

**Consent Based Catholic Sex Education:
Moving towards a more inclusive model of sex education, reproductive
education, and consent education**

By Melissa Cedillo
Professor Dan McKanan and Natalie Malter

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I write this paper as someone who identifies as Catholic and attended a Catholic high school. I was not raised with religion, but at the age of eighteen I decided to undergo the proper initiations to become Catholic. Converts to Catholicism can often remember the moments that called us to the faith: I chose to become Catholic out of a place of love, attracted by the community and the commitment to justice.

Seven years later, I write this as someone who has often been frustrated by the Catholic Church. The on-going sex abuse crisis, the allegiance to white supremacy, the hatred towards the LGBTQ+ community, and the male centeredness of it all can be enough to make someone leave—and I have thought about leaving but, it is the teachings around community, creation, the sacredness of humanity and the Catholic women in my life that keep me here.

This paper is for those who can remember a time where they loved their Catholic faith fully, and for those who know that being Catholic will always be part of them. This paper is written for those who know consensual sex and reproductive health are beautiful, and it is written for those who have been deeply hurt by the Church, but fight like hell to stay, and profess that, like myself, they are still part of this Church body.

This paper will show that Catholic sex education needs an update immediately. I argue that Catholic sex education should move towards a model that is based on consent, that teaches comprehensive reproductive education, and that is culturally competent. Utilizing sources that have been produced by the Catholic Church, the resources from the Loyola Marymount University Cares program, and from survey respondents themselves, I begin to lay out what a new form of inclusive sex education in the spirit of Catholic teaching can look like and how to reduce further harm from occurring.

For the Very First Time

I can still remember the first time I learned about consent. My undergraduate university, Loyola Marymount University (LMU)¹, required all freshman students to take a series of courses to learn about bystander intervention, healthy relationships, and consent.² As the facilitator scrolled through her presentation and started to define consent, I felt something in the pit of the stomach. *Wait, consent should be on-going? You can say no to someone you are dating? What did this mean for my physical interactions up to this point that were technically non-consensual?* Aside from the biological description of intercourse, I had only learned a few things about sex by that point: I had learned that sex should only happen between a married man and woman and to never use contraception because it was a sin, whatever extra knowledge I had about sex was from friends, the internet, and movies. I had not learned how critical consent is for healthy relationships and for upholding the dignity of others, it was as a freshman in college that I truly learned about consent for the first time.

As a new Catholic, I was alarmed that my Catholic high school had skimmed over consent. My research and my experience as a Catholic have shown me that there are many Catholics or graduates of Catholic education who do not know how to talk about sex or do not think Catholics are allowed to talk about sex. There are even more Catholics who have never learned about consent and unknowingly participate in nonconsensual sexual relations. This inspired me to create an online survey³ that allowed graduates of Catholic high school to anonymously evaluate their Catholic sex education, allowing space to talk about what people appreciated and

¹ 'What is Consent?', LMU Cares, Loyola Marymount University, last modified 2021, <https://studentaffairs.lmu.edu/wellness/lmucare/education/whatisconsent/>.

² In this presentation they defined consent as, 'clearing, coherent, willing, and ongoing'.

³ The survey has been included in 'Appendix A' at the end of the paper.

what people wished they had learned. Before laying out the body of the paper I must talk about where I am writing from and my own biases.

I write as someone who identifies as a heterosexual woman and also as a Chicana. I also write as someone who has a brown body and has often felt that my body is not viewed as equally sacred in the Church's teaching about sex. This point of view is significant because the Catholic Church in the United States is currently witnessing a demographic shift in which the Church body is becoming less white.⁴ The racialization of non-white bodies can also bring up notions of shame making it even more difficult to talk about consent. Throughout my time in Catholic high school it felt like there was an unspoken preference for women to have lighter and thinner bodies. The heavier and the darker the body, the less it seemed to be equated with holiness. In my experience, this was reflected in who was most likely to be dress coded, who teachers were most likely to treat with respect and how weight gain was talked about, especially when it came to white teachers commenting on the bodies of Black and Brown students.

This paper will begin by giving special attention to the on-going sex abuse crisis in the Catholic Church and how this has impacted teachings around sex education. Next, the paper will take a closer look at the demographic change happening in the Church and what this means for Latinx Catholic. Then, the paper will examine three Church documents that influence the way sex education is taught in Catholic high schools. Subsequently, I will analyze responses I received to the online survey. Lastly, based on the survey results, the paper will begin to imagine what a different Catholic sex education could like that is grounded in consent. The Church's on-going sex abuse crisis is one glaring example of the immediate need for a more comprehensive Catholic sex education.

⁴ *The Church is Changing* section of this paper addresses this in detail.

Talking About Consent in a Church with a Sex Abuse Crisis

In 2002, the Boston Globe led an investigation that would forever change the Catholic Church in the United States. This report by the Globe revealed that the Archdiocese of Boston had covered up a decade worth of child molestation claims against at least 70 or more priests.⁵ Further, this investigation reported that there were clergy involved at all levels who were aware of these issues and participated in a system that allowed sex abuse to occur. In response to this news, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops met to create the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. This document established a ‘zero tolerance’ policy for accused abusers and mandated that all allegations of child sex abuse by clergy must be turned over to law enforcement. The focus of this charter was to create a safe environment for children and young people, healing and reconciliation for victims and survivors, and a system of accountability for the future.⁶

Then in the fall of 2019, the Pennsylvania grand jury report implicated 300 priests in the sex abuse of over 1,000 minors across six of the state’s eight dioceses.⁷ In response to this, Pope Francis then wrote a letter that shined a light on the system of silence and harm that has led to this on-going sex abuse crisis, with a call to healing and penance.⁸ All over the world, allegations

⁵ “Scores of Priests Involved in Sex Abuse Cases - The Boston Globe.”, The Boston Globe, 31 Jan. 2002, www.bostonglobe.com/news/special-reports/2002/01/31/scores-priests-involved-sex-abuse-cases/kmRm7JtqBdEZ8UF0ucR16L/story.html.

⁶ *Promise to Protect, Pledge to Heal: Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People; Essential Norms; Statement of Episcopal Commitment*. United States Conference of Catholics Bishops, 2002, [https://www.usccb.org/test/upload/Charter-for-the-Protection-of-Children-and-Young-People-2018-final\(1\).pdf](https://www.usccb.org/test/upload/Charter-for-the-Protection-of-Children-and-Young-People-2018-final(1).pdf).

⁷ Burton, Tara Isabella. “Scathing Report Reveals 300 Pennsylvania Catholic Priests Abused over 1,000 Children: The Report is a Watershed Moment in the Catholic Child Sex Abuse Crisis.”, 14 Aug. 2018, <https://www.vox.com/2018/8/15/17689994/catholic-sex-abuse-priest-crisis-pennsylvania-report>.

⁸ “Pope Calls for Solidarity and Penance in Letter on Abuse Crisis.”, Vatican News, 20 Aug. 2018, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2018-08/pope-francis-letter-people-of-god-sexual-abuse.html>.

against priests who have committed sexual abuse are still surfacing, showing that this is a recent and on-going issue within the Catholic Church.⁹ These articles mentioned above also show that in response to this abuse, the Church has moved to write out resources that talk about consent and boundaries for young people.

As this paper works to create a new culture of consent in Catholic sex education, it must do so on the backdrop of the sex abuse crisis in the Catholic Church. This crisis also points to a culture of silence in the Church. As one begins to consider the moral authority the Church has to talk about sex education, many debate what the sex abuse crisis means when talking about matters of sex and reproduction. Additionally, the healing needed from this crisis will also inform the foundation for a new curriculum brought forth in the last section of this paper. The sex abuse crisis is not the only on-going in the Church event that should be taken into consideration when talking about Catholic sex education, the ethnic and racial changes in the Church must also be addressed.

The Church is Changing

The Catholic Church in the United States has historically been a church of immigrants, and while this is still the case, this section will investigate the growing Catholic Latino¹⁰ population, and how that should be reflected in a new Catholic sex education. Whereas the Catholic Church in the U.S. was once predominantly white, the demographics of the Church have shifted. A study completed in 2020 found that 55% of Catholics ages 0-13 are Latino/a and

⁹ “German archbishop under fire over clergy sex abuse report.”, The Associated Press, 05 Feb. 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/sexual-abuse-by-clergy-cologne-germany-sexual-abuse-a7dcc0425dacff9101e7eda78eb37def>.

¹⁰ In this section I use Latino and Latino/a to mirror the language used in the research, but the most inclusive term is either Latinx or LatinE.

51-52% of Catholic Latinos are ages 14-17.¹¹ Further, Latino/as are poised to become the majority of all Catholics in less than 40 years.¹² These changes have also impacted the demographics of enrollment at Catholic high schools.¹³ Latino/as have now surpassed the whites as the largest segment of the high school-age Catholic population in the United States.¹⁴ Specifically, children of immigrants or those who identify as first-generation American predominate among teens.¹⁵ As the Catholic Church continues to change, the curriculum taught to young Catholics must reflect this shift so that it can adequately meet people where they are and consider the lived realities of young Latino/as in this country, especially when it comes to intimate matters such as sex and reproduction. Growing up between two or more cultures can determine if young Latino/as feel like they have a place in the future Church and this cultural reality influences the perspectives that young Latino/as bring to the Church.

One way to make young Latino/as feel included in the Church is by having bilingual educators. The children of immigrant parents are 50% bilingual.¹⁶ 58% of Latino/a teens speak at least as much Spanish as they do English at home.¹⁷ If the Church expectation is that conversations around sex are also taking place in the home, and are the obligation of parents¹⁸, but Latino/a parents are not given Spanish language sex education materials, than these conversations might never occur, or teens may turn elsewhere for this education. Teachers who

¹¹ V Encuentro. "Hispanic/Latino Ministry in the United States.", USCCB Hispanic Affairs, 2020, <https://vencuentro.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Hispanic-Ministry-Media-Kit-2020-EN.pdf>.

¹² Mondragón, "Hispanic Youth," 104.

¹³ Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. "The American Parish: By the Numbers.", Commonweal Magazine, 2020, https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/sites/default/files/imce/30047/4.2020_CW_Parish_Dataset.pdf.

¹⁴ Mondragón, 105.

¹⁵ Ibid, 106.

¹⁶ Gonzalez-Barrer, Anna, and Krogstad, Jens. "A majority of English-speaking Hispanics in the U.S. are bilingual.", Pew Research Center, 24 Mar. 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/03/24/a-majority-of-english-speaking-hispanics-in-the-u-s-are-bilingual/>.

¹⁷ Mondragón, 106.

¹⁸ This point is outlined in *Gravissimum Educationis*, introduced in the next section.

can instruct a bilingual sex education might also have a better chance of teaching a curriculum that is both culturally relevant and comfortable.

It is also worth noting that the Catholic parents of Latino/a teens often have a different background than that of white Catholic parents which can impact the way sex is talked about at home. Yet, both Latino parents and white parents are equally expected to carry out the same duties. Some of these differences include that 30% of Latino/as in their 20's had not completed high school, compared to only 7% of their white counterparts.¹⁹ Additionally, a 2016 study found that 67% Hispanics 25 and older that had at least a high school education in 2016.²⁰ Aside from educational differences there are also income differences to consider. For example, 26% of Latino/a Catholic households had an annual income less than \$20,000, this compares to 4% of white Catholic households.²¹ One study found that the median income for Latino/a households is \$17,000 less than the median income white households.²² These statistics are important, not because Latino/a Catholic parents are not as smart or as hardworking, but because their lives may consume of more hours worked during the week, which leaves less time for Latino/a parents to teach sex education to their teens.

Most importantly, just like other high school students, there are Latino/as who have sex as teenagers, reinforcing the need for an updated Catholic sex education. It is worth noting that Latino/as are more than three times as likely to get pregnant or get someone pregnant as adolescents.²³ This statistic must not be used to reinforce stereotypes that Latina's are hypersexual, or more sexual than their white peers. It also must not be used to shame Latino/a

¹⁹ Mondragón, 107.

²⁰ "Hispanic/Latino Ministry in the United States."

²¹ Mondragón, 108.

²² "Hunger and Poverty in the Latino Community.", Bread for the World, Sept. 2018,

https://www.bread.org/sites/default/files/downloads/hunger-poverty-latino-community-september-2018_final.pdf

²³ Mondragón, 108.

parents for failing as parents, or to shame teen pregnancy, or sex before marriage. This statistic is most useful because it shows that young Latino/as are in fact having sex, and that the need for an updated Catholic sex education is pertinent.

The statistics in this section also remind us that in the Catholic sphere, where the Church believes parents are also to play a role in educating their children about sex, questions about class, culture, and race must be raised. Lastly, the Catholic identity is important to many Latino/as, but if Catholic sex education remains outdated and inaccessible, Catholic parents may move to forfeit Catholic education for a public sex education that is of better quality and meets their economic background more accurately. For these reasons, the Catholic Church must act with urgency in creating an updated curriculum. To better understand what needs to be updated in Catholic high schools, we must first look at what is currently being taught.

The Current State of Sex Education in Catholic High Schools

I will provide context on some of the teachings that have influenced the current state of sex education in Catholic high schools before introducing my survey in the next section. To understand why Catholic sex education may cause harm to students or why it needs an immediate update in the classroom, the teachings that have influenced these current attitudes around sex will be introduced. As of now, papal encyclicals²⁴ and clergy approved curriculum are largely what influences approaches to teaching sex education in Catholic high schools. This section will look at concepts of natural law and documents like: *Humanae Vitae*, *Gravissimum Educationis*, and *What Is My Vocation?* to better understand the role sex plays in the Catholic sacrament of marriage.

²⁴ Letters written by the Pope.

In the Catholic Church, teachings on sex and marriage are informed by natural law. Natural law is defined as “the will of God” or how God has designed creation. Natural law is to be “faithfully observed and is necessary for men’s eternal salvation”.²⁵ Unlike sex education that is taught in the public sphere or a secular setting, these teachings cannot only be rooted in biology or limited to a health class. The concept of natural law informs why people should have sex and when people should have sex, and it is reflected in various documents put forth by the Catholic Church.

The teachings of natural law are reflected in *Humanae Vitae*. *Humanae Vitae* is an encyclical written by Pope Paul VI. Written in 1968, this document came to fruition during a time when many Catholics were wondering what rapid population increase, harshening work and housing conditions, the development of contraceptives, and new understandings of the role of women in relation to marriage and family meant for them. This document did not explicitly address the topic of sex education, yet the encyclical remains relevant because the central themes are still reflected in the way Catholic high schools address sexuality. Under the section ‘Doctrinal Principles,’ *Humanae Vitae* states, “the question of human procreation, like every other question which touches human life, involves more than the limited aspects specific to such disciplines as biology, psychology, demography, or sociology.”²⁶ This quote shows that the Catholic understanding of sex will never purely be about biology or psychology, but rather, sex will always be about creating new life, incorporating religious and theological understandings of sex.

²⁵ “*Humanae Vitae*,” Encyclical letter, *Humanae Vitae* of the Supreme Pontiff Paul VI, paragraph 4, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html.

²⁶ “*Humanae Vitae*”, paragraph 7.

Humanae Vitae clearly states that sex should only take place between a man and a woman who are married. *Humanae Vitae* describes marriage as, “far from being the effect of chance or the result of the blind evolution of natural forces. It is in reality the wise and provident institution of God the Creator, whose purpose was to effect man in His loving design”.²⁷ The Catholic Church describes marriage as a vessel for ‘God’s loving design’, meaning that God, from a place of love, intentionally designed sex to be only between a man and woman. *Humanae Vitae* does not believe that the creation and purpose of man and woman is ever random, but only by God’s intention. Thus, sex within marriage should occur for the purpose of both union²⁸ and procreation, so that couple can grow in intimacy with each other, and with God and also so they can create new life. If a couple is desiring to bring children into the world, they must also ensure that they, “recognize their own duties toward God, themselves, their families and human society”.²⁹ A married couple should not only consider worldly concerns when discerning children, but also be in conversation with God about this choice. As an extension of natural law, union and procreation are the only authentic justifications of sexual relationships which will ultimately inform how sex education is taught to teenagers.

Humanae Vitae encourages Catholic educators to emphasize the virtue of chastity when talking about sex with teens. The portion of *Humanae Vitae* titled ‘Chastity’ begins, “we take this opportunity to address those who are engaged in education and all those whose right and duty it is to provide for the common good of human society,”³⁰ suggesting that the audience could be Catholic school teachers, Sunday school teachers, and even parents. *Humanae Vitae* subsequently asserts that the main objective of these educators is to “create an atmosphere

²⁷ “*Humanae Vitae*”, paragraph 8.

²⁸ Man and woman growing closer together.

²⁹ *Ibid*, paragraph 10.

³⁰ *Ibid*, paragraph 22.

favorable to the growth of chastity so that true liberty may prevail over license and the norms of the moral law may be fully safeguarded.”³¹ In this sentence, it can be assumed that ‘true liberty’ means ‘free will’ as guided by God and not by human sexual desire, and that Catholic parents have a responsibility to teach their kids the difference. This section indicates what type of sex education is preferred which aligns with natural law.

There are a few instances where the role of consent in sex is mentioned in *Humanae Vitae*. First, the word ‘mutual’ is used often in this document when referring to married couples. For example, this document says, “As a consequence, husband and wife, through that mutual gift of themselves, which is specific and exclusive to them alone, develop that union of two persons in which they perfect one another, cooperating with God in generation and rearing of new lives.”³² When thinking about a consent based sex education, ‘mutual gift’ should be inferred to mean that both the wife and husband have consented to the act of sex.

To have sex without the consent of both parties is seen as a sin. *Humanae Vitae* also says, “men rightly observe that conjugal act imposed on one’s partner without regard to his or her condition or person and reasonable wishes in the matter, is no true act of love, and therefore offends the moral order in its particular application to the intimate relationship of husband and wife.”³³ Thus, a sexual act where one partner is forced to engage or cannot coherently agree is unloving and immoral. This begins to vaguely touch on notions of consent. Rigid notions of natural law often consume Catholic sex educations, losing the rich teachings around consent. According to the Catholic Church, parents also have a role to play in in sex education.

³¹ Ibid, paragraph 22.

³² Ibid, paragraph 8.

³³ Ibid, paragraph 13.

In the Catholic Church, sex education is not only to happen in the classroom, but also at home with one's parents. *Gravissimum Educationis* by Pope Paul VI must be introduced to understand the expectations of parents when it comes to sex education in the Catholic Church. This encyclical states that since it is the parents who give life to their children, they are the principal and primary educators on all matters, including sex.³⁴ Many Catholic sources will make note of this when giving guidance on topics around sex education, reminding the reader that children are to listen first and foremost to their parents and that their parents have an obligation to teach their kids in a way that reflects a relationship with Christ. Aside from *Gravissimum Educationis*, teacher's manuals and curriculums provide some insight to the approach Catholic educators may take or attitudes they might express while teaching.

The Catholic understanding of vocation also plays a role in sex education. In 2005, the University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary³⁵ put forth a teacher's edition called *What Is My Vocation?* that was to be used as a resource in Catholic high schools. This teacher's manual provides the foundation for vocations and how vocation relates to sex education. The manual explains the four main vocations that Catholics can hold: marriage, single life, priesthood, and religious life. This resource defines a vocation as a plan or way of life that God invites us to live.³⁶ The Church presumes that all high school students can be classified as 'single' because they have not yet been called to their vocation fully but may later be called to live out the vocation of marriage, religious life, the priesthood, or lifelong single life.³⁷ The

³⁴ "Gravissimum Educationis," Encyclical letter, *Humanae Vitae* of the Supreme Pontiff Paul VI, paragraph 1, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_en.html.

³⁵ A private Roman Catholic Seminary.

³⁶ Joseph Noonan, *What is My Vocation?* (St. Mary of the Lake: Mundelein Seminary, 2005), 13.

³⁷ Noonan, *What is My Vocation?*, 23.

presumption that all high school students would be living out ‘single life’ is important because it indicates what type of lessons students will get about sex.

According to the Catholic Church, chastity is one component of what it means to live out a single life. Chastity, for single people, means, “avoiding sexual relations outside of marriage, and respecting the dignity of those around us. Chastity is the virtue that guides the way we express love with our bodies and control our sexual desires according to our particular vocation.”³⁸ In this teaching resource, teachers are encouraged to explain that, as single people, students should use their time to prepare for what God might ask of them in the future. This manual explains that being single and practicing chastity allows for one to reflect on how they can better serve the Church as well. If you are called to be married, singlehood should also be used to prepare to become a good spouse. Most importantly, the authors of *What Is My Vocation?* argue that teachers should stress that chastity should be used to promote a love and service that is unselfish to God and other people. In this guidance, chastity is also seen as a way of expressing respect for someone else's dignity.

The Church also believes that modesty is essential to single life. The manual defines modesty as “being decent and appropriate in dress, words, and behavior. This means respecting our bodies and the bodies of others. The Church teaches us that modesty protects our most intimate selves.”³⁹ The teachers are supposed to give ‘not dressing sleazy and not using your bodies for attention’ as examples of how students can practice modesty. It is also suggested that teachers utilize historical Catholic examples of people like St. John the Baptist, St. John the Apostle, and St. Mary Magdalen as people who were martyrs and virgins who practiced celibacy. Lastly, there is a teachers note that advises, “in discussing chastity it is important to remember

³⁸ Ibid, 26.

³⁹ Ibid, 25.

that the point of this section is to give a simple, objective statement of the teachings of the Catholic Church. It is not meant to be judgmental to individuals. Special care should be taken to maintain charity and due delicacy during this discussion.”⁴⁰ This portion of the teacher’s manual is highlighted for two reasons. Firstly, the approach that is recommended is ‘simple and objective’, the surveys will show that this is rarely the case and that while a simplicity is suggested, breezing over topics like consent can have a troubling impact on people. Secondly, there is also a note to not be ‘judgmental’. Again, many in the next sections share how attitudes of judgment or hostility created an environment where it was difficult for students to ask important questions regarding sexual consent or reproductive consent. These are not the only documents or teachings that impact the current state of sex education, but they do provide background information about the patterns seen in the next section, as well as, common sentiments found in Catholic high school spaces. Now that the current state of Catholic sex education has been introduced, we will move towards the survey portion of the paper.

Survey Introduction:

In order to learn more about the sex education experiences of Catholic high school graduates, I created a survey which I distributed online.⁴¹ I distributed this online survey through emailing groups of people I had gone to high school with, circulating on social media and asking folks to send to their peers from Catholic high school. The purpose of the survey was for people who had attended Catholic high school to evaluate and reflect, in their own words, their experiences with sex and reproduction education. In total, there were twenty-seven questions that took the form of multiple choice and open text box responses. There were only two requirements

⁴⁰ Ibid, 33.

⁴¹ This survey was approved through the Harvard IRB process. I distributed this survey online in order to collect a variation of responses while also adhering to COVID-19 safety regulations.

for someone who wanted to take the survey: a) That they had attended a Catholic high school and b) That they were 18 years of age or older. The survey was anonymous in order to protect people's identities and to allow space for people to reflect honestly about their experiences.

Before introducing the survey responses, it is important to understand who took this survey.

A Breakdown of Survey Respondents

To better understand the anecdotal responses let us first get a better understanding of who took the online survey. There was a total of eighty-nine responses collected. Breaking down who answered this survey will provide insight as to who these eighty-nine people are. To start, thirty-one out of the eighty-nine respondents indicated that they identify as Hispanic or Latinx/a/e/o. Next, the largest age group reported were those between the ages of 23-26 which means fifty of the eighty-nine respondents were born between 1998 and 1995. For context, this means that this group attended high school somewhere between 2009-2015. The next largest group was between the ages of 27-32, meaning twelve of the eighty-nine respondents were born somewhere between 1994-1989. The third largest group were between ages 18-22 which means that they were born between 1999-2004. These age groups help to give a sense of when people attended Catholic high school.

It is also important to note that those taking the survey overwhelmingly identify as women. The gender identity responses are as follow: Seventy-one women, seventeen men and two genderqueer/gender conforming. In terms of sexual orientation, fifty-eight of the eighty-nine respondents described their sexual orientation as 'heterosexual or straight' and thirteen selected bisexual. Nine respondents selected queer, seven selected lesbian, seven selected gay, two selected pansexual, one selected poly sexual, one selected demi/bi and one person did not want to disclose their sexual orientation due to privacy. For both of these questions respondents had the option to 'check all that apply', there were respondents who clicked more than one box. This

means that a majority of respondents were between the ages of 23-26, identified as a woman, and as heterosexual, which is helpful to know when considering later questions around sex and reproduction.

This survey was also predominantly taken by English speakers. For example, sixty-nine respondents indicated that English was the primary language spoken in their homes during high school. Eight selected Spanish as being the primary language and nine selected both English and Spanish. Three respondents selected 'other' as the primary language being spoken at home (these were Arabic, French, and Tagalog). All eighty-nine respondents said that English was the language that was used in their high school when discussing topics related to sex education. This component on language is helpful when thinking about a Catholic sex education that is culturally competent.

Respondents also noted that they learned about sex education in both their health classes and their theology classes. Fifty-nine of those taking the survey said that they learned about sex education in health class. Forty-nine said that they learned about sex education in theology class. Eighteen selected biology classes. 0 selected ethics class and six marked 'other'. There are more than eighty-nine responses here because the question said to check all that apply. Based on the data it seemed like the most common response was 'health class' and 'theology class' which was selected by a total of 108 people.

This initial demographic data indicates the internal diversity of Catholic high school experiences that are represented in these survey responses. There are a variety of gender identities, sexual orientations, ethnicities, and ages being represented in this survey which will impact how people answer the later questions about sex education, reproductive health, and

consent. It is because of this variety that the next section will work to construct two common definitions around sex in Catholic high schools.

Defining Sex

In Catholic spaces there are various ways that people define the act of sex, in this section there will be two definitions that are investigated. Seventy-three respondents selected ‘Learning about: gaining the skills to navigate relationships and manage one’s own sexual health’ as being the closest definition they used to define ‘sex education’ (Definition 1). Sixteen respondents selected ‘learning about: the union of husband and wife cooperating with God’ (Definition 2). Nine selected Definition 1 as part of their high school curriculum, twenty-four selected Definition 2 as part of their curriculum, fourteen said both were included with an emphasis on Definition 1 and twenty-nine said both were included, but with an emphasis on Definition 2. Four people responded that both definitions were included equally and nine said that sex education was not part of their high school curriculum. This clarification is important because that means a majority of people responding to this survey define sex as gaining the skills to navigate relationships and manage one’s own sexual health which will impact how they evaluate their Catholic sex education later on in the survey.

The Holy Trinity of Catholic Sex Education: Marriage, STI’s and Abstinence

This section found that marriage, STI⁴² education and abstinence are three lessons people most remembered being taught in terms of their Catholic sex education. In the following section I will explore the results from this question:

Can you remember what you learned about sex education while in Catholic high school? If yes, what do you remember? If no, when (if ever did you learn about sex education? If other, please feel free to write ‘it’s complicated’.

⁴² Sexually transmitted infections. Also known as STD’s (sexually transmitted diseases).

This question had a written response option instead of only multiple choice to allow people to give as much or as little detail as they wanted. In this section people recalled memories about their sex education in Catholic high school. Respondents included metaphors that they remembered, guest speakers who had come into their school to give ‘the talk’, projects they were assigned about sex education, and advice they had been given from educators. Of the eighty-seven responses given to question listed above, it is worth noting that not a single response listed that ‘consent’ was explicitly part of their sex education. When doing a quick word search, the top three words that came up most frequently from the answers to the question above were: marriage, STD, and abstinence.

Additionally, sixteen of the eighty-seven people who answered noted that they could not remember what they learned about sex education while in high school. Five of the sixteen said that they learned about sex education in middle school, but not in high school. Of the five, three mentioned that they attended a Catholic middle school where the focus was on learning about: ‘the union of husband and wife cooperating with God’ (Definition 2) or one respondent stated, ‘very Catholic-guilt style’. Four indicated that they had learned about sex education in college. Two mentioned that they learned from friends or family. One said they educated themselves and another person said they learned from their partner who attended public school.

Second, in terms of content, twenty-seven out of the eighty-seven respondents said that their sex education curriculum included information about STD’s or STI’s. A few respondents noted that their STD’s lessons were framed as a ‘scare tactic’ to prevent teenagers from having sex. Fourteen of the respondents said that their curriculum included conversations around abstinence and about thirteen indicated that their curriculum about sex education meant learning

that sex should only happen in a marriage between a man and woman. Lastly, three of the eighty-seven responses noted that at some point their sex education talked about domestic violence or abusive relationships. There have been quotes from the survey included below in order to expand on what people remembered. Here are three respondents who remember some sort of analogy being used to relay the importance of waiting to have sex until marriage:

“In quinceañera⁴³ classes, the priest asked me if I was a Virgin and the facilitators compared premarital sex to a chewed piece of gum—no one wants it once it’s been used.”

“But my teacher also projected large images of various STIs on a large screen to scare us from having sex and shared the analogy of being a lollipop that is passed around a room as an analogy for promiscuity.”

“Obviously nothing about contraception- it was acknowledged that it exists but emphasized that it creates a barrier between men and women spiritually, not just physically and it cheapens the experience.”

Respondents also recalled guest speakers coming to school to emphasize abstinence or teachers using their family members as examples when talking about sex:

“Jason Evert⁴⁴ came and talked and my all-girls school went along with the all-boys school. Jason Evert also had a barbie the whole time he was at the podium, and it was a ‘slut’ barbie”

“I remember teachers bringing in a star football player to talk about how he was waiting for marriage. It felt like persuading a class of only women to be persuaded by a jock. Also, they would bring in a woman who would present to the whole school about chastity.”

“A strange mix, from health class an embarrassed teacher who seemed barely older than us explaining different methods of contraception, but that the best contraception was

⁴³ A cultural and religious celebration for a girls 15th birthday in Latin America and among Latinx communities in the U.S.

⁴⁴ Jason Evert, alongside his wife, runs the *Chastity Project*; part of this work includes going to Catholic high schools to preach on the virtues of Chastity.

abstinence. And in ethics, a teacher describing in detail his wife's fertility cycle and that one should only have sex if they want to pro-create."

People also recalled having to complete school projects about sex and marriage:

"My senior year, our formative assessment was a marriage ceremony that we had to plan"

"Each freshman student was expected to have Health their first year, and as a part of the curriculum, we were expected to carry around a baby that was programmed to eat, cry, and require diaper changes. We were told early on that this baby would be crying in the middle of the night, meaning lack of sleep for a bunch of 14- or 15-year old's, and we were expected to carry it around campus in classrooms."

And lastly, people recalled learning that masturbation is bad or that their sex education included 'pro-life movement'⁴⁵ rhetoric:

"An elderly priest told us to close our eyes during movies that had naked women and lots of warnings about masturbation"

"We were encouraged to be pro-life and attend the March for Life without any real explanation into the issues."

These answers begin to capture the limitations of Catholic sex education and are investigated in the next section.

Analyzing the Memories of Catholic Sex Education

When curriculum is grounded in a fear-based approach it prevents students from feeling comfortable to ask questions and makes it difficult for accurate information to be relayed to students. Matters of sex education can be personal and to have an authentic conversation around this topic there needs to be a sense of trust and safety instead of fear and ambiguity. There were answers that mentioned guest speakers who came in to talk about sex, but perhaps having someone the students already know and trust is a better option. It is also important that Catholic

⁴⁵ A popular anti-abortion movement among Christian and Catholics.

educators are adequately prepared to teach about sex education and able to do so confidently. Further, planning a marriage ceremony or carrying around a faux-baby does not equip people with knowledge about consent or reproductive health. Instead, it attempts to teach about marriage and childrearing without providing an explanation of how one arrives at marriage or childbirth.

All in all, these answers allude to the large issues of Catholic education: this sex education does not accurately prepare students to be knowledgeable about boundaries, healthy relationships, and ways to respect other people's bodies. Students are never taught how to vocalize when they are in pain or if their body feels uncomfortable. All of which can have devastating consequences. As it stands, Catholic sex education leaves a lot unanswered, which leaves the question open: How do students at Catholic high schools end up getting their information about sex or consent?

Sex Education Outside of Catholic Curriculum

Catholic high school is not the only place people learn about sex. Some turn to friends and family to ask the more difficult questions, which is why another question on the survey asked:

Did parents, guardians, or another figure in your life provide you with additional sex education outside of school? If yes, what did they teach you? If no, when (if ever) is a time you remember learning about sex education outside of school? If other, please feel free to write 'it's complicated.

Thirty-seven out of the eighty-five respondents indicated that parents, guardians or another figure in their life did not provide them with additional sex education and forty-seven respondents indicated that they did have parents, guardians, or another figure in their life provide them with additional sex education.

A fundamental distinction I observed while reading over the answers was the difference between knowing what sex was versus knowing how to have sex. People desired to know about the mechanics of sex beyond the basics of anatomy. It was clear that almost half of the respondents sought out information on their own when information was not given to them by their parents, guardians, or other figures in their lives. Common answers that were given were that people used the internet, TV, and friends to understand more about sex. Through sexual interactions and various google searches, many figured out more about sex by the time they were in college.

Special attention was given to how Hispanic/Latinx/a/e/o⁴⁶ respondents answered this question. For example, of the thirty-seven people who said their parents did not teach them about sex, ten of those people said that they identified as Hispanic/Latinx/a/e/o. This is significant because it means just over a third of Hispanic/Latinx/a/e/o were not given information from parents, guardians, or other figures in their life about sex education. This information is important to keep in mind when moving to create a sex education that is responsive to the demographic shift happening in Catholic high schools in the United States. The internet⁴⁷ was one of the most common answers provided when asked where people learned more about sex, reproduction, and contraception⁴⁸. The answers below illustrate this trend:

“Honestly, I did a lot of learning on my own in terms of reading articles on the internet, focusing social media accounts that promote health sex ed. Etc, - throughout college and beyond.”

⁴⁶ I use Hispanic/Latinx/a/e/o because that is what was listed on the survey and is most inclusive of all possible ethnicities.

⁴⁷ Referencing the internet has had a range of meanings in this paper. It includes, but is not limited to, pornography, articles about sex, social media, googling definitions, and Planned Parenthood websites.

⁴⁸ It is also worth clarifying that there are various age groups represented in these responses. The internet was not widely available during high school for each age group.

“The rest I learned through friends, or secretly watching porn (I didn’t have a clear understanding of the mechanics and action of sex before that).”

“I remember researching different birth control methods on Planned Parenthood. I also learned from watching 16 and pregnant on MTV.”

Aside from the internet, the next resource people turned to the most were their friends, and many mentioned that their parents did not feel comfortable talking about the subject and that it never came up.

“My parents did not talk about this. I learned on my own.”

“Sex is not a topic discussed in my house.”

These answers show that the Church’s assumption that parents are teaching the gaps in sex education is not accurate and leads many to find additional resources.

The Role of Parents, Guardians, and other Figures in Sex Education

The section of this paper titled, *The Current State of Sex Education in Catholic High Schools* explains how the Church assumes that parents will play an instrumental role in educating their child about all matters including sex. This question about sex education outside of the classroom was included because Catholic teaching depends on the role of parents to teach the parts of sex education that Catholic high school’s do not talk about or leave out. However, these answers show that did not usually happen⁴⁹. Instead people turned to the internet, friends, and media to stay informed. On one hand, these platforms are more accessible and allow people to access information in private. On another hand, it is hard to screen which information on the internet is accurate when it comes to sex education, reproductive health, and consent.

The assumption by Catholic high schools that students will learn about sex in the home is one that is rooted in the idea that people come from a two-parent home where parents or guardians have the time and knowledge to talk about these subjects correctly. Further, this is an

⁴⁹ Important to note that not every parent who sends their kid to Catholic school is Catholic or could be unfamiliar with this Church assumption.

assumption rooted in whiteness⁵⁰ that does not take into account cultural barriers that exist in the home as mentioned in these answers. These barriers can look like not having the correct language proficiency to teach their children what needs to be known about sex or knowing that in various cultures sex is a taboo and gendered subject. When people want to know more they will turn to what is available. Even when people did learn information about sex from their parents, that information rarely included how to consent to sexual activities or how to verbalize discomfort, or examples of reproductive health, that is why this next section specifically looks at what people recall learning about their Catholic curriculum regarding consent.

Consent and curriculum

Consent should be at the center of sex education, but that is not always the case. To get at the heart of this research they survey asks:

Did your sex education include topics around practicing consent (consent can be defined as a mutual agreement to participate in sexual activity)? If yes, what did your sex education say about consent? If no, when (if ever) did you learn about consent? If other, please feel free to write 'it's complicated'.

Because this paper advocates for consent driven curriculum, special attention was paid to how well concepts of consent were introduced. The goal of this survey was to get an accurate snapshot of how Catholic high school graduates felt about their sex education curriculum and specifically, if they learned anything regarding consent as defined above.

There was a total of seventy-nine responses to this specific question. Sixty of these respondents said that their high school curriculum did not talk about, teach or introduce consent as part of the sex education curriculum. When elaborating on when, if ever, respondents learned about topics related to consent, twenty-five of the sixty said that they did not learn about consent

⁵⁰ Whiteness can be defined as structures that produce white privilege, the examination of what whiteness is when analyzed as a race, a culture, and a source of systemic racism, and the exploration of other social phenomena generated by the societal compositions, perceptions and group behaviors of white people.

until college. The next most common answers were that they learned about sex and consent either from social media or their peers. An interesting observation is that many mentioned that consent only came up in relation to sexual assault or after accounts of sexual misconduct on college campuses. For those who indicated that consent was part of their high school curriculum many noted that it was in the context of abstinence and/or rape prevention. Many reported that the definition that they learned was, “no means no”. Respondents also shared that they learned that consent was necessary for marriage or that because marriage is ‘freely joined’ that consent was understood almost as a given. A few of the responses for those who did learn about consent in high school get reveal common themes of attending an all-girls school or having teachers put in extra effort:

“As a liberal all girls’ school, we talked about consent often & safety in relationships (romantic or otherwise).”

This idea that all-girls school had a better environment for talking about consent is worth noting. A majority of this section shows that consent is typically not a priority for catholic sex education.

Consent is an Afterthought

The number of Catholic high school graduates who did not learn about consent is alarming. About two thirds of respondents never learned about consent. These findings emphasize the need to rethink the ways Catholic sex education incorporates consent into their teachings. Further, for those who did learn about sex education in high school, there was an assumption that being married is the equivalent of giving consent for sexual activity. There are also many teens who are sexually active before college, meaning these students are sexually active before they ever learn about consent and sex.

For those who are sexually active before college, this calls into question if these acts were consensual and what type of sexual patterns people learn at a young age because they are not

taught about consent. For those who never attend college, it raises the question of when or if this population ever learns about consent. And for those who are not heterosexual or who participate in pre-marital sex, aside from the acts being called a sin, it does not clarify what consent looks like for these populations either. Not only does consent seem to be absent or an afterthought for Catholic high school sex education, so do topics of reproductive health and gynecology.

Reproductive Health and Gynecology in Catholic Education

A comprehensive understanding of reproductive health is crucial to upholding the dignity of others. To understand what type of reproductive health education people received during high school this survey also asked:

Did your sex education include information about reproductive health or gynecology? (Reproductive health can be defined as matters relation to the reproductive health system, functions, processes) and (Gynecology can be defined as the branch of physiology and medicine which deals with the function and diseases specific to women and girls, especially those affecting the reproductive system). If yes, what did your sex education teach about reproductive health or gynecology? If no, when (if ever) did you learn about reproductive health of gynecology? If other, please feel free to write 'it's complicated'.

Reproductive health is a fundamental part of sex education. Everything from the correct anatomical language to maternal health⁵¹ to gynecology can fit under the category of reproductive health. Thirty-three of the eighty-five respondents who answered this question said that they did not learn anything regarding reproductive health or gynecology. Of those who said that they did not learn about these topics in high school, many cited 'independent research' as how they learned about reproductive health or gynecology. Others relied on books, classes in college, and their doctors to explain these matters to them. One respondent noted that they did not learn about these two areas until they became pregnant.

⁵¹ Maternal health can be defined as the health of women during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period.

For those who answered yes -to learning about these subjects in school- many noted that they learned about reproductive anatomy, but not gynecology specifically. In terms of reproductive health, the most common answers about what people remember learning were: reproductive systems, biology, and reproductive anatomy. Following that, STD's, menstruation, and childbirth were also common answers.

About eight respondents mentioned reproductive health lessons included pro-life sentiments, the 'immorality' of birth control, and natural family planning. A few people mentioned that they felt that their reproductive health lessons were focused more on 'males'. For example, one respondent states, "Only covered fallopian tubes, ovaries, and uterus. Vaginal anatomy was never discussed, though the anatomy of the penis was." Other respondents provided details as to what was left out of their education or their experiences around sex education in high school. Some noteworthy responses are listed below:

"I think it was probably because they assumed, we understood reproductive health by now, but given how many people in class thought females pee out of their vaginas, I think that was an ill-informed decision.

"I never learned about the clitoris from my health teachings, from parents or during education. Sexual health seemed taboo, but reproductive health seemed to take priority."

"Not necessarily any health problems that could be experienced outside of heterosexual encounters, STI's, and we didn't learn about endometriosis etc."

Additionally, for some of the respondents who said that they did learn about reproductive health knowledge, learning what can cause yeast infections, the importance of breast checks, and the importance of seeing a gynecologist were some of the examples of what were taught.⁵² The

⁵² One respondent cited that they thought this knowledge (about reproductive health) was possible for them because they attended an all-girls school.

lack of reproductive health taught can be attributed to the patriarchal tendency of the Catholic Church and disregard for the variety of bodies that exist.

The answers from this section are not surprising but still concerning. The lack of knowledge around gynecology and the stigma of seeing gynecologists prevents many from knowing about conditions like breast cancer, cervical cancer, and endometriosis. Further, this calls into question what happens to those who do not attend college or who's family do not inform them about various aspects of reproductive health. The worry that arises is around who has access to healthcare, education, and have parents or guardians who have the time and correct knowledge to teach them about reproductive health and gynecology. Additionally, for those who go on to be mothers, they are not taught what proper maternal health looks like or how to advocate for themselves in the doctor's office. The absence of comprehensive reproductive health leaves many in the dark about the depths of reproductive health and the array of bodies that exist in the world. If Catholic education is to uphold that every human has inherent dignity, Catholic education must include a more inclusive and holistic curriculum around sex education.

How satisfied are you?

Aside from knowing what people learned about sex education from Catholic high school, the other goal of this survey was to understand how people felt about their sex education. Were they satisfied with what they learned, or did they wish it was different? The next question asked:

If you defined sex education as: gaining the skills to navigate relationships and manage own's own sexual health. How satisfied are you with the sex education you received?'

People were allowed to check more than one category for this question. Out of eighty-nine people, thirty-nine said that they were 'not satisfied at all', seventeen said somewhat unsatisfied, eight marked 'neutral', nine said somewhat satisfied, five said extremely satisfied, eleven said 'I used the other definition, and two said that they had no opinion'. Of the seventy-

eight respondents who agreed with the definition of sex education provided on the survey, fifty-six indicated dissatisfaction with their sex education.

Next, when asked, 'If you define sex education as, the union of husband and wife cooperating with God. How satisfied are you with the sex education you received?' sixteen said not satisfied at all, one said somewhat unsatisfied, six said somewhat satisfied, three said extremely satisfied, forty-six said they used the other definition, and twelve said that they had 'no opinion'. This survey attempts to use these answers to honestly evaluate the content of what is taught in Catholic sex education. Thus, it is critical to know the demographics of who were not satisfied.

Fourteen of thirty-one respondents who said they identified as Hispanic/Latinx/a/e/o said that they were 'not satisfied at all' and four of the thirty-one said that they were 'somewhat unsatisfied'. Of the forty respondents who said they identified as LGBTQIA+, twenty-two said that they were 'not satisfied at all' and eleven said that they were 'somewhat unsatisfied.'

Next, of the eight who said they primarily spoke Spanish at home, five were 'not satisfied at all' and of the nine who said they spoke primarily both English and Spanish at home four were 'not satisfied at all' and two were somewhat unsatisfied.

Further, of the seventy-one respondents who said they would describe their gender identity as 'female', thirty-one of them were 'not satisfied at all' and sixteen were 'somewhat unsatisfied, of the seventeen respondents who marked 'male' as their gender identity, seven were 'not satisfied at all', and of the two respondents who selected 'genderqueer/gender nonconforming' two said that they were 'not satisfied at all.' Lastly, of the nine people to answer

from the age group 18-22, seven were not satisfied at all, one was not somewhat unsatisfied, and 1 was neutral.⁵³

This breakdown helps identify who benefits *least* from Catholic sex education. Based on this survey, if you are younger, if you identify as LGBTQ+, if you spoke Spanish in the home, and if you identified as Hispanic/Latinx/a/e/o you were likely to not have been satisfied with your sex education. It is also important to remember the role of intersectionality when reading these results. There are many respondents who hold a variety of these identities.⁵⁴ Lastly, the emphasis on how satisfied Hispanic/Latinx/a/e/o respondents were to reflect on the population that continues to make up the majority but remains underrepresented. This breakdown is helpful because it signals the need for an inclusive and culturally competent sex education.

Race, Ethnicity, and Sexuality: Impacts of Sex Education

The relationship between sex education and race and ethnicity also needs to be investigated. The next question asked:

How has your sex education caused you to think about your own racial/ethnic identity in relation to sexuality? Please explain.

This question in particular yielded interesting commentary on race, ethnicity, and self-identification. There were a handful of answers where people self-identified as white women and explained that due to white privilege⁵⁵ they had not had to think about the relationships between race, ethnicity, and sexuality. Those who identified as white women also commented on the

⁵³ This age group in particular is interesting because if you are between 18-22 you have most recently attended Catholic high school of the respondents, this can help us get the closest insight as to what is currently being taught.

⁵⁴ For example, there were respondents who identified as being between 18-22, Hispanic/Latinx/a/e/o and queer. This would be one example of intersectionality in this paper, where a respondent holds a variety of the identities most likely to not be satisfied with their Catholic sex education.

⁵⁵ White privilege can be defined as an inherent advantage possessed by a white person on the basis of their race in a society characterized by racial inequality and injustice.

relationship between whiteness and purity and/or how they attended a predominately white school. Here are some of those answers:

“As a white woman I benefit from white privilege, in a way because whiteness is considered the template or the norm, I benefited from sexual education that was taught by white people for white people. It was catered to me completely and I only realized that a long time after.”

“It has really stimulated thought for me. Unfortunately, it seems to just reinforce ‘whiteness’ as the norm or ideal relationships.”

There seemed to be an awareness among white respondents that Catholic sex education was made for white people. There were also people who shared that they identified as Hispanic/Latinx/a/e/o in their anecdotal responses. Many of these answers included an awareness of how the ‘Latinx’ or ‘Latindad’ community’s relationship with the Catholic Church or attending an all-white school impacted views on sex, race, and ethnicity. Here are a few of the answers:

“I think in some ways my education was tied to my ‘Latindad’ and the expectations of a Mexican American Catholic girl. The expectations were that it was intended for me to wait until marriage, marry sometime in my 20’s while prioritizing my education and then have children. My immediate household didn’t drill this in my head per say, but it felt like that value was reinforced during Confirmation class. The city I was raised in was predominantly Latino (97%) and mostly Mexican/Mexican America. These values were tied with my community”

“I think a lot about how in Latinx customs, specifically Mexican because that is the community I grew up with, assume women will be married young and have children. I feel like an anomaly within these circles of people I grew up with because I am still single with no plan of having children any time soon, if ever. I never liked these patriarchal expectations and pushed back on religion and machismo.”

When the responses above are put in conversation with the ways Hispanic/Latinx/a/e/o respondents evaluated their satisfaction with their Catholic sex education a complexity arises. If

the Hispanic/Latinx/a/e/o community does not talk about consent or reproductive health, and if Catholic high schools also omit this information, where are Hispanic/Latinx/a/e/o people supposed to get their information on these subjects? Many respondents have noted that they eventually learn about these concepts from college, parents or doctors, but when you take into consideration the social inequities among higher education, annual incomes, and health insurance, there might be many Hispanic/Latinx/a/e/o people who are left out from ever obtaining accurate information about consent or reproductive health. There were answers that also touched on how not having a white body can sometimes leave people feeling less pure or stigmatized. For example:

“As a female and member of Latinx community, I feel that my body is often hypersexualized due to the stereotypes of Latinx women, I can’t say this is related Catholic sex education specially as I didn’t really receive a sex education.”

“There were a lot of depictions of white Mary, pure and inviolate, and I think subconsciously white girls, including myself, were held up to that white male ideal of perfect object to be protected. Once violate, that purity is tarnish, black/brown female bodies were rarely portrayed as the pure/holy, and the topic of race or ethnicity was never brought up in sex education as far as I can remember.”

Sentiments like these enforce the need for a culturally competent sex education that does not reinforce stereotypes about bodies that are not white. White and non-white people will have a different experience of interpreting sex education materials, of what it means to go home and ask more questions about sex, and how they are sexualized both in the Church and society at large. These are all points to take into consideration when creating the curriculum around sex education without furthering an ‘at risk’ narrative, but instead treating bodies like those that identify as Hispanic/Latinx/a/e/o as equally sacred. In addition to race and ethnicity, the relationship between sex education and gender identity must be examined.

Unlearning Catholic guilt

When asked about sex education and gender identity, many themes of guilt came to surface. The next question asked:

How has your Catholic sex education caused you to think about your own gender identity in relation to sexuality?' Please explain.

Ten respondents mentioned that it had 'no impact', 'no relation', or 'it didn't'. Gender identity was not even part of the curriculum. Others mentioned that, while they did not follow the teachings of the Church and engaged in premarital sex, feelings of guilt or feeling dirty stayed with them. Respondents also talked about how upon learning about gender roles or the passivity of women in high school, they knew that they disagreed with what was being taught but were afraid of disappointing male figures, God or their youth pastors and teachers.

There were also answers that touched on how female pleasure was never discussed. Some felt that a majority of their sex education only focused on men. One person wrote about how hard it is to understand pleasure without feeling guilty even though they were in fact married. People also voiced concern that the pressure was on women to always say 'no', but never about the men who wanted sex. There were also two responses that talked about the complexities of being Catholic, identifying as Hispanic/Latinx/a/e/o, and gender identity:

"Catholicism and Christianity were very tied to my upbringing in a Latino household. From a young age I also was curious about my sexual identity. I never thought being with someone of the same or different gender mattered to me, it made sense that I was attracted to whoever I liked. But never having that conversation in sex class, at home, school, and church made me realize at a young age that not every had the same thinking."

"There is a saying that my Latinx/Hispanic mother has always used growing up: "Protejan a sus gallinas, porque el gallo anda suelto." (Translation: Protect your hen, because the roosters are loose.>"). I've always interpreted this as a notion of her needing to protect me from this non-existent threat to my socially constructed 'virginity' or 'purity'. I think there's this toxic notion that Women need to protect themselves from men

who are obviously out to impregnate them and ruin their future- and that if this happens, it's entirely the woman's fault."

Respondents wrote a lot about Catholic guilt when answering this question; guilt for desiring or partaking in premarital and not upholding Church teaching, guilt for not wanting children or not wanting to be part of the women' and men Catholic binary.

Responses also touched on the lack of pleasure education. People and especially women⁵⁶ not being taught that sex can and should feel good or that women can and do desire to have sex. Quite a few times people talked about not fitting into the stereotypical Catholic women of being pure, feminine, and passive; and feeling bad about this or trying to hide this. These observations illustrate the long-term effects that Catholic sex education and Catholic teachings around sex and gender can have on relationships and the act of sex and should be taken into consideration when forming a new curriculum around sex education. There must be a shift from a sex education that is rooted in guilt to one that is grounded in consent and inclusivity. This inclusivity can look like considering that not all who go to Catholic high school are heterosexual.

Unlearning Catholic Shame

In this section, respondents discuss their sexual orientation in relation to Catholic sex education. This survey question asked:

How has your Catholic sex education caused you to think about your own sexual orientation? Please explain.

People shared that their Catholic sex education had left out gay people altogether. Some wondered if they had been given a broader language around sexual orientations if they would have come out sooner and others knew that coming out meant having to have a more distant relationship with the Church. One answer explained how part of their campus ministry program

⁵⁶ Women as defined section, *Breakdown of Survey Respondents*.

supported them as a gay male and how other parts of campus ministry did not, making them unsure if campus ministry was a safe space. Some folks talked about how they identified as ‘heterosexual’ and/or ‘cis gender,’ but because of close friends in high school who identified as LGBTQ+ they took their sex education ‘with a grain of salt’. Other people who identified as ‘heterosexual’ or ‘straight’ acknowledged, ‘straight sex was really only discussed so I have never taken into account how people not like myself are feeling or affected. It is unfortunate that this is the first time I am thinking of this to be honest’. People frequently mentioned that it was not until after high school that they felt free to explore their sexual orientation or work through feelings of shame about not identifying as ‘straight’. Here are some thoughtful answers that illustrate these feelings:

‘The sex ed I received did not facilitate honest reflection about my own sexual orientation. In fact, it likely suppressed my own exploration of my sexual orientation, such that I came out to myself much later in life. ‘

‘My Catholic education made me believe for 12 years that I was straight, regardless of how I felt towards both men and women. I believed that I could only be in a heterosexual relationship, as anything different would be looked down upon. When discovering my true sexuality, I felt confused, scared, and ashamed rather than proud.’

‘I didn’t come out until my 30s and I think that had a lot to do with internalized stuff from Catholic school and Catholic upbringing. My family and my school were not super strict or devout, but the possible rejection for being queer was deeply seeded. Literally NO ONE in my life was surprised when I came out as I was so obviously queer to them, but I was still terrified to tell them.’

Feelings of being ostracized, guilt and shame were mentioned a lot. Some articulated that because of this they resented the Church or ultimately left the Church because they were not accepted fully and others who were fully out⁵⁷ talked about how they still will not and do not

⁵⁷ To be out can mean to reveal or share that they identify as LGBTQ+ to others.

plan on telling their Catholic family or friends out of fear of judgement and hostility. And some talked about how they were not included in the Church's idea of family or fatherhood because they were not heterosexual. Respondents pointed out that when there was mention of gay people it was usually gay men, but never gay women and that for people who identified as bisexual they knew they were attracted to multiple genders, but only dated people that allowed them to maintain a heterosexual appearance. This section reveals more about who felt left out from the Catholic sex education and how to make an updated Catholic sex education more inclusive.

What Should a New Curriculum Include?

As this paper moves to plant the seeds for a sex education that is more inclusive, this paper included what people wanted or appreciated from their Catholic sex education. The last question of the survey asks:

What (if anything) do you wish your Catholic high school sex education would have included?' and 'What (if anything) did you appreciate about your Catholic high school sex education?'

Survey feedback found that traditional Catholic sex education has been quite exclusive—by invalidating the experiences of women, people of color, and LGBTQ+ people and by promoting shame and sex negativity. My goal is to utilize the survey data to start creating a more inclusive model, to move from diagnosing the problem towards offering solutions. The goal is that by having people articulate what they wish their sex education would have included, this will begin to form the basis for a new curriculum. Additionally, by listing what people appreciated about their sex education, there's a way to keep some of the content that upheld themes of dignity.

It could be because it was in the name of this survey or because it is not really taught in Catholic high schools, but consent was an answer that came up frequently when it came to what people wish they had been taught. There were also a handful of answers that advocated for a more sex-positive approach to sex instead of one that is fear based. There was also mention of

learning more about pleasure. For example, learning what an orgasm is or learning how to communicate if sexual acts are painful. People also discussed how they wish they had learned that relationships outside of a 'husband and wife' dynamic could exist and ways to have sex safely, or about contraception.

In terms of reproductive health, there was also a desire for reproductive material that expanded past childbirth. People wrote about a yearning to learn more about healthy relationships at a younger age. Also, because people can start dating in high school, there was an expressed interest in learning about healthy boundaries and how to communicate about physical touch and consent with their partner with acts outside of sex as well. There were also people who felt that changing sex education in Catholic school would be impossible until the Church changed their teachings on marriage, sex, or birth control altogether. The quotations below are included because they meaningfully contribute to the conversation of what the future of Catholic sex education could potentially look like or materials that could be included. This is what people wish their sex education would have included:

"I wish they would have included how to talk to your doctor about this (reproductive health) as well."

"I want a reading of Humanae Vitae through the a priori principles of not using one another rather than its current interpretation as sex being purely for procreation within the confines of a marriage."

"I would like to see these courses focused on healthy and healthy practices regardless of whether certain things are "sins" or not (people always seem to forget that "God is Love." And his ultimate power of forgiveness "knows no bounds" so even if it is a "sin", they can still be educated on it in the event they choose to do certain things they can still know their God is forgiving). I would love to see sex education throughout school (not just a one-time thing) I would also like to see the inclusion of other sexual orientations, as well as more information on sexual and reproductive health, more information on purity, and periods, and so much more."

People also acknowledged what they thought was feasible given the limitations that arise when working within the Catholic church. Examples of how a lack of teaching around consent pressured people into performing acts they were not comfortable with because they were not sure how to say no to different actions were also included:

“My Catholic education truly lacked in every area for those that did not wish to conform to a traditional Catholic sex life. I also wish that there was ANY education on LGBTQ+ topics, which are inherently made sexual (that's another problematic topic). Most of all, as a young woman, I wish there was education on consent, that I have a choice to say no any time and without a reason and that should be enough.”

“We need to talk about consent. As a woman, I have found it very easy to end up in relationships that are very male-centered sexually. No one ever talked to me about making sure my sexual needs were met. I felt awkward or ashamed to ask for sexual favors from my boyfriend. I often let him do what he wanted without paying attention to if I was in pain or saying no.”

These quotations are included because they show what is at stake if Catholic high schools do not move towards a sex education that is grounded in conversations around consent. Clearly harm occurs when consent and boundaries are not taught, regardless of where the Church stands on certain issues, because each human body is full of dignity and is sacred, the Church should work to prevent harm like this happening when possible. While many are skeptical that any conversations rooted in consent can truly happen in Catholic high school, it is important to remember that the Catholic Church does have some well-written material on consent that it could incorporate. In terms of what people thought their Catholic sex education did well, here are a few quotes to consider:

“I did choose to wait for a fairly long time until having sex. I appreciate that that space was provided, to treat it seriously and not assume that it would just by default be part of being a teenager. I am thankful that I was able to integrate some of the better points, regarding communicating love and care through sex, and apply them to my life. To be honest I'm still figuring out a lot, but that principle at least is one that I value.”

“They at least attempted to talk about abusive relationships and how to recognize the signs of one. It wasn't necessarily tied to sex education but it's the one and only good thing I remember being taught about in regard to relationships.”

“I do appreciate its harsh warnings that people are not to be used. It helped me take sex seriously, as something that is to be an expression of love and not something to be treated irresponsibly and unintentionally. It helped me understand sex as a self-giving rather than as a consumption. It helped me understand sex (albeit hetero sex) as something good, natural, and Godly.”

This section ends with these quotes because it points to the values of the Catholic Church that could guide a new form of Catholic sex education. These answers talked about respecting others, about a non-selfish form of love, and creating space for people who have sex at different times in their lives. This next section will work to include the desires from the quotes above with that of Catholic teaching to begin to lay the foundations of new Catholic sex education.

A Consent Based Catholic Sex Education

When it comes to creating a Catholic sex education that is consent based or inclusive to reproductive health, we do not have to start from scratch. There are Church teachings that already exist that are useful for a consent-based curriculum. There are also Catholic universities that are *already* teaching consent-based sex education. There is also wisdom on what to incorporate into this curriculum that is provided from the surveys. These three areas will work together in this section to lay the foundation for a new, and more inclusive, consent based Catholic sex education.

A portion of this survey was intentionally dedicated to reproductive health education. In this paper, reproductive health education extended past the anatomy of the reproductive system and also included topics like gynecology, maternal health, pleasure, reproductive care, the

clitoris and reproductive diseases. Respondents wrote about not knowing of these issues till much later in life or from internet searches. A more comprehensive understanding of reproductive health allows us to know more fully about the sacredness of reproductive bodies. This knowledge allows people to be more empowered when it comes to consenting to sex for reproduction, consent when it comes to pleasure, advocating from themselves in healthcare spaces and how to say no when sex physically hurts. By teaching this in the classroom, it gives all Catholic high school students an equal opportunity to be aware of reproductive health, rather than only a select few. A comprehensive reproductive health education creates a sense of equality in sex and upholds the dignity of those with reproductive systems, and should be component of Catholic sex education.

Next, I will introduce *Protecting God's Children: Teaching Touching Safety* to show the role boundaries play in sex education.⁵⁸ *Protecting God's Children: Teaching Touching Safety* is a Church approved document whose goal is to teach children physical boundaries and to, “resist the lures of manipulative, controlling people who exploit children for their own sexual gratification.”⁵⁹ This document is frequently taught in Sunday school classes for minors and is influenced by the on-going sex abuse crisis.⁶⁰ This document is helpful because this language around boundaries should be expanded to Catholic high school students who are learning about sex education. This idea of touching safety can be used to ensure high school students learn how to set boundaries with their body. For example, this document defines boundaries as the limits that define one person as separate from another or from others. Boundaries promote and preserve

⁵⁸ National Catholic Services, *Protecting God's Children: Teaching Touching Safety* (National Catholic Services, 2004), 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 5.

⁶⁰ This is defined in the section of the paper titled *Talking About Consent in a Church with a Sex Abuse*

personal integrity. Boundaries give each person a clear sense of “self” and a framework for how to function in relation to others.⁶¹

Teaching boundaries as part of sex education, while stressing that having a clear sense of ‘self’ is necessary to giving consent, not only upholds the Church’s understanding of integrity, but also reduces some of the violence that can happen in non-consensual acts. Additionally, in several of the responses to the survey, people mentioned how they wished that they could have learned how to say no to sexual acts or to advances in relationships. This work of boundary setting needs to start early on and needs to use high school appropriate examples as opposed to the ones *Protecting God’s Children* lays out for children.

Protecting God’s Children is also useful for understanding when boundaries have been crossed and why this is not a healthy model for relationships. For example, “a parent who demands that a child kiss grandma goodbye—even when a child does not want to-- can leave a child believing that individual wants should be suppressed in favor of the wants and wishes of other, more influential people.”⁶² This example is not exclusionary to a couple who is married, but instead it highlights that someone should not give into actions simply to please someone else with more power, but rather they should listen to what their body wants too. Once a person understands what their boundaries are and what their body is comfortable with they are able to understand if they want to grant consent to someone else.

Feeling safe is also important when it comes to consent. *Protecting God’s Children* gives three points on how to identify possible danger and harm. First, the teaching that children must

⁶¹ *Protecting God’s Children*, 5.

⁶² *Ibid*, 5.

be able to identify and resist any touch that can harm them—sexual or nonsexual. Two, children must respect their own health and safety and the health and safety of others. Third, learning the anatomically correct names for their private body parts. These three teachings should extend to high school students, stressing that above all else sex should feel healthy and safe. Learning how to understand when your body feels uncomfortable or how to say no to an unwanted touch or hug is also crucial to the consent process. There are two lessons from *Protecting God's Children* that expand on bodily consent. Lesson 1 of this curriculum includes examples and times of how and when to vocalize 'no', 'stop', 'don't do that' or 'I don't like that, and I don't want to be touched!'⁶³ This is helpful for people to begin and normalize vocalizing consent, and the various ways to say no. Lesson 2 defines the word uncomfortable as 'experiencing physical discomfort that leaves one ill ease or uneasy, sometimes causing anxiety.' This can be a helpful way for folks to reflect on how their body responds to a situation and what that might indicate about what is occurring.⁶⁴ Saying no to a hug or to sex is not always easy, but this process of what feels right can become clearer as one begins to know themselves better. Whether you are married or not, you always have the right to say no to any act that makes you uncomfortable. By having a curriculum that teaches students how to listen to when their body is anxious or a variety of ways to say no, a curriculum not rooted in fear begins to form.

Next, *Humanae Vitae's*⁶⁵ teaching on mutuality and how that relates to authentic consent will be introduced. *Humanae Vitae* uses the phrase 'mutual gift'. The idea of sex being mutual implies that all parties involved should have the same understanding of what is happening and are consenting to these actions. Ensuring that everyone is on the same page can reduce harm

⁶³ Ibid, 6.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 7.

⁶⁵ Introduced on page 7 of this paper.

from occurring. Furthermore, *Humanae Vitae* also says that every human life is sacred and a reflection of God.⁶⁶ Ensuring that consent is given during sex is a way to acknowledge that human life is sacred and as a reflection of God, must be respected. Again, this sacredness is not based on whether someone is married or not, but rather it is inherited because each human reflects God. This concept of mutuality and inherit dignity must be emphasized in order to create an inclusive sex education.

Lastly, this section will fully introduce the Loyola Marymount University's (LMU) Cares program mentioned at the beginning of the paper. LMU Cares is a program that is taught at a Catholic University and provides language that would be helpful for those in high school. The mission statement of LMU Cares states, "We are committed to building a community where individuals act with integrity, stand in faith and serve one another. Student safety is our top priority and we remain dedicated to combating sexual or interpersonal misconduct in our community."⁶⁷ LMU Care sees consent based education as a reflection of the Catholic faith and a way to create a community where all feel safe.

LMU Care's comprehensive program sifts through the gray areas of consent. LMU Cares defines consent as being clear, coherent, willing and on-going. LMU Cares clarifies that silence is not consent and cannot be implied. This program explicitly states that one cannot fully consent if they are incapacitated drugs or alcohol. LMU Cares also says that consent cannot be given out of manipulation and that it must be obtained every step of the way. The program also makes it clear that just because one is in an intimate relationship with someone does not mean that consent can be assumed and explains the physical representations of saying no.⁶⁸ This definition

⁶⁶ "Humanae Vitae", paragraph 13.

⁶⁷ 'What is Consent?', LMU Cares, Loyola Marymount University, last modified 2021, <https://studentaffairs.lmu.edu/wellness/lmucare/education/whatisconsent/>.

⁶⁸ 'What is Consent?'

of consent includes people who are not married while giving a clear outline of what is ok and what is not ok, something that the survey showed is not frequently taught to people.

To end, people from the survey mentioned concepts from their sex education that they found positive. Communication as a form of love and care is an idea that should not be lost. The Catholic Church understands that communication allows you to fully respect someone else and this has to be central to a consent based Catholic sex education. People also mentioned that while they did not adhere to abstinence as a practice in their own life, they felt that having a counter cultural teaching about sex in high school, where it is often assumed that everyone is having sex, made those who were not ready to have sex in high school feel welcomed; reminding people that is important to have sex based on your own terms rather than cultural expectations.

Protecting God's Children, Humanae Vitae, the LMU Cares program and these survey's allow us to begin imagining a new sex education for Catholic high school. A curriculum that moves away from fear and the abstract and towards a curriculum that teaches about boundaries, the sacredness of each other, and how to formally define consent, including a true understanding of reproductive health. This not only allows high school students to form a sense of self and how to gauge what feels comfortable for their bodies, but it also allows students to practice healthy boundary setting skills earlier on in life. The hope here is that this becomes a preventive model for learning about sex rather than learning about consent after harm or non-consensual acts occur. Most importantly, this section highlights that there are Catholic teachings that can be drawn on to create an update to sex education in Catholic high schools.

Concluding Thoughts:

As a Catholic I have learned that one of the best ways for me to honor God is through good communication skills. When I communicate to someone what I need, I am honoring myself

as creation, and when I listen to what someone else needs, I am being offered an opportunity to honor the God in that person. The vulnerabilities shared by the respondents and the on-going sex abuse crisis proves that Catholic sex education needs an update immediately. Catholic sex education must move towards a model that is based on consent, that teaches better reproductive education, and that is culturally competent. By drawing on sources that have been produced by the Catholic Church, the resources from the Loyola Marymount University Cares program, and from survey respondents themselves, I begin to lay out what a new form of inclusive sex education in the spirit of Catholic teaching can look like and how to reduce further harm from occurring, however, this is only the beginning of what that curriculum could look like, as the Catholic Church in the United States bends and grows, it would do well to focus on healing as a way to respond to the Signs of the Times too.

To end, teaching an inclusive Catholic sex education that is rooted in consent proves that boundaries and knowing one's self is not a concept that is only reserved for a married man and woman, but for everyone, without question because of their inherent dignity. It is obvious that not everyone who receives sex education in a Catholic high school is heterosexual or is waiting till marriage to have sex, and while the Church may not agree with that, they still have a duty to uphold each human in a dignified way. A comprehensive Catholic sex education should include reproductive health and consent education as a way to reduce suffering in the community and to express love to each other, and these responses show that there is a desire to learn these topics in the classroom early on in life. When considering the Catholic call to fight for the common good, and for the community as a whole, consent and boundaries are a beautiful way to uphold and respect the dignity of our neighbors. An accurate and holistic sex education is an act of harm

prevention and a way to rebuild back trust to those the Church has hurt. May we all fight for a sex education that leads towards liberation and justice for all.

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Appendix A: Online Survey included below

Catholic high school sex education, reproductive education, and consent education:

The purpose of this survey is to ask participants to reflect on and examine topics of sex education in relation to their Catholic high school. The survey is intended for those who attended Catholic high school.

***Content Warning* this survey does include topics of sex, sexual identity, consent, and reproductive health if this content is triggering or harmful please feel free to exit the survey at any time.**

Q1. I agree to participate in this research study. I understand the purpose and nature of this study and I am participating voluntarily. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without any penalty or consequences

- Yes
- No

Q2. Did you attend Catholic high school?

- Yes
- No

Q3. Do you identify as Hispanic or Latinx/a/e/o?

- Yes
- No

Q4. What is your age?

- 18-22
- 23-26
- 27-32
- 33-37
- 38-42
- 43-47
- 48-52
- 53-57
- 58-62
- 63-67
- Over 67

Q5. How would you describe your gender identity? Check all that apply

- Male
- Female
- Trans Man/Trans Male
- Trans Woman/Trans Female
- Genderqueer/Gender NonConforming
- Please list your gender identity here if it is not listed

Q6. If your gender identity was not listed please list it here:

Q7. How would you describe your sexual orientation? Check all that apply

- Heterosexual or straight
- Gay
- Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Queer
- Pansexual
- My sexual orientation is not listed

Q8. If your sexual orientation was not listed please list it here:

Q9. What language was primarily spoken at your home during high school?

- English
- Spanish
- Both
- Other

Q. If the language you spoke primarily spoke at home was not listed, please list it here:

Q10. What language was used in your high school when discussing topics related to sex education?

- English
- Spanish
- Both
- Other

Q. If the language used at school was not listed, please list it here:

Q11. Which of these descriptions is closest to how you define sex education?

For this research study please choose only one while noting that a mixture of the two definitions are used by many

- Learning about: Gaining the skills to navigate relationships and manage one's own sexual health (Definition 1)
- Learning about: The union of husband and wife cooperating with God (Definition 2)

Q. If you defined sex education as: gaining the skills to navigate relationships and manage one's own sexual health.

How satisfied are you with the sex education you received?

- 1 not satisfied at all
- 2 somewhat unsatisfied
- 3 neutral
- 4 somewhat satisfied
- 5 extremely satisfied
- I used the other definition
- No opinion

Q.If you define sex education as, the union of husband and wife cooperating with God

How satisfied are you with the sex education you received?

- 1 not satisfied at all
- 2 somewhat unsatisfied
- 3 neutral
- 4 somewhat satisfied
- 5 extremely satisfied
- I used the other definition
- No opinion

Q12. Was sex education part of your high school curriculum?

- Yes definition 1 was part of my curriculum
- Yes definition 2 was part of my curriculum
- Both were definitions were included (with emphasis on definition 1)
- Both were definitions were included (with emphasis on definition 2)
- Both definitions were included equally
- Sex education was not part of my high school curriculum

Q13. If yes, where in the curriculum was sex education taught? Check all that apply

- Biology class
- Health class
- Ethics class

- Theology class
- Other high school class

Q14. Can you remember what you learned about sex education while in Catholic high school? If yes, what do you remember? If no, when (if ever) did you learn about sex education? If other, please feel free to write 'it's complicated'

Yes

No

Other:

Q15. Did parents, guardians, or another figure in your life provide you with additional sex education outside of school? If yes, what did they teach you? If no when (if ever) is a time you remember learning about sex education outside of school? If other, please feel free to write 'it's complicated'

Yes

No

Other:

Q16. Did your sex education include topics around practicing consent (consent can be defined as a mutual agreement to participate in sexual activity)? If yes, what did your sex education say about consent? If no, when (if ever) did you learn about consent? If other, please feel free to write 'it's complicated'

Yes

No

Other:

Q17. Did your sex education include information about reproductive health or gynecology?

→ Reproductive health can be defined as matters relating to the reproductive system, functions, processes.

→ Gynecology can be defined as the branch of physiology and medicine which deals with the function and diseases specific to women and girls, especially those affecting the reproductive system.

→ If yes, what did your sex education teach about reproductive health or gynecology?

→ If no, when (if ever) did you learn about reproductive health or gynecology?

→ If other, please feel free to write 'it's complicated'

Yes

No

Other:

Q19. Did your sex education cover consent relate to non-heterosexual relationships (relationships that are not between a man and a woman)? If yes, what did your sex education say about this? If no, when, if ever, did you learn about this?

Yes

No

Q22. How has your Catholic sex education caused you think about your own racial/ethnic identity in relation to sexuality? Please explain:

Q23. How has your Catholic sex education caused you to think about your own gender identity in relation to sexuality? Please explain:

Q24. How has your Catholic sex education caused you to think about your own sexual orientation? Please explain:

Q25. What (if anything) do you wish your Catholic high school sex education would have included?

Q26. What (if anything) did you appreciate about your Catholic high school sex education?

Q 27. Any additional feedback?

Q 28. When you are done, please hit agree.

By clicking 'agree' you agree to submit your survey results.

These answers will remain anonymous and stay protected.

- I agree

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