses contained in her book (cf. art. 25-26). On October 3, 2011, Sr. Patricia McDermott, who in the meantime had succeeded Sr. Mary Waskowiak as President of the *Sisters of Mercy of the Americas*, forwarded to the Congregation—in accordance with art. 27 of the above cited *Regulations*—the response of Sr. Farley, together with her own opinion and that of Sr. Waskowiak. This response, having been examined by the Commission of experts, was submitted to the *Ordinary Session* for judgment on December 14, 2011. On this occasion, the Members of the Congregation, considering that Sr. Farley's response did not adequately clarify the grave problems contained in her book, decided to proceed with the publication of this Notification. (paras. 1-3)

The reason the introduction to this letter is cited here in its totality is to underscore the realities of the Church and its desire to correct academic work in the name of ensuring an understanding of an evolving field of science and theory remains true to the timeless and unchanging tradition of the Church. This quotation was also provided to emphasize the great risks to which theologians and concerned Catholics go to, in order to create spaces for important discussions that have the potential to help the Church fulfill its pastoral obligations. To some this letter and its subsequent 13 additional paragraphs only serve as evidence of an institutional Church so focused on suppressing reasoned conversations about theology that it has forgotten its responsibility to seek the truth with the people of God, encourage the fundamental teachings of Christ, and act as the voice for the marginalized and oppressed. There are scholars who would argue that if the

teachings of the Church are in fact sound, then the scholarly examinations of Church teaching should pose no threat—rather, it should arrive at the same invariable truths. In the same way, other scholars feel that such a debate will only fuel doubts about the teaching, cause confusion among the faithful, or lend too much credibility to unproven scholarship.

Queer Theology in the Catholic Church

Through Queer Theology, scholars can examine Church teaching and simultaneously seek out effective avenues by which the Church can serve gays and lesbians. Stephen Lovatt (2012), a Catholic theologian, considers both of these aims attainable in his book, *Faithful to the Truth: How to be an Orthodox Gay Catholic*:

> Though sex may not be objectively important in the scale of things, the Vatican has chosen to account it so. Rome has become obsessed with sex and gender and it now seems that this the battle ground upon which the Curia has chosen to fight a last stand against the forces of theological Modernity and secular post-modernity. It is generally assumed by commentators that the sides are well drawn up in this conflict and that the alliances are clear. In the one camp are the Pope and Curia, Social Conservatism, Sexual Repression, Bigotry, Church Tradition and Orthodoxy; while in the other are Secularism, Progressivism, Social Diversity, Reason, Dissent and Enlightenment. One aim of this book is to show that this is not the case: that Orthodoxy is not the same thing as Conservatism, or of servile obedience to the decrees of any particular pope; that the repressive policies of the modern Magisterium are not supported by a careful, dispassionate and open-hearted reading of the Church's Tradition and that it is not necessary to adopt either heretical opinions or even a progressivist mentality in order to

> defend "homosexuals" against the charge of gross immorality which is typically laid against them. (pp. 7-8)

Lovatt's (2012) call for a "careful, dispassionate and open-hearted reading of the Church's Tradition" is a critical step in understanding how Queer Theology can access Catholic teaching. For this discussion, we can draw on Cheng's (2011) *An Introduction to Queer Theology: Radical Love*:

> Queer theology draws upon at least four sources: (1) scripture, (2) tradition, (3) reason, and (4) experience. This multiplicity of sources is important because the Bible on the one hand, theology has never been simply about reading the Bible literally (that is, scripture) not simply about what the church authorities have taught (that is, tradition). On the other hand, theology has never been simply a matter of drawing upon philosophy (that is, reason) nor has it simply been equated with the human experience of the divine (that is, experience). Rather theology is a synthesis of all four sources, and each of these sources acts as a "check and balance" for the other three. Of course, different traditions give different weight for each of these sources. For example, evangelical Protestants rely heavily upon scripture, Roman Catholics rely heavily upon tradition, Anglicans rely heavily upon reason, and progressive Protestants rely heavily upon experience. (p. 11)

Cheng's assertion that "Roman Catholics rely heavily upon tradition" is a fairly accurate one. Moreover, since the research here is explicitly Catholic, I will focus on the two major sources of Queer Theology at the core of Catholic Church teaching, namely Scripture and Tradition, and how through such an analysis, we might enhance the emancipatory potential of the Church to serve the spiritual and communitarian needs of gays and lesbians.

Scripture and Tradition

The Church considers scripture and tradition to be interconnected. In *Dei Verbum,* Pope Paul VI (1965c) asserts, "There exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end" (para. 9). Accordingly, the Catholic Church considers these two sources almost one in the same. In *Dei Verbum,* Pope Paul VI (1965c) declares:

> For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. (para. 9)

If there is any distinction between Scripture and Tradition, it would not be found in *Dei Verbum* (Pope Paul VI, 1965c). Cheng's (2011) earlier assertion that "Roman Catholics rely heavily upon tradition" (p. 11) is fairly accurate, but the Catholic Church does not simply rely on tradition without referencing scripture. To the Church both are equally important: "both Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence" (Paul VI, 1965c, para. 9). Within, *Dei Verbum* cites St. Ambrose, a fourth century Bishop of Milan and Doctor of the Church, as the source of this teaching. In his work, entitled *On the Duties of the Clergy* or *On the Duties of Ministers Book One,* St. Ambrose

(n.d./1896) calls upon the clergy to enhance their relationship with Scripture in their lives of service:

> Why do you not spend the time which you have free from your duties in the church in reading? Why do you not go back again to see Christ? Why do you not address Him, and hear His voice? We address Him when we pray, we hear Him when we read the sacred oracles of God. What have we to do with strange houses? There is one house which holds all. They who need us can come to us. What have we to do with tales and fables? An office to minister at the altar of Christ is what we have received; no duty to make ourselves agreeable to men has been laid upon us. (para. 88)

In turn, The Catholic Church (1994), citing *Dei Verbum*, defines Tradition as "this living transmission, accomplished in the Holy Spirit, is called Tradition, since it is distinct from Sacred Scripture, though closely connected to it" (para. 78). The living Tradition is the "tradition which comes from the Apostles develop in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit" (Paul VI, 1965c, para. 8), according to the teachings of St. Augustine, St. Thomas, the Council of Trent, Scriptural Canons, and two different papal encyclicals. *Dei Verbum* continues:

> The Church, in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes. The words of the holy fathers witness to the presence of this living tradition, whose wealth is poured into the practice and life of the believing and praying Church. Through the same tradition the Church's full canon of the sacred books is known, and the sacred writings themselves are more profoundly understood and unceasingly made active in her; and thus God, who spoke of old, uninterruptedly converses with the bride of His beloved Son; and the Holy Spirit, through

> whom the living voice of the Gospel resounds in the Church, and through her, in the world, leads unto all truth those who believe and makes the word of Christ dwell abundantly in them. (Paul VI, 1965c, para. 8)

Dei Verbum also references Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

Dei Verbum makes it clear that whatever form Tradition takes, two things must be kept in mind: first, that it comes with the full weight of scripture, and second, that it comes from the authority of the Church:

> Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church. Holding fast to this deposit the entire holy people united with their shepherds remain always steadfast in the teaching of the Apostles, in the common life, in the breaking of the bread and in prayers, so that holding to, practicing and professing the heritage of the faith, it becomes on the part of the bishops and faithful a single common effort. (Paul VI, 1965c, para. 10)

The issue here is what is considered part of Tradition. The Church using its authority to teach determines what is and is not considered to be Tradition. In other words, what comes first, the tradition that gives the Church the authority or the authority of the Church to determine what is tradition?

This phenomenon of *which came first* can become a self-replicating cycle of which Marvin M. Ellison (1996) asserts, "Many people uncritically pass on received tradition as if it represented an unassailable and permanently valuable moral truth. However, when people rely

exclusively on the past to discern present realities, dehumanizing cultural patterns often go unnoticed and unchallenged" (p. 5).

Lovatt (2012) appears to support Ellison when he problematizes this connection between Tradition and Church Teaching further, particularly with respect to sexuality:

> There is no clear-cut distinction between the official teaching of the Church and Tradition. Indeed, official teaching is often the best witness to the content of Tradition; but in our present field this is sadly not the case. It is apparent, on the most cursory investigation that the official teaching on the subject of "Sexuality" (as opposed to marriage and procreation) has a definite beginning in the Twentieth Century. (p. 128)

Furthermore, Lovatt makes two crucial points here. First, he acknowledges the problem posed by Queer Theory, which suggests that our contemporary understanding of sexuality, particularly notions of homosexuality and heterosexuality, have not only been constructed recently, but also constructed separate from early Church Teaching, Tradition, or ancient Scripture (LeVay, 1997). Second, as mentioned previously, if the Church teaches that there is no distinction between Scripture and Tradition (Paul VI, 1965c), yet undertakes the responsibility of determining Tradition through Church Teaching, then it has essentially equated Church Teaching, replete with its outmoded understanding of sexuality, with Scripture (Lovatt, 2012).

When Church Teaching is equated with Scripture, Church teaching takes on a whole new level of significance, because Scripture is considered to be the Word of God; in so doing, the Church affirms potentially incorrect teachings as though they are the Word of God. This is not to suggest the teachings, particularly on sexuality, are incorrect. Rather, I am suggesting that because Church teachings have been elevated to such a sacrosanct status typically only afforded

to the Word of God, critical analysis of the historical and power relations that inform their production is all but shut down as a consequence (Ellison, 1996).

This discussion is not meant to undermine the role and authority of the Church, but rather to complicate the relationship of human involvement in the execution of spiritual traditions and interpretations of a changing world on behalf of the Church. The Church's authority is considered to be anchored in Scripture, as understood from the following passage from the book of Matthew:

> Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:17-19)

The Church considers Peter the first Pope of the Church, and, therefore, through the concept of Apostolic succession, the authority given to Peter is also given to the current Church. (Catholic Church, 1994). However, Lovatt (2012) challenges the assumption that Sacred Tradition and the Magisterium, the teaching authority of the Church, are one:

> Sacred Tradition is not to be equated with the Magisterium. Neither does the Magisterium have any authority over the Word of God. The Gospel rules the Church, not vice versa. The Magisterium can never proclaim anything that is new, unknown or fundamentally surprising to the Church. (pp. 127-128)

To some, this also includes the current understanding of homosexuality and the belief that the current teachings of the Catholic Church are not new and only draw from a deep and immutable truth about the nature of God. In the next section, the study will theoretically attempt to access another form of tradition, Queer tradition, and use that as a lens from which to look at sexuality. The study will seek out opportunities where Catholic and Queer tradition can dialogue, and thereby support the argument for a new look at Church teaching on sexuality that could potentially support a new pastoral response aligned with Church teaching, which could ultimately lead to more socially just outcomes for gay and lesbian students in Catholic schools.

Queer Tradition and the Church

Cheng (2011) argues that "Queer Theology draws upon tradition—that is, church history as well as the teachings of the church over the last two millennia—in creative ways" (p. 14). In sync with the Catholic Church, Cheng emphasizes that tradition is the combination of church history and teaching; however, Cheng intentionally uses the words *church* and *tradition*, without the capital C or T, to both emphasize the larger Christian community's history and teaching and that tradition cannot be considered absolute, static, or immovable. Lovatt (2012) offers a critical perspective of Catholic Tradition that can be open to mutability, particularly given the dialectical nature of human participation and the changing life circumstances that must be confronted in the process:

> The passing on of the Apostolic deposit of faith is not a passive process, not a mere conversation of data. It is more like the weaving of a tapestry, which process is based on a framework and must—if it is to be any good—maintain an integrity of pattern with what has gone before; but dwells on the message which it has received from its

> forbearers: wise men and women pondering in their hearts, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Each elucidates or clarifies the message in some way. Each applies it in new ways and to new circumstances. As secular knowledge advances, so the eternal verities of the Gospel are necessarily re-expressed in new terms; just as Aquinas strove to express the Gospel in the new-fangled Aristotelian language which was popular in his day. (p. 130)

In Lovatt's (2012) perspective, scholars have a responsibility to apply "in new ways and to new circumstances," to be "re-expressed in new terms" the "eternal verities of the Gospel" "as secular knowledge advances," including the evolution of our understanding of human sexuality (p. 130).

Queering Christ

Queer theologians have *queered* Christ in several ways. Some of the more radical approaches have attempted to sexualize Christ or at least question the political motivations of the desexualization of Christ by the Church. In *Telling Truths in Church,* Mark Jordan (2003) writes about the Catholic tradition of having a *corpus*, or body, of Christ dying on the crucifix. In some parts of the Catholic world there have been attempts to create the most realistic portrayal of Christ's agony and death on the cross, but as Jordan notes, "The big business of theology has been to construct alternate bodies for Jesus the Christ—tidier bodies, bodies better conformed to institutional needs. I think of these parts of official Christology their mortuary" (p. 84). As an example, Jordan reflects on a moment when a paper loincloth that had carefully covered Christ on the crucifix in his mother's home fell off one day:

> When the paper fell away after one too many moves, it revealed that there was nothing underneath. The corpus on the crucifix was shockingly detailed, except in the lower

> abdomen, which was as smooth and abstract as an old-fashioned manikin. Imagine for a moment a more completely incarnate practice of carving crucifixes. The carver would take special care to carve equally realistic genitals on each corpus, whether or not a miniature loincloth would hide the work. The genitals would be considered—as they were in some periods of Christian painting—a powerful sign of the fullness of incarnation. The penis would be circumcised in conformity with scriptural evidence and as a sign of Jesus's obedience to Jewish law. But it would be neither exaggerated nor minimized, fetishized neither as a commodity to be chased nor as a disgrace to repudiated. (p. 85)

In *From Sin to Amazing Grace: Discovering the Queer Christ,* Cheng (2012) explains further the implications of Jordan's discovery of an androgynous (or sexless) Christ:

> For Jordan, this refusal to depict the entire body of Jesus Christ—who was, after all, fully human as well as fully divine—perpetuates the shame that many Roman Catholic LGBT people (and others) continue to harbor about their bodies. (p. 113)

The genderless Christ that Jordon saw not only perpetuates a sense of shame but also reflects a larger systematic assertion that the Church is afraid of acknowledging sexuality outside a narrowly defined function. According to Peter Brown (2008), early Church fathers were afraid of what an unchecked sexuality might engender:

> To reject sexuality, therefore, did not mean, for Origen, simply to suppress the sexual drives. It meant the assertion of a basic freedom so intense, a sense of identity so deeply rooted, as to cause to evaporate the normal social and physical constraints that tied the Christian to his or her gender. (p. 171)

Ellison (1996) rightly confirms, "Part of this difficulty is rooted in a dualistic tradition within Christianity that fears and disparages the body and things sexual" (p. 5). This concern of the early Church goes even further back to Saint Paul, as Boswell (2005) writes:

> While Saint Paul did not specifically comment on gay feelings or lifestyles, he would have disapproved of any form of sexuality which had as its end purely sexual pleasure, and he might have disapproved of relationships directed chiefly at the expression of erotic passion. He clearly regarded licit sexuality as that contained within a permanent and monogamous relationship. (p. 115)

If this is the intent, then the challenge is what to do when the Christian is unable to overcome the desire to express himself/herself outside the Church's narrowly defined role of sexuality.

The notion that sexuality has been hidden in the Bible is also explored in Marcella Althaus-Reid's (2000) book, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics*. She asserts that the sexually diverse text of the Bible has simply been hidden so that only heterosexual narrative remains. Althaus-Reid is one of many Queer theologians who have reasserted sexuality into discourses of the sacred. Cheng (2012) considers this reassertion an explicit goal for Queer Theology:

> Indeed, for many people, spirituality and sexuality exist in two mutually exclusive realms, and it would be sacrilegious to think about the Erotic Christ. One important contribution of the LGBT theologians, however, has been to bring the two realms of sexuality and sacred together, and a number of these theologians have written about the Erotic Christ in their Christological reflections. (p. 70)

Resistance to any type of connection between sex, sexuality, and spirituality is so deeply rooted in Tradition that even to ponder Christ as sexual is to oppose "a monosexual project, born from the monosexual empire of current theologies. This is the Christ of mono-relation monotonous Mono/Christ. To think Bi/Christ is to dismantle the foundations of these sexual monopolistic claims of naming reality but also organising it" (Althaus-Reid, 2000, p. 118)

Throughout Althaus-Reid's (2000) work she underscores how sexuality has been appropriated by institutions, constrained, fixed, and reified, then reintroduced in ways that reassert patriarchal ideations of heterosexual power. If left unchallenged, a de-sexualized Christ and Bible have tremendous implications as to how individuals in the Church see themselves and their bodies (Cheng, 2012).

The response to this political project of de-sexualization of Jesus and the Bible has been to reappraise the narrative that has been constructed by the Church and recontextualized within the framework of Queer Theology. Gerard Loughlin (2007a) suggests that this counter-narrative is compatible with our understanding of Christian Tradition:

> Queer theory has shown the instability and malleability of sexual identities, as these are variously constructed and reconstructed in different times and places. But this insight is on one sense belated, because Christian theology has always already found the body of Christ to be fungible flesh, a transitioning corporeality; never stable but always changing, becoming other. Christ's body is transfigured, resurrected ascended consumed. Born a male, he yet gives birth to the church; dead, yet he returns to life; flesh, he becomes food. As Stuart says, "the body of Christ is queer." And it is in becoming part of this queer

> body that our own bodies—and their identities—are set upon a path of transfiguration, resurrection, and ascension: a baptismal path of eternal transformation. (p. 12)

To queer Christ is to recontexualize his purpose for being. In "This Body Trans/Forming Me," Martin Quero (2008) further explains the purpose of this recontextualization:

> Christ is not just a servant of the heteropatriarchal taxonomy, but a cosmic event that embraces multiple and distinct beings into the divine. The option of God to incarnate a human body is not trivial but a sublime act to dignify the beauty of every single human body, whether they are straight, transgender, intersex, poor, Latina/o, and so on. In Jesus, God made a distinct act of divine power and opened up a world, a divine world, to all creation. (p. 112)

In this way the understanding that some Queer theologians are arguing for a Christ for all people is not too entirely different from the Christ as understood in the Catholic tradition.

Queer Theology and Catholic Tradition

To say that there are significant differences between Queer Theology and Catholic Tradition would be an understatement. Both Queer Theology and Catholic Tradition present the image of an inclusive and welcoming Christ; however, Queer theology fundamentally rejects the idea that Jesus must be desexualized in order to attain a sufficient level of purity, devoid of sin, to legitimize his work on earth. As Marcus J. Borg (2006) explains in *Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary*:

> In order for God to forgive sins, a substitutionary sacrifice, must be offered. But an ordinary human being cannot be the sacrifice, for such a person would be a sinner and would be dying only for his or her own sins. Thus the sacrifice must be a perfect human

being. Only Jesus, who was not only human but also the Son of God, was perfect, spotless, and without blemish. Only his substitutionary death makes our forgiveness possible. (p. 268)

This understanding of a pure and unblemished sacrifice, bereft of sexuality, problematizes the reality of human sexuality: namely, that human sexuality manifests itself in many ways. Therefore, Church Tradition, in consistently challenging its members to become Christ-like and strive for an unblemished state, has asked its members to express their sexuality for a very specific purpose. In *Love and Responsibility,* Karol Wojtyla (1993), who would later be known as Pope John Paul II, clarifies and asserts the traditional role of sex in the Church:

> This view, in its developed form, holds that in using man and woman and their sexual intercourse to assure the existence of the species Homo, the Creator Himself uses persons as the means to his end. It follows that conjugal life and sexual intercourse are good only because they serve the purpose of procreation. A man therefore does well when he uses a woman as the indispensable means of obtaining posterity. The use of a person for the objective end of procreation is the very essence of marriage. (pp. 58-59)

Thus, any sexual act that precludes the possibility of procreation is considered offensive to the Church. Sex outside of *natural law* is considered a violation of the purity of the sexual act in that its life-giving purpose is eclipsed and what remains is entirely in the realm of self-gratification. This view of sexuality held by the Church is described in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* when it states:

> Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which present homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.

> They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved. (Catholic Church, 1994, para. 2,357)

To some scholars, however, this idea of procreation as an essential element of the sexual act, however, does not appear to be rooted in any specific teaching of Jesus. Boswell (2005) notes:

> The only sexual issue of importance to Jesus appears to have been fidelity: he did not mention the precreation or rearing of children in connection with marriage but only its permanence, and he prohibited divorce except in cases of infidelity. He was apparently celibate himself, and the only persons with whom the Gospels suggest he had any special relationship were men, especially Saint John, who carefully describes himself throughout his gospel as the disciple whom Jesus loved. (p. 115)

In fact, some scholars, then, question the insistence that Jesus saw sexuality as purely a function of procreation (Ellens, 2006; Ellison, 1996; Farley, 2006; Helminiak, 2006; Higgs, 2011). However, some biblical scholars counter this analysis and, instead, insist that the story of Adam and Eve, where God commands his creation to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 2), represents the command to procreate. Yet again, the same critical concerns earlier in this study, regarding the Book of Leviticus, the Book of Genesis, or Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans, should be revisited. What were the socio-cultural and political imperatives of those authors that insist upon an absolute pro-creationist reading of sexuality? And, ultimately, how can these texts accurately be translated to our modern understanding, taking into account all that we now know about human sexuality?

The raising of these critical concerns is not meant to discredit centuries of scholarship. Rather, it is intended to highlight that, after centuries of scholarship, there are some who would question whether there is indeed a consensus as to the teachings of sexuality and the Christian tradition on sexuality as we understand it today has only recently assumed a dominant position in the discourse. It has been argued that similar to other beliefs in the Church not explicitly derived from scripture, the privileging of heterosexual sexuality has become rooted in an *official* culture of dominance. Borg (2006), referring here, for example, to the Christian view on the death of Jesus, makes reference to the underlying relationship between time, dominance, and orthodoxy:

> Many people think this is the orthodox and thus "official" Christian understanding of Jesus's death, including many who have difficulty with it, whether within the church or outside of it. Hence it is important to realize that it is not only Christian understanding. Indeed, it took over a thousand years for it to become dominant. (p. 268)

If a particular understanding is repeated and reinforced over time by those in authority, the idea can reify and become a dominant, commonsensical view in the culture (Gramsci, 1971). The scholarship in Queer theology would argue that this idea of dominance can be applied to Church teaching regarding sexuality because it has been repeated and reinforced over time so much that it has become ingrained and commonplace within Church Tradition. Along that same argument, as the Church has desexualized the Bible or recoded it to serve a heterosexual narrative that supports Church teaching, that hegemonic view has been raised to the status of tradition, assuming so much power that it has effectively shut down critical dialogue and inquiry into the initial concepts or political events that fixed its meaning.

Hence, in the traditional view on sexuality, questions about gay and lesbian students would not appear, on the surface, to have any relevance or legitimacy to the pedagogy of Catholic schools. The concern about dialogue, then, might be a moot point for some, who may feel that there is no appropriate place in the Church, let alone its schools, to have such a discourse. It could even be argued that Catholic schools should actively prevent such dialogue from happening and at the very most become a neutral party in what appears to be a larger social conflict regarding the place of gays and lesbians in the world.

The Importance of Critical Dialogue

According to Darder (2012), in the absence of dialogue and inquiry, a level of unchallenged inequity and injustice can occur, particularly in institutional settings like schools:

> A final characteristic that supports the inequity in American schools is the traditional, uncritical acceptance of the existing relationship between schools and the larger society. Schools are viewed as neutral and apolitical institutions whose sole purpose is to educate students with the necessary knowledge and skills to render them functional in and to society. It is this basic lack of inquiry into the relationships between schools and society that permits the structure and ideology of the dominant culture to be rendered unproblematic and the oppressive contradictions inherent in this view to remain concealed within the mainstream educational process. (p. 8)

There seems to be a great need for dialogue and critical inquiry among Catholic school leaders on the question of how they address sexuality, in general, and homosexuality, in particular. If we are to provide an emancipatory education that serves the needs of all students in Catholic schools, then it is important to resolve the injustice faced by gay and lesbian students by

promoting critical inquiry into the underlying tensions between Queer Theology and Catholic Theology.

Radical Love: Where Queer Theology and Catholic Tradition Meet

It would seem that if we do not seek to move beyond the procreative sexual imperative established by the Church or fail to separate the sexual identity of the child from the sexual act, there seem to be no scriptural possibilities from which Catholic educators can begin critical dialogue. Boswell (2005), like some other Biblical scholars, does not appear to find any definitive statement about sexuality in general, let alone homosexuality, that can be attributed to the scriptural Jesus:

> It might be urged that the general thrust of the New Testament sexuality would preclude licit homosexual relations for Christians regardless of specific prohibitions. Any arguments which could be made in support of this position however, would be anachronistic; on the basis of the text of the Bible alone no such conclusion is warranted. Sexuality appears to have been largely a matter of indifference to Jesus. His comments on sexual mores are extremely few, especially in comparison with the frequency of his observations on such matters as wealth and demonic possession, which were largely ignored by later Christians. Even where sexuality is specifically mentioned, the aim is generally to make a larger point: e.g. using the example of committing adultery "in one's heart" to point out that it was the intent which constitute sin (Matthew 5:28). Although he insisted on indissolubility of the marriage bond, he was widely thought to have advocated celibacy (Matthew 19:10-12), and he certainty rejected the position of paramount importance accorded he family under Mosaic law and Judaic culture

> (Matthew 8:21-22, 10:35-37, 12:46-50, 19:29; Luke 9:59-60, 14:26-27, etc.). When confronted with adulterers, he recommended no punishment and clearly suggested that the sins anyone else might have committed were of equal gravity (John 8:3-11). He pronounced no condemnations of sexuality among the unmarried and said nothing which bore any relation to homosexuality. (pp. 114-115)

The purpose of citing Boswell (2005) is not to suggest that Jesus condoned homosexuality; rather, the purpose is to challenge any notion that Jesus's ministry was driven by his desire to strengthen a heterosexual narrative, support a procreative imperative, or even define the role of sex and sexuality in general. Loughlin's (2007a) reminds us, as he *queers* Christ, that Jesus rises above issues of sex and sexuality:

> It is thus not possible for Christians schooled in the gospels and tradition to believe that gay people are ordered to an "intrinsic evil," since all are ordered to God, and those ordered to God through their own sex are ordered as were the two Johns—the beloved and the Baptist—who were ordered to Jesus: a lover who does not distinguish between the sex of his brides; who welcomes all alike. Christ is the lover of both St. Teresa of Avila *and* St. John of the cross. And he is a lover whose own sex is less than stable; since as Jesus he is man, but as Christ woman also. (p. 7)

Here, Loughlin is expressing Jesus's ability to love everyone, irrespective of sex or sexuality. Jesus's particular form of love is expressed through his role as Christ, which would seem to contradict the heteronormative conventions of sexuality assigned to him as a man. Either we need to understand his socially constructed gender as subordinate to his genderless divine

identity, or we need to recognize the role his socially constructed gender is supposed to play within the context of his teaching.

If we look at the role his socially constructed gender is supposed to play within the context of his teaching, we see him focusing less on sex and sexuality and more on breaking boundaries between people and teaching a new idea of love, separate from any preconceived notions about sex or sexuality. In an effort to move spiritual articulations of Christ toward a more emancipatory (and accurate) foundation, Cheng (2011) describes Jesus Christ as the "embodiment of radical love:"

> Radical love is understood as a love so extreme that it dissolves boundaries, then Jesus Christ is the living embodiment of the dissolution of boundaries. Through his ministry, Jesus constantly dissolved the religious and social boundaries of his time. He ate with tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners. He touch "unclean" people such a lepers and bleeding women. He spoke with social outcasts such as Samaritans. In other words, Jesus Christ dissolved the "holy" boundaries of clean and unclean, holy and profane, and saint and sinner. He challenged the religious and political authorities of his day—to such an extent that he was ultimately put to death. (pp. 78-80)

Cheng's (2011) notion of radical love is not without precedent. Church Tradition has always emphasized Jesus's role in humanity's transcendence from an earthly limited notion of love to a love that is truly boundless. In his encyclical letter, *Deus Caritas Est,* Pope Benedict XVI (2005) illustrates this concern when he problematizes the word *love* and the limitations of human language to express fully the nature of God's love:

> Let us first of all bring to mind the vast semantic range of the word "love": we speak of love of country, love of one's profession, love between friends, love of work, love between parents and children, love between family members, love of neighbour and love of God. Amid this multiplicity of meanings, however, one in particular stands out: love between man and woman, where body and soul are inseparably joined and human beings glimpse an apparently irresistible promise of happiness. This would seem to be the very epitome of love; all other kinds of love immediately seem to fade in comparison. So we need to ask: are all these forms of love basically one, so that love, in its many and varied manifestations, is ultimately a single reality, or are we merely using the same word to designate totally different realities? (para. 2)

Pope Benedict XVI (2005) seems to agree with this need to reconceptualize love when he suggests a new, radical form of love that deserves its own definition and term. Drawing heavily on Tradition, he points to a Christian understanding of love based on both Scripture and experience:

> That love between man and woman which is neither planned nor willed, but somehow imposes itself upon human beings, was called *eros* by the ancient Greeks. Let us note straight away that the Greek Old Testament uses the word *eros* only twice, while the New Testament does not use it at all: of the three Greek words for love, *eros, philia* (the love of friendship) and *agape*, New Testament writers prefer the last, which occurs rather infrequently in Greek usage. As for the term *philia*, the love of friendship, it is used with added depth of meaning in Saint John's Gospel in order to express the relationship between Jesus and his disciples. The tendency to avoid the word *eros*, together with the

> new vision of love expressed through the word *agape*, clearly point to something new and distinct about the Christian understanding of love. (para. 3)

Pope Benedict XVI (2005) believes that the love expressed between a man and a woman are a "glimpse an apparently irresistible promise of happiness" that "would seem to be the very epitome of love; all other kinds of love immediately seem to fade in comparison" (para. 2), he himself concedes that there is a higher love than even this, a love known as *agape*:

> Only my readiness to encounter my neighbor and to show him love makes me sensitive to God as well. Only if I serve my neighbor can my eyes be opened to what God does for me and how much he loves me. The saints—consider the example of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta—constantly renewed their capacity for love of neighbor from their encounter with the Eucharistic Lord, and conversely this encounter acquired its realism and depth in their service to others. Love of God and love of neighbor are thus inseparable, they form a single commandment. But both live from the love of God who has loved us first. No longer is it a question, then, of a "commandment" imposed from without and calling for the impossible, but rather of a freely-bestowed experience of love from within, a love which by its very nature must then be shared with others. Love grows through love. Love is "divine" because it comes from God and unites us to God; through this unifying process it makes us a "we" which transcends our divisions and makes us one, until in the end God is "all in all." (para. 18)

There is agreement here with the perspective of Pope Benedict XVI (2005) in the assertion that there are different understandings and consequently different levels of love, and that the most important form of love is *not* heterosexuality; rather, it is agape, a radical love that

transcends sex and sexuality. It appears possible, then, for a love that is transcendent, beyond the focus of heterosexuality, which has been the primary focus for so much of the Church's teachings on sexuality, to become the defining purpose of the Church's teachings on sexuality. If a radicalized idea of love becomes the transcending force that characterizes Church teaching on sexuality, this would suggest that any effort to exclude, reprimand, or isolate gays and lesbians in the Church would be in violation of the Church's message. This idea is not new; Loughlin (2007a) states "it is not possible to place gay people outside of Christ's Eucharistic embrace" (p. 7); and Pope Benedict XVI (2005) asserts "the Eucharist is where we learn the concrete practice of love. For Eucharistic communion includes the reality both of being loved and of loving others in turn" (p. 7).

One may argue that this radicalized love that Cheng (2011) and Pope Benedict XVI (2005) describe are different, and that this difference is evident in the intention and context of each set of writings. However, their arguments are also highly similar because they both come from the same scripture and the same Jesus Christ who, when asked which of the commandments in the law was the greatest, responds:

> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:34-35)

In fact, scripture is replete with identifications, commandments, examples, and even poems on love. Pope Benedict XVI (2005) goes further, suggesting that, "love is now no longer a mere 'command;' it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us" (para. 1).

Queer Theology and Social Justice

The assertions in Pope Benedict XVI's (2005) encyclical letter *Deus Caritas Est* are not new; rather, they reaffirm an understanding of love that already exists in the Church. This current understanding of love can be clearly seen in the Church's social justice efforts in combating poverty, war, and violence towards the most vulnerable. However, *Deus Caritas Est* also suggests that the Catholic Church's social justice efforts have had a complicated relationship with sexuality. Unfortunately, this same understanding of love that fuels contemporary Church social justice efforts seems to face major limitations when confronted with social injustices associated with heterosexist and homophobic attitudes, policies, and practices.

This is where Queer Theology may offer a potentially different radicalized notion of love that can still access Catholic Theology. It is a radicalized love that may have been part of Catholic Tradition all along, but cannot be fully revealed without a dialogue with Queer Theology. Queer Theology presents a radicalized love that deconstructs and transforms the traditional notion of love that the Catholic Church teaches into something more transgressive, assertive, and liberating, tied directly to the character of Christ.

This critical understanding of love is part of the transgressive character of Christ and linked to a salvation narrative that gives purpose to Christ's mission on earth and ultimately his death. Jesus preaches:

> As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love

you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another. (John 15: 9-17)

Queer Theology has made it clear that Jesus's form of love reflects a radical departure from anything contrived by human beings and steps beyond our limited notions of love and sexuality, perhaps even beyond the ideas expressed by Pope Benedict XVI (2005). Farley (2006) insists that there needs to be a new agape that reflects a combination of Jesus's radical love and the ethics of Christian social justice. Moreover, she offers the contextual basis for a *sexual justice*:

> Christians affirm also the call of human persons to a destiny of friendship and ultimate communion with God and all persons in God. Christians (at least many Christians) affirm belies in the role of human persons as agents in cooperation with the ongoing creative activity of God; the importance of not only the individual but the community; the responsibilities of human persons to promote the health and well-being of one another; the shared task of working for justice in the world and the healing of creation; the equality of persons not only before God but before one another. Christians believe, too, in loves that, like the love of Jesus Christ, are stronger than death; and in the possibility that tragedy is not the last word manifests something sacred—that is, the presence of

> God—so that human sexuality, too, has a sacramental dimension. A Christian sexual justice ethic is informed and sustained in the context of these beliefs. (p. 241)

Farley (2006) firmly believes that a sexual justice ethic can exist in Christianity and be consistent with Church Tradition. As such, this serves as a clear example of the role that Queer Theology can play in informing, challenging, and reinventing the social justice goals of the Church and, in doing so, support gay and lesbian students in Catholic schools. Farley is hopeful that "we are now at a point where we can transcend the general question of permission/prohibition and look at specific norms for same-sex relationships" (p. 288).

Radical Love and Catholic Social Justice

The radical love that Queer Theology proposes stands apart from the traditional proclamations of social justice by striving to end not just socio-economic injustice, but also any and all forms of injustice that isolate, demean, or exclude members from the community. Along those lines, it is not just any form of love Jesus is asking for us to practice in our lives; it is a self-sacrificial love that expects us to *die* for one another: "This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:12-13). This self-sacrificial love, steeped in a sense of community, is the only standard of love that Jesus gives and, in so doing, requires us to ask how the Church has responded in a self-sacrificial way to the needs of gays and lesbians.

Catholic Tradition has *codified* social justice by demarcating its limits, categorizing it into principles, and defining every ambiguous term with yet another term. In the end, it all becomes a set of rules that could potentially be devoid of any substance sans the men and women who serve others and who have remarkably been able to continue the social justice mission of the

Church without any knowledge of the principles, rules, and sub-rules of social justice as a prerequisite. All of these men and women may know (or really need to know) is Jesus's teaching about love found in Scripture.

I am not implying here that we forgo Catholic traditions and rely on Scripture alone or that there is no value in the doctrine of Catholic Social Justice. Rather, I suggest that the strength of Catholic theology is that it can draw from both Scripture and Tradition to become an imaginative and fluid force for social justice as it responds to the ever-evolving needs of a complicated world.

In its own way, Church Tradition has shown what love looks like by providing theoretical examples and sharing the stories of men and women who are examples of social justice, but ultimately this Church Tradition is limited in scope by looking for examples that do not challenge Church authority on particular subjects (Byron, 2009; Castellanos, 2012). This avoidance of conflict with Church tradition appears to oppose the very spirit of the radical love of Christ, "a love so extreme that it dissolves boundaries" (Cheng, 2011, p. 78), and challenges forms of authority that promote dehumanizing polices or practices.

Queer Theology argues that Christ's message of radical love has been chopped, dissected, truncated, and diluted by Church Tradition and, in so doing, has permitted the dehumanization of the very people it was supposed to serve. As cited earlier, Ellison (1996) recognizes that, "Many people uncritically pass on received tradition as if it represented an unassailable and permanently valuable moral truth. However, when people rely exclusively on the past to discern present realities, dehumanizing cultural patterns often go unnoticed and unchallenged" (p. 5). It has been argued that the Church's insistence on uncritically passing on this Tradition on sexuality

suggests there is fear of disrupting the current power structure of the Church. Furthermore, some suggest that unexamined hegemonic policies and practices regarding sexuality that oppress its people only serve to weaken the moral authority of the Church. Lovatt (2012) supports this analysis, expressing concern for the fragility of oppressive sexual policies of the Church:

> In the end, this policy will back-fire; because reality is not on the Vatican's side, and eventually the truth will win out—just as it did in the case of Galileo. When Rome is finally forced to back down on the issue of homosexuality, it will result in a huge loss of credibility; which is why the Curia is presently orchestrating as much resistance as it can, in the hope that it will win the battle against what it claims s nothing more than secularism, heresy and misinformed public opinion. (p. 10)

This is why Catholic Social Justice is, wittingly or unwittingly, failing gay and lesbian students. No matter how well-meaning its efforts, Catholic Social Justice is grounded in an understanding that, tacitly or explicitly, reinforces certain assertions of homosexuality that it cannot reconcile completely in Jesus's teachings, especially his teachings regarding radical love. Hence, Althaus-Reid (2000) once again links this constructed discourse of sexuality with power:

> Theology is from that perspective a sexual act participating in the ideological construction of God from the idealist discourse of what it is supposed to be and the regulations and control discourses based on some heterosexual falsifications or alienations of what is due to reality, and to the people who live under the threats of the naturalization of sexuality or decency codes in theology. (p. 24)

There are two important implications of this part of the analysis. The first implication is that the type of love Queer Theology and Catholic Theology describe are quintessentially

different; this is not to say that they are diametrically opposed, but rather that they fall along the same line as each other, with the suggestion that radical love represents the form of love closer to the spirituality of Jesus. The second implication is that dialogue between Queer Theology and Catholic Theology is possible only after we acknowledge how the current hegemonic discourse only serves to reinforce the current status quo and power structure. If we do not acknowledge the inherent unequal status of the two bodies of literature and both sides do not actively seek in good faith the desire to give themselves to the other, as radical love insists, referencing scripture "to lay down one's life" (John 15:13), with each side open to the possibility of the *death* of its position, then the dialogue will only produce limited results.

This critical dialogue can take shape in many ways, but Lovatt (2012) proposes that the Catholic Church enter into dialogue with gay and lesbian Catholics in ways that would allow them to participate in the development of doctrine:

> The best way to avoid the disaster of a dramatic forced change in official doctrine would be to engage positively with intelligent, serious and loyal Catholic *homosexuals*, so as to explore the theological and ethical issues raised by the reality of *homosexuality.* This would facilitate a reasonable, measured, gradual and gracious development of doctrine; such that all key points which do not require changing can be preserved. (p. 10)

In other words, no new understanding of sexual moral theology can credibly occur without including those who are most affected into the conversation (Ellison, 1996). Yet, despite concerted efforts by queer theologians and people of good will everywhere for open engagement, Lovatt (2012) reveals, "Sadly, there is no indication that this is going to happen anytime soon" (p. 10). This is not a surprise, for as Darder (2012) argues, "respecting different discourses and

putting into practice a theory committed to the plurality of voices will require nothing short of political and social transformation" (p. 95).

This transformation is urgently needed if we are to address the violence and harassment that gay and lesbian students are facing in Catholic schools. The next chapter will reintroduce and further expand on the notion of radical love through the work of Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Freire provides the theoretical framework from which we can explore the dichotomy of oppressed and oppressor and affirm the power of the dialectic as emancipatory action for both oppressed and oppressor alike. In addition, the chapter will explore the radical and transgressive nature of love through Darder's (2002) articulation of Freire and critical pedagogy, providing the grounding principles for the articulation of a Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education—the political project that is at the heart of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Critical Pedagogy is central to the theoretical framework of Critical Queer Pedagogy, and Critical Queer Pedagogy along with Critical Pedagogy form the basis of the principles of Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education: Dialogue, Solidarity, and Love. In this chapter I will explore the role of Critical Pedagogy in this project and how it has informed the central themes of Critical Queer Pedagogy. Once the central themes of Critical Queer Pedagogy are introduced the study intends to interweave the major elements of Catholic Social Justice teaching, Queer theology, the Mission of Catholic schools, and Critical Queer Pedagogy into a coherent theoretical framework that will be known as a Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education.

The Emergence of Critical Theory: The Frankfurt School

Critical Pedagogy's roots go back to Critical Theory, which can be traced back to a group of theorist at Das Institut für Sozialforschung, also known as the Frankfurt School, established in Germany in 1923 (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009a). These first critical theorists began their work in response to the limitations they saw in previous social science discourse in Europe and then eventually in the United States (Kincheloe, 2008). Henry A. Giroux (2009) describes the development of Critical Theory at the Frankfurt School thusly: "Central to the Frankfurt School's critique of positivist rationality was its analysis of culture. Rejecting the definition and role of culture found in both sociological accounts and orthodox Marxist theory" (p. 37). For Giroux the Frankfurt School represented a rejection of "the mainstream sociological notion that

culture existed in an autonomous fashion, unrelated to the political and economic life-processes of society" (p. 37).

According to Darder et al. (2009a), the:

> Early years of the Frankfurt theorists were primarily concerned with an analysis of bourgeois society's substructure, but with time their interests focused upon the cultural superstructures. This overarching emphasis was, undoubtedly, a result of the disruptions and certain fragmentation experienced in the process of emigration and repeated relocation the 1930s and 1940s—a process that was precipitated by the threat of Nazism, the member's avowedly Marxist orientation, and the fact that most of them were Jews. (p. 7)

Some of the Frankfurt theorists, feeling that their lives and work were threatened by the growing power of Nazism in Germany, chose to immigrate to the United States. According to Joe L. Kincheloe (2008):

> Eventually locating themselves in California, these critical theorists were shocked by American culture. Offended by the taken-for-granted empirical practices of American social science researchers, Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse were challenged to respond to the positivistic social science establishment's belief that their research could describe and accurately measure any dimension of human behavior. (p. 47)

The reaction of these early critical theorists to "the contradictions between progressive American rhetoric of egalitarianism and the reality of racial and class discrimination" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 47) was similar to their reaction of European social sciences at the time (Giroux, 2009). At this time, while in the United States, some of these key critical theorists began their most

significant academic work. Darder et al. (2009a) describe the prolific work of one of those critical theorists:

> Herbert Marcuse, in particular, is considered by some as the most prominent scholar of the Frankfurt School to influence critical pedagogical thought. As others in his tradition, Marcuse incorporated the thought of Hegel, Marx, and Heidegger, in his efforts to imagine a society in which all aspects of our humanity—our work, play, love, and sexuality—functioned in sustaining a free society. (p. 7)

What the Frankfurt School began as a critical theoretical lens from which to look at class oppression in Europe evolved into a theoretical lens that would eventually shape social and political thought for the remainder of the century in various fields throughout the world. Darder et al. (2009a) underscore the influence the Frankfurt School has had on critical pedagogy:

> Critical educational thought is fundamentally linked to those critical theories of society that emerged from the members of the Frankfurt School and their contemporaries. These theorists sought to challenge the narrowness of traditional forms of rationality that defined the concept of meaning and knowledge in the Western world, during a very critical moment in the history of the twentieth century. As such, their work was driven by an underlying commitment to the notion that theory, as well as practice, must inform the work of those who seek to transform the oppressive conditions that exist in the world. (p. 7)

Critical Pedagogy: Paulo Freire

In her book, *Teaching to Transgress,* bell hooks (1994) describes the first time she read Freire: "When I discovered the work of the Brazilian thinker Paulo Freire, my first introduction

to critical pedagogy, I found a mentor and guide, someone who understood that learning could be liberatory" (p. 6). For many scholars, such as hooks, Paulo Freire is the introduction to Critical Pedagogy, and since the publication of his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he remains the most influential scholar in the field (Kincheloe, 2008). Many of the principles that inform critical pedagogical practice are anchored in Freire's writings.

Dialogue

For Freire (1970), one of the key components to a critical pedagogy is the notion of dialogue:

> Critical and liberating dialogue, which presupposes action, must be carried on with the oppressed at whatever the stage of their struggle… The content of that dialogue can and should vary in accordance with historical conditions and the level at which the oppressed perceive reality. (p. 65)

In "Beyond Culture: The Hybridity of Funds of Knowledge," Norma Gonzalez (2005) reflects on a study with parents that successfully applied the dialogical principle as articulated by Freire:

> As parents responded with personal narratives concerning their own unique and singular life courses, a heightened historical consciousness began to emerge. The articulation of the trajectory that brought parents to be where they are now engendered an awareness of the historical character of their experiences. In this way, the Freirean notion of dialogue as an emancipatory educational process can be developed in the households. (p. 42)

Love

For scholars like bell hooks (1994) and Darder (2002), the Freirean notion of dialogue is rooted in a sense of love. With this in mind, hooks notes, "Though I may not quote Freire as

much, he still teaches me… a quality of that dialogue that is a true gesture of love" (p. 57). In Freire's (1970) view:

> Dialogue cannot exist, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. (p. 89)

In fact, much of Freire's writings in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* focus on the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor, with respect to and understanding of love as a political construct in the emancipation of oppressed populations. Freire emphasizes that neither the oppressed nor the oppressor can become conscious of their current social/historical oppression and ultimately experience liberation, without genuine gestures of love (Darder, 1998).

Praxis

The importance of dialogue's role in critical pedagogy cannot be overstated. It is essential to emphasize that the dialogue Freire (1970) desired was not just communication between the oppressed and the oppressor. Rather, Freire's transformative dialogue is rooted in the process of praxis "theory and practice; it is reflection and action" (p. 126). In Freire's writing, praxis becomes the transformative dialogue of reflection and action, because for him, "revolution is achieved with neither verbalism nor activism, but rather with praxis, that is, with *reflection* and *action* directed at the structures to be transformed" (p. 126).

Consciousness

For Freire (1970), praxis within dialogue represented a vehicle in which the world of oppression can be unveiled for both the oppressed and the oppressor:

> Dialogical theory requires that the world be unveiled no one can, however, unveil the world *for* another. Although one Subject may initiate the unveiling on behalf of others, the others must also become Subjects of this act. The adherence of the people is made possible by this unveiling of the world and of themselves, in authentic praxis. (pp. 168-169)

This unveiling of the world in authentic praxis develops what Freire describes as a process of *social consciousness or conscientization.* This entails ability of the oppressed and the oppressor of "to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (p. 33).

In "Teaching with Pensive Images: Rethinking Curiosity in Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,"* Tyson E. Lewis (2012) explains further:

> For Freire, dialogic pedagogy *raises* consciousness above ideological distortion or mystification to reveal the greater truth of social complexity. In other words, epistemology becomes the democratic weapon par excellence in that it clarifies and provides methodological rigor for the development of praxis. (p. 35)

In an interview with a teacher presented in "Funds of Knowledge and Team Ethnography: Reciprocal Approaches," Marcia Brenden (2005) recognizes how the teacher "came to understand the way things were in her own family through the interviewing of similarly situated families in her community and through the exchanges with other teachers in the study group" (p.207). This recovery of one's own history is similar to what Freire described as a recapturing of historical consciousness. Katrine Czajkowski, a high school teacher interviewed in Darder's (2002) book *Reinventing Paulo Freire*, talks about her consciousness:

> Through Paulo Freire's work, I came to understand that teachers from privileged backgrounds have a particular role to play in the struggle for social justice in schools. In my experience, this issue of privilege is seldom addressed, and when it is, it is often sugar coated with a vapid liberalism that is condescending and deceitful. Yet in my experience with my students, they tell a strong kind of truth, for they often know more about what they need that the teachers who so easily dismiss their voices. So I have learned to listen and to search for ways to mediate the clash between the world in which they live and the world they find within the schools that they are forced to attend. I seek to assist them in navigating an educational system that is often alienating and hostile. (p. 196)

Whether it is "quality of that dialogue that is a true gesture of love" (hooks, 1994, p. 57), "dialogue as an emancipatory educational process" (Gonzalez, 2005, p. 42), "recapturing of historical consciousness" (Brenden, 2005, p. 297), or mediating a "clash between the world in which [the students] live and the world they find within the schools that they are forced to attend" (Darder, 2002, p. 196), Freire's influence can be seen among educators, researchers, and activists (Meyer, 2007).

Critical Queer Pedagogy

Critical Queer Pedagogy emerged because of the perceived lack of pedagogical space in critical pedagogy and current feminist discourses for certain theorist exploring sexuality. According to Kevin McDonough (2007), in "The 'Futures' of Queer Children and the Common School Ideal" he asserts, "the view that liberal theory and liberal educational institutions cannot adequately accommodate the legitimate claims of queer children (and adults)" (p. 796). In "Queering/Querying Pedagogy? Or, Pedagogy Is a Pretty Queer Thing," Susan Luhmann (1998)

writes that even when a space is provided, "The hope for lesbian/gay content as a remedy against homophobia is also thrown into relief by experiences within queer studies: Even in designated queer studies classrooms heterosexism and homophobia reemerge and threaten to overwhelm queer subjects" (p. 125). The dilemma queer theorists experience is a combination of a lack of pedagogical space and the dominance of heterosexuality or heterosexism within the discourse that could only be satisfied by extricating the scholarship from heterosexual dominant discourses and carving out a new field of Critical Queer Pedagogy.

Resisting Heterosexual Dominance

Tension between the early scholars of Critical Queer Pedagogy and the larger development scholarship of Critical Pedagogy appears to originate in the underlying assumptions Critical Pedagogy has made regarding sexuality in general. Early scholars in Critical Queer Pedagogy found it problematic that they could not escape the dominant culture's heteronormative assumptions that were being made at the time and that any queer perspective that was made would only be understood in relation to heterosexuality. In "Queer Pedagogy: Praxis Makes Im/Perfect," Mary Bryson and Suzanne de Castell (1993) highlight this tension when they define the purpose of:

> …queer pedagogy—a radical form of educative praxis implemented deliberately to interfere with, to intervene in, the production of "normalcy" in schooled subjects. We argue for an explicit "ethics of consumption" in relation to curricular inclusions of marginalized subjects and subjugated knowledge. We conclude with a critical analysis of the way that, despite our explicit interventions, all of our discourses, all of our actions in this course were permeated with the continuous and inescapable backdrop of white

> heterosexual dominance, such that… any subordinated identity always remained marginal. (p. 285)

Critical Queer Pedagogical concern about the "inescapable backdrop of white heterosexual dominance" also appears in Elizabeth J. Meyer's (2007) "But I'm Not Gay: What Straight Teachers Need to Know About Queer Theory," where she explores the perceived limitations of feminist work:

> Many scholars of color, lesbian scholars, and Marxist theorists have critiqued much feminist work as being narrowly centered in the realm of white, middle class, heterosexual privilege. Gay and lesbian researchers have also had a history of working from a white, middle class, patriarchal perspective. Although many poststructural feminists and critical theorists have worked to address these issues, queer theory has learned from this history. Queer theorists have consciously worked to understand the many intersecting layers of dominance and oppression as possible. (pp. 24-25)

The Instability of Sexual Identity

An example of heterosexual domination is the underlying assumption within heteronormative discourse that presupposes stable sexual identities. Again, Bryson and de Castell (1993) discuss the problematic nature of this discourse:

> Lesbian identity in this institutions context was always fixed and stable, even in a course that explicitly critiqued, challenged, and deconstructed a monolithic "lesbian identity" from the standpoint of their *theoretical* resolution—which is, at least in principle possible—but from the standpoint of their insistent irresolvability in the context of pedagogical practice (p. 286).

This understanding of the unstable and potentially problematic traditional identifications of sexual orientation—gay and lesbian—has led some scholars to explore the use of alternative identities. For example, the term *queer* has been appropriated within the scholarship to address these concerns of heterosexual domination, but even this term appears to present its own problems. In Paul C. Reece-Miller and Hidehiro Endo's (2010) "Constructing Queer Knowledge in Educational Contexts," they explore the adoption of the term queer as opposed to gay and lesbian:

> Reconsider the term *queer* by problematizing the term through a number of important questions: 1) What counts as a queer topic? ; 2) Is a queer topic limited to LGBTIQ subjects? ; 3) Can the word queer also refer to the deconstruction of binaries and social norms? Attempting to define the word queer is in and of itself problematic. Instead, to queer is to highlight the unstable and multivalent nature of identity, language, culture, community and charges scholars to envision another strategy or framework that would serve more people and lessen or even eliminate the policing of identity boundaries. Such discussions as this represent how queer knowledge has evolved and perhaps the direction that future scholarship might take. (p. 3)

As demonstrated throughout this study, the nature of sexuality and sexual orientation are contingent on language, culture, community, and even history, which makes sexual orientation far from being an essentialized, fixed, or eternally stable category (see Figure 3.1).

In the next chapter I will provide the foundational principles of a Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education. Each foundational principle will be grounded in the literature presented earlier in this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CRITICAL QUEER PEDAGOGY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

In this chapter I will reintroduce Paulo Freire and reread critical pedagogy through a queer lens and posit a set of foundational principles for Critical Queer Pedagogy for Catholic Education. Each principle will be anchored in the literature on Catholic doctrine, Catholic Social Teaching, Queer Theology, and Critical Pedagogy.

Rereading Paulo Freire with a Queer Lens

Although feminists have made many valid criticisms of critical pedagogy and Paulo Freire:

> …For his sexist language and assumptions…many thinkers have taken his ideas and built upon them to include antisexist and antiracist work as a form of liberatory pedagogy. In education, feminist pedagogy has built on Freire's concepts to work toward more liberatory educational experiences for all students. (Meyer, 2007, p. 24)

In fact, it is not possible to talk about Critical Queer Pedagogy without Critical Pedagogy: "liberatory pedagogy and queer pedagogy are mutually reinforcing philosophies that share a radical vision of education as the path to achieving a truly equitable and just society" (Meyer, 2007, p. 25). Critical Pedagogy, as a liberatory pedagogy described by Freire, still has an important role to play within critical queer pedagogy. Freire's work was not meant to be conclusive or delimitating, but rather was intended to be part of an ongoing and evolving dialogue with the post-discourses (Kincheloe, 2008) and represents what Kincheloe (2008) considers "critical theory's attempts to avoid too much specificity, as there is room for

disagreement among critical theorists" (p. 48). Ultimately, Freire's principles continue to Shape Critical Queer Pedagogy and feminist writing. In an anthology of writers in *Feminist Engagements: Reading, Resisting, and Revisioning Male Theorists in Education and Cultural Studies*, feminist author Kathleen Weiler (2001b) states this best in her contribution, "Rereading Paulo Freire:"

> In this reading of Freire I take up a number of what I see as problematic aspects of his theory. But at the same time, and in a fundamental way, I want to assert my respect for Freire and for his passionate commitment to social justice, his steadfast stance on the side of those who suffer. To the very end of his life, Freire continued to condemn forces of exploitation and dehumanization. Since the publication of his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Freire has been an inspiration to progressive educators seeking ways to use education to build more just societies in settings throughout the world. In his writings, workshops, and public appearances, Freire articulated a set of values based on compassion and respect for all human beings. (p. 74)

Queer Dialogue

In "The 'Futures' of Queer Children and the Common School Ideal," McDonough (2007) argues for a dialogical space for queer children. McDonough goes so far as to list a series of areas that schools will need to address in order to "facilitate such engagement" for the "recognition of queerness" (p. 800): addressing bullying, reconstructing curriculum, implementing teacher training, gaining support from the school board, and gaining recognition of queer identity. For McDonough it is a matter of integrating queer pedagogy into the preexisting structures of schools by focusing on positive and supportive social interactions between queer

children and the non-queer world. In one way, McDonough's approach to dialogue is, as Freire (1970) puts it, "in accordance with historical conditions and the level at which the oppressed perceive reality," which is understandable because "the content of that dialogue can and should vary in accordance with historical conditions and the level at which the oppressed perceive reality" (p. 65).

However, in "The Tolerance That Dare Not Speak Its Name," Mayo (2009) rejects McDonough's call for "recognition of queerness" by school authorities and challenges the ability and willingness of schools to "facilitate such engagement:"

> Because of codes of civility and conduct are so closely linked with practice of propriety, these codes maintain relations of dominance by shifting the focus on structural inequities to matters of social interaction. I am not arguing that structural inequities and social interaction are disconnected but rather that codes of conduct sidestep the material inequalities and install instead a civil place where the difficulties of inequality purportedly do not matter as much as they do in other spaces. (p. 263)

Freire (1970) appears to support Mayo's suggestion that by seeking ways for schools to "facilitate such engagement," we are ignoring the underlying structures of oppression, because substituting

> monologue, slogans, and communiques for dialogue is to attempt to liberate the oppressed with the instruments of domestication. Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building; it… will transform them into masses which can be manipulated. (p. 65)

With this in mind, dialogue in Critical Queer Pedagogy is an emancipatory process that requires students and teachers to question their assumptions and to embrace an unknown path. In "Here I Stand: College Students' Critical Education Narratives," Barbara Kessel and Kim Hackford-Peer (2014) speak to their experience with student dialogue:

> As this introduction to the class suggests, from the beginning, the classroom was a space in which meaning was struggled over and co-constructed. While this was always our intention students' questioning of the word queer and the dialogue that ensued set the stage, early in the semester, for a high level of critical engagement and reconsideration of the norms we take for granted. Students talked about their families, communities, schools, teachers, friends, the media, and popular culture. (p. 63)

Queering Praxis

Freire (1970) considered reflection and action to be one in the same, asserting that neither could exist without the other in order for transformation to happen. In "Using Freirean Pedagogy of Just IRE to Inform Critical Social Learning in Arts-Informed Community Education for Sexual Minorities," Andre P. Grace and Kristopher Wells (2007), make a connection between Freire's praxis and sexual minority studies:

> Although Freire did not pinpoint sexual orientation and gender identity as power relationships in his class-based work, his critical, sometimes radical research and writing are still important to researchers whose theorizing, activism, and cultural work focus on the disenfranchisement of sexual minorities, social learning, and education for full citizenship. Freire's praxis emphasized ethics, democracy, inclusion, and civic courage.

> Recent critical queer scholarship recognizes the value of this praxis to sexual- minority studies and cultural work in communities. (p. 98)

However, Grace and Wells's (2007) view of Freirean praxis is not necessarily what I call queer praxis, given that their approach denies the transformative, even revolutionary, aspects of Freirean praxis because it appears to isolate the process of praxis from the rest of the oppressed and confine it to research and writing for the consumption and promulgation of an educated queer elite. If queer praxis is to exist then, it must recognize that praxis entails:

> …*Reflection* and *action* directed at the structures to be transformed. The revolutionary effort to transform these structures radically cannot designate its leaders as its *thinkers* and the op- pressed as mere *doers.* If true commitment to the people, involving the transformation of the reality by which they are oppressed, requires a theory of transforming action, this theory cannot fail to assign the people a fundamental role in the transformation process. (Freire, 1970, p. 126)

Queer praxis challenges everyone—student, researcher, and teacher—to be part of this transformation process. In fact, for Bryson and de Castell (1993), queer praxis goes far beyond simply queer scholarship:

> It seems that a worthwhile avenue for the elucidation of a queer praxis might be to consider the value of an actively *queerying* pedagogy—of queering its technics and scribbling graffiti over its texts, of colouring outside of the lines so as to deliberately take the wrong route on the way to school—going in an altogether different direction than that specified by a monologic destination. This seems a promising approach indeed for refashioning pedagogy in the face of the myriad institutionally sanctioned "diversity

management" programs that, today, threaten to crowd out and silence most opportunities for radical emancipatory praxis. (p. 299)

Here, critical queer praxis goes a step further than what Grace and Wells envision, deliberately seeking ways to undermine, interrupt, or destabilize traditional pedagogies that support oppressive structures of heterosexual domination.

Queer Consciousness

As mentioned earlier, this unveiling of the world in authentic praxis develops what Freire (1970) describes as social consciousness or the ability of the oppressed and the oppressor "to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (p. 33). In *Transcending Heteronormativity in the Classroom: Using Queer and Critical Pedagogies to Alleviate Trans-Anxieties,* Karen Lovaas, Lina Baroudi, and S. M. Collins (2002) describe queer consciousness thusly:

> Queer pedagogies involve engaging students in recognizing the paradoxes and troubles of socially constructed gender and sexual identities and critiquing hegemonic notions of normativity and deviance. Queer pedagogy views the classroom and the curriculum as sites for admitting specific perceived differences among individuals. (p. 182)

In addition to providing students the opportunity to recognize the paradoxes of their own experiences, queer consciousness represents an ongoing process that continuously challenges both the oppressor and the oppressed to understand their oppression in new ways. In "Getting Queer: Teacher Education, Gender Studies, and the Cross-Disciplinary Quest for Queer Pedagogies," Reta Whitlock (2010) describes a presentation in her Queer Studies class in which one of her gay students describes his queer consciousness:

> In closing, he said he had taken the class because it was "gay," but throughout the course of the semester he had watched as the class had formed important bonds, he reported. "There are people in this class that I would not have spoken to. Have seen at the coffee shop downstairs and *not* spoken to. Because they were different. Transgendered. Here I thought Robert, assimilationist gay man I had assumed him to be, would make a statement about tolerance, wherein he had learned to view his fellow transclassmates as people, too. I had expected for calls of representations of a knowable, always accessible, conscious self who progresses, with the help of autobiographical inquiry, from ignorance to knowledge of self [and] other. Instead, Robert ended his presentation with a rejection of normalized versions of a tolerance discourse and questioned his own identity and its instability. He spoke and wrote into existence, denaturalized ways of being that are obscured or simply unthinkable when one centered, self-knowing story is substituted for another. Robert was not tolerant of others; rather, through his growing awareness of himself *as* a Self resistant to normative sexual, gender, and biological boundaries, Robert was owning his queerness and putting (him)Self in relation with the Other. (pp. 88-89)

The goal of queer consciousness, according to Lovaas et al. (2002), "is not that pedagogy become sexed, but that it excavate and interpret the ways it already is sexed—and further, that it inquire into the ways it is heterosexed" (p. 182). Once queer consciousness reveals to both the oppressed and the oppressor how their pedagogy has been "heterosexed" they can both begin the process of what Paul C. Reece-Miller and Hidehiro Endo (2010) describe as the process of *unlearning*:

> A provocative perspective on the interaction between scholarship and activism by personifying them, and noting that these two kids are anything but (hetero/homo)-normative, since, like the heterogeneous practices of queer sex, the tools *and* the trade *mean* things and *do* things hetero-geneously and co-constitutively in time and space. Suggesting a pedagogy giving space to an articulation of what "ought to be." A pedagogy that focuses on putting theory into practice by describing how someone can benefit from the privileges of their background, and how they can take this newly found understanding through "unlearning" and implemented it their own teaching. (p. 3)

Queer Love

In her writings on Paulo Freire, Antonia Darder (2002) attests to the manner in which love provides "the foundation for his pedagogy of liberation" (p. 53). Hence, in addition to his unwavering commitment to "condemn forces of exploitation and dehumanization" and "articulate a set of values based on compassion and respect for all human beings" (Weiler, 2001b, p. 74), Freire embraced a transformative pedagogical practice rooted in an *armed love*, which could function to both challenge and reinvent conditions of educational injustice and social oppression.

Ultimately in the end, Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education is at the heart a practice seated in the act of teaching and learning. In *Teaching as an Act of Love: In Memory of Paulo Freire,* Darder (1998) writes:

> Paulo argued passionately that teaching was a task that required a love for the very act of teaching; for only through such love could the political project of schooling become transformative and liberating. Hence, it could never be enough to teach only with critical

reason. Instead, Paulo fervently argued that we must dare to do all things with feeling, dreams, wishes, fear, doubts, and passion. (p. 11)

This study has already explored queer love or radical love in the previous chapter, but suffice it to say that Freire's transformative love—one that dissolves the boundaries that separate the oppressed and the oppressor—is the same love that drives this study's understanding of Critical Queer Pedagogy. In *Radical Love: Introduction to Queer Theology*, Cheng (2011) writes, "This self-revelation is grounded in God's love for us, and it is a radical kind of love because it dissolves existing boundaries that separate the divine from the human, the powerful from the weak, and knowing from unknowing" (p. 48). Indeed, Freire's work of articulating an emancipatory educational practice of dialogue, praxis, consciousness, and love, as understood through the lens of Critical Queer Pedagogy, is at the heart of Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education; and this is why his work serves as the foundation for this study.

Bringing the Major Concepts Together

In the beginning, the study presents possible nascent pedagogical spaces for gay and lesbian children within the context of the Mission of Catholic Schools and Catholic Social Justice. As the study progressed, it is revealed that Catholic teachings regarding homosexuality prevent the Mission of Catholic Schools and Catholic Social Justice from fully embracing gay and lesbian children. It is further revealed that this teaching also maintains mechanisms for institutional resistance to any type of academic or spiritual dialogue regarding homosexuality. This lack of conceptual space, forced the study to look beyond Catholic understanding to a field known as Queer Theology. Queer theology offered a conceptualization of sexuality that was open to dialogue and appeared to address the academic and spiritual criticisms of Catholic

teachings regarding homosexuality. As the study took shape it began to identify ways in which the Mission of Catholic Schools and Catholic Social Justice could be supported by specific concepts within Queer Theology, a Queer/Catholic dialogue began to emerge. Finally, the study looked at the work of Paulo Freire and introduced the major concepts of Critical Pedagogy: love, dialogue, praxis and consciousness through a queer lens. The Queer/Catholic dialogue was then viewed through the principles of a Critical Queer Pedagogy eventually creating the principles of Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education: Critical Queer Catholic Praxis, Critical Queer Catholic Dialogue, and Radical Queer Catholic Love. The following section highlights the major concepts of: the Mission of Catholic Schools, Catholic Social Justice, Queer Theology, and Critical Queer Pedagogy.

Mission of Catholic Schools

The literature focused on three aspects of the Mission of Catholic schools: the promotion of cooperation and intellectual diversity, advocacy for the powerless, and the common good (Bryk et al., 1993; Buetow, 2002; The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977; Wyss, 2004). The literature suggests that any one of these three concepts imbedded in the Mission of Catholic schools should be sufficient in bringing about social justice for gay and lesbian students; however, this does not appear to be the case.

At the risk of oversimplifying the issue, Catholic schools, like any other institution, can demonstrate a range of socio-political and cultural responses to gay children that could be distilled into one of three categories: progressive/liberal, centrist/moderate, or conservative. Based on the research, if we simply look at the progressive/liberal Catholic schools, the schools most likely to help gay and lesbian children, it is clear that nothing is being done or that a policy

of silence is being actively enforced or encouraged. Even when we appreciate the wide range of individual responses caring educators have made on behalf gay and lesbian children, the institutions themselves often remain silent (Maher, 2007; Maher & Sever, 2007) leaving students unprotected and abandoned as they traverse the difficult terrain.

Catholic Social Justice

The study then moved beyond Catholic schools to see if any aspect of Catholic Social Justice teachings could compel Catholic schools to respond. The literature in this section identified five of the 10 principles within Catholic social teaching that would eventually become the basis of Catholic Social Justice within Catholic schools. The principles are: Human Dignity, Respect for Human Life, Association, Participation, Preferential Protection for the Poor and Vulnerable, Solidarity, Stewardship, Subsidiarity, Human Equality, and Common Good (Bryk et al., 1993; Byron, 2009; Catholic Church, 1993; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004). Catholic Social Justice was then introduced as a unique expression of Catholic faith and separate from Catholic social teaching. Catholic Social Justice was described as the commitment to become a transformative force for good that goes beyond the mere teaching of gospel values (Bryk et al., 1993; Dorr, 2012; Heft, 2009; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004; The World Synod of Bishops, 1971).

For gay and lesbian Catholics, this concept of social justice has been replaced by a message that focuses more on condemnation and rule following then grace and pastoral care (Catholic Church 1994; The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1986, 1992, 2012; Spadaro, 2013; USCCB, 1997). This has resulted in the isolation of gay and lesbian Catholics, resulting in possibly more violence against them and the risk of feeling isolated and alienated

from their faith (Blumenfeld, 2000; Maher, 2007; Maher & Sever, 2007; Martin & Litton, 2004; Spadaro, 2013).

Queer Theology

The desire to find an answer continued to drive the research into a new field previously untapped by Catholic theologians known as Queer Theology. Queer Theory and more specifically Queer Theology were selected because both of these fields appear to address some of the concerns brought up in critiques of Catholic teachings on sexuality, biblical interpretation, and the role of love. Queer Theology argues against "absolute, essentialist, or fixed" (Cheng, 2011, p. 7) notions of gender and sexuality and warns about assuming these qualities as natural. Queer Theology introduces the idea that gender and sexuality are constructs that reflect more of the needs and desires of a culture at a specific socio-historical moment than of any divinely understood plan (Cheng, 2011; Foucault, 1990; Halperin, 1989).

Queer Theorists argue that at this present socio-historical moment, gender and sexuality have been constructed to suppress queer voices (Brett et al., 1994; Butler, 2007; Creekmur & Doty, 1995a; Doty, 1993; Merk, 2005). Specifically, Queer theologians argue that this suppression enforces a spirituality dominated by the voice of a single heterosexual narrative (Althaus-Reid, 2000; Cheng, 2011; Edgar & Sedgwick, 2007; Stuart, 2003). Queer theologians have actively sought openings for dialogue with Christian theologians, resulting in varying levels of success (Cheng, 2011; Stuart, 2003); however, conversations within the Catholic Church have been consistently sought out and silenced by church authorities (Frawley-O'Dea, 2007; McNeill, 1993; Stuart, 2003).

Yet, the Church's responses have not stopped conversations from happening elsewhere (Cheng, 2011; Scanzoni & Mollenkott, 1994), which has allowed Queer Theology to explore spirituality without direct Catholic interference. As a consequence, Queer Theology has taken a radical transgressive approach to looking at spirituality (Cheng, 2011; Cleaver, 1995; Cornwall, 2011; Farley, 2006; Michaelson, 2011; Shore-Goss, 1993). Even in this seemingly difficult climate, some Catholic theologians, devout in their faith, are trying to reconcile Church teachings and sexuality (Farley, 2006; Lovatt, 2012).

Following along those same lines, the study then explored whether there is room for a queer perspective in current Catholic theology by first addressing the authority of the Catholic Church to teach about sexuality (Catholic Church, 1994; Paul VI, 1965c; St. Ambrose, n.d./1896). It is here that the study introduced an analysis that questions the roles that tradition, authority, and scripture have in Catholic teaching particularly within the context of sexuality and suggested possible avenues via which dialogue about sexuality can occur (Boswell, 2005; Brown, 2008; Ellison, 1996; Farley, 2006; Jordan 2003; Loughlin, 2007a; Lovatt, 2012).

The concept of the queered Christ was then introduced—a figure that represents an unconditional love that transgresses heterosexist notions of love and the sexual prohibitions it supports (Cheng, 2011, 2012; Jordan, 2003; Quero, 2008). The study then demonstrated that this idea of a queer love does not contradict Catholic theology and social justice (Benedict XVI, 2005; Borg, 2006; Boswell, 2005; Cheng, 2011; Farley, 2006; Loughlin, 2007a; Wojtyla, 1993).

Critical Queer Pedagogy

This chapter began by introducing Paulo Freire and the core principles of critical pedagogy: dialogue, love, praxis, and consciousness (Brenden, 2005; Darder, 2002; Freire, 1970;

Gonzalez, 2005; hooks, 1994; Kincheloe, 2008; Lewis, 2012; Meyer, 2007), from a critical queer lens. It then continued by discussing the perceived limitations of critical pedagogy and the emergence of a Critical Queer Pedagogy (Luhmann, 1998; McDonough, 2007). Critical Queer Pedagogy introduces two new principles to address these limitations: resisting heterosexual dominance and the instability of sexual identity (Bryson & de Castell, 1993; Meyer, 2007; Reece-Miller & Endo, 2010) and rereads the Critical Pedagogy through a queer lens (Meyer, 2007; Kincheloe, 2008; Weiler, 2001b), introducing the following concepts: queer dialogue (Freire, 1970; Kessel & Hackford-Peer, 2014; Mayo, 2009; McDonough, 2007), queer praxis (Bryson & Castell, 1993; Freire, 1970; Grace & Wells, 2007), queer consciousness (Freire, 1970; Lovaas et al., 2002; Reece-Miller & Endo, 2010; Whitlock, 2010; see Figure 4.1).

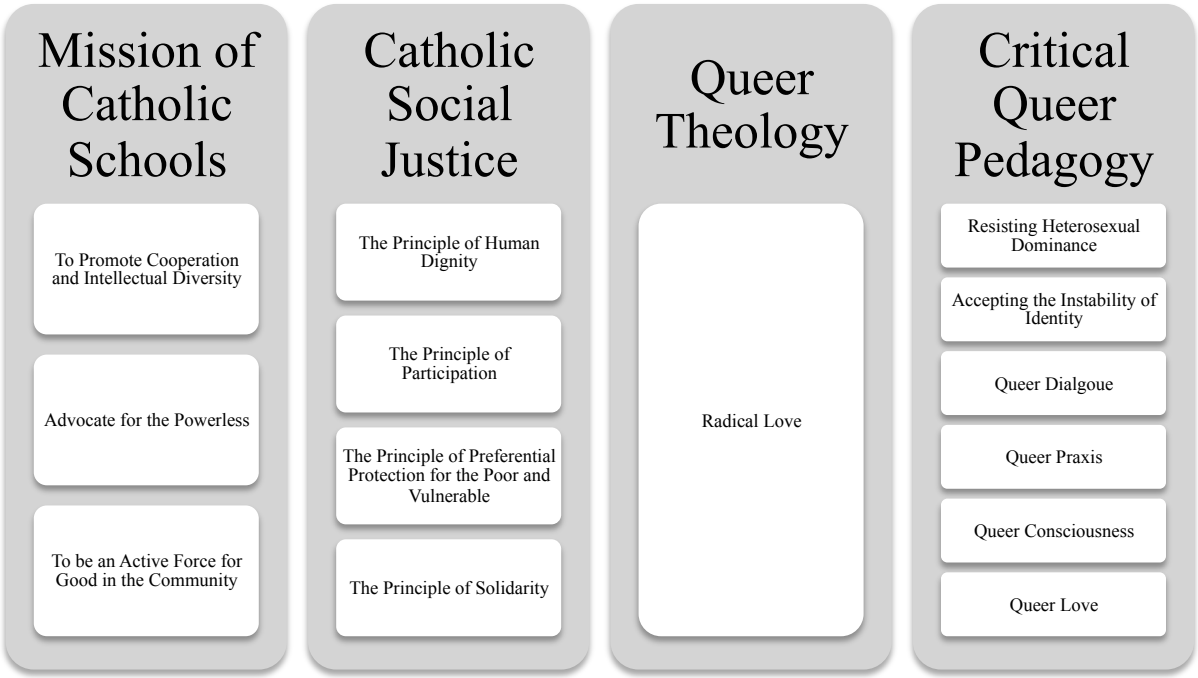

Figure 5.1. The Major Bodies of Literature Presented in a Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education.

Foundational Principles for a Critical Queer Pedagogy for Catholic Education

For the next part of the study, I will take queer dialogue, queer love, queer praxis and queer consciousness and ground it in Catholic literature in order to illuminate the significance of a critical queer pedagogy specifically for Catholic education. These new critical queer Catholic principles will become the foundational principles of Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education (see Figures 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4).

The Principle of Critical Queer Catholic Dialogue

The principle of Critical Queer Catholic Dialogue is an important aspect of Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education that draws from the literature related to Catholic schools, interviews with Pope Francis and Critical Queer Pedagogy's queer praxis and queer dialogue (see Figure 5.2). In order to understand what makes Critical Queer Catholic Dialogue different from simply Catholic dialogue, one must first understand what Catholic dialogue is. In terms of Catholic literature, the understanding of Catholic dialogue is generated in two areas of the study. The first comes from Pope Francis (as cited in Spadaro, 2013) himself who states:

> The ministers of the Gospel must be people who can warm the hearts of the people, who walk through the dark night with them, who know how to dialogue and to descend themselves into their people's night, into the darkness, but without getting lost. (p. 24)

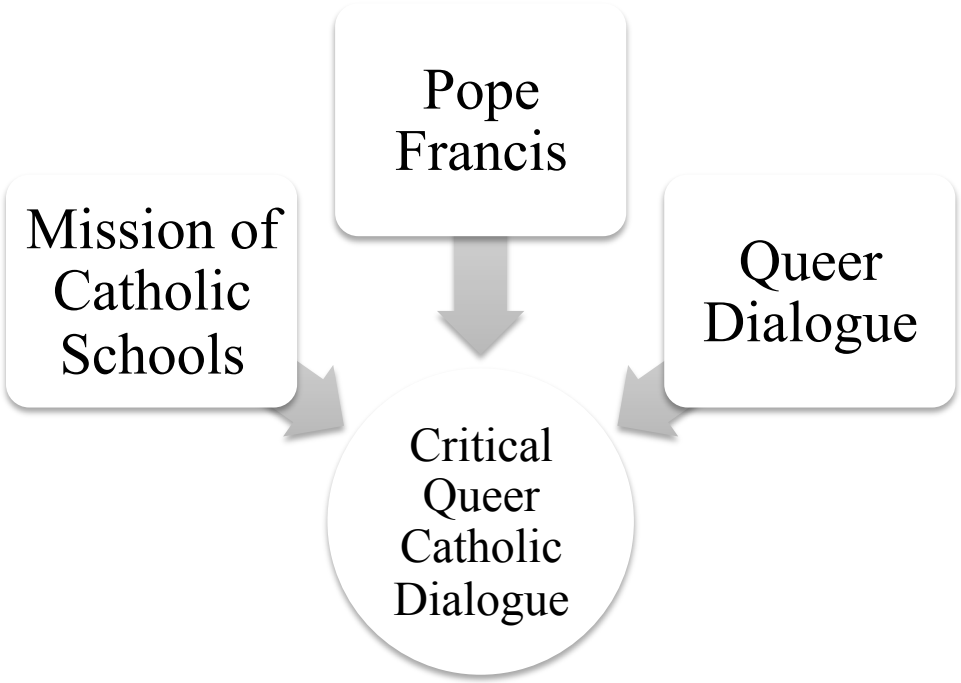

Figure 5.2. Diagram of the Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education Principle of Critical Queer Catholic Dialogue.

Pope Francis' invitation to members of the Church to become part of a dialogue and to be with those they encounter is consistent with the mission of Catholic Schools. The values of Catholic Schools are to promote cooperation and intellectual diversity, to advocate for the powerless, and to be an active force for good in the community.

In their interpretation of *The Catholic School*, Bryk et al. (1993) see that "when combined with the ethos of 'freedom in what is doubtful and charity in everything' the spirit of *The Catholic School* invites not submission but dialogue and encounter" (p. 54). However, Maher (2007) notes that "silence is the overall response to the topic of homosexuality," and in some cases "schools also reinforce in more subtle ways a preferential status for heterosexuality" (p. 454). This important aspect of Catholic dialogue would suggest that the quality and nature of

the dialogue must change through the incorporation of a Critical Queer Pedagogical approach to dialogue.

For Critical Queer Catholic Dialogue to exist, it will have to incorporate critical Queer Pedagogy's concept of queer dialogue and its active resistance of heterosexual dominance (Bryson & de Castell, 1993; Meyer, 2007) to counteract this "preferential status for heterosexuality" (Maher, 2007, p. 454). In so doing, Critical Queer Catholic Dialogue allows students to live their own sexual identities and allows them to recognize their queerness, without shame or negative repercussions (McDonough, 2007). Within this pedagogical space students will be able to struggle "over and co-construct" (Kessel & Hackford-Peer, 2014, p. 63) the meaning of their sexual identities consistent with what Bryk et al. (1993) call "the ethos of 'freedom in what is doubtful and charity in everything' the spirit of *The Catholic School* invites not submission but dialogue and encounter" (p. 54).

The principle of Critical Queer Catholic Dialogue invites both the Catholic school and gay and lesbian children to develop a Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education together. Freire (1970) writes, "No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors" (p. 53). The dialogue must be genuine and not the product of the "false generosity of paternalism" or "it would be a contradiction in terms if the oppressors not only defended but actually implemented a liberating education" (p. 54).

The Principle of Critical Queer Catholic Praxis

This principle of Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education is based on a reconceptualization of Catholic Social Justice through the lens of critical queer

pedagogy's queer praxis and queer consciousness (see Figure 5.3). Catholic Social Justice was first introduced as an offshoot of Catholic social teaching. After closely analyzing Byron (2009)'s article, "Ten Building Blocks of Catholic Social Teaching," five principles of social teaching emerged that were grouped into one of two groups. The first group of principles implies that all gay and lesbian students have an inherent right to be treated with dignity and respect and worthy of support in their efforts as members of the Catholic Church. The second group of principles directs the Church, Catholic schools, and society to work together to respond to any type of social injustice gay and lesbian students are facing. What is important in this principle of Critical Queer Catholic Praxis is how Catholic Social Teaching transitions to a contemporary understanding of Catholic Social Justice.

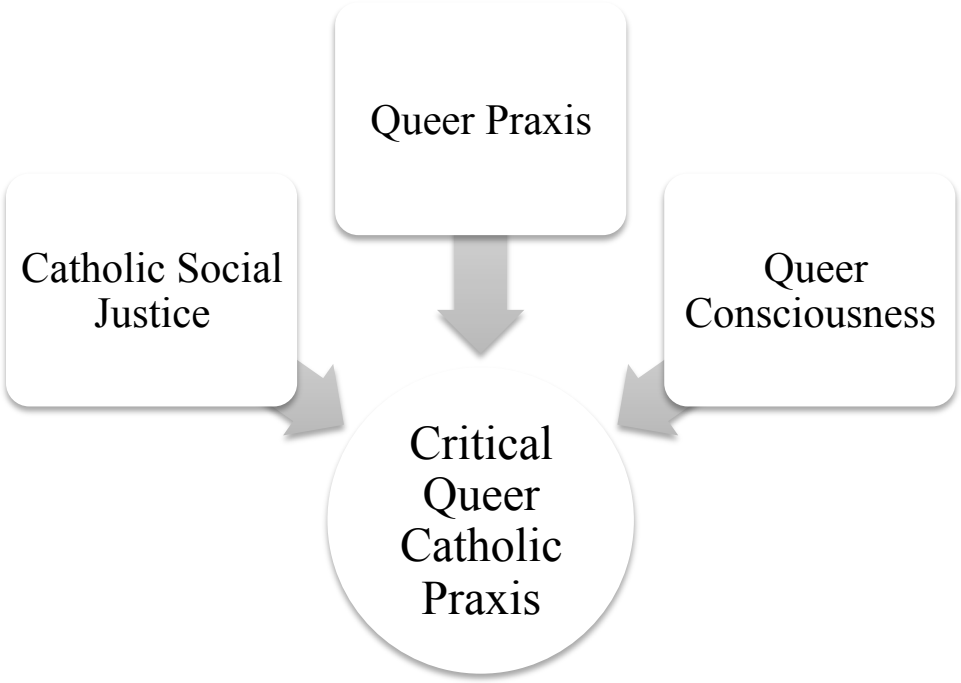

Figure 5.3. Diagram of the Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education Principle of Critical Queer Catholic Praxis.

Catholic Social Justice came into being because of two different, but equally important, components; the first is a call to action as presented through a proclamation from The World Synod of Bishops (1971) in *Justice in the World*:

> The mission of preaching the Gospel dictates at the present time that we should dedicate ourselves to the liberation of people even in their present existence in this world. For unless the Christian message of love and justice shows its effectiveness through action in the cause of justice in the world, it will only with difficulty gain credibility with the people of our times. (para. 35)

The second component of Catholic Social Justice comes from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (2004), who acknowledge that social justice in the Church is continually evolving, based on the "passing of time and the changing of social circumstances" and, consequently, "will require a constant updating of the reflections on the various issues raised here, in order to interpret the new signs of the times" (para. 9). This assertion suggests the critical role that reflection plays in Catholic Social Justice. Catholic Social Justice's two dimensions of action and reflection constitute a Catholic notion of praxis that could be roughly compared to Freire's (1970) conceptualization of praxis within the Critical Pedagogy:

> But human activity consists of action and reflection: it is praxis; it is transformation of the world. And as praxis, it requires theory to illuminate it. Human activity is theory and practice; it is reflection and action. Revolution is achieved with neither verbalism nor activism, but rather with praxis, that is, with *reflection* and *action* directed at the structures to be transformed. (p. 125)

With this said, this study demonstrates consistently that Catholic Social Justice is either unable or, till now, unwilling to address the needs of gay and lesbian children and in so doing it only serves as a reminder that Catholic Social Justice praxis is not "directed at the structures to be transformed" (Freire, 1970, p. 125). It should not come then as a surprise that the Catholic notion of praxis does not fully represent the "true praxis" of Freire:

> In order to dominate, the dominator has no choice but to deny true praxis to the people, deny them the right to say their own word and think their own thoughts. He and she cannot act dialogically; for to do so would mean either that they had relinquished their power to dominate and joined the cause of the oppressed, or had lost that power through miscalculation. (Freire, 1970, p.126)

In fact, throughout this study there have been numerous examples of how Catholic Social Justice Praxis is still locked in a narrow application of Church teaching. To counteract this characteristic of Catholic Social Justice praxis, there appears to be a need for a new pedagogical approach that "deliberately takes the wrong route" and values "actively *queering* pedagogy" (Bryson & Castell, 1993, p. 299). Bryson and de Castell (1993) argue for a "queer praxis" that focuses on "refashioning pedagogy in the face of the myriad institutionally sanctioned 'diversity management' programs that, today, threaten to crowd out and silence most opportunities for radical emancipatory praxis" (p. 299). The queering of this Catholic notion of praxis eventually leads to a Critical Queer Catholic Praxis, a principle of Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education.

However, it is worth noting that in the queering of praxis this does not mean that Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education is advocating for any type of

pedagogical practice that is dominated by gay and lesbian realities, which would only reverse the roles of oppressed and oppressor. Rather, as Freire (1970) states:

> The oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. The reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation. (p. 54)

Within the context of queer praxis, Bryson and de Castell (1993) "envision praxis—typically conceptualized as reflexive, re-constitutive action—as a necessary corrective to the often overly abstract, aesthetically self-indulgent, politically ambivalent, and obtusely textualized forms of postmodern theorizing" (p. 288).

Encompassed by the principle of Critical Queer Catholic Praxis is the concept of queer consciousness. Lovaas et al. (2002) describe queer consciousness as the logical result of "engaging students in recognizing the paradoxes and troubles of socially constructed gender and sexual identities and critiquing hegemonic notions of normativity and deviance" (p. 182). Freire (1970) calls this a "problem-posing education that bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action" and just like queer praxis, a problem-posing education "accepts neither a well-behaved present nor a predetermined future—roots itself in the dynamic present and becomes revolutionary" (p. 84).

The Principle of Radical Queer Catholic Love

The principle of Radical Queer Catholic Love joins together the analytic strengths derived from both the traditions of Catholic Love/Agape and Radical Queer Love (see Figure 5.4). As discussed earlier, Queer Theology has identified a radicalized love that offers promise

for gay and lesbians, through the possibility of being accepted for who they are versus what the Church wants them to become. In Queer Theology, Jesus Christ is the *embodiment of radical love* that accepts everyone no matter who they are or what they have done:

> Radical love is understood as a love so extreme that it dissolves boundaries, then Jesus Christ is the living embodiment of the dissolution of boundaries. Through his ministry, Jesus constantly dissolved the religious and social boundaries of his time. He ate with tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners. He touched "unclean" people such a lepers and bleeding women. He spoke with social outcasts such as Samaritans. In other words, Jesus Christ dissolved the "holy" boundaries of clean and unclean, holy and profane, and saint and sinner. He challenged the religious and political authorities of his day—to such an extent that he was ultimately put to death. (Cheng, 2011, pp. 78-80)

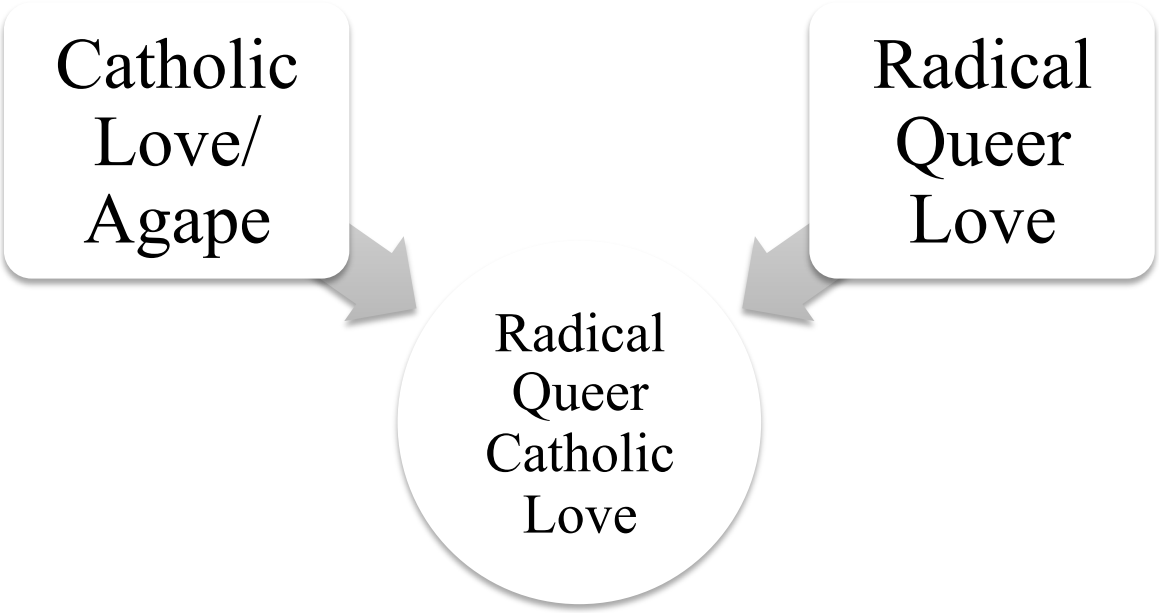

Figure 5.4. Diagram of the Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education Principle of Radical Queer Catholic Love.

Queer Theology's radicalized love may not be new, in fact I would argue that it has been part of Catholic Tradition all along, but could not be fully revealed or expressed because Catholic Theology has actively suppressed theological spaces to explore this notion of love. I would argue that the love of Catholic Theology and Queer Theology can be one in the same, and once Catholic teaching is properly deconstructed and transformed through a emancipatory pedagogy, then the traditional notion of love that the Catholic Church teaches will become something similar to the radical love of Queer Theology, a transgressive, assertive, and liberating force, tied directly to the character of Christ:

> As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another. (John 15: 9-17)

This unconditional love or agape as demonstrated by Jesus' willingness to die for our sins is the consistent expression of love that Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education is suggesting and is at the heart of this project: the willingness to give oneself to the

other—to the point of death. However, Radical Queer Catholic Love is not fixated on death or one side dying for the other.

However, death is only one of the two components that make up Radical Queer Catholic Love, the other being the act of rebirthing. The idea of rebirth is an essential aspect of this transgressive act of love that Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education is proposing; because the event of rebirth acts as a transformative event, an event that could not happen without death. In other words, rebirth has no significance without the act of death, signifying the end of a previous (oppressive) state, and in a similar way, without rebirth, death becomes the final event where there can be no further transformation. For Freire (1970), this final event of death becomes the opposite of love:

> Sadistic love is a perverted love—a love of death, not of life. One of the characteristics of the oppressor consciousness and its necrophilic view of the world is thus sadism. As the oppressor consciousness, in order to dominate, tries to deter the drive to search, the restlessness, and the creative power which characterize life, it kills life. (pp. 59-60)

Therefore, the transgressive, radical love of Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education is then composed of two elements: the element of death and the critical element of rebirth. This notion of death and rebirth, the transformation from one state to another, for Freire, is a "conversion to the people requires a profound rebirth. Those who undergo it must take on a new form of existence; they can no longer remain as they were" (p. 61).

For Freire (1970) this rebirth signals a new relationship between the former oppressor and oppressed, "founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust" (p. 91). Freire uses the image of the slave as the precursor

state before the rebirth and the act of love, noting that "rebirth can occur—not gratuitously, but in and through the struggle for liberation—in the supersedence of slave labor by emancipated labor which gives zest to life" (p. 91). In a similar way, Jesus brings about the image of the freed slave as the end result of the transformative experience of love:

> This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another. (John 15:12-17)

For Jesus, the act of love "rebirths" the relationship between the master and slave to one of friendship and equality. Similarly, in Freire's work, the act of rebirthing initiates a new relationship "founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialogues is the logical consequence" (p. 91). In Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education, no child is beyond the Radical Queer Catholic Love that is both unconditional and transformative. Hence, this queer critical pedagogy for Catholic education is founded upon a radical love that inspires hope, solidarity, and liberation for all people.

CHAPTER SIX

A PLACE TO BELONG

> With this in mind, this Congregation wishes to ask the Bishops to be especially cautious of any programmes which may seek to pressure the Church to change her teaching, even while claiming not to do so. A careful examination of their public statements and the activities they promote reveals a studied ambiguity by which they attempt to mislead the pastors and the faithful. For example, they may present the teaching of the Magisterium, but only as if it were an optional source for the formation of one's conscience. Its specific authority is not recognized. Some of these groups will use the word "Catholic" to describe either the organization or its intended members, yet they do not defend and promote the teaching of the Magisterium; indeed, they even openly attack it. While their members may claim a desire to conform their lives to the teaching of Jesus, in fact they abandon the teaching of his Church. This contradictory action should not have the support of the Bishops in any way. (Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, 1986, para. 14)

The preceding quote highlights my acute awareness that those in a position to implement change may not embrace the intent of this study, perhaps even the entire project for that matter, with an open mind. It is my sincere hope that my fellow Catholics receive this project in the same way it was given—in the spirit of good will, in service of our holy Church, and the urgent needs of gay and lesbian children in Catholic schools. This final chapter will demonstrate my thoughtful approach to the issue and how it evolved into the final project before you.

The Development of the Study

When I first embarked on this project my hope was to conduct a school climate study of gay and lesbians in a Catholic High Schools in Los Angeles. It felt appropriate because at the time there was a rash of violence incidents against gay and lesbian children and a number of highly publicized suicides by gay and lesbian children. I wanted to replicate climate studies that have been conducted in public schools, and based on my initial research it seemed that something like this had never been attempted in Catholic schools.

I decided to spend a year contacting various schools, organizing my literature, and developing various school climate studies, but as the year progressed I began to notice something unexpected. It started when I would discuss my plans with Catholic school colleagues I had known for years—their reaction was either shock or genuine concern for my safety—not the physical kind, but the professional. They thought I could lose my job for even suggesting that there were gay and lesbian kids in Catholic schools let alone something bad was happening to them. They agreed that a school climate study was badly needed, but did not think that "schools are ready for this" or the "Church will allow it." Their concerns appeared to be valid, as one Catholic school after another politely declined to participate in my study or in some cases never even bothered to return my call. This lack of interest was only compounded with what I was finding in the research; there was a dearth of knowledge and I was only able to identify two researchers who recently (in the past 10 years) wrote explicitly about gay and lesbian students in Catholic schools. Anything beyond these two researchers, appeared to be from other countries with their own unique circumstances, which limited my ability to adapt it for the purposes of my study because it focused on the lived realities of children in the United States.

It took me a year of phone calls and research to realize that this project would be impossible to do, but I still refused to think that Catholic schools, once educated about the harassment, violence, and bullying of gay and lesbian children, would permit it to continue. I honestly felt that Catholic schools seeing the highly publicized suicides of gay and lesbian children would use any and all available means to understand and address this issue, but I started to realize I could be wrong. Something within Catholic schools was preventing them from acting out their mission and social justice values fully and gave them tacit permission to remain ambivalent or out right hostile to the issues of gay and lesbian children. This institutional resistance to doing what I thought was right started to become the new focus of my study.

The study set out to understand and deconstruct the institutional resistance that is preventing Catholic schools from protecting the one of the most vulnerable populations within its care. When I began the project I honestly believed that once this resistance was properly understood, I could use Catholic Social Justice teachings and the Mission of Catholic schools to design a theoretical framework that could be used to interrupt these isolated events of social injustice against gay and lesbian children. However, as I researched Catholic teaching, I began to see a pattern of responses towards gay and lesbians that permeated the entire organization, not just within its schools. In fact, the intensity and extent of this reaction to gay and lesbians was so powerful it was able to dominate other teachings of the Catholic Church, including social justice teachings. This revelation was both surprising and disturbing to me as a gay Catholic, and it challenged my faith in the Church on more than one occasion. Rather than give up, I began to realize that if my goal was to provide a pedagogical space for future researchers, teachers, and children to explore and celebrate their Catholic and sexual identity, I would have to look beyond

Catholic schools and Catholic Social Justice teachings to a theological space almost beyond the influence of Catholicism, which is where I found Queer Theology and Queer Critical Pedagogy.

Queer theorists provided the grounding for a new theoretical framework that is deeply connected with Critical Pedagogy and Catholic teaching called Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education. This theoretical framework has three underlying principles: Critical Queer Catholic Dialogue, Critical Queer Catholic Praxis, and Radical Queer Catholic Love. These core principles are rooted in the idea that children need a voice and to be given an opportunity to articulate their reality. Because we have a profound and abiding love for them, educators have a responsibility to establish a space for this to happen. These three principles represent the final product of this study: a theoretical argument for a pedagogical place for gay and lesbian children in Catholic schools to feel safe.

The Impact of this Study

Catholic Schools

My vision of Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education within Catholic classrooms is both ambitious and small. I would like to see a faculty advisor and a group of students be allowed to gather and talk about their day without having to hide who they are, what they did, or who they love. I want to imagine a courageous Catholic school administrator who would rather find a loving and thoughtful approach to gay and lesbian issues rather than permit silence on the issue. I would like to see students speaking up when they see comments or actions that violate their own definitions of social justice. This is a short list of images that come to mind when I think of Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic

Education. I would like these to be the images that come to mind when I think of Catholic schools.

Catholic Social Justice

It is my hope that concerned Catholics understand my deep respect for our social justice teachings. Even with such respect, it saddens me that the Church has not responded to the urgent need of gay and lesbian children. I would like to think that this study will awaken within Catholic Social Justice its potential to make a real difference for a vulnerable and subjugated community. Even if the Church rejects my interpretations of our social justice teachings, I also hope that studies like this will encourage more scholars to look at how Catholic Social Justice and Catholic education can intersect.

Queer Theology/Pedagogy

I would like to think that this study will encourage queer theorists to take a second look at Catholic theology and the amazing contributions Catholic thinkers can make in the field. I took great pains to demonstrate in this study the wide range of opinions the Church holds on many issues, in order to demonstrate that the Church is not a single monolithic institution but an institution with many voices, some of which emphasized much more than others. If theologians can reach across this academic divide and listen to each other, then real spiritual reconciliation can occur. I hope that this study has made some sort of contribution to that reconciliation.

Conclusion

I am ambivalent about the contribution of this study to the aforementioned vision. This study will only be as important or significant as the teachers and students who have the courage

to undertake the project that is Critical Queer Pedagogy for Social Justice in Catholic Education. Without them, this study will only disappear within the stacks of other intellectual exercises.

When I started this project I was told that it would scandalize my career and destroy any hopes of me continuing to work in the Church. I would agree. There is a scandal here, but it is not of my making. It is a scandal that comes from silence, a silence that prevents the most vulnerable from having a voice. My hope is that the Church has learned from its past and will see that silence about an issue is no solution. Moreover, I hope that the Church will not have to suffer the scandal that awaits should their silence be met with a suicide or a murder. This outcome is morally and theologically unacceptable. We are all children of God; because of that, we all deserve better. In this case, I think we are in a position to make it better.

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