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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Interrogating Pope Francis: On Gender Theory and Ideological Colonization

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Religious Studies

by

Danielle Marie Dempsey

June 2020

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For my mom - we did it!

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Interrogating Pope Francis: On Gender Theory and Ideological Colonization

by

Danielle Marie Dempsey

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Religious Studies
University of California, Riverside, June 2020
Dr. Melissa M. Wilcox, Chairperson

Interrogating Pope Francis employs institutional genealogies and a queer and trans studies lens to analyze the power dimensions binding the colonial project and the rise of the nation-state to the Catholic Church. In this dissertation, I contextualize the charismatic Pope Francis amongst his predecessors, the institutional Church's direct adoption of colonial ideologies in the past, and its current support for exclusionary identity politics within national arenas. I conduct close readings of Church documents alongside Pope Francis's public statements to reveal the evolution and stagnation of Catholic sexual ethics, and the ways in which the Church has intentionally separated sexual ethics from Catholic social teachings as a means to reject platforms for gender and sexual justice. This genealogy unearths the interrelated but paradoxically juxtaposed Catholic teachings on natural law, human dignity, sexual ethics, and social justice. My analysis further reveals the intentionally divisive and exclusionary direction Francis and

the Catholic Church continue to assume in relation to peoples of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities: a direction that directly upholds the Church's colonial legacy.

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Interrogating Pope Francis: On Gender Theory and Ideological Colonization

Introduction

I became inspired to conduct the research that appears in this dissertation when I heard of Francis's comments decrying gender theory in the summer of 2016:

In Europe, America, Latin America, Africa, and in some countries of Asia, there are genuine forms of ideological colonization taking place. And one of these - I will call it clearly by its name - is [the ideology of] "gender". Today children - children! - are taught in school that everyone can choose his or her sex. Why are they teaching this? Because the books are provided by the persons and institutions that give you money. These forms of ideological colonization are also supported by influential countries. And this [is] terrible!¹

A student of Catholicism and of postcolonial theory, and at the time, as someone who was relatively optimistic about Francis's papacy, when I heard that he referred to gender theory as ideological colonization, my reaction was a mixture of anger, hurt, and scholarly fascination. I decided to enact my scholarly revenge on the pontiff by writing a dissertation on him. I am privileged to have had the resources to interrogate Pope Francis. I should also mention that although I was lucky to have something as topical as Francis's ongoing attack on gender theory traverse my own path to my degree, this project began long before Francis became the first pontiff to appropriate the term "ideological colonization." Indeed, I started formulating this project well before Francis's papacy.

I used to cry when I would do my moral theology homework. I am an expert - or literally a master, if you will - in Catholic moral theology. Catholic moral theology, which deals broadly with the meaning and nature of the human person, makes evaluative

¹ Francis, "Meeting with the Polish Bishops," Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Poland on the Occasion of the XXXI World Youth Day, 27 July 2016, accessed *September 2019*, <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2016/08/02/0568/01265.html#en>, question 4, first brackets original, additional brackets added.

claims about sexual ethics; social justice; morality; the meaning of human existence; and other such issues that are extremely crucial to a queer, trans, or feminist person, or any member of an oppressed community. I obtained a Master of Art in theology from a (liberal) Catholic university and grew fascinated with Catholic moral theology, where my instructors were extremely encouraging about the early iterations of what inspired the research that I present here. Even so, I grew increasingly frustrated that topics that were personal (*not* just hypothetical to myself and other minoritized classmates) were subject to public debate. My professors assigned an array of inspiring revisionist, feminist, womanist, queer, intersectional, postcolonial, and liberationist theologies. These were lamentably accompanied by traditionalist sexual ethics, New Natural Law Theory, and theology that toed an extremely condemnatory party line. We read these documents for homework; people were free to voice their opinions on whether I had a right to exist (or so it felt to me), and often, I would struggle to explain why the whole process felt so demoralizing. I was (and am) frustrated that despite the impacts the Church's teachings have on peoples of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities, the Church has shown no signs of changing its sexual ethic.

The term I was searching for has been described variously: epistemic violence. Discursive colonialism. Knowledge-power production. What Francis so strategically refers to as ideological colonization. What follows is a critical analysis of Francis's statements on gender theory and ideological colonization in conjunction with the relevant fields of institutional Catholic theologies and doctrines to which they correspond. My analysis reveals how the Church has constructed these discourses in ways that

subordinate intersectionally marginalized groups, especially peoples of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities.

The first statement I remember hearing about was a headline I came across on the Internet. I don't recall whether I saw his comments on a search engine or social media, but Francis's August 2016 statement, quoted above, in which he decried the idea that children are encouraged to express their true gender identities, took place while Francis met with a group of bishops in Poland. His statements were widely reported in the U.S. and have since received the attention of other scholars of gender and sexuality and gender and sexual justice activists.²

I read about Francis's statements shortly before I began my doctoral examination year, and they went on to inspire the central questions of my dissertation: Why does Francis, a Pope generally perceived as being socially progressive, oppose the movements and ideals that he has apparently collapsed into the term "gender theory?" What do his comments reveal about the institutional Church's approach to the same topic? Are Francis and the Roman Catholic Church legitimately concerned about anti-, post- and decolonial critiques that certain gender and sexual justice movements can be seen as unwanted importations from the Global North and West? Or, is Francis capitalizing on these kinds of critiques but ultimately with the intention of preserving the Church's institutional - and ironically, historically colonial - power?

² Judith Butler, "The Backlash Against 'Gender Ideology' Must Stop," *New Statesman America*, January 2019, accessed March 2020, newstatesman.com; Elizabeth S. Corredor, "Unpacking 'Gender Ideology' and the Global Right's Antigender Countermovement," *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 44 No. 3, 2019, accessed March 2020, <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/701171>.

As I began my research, I was surprised to find out that Francis's 2016 statement was not the first time he had used the phrase "ideological colonization;" nor was it his most provocative statement to date. Francis's first use of the phrase "ideological colonization" took place in January 2015, when he referred to "forms of ideological colonization out to destroy the family."³ When asked by a reporter to expand on the afore-mentioned comments, Francis compared teaching "gender theory" to children in school to the indoctrination of the Balilla in Fascist Italy and the Hitler youth. He stated:

Think of the Balilla, think of the Hitler Youth.... They colonized the people.[...] Each people has its own culture, its own history.[...]. But when conditions are imposed by colonizing empires, they seek to make these peoples lose their own identity and create uniformity.[...] This is 'ideological colonization.'⁴

Each of Francis's statements on ideological colonization between January 2015 and January 2020 have proven just as thought-provoking as the initial statement that caught my own and a fair amount of public attention. What does Francis mean by "gender theory?" By "ideological colonization?" What are the implications of Francis's statements on queer and trans people? On women? On the Church's relationship with the Global South and other colonized peoples? This dissertation conducts a genealogical analysis of Francis's statements to highlight how contextually, Francis's comments

³ Francis, "Meeting With Families: Address of His Holiness Pope Francis," *Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Sri Lanka and the Philippines*, 16 January 2015, accessed September 2019, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco_20150116_srilanka-filippine-incontro-famiglie.html.

⁴ Francis, "In Flight Press Conference of His Holiness Pope Francis from the Philippines to Rome," 19 January 2015, accessed March 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco_20150119_srilanka-filippine-conferenza-stampa.html.

traverse the institutional Roman Catholic teachings of sexual ethics, social doctrine, and the Roman Catholic Church's role in colonialism.

This project focuses specifically on the institutional Roman Catholic Church, which includes the papacy and the other leaders, primarily bishops, and all of whom are ultimately led by the Pope, who are responsible for establishing "official" Catholic doctrine. I am specifically interested in the power dynamics of knowledge production. This dynamic has far-reaching impact on the relationship between the institutional Church and lay Catholics, and even more specifically Catholics (and non-Catholics) who are members of non-dominant groups. I am further conducting this study in part to answer the question as to why the institutional Church has been so hesitant to respond to or incorporate social movements that are more inclusive of (Catholic) people of non-dominant sexes, genders, and sexualities.

I began this dissertation with two primary goals: 1) to understand what Francis means by "ideological colonization" and 2) to unearth what his statements reveal about the Church's approach to what it calls "gender theory." This proved to be a complex process due in equal part to the fact that Catholicism is a living tradition, and one that is some 2,000 years old. Francis is a living Pope who speaks for an institutional tradition, and my project – as well as my data – evolved along with his multifaceted thoughts and remarks on ideological colonization and gender theory. Using official and unofficial Vatican statements and documents, I conduct a genealogical analysis of the theological and institutional legacies underpinning Francis's use of the phrase "ideological

colonization,” and its close relationship with the Vatican’s longer-stemming criticism of “gender theory.”

Due in part to the fact that many of Francis’s statements were in response to questions or otherwise improvised and due also in part to the elaborate interrelatedness of institutional Catholic doctrines, pulling apart the intricate threads of Francis’s “ideological colonization” has proven to be a complex process. This process was further complicated by the challenge of translation. The Vatican offers several official translations of any document they have published electronically, since the mid-twentieth century, and Francis’s verbal statements occur in English, Spanish, or Italian. Some official Vatican documents are additionally promulgated in Latin.

Some transcripts, however, do not indicate which language Francis was speaking during verbal communications. In those cases, I did my best to discern the original language based on the languages Francis speaks (English, Spanish, and Italian) and the audiences with whom he was speaking. In situations such as interviews and press conferences, references to groups speaking various languages suggest that there were interpreters present. In some instances, some of what Francis and especially his non-Spanish, Italian, or English-speaking interlocutors were saying may have been diluted in the translation process. I did my best to obtain accurate transcripts by cross-referencing the multiple translations that the Vatican publishes. I also cross-referenced transcripts with audio and video clips when they were available. In the majority of cases, I was able to definitively determine the original language of Francis’s statements, and usually that of his interlocutors as well. I began my investigation with Francis’s use of the term

“ideological colonization”, which revealed thirty-one different instances in which the phrase has been invoked during Francis’s papacy between January 2015 and January 2020. I then cross-referenced these instances with the electronic publications of the Vatican’s uses of the terms “gender,” “gender theory,” and “gender ideology.” These inter-related terms predate Francis’s papacy, but only appear electronic in Vatican archives shortly before the turn of the millennium, and largely as backlash against feminist ideology in the 1990s. This suggests that Francis is the first pontiff to use a specific term(ideological colonization) and to place an additional focus (trans and gender variant people) to accompany the Vatican’s pre-existing critique of gender theory.

I compiled these data through searching the electronic Vatican archives, which are published by the *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, the Vatican’s official publishing house. The electronic Vatican archives include a vast wealth of meticulously recorded transcripts of official and unofficial Vatican statements and documents. The earliest official statements that appear in the archives include encyclicals and papal bulls issued by Pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758). Each pontiff, beginning with Leo XIII (1878-1903), has a dedicated URL from which one can access a variety of corresponding transcripts and documents. Beginning with Paul VI, (1963-1968), the Vatican has electronically published each Pope’s public activities. The content available for public consumption is sub-cataloged under each pontiff by year. This information includes official statements, documents, weekly homilies and *angeli* (statements given to visitors gathered in Saint Peter’s Square), speeches, audiences, messages, and documentation and transcripts from the

Pope's travels.⁵ In addition, the Vatican has extensively cataloged documents for the Roman Curia, which are the administrative institutions of the Vatican. For the purpose of clarity, it should also be noted that the Vatican refers to itself as the Holy See.

The Roman Curia is overseen by the Pope, and includes but is more expansive than the Magisterium, which refers specifically to the teaching authority of the Catholic Church, especially the Pope and bishops. The Internal Theological Commission explains: "By 'ecclesiastical Magisterium' is meant the task of teaching that by Christ's institution is proper to the College of Bishops or to individual bishops linked in hierarchical communion with the Supreme Pontiff."⁶ In addition to the Magisterium, some of the entities comprising the Roman Curia at stake in this study include various Congregations, Pontifical Councils and Pontifical Commissions, and the Pontifical Swiss Guard, to name only a few. The records available for the Roman Curia are also sub-cataloged and available in multiple languages. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), for example, which has existed under that name since 1965, includes a link to a "complete list of documents" dating back to March 1966.⁷ Indeed, a large process of

⁵ The different types of official Vatican documents are vast, and will be explained when they have bearing on my analysis. More important here is the distinction between official and unofficial statements. Official statements occur when the Pope declares an item official doctrine, as compared to making a statement informally, such as during a press conference or some similar venue.

⁶ Internal Theological Commission, *The Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology*, 1975, accessed March 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_1975_magistero-teologia_en.html.

⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Complete List of Documents," February 2020, accessed May 2020, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/doc_doc_index.htm.

preserving the extensive Vatican archives and making them available for public consumption began around the same time in 1963 under Paul VI (1963-1978).⁸

In 2005, the Vatican published the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, which provide additional indices and commentaries for the primary documents in question in this study. Both of these are available as hard copy texts as well as electronically on the website. Like the rest of the website, the *Catechism* and the *Compendium* are searchable. I consulted both versions throughout my research and was able to search these and the rest of the digitized documents for key terms such as “gender” and “ideological colonization.” Many transcripts are offered in up to nine or more different languages, and the search function is currently searchable in seven different languages, including English, Spanish, and Italian, which are the languages Francis speaks.

Interestingly, in all the transcripts I came across, terms such as “gay,” “gender,” and “transgender” appeared in English despite the language of the speech, interview, or document in question. The term ideological colonization conversely appeared to have been translated from the language Francis was speaking. This was evidenced by slight variation in spelling and English translation. While the vast majority of instances included the phrase “ideological colonization,” spelled in American English, I also came

⁸ There are even larger volumes of archives included in the Vatican Library and the Vatican Apostolic Archive (formerly known as the Vatican Secret Archive) that span over a millennium of volume. Much of this content has been digitized since the twentieth century as well (and obviously, much of it has not). My research consults primary and secondary sources that deal with official statements from the mid-nineteenth century to present as well as verbal transcripts from the late twentieth century to present, both of which have been widely published and documented (“The Papal Archives,” Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, accessed April 2020, archivioapostolicovaticano.va).

across some variations such as “ideological colonisation,” “ideological colonialism,” and “ideological colonialization.”

Since the Vatican includes search functions and transcripts in multiple languages, I was able to cross reference fairly easily to find a comprehensive list of the entries on gender and ideological colonization that the Vatican has published electronically. I compared statements in multiple versions to the official English translations that the Vatican publishing house provides to add additional layers of linguistic accuracy and sophistication.

After compiling and closely analyzing the Vatican archives, in Chapter 1 I systematically analyze the theological discourses to which Francis alludes. Francis’s statements on ideological colonization have proven to be extremely intricate. I devote my first chapter to a survey of the ways in which the Vatican has engaged the topic of gender, and the complexities of Francis’s statements on ideological colonization. The Vatican’s condemnation of what it has subsumed under the umbrella term “gender theory” is embedded in a longer intellectual history involving sexual ethics, moral theology, and social doctrine, to name only some of the primary components at stake in Francis’s statements.

In Chapter 2, I elaborate upon the relationship between human dignity and natural law. The Church believes human dignity derives from humans being made in the image

of God.⁹ This is fundamental not only to the human person but also to the human body.¹⁰ Human dignity is intrinsically tied to the Church's understanding of natural law theory. In chapter 3, I explain how the relationship between human dignity and natural law additionally informs the ways in which the Church's social teaching has developed in relation to and distinct from contemporary social movements (especially sexual and gender justice movements). Finally, in Chapter 4, I highlight the ways in which Francis's statements on ideological colonization evoke a particularly nationalist rhetoric.

This project is deeply indebted to queer, trans, and feminist studies in Catholicism. Indeed, my research suggests that resistance to the Church's subordination of peoples of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities predates the Church's current sexual ethic or social doctrine. While my research also draws on queer, trans, and feminist theologies, the research presented here aims to understand the Church as an institution, rather than to offer any further theological inquiry. This research pays deference to the powerful ways in which peoples of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities have historically negotiated and rebelled against structures designed to oppress them by asking a crucial follow-up question to the counter-narratives these texts, theories, and movements have offered.

⁹ All human beings, in as much as they are created in the image of God, have the dignity of a person. A person is not something but someone, capable of self-knowledge and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with God and with other persons. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), accessed April 2019, http://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium_ccc/documents/archive_2005_compendium-ccc_en.html, 66.

¹⁰ The human person is a being at once corporeal and spiritual. In man spirit and matter form one nature. This unity is so profound that, thanks to the spiritual principle which is the soul, the body which is material, becomes a living human body and participates in the dignity of the image of God (*Catechism*, 69).

Why, despite the vast body of literature, protest, activism, resistance, and research, does the institutional Church hold fast to its condemnation of “gender theory?” How does the Vatican continue to reject critiques that view the Church’s sexual ethic as anywhere from obsolete to an act of erasure? Critiques that point out the systems of homophobia, transphobia, and sexism that such an ethic perpetuates? And simultaneously, critiques that the Church has its own history of committing acts of colonialism and genocide, despite Francis’s claims that gender theory itself is an act of colonization?

In an attempt to resist the imposed binary between “gender theory” and the Church’s sexual ethic, this study takes seriously the charge that contemporary gender theory is a product of western imperialism, while also interrogating the Church’s role in that same structure. In that same vein, this is not a project on Pope Francis. My goal is to illuminate the ways in which Pope Francis is emblematic of the twenty-first century institutional Church, which has elected a leader capable of adapting to postmodern sensibilities, but who will ultimately protect the Church’s deep-seated sexual ethic. For these reasons, the research presented here decidedly centers on the Catholic Church as an institution, and the ways in which it impacts nondominant bodies. The research presented here provides an in-depth analysis of genealogical and epistemological histories of the institutional Roman Catholic Church as it relates to sexual and gendered embodiments and colonialism.

Intellectual Histories, Power Regimes, and Foucauldian Genealogies

This study uses Foucauldian genealogy to critically examine institutional Roman Catholic intellectual histories pertaining to what the Vatican has recently termed “gender theory.” Simply put, genealogical method traces the history of an idea in an attempt to historicize it. The aim of tracing an intellectual history thusly is not so much to search for its origins, but to question and problematize its epistemological underpinnings and their relationship to power dynamics in the present. Foucault crystalizes his genealogical method in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, where he states the following: “This book is intended as a correlative history of the modern soul and of a new power to judge; a genealogy of the present scientifico-legal complex from which the power to punish derives its bases, justifications and rules, from which it extends its effects and by which it masks its exorbitant singularity.”¹¹

Foucault further posits that knowledge is inherently tied to power through the process of knowledge production, asserting “that power produces knowledge;[...] that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of the field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.”¹² This constitutive link between power, knowledge, and institutions informs my approach to the study I conduct here. Foucauldian genealogy is concerned with knowledge production, which is achieved primarily by self-replicating power structures, such as the prison system, which Foucault

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 23.

¹² Foucault, 27.

analyzes in *Discipline and Punish*, as well as the institutional Church, which is the subject of my study in this dissertation. In analyzing papal and Vatican statements on ideological colonization and gender theory, I aim to uncover a more extensive history of Catholic knowledge production.

Foucauldian genealogy as well as Foucauldian insights on sexuality and the body have proven helpful in this regard. As this study shows, institutional Catholic sexual ethics has historically served to subordinate a number of nondominant bodies, thus demonstrating the powerful effects of the relationship between power regimes and knowledge production. Sexual ethics broadly refers to the area of discourse surrounding human sexual morality, norms and codes of conduct. Catholic sexual ethics is a broad subfield of Christian sexual ethics, which relies on Christian sources of interpretation to approach sexual ethics.

In his chapter on Christianity in *Sex and Religion*, Anthony LoPresti identifies four “pivotal theological issues” that inform debates surrounding Christian sexual ethics.¹³ These sources of interpretation include scripture, tradition, natural law, and human experience.¹⁴ Debates surrounding moral discernment derived from sexual ethics arise due to disagreements over which and to what extent each source should be emphasized. These issues are further complicated “when concrete experiences suggest a moral evaluation that differs from traditional sources of morality (scripture, tradition,

¹³ Anthony F. LoPresti, “Christianity” in *Sex and Religion*, ed. Christel Manning and Phil Zuckerman (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2005), 124.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 124-125.

[natural law]) have said.”¹⁵ Specific to Catholic sexual ethics, institutional Catholicism relies heavily on a tradition of Church hierarchy, placing official theological and doctrinal discernment solely in the hands of ecclesiastical authority, often reducing the impact of dissenting voices within these debates.

(Re)-Reading Intellectual Histories: A Foucauldian Lens

The field of queer, trans, and feminist studies in Christianity and especially Roman Catholicism remains largely indebted to theological works, particularly their critical analyses of the history and development of Catholic sexual ethics. These works offer useful historical approaches to Catholic sexual ethics.¹⁶ They additionally provide in-depth explanations as to how the broader field of Catholic sexual ethics relates to natural law theory.¹⁷ They also provide important insights into the history of Catholic social thought and doctrine.¹⁸ Significantly, much of the theological work that has already been published applies extra-theological, interdisciplinary approaches to Christian sexual ethics. These include, for example, Foucauldian analyses of theology, religion, and

¹⁵ Ibid, 125.

¹⁶ Margaret A. Farley, *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 2006), 37-49, 183-187, 271-312.

¹⁷ Jean Porter, *Natural and Divine Law: Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics* (Ottawa, Ontario: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999); Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler, *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2018), 48-123.

¹⁸ David Matzko McCarthy, “Human Rights and Pluralism in Catholic Social Thought” (*New Blackfriars* 90, no. 1025 [2009]), 72-89; see Charles E. Curran.

bodies and sexuality.¹⁹ Important theological works have also been published that engage concepts such as orientalism, postcolonial theory, and gender theory.²⁰ These analyses prove methodologically and theoretically useful for an investigation that seeks to conduct a historical and genealogical analysis of institutional Roman Catholic sexual ethics. I similarly aim to employ gender and sexuality studies theories and methods while also paying special methodological attention to queer and trans studies in religion.

While overtly confessional frameworks for sexual ethics provide useful foundations for the task at hand, the question remains as to how to approach the topics in question when the aim of this study is not theological. Instead, the aim of this project is to ask questions about structural and epistemic violence by interrogating the institutional Church *and* normative queer, trans, and feminist epistemologies. In order to do so, I undertake to negotiate Roman Catholic theologies and queer, trans, gender and sexuality studies simultaneously. Other scholars in religious studies have already done so successfully.

One thinker within Roman Catholic studies who negotiates between theological and non-confessional religious studies scholarship particularly well is Mark Jordan.²¹

¹⁹James Bernauer and Jeremy Carrette, *Michel Foucault and Theology: The Politics of Religious Experience* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004); Mark D. Jordan, *Convulsing Bodies: Religion and Resistance in Foucault* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015); Farley, 18-25.

²⁰ Farley, 63-69. Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000); *The Queer God* (London: Routledge, 2003); Farley, 63-69 Farley, 63-69.

²¹ Here, by confessional vs. non-confessional I mean works that do not seek to make claims from an overtly theological, religious, or confessional perspective.

Jordan's historical and epistemological analyses of the development of the term "sodomy"²² and its influence on modern discourses on homosexuality,²³ for example, have proven extremely influential to contemporary discourse within the broader field of queer and trans studies in Christianity. Jordan's genealogical work on the term "sodomy" as a medieval invention and its later re-appropriation within contemporary Christian sexual ethics proves particularly central to this work.

Jordan's focus on the historical and linguistic fluidity of the term "sodomy" is further illuminated by Heather White's text *Reforming Sodom. Reforming Sodom* historicizes the invention of the term "homosexuality," and how the use of homosexuality as a term and concept coincided with the development of the fields of psychoanalysis and sexology.²⁴ *Reforming Sodom* draws important connections between the invention of homosexuality, the subsequent increase of homophobia within Christian milieux, and the impact the invention of homosexuality and resultant homophobia had on the rise of "gay rights" movements. This study similarly focuses on the relationship between Christian sexual ethics – which is largely historically informed by teachings on the binary between homosexuality and heterosexuality specifically – and this dichotomy's impact on related contemporary social movements, such as gender equality and queer activism.

²² Mark D. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

²³ Mark D. Jordan, *The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 2000.

²⁴ Heather White, *Reforming Sodom: Protestants and the Rise of Gay Rights* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 1.

Because the invention of homosexuality emblemized the invention of ‘sexual orientation’ (and indeed, predated the invention of heterosexuality), sexuality from the late nineteenth century onward defined any sexuality other than heterosexual as deviant.²⁵ Subsequent to this development was the implication that sexuality discourse centered upon binary cisgender bodies with binary sexualities. This development served simultaneously to pathologize gender variant people and people who engaged in same-sex sexual activities, while erasing other variations of non-normative gender and sexual expressions, although queer subcultures certainly did and continue to exist. Examination of the advent of sexology in tandem with pivotal events in the Catholic Church such as the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) and the development of official Catholic social doctrine (1891) suggests that the stark divide between social doctrine and sexual ethics may have been influenced by theories in sexology and psychoanalysis, as White similarly posits. I rely on theoretical frameworks similar to White’s as well as Jordan’s to show how since the nineteenth century, institutional Catholicism has increasingly excised sexual ethics from social doctrine.

The current study, then, seeks to investigate the ways in which the Magisterium has subordinated and often elided these afore-mentioned nondominant groups. An inquiry into the relationship between Catholic sexual ethics and people of nondominant genders, sexes, and sexualities relies, to some extent, on a combination of works. This includes

²⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

works that focus on (primarily cis-male) homosexuality.²⁶ This additionally includes scholarship on women and people interpellated as women.²⁷ For this reason, I devote extensive attention to Church teachings on what many thinkers frame as women’s rights, as well as reproductive justice. Lisa Sowle Cahill, for example, has written extensively on reproductive justice and the role of women in the Catholic Church. Indeed, the volume of literature on women’s rights and related reproductive justice within Catholicism is prolific.²⁸

This study, in part as an attempt to increase frameworks approaches that whether intentionally or incidentally understand minoritized groups as necessarily separate, conducts a holistic approach to sex, gender, and sexuality. I do so by recognizing and analyzing simultaneously the similar ways in which peoples of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities are oppressed by the institutional Church. This system of

²⁶ See Mark Jordan; Robert Goss, *Jesus Acted Up: A Gay and Lesbian Manifesto* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993); *Queering Christ: Beyond Jesus Acted Up* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2002); Richard Rambuss, *Closet Devotions* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

²⁷ There is no perfect way to refer to the category of “woman.” The phrase “people interpellated as women” is useful to signal that not everyone that society perceives as “woman” identifies as such. However, this signification becomes more complicated within conversations involving reproductive justice, as that primarily involves people with uteruses or other reproductive organs typically designated as “female” (in the future, I will refer to this designation as female-bodied, while acknowledging that assigning these body parts a biological sex is socially constructed). To complicate matters further, not all people with these body parts are interpellated as women (trans and intersex men, for example). For these reasons, I find it important to use different phrases when discussing different topics, and will identify my terminology at the outset accordingly, while acknowledging that these topics are necessarily slippery.

²⁸ See also Jeanine Kraybill, *One Faith, Two Authorities: Tension Between Female Religious and Male Clergy in the American Catholic Church* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 2019); Elizabeth Gillan Muir, *A Women’s History of the Church: Two Thousand Years of Female Leadership* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019); Emily Machen, *Women of Faith and Religious Identity in Fin-de-Siècle, France* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2018); Mary J. Henold, *Catholic and Feminist: The Surprising History of the American Catholic Feminist Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); *The Laywoman Project: Remaking Catholic Womanhood in the Vatican II Era*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020).

oppression reflects larger societal trends. One particularly beneficial contribution to this conversation is to suggest that issues related to women, reproductive justice, and LGBTQIA+ people in Catholicism should be viewed in terms of social justice rather than exclusively in terms of sexual ethics. Incorporating discourses of gender and sexual justice into this conversation pushes back against narratives that selectively view issues pertaining to sex, gender, and sexuality exclusively through the lens of heterosexual, procreative functionality.

As such, this study takes seriously the contemporary theological works that articulate the history and development of Catholic social thought. In addition to the aforementioned texts, which examine the broader context from which Christian sexual ethics has developed, other texts offer insights into the relationship between the Catholic Church and other recent movements focused on various platforms for social activism, a relationship that this study likewise engages. Other work detailing the relationship between institutional Catholicism and social activism includes Anthony Petro's *After the Wrath of God*, which examines Catholic influences on and relationships to the AIDS crisis.²⁹ Much work has also been done that examines the role of the Catholic Church in debates surrounding women's rights. Aline Kalbian's work in *Sex, Violence, and Justice* is just one such example, and offers insights into the role of the Catholic Church in the debate regarding women's right to birth control.

²⁹ Anthony Petro, *After the Wrath of God: AIDS, Sexuality, and American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 2.

In many ways, women are subordinated in similar ways and by the same teachings as other people of nondominant genders and queer people. As these and other works are helpful in understanding, sex, gender, and sexuality are three of a vast number of issues related to how the Church understands the purpose and meaning of human life and human dignity.

Other current scholarship in the field traces the history of Catholic social thought as it relates to an array of intersectional analyses. These include race, gender, and labor.³⁰ Other works engage immigration and ethnicity.³¹ Others still, like the analysis I offer here, engage the relationship between Catholic social thought and colonialism.³² Interestingly, many of the Church's official statements on these same issues draw from the same sets of teachings to address these diverse topics. In addition, as some of the afore-mentioned studies reveal, the institutional Catholic Church has aligned itself with some of these social movements, while condemning others. This study seeks to uncover the inner logics that dictate official Catholic approaches to social movements as articulated by the Church's beliefs regarding human dignity.

Specifically, this study uses official Vatican documents and statements, issued from Vatican I to present, as an archive to foreground this discussion between Catholic

³⁰ R. Scott Appleby and Kathleen Sprows Cummings, *Catholics in the American Century: Recasting Narratives of U.S. History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

³¹ Mario T. Garcia, *Catholicos: Resistance and Affirmation in Chicano Catholic History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008).

³² Joseph Palacios, *The Catholic Social Imagination: Activism and the Just Society in Mexico and the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

social teaching and modern social movements. As I will demonstrate, such an examination reveals, for one, the Church's adoption of certain social movements (such as pluralism and unionization) and its rejection of others (such as women's and queer and trans rights). Many scholars in the field have already cohered and clarified the history of Catholic social thought and the ways in which a vast array of teachings such as those on natural order, bioethics, and marriage pertain to Catholic sexual ethics as a whole and to Catholic attitudes towards sex, sexuality and gender specifically.³³ Kalbian's work in *Sex, Violence and Justice* and *Sexing the Church* prove particularly useful here as they, too, address official Vatican documents dealing with human life, and human dignity.³⁴ Additionally, these thinkers utilize a number of interdisciplinary methodologies. Joseph Palacios's uses sociological methodology in his systematic reading of the Church's history of social teaching.³⁵ Kalbian offers a thorough historical-critical literary analysis and gender and sexuality studies methods to engage critical, close readings of papal encyclicals and other official Vatican documents.³⁶ This study also adopts an interdisciplinary approach.

The questions at stake in this study are all the more timely due to the mixed reception of Francis's papacy. Although Francis is regarded by many as being fairly

³³ See Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Washington, D.C.: USCCB Publishing, 2005) John A. Coleman and William F. Ryan, *Globalization and Catholic Social Thought: Present Crisis, Future Hope* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005); Garcia; Palacios.

³⁴ Aline Kalbian, *Sexing the Church: Gender, Power, and Ethics in Contemporary Catholicism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 66.

³⁵ Palacios.

³⁶ *Sexing the Church*, 2.

socially progressive, the comments he has made towards gender theory have largely been negative.³⁷ His statements against gender theory/ideology have received attention on the part of scholars of gender and sexuality since not long after they received media coverage, including contributions that call into the fore the Church's own complicity in colonialism.³⁸ These comments beg further inquiry as to Catholic interpretive approaches to human dignity, which seems to play a crucial role in the approaches the Church has historically assumed towards various (predominantly Western) social movements. Doing so will shed light as to why the Church adopts some, while it considers others an affront to human dignity and the ideologies of the Church.

This project uses a comprehensive, intersectional approach that examines the circularity with which the institutional Church approaches to peoples of nondominant

³⁷ Paul Vallely, *Pope Francis: Untying the Knots: The Struggle for the Soul of Catholicism* (New York: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2013); Edward Maibach et al, "The Francis Effect: How Pope Francis Changed the Conversation About Global Warming," (November 2015), <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2695199>; Juan Carlos Scannone, "Pope Francis and the Theology of the People," *Theological Studies* 77, no. 1 (2016): 118-135, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0040563915621141>; Walter Kasper, *Pope Francis' Revolution of Tenderness and Love: Theological and Pastoral Reflections*, 2015; Richard Gaillardetz, *An Unfinished Council: Vatican II, Pope Francis, and the Renewal of Catholicism* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2015).

³⁸ Butler, "The Backlash Against "Gender Ideology Must Stop; Butler, "What Threat? The Campaign Against 'Gender Ideology;'" *Glocalism: Journal of Culture, Politics, and Innovation* 2019, no. 3 (2019): 1-12, <https://doi.org/10.12893/gjcp.2019.3.1>; Corredor; Kathleen Lennon and Rachel Alsop, *Gender Theory in Troubled Times*, 2020; Jorge Aquino, "No Queer Aggiornamento This Time: Resubscribing to the Philosophy of Natural Law, Pope Francis Forecloses Reforms of Catholic Teaching on Sexuality," *The Politics and Religion Journal – Serbia Edition* XI, no. 2 (2017): 217-233, <https://www.cceol.com/search/article-detail?id=586385>; Annie Wilkinson, "Latin America's Gender Ideology Explosion," *Anthropology News* 58, no. 2 (November 2017, <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/AN.379>): 233-237, <https://doi.org/10.1111/AN.379>; Mary Anne Case, "Trans Formations on the Vatican's Wary on Gender Ideology," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 44, no. 3 (March 1, 2019): 639-664, <https://doi.org/10.1086/701498>
Kapyra Kaoma, "The Vatican Anti-Gender Theory and Sexual Politics: An African Response," *Religion and Gender* 6, no. 2 (19 February 2016): 282-292, <https://doi.org/10.18352/rg.10180>.

sexes, genders, and sexualities, and the role that colonialism plays in this process. This approach is best achieved by synthesizing a close reading of Francis's statements. Such a method analyzes Francis's rhetorical moves and strategical devices and critically locates them within the institutional and theological context of the Roman Catholic tradition. A Foucauldian genealogical method reveals that Francis's statements are the latest display of institutional Catholic knowledge-power production. This project is, in large part, a tribute to the crucial volume of work that has produced counter-narratives to the ethic that the Vatican has promulgated; that has insisted upon queer, trans, feminist, grassroots, and anti-colonial Catholicisms. It is my sincerest hope that this genealogical critique of the Church's systematic denial of these knowledges will offer one more contribution to those efforts.

Deconstructing the Vatican (Archives): An Outline

My first chapter reviews the Vatican's entries on ideological colonization and gender in full. Each statement on ideological colonization serves as a vignette for a much larger institutional theological and doctrinal tradition. The archives reveal that the Vatican only began discussing "gender," which often appears in quotation marks in Vatican transcripts, as recently as 1989. Additionally, gender theory/ideology (used interchangeably) appeared approximately around the turn of the millennium, largely in negative response to the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing. References to gender (theory) as well as ideological colonization frequently appear in statements on the

family. The Church's understanding of the family, in turn, is intricately related to the Church's teachings on sexual ethics and natural law, themselves also interrelated with the Church's concept of human dignity. The first chapter explores the multi-faceted layers as to what is at stake in Francis's statements, and what they reveal about the Church's overall agenda with regard to peoples of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities.

Chapter two investigates the Church's concept of human dignity, which is central to the Church's understanding of the function of the human person. The Church's concept of human dignity is heavily related to its concept of natural law theory. The Catholic *Catechism* locates human dignity within the Creation event, and the notion that God created human as man and woman. Human dignity is therefore described at the outset as (traditionally) gendered, heterosexual, and (traditionally) familial. Natural law developed in the late medieval period and is associated most closely with Thomas Aquinas, a thirteenth-century Catholic theologian who relied heavily on ancient Aristotelian philosophy and argumentation.³⁹ Aquinas popularized the idea that the nature of existence is hierarchical, with humanity at the top of this hierarchy. He and other medieval natural law theorists further posited that humans have certain essential functions, including those of a sexual "nature." Natural law, human dignity, and the Church's concept of the family are in turn fundamental to the Church's understanding of social doctrine. Catholic social doctrine emphasizes the importance of human dignity and understands the family as the microcosm for society. Excavation of each of these areas

³⁹ *Invention of Sodomy; Teaching Bodies: Traditions of Moral Formation in the Summa of Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017); Jean Porter, *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law* (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdsman Publishing Co., 2005); Salzman and Lawler.

shows how the church deploys and exemplifies Foucault's theory of power regimes as self-concealing and self-replicating. Specifically, I hope to emphasize that the Church's ties to a history of colonialism have not necessarily diminished in the twenty-first century.

Chapter three elaborates on the institutional Church's sexual ethic, as it has developed, paradoxically, both concomitantly and in contrast with the Church's social doctrine. Catholic social doctrine, which addresses the Church's official positions towards contemporary social movements, arose as a discrete theological category in the late nineteenth century.⁴⁰ This development was largely a result of social issues that the Magisterium first raised at the First Vatican Council, convened from 1869-1870. According to Palacios, Catholic social doctrine is historically both "(1) reactive to social events of the time and (2) declaratory of the Church's understanding of the events."⁴¹ Since 1891, the Church has issued official statements on contemporary social movements involving issues ranging from modernization, to women's rights, to homosexuality.⁴²

In certain cases, the Church has officially affirmed various aspects of contemporary social movements. Some examples include anti-war movements, preferential options for the poor, and workers' rights.⁴³ In contrast, the Church has

⁴⁰ Palacios, 26.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*.

⁴³ "Preferential option for the poor" is the idea that the poor and "most vulnerable" members should be prioritized in terms of the Church's social outreach efforts (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,

historically denounced social movements based on gender and sexual justice.⁴⁴ This is due primarily to the fact that the Church possesses certain ontological beliefs, grounded in natural law, that essentialize human sex, gender, and sexuality. Not coincidentally, Catholic social doctrine developed contemporaneously with the rise of early (western) feminism, and also with the advent of sexology. Since the late nineteenth century, the Church, probably influenced by these paradigmatic epistemological shifts, has worked hard to separate sexual ethics from social doctrine, until more recently when it has identified gender theory as a social *problem*.

Finally, chapter four examines the evolution of rhetoric that Francis's use of the phrase "ideological colonization" represents on the part of the twenty-first century Vatican. Francis is deploying a seemingly intentionally divisive identity politics aimed at pitting (western) gender and sexual justice movements against anti-, post- and decolonial movements. His rhetoric is meta-nationalist, in tone, given that he is trying to galvanize an entire global religion.⁴⁵ I examine the ways in which Francis attempts to homogenize a

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable, accessed May 2020, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/option-for-the-poor-and-vulnerable.cfm>; *Social Doctrine of the Church*). Since as the USCCB's explanation suggests, preferential option for the poor is often interpreted to include not only people within lower income brackets but vulnerable members of society in general, the issue of whether queer and gender variant peoples warrant these kinds of preferential options arises. This may account in part as to why the Church has historically segregated sexual ethics and social justice doctrine so stringently.

⁴⁴ *Social Doctrine of the Church*.

⁴⁵ Hettne, Intonai, and Sunkel suggest that globalism has changed the shape that nationalism takes in the late twentieth, and I would posit, the twenty-first century. Similarly, Roman Catholicism has some 1.2 billion adherents spanning most parts of the inhabited world. In addition, Catholicism is a missionary religion that welcomes (and at certain points in history has actively and coercively sought) converts. In these ways, the audience to which Francis and the institutional Church have access is relatively large and global in scale. In the ensuing chapters, I expand on why I find it to be specifically nationalist in nature as

unified Catholic people by pitting Catholics and colonized peoples against queer, trans, feminist, and peoples of the Global North and West.

These categories are, obviously, imperfectly separated categories given the realities of diaspora, indigeneity, and the fact that queer and trans people exist in the Global South and West, to name only a few significant caveats to Francis's problematic logic. Institutional documents to which Francis refers implicitly or explicitly use feminine imagery and the concept of women as symbols, another common nationalist trope that simultaneously homogenizes an imagined nation and subordinates peoples of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities. Although Francis is ostensibly making a statement against colonization, he is also deploying an exclusionary identity politics. This proves divisive to marginalized Catholics and reasserts the Church's institutional - and paradoxically colonial - power.

Per Francis's assessment, a proper Catholic *and* a proper opponent to colonization will resist social justice movements based on contemporary gender theory. In doing so, Francis and the institutional Catholic Church reassert structural systems that intersectionally oppress many different groups on a global scale. Given the Church's commitment to social justice, further assessment of the Church's role in systems that prove violent to people of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities is warranted.

well. (Björn Hettne, András Intonai, Osvaldo Sunkel, *Globalism and the New Regionalism*, vol. 1 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

Chapter 1: A Genealogy of “Gender Theory” and “Ideological Colonization”

This chapter provides a survey of Francis’s use of the phrase “ideological colonization” in conjunction with the Vatican’s recent adoption of the interchangeable terms “gender,” “gender ideology,” and “gender theory.”⁴⁶ The phrase “ideological colonization,” a phrase Francis began using in January 2015, has not been used by any other Pope, and is consistently linked, implicitly and explicitly, to an institutional condemnation of gender (theory/ideology). The term “gender” only first appears in the Vatican archives shortly before the turn of the millennium, and commonly evokes a disparaging mood. The Vatican’s use of the term gender is connected to the similarly negative rhetoric Francis uses when he deploys the phrase ideological colonization. I enumerate the data revealed in the electronic Vatican archives on the Vatican’s use of these terms. This investigation reveals the ways in which gender theory and ideological colonization what Sara Garbagnoli has aptly termed syntagma.⁴⁷ Though Garbagnoli refers to the terms “gender theory” and “gender ideology,” indeed, Francis has not only deemed gender theory ideological colonization; he has in turn defined ideological colonization as gender theory.

⁴⁶ My own research and secondary analyses suggest that the Vatican uses these terms interchangeably (Kaoma, 289; Sara Garbagnoli, “Contra la Herajía de la Inmanencia: el ‘Género’ Según el Vaticano Como Nuevo Recurso Retórico Contra la Denaturalización del Orden Sexual,” in *iHabemus Género! La Iglesia Católica y Ideología de Género*, ed. David Patternote and Sarah Bracke, Sexuality Policy Watch, 2018, sxpolitics.org), 191. This interchangeability is likely due in part to translation. Notably, Francis and other Vatican writers appear always to use the term gender in English, despite the language being spoken or written. I would posit that theory and ideology are variously translated. I further contend, however, that the interchangeability of gender theory, gender ideology, and “gender” in quotes is part of a process of homogenizing establishing gender as a pejorative term in reference to the Vatican’s attack on what it perceives as gender transgression.

⁴⁷ Garbagnoli, 191.

In addition to analyzing the full scale of the data available on the terms “gender,” “gender theory,” “gender ideology,” “ideological colonization” and their derivatives, I offer seven key rhetorical themes that the statements most commonly reveal that I have drawn from my analysis of thirty-one total statements on ideological colonization during Francis’s papacy. These themes include (1) threats to the family; (2) gender theory as ideological colonization; (3) messages to or about youth; (4) globalization; (5) nationalism; (6) natural law; and (7) threats to modernity. All of these themes are consistent and significant points of Roman Catholic theological discourse, and have been used strategically by Francis as well as his predecessors, particularly since the fall of the Papal States and the First Vatican Council (1869-1870), as a means of preserving institutional authority. Since the turn of the twenty-first century, the papacy seems to have a vested interest in using these tools to launch a critique against “gender (theory).”

Gender (Theory)

The term “gender” appears in Vatican transcripts shortly before the turn of the millennium, and only in very few recorded instances before the year 2000. As of February 2020, a search on the electronic Vatican archives for the term “gender” yields 102 results between its first appearance in 1989 and January 2020, excluding duplicate entries or when the term only appears in indices or tables of contents. Because the Vatican has electronically cataloged official documents from the mid-eighteenth century and verbal statements from the Pope as well as the Roman Curia from the mid-twentieth

century to present, it is likely that the Vatican was not talking about gender in any official capacity until this time.

The first appearance of the term gender occurred in a 1989 address by John Paul II “to the Participants in the Muslim Christian Colloquium on ‘Religious Education and Modern Society.’”⁴⁸ In the address, John Paul stated, “Young people are best served by being taught to discover God and his will within the new confines of their modern surroundings.[...] Furthermore, religious education, of its very nature, must teach respect for others and openness to them as children of God independently of race, religion, economic status, gender, language or ethnic group.”⁴⁹ Gender appears similarly in a somewhat positive though uninterrogated light from this point on, although it also appears extensively in negative reference to what the Vatican soon disparages as gender theory.

The term gender does not appear again until 1997, which is around the time that “gender” seems to take on the meaning of gender theory, which in turn, seems to signify transgression. In 1997, Mary Ann Glendon, the official Vatican representative to the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women, authored a document entitled “Public Acts of Contrition in the Age of Spin Control” in which she referred to “gender police” who “think the Church is sexist because it refuses to ordain women.”⁵⁰ Glendon, the Learned

⁴⁸ John Paul II, “Address of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the Participants in the Muslim Christian Colloquium on ‘Religious Education and Modern Society,,” December 1989, accessed February 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1989/december/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19891207_cristiani-musulmani.html.

⁴⁹ Muslim Christian Colloquium.

Hand Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, specializes in areas such as human rights and bioethics, is vocally pro-life, and otherwise espouses traditionalist sexual ethics in line with the magisterial position on issues pertaining to sex, gender, and sexuality.⁵¹ It is no doubt for these reasons that the Church appointed her as representative for the 1995 conference in Beijing.

Glendon later went on to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See and served on the Vatican's Pontifical Academy for the Social Sciences (part of the Roman Curia, and as such she was part of the Vatican's administrative body). She referenced the conference in Beijing in the above-mentioned letter, and whether unwittingly or intentionally, seems to have set the stage for how the institutional Church has since defined gender (theory). Glendon reaffirms the Church's traditionalist approach towards gender roles, which includes banning women from ordination, but in recent years has become increasingly more concerned about trans and gender variant expression. Her letter additionally foreshadows the Church's subsequent combative approach towards gender theory as well as its use of the term gender as epithet, here seemingly referring to feminist viewpoints represented at the Beijing conference as the "gender police."

As Glendon's comments indicate, around the turn of the millennium, the Vatican archive reflects increased attention towards the status of women and gender equality,

⁵⁰ Mary Ann Glendon, "Statement at the Fourth World Conference on Women*", September 1995, accessed February 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/diplomazia-multilaterale/conf-internaz/documents/rc_seg-st_19950905_glendon-donne_en.html, original asterisk; Mary Ann Glendon, "Public Acts of Contrition in the Age of Spin Control," July 1997, accessed February 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/magazine/documents/ju_mag_01071997_p-26_en.html.

⁵¹ "Mary Ann Glendon," Harvard Law School, accessed April 2020, hls.harvard.edu; Mary Ann Glendon, *Abortion and Divorce in Western Law: American Failures, European Challenges* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

both positive and negative, as well as attention towards what the Vatican termed “gender theory”/”gender ideology.” Of 102 entries containing the word gender, thirty two entries, or just over 31% of the total data I found are from documents relating to a magazine issued electronically through the Holy See’s website from 1999-2010 by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. Of these, gender appears in the earliest issue in 1999, and the context in which the term appears generally expresses concerns for the status of nondominant groups on the basis of immigration, ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, and other such mitigating factors. In this sense, it seems that around the turn of the century, at least some Vatican delegations opened social discourse to include gender-based concerns.

Indeed, much of the positive discourse surrounding any sort of gender equity appears in documents and transcripts involving what scholars in gender and sexuality studies and related fields might refer to as a (partially) intersectional approach to “gender,” with the caveat that for the Vatican (and its archives) means cisgender women. An excerpt in a document advocating recognition of Roma as a distinct people and their right to engage in a “voluntary [nomadic] lifestyle” is telling.⁵² *The Protection of [G***ies’] Rights in the Migratory Phenomenon and in the Integration Processes*, issued in 2003, states:

From 1949 onward, the need to protect "contextualized" man in his fundamental rights and freedoms has led to the development of a whole series of economic, social and cultural rights[....] This need has led progressively to the enunciation of

⁵² Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *The Protection of [G***ies’] Rights in the Migratory Phenomenon and in the Integration Processes*, July 2003, accessed February 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/documents/rc_pc_migrants_doc_2003099_Nomads_Budapest_Perotti_en.html.

human rights related to the diversity of man's phenomenological identities [including] those related to gender (the rights of women).

The document, although it ostensibly speaks positively about advancements in what might be posited as issues of human rights or social justice, remains normatively sexed and gendered. Although such qualified (and limited) positive attention towards the status of women increased around the year 2000, so did the Vatican's increasing preoccupation with "gender ideology." In addition to Glendon's disparaging comments towards the 1995 conference in Beijing and her comments towards "gender police" who accused the Magisterium of sexism, similar sentiments have since been espoused by Magisterial officials.

Not long after the term gender starts to appear in the digitized archives, so does the first variation of the term gender ideology. The term first appears in November 2000 in a statement by the Pontifical Council for the Family (PCF) entitled "Marriage, Family, and 'De Facto' Unions." The statement uses the term "gender" in quotations several times throughout, and refers negatively to the "ideology of 'gender.'" The statement, given during a presentation by members of the PCF, asserts:

In the process that could be described as the gradual cultural and human de-structuring of the institution of marriage, the spread of a certain ideology of "gender" should not be underestimated. According to this ideology, being a man or a woman is not determined fundamentally by sex but by culture. Therefore, the very bases of the family and inter-personal relationships are attacked. Some considerations should be made in this regard because of the importance of this ideology in contemporary culture and its influence on the phenomenon of de facto unions.⁵³

⁵³ Pontifical Council for the Family, *Marriage, Family, and 'De Facto' Unions*, November 2000, accessed February 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_20001109_de-facto-unions_en.html.

Here, the PCF critiques people who cohabit outside of the confines of marriage. Such a critique is unsurprising since the Church's views on marriage are very narrow.

The only marriage the Vatican recognizes as legitimate is one that is takes place between a cisgender man and woman, that is formally blessed by the Church, and that allows for procreation.⁵⁴ The above quotation is a fascinating precursor to the ways in which Francis convolutes gender and sexual justice, gender variance, same-sex unions, and non-normative approaches to families and romantic relationships in general. For the Church, the human person is essentially Catholic, cisgender, heterosexual, socially gendered, monogamous, and celibate outside of an institutionally Catholic, procreative marriage. Fascinatingly, the Church associates any deviations from these norms as “gender theory.” The foundations for Francis's gender-theory-as-ideological colonization are apparent in this and similar documents issued around this time, which suggest that gender ideology is a cultural imposition. Like Francis's statements, many of the Vatican references to gender are primarily concerned with threats to the family. Several documents, including several on the commission for the status of women, make repeated references to the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Salzman and Lawler, 48-123.

⁵⁵ References to Beijing occur within at least nine separate entries, primarily in documents that reiterate the Vatican's opposition to the definition of gender (ideology) offered at the conference In addition to objecting to the conference's reproductive justice platform, which included advocating for access to safe and legal abortion, the Church objected to the ways the platform approached sex in gender, which the Church believed platform's language separated. (Celestino Migliore, “54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women,” March 2010, accessed April 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/2010/documents/rc_seg-st_20100308_status-women_en.html.)

Issued only a few days after the presentation on “de facto unions,” another presentation by the PCF entitled “The Family and Human Rights” also discusses the world conference in Beijing. An excerpt reads:

While an exacerbated liberal individualism is exalted together with a subjectivist ethic that encourages the unbridled search for pleasure, the family also suffers the resurgence of [...] Marxist socialism. One tendency which appeared at the Beijing Conference (1995), presumes to introduce the "gender ideology." [...] This ideology affirms [...] that the greatest form of oppression is man's oppression of woman, and that this is institutionalized in monogamous marriage. The ideologists then conclude that in order to end this oppression, it is advisable to put an end to the family based on monogamous marriage. Marriage and the family [...] are allegedly the products of a culture [...] but which ought to disappear so that women can be freed and occupy their rightful place in productive society. We are aware that the Holy Father [...] [has] already spoken out many times about these ideologies which are not only anti-life and anti-family but also destructive of nations.⁵⁶

The footnote to this excerpt elaborates, “According to this ideology, men and women's roles in society would be merely the product of history and culture, and people are free to choose their sexual orientation, regardless of their biological sex.”⁵⁷ It is evident from the sentiments in these early statements that much of Francis’s rhetoric is in line with preceding institutional sentiments towards gender theory/ideology, as these preceding statements and subsequent ones homogenize gender theory/ideology as a cultural imposition. The excerpt also claims that gender ideology is a threat to nations. Given that the Church essentializes cisgenderedness, heterosexuality, and traditional gender roles, in

⁵⁶ PCF, *The Family and Human Rights*, November 2000, accessed February 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_20001115_family-human-rights_en.html.

⁵⁷ *The Family and Human Rights*.

the above quotation, the Church is explicitly casting gender variant, queer, and trans people as threats to nations.

Interestingly, the above excerpt, in the same breath, also aligns gender ideology with liberal individualism *and* socialism, in a fascinating rhetorical move. The denunciation of liberal individualism seems to invoke the Church's social platform, which envisions society as the (implied correct) type of family, and limitations that shy away from that vision, such as impeding the ability to procreate, are criticized as individualistic.⁵⁸ "Correct" is implied because as the above quotation indicates, there are parameters for the communal aspects of the Church's vision of the family. Socialism is also off limits: as the above quotation implies, some forms of socialism reject monogamy and "traditional" family roles.⁵⁹ Above all, the immediate, traditionally gendered family, of which monogamous, procreative marriage is the pinnacle, and is to be celebrated.⁶⁰ These early rejections of gender ideology seem, then, most directly connected to feminist

⁵⁸ This connection is further seen by how the *Catechism* explains Church social doctrine, which views the family as the microcosm of society. The *Catechism* reads: What would be opposed to the social doctrine of the Church? Opposed to the social doctrine of the Church are economic and social systems that sacrifice the basic rights of persons or that make profit their exclusive norm or ultimate end. For this reason the Church rejects the ideologies associated in modern times with Communism or with atheistic and totalitarian forms of socialism. But in the practice of capitalism the Church also rejects self centered individualism and an absolute primacy of the laws of the marketplace over human labor (*Catechism*, 512).

⁵⁹ Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State: in the Light of the Researches of Lewis H. Morgan* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1902)

⁶⁰ What is the nature of the family in the plan of God? A man and a woman united in marriage form a family together with their children. God instituted the family and endowed it with its fundamental constitution. Marriage and the family are ordered to the good of the spouses and to the procreation and education of children. Members of the same family establish among themselves personal relationships and primary responsibilities. In Christ the family becomes the domestic church because it is a community of faith, of hope, and of charity (*Catechism*, 456).

politics that the Church perceives as disrupting the Church's vision of a traditional family.

Uncoincidentally, the appearance of the term gender (and the term gender ideology not long after) roughly coincides with what some scholars regard as another (third) wave or upsurge in feminism in the late 1980s and 1990s.⁶¹ It is likely also no coincidence, then, that the backlash towards 'gender' (the Vatican's skepticism towards the concept is clearly betrayed by its repeated use of quotation marks) begins shortly after the pivotal conference in Beijing in 1995. Despite this timing, the excerpt above demonstrates that the Church consistently establishes an imagined threat when it homogenizes and disparages "gender ideology." In the above, the excerpt describes gender ideology in ways more reminiscent of movements related to second-wave/radical feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, including lesbian separatism, which encouraged women of all sexual inclinations to engage in lesbian relationships with other women.⁶²

The Beijing Declaration from the 1995 conference did espouse views that conflicted with institutional sexual ethics, advocating reproductive justice that included abortion. It also discussed gender equality, with which the Church took issue.⁶³ The Church has elsewhere claimed that gender equality as discussed within such discourses as

⁶¹ Cathryn Bailey, "Making Waves and Drawing Lines: The Politics of Defining the Vicissitudes of Feminism," *Hypatia*, Vol. 12, No. 3, Third Wave Feminisms (Wiley, 1997), accessed January, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810220a>.

⁶² Julie R. Enszer, "On Lesbian-Feminism and Lesbian Separatism: A New Intersectional History;" Radicalesbians, "The Woman-Identified Woman," in *Introduction to Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies: Interdisciplinary and Intersectional Approaches*, ed. L. Ayu Saraswati, Barbara L. Shaw, Heather Rellihan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁶³ "Beijing Declaration," Fourth World Conference on Women, September 1995, accessed April 2020, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/beijingdeclaration.html>.

the Church has subsumed under the umbrella term “gender ideology” erases the “natural” differences between men and women.⁶⁴ So although the charges against “gender ideology” described in the above are somewhat outdated and inaccurate as compared to the concerns of the women’s conference in Beijing, the Vatican’s response subtly betrays the fact that the Vatican was already reacting negatively to women’s/feminist movements of the 1960’s/Vatican II era (and likely earlier).

To that end, although the Vatican commemorates the conference in its commission for the status of women in several documents, it also uses those statements as an opportunity to redefine gender as determined by sexual difference. The early backlash as primarily focused against women’s rights specifically, combined with repeated reference to gender as well as sexuality additionally confirms that for the institutional Church, “gender” signifies transgression, and gender transgression includes queer, feminist, and gender variant expressions.

Ideological Colonization

According to transcripts uploaded to the Vatican’s electronic archive, the phrase “ideological colonization” has been used on at least thirty-one separate occasions between January 2015 and January 2020. Of these, twenty nine instances were in verbal communications by Pope Francis, and two were in written documents, one authored by

⁶⁴ Angelo Amato, Joseph Ratzinger, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World*, May 2004, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040731_collaboration_en.html.

Francis and one by a Synod of Bishops convened by Francis. The twenty nine occasions during which Francis used the phrase verbally included eleven occasions during apostolic journeys abroad and nineteen occasions in Rome or elsewhere in Italy (one of these occasions was in a speech summarizing another apostolic journey abroad).

The apostolic journeys abroad during which Francis used the phrase included (in chronological order): two occasions on an apostolic journey to Sri Lanka and the Philippines in January 2015; two occasions on a trip to Ecuador, Bolivia, and Paraguay in July 2015; a trip to Cuba, the United States, and the United Nations (the statement occurred during a meeting with the UN) in September 2015; World Youth Day in Poland in August 2016; two occasions on an apostolic journey to Georgia and Azerbaijan in October 2016; World Youth Day in Panama in January 2019; a meeting with young people in Bulgaria and North Macedonia in May 2019; and a journey to Romania in June 2019. To date, while abroad, Francis has only used the phrase “ideological colonization” in Southeast Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, Eastern Europe while on an apostolic journey for World Youth Day and in an audience with the United Nations . Including a pastoral visit within Italy, Francis used the phrase on twelve out of forty-one total trips including those within Italy and abroad that he made over the same five year period. The phrase ideological colonization seems to appear almost exclusively in reference to gender theory, and the term gender appears most frequently as a criticism of gender theory/ideology.

The geographical and demographic audiences Francis has selected appear to be intentional as they are loaded. This trend is further demonstrated by the audiences he

selects when using the phrase from the Vatican, and on one visit to Pompeii and Naples (or more to the point, Italy, a nation with which the Catholic Church has a long-stemming political history). Francis's addresses from the Vatican include an audience with bishops from the Central African Republic, six instances during which he spoke to or about Latin American peoples, and one instance during a synod on the "Pan-Amazon Region." Altogether, seventeen of the thirty-one times the phrase has been deployed by Francis or during Francis's papacy have either been an address or in reference to the Global South and East, or more accurately, Francis's imposed/imaginary Global South and East.

The remaining instances in which the phrase has been used during Francis's papacy include: two doctrinal statements that have been written during Francis's tenure and under his direct supervision. The rest were all during other statements Francis made: one visit to the UN; two statements to entities representing the state of Italy; two statements on New Year's Day; two general audiences; in addresses to the World Economic Forum; the Pontifical Academy for Life; the Pontifical Academy for Social Sciences; during the conferral of the Charlemagne Prize, one received in recognition for efforts to unify Europe, and finally, during the afore-mentioned visit to Italy (a nation with historical significance due to its longstanding relationship to Vatican City).

By addressing audiences both rhetorically and physically outside of the Global North and West, Francis is simultaneously establishing the Global North and West as the colonizer, homogenizing the Global South and East, and imposing these entities as dichotomous and mutually exclusive. Francis also seems to be galvanizing his imagined people – at once the victim of colonization and a Catholic people. Since the boundaries of

the people he is defining are so clearly delineated, it is perhaps more accurate to think of the group he is galvanizing as a People. In this sense, as I will address in more detail in my chapter on nationalism, it is accurate to suggest that Francis is engaging with problematic colonial/institutional processes of nation-building.

In one sense, it is clear Francis is addressing colonized peoples in his rhetoric. In another sense, he is establishing the Church, who maintains an exclusionary sexual ethic, as a victim of colonization. Church here signifies, simultaneously, the Magisterium *and* a Roman Catholic People, upon whom Francis imposes a unified vision for sexual ethics through his audience as well as his vision. Francis's rhetoric in Italy, like his rhetoric abroad, furthers a unifying, meta-nationalist agenda. Additionally, the role of the Vatican itself and its relationship to Italy proper has symbolic and perhaps literal significance here.

The relationship between Italy and the Vatican is noteworthy because for approximately a millennium until modernity and the rise of the nation-state, church and state powers throughout Europe were deeply intertwined. The historical overlap between king and pontiff in what are now a large portion Italy and the Vatican is particularly historically significant. The Papal States comprised a portion of the Italian Peninsula exceeding the area of Rome, in which the Vatican (a sovereign nation) remains today.⁶⁵ The Pope was sovereign head of the Papal States, and possessed an army and the rights to defend the territory's borders. Vatican City is the last remaining Papal State today; the

⁶⁵ David Kertzer, *The Pope Who Would Be King: The Exile of Pius IX and the Emergence of Modern Europe* (New York: Random House, 2018), 12.

Pontifical Swiss Guard serves as the sovereign nation's armed forces.⁶⁶ For these reasons, the pontiff's authority as a leader of the nation should be understood not only as metaphorical but as literal, and his intent to galvanize audiences at his sovereign nation of the Vatican as well as wider Italy (over which the pontiff also previously historically possessed extensive control) is important to interrogate.

A third audience Francis consistently addresses at the Vatican and abroad is also noteworthy. A total of nine statements express concerns towards young people, especially with regard to sex education in schools. In fact, both instances in which "ideological colonization" appears in official documents are addressed to young people. Overlapping with these statements are seven statements expressing concerns about the family and/or marriage. Francis's chosen audiences seem geographically and demographically strategic. It makes sense that since he is concerned that gender theory is a form of ideological colonization on par with the Hitler Youth and the Balilla of fascist Italy that he would target young audiences with his message. Likewise, it would benefit the Catholic Church to remove itself from the Global North and West in order to excise itself further from complicity in European settler colonialism.

As Francis has largely avoided western audiences, he stands a better chance of aligning himself as a member of the Global South rather than alienating himself as head of a colonial entity. Even so, echoes of the Church's uncomfortable colonial past are present within his rhetoric and actions. Given the extent of his audience and the systems of sexism, homophobia, and transphobia that such sexual ethics as that of the Roman

⁶⁶ *The Pope Who Would Be King*, 106.

Catholic Church perpetuates, Francis's public attacks on gender theory might rightly themselves be construed as a form of ideological colonization. In addition, he has expressed these sentiments during several trips abroad, which in some ways is reminiscent of the Church's role in missionization, which was historically intrinsically tied to conquest.⁶⁷

Fascinatingly, having otherwise avoided western audiences, Francis has also made statements on ideological colonization back home in the Vatican and to audiences with judiciary officials from Italy. In these cases, Francis evokes a history of territorial sovereignty over not only the Vatican and some parts of the Italy, as with the Papal States, but with authority over many Catholic monarchies in premodern Europe.⁶⁸ Since the Pope is still head of his own sovereign nation, this is, to some extent, a literal and not just a metaphorical comparison. Because Francis has spoken of ideological colonization during his weekly *Angelus*, when the Pope greets masses gathered in St. Peter's square from a window high up in an ornate Vatican building, the imagery of a premodern "pope-king," as David Kertzer calls them, becomes all the more prominent.⁶⁹ Between the Pope's continued influential role in religion, politics, and society combined with his public campaign against "gender theory," the question as to whether Francis and the institutional Church remain complicit in colonially oppressive structures in the twenty-first century is all the more timely.

⁶⁷ Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Boston: South End Press, 2005).

⁶⁸ *The Pope Who Would Be King*.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 3.

In what follows, each individual statement on ideological colonization serves as a vignette into an intricate history of Catholic doctrine and ecclesial authority, and demonstrates the dynamic complexities of the living tradition of the Catholic Church. Below is a list I have compiled through extensive search of the records on the Vatican website, which are made available by the *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, known in English as the Vatican Publishing House, which is responsible for publishing all the Holy See's texts (electronically and in print). While the scope of this project does not permit a close reading of each statement, certain patterns can be drawn from how and where Francis uses the term. I have included excerpts from all of his statements in an appendix, and shorter excerpts in this chapter when relevant. Francis's statements can also be grouped by various themes, which I have enumerated below.

1. Threats to the family

In his first and several subsequent statements on ideological colonization, Francis refers to threats to the family. The role of the family is significant to institutional Catholic sexual ethics as well as social doctrine. Sexual ethics institutes heterosexual gender norms, while social doctrine envisions traditionally gendered familial norms as the ideal model for society. Francis's inaugural recorded use of the term as pontiff occurred on an apostolic journey to Sri Lanka and the Philippines during a meeting with families, when he stated:

There are forms of ideological colonization which are out to destroy the family. [...] [T]hey come from without, and for that reason I am saying that they are forms of colonization.[...] The family is also threatened by growing efforts on the

part of some to redefine the very institution of marriage, by relativism, by the culture of the ephemeral, by a lack of openness to life.⁷⁰

The Church uses the (“traditional”, nuclear) family to dictate sex, gender, *and* sexuality. That is, the Church believes the relationship between husband and wife should be physically (meaning sexually) and socially complementary (referring here to traditional gender roles).⁷¹ In addition, the Church possesses an *a priori* understanding of the family as “the first societal organism.”⁷² Due to the Church’s understanding of the family, allusions to threats to the family can be read as intrinsically connected to Francis’s condemnations of gender theory. Moreover, the role that the family plays in social doctrine can be understood as gatekeeping between sexual ethics and social doctrine. That is to say, ensuring that social doctrine works to preserve the Church’s strict sexual ethic, but not to advance contemporary gender and sexual justice movements.

2. Gender theory as ideological colonization

Francis established gender theory as ideological colonization during a follow-up question in an in-flight press conference on his return flight to Rome from the above apostolic journey to Sri Lanka and the Philippines. In-flight press conferences are common practice on Francis’s travels to and from official apostolic journeys (any journey in his official capacity as pontiff). Reporters and news outlets from all over the globe are permitted to attend and ask questions. In his response to the question posed about his

⁷⁰ Francis, “Meeting With Families,” *Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Sri Lanka and the Philippines*, Manila, January 16 2015, accessed March 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco_20150116_srilanka-filippine-incontro-famiglie.html.

⁷¹ Letter on men and women, para. 8.

⁷² Palacios, 35.

initial statement on ideological colonization during his trip to Sri Lanka and the Philippines, he specifically criticized for the first time the fact that children are taught “gender theory” in school. He compared such a phenomenon to the indoctrination of the Balilla of fascist Italy and to the Hitler youth.⁷³ Surprisingly, these statements seemed to go less widely reported in the U.S. than his comments in 2016 when he lamented the notion that children are being taught in schools that they can choose their own sex.⁷⁴ In general, Francis’s statements on gender-theory-as-ideological-colonization are as divisive as they are accusatory, but this early statement is perhaps one of the most provocative, and set the tone for his anti-gender theory campaign.

3. Messages to or about youth

As also demonstrated above, many of Francis’s statements as well as the two official Vatican statements in question also invoke or address young people. Significantly, both official documents that use the statements are documents written after the Fifteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops held in October 2018, the theme of which addressed young people, the faith, and vocational discernment. The culminating document penned from that synod warned of ideological colonization in “youth circles.”⁷⁵ Francis also used the term in his corresponding apostolic exhortation,

⁷³ Francis, “In-Flight Press Conference of His Holiness Pope Francis From the Philippines to Rome,” *Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Sri Lanka and the Philippines*, January 19 2015, accessed March 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco_20150119_srilanka-filippine-conferenza-stampa.html.

⁷⁴ Francis, “Meeting with the Polish Bishops,” *Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Poland on the Occasion of the XXXI World Youth Day, 27 July 2016*, Accessed September 2019, <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2016/08/02/0568/01265.html#en>, question 4, English translation, original brackets.

Christus Vivit, the second of the two official statements that has been released in which the term “ideological colonization” appears. In multiple verbal statements, Francis has elaborated that he is specifically concerned that children are taught in school that they can choose their own sex.

The most explicit reference to that effect occurred in the 2016 statement that inspired this dissertation, when Francis stated, “Today children – children! – are taught in school that everyone can choose his or her sex.[...] These forms of ideological colonization are also supported by influential countries. And this [is] terrible!”⁷⁶ Another such reference occurred approximately two months later also during an in-flight press conference. During the press conference, Joshua McElwee, a reporter for the U.S. newspaper National Catholic Reporter, asked Francis, “What would you say to a person who has suffered for years with his or her sexuality and truly feels that it is a biological problem, that his or her physical makeup does not correspond to what he or she considers his or her sexual identity (sic)?”⁷⁷ Francis’s response was illuminating:

First of all, [...] I have accompanied many people with homosexual tendencies and also homosexual activity[...] No. What I was talking about has to do with the mischief going on these days with the indoctrination of gender theory. A French father told me that he was at the table speaking to his children – he is Catholic, his wife is Catholic, the children are Catholic [...] and he asked his ten-year old son:

⁷⁵ Synod of Bishops, XV Ordinary General Assembly, *Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment: Final Document*, October 2018, accessed March 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2018/october/documents/papa-francesco_20181027_chiusura-lavori-sinodo.html.

⁷⁶ Francis, Meeting with the Polish Bishops.

⁷⁷ Note the reporter, not unlike the institutional Church, seems to conflate gender and sexual identity here (Joshua McElwee, “In-Flight Press Conference of His Holiness Pope Francis From Azerbaijan to Rome, *Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Georgia and Azerbaijan*, 2 October 2016, accessed March 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/october/documents/papa-francesco_20161002_georgia-azerbaijan-conferenza-stampa.html).

“And what do you want to be when you grow up?” – “A girl.” And his father realized that the schoolbooks were teaching gender theory.⁷⁸

The above suggests that Francis and presumably the Church taxonomize gender variance as the gravest of offenses within the gender theory trifecta. Homosexuality and gender egalitarianism still make the list inasmuch as they disrupt the traditional familial order, but the above quotation suggests that they are less offensive if they are performed by cisgender bodies. Francis thus specifically targets trans and gender variant expression as forms of ideological colonization.

To that end, in June 2019, the Congregation for Catholic Education released statement entitled “*Male and Female He Created Them*”: *Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education*. This is significant inasmuch as a condemnation of gender theory now exists in a document officially released by the Roman Curia and promulgated for the intention of educating Catholic children. This is presumably an attempt to combat the apparent systemic of gender theory being disseminated among today’s youth that Francis has bemoaned in various statements. The document denounces embodiments that do not adhere to a gendered, sexed, and sexual binary, and specifically mentions intersex and transgender embodiments.⁷⁹ Its specificity and the increase in official documentation may represent an escalation in the anti-gender theory campaign led by Francis’s papacy.

⁷⁸ Francis, in-flight press conference from Azerbaijan to Rome.

⁷⁹ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Male and Female He Created Them*, June 2019, accessed March 2020, <https://www.newwaysministry.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Male-and-Female-Document-June-10-2019.pdf>, 14.

4. (Critiquing and Appropriating) Globalization

Francis makes several comments directly in reference to or invoking globalization, beginning as early as his second statement on ideological colonization when he referenced the Balilla and the Hitler Youth, a statement I analyze in more detail in my chapter on nationalism. The same excerpt continues:

This is spherical globalization — all points are equidistant from the centre (sic). And true globalization — I like to say this — is not a sphere. It is important to globalize, but not like the sphere but rather, like the polyhedron. Namely that each people, every part, preserves its identity without being ideologically colonized.⁸⁰

Francis's apparent criticism of globalization is regarded by some as an example of what many perceive as Francis's generally progressive papacy. His encyclical *Laudato Si'*, the first ever environmental encyclical, is lauded by many for criticizing globalization and capitalism for their negative effects on climate change, for example.⁸¹ Francis's position on such issues as globalization stand in stark contrast with his position on "gender theory." However, closer examination of Francis's usage of the term "globalization" reveals that he does not oppose globalization outright. Instead, Francis distinguishes between what he considers "spherical" vs. "true" globalization.

Spherical globalization, which Francis critiques as assimilatory, seems to be the primary point of critique, in comparison with "true" globalization, which he compares to a polyhedron. Ostensibly, a "truly" global world would preserve the multicultural identities of different peoples rather than smoothing them over, which is what Francis

⁸⁰ *Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment*.

⁸¹ Francis, *Laudato Si'*, May 2015, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_encyclica-laudato-si.html.

critiques in his reference to spherical globalization. The point of contention between Francis and traditionalist sexual ethicists on the one hand and those Francis pejoratively refers to as “gender theorists” on the other is that so-called gender theorists might propose that a multiplicity of sexual and gender expressions adds to a polyvalent world. Conversely, Francis accuses such perspectives of colonization and erasure.

Francis’s critique of spherical globalization relates to his sentiments towards colonization - or perhaps more accurately imperialism, in which an entity intends to subsume all other entities under its umbrella on a global scale, with fixed distances around an imagined center. Francis advocates “true” globalization, which he suggests occurs in the form of a polyhedron and ostensibly does not erase distinct identities. This is in line with the Church’s understanding of the term “Catholic” as well as its evangelizing mission, which the Church understands to be universal in a unifying rather than an assimilationist sense. On the other hand, Francis’s assertion could equally be critiqued as insensitive to the Church’s role in missionization and the subjugation of Native and other colonized peoples.⁸²

5. Nationalism/nationalist rhetoric

Closely related to Francis’s references to globalization are his explicit references to nationalism as well as his implicit use of nationalist rhetoric, a theme I draw out more extensively in Chapter 4. His statements seemed aim at a particular audience, despite the fact that the Roman Catholic Church is an ostensibly global religion. . Although Christian missionization generally preaches a message of welcome to everyone, institutional

⁸² Smith; Maria Wade, *Missions, Missionaries, and Native Americans: Long-Term Processes and Daily Practices* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008).

Catholic sexual ethics attaches several caveats that omit feminist, queer, and gender/sex-variant expression. Francis goes as far as to suggest that “gender theory” is a form of ideological colonization because per the Church’s assessment, gender theory erases the identities of cultures who do not adhere to these ideologies.⁸³ Although Francis claims the Church envisions a form of global unity that does not erase individual identities, which he indicates by his assertion that ideological colonization erases identities whereas true globalization does not, it could be argued that the Church’s sexual ethic erases not only gender and sexual justice ideologies, but also queer, trans, and certain feminine identities (ones which stray from the Church’s complementarian ideal).

Francis’s rhetoric is nationalistic in tone in that it establishes a unified group specifically to the exclusion of other groups. This in combination with the fact that the Church played a central role in settler colonialism, exerted sovereign power over much of Europe for approximately a millennium, maintains sovereign rule over its own nation and socio-political influence over much of the rest of the world today, begs questions as to the explicitly structural, institutional, and neo-colonial power the Church retains today.⁸⁴

By asserting that gender theory is ideological colonization, Francis is essentially casting queer, trans, and feminist people – the latter of whom the Church views as also gender nonconforming and also therefore a problem - as western/white supremacists and

⁸³ There is a need to reaffirm the metaphysical roots of sexual difference, as an anthropological refutation of attempts to negate the male-female duality of human nature, from which the family is generated. The denial of this duality not only erases the vision of human beings as the fruit of an act of creation but creates the idea of the human person as a sort of abstraction who ‘chooses for himself what his nature is to be’. (*Male and Female He Created Them*, 34); Appendix 6, 19, 16.

⁸⁴ *The Pope Who Would Be King*; Wade.

un-Christian/irreligious, while simultaneously absolving Catholicism of its colonial past in the process. He is also appealing to the national pride of his audience over and against an imagined “West,” undercutting even the unifying ideal of his own Roman Catholicism. Francis’s rhetoric is therefore simultaneously raced, gendered, sexed, and religioned. Because Francis is speaking to members of a global religion, a religion that self-identifies as literally catholic or universal, his tactics are even more accurately conceived of as meta-nationalist, or nationalism operating on a larger, more global scale used to unify larger regions or entities. Examples of such entities might include the European Union, the former Soviet Union, the United Nations, or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, whose slogan is “one vision, one identity, one community.”⁸⁵

One facet of Francis’s nationalist devices is his use of in-group/out-group mentality, which he deploys through divisive identity politics. That is, establishing who a people *is* automatically defines who a people is *not*. This divisive verbiage is apparent throughout several of Francis’s statements. One way his meta-nationalist rhetoric is obvious is through his assertion of specific identity politics. This is achieved both by casting “proper” Catholics in a certain light (and therefore subsequently also defining improper Catholics) and evident, in many cases, by the audiences he addresses in his statements.

For example, Francis used the phrase during the conferral of the Charlemagne prize, an award given in the honor of work done in the name of European unification. During his speech, Francis encouraged the “community of European peoples” to

⁸⁵ Hettne et al; asean.org.

“overcome the temptation of falling back on unilateral paradigms and opting for forms of ‘ideological colonization’”⁸⁶ and to “rediscover the breadth of the European soul, born of the encounter of civilizations and peoples.”⁸⁷ Here, Francis refers to ‘ideological colonization’ – which he attaches virtually exclusively to gender theory – as a unilateral, literally one-sided, or a seemingly monolithic or even unyielding paradigm. Paradoxically, he simultaneously juxtaposes unilateral ideological colonization with a homogenous European soul, which is therefore by definition what ideological colonization is *not*. The implication is that the European soul is *not* gender theory; therefore does *not* disrupt traditional roles of sex, gender, or sexuality.

Similar to the significance of deploying the phrase during a speech on European unification, Francis also invoked ideological colonization in an audience with the United Nations, which could be seen as a meta-nationalist - or global entity *par excellence*. In the meeting with the UN, Francis once again asserts an identity politics, warning against “an ideological colonization by the imposition of anomalous models and lifestyles which are alien to people’s identity.”⁸⁸ In an address to the Synod of Bishops for what the Vatican significantly refers to as the “Pan-Amazon Region,” Francis suggests that Amazonian peoples have a “proper identity,” and that “ideological colonizations [...]

⁸⁶ Francis, “Conferral of the Charlemagne Prize,” 6 May 2016, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2018/november/documents/papa-francesco_20181115_collegio-piolatino-americano.html.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Francis, Meeting with UN, September 2015.

destroy or diminish the characteristics of the people.”⁸⁹ Notably, Francis refers to colonizations in the plural here, in an statement to Amazonian peoples that specifically addresses ecology and development. Once again, Francis uses a strategical tactic of subversively incorporating anti-gender theory discourse into presumably more progressive discourses such sustainability and its relationship to (post)colonialism. He conflates the economic exploitation and environmental degradation of the Amazon region with “ideological colonizations,” or gender theory, that supposedly diminishes peoples’ of the “pana-Amazon region’s” intrinsic humanity.

As with the “Pan-Amazon Region,” Francis asserts a similar identity politics in an address to a group from the Pontifical Commission for Latin America (PCLA), during which he also invokes the apparition of the Virgin de Guadalupe, a central figure in Latin American Catholicism and Mexican and Latinx identities. In his address, Francis warns against cultural, ideological, and economic colonization, asserting, “[I]f you do not wish to err on the path for Latin America, the word is ‘fusion’. Latin America was born mestizo, will remain mestizo, will only grow mestizo, and this will be her destiny.”⁹⁰ As with Francis’s appropriation of what he asserts is the correct form of multivalent globalization, Francis advocates a correct multiculturalism, referred to in the aforementioned as fusion. Francis’s and the Church’s vision of identity, multiculturalism, or

⁸⁹ Francis, *Openings of the Works of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region on the Theme: “Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and for Integral Ecology,”* October 2019, accessed March 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/october/documents/papa-francesco_20191007_apertura-sinodo.html.

⁹⁰ Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to a Group from the Pontifical Commission for Latin America,” March 2019, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/march/documents/papa-francesco_20190304_pontcommissione-americalatina.html.

pluralism, though it has grown less exclusionary of different religions and cultures, remains exclusionary towards nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities. In asserting an identity that is simultaneously diverse, unified, and exclusionary, Francis's galvanization of meta-nationalist/global entities is one extreme tack of his nationalist schema, pitting Latin American nationalism and pride against foreign "colonization" that is presumably simultaneously western and espousing a gender theory agenda.

Another nationalistic trope the institutional Church has historically used women as symbols of the nation. In his address to the PCLA, in addition to invoking La Virgen de Guadalupe, a longstanding feminine symbol of Latinx identity, Francis also refers to Latin America with feminine pronouns. Feminine imagery is often used as symbolism for a nation – previously, in the literal sense, a people or a tribe, and more recently, as a symbol for the nation-state. This is typical of nationalist schemas. The Church deploys nationalist schemas in *both* the cultural and the civic senses of the term, considering the pontiff is sovereign over the Vatican and the Catholic Church continues to argue that it has a role to play in influencing political decisions around the world.⁹¹

There is a further overlap in the Church's tradition of referring to the Catholic Church as she, and Francis referring to Latin America as she in the afore-quoted excerpt. Thus, Francis urges his audience to spread the social doctrine of the Church while simultaneously warning against ideological colonization.⁹² These actions are to be taken

⁹¹ Sikata Banerjee, *Make Me a Man! Masculinity, Hinduism, and Nationalism in India* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 5.

⁹² "I like to repeat that we always have to beware of cultural colonization, no, ideological colonization: there are economic ones because societies have a "colony" dimension; that is, of being open to colonization. And so we must defend ourselves" (Francis, PCLA).

in defense of the imagined female nation and church. This furthers Francis's in-group/out-group strategy, and anticipates counterarguments that frame nondominant sexual and gender expression within human rights/or justice discourse. Resisting gender theory, on this account, is to protect the oppressed, feminine nation and church.

That Francis anticipates such counterarguments is evident in a statement on ideological colonization in which he tellingly refers to “the social upheaval of the 1960’s” and asserts, “Somewhat paradoxically, there is a risk that, in the very name of human rights, we will see the rise of modern forms of *ideological colonization* by the stronger and the wealthier, to the detriment of the poorer and the most vulnerable.”⁹³ Here, again, Francis aligns ideological colonization with globalization (so one can also assume environmental exploitation) and economic exploitation, specifically critiquing capitalism, as have some of his predecessors. Since Francis has made it abundantly clear that he defines ideological colonization largely as “gender theory,” Francis puts gender and sexual justice at odds with other forms of social justice and human rights discourse. He also defends against the assertion that sexual and gender identities should be protected as universal and fundamental rights. This is only one semblance of an overall divide and conquer tactic; such a tactic is common not only to nationalist but also to colonial strategies.⁹⁴

⁹³ Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See for the Traditional Exchange of New Year Greetings,” January 2018, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2018/january/documents/papa-francesco_20180108_corpo-diplomatico.html, original emphasis.

⁹⁴ This strategy was particularly successful in colonial India, for example, where tactics such as the promotion of Sikhs in the Army and reinforcement of the caste system encouraged in-fighting amongst Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus (Richard Morrock, “Heritage of Strife: The Effects of Colonialist ‘Divide and

Francis made similar identitarian remarks in a speech addressing Italian judicial officials, which is significant for parallel but somewhat distinct reasons. In June 2015, Francis addressed members of the High Council of the Judiciary, the body that oversees Italy's judicial branch.⁹⁵ In this speech, Francis critiques globalization, suggesting that globalization “brings with it aspects of potential confusion and uncertainty, such as when it becomes a means of introducing customs, concepts, even rules, extraneous to a social fabric, with the consequent deterioration of the cultural roots of reality which should instead be respected.”⁹⁶ He asserted that this process was a form of ideological colonization and “the result of the tendencies proper to other cultures which are economically advanced but ethically debilitated.”⁹⁷ Here, once again, Francis critiques (certain forms of) globalization, while asserting a particular culture by default. In identifying one group as alien, foreign, or enemy, one defines one's own group by extension. San Juan Jr. draws these same connections between identity formation and nationalism in his paper “Nation-State, Postcolonial Theory, and Global Violence.” He states, “Identity implies definition by negation, inclusion based on exclusion underwritten

Rule' Strategy upon the Colonized Peoples,” *Science and Society* 37, no. 2 (Summer 1973): 129-151; Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Totowa, NJ: Biblio Distributions Center, 1986), 9-10; San Juan Jr.

⁹⁵ “About the Council,” Consiglio Superiore della Magistratura, 2015, accessed March 2020, [csm.it](http://www.csm.it), English translation.

⁹⁶ Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Members of the High Council of the Judiciary,” 13, June 2015, accessed March 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/june/documents/papa-francesco_20150613_csm.html.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, emphases removed.

by positivist logics of representation.”⁹⁸ With each of these examples, Francis additionally deploys meta-nationalist rhetoric practically and ideologically, while dealing in tropes of nations that are financially wealthy but morally vacuous.

Practically speaking, Francis’s chosen audiences are also significant. Similar to targeting an audience with judicial authority over the nation of Italy, Francis mentioned ideological colonization during an address to members of a Plenary Session, the theme of which was the nation-state.⁹⁹ During the address in question, Francis cites Simón Bolívar, also known as El Libertador, or the Liberator, who led many Latin American states to independence from the Spanish Empire.¹⁰⁰ In this case, it is readily apparent that Francis appropriates social movement language and strategy, likely as an attempt to conceal the potentially less palatable elements of his message (and risk alienating potential gender and sexual justice sympathizers) and appeal more readily to his audiences. The invocation of this particular freedom fighter is deeply ironic, considering that the Spanish Empire, like many European monarchies, sailed with the blessing of the pontiff at the advent of settler colonialism.¹⁰¹

Although Francis’s identity as a South American should not be erased, that he speaks out against colonialism in a manner that seems to set himself and the institutional

⁹⁸ San Juan Jr., 12.

⁹⁹ Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the Plenary Session on the Pontifical Academy of Sciences,” 2 May 2019, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/may/documents/papa-francesco_20190502_plenaria-scienze-sociali.html.

¹⁰⁰ David Bushnell, *El Libertador: Writings of Simón Bolívar* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹⁰¹ Wade, 3.

Church up solely as a victim of colonialism inverts anticolonial strategies in troubling ways. In one statement to an audience in Bolivia, Francis did make an apology for the Church's complicity in colonialism, stating, "Here I wish to bring up an important issue. Some may rightly say, 'When the Pope speaks of colonialism, he overlooks certain actions of the Church'. I say this to you with regret: many grave sins were committed against the native peoples of America in the name of God."¹⁰² However, in the same statement, Francis also invoked ideological colonization and spoke of "new colonialism," once again seemingly exempting the Church from any complicity in contemporary structures of oppression:

The new colonialism takes on different faces. At times it appears as the anonymous influence of mammon: corporations, loan agencies, certain "free trade" treaties, and the imposition of measures of "austerity" which always tighten the belt of workers and the poor. We, the bishops of Latin America, denounce this with utter clarity[...] Similarly, the monopolizing of the communications media, which would impose alienating examples of consumerism and a certain cultural uniformity, is another one of the forms taken by the new colonialism. It is ideological colonialism (sic).¹⁰³

In the above, Francis critiques with "utter clarity" a "certain cultural uniformity" that he has elsewhere asserted that gender theory imposes on cultures to which it is "alien."¹⁰⁴ Although he does apologize for the Church's colonization of Native peoples in the same excerpt, he also takes strategic care to establish the Church as the present-day victim of colonization. The passage continues:

¹⁰² Francis, "Participation at the Second World Meeting of Popular Movements," Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Ecuador, Bolivia and Paraguay, 9 July 2015, accessed April 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/july/documents/papa-francesco_20150709_bolivia-movimenti-popolari.html.

¹⁰³ Francis, Second World Meeting, English translation (original Spanish "colonialismo").

¹⁰⁴ Francis, visit to the UN.

The Church, her sons and daughters, are part of the identity of the peoples of Latin America. An identity which here, as in other countries, some powers are committed to erasing, at times because our faith is revolutionary, because our faith challenges the tyranny of mammon. Today we are dismayed to see how in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world many of our brothers and sisters are persecuted, tortured and killed for their faith in Jesus.¹⁰⁵

Because erasure and persecution are essential components of successful campaigns of imperialism and colonization (and genocide, for that matter), Francis subtly establishes the Church as the victim rather than the perpetrator of colonialism.¹⁰⁶ This is a common technique throughout his rhetoric, as he typically employs identity politics that invoke his role as a Latin American rather than head of the Catholic Church.

The above reference increasingly demonstrates the institutional Church's tendency to coopt liberation-themed imagery, while subtly subverting the meaning. Francis is particularly gifted at this tactic. Palacios suggests that this tendency largely has to do with the fact that social and other Church doctrine has been systematized retrospectively and "because of this pattern of development, the teaching has not developed dialectically with modern social science, social movements, and political change. The teaching often appropriates the language of the times but defines it differently."¹⁰⁷ I would suggest that this tendency is not incidental but rather deliberate based on Francis's persuasive use of this tactic. This effects of this strategy are evident with the Church's selective use of liberation theology imagery, despite having

¹⁰⁵ Francis, visit to Bolivia.

¹⁰⁶ San Juan Jr., 12.

¹⁰⁷ Palacios, 26.

condemned liberation theology on the whole, and with Francis's use of ideological colonization, which likewise appropriates liberationist and anti-colonial themes.

In the same speech on the nation-state, Francis rejects “nationalistic impulses and hegemonic policies” and cautions against “the growing hegemony of powers and interest groups that impose their own visions and ideas, as well as new forms of ideological colonization, not rarely disrespectful of the identity, of uses and customs, of the dignity and sensitivity of the concerned peoples.”¹⁰⁸ Instead, Francis praises what he here calls “multilateralism”¹⁰⁹ and elsewhere refers to as a polyhedron. Similarly, as referenced in the above excerpt from his address to the “Pan-Amazon Region,” he advocates for fusion and suggests *Mestizaje* is fundamentally Latin American. This further demonstrates that Francis is intentionally pitting gender and sexual diversity against multiculturalism, or more accurately, the correct kind of diversity. In the above excerpt Francis also uses the term hegemony, which was popularized by Antonio Gramsci and also used by Karl Marx.¹¹⁰ Notably, the Church vocally opposes Marxist and other forms of socialism, so Francis is once again selective in his use of the term hegemony, and likely uses it to gain momentum with audiences with which the term resonates. This includes liberation theologians, whose ideologies the Church has also historically opposed based on the Marxist roots of the movement.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Francis, Pontifical Academy of Sciences, May 2019.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and tr. Derek Boothman (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1972).

¹¹¹ Himes.

Francis’s vision of multiculturalism is in line with the Church’s adoption of a more religiously and culturally pluralistic point of view in the wake of Vatican II, whereas in contrast, the Vatican reinstated its ban on birth control. This was widely seen as a rejection of women’s rights movements, and also emblematic of the “social upheaval,” as Francis refers to it, at the time. The Church’s position on contraception relates to the fact that the Church interprets gender as inherently related to genitalia, and sexuality based on sex acts rather than identity, thus negating the possibility of interpreting LGBTQIA+ people as members of a “community.” In the same excerpt, Francis even takes care to criticize nationalism, further proving his familiarity with the kinds of charges often leveled against the institutional Church. The above is one of two statements on ideological colonization in which Francis explicitly criticizes nationalism, even while at other times, he selectively co-opts nationalist energies to bolster his opposition to gender theory.¹¹²

That Francis warns of ideological colonization and asserts an identity politics – one which excludes queer, trans, and feminist identities and embodiments – in multiple audiences geared towards a potentially global audience seems strategic and certainly not coincidental. Ideologically speaking, Francis is appropriating relatively progressive causes – e.g. a critique of globalization – and suggesting opponents of globalization and

¹¹² “As a reaction to a ‘spherical’ notion of globalization, one that levels differences and smooths out particularities, it is easy for forms of nationalism to reemerge. Yet globalization can prove promising to the extent that it can be ‘polyhedric’, favouring a positive interplay between the identity of individual peoples and countries and globalization itself, in accordance with the principle that the whole is greater than the part.” (Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See for the Traditional Exchange of New Year Greetings,” January 2019, accessed March 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2020/january/documents/papa-francesco_20200109_corpo-diplomatico.html.)

gender and sexual justice activists are mutually exclusive. On the surface, this position might seem grounded in anticolonial sentiments that rightfully critique certain gender and sexual justice movements as imperial impositions. However, Francis's position lacks nuance inasmuch as it neglects the Church's institutional legacy of colonialism and imperialism as well as the fact that same-sex attracted persons, gender variant persons, and gender and sexual justice exist everywhere, including in the Global South and East, and within the Catholic Church. Francis is completely silent on these salient issues.

In light of Francis generally being regarded as a socially progressive Pope (at least in comparison with his predecessor Benedict), another interesting phenomenon taking place within his rhetoric is a particular politics of respectability, related specifically to the sexual politics Francis is familiar with, and to an extent, selectively deploys. Jasbir Puar's concept of homonationalism helps to illuminate some of the ends Francis seems to be achieving in this regard. Puar states:

“The Orientalist invocation of the terrorist is one discursive tactic that disaggregates U.S. national gays and queers from racial and sexual others, foregrounding a collusion between homosexuality and American nationalism that is generated both by national rhetorics of patriotic inclusion and by gay and queer subjects themselves: homonationalism.”¹¹³

Homonationalism is useful for understanding Francis's justificatory and rhetorical move to serve parallel ends to that which homonationalism accomplishes. Both are useful to preserving oppressive structures and to separating respectable gays and lesbians from unrespectable 'sexual others.'

¹¹³ Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press: 2007), 39.

In other words, Francis seems willing, when necessary, to adopt a more seemingly progressive social platform, while simultaneously preserving a hierarchical sexual ethics. He makes certain concessions in this regard: Although homosexuality is still a sin, it is a lesser sin than being transgender, as delineated by his comments that compare teaching gender in school to having homosexual tendencies. While Francis attempts to disaggregate Catholics and members of the Global South specifically from gender variant sexual others, Puar points out that (homo)nationalist rhetoric tends also to be racially charged. Suggesting that gender theory is a product of ideological colonization also implies a correlation between transness and whiteness, which compounds the problem of transphobia for trans and gender variant people living in the Global South, members of colonized communities, and minoritized racial groups, to mention only a few that Francis's vision implicates. His rhetoric calls into question simultaneously not only their genders and sexualities, but also their races, ethnicities, and nationalities, as well as their (Catholic) religion. In addition, Francis overtly disaggregates same-sex attracted individuals from 'sexual others' by possessing a more welcoming attitude toward gay people than trans and feminist people (and specifically women), while not overtly condoning homosexuality: a politics of respectability, which is inherently tied to Francis's other nationalist devices.

In that same vein, Francis's repeated condemnation of gender theory stands in stark contrast with a remark that made headlines early in his papacy in which he was asked about a "gay lobby" within the Vatican and responded, ""If someone is gay and

searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?”¹¹⁴ It is true that Francis did not assume an overly condemning approach to same-sex activity in his response, but it is also inaccurate to suggest that his comments were overtly progressive. He did use the colloquial English phrase ‘gay,’ in contrast with his predecessors who favored the term homosexual(ity), but is worth noting that the interviewer used the phrase first. In addition, Francis was referring specifically to gay clergy members. The institutional Church dictates that clergy members and same-sex attracted people are both supposed to remain celibate; therefore, Francis’s statements were technically in line with the Magisterium’s position on homosexuality and celibacy.¹¹⁵ In this sense, his comments are once again a strategic rhetorical move, as they were well received by progressive Catholics and non-Catholics alike, but they were actually in line with the institutional values of the Church. In addition, his comments fascinatingly perpetuate an undercurrent of homonationalism, specifically related to politics of respectability, that afflicts many strands of seemingly progressive social politics today, by disassociating “respectable” cisgender homosexuality from “unrespectable” gender variance. That is to say, Francis ingratiated himself to mainline gay and lesbian rhetoricians while simultaneously upholding the Church’s anti-homosexual ethic and further alienating gender variant persons and expressions.

¹¹⁴ Francis, “Press Conference of Pope Francis During the Return Flight,” *Apostolic Journey to Rio de Janeiro on the Occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day*, July 2013, accessed June 2018, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130728_gmg-conferenza-stampa.html, English translation.

¹¹⁵ *Catechism*, 492.

David Valentine further points out the ways in which peoples of same-sex attraction benefit from this type of gendered/sexed hierarchy in *Imagining Transgender*, suggesting:

Mainstream gay and lesbian organizations have come to depend on transgender not simply to define themselves as a discrete set, as Douglas suggests, but because transgender incorporates, and thereby removes from the category “gay” (and in different ways, from “lesbian”), gender-variant behavior or identities. That is, not only does transgender provide a foil against which “gay”—implicitly white, middle class, respectable, private, dependable, and most deeply, male—can define itself but it allows any gender-variant behavior—even from those who identify as gay—increasingly to be moved into the category transgender.¹¹⁶

Once again, Francis seems acutely aware of (seemingly) progressive social politics and seamlessly uses them to incorporate social and institutional Catholic gender and sexual hierarchies. As Puar and Valentine point out, and as Francis’s rhetorical devices demonstrate, Francis’s sexual politics of respectability works not only to cast gender variant people but also cisgender women as sexual others. In addition to subordinating women to men and preventing them from full participation in the Church, Francis’s imagined category of gender theory reveals a disavowal of feminist politics that disrupt traditional gender norms.

Francis’s strategical moves are further evidenced by his reiteration that the ban on women’s priestly ordination still holds, but suggesting that women are in some ways actually more important than men.¹¹⁷ Hope for the role of women in the Church

¹¹⁶ David Valentine, *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 202, quoted in Melissa M. Wilcox, *Queer Nuns: Religion, Activism, and Serious Parody* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 109.

¹¹⁷ Francis, “In-Flight Press Conference of His Holiness Pope Francis From Sweden to Rome,” *Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Sweden*, November 2016, accessed March 2020,

resurfaced recently when a Synod of Bishops (appointed and overseen by Pope Francis) raised the issue of allowing male priests to marry and women to become deacons. Such allowances appear on the surface to be an advancement in gender politics but do not structurally change the inequities that women and other gender and sexual minorities face in the Church. This disparity is emblematic of ongoing debates over rights discourse in wider society. It should also be mentioned that these concessions were requested not specifically to advance the rights of women in the Church, but rather due in large part to a shortage of male clergy.¹¹⁸

Unsurprisingly, in his remarks in response to this Synod and to women's status in the Church, Francis went on to praise the "strength and gift"¹¹⁹ of women while suggesting that to clericalize women would "narrow" the vision of the Church and diminish what they had already accomplished.¹²⁰ In sum, while Francis may be perceived by some as having softened the Church's policies towards women and gay people, he has actually worked diligently and subversively to preserve the Church's sexual ethic while seemingly also improving the Church's image on the part of critics of that same ethic.

6. Natural law

Closer reading of Francis's statements also reveals several references to natural law, which is unsurprising given that natural law grounds the Church's understanding of

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/october/documents/papa-francesco_20161002_georgia-azerbaijan-conferenza-stampa.html.

¹¹⁸ Francis, *Querida Amazonia*, February 2020, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20200202_querida-amazonia.html, 90.

¹¹⁹ QA, 99.

¹²⁰ QA, 100.

sex, which the Church presupposes is the same as gender, and which dictates sexuality. Natural law is central to not only to the Church's sexual ethic, but also to its social doctrine and to its understanding of human dignity. In his statement (given in English) where he distinguishes between homosexuality and "transsexuals," Francis suggests that the latter goes "against the reality of nature."¹²¹ Here, Francis is distinguishing between biological nature and natural law: just because behavior exists in nature (such as homosexuality and gender variance) does not mean it aligns with that which reason, morality, and God prescribe as one's higher nature.¹²²

Another of Francis's references to natural law took place in September 2015 on a journey to the United States, Cuba, and the United Nations, specifically during the meeting with the UN mentioned previously. In the same speech during which he warned against ideological colonization and lifestyles "alien to people's identities," Francis also called for a "recognition of certain incontestable natural ethical limits," once again evoking natural law.¹²³ This particular excerpt indicates even more clearly the extent to which natural law influences Catholic moral theology and (sexual) ethics. Any such reference to nature evokes natural law, which suggests an innately hierarchical natural order that places humans at the top and plants and other matter in descending order at the

¹²¹ Francis, "In-Flight Press Conference of His Holiness Pope Francis From Azerbaijan to Rome, *Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Georgia and Azerbaijan*, 2 October 2016, accessed March 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/october/documents/papa-francesco_20161002_georgia-azerbaijan-conferenza-stampa.html.

¹²² Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility* (London: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd, 1981), English edition, 56-57, quoted in *Male and Female He Created Them*, 12.

¹²³ Francis, visit to the UN.

bottom. Humans are also ranked in this hierarchy according to how they behave, and specific to sexually ethics, how they perform their sex, gender, and sexuality.¹²⁴

For the institutional Church, natural law also subordinates women to men, although the contemporary Church will specify that this relationship is complementary rather than inequitable.¹²⁵ This is a charge that many gender and sexual justice advocates have historically disputed, while the Church has in turn criticized such activists for disrupting the sanctity of a preordained natural order.¹²⁶ For the Church, this order is not only natural, but also ethical, moral, and existential. Natural law is deeply embedded in the Church's understanding of creation – which the Church understands as having created man and woman and therefore gender. The Church also grounds its understanding of human dignity in the creation account of man and woman. Francis's references to natural law in relation to ideological colonization further demonstrate his ongoing opposition to what he and the Church call “gender theory.”

7. Threat(s) of Modernity

Related to some of his other justificatory and rhetorical moves, Francis also invokes ideological colonization when addressing the threat of modernity. Much like the imagined threat of gender, the Church also grapples with the imagined threat of modernity. It has done so in an official capacity at least since of the papacy of Pius IX,

¹²⁴ *Nature as Reason*

¹²⁵ Francis, “In-Flight Press Conference from Sweden to Rome”, 2016.

¹²⁶ Letter on men and women, intro.

who convened the First Vatican Council and instituted the doctrine of papal infallibility. Papal infallibility remains extremely influential to Catholic power dynamics and politics.

The perceived threat of modernity is intrinsically tied to the development of Catholic social teaching, which arose contemporaneously out of concerns surrounding modernization. The perceived threat of modernity caused the Church to hold not only the First (1869-1870) but also the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) nearly one hundred years later. The perceived threat of modernity continues into the twenty-first century. In one statement, Francis asserts, “I would like to repeat here something I have said many times: we must beware of the new ideological colonization that invades human and Christian thought, under the pretense of virtue, modernity and new attitudes. It is actually colonization, that is, it takes away freedom.”¹²⁷

Not insignificantly, Francis made these remarks during an address to the Pontifical Academy for Life. Traditionalist Catholic references towards “life” are generally procreationist, hetero-centric, and pro-life. In line with the Church’s historical response to prior and current social movements, a response which has resisted birth control; women’s ordination; and other forms of gender and sexual justice, Francis seems to be continuing the Church’s lamentations towards the perceived “ills” of modernity here. At the same time, Francis praises the value of freedom. On the one hand, “freedom” in this context could be taken synonymously with free will, a relatively standard concept within many forms of Christianity. On the other hand, freedom could be understood as an

¹²⁷ Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life,” 3 March 2016, accessed March 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/march/documents/papa-francesco_20160303_plenaria-accademia-vita.html.

espousal of a particular western (or literally, liberal) western value. Further evidence supports the latter possibility when considering that in another statement on ideological colonization, Francis advocates participatory democracies (indeed, the Church has historically supported democracies in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries).¹²⁸

As with the Church's platform for social politics, Francis is extremely selective in which "modern" values he approves or opposes. This is due in large part to the Church's interpretation of natural law. Further evidencing this trend, in an address to young people in Bulgaria and North Macedonia, Francis stated, "[T]hose who want to colonize[...] will come to you and say: 'No, you must be a more modern people, more advanced, take these things and take a new path, forget older things: progress ahead!'"¹²⁹ Francis is continuing the ecclesial legacy of drawing a very clear line between which progressive/modern social values are acceptable and which ones are not, and that line seems to be dictated in large part by embodiment and politics of respectability.

A close reading of Francis's statements presents the complicated task of systematically unpacking a complex history that is simultaneously institutional, theological, and ecclesial. In this chapter, I have done so by enumerating the data that the electronic Vatican archive possesses on the term "gender" and illustrating how it relates to Francis's co-option of the term "ideological colonization." I then analyzed this data to

¹²⁸ Francis, New Year Greetings 2019; Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Washington, D.C.: USCCB Publishing, 2005), 190.

¹²⁹ Francis, "Ecumenical and Interreligious Meeting with Young People," *Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Bulgaria and Macedonia*, May 2019, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/may/documents/papa-francesco_20190507_macedoniadelnord-giovani.html.

reveal some of the primary themes that present themselves multiply throughout Francis's statements on ideological colonization. Institutionally, Francis has assumed a role that precedes him; one which sought to demarcate the line between sex and social justice. Individually, Francis has largely been regarded as a charismatic and relatively progressive pontiff. His adoption of progressive language and demeanor couched in conservative policies ultimately serves to preserve an unremitting sexual ethic.

Chapter 2: The “Nature” of Human Dignity: Inscribing a Traditionalist Sexual Ethics

Natural law theory is a concept drawing on Aristotelian philosophical inquiry that developed from late medieval scholastic thought which is most famously attributed to Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 CE).¹³⁰ Natural law continues to influence a broad arena of contemporary discourses - theological and extra-theological, Christian and otherwise - including institutional Catholic sexual ethics. May et al note in *Catholic Sexual Ethics* that “the continuity of the Catholic theological tradition from the death of St. Thomas Aquinas in 1274 until the 1960s is remarkable,” and indeed, Thomistic theology and Thomistic Natural Law Theory (TNLT) in particular continue to shape sexual ethics well into the twenty-first century.¹³¹

As the term natural law suggests, Aquinas posited that certain orders, structures, and dicta exist *a priori* in nature. Adopting the methods of Greek philosophers, Aquinas also believed that natural law is understandable for humans not only due to the existence of God but also through humanity’s ability to reason. The Catholic *Catechism* defines natural law thusly:

The natural law which is inscribed by the Creator on the heart of every person consists in a participation in the wisdom and the goodness of God. It expresses that original moral sense which enables one to discern by reason the good and the

¹³⁰ There is little uniformity as to whether natural law and natural law theory are capitalized. I have chosen to leave them uncapitalized (except when using the abbreviation NLT) as there is less uniformity with regard to what those terms mean. In contrast, I capitalize Thomistic Natural Law Theory (TNLT) and New Natural Law Theory (NNLT) as the latter is more frequently capitalized, and both TNLT/NNLT are more crystallized theoretical frameworks.

¹³¹ They are referring to changes that occurred during the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965 CE) here (William E. May, Ronald Lawler, Joseph Boyle, Jr., *Catholic Sexual Ethics: A Summary, Explanation, and Defense* [Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 2011]), 97.

bad. It is universal and immutable and determines the basis of the duties and fundamental rights of the person as well as those of the human community and civil law.¹³²

As seen from the above excerpt from the *Catechism*, the Magisterium associates nature with morality. Although natural law emerged systematically during the medieval period as part of scholasticism and largely Thomistic philosophy, it is clear that the Church also perceives “natural law” (or perhaps rightly referred to as “laws of nature”) as fixed, universal, and associates them quite literally with the beginning time.

Natural Law and Sexual Ethics

Natural law, drawing on Aquinas’s work in conjunction with other sources of authority, uses a series of exhaustive discernment and analysis to determine what is “natural.” Although important work has been done to underscore the influence of other medieval scholastic philosophers on natural law, this chapter focuses primarily on the Roman Catholic Church’s adaptations of Thomistic Natural Law Theory (TNLT), and uses of the term natural law/natural law theory presume a Thomistic influence on the former category.¹³³ . In this chapter, I explore the mutually influential relationship between natural law, sexual ethics, social doctrine, and human dignity.

Natural law is central to Catholic teachings on human dignity, which in turn central to sexual ethics as well as social doctrine. Catholic conceptions of sexuality and dignity, both of which draw upon and are grounded in human nature, in turn

¹³² Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), accessed April 2019, http://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium_ccc/documents/archive_2005_compendium-ccc_en.html , 416.

¹³³ *Nature as Reason*.

simultaneously draw upon and defend gender complementarity, creating a tautological feedback loop. That is, gender complementarity cites human dignity in defense of gender complementarity; human dignity also cites complementarity in its definition of human dignity; and definitions ultimately harken back to the idea that humans were created in the likeness of God. Natural law consistently weaves its way through all of these discourses, and the logic becomes circular and all the more difficult to refute. I conclude that because of these entanglements, natural law remains one of the most central barriers to queer, trans and feminist-inclusive approaches to Catholic sexual ethics and social justice. What is more, natural law impinges on institutional Catholic imaginings of the human dignity of women as well as queer and gender variant people. In order to enumerate the vast impact of natural law on the Church's understanding of human sexuality, Todd Salzman's and Michael Lawler's *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology* is useful. *The Sexual Person* provides an in-depth explanation of the Thomistic influence on Catholic moral theology, under which the category of sexual ethics falls. According to Salzman's and Lawler's reading of Aquinas, "eternal law is God's rational plan for creation and redemption. God has created an orderly universe, and every created thing within that universe participates in the eternal law according to its 'nature.' Natural law is the participation of humans in the eternal law through reason."¹³⁴ Per Thomistic theory, natural law is at once eternal and natural; moral and reasonable. "It is a rational appetite that provides human beings with knowledge of inclinations that direct them toward ends, including both the final end, human fulfillment or friendship

¹³⁴ Salzman and Lawler, 62.

with God, and proximate ends, human actions that facilitate attainment of the final end.”¹³⁵ In this excerpt, Salzman and Lawler are referring to teleology.

Teleology might be thought of as a subcategory of ontology, which questions the nature of existence. Teleology concerns itself with the trajectory of existence, and posits about the *telos* or purpose, goal, end, or existence of nature. The Catholic Church relies on teleology in natural law to dictate its approach to human dignity, which concerns the purpose of human existence. Salzman and Lawler continue, “Practical reason is concerned with human actions and pursuing proximate ends that originate from our final end. Though the first principle of practical reason is to do good and avoid evil, Aquinas distinguishes between three precepts of the natural law that correspond to humans’ natural tendencies.”¹³⁶ Salzman and Lawler conduct a close analysis of these three precepts. Their reading, in addition to providing a thorough explanation, offers critiques of many traditionalist elements of natural law that I call likewise into question in this chapter.

Salzman and Lawler explain:

“The first inclination humans share with all creatures is the inclination to preserve themselves in being. This inclination fosters the protection and defense of life, and it prohibits suicide, for example. The second inclination is sometimes referred to as ‘generic natural law’ and includes what humans share with all animals, for example, the procreation and education of children.”¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Salzman and Lawler, 62.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 62-63.

¹³⁷ Salzman and Lawler, 63.

Salzman and Lawler note that this second “inclination is frequently associated with physicalism, the idea that the moral meaning of an act is defined by its physical structure. For instance, the *telos* or end of sexual intercourse is reproduction, and to frustrate that end is to frustrate the natural *telos*.”¹³⁸ This is significant because “generic natural law” is largely responsible for procreative essentialism, or the strand of thought in Catholicism and elsewhere that necessitates procreation and therefore heterosexual coupling as a prerequisite for any acceptable sexual act. Salzman and Lawler additionally point out that this “strand of natural law is certainly emphasized in the traditional hierarchy of the ends of marriage; the procreative meaning of marriage is primary, the unitive meaning is secondary.”¹³⁹

Because natural law theory is hierarchical, one precept is reserved exclusively for humans, which Aquinas believed to be the highest order of earthly beings: “Though all animals can procreate and educate their offspring, only human beings, through reason and will, have the natural inclination to experience relational union in marriage; this inclination constitutes ‘specific natural law,’ the third precept of natural law.”¹⁴⁰ As I explain in more detail below, heterosexual marriage as a precept of natural law is something that New Natural Law Theory (NNLT) has specifically emphasized since the mid-to-late twentieth century, and is among several contributing causes as to the divergence between Catholic approaches to sexual ethics and contemporary sexual and

¹³⁸ Salzman and Lawler, 63.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

gender and justice movements, Salzman and Lawler note as much in their own treatment of TNLT/NNLT. They continue:

Specific natural law pertains exclusively to human beings and includes inclinations guided by reason such as knowing truths about God, living in community, and striving to realize the common good. The natural inclinations of specific natural law focus on human capacity to reason and to pursue the good, a capacity unique to human beings.¹⁴¹

Salzman's and Lawler's critical analysis of Thomistic precepts of natural law help frame the discussion in this chapter.

From medieval scholastic theorists and especially from Aquinas' work, TNLT developed into a thorough and sophisticated discourse, which has had a lasting impact on Catholic sexual ethics. The Church envisions sexuality as dictated by the laws of nature, which for Aquinas were ordered and therefore hierarchical. TNLT draws on the creation accounts in Genesis. Significantly, the Magisterium draws on TNLT *and* the creation accounts in Genesis to support its sexual ethic. This is seen in the *Catechism*, which much like Thomistic theory, is written in the form of formulaically written questions and answers. *Catechism* 71 poses the following:

What relationship has God established between man and woman?

Man and woman have been created by God in equal dignity insofar as they are human persons. At the same time, they have been created in a reciprocal complementarity insofar as they are masculine and feminine. God has willed them one for the other to form a communion of persons. They are also called to transmit human life by forming in matrimony "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). They are likewise called to subdue the earth as "stewards" of God.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Salzman and Lawler, 63.

¹⁴² *Catechism*, 71.

The creation story has become increasingly inflected with natural law since the medieval period. In the chapter preceding the one the *Catechism* quotes above, the first creation account in Genesis describes the sequential creation of light; the earth and the sea; plants; sea, sky, and land animals; and culminates in the creation of human beings. Humans were to “have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth” (Gen. 1:26).¹⁴³

Thomistic theory not only solidified interpretations of Genesis that perceived humanity as hierarchically superior to animals, plants, and other elements of nature; TNLT also helped to preserve the Church’s gender and sexual hierarchy. The institutional Church uses a natural law lens to interpret the meanings of the creation accounts, and especially the creation of Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, as the Roman Catholic Church interprets the creation story in Genesis. The creation account continues: “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). The Church dictates gendered and sexual norms according to its interpretation of the story of Adam and Eve, as told across both creation accounts.

Creation story hermeneutics have provoked an array of debates and discourses within the institutional Catholic Church alone, as the dense theological content within the above excerpt from the *Catechism* demonstrates. The afore-mentioned *Catechism* excerpt

¹⁴³ I used New Revised Standard Version here, which is one of the English translations officially approved by the Church, and a widely used study Bible due to its close approximation to the original Greek.

cites the second creation account in defense of its position on gender complementarity. The Genesis passage in question reads, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken” (Gen 2:24). Once again, the sequence of events here is significant, both in terms of discerning the influence of natural law, and specifically in terms of how natural law affects gender roles in Catholicism.

The *Catechism* uses the above biblical passage to justify its position on gender complementarity, which it describes as reciprocal, and pertaining to masculinity, femininity, human life, and matrimony. The reciprocity or complementarity that the *Catechism* describes is therefore social and physical, as well as nuptial and procreative. Gender complementarity is social inasmuch as the Church attributes gendered social traits to biologically male-bodied and female-bodied persons, and physical inasmuch as it is procreative: gender complementarity stems from the literal physical complementarity of hetero-genital copulation.¹⁴⁴ It is additionally apparent that the Church perceives the story of Adam and Eve as a nuptial event.

It is unsurprising, given the central role of tradition in Roman Catholicism, that the Church would go to such great lengths to tie the origins of procreation and heterosexual union quite literally to what the Church perceives, whether literal or metaphorical, as the beginning of human history. Although contemporary Catholic sexual ethics suggests that complementary reciprocity indicates sexual difference rather than

¹⁴⁴ By male-bodied and female-bodied, I mean to signify people with hormones, chromosomes, DNA, genitalia, and other physical characteristics that typically result in people being assigned female at birth or assigned male at birth, sometimes also referred to as AMAB and AFAB. There is no perfect way to discuss these categories, other than to point out that they are socially constructed.

subordination, historically, the creation accounts have often been used not only in defense of gender complementarity but also to suggest that man precedes woman not only in terms of cosmogony but in all things.¹⁴⁵

The relationship between natural law and sexual ethics is further illuminated by Anthony LoPresti's chapter on Christianity in *Sex and Religion*. LoPresti summarizes Thomistic theory succinctly, referring to natural law as:

[A] form of reasoning that seeks to draw generalizations about the meaning and value of human experience through a careful and nuanced analysis. Natural law theory holds that there is an objective moral order to the universe, laid down by God, that is independent from but accessible to human beings. Through the powers of observation and reason, exercised within a wider community of critical discernment, one can appropriate God's eternal law regardless of one's religious stance.¹⁴⁶

There are a number of reasons to problematize several aspects of natural law in further detail. Note, for example, that LoPresti (correctly) describes natural law theory as making "generalizations" that describe the "objective" nature of the universe.

Postmodernist understandings of sexes, genders, and sexualities tend to avoid truth claims that purport themselves to be objective or immutable. Since sex, gender, and sexuality are fluid and diverse, those who do not fit the generalization at best are left unrepresented. Often, these individuals are compelled to adhere to the generalized standard, and are punished when they do or cannot. In addition, many GSST/QTST theorists reject the hierarchy that natural law instills, particularly with regard to gender complementarity. Interpreted through a gender complementarian lens, the Genesis

¹⁴⁵ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Between the Sexes: Foundations for a Christian Ethics of Sexuality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985).

¹⁴⁶ LoPresti, 125.

creation accounts lead some theologians to conclude that women literally proceed from and are therefore subordinate to men. Therefore, these are the only two sex-genders the Church officially recognizes. LoPresti's summary of the relationship between sexual ethics and natural law is helpful in illuminating how this logic operates.

LoPresti continues his summary of natural law and its incorporation, among other elements, of experience and reason by citing feminist sexual ethicist Lisa Sowle Cahill:

Experience reveals what is most fulfilling for human beings, and reason interprets that experience so as to distinguish what is 'natural' (morally appropriate) human conduct, 'as differentiated from behavior that humans may often exhibit, but which is not in conformity with their true nature or highest ideals.'¹⁴⁷

Natural law dictates procreative, nuptial sex as the only "natural" sex act. LoPresti emphasizes the fact that natural law theory, and as a result, the Magisterium, equates "nature" with morality. Thus, any act that deviates from the prescribed formula is consequently morally devalued. This is somewhat paradoxical, given the fact that historically, institutional Catholic sexual ethics aims to discern the morality of the sex act rather than the moral character of the person committing the act.¹⁴⁸

A revisionist counterargument to natural law and institutional sexual ethics in general might contend, for example, that the Church's position on homosexual sex acts, which it deems an "intrinsic moral disorder," fails to distinguish successfully between condemning the homosexual act and the homosexual person.¹⁴⁹ The Church's position

¹⁴⁷ Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Sexuality, Marriage, and Parenthood: The Catholic Tradition" in *Religion and Artificial Reproduction*, ed. Lisa Sowle Cahill and Thomas Shannon (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 37, quoted in LoPresti, 125.

¹⁴⁸ Darlene Fozard Weaver, *The Acting Person and Christian Moral Life* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 5-28.

further encompasses both sin and sickness, which as Mark Jordan notes is no coincidence. Institutional documents dealing with homosexuality rely on “notions from more than one hundred years ago, from the nineteenth century’s campaign to categorize and regulate sexual perversions, including the newly named ‘homosexuality.’”¹⁵⁰ This characterization, always ableist and problematic, no doubt added further insult to injury given that Ratzinger issued the letter in question during the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis, which at the time was most heavily associated with gay men and specifically their sexual activities. Further, asserting that morality derives from nature solidifies the notion that morality is fixed, universal, and objective. This is perhaps one of the most crucial points of departure between the institutional Church on the one hand and contemporary gender and sexual justice movements on the other.

As seen in several official Vatican statements as well as secondary source materials, in addition to attaching nature to morality, the institutional Church infuses these earlier concepts with what it refers to as human dignity. Aline Kalbian explains this relationship in *Sexing the Church: Gender, Power, and Ethics in Contemporary Catholicism*, which analyzes official Vatican statements pertaining to Catholic sexual ethics.

¹⁴⁹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, October 1986, accessed April 2019, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19861001_homosexual-persons_en.html, para 3.

¹⁵⁰ *Silence of Sodom*, 29.

Kalbian discusses natural law in relation to *Donum Vitae [the gift of life]*; *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation*, a letter issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1987. Kalbian explains:

The natural law is a ‘rational order whereby man [*sic*] is called by the Creator to direct and regulate his [*sic*] life and actions and in particular make use of his [*sic*] body’ (Intro. 3). Human bodies and human actions fall under the purview of humans, and, according to *Donum Vitae* moral evaluations are to be made in reference to the dignity of the person. This dignity is best respected when one safeguards the body.[...] [T]he person as a ‘unified totality’ receives an apparently greater status in the moral argument. The language of integrity and totality protects the magisterium from arguments made by some theologians that natural law is wrongly interpreted as too physical or biological. The dignity of the person in *Donum Vitae*’s vision derives from both the body and the spirit of the person.¹⁵¹

Although Kalbian is primarily interested in the institutional Church’s position on contraception and assisted reproduction, her study demonstrates the extensive reach of natural law theory and the Church’s core sexual ethic. In the above excerpt, Kalbian summarizes another crucial point of departure that Francis also touches on in his criticism of “gender theory.”

Human dignity is a key theme in several areas of Catholic theology. The institutional Church also ties human dignity to the creation story. *Catechism* 311 states, “The *dignity of the human person* is rooted in his or her *creation in the image and likeness of God*. Endowed with a spiritual and immortal soul, intelligence and free will, the human person is ordered to God and called in soul and in body to eternal beatitude

¹⁵¹ Joseph Ratzinger, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Vitae: Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation*, February 1987, accessed March 2020, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19870222_respect-for-human-life_en.html, quoted in *Sexing the Church*, 73-74, original brackets.

[blessing].”¹⁵² Read in conjunction with *Catechism* 71, it is apparent that the Church interprets gender complementarity as essential to human dignity: “Man and woman have been *created by God in equal dignity* insofar as they are human persons. At the same time, they have been created in a reciprocal complementarity insofar as they are masculine and feminine.”¹⁵³

Gender complementarity has far-reaching implications. First, gender complementarity is rooted in genital penile-vaginal, perceived active-receptive complementarity. Because of this, the Church essentializes conjugal procreation, and, therefore, heterosexuality. Second, essentializing hetero-genital complementarity aligns biological sex with masculinity and femininity, or, more to the point, fixed binary gender roles. Third, and most relevant to this chapter, it is evident that gender complementarity is intrinsically tied to and mutually reinforced by the Church’s theories on natural law and human dignity. The logic becomes circular and therefore all the more irrefutable. Human dignity is rooted in natural law, which by “nature” cannot change. Humans must not engage in “unnatural” sex acts, because these acts detract from their human dignity, which is also rooted in natural law; the cycle repeats, and the logic reveals itself to be tautological. The institutional Church works to preserve its authority in terms of constructed longevity as well as the wide-ranging scope to which natural law and its core sexual ethic applies.

¹⁵² *Catechism*, 358, emphasis added.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 71, emphasis added.

As Kalbian and LoPresti explain, natural law dictates that there are unequivocal ways in which the human body must act, according to God, nature, reason, *and* morality. The Church limits human sexual acts to those which are simultaneously procreative and conjugal, believing that it is unnatural to separate reproduction from genital copulation or vice versa. Additionally, the Church and supporters of natural law celebrate the immutability of these teachings. In their *Summary, Explanation and Defense* of sexual ethics, May et al note:

For nearly eight hundred years Catholic tradition has affirmed unanimously and with one voice that marriage is good; that genital sexual activity outside marriage, whether through adultery, fornication, masturbation, homosexual activity, or bestiality, is gravely sinful; and that within marriage some sexual acts – notably contraception and acts leading to orgasm apart from sexual intercourse – are wrong.¹⁵⁴

The tone in their *Defense* reads drastically differently than a critique of these same teachings in this work and elsewhere. From gender and sexual justice perspectives, the institutionalized condemnation of what amounts to the majority of sex acts is cause for concern rather than celebration, as is the static position the institutional Church has maintained for so many centuries.

¹⁵⁴The Catholic *Catechism* has possesses a variety and hierarchy of sins, which include but are not necessarily limited to venial, mortal, grave, and deadly sins, the three latter of which are more serious. Regarding grave sins, *Catechism* 304 reads: “Which sins must be confessed? All grave sins not yet confessed, which a careful examination of conscience brings to mind, must be brought to the sacrament of Penance. The confession of serious sins is the only ordinary way to obtain forgiveness” (*Catechism*, 304). The significance here is that those who have not gone to confession cannot participate fully in Catholic liturgy and are therefore not considered to be in good standing in the Church. In other words, those who are actively engaged in homosexual relationships or use contraception, for example, and are not penitent, cannot participate fully in the Church (May et al, 97).

Social justice is another significant point of departure, broadly speaking, between the institutional Catholic approach and, gender and sexual justice activists. As summarized in the *Catechism*:

Society ensures social justice when it respects the dignity and the rights of the person as the proper end of society itself. Furthermore, society pursues social justice, which is linked to the common good and to the exercise of authority, when it provides the conditions that allow associations and individuals to obtain what is their due.¹⁵⁵

Many scholars have made arguments on the basis of human dignity and social justice on behalf of the plight of people of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities.¹⁵⁶ There is also some potential overlap between human rights discourse and what the Church refers to as human dignity, although the conclusions that these discourses might draw are potentially quite different. In any case, Francis has acknowledged – and rejected – these kinds of appeals on multiple occasions, including during an address *On the Universal Declaration Human Rights* in 2018:

Somewhat paradoxically, there is a risk that, in the very name of human rights, we will see the rise of modern forms of *ideological colonization* by the stronger and the wealthier, to the detriment of the poorer and the most vulnerable.[...] [I]t is painful to see how many fundamental rights continue to be violated today. First among all of these is the right of every human person to life, liberty and personal security.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ *Catechism*, 411.

¹⁵⁶ See Lisa Sowle Cahill; Charles Curran; Margaret Farley, *Just Love*; Mark D. Jordan; Patrick S. Cheng;, *Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology* (New York: Seabury Books, 2011);; Salzman and Lawler, *The Sexual Person*.

¹⁵⁷ Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See for the Traditional Exchange of New Year Greetings,” January 2018, accessed March 2020, original emphasis, brackets added, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2018/january/documents/papa-francesco_20180108_corpo-diplomatico.html.

In the above address, Francis one again uses the phrase “ideological colonization,” and suggests that certain actions carried out in the name of human rights are actually detrimental to the most vulnerable members of society. His meaning in some respects is quite clear; for example, he refers to the right of every person to human life. Although some might interpret this as being a statement specifically about abortion, having explicated institutional sexual ethics, it is clear that the Church views masturbation, assisted reproduction, use of birth control, homosexual sex acts, and euthanasia, to name only a few examples, as threats to human life.¹⁵⁸

The Church officially affirms that human life is centered upon the hetero-nuclear, procreative family, for which the woman is primarily responsible, so it might be equally accurate, particularly in conjunction with Francis’s statements on threats to the family as forms of ideological colonization, to add disruptions to traditional gender roles to that list. In this context, natural law theory allows the Church to reject appeals to human dignity, human rights, *and* social justice doctrine. Read in this light, the extent of the limitations it imposes upon allowable sex acts – or, I might posit, human activity more generally – is vast.

Gender Theory Backlash and New Natural Law Theory

Per May’s, Lawler’s, and Boyle’s assertion in the previous quotation, the institutional Church’s position on sexual ethics remained relatively static from the time of Thomas Aquinas in the late 13th century through the 1960s. This perception is telling,

¹⁵⁸ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, July 1968, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html.

given that Joseph Boyle is one of three thinkers often credited with developing *New Natural Law Theory* (NNLT). New Natural Law Theory developed after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965 CE), and rose in popularity during the 1980s. Many published theologians continue to espouse NNLT in the twenty-first century.¹⁵⁹ The Second Vatican Council was pivotal in Catholic history, and divisive for many institutional as well as lay Catholics. Pope John XXIII and the Magisterium are largely regarded as having convened Vatican II as a response to contemporary social movements at the time; some of the movements relevant to the topic of this study include second wave feminism, sexual liberation, hippie counterculture, and civil rights.

One of the primary issues that Church officials discussed during Vatican II was whether or not to eliminate the institutional ban on the use of contraception. This debate eventually culminated in Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (human life), issued in 1968, which reaffirmed the Church's longstanding ban on birth control and other forms of artificial contraception. This move was disappointing to many progressive Catholics aligned with sexual and gender justice movements, who hoped the Church would amend its official position. More conservative Catholics, however, felt that Vatican II had resulted in too many concessions, and that post Vatican II Catholicism had strayed too far from traditional Catholic doxa and praxis. Some thinkers surmise that the resurgence of TNLT and its counterpart, NNLT, developed out of backlash against some of the social changes brought forth by the Second Vatican Council.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ See also Germain Grisez, John Finnis, and Christopher Kaczor.

As seen by Joseph Boyle's contribution to *Catholic Sexual Ethics: A Summary, Explanation and Defense*, NNL theorists see themselves as purveyors – or perhaps perfecters - of natural law, and defenders of magisterial Catholic teachings in general. However, Porter, Cahill, Salzman and Lawler as well as other thinkers have refuted the extent to which NNLT accurately reflects even institutional Catholic tradition, much less the tradition of the Catholic people in general. Salzman and Lawler, who offer a revisionist Catholic sexual ethic, simultaneously push back against certain institutional Catholic teachings while also pointing out that much of NNLT is not in line with the tradition of natural law from which the Magisterium draws in the first place.¹⁶¹ Jean Porter makes a similar assertion about contemporary appropriations of natural law in *Natural and Divine Law: Reclaiming Tradition for Christian Ethics*.¹⁶²

These discrepancies are significant because as many sexual and gender justice advocates have pointed out, if the institutional Church is complicit in the oppression of peoples of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities, the positions that NNLT espouses are even more problematic than those of the institutional Church. Salzman and Lawler explain: “Although traditionalists appear to be united in their goal to defend the absolute sexual ethical norms of magisterial teaching, there are different emphases in the

¹⁶⁰ Charles E. Curran, *Catholic Moral Theology in the United States: A History* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2008), 97-98, Salzman and Lawler, 58-75.

¹⁶¹ Salzman and Lawler, 61-75.

¹⁶² *Natural and Divine Law*.

natural law normative theories and sexual anthropologies they construct to justify these norms” and their relationship to Catholic understandings of human dignity.¹⁶³

In comparison to Thomistic Natural Law Theory, which has influenced law, philosophy, and a wide variety of Christian theological traditions, NNLT hyper-emphasizes human sexuality and procreative essentialism. NNLT draws upon Thomas Aquinas’s adage “do good and avoid evil [...] as the foundation for moral judgment.”¹⁶⁴ One unique addition NNLT has made to Thomistic natural law is the principle of basic goods, which prominent new natural law theorist Germain Grisez defines as “aspects of our personhood, elements of the blueprint which tells us what human persons are capable of being.”¹⁶⁵ Salzman and Lawler elaborate, “We come to an awareness of basic goods in and through our experience of a natural inclination toward them.”¹⁶⁶ Though NNLT’S basic goods themselves are addenda to TNLT, influence from natural law proper is evident.

For example, the above demonstrates that NNLT draws connections between natural law and human dignity, which is apparent with Grisez’s reference to “personhood,” a term often used in relationship to the concept of human dignity. Grisez further references the connection between human dignity and natural law when he refers to ‘the blueprint which tells us what human persons are capable of being.’ The Church’s

¹⁶³ Salzman and Lawler, 57-58.

¹⁶⁴ Salzman and Lawler, 58.

¹⁶⁵ Germain Grisez and Russell Shaw, *Fulfillment in Christ* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 54, quoted in Salzman and Lawler, 58.

¹⁶⁶ Salzman and Lawler, 58.

concept of human dignity, intrinsically tied to natural law, theorizes about the ontological nature of humanity, or the nature of (human) being.

Even more specifically, the Catholic Church is concerned with teleology and deontology; that is the purpose and the duty of the human being, respectively. Catholic theological interpretations of natural law posit that the existence of humans suggests that humans possess an *a priori* purpose *and* duty, towards which humans are naturally ordered. To that end, human dignity, rooted, in the eyes of the institutional Church, in natural law, is concerned with the *higher* nature of the human person. In this sense, the Church differentiates between natural law and human biological nature. The Church reiterates this in *Male and Female He Created Them*, a letter issued by the Congregation for Catholic Education in June 2019, which marked an official reaffirmation of Francis's and the Church's condemnation of gender theory.¹⁶⁷ *Male and Female He Created Them* cites Karol Wojtyla (who later became Pope John Paul II)'s *Love and Responsibility*, which states:

The expressions 'the order of nature' and 'the order of biology' must not be confused or regarded as identical, the 'biological order' does indeed mean the same as the order of nature but only in so far as this is accessible to methods of empirical and descriptive natural science, and not as a specific order of existence, with an obvious relationship to the First Cause, to God the Creator God.¹⁶⁸

In other words, the mere fact that a phenomenon such as homosexual activity or gender variance occurs in nature does not suggest that such a phenomenon is attuned to a person's highest moral order. Cancer, for example, can exist in nature; some studies even

¹⁶⁷ *Male and Female He Created Them*.

¹⁶⁸ Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility* (London: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd, 1981), English edition, 56-57, quoted in *Male and Female He Created Them*, 12.

suggest that some individuals might be predisposed to cancer, but cancer is certainly not a good. Per the logics of TNLT and especially New Natural Law Theory, humans can be tempted or even predisposed towards particular behaviors (alcoholism is another analogy that might be used), but that does not make those behaviors “natural” or “good” in the sense of natural moral order and basic goods.

In that latter vein, NNLT adds eight basic goods to the concept of natural law. These goods include human life; knowledge and aesthetic appreciation; skilled performances of all kinds; self-integration; practical reasonableness or authenticity; justice and friendship; religion or holiness; and the final good, which was added most recently, is the basic good of marriage. Salzman and Lawler describe NNLT’s concept of marriage as a basic good thusly:

NNLT’s sexual anthropology is founded upon the basic good of marriage. Its argument for marriage as a basic good and the absolute norms that follow from that basic good develops in three steps. The first step defines heterosexual marriage as a basic good; the second defines marital sexual acts in terms of that basic good; and the third judges all other sexual acts to be nonmarital and, therefore, unnatural, unreasonable, and immoral.¹⁶⁹

Some of the claims that Salzman and Lawler summarize above are not entirely unique to NNLT, but they are useful referents to use to analyze the push and pull between progressive social movements and conservative backlash, as that tension guides this research. Salzman and Lawler offer several points of critique that emphasize these crucial differences and why they matter. These points of critiques serve as microcosms of the points of departure between the institutional Church and proponents of sexual and gender justice movements who view the Church as antithetical to these causes.

¹⁶⁹ Salzman and Lawler, 58.

The institutional Church as well as NNLT both conflate natural law with morality. NNLT itself ostensibly arose as backlash not only against social movements prevalent especially in the Global North and West in the 1960s, but as backlash against some of the concessions the institutional Church chose to make as a result of those signs of the times. Also unique to New Natural Law Theory is the extent to which it emphasizes the hetero-genital complementarity promulgated by the institutional Church. Although advocates of NNLT often proclaim themselves to be spokespeople of the Catholic Church, those who reject the changes of Vatican II actually espouse views more opposed to sexual and gender and sexual justice than the official Church, who can also be justifiably criticized for contributing to campaigns of homophobia, sexism, and transphobia.

The first point of critique that Salzman and Lawler raise towards NNLT is that it relies on the hetero-procreative function without adequately defining the human person. This is a common revisionist critique of traditionalist sexual ethics.¹⁷⁰ Sexual ethics that emphasize biological function do so to the detriment of the full human person.¹⁷¹ Some revisionist theologians including those cited previously view the logic in this position to be flawed, given the Church's investment in human dignity and personhood. Secondly, marriage as a basic good emphasizes what Salzman and Lawler previously describe as Aquinas's "generic natural law," which they deem physicalist, referring to the idea that the morality of an act is defined by its physicality. Emphasizing the physical act of

¹⁷⁰ Per Salzman's and Lawler's use of the term, revisionist means those who seek to revise the institutional/or traditionalist approach to Catholic theology, or in this case sexual ethics. Here, traditionalist can signify the Magisterium as well as New Natural Theory, though as Salzman and Lawler as well as other critics point out, there are varied degrees of conservatism to traditionalist approaches, and NNLT actually exceeds the conservatism of the institutional Church.

¹⁷¹ Fozard Weaver.

heterosexual coupling results in procreative essentialism, and de-emphasizes what Salzman and Lawler refer to as the “unitive” aspect of marriage and sexuality. The physicalist approach to marriage as a basic good, which emphasizes generic natural law to the point of minimizing other sources of tradition and authority, works to solidify even further the Church’s focus on procreation.

Salzman and Lawler point out other potential consequences in emphasizing generic over specific natural law, or the biological component of marriage over the personal: “For example, spousal rape violates the personal dimension of human sexuality but, prior to any determination of the immorality of the act, [...] rape could potentially be a marital act because organic complementarity and freely given marital commitment are in place.”¹⁷² This particular point is crucial to consider multiple perspectives, including feminist and masculinity studies, scholarship on rape, and gender and sexual justice. Salzman’s and Lawler’s misgivings about readings of Catholic sexual ethics that neglect advocacy for survivors of sexual assault parallels my critique of Francis’s condemnation of gender theory. Sexual assault provides a poignant example of why it is potentially harmful to claim sexual and gender justice has no place within the Catholic Church. Francis seems not to have considered, or even worse, not to deem important, the fact that sexual assault advocacy has also historically been a crucial component of what he and the institutional Church are intent on vilifying under the umbrella of “gender theory.”

Salzman and Lawler continue, “Contrarily, regardless of personal meaning of a sexual act between a gay or lesbian couple, for example, NNLT holds that the lack of

¹⁷² Salzman and Lawler, 63.

organic complementarity precludes the possibility of the personal meaning of the sexual act.”¹⁷³ NNLT proposes that the sexual act *must* be biologically and hetero-genitally complementary in order to be personally unitive. In addition to the problem of spousal rape that Salzman and Lawler raise above, this kind of biological determinism has been used in support of white supremacy, sexism, ableism, and other campaigns of eugenics, to name only a few ways that physicalism, biological determinism/or other forms of essentialism have been used to enact violence on nondominant bodies. Indeed, the Church has raised concerns over the issue of eugenics in defense of its position against contraception, abortion, and euthanasia.¹⁷⁴

Another important point Salzman and Lawler raise is the issue of “sexual orientation,” a term that has been highly contested and pathologized since its advent: “NNLT provides this incomplete and tendentious definition: ‘The stable disposition of an adult toward sexually and gratifying bodily contact with persons of the same sex.’”¹⁷⁵ Stable here presumably means static and unchangeable, therefore implying that some same-sex inclined persons are capable of change. Salzman and Lawler note that “this definition is incomplete because it totally ignores heterosexual orientation.”¹⁷⁶ This is unsurprising since the term homosexuality was invented only as recently as the late

¹⁷³ Salzman and Lawler, 63.

¹⁷⁴ *Humanae Vitae*; Aline Kalbian, *Sex, Violence, and Justice: Contraception and the Catholic Church* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2014).

¹⁷⁵ Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus, Volume Three: Difficult Moral Questions* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1997), quoted in Salzman and Lawler, 65.

¹⁷⁶ Salzman and Lawler, 65.

nineteenth century, and predated the invention of the term heterosexuality.¹⁷⁷ Just as homosexuality and sexual orientation were pathologized in psychology, NNLT continues to do so likely as a means to maintain heterosexuality as the normative, unmarked sexual category.

Salzman and Lawler further note that NNLT's definition of sexual orientation "is tendentious because it focuses exclusively on the biological ('arousing') and physically pleasurable ('gratifying') dimensions of homosexual orientation, and it totally ignores the emotional and relational dimensions."¹⁷⁸ Here, Salzman and Lawler once again touch upon a primary critique towards traditionalist sexual ethicists on the part of sexual and gender justice advocates, which is that traditionalist Catholic sexual ethics possesses a double standard in terms of a same-sex attracted person's capacity to love romantically and engage in meaningful romantic partnerships as compared to a heterosexually inclined person's. This differentiation is due in large part to traditional sexual ethicists' understanding of natural law and what it dictates for moral human sexuality.

As compared to NNLT's definition of sexual orientation, the Magisterium makes the following declaration regarding sexual orientation: "It seems appropriate to understand sexual orientation as a deep-seated dimension of one's personality and to recognize its relative stability in a person."¹⁷⁹ Salzman and Lawler provide this definition,

¹⁷⁷ David Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

¹⁷⁸ Salzman and Lawler, 65.

¹⁷⁹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers*, September 1997, accessed March 2020,

cited from a statement entitled *Always Our Children* issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 1997, suggesting that the USCCB's definition is "more complete" than the one provided by NNLT.¹⁸⁰ In some respects, the recognition of sexual orientation as a category is a relatively progressive move on the part of Church officials, as the Vatican previously defined homosexuality in terms of sex acts rather than orientation.

However, *Always Our Children*, which offers advice to U.S. parents and pastors of homosexual children, distinguishes "between a homosexual 'tendency,' which proves to be 'transitory,' and 'homosexuals who are definitively such because of some kind of innate instinct.'"¹⁸¹ In comparison with Salzman and Lawler, I would only offer extremely qualified positive assessment of the Church's approach to "sexual orientation." Salzman and Lawler are correct, however, that NNLT's attitude toward homosexuality and non-normative sexual and gender expressions are more negative than that of the institutional Church, which likewise opposes homosexuality. This reality becomes starker when the Church's already negative attitude towards these groups is made even more apparent.

Although Salzman and Lawler provide an illuminating analysis of official Church statements on the concept "sexual orientation," it is inaccurate to suggest that the Church recognizes or validates the category of sexual orientation as such. That is, the strictures of

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/homosexuality/always-our-children.cfm>, quoted in Salzman and Lawler, 65.

¹⁸⁰ Salzman and Lawler, 65.

¹⁸¹ *Always our Children*, quoted in Salzman and Lawler, 65, emphasis removed.

natural law continue to dictate that conjugal, procreative heterosexuality is the only acceptable sex act, thus pathologizing any other “orientation.” Although Salzman and Lawler are correct to point out that NNLT’s approach to (homo)sexual orientation is even bleaker, the institutional church’s response is not much better. The institutional Church simply refuses to recognize sexual orientation at all and does not regard heterosexuality as an orientation per se, because according to its teaching, heterosexuality is the only natural, normalized form of sexuality.

Moreover, taken in conjunction with the USCCB’s comments on orientation vs. tendency, we see that *Always Our Children* is very much in line with traditional/institutional Catholic sexual ethics, which simultaneously discourages homosexuality and institutes a compulsory heterosexuality by defining sexuality through gender roles and hetero-genital procreation.¹⁸² The conflation of these categories is most starkly seen in *Catechism* 487, which poses the following:

What responsibility do human persons have in regard to their own sexual identity?

God has created human beings as male and female, equal in personal dignity, and has called them to a vocation of love and of communion. Everyone should accept his or her identity as male or female, recognizing its importance for the whole of the person, its specificity and complementarity.¹⁸³

The above shows that the Magisterium defines sexual identity, which ostensibly refers to sexuality, in terms of sex and gender. *Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers*, issued by the U.S. Bishops conference in 1997, is comparable to Cardinal Ratzinger’s (later Pope

¹⁸² Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5, no. 4 (Summer 1980): 631-660, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1086%2F493756>.

¹⁸³ *Catechism*, 487.

Benedict XVI's) *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, issued in 1986.

Ratzinger's letter also refers to sexual orientation, asserting that "The human person, made in the image and likeness of God, can hardly be adequately described by a reductionist reference to his or her sexual orientation."¹⁸⁴ Here, Ratzinger seems to be implying that gender and sexual justice movements reduce people to their sexual identities. However, the excerpt continues:

Every one living on the face of the earth has personal problems and difficulties, but challenges to growth, strengths, talents and gifts as well. Today, the Church provides a badly needed context for the care of the human person when she refuses to consider the person as a "heterosexual" or a "homosexual" and insists that every person has a fundamental Identity: the creature of God, and by grace, his child and heir to eternal life.¹⁸⁵

In reality, Ratzinger and the institutional Church are reductive with regard to sexual identity inasmuch as they ignore and pathologize its varieties in favor of a heterosexual ideal. Additionally, Ratzinger's appeal to natural law and human dignity, which are mutually influential, is evident in his reference to the human person made in the image of God. Ratzinger also alludes to the notion that there is a difference between biological function and human's ideal nature, which in the case of "sexual orientation," is simultaneously conjugal, procreative, and complementary.

Ratzinger's letter, which he penned as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), further asserts, "Although the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is a more or less strong tendency ordered toward an

¹⁸⁴ Ratzinger, 16.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

intrinsic moral evil; and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder.”¹⁸⁶ Although it came as a surprise to some (both critics and proponents alike) that Ratzinger declared that homosexual inclination itself was not a sin, Ratzinger went on in the same sentence to describe homosexuality as a ‘tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil.’ Therefore, although the Church seemed to catch on, in the late twentieth century, to the use of the phrase sexual orientation, its stance towards homosexuality seems to have varied little. The pathologization of homosexuality that occurred in the late nineteenth century onward is also relevant here. Indeed, the Church’s use of the phrase sexual orientation here likely has less to do with any acceptance of the concept of sexual orientation(s) and more to do with an effort to pathologize individuals with what the Church perceives as deviant – or indeed unnatural - sexual behaviors.¹⁸⁷ The church seems to use the terminology of sexual orientation in order better critique what it finds objectionable, not to adopt any of the underlying realities, experiences, or concepts that concepts such as gender and sexuality illuminate.

Salzman’s and Lawler’s critique of Ratzinger and other traditionalists further problematize the role that natural law plays in traditionalist Catholic understandings of complementarity: “Heterogenital complementarity, where the male penis penetrates the female vagina in an act of a reproductive kind, is established as *the* litmus test for determining whether or not a sexual act can fulfill personal complementarity, and thus be natural, reasonable, and therefore moral.”¹⁸⁸ As Salzman and Lawler point out,

¹⁸⁶ Ratzinger, 3.

¹⁸⁷ White.

“Heterogenital complementarity is the necessary, foundational, sine qua non condition for what defines a reasonable and moral sexual act. Because homosexual acts clearly lack heterogenital complementarity as defined, they can never be reasonable and moral.”¹⁸⁹ As many critics of natural law proper and especially of NNLT point out, natural law collapses morality, nature, and reason. Simultaneously, traditionalist approaches to Catholicism conflate categories of sex, gender, and sexuality, as well as natural law and human dignity.

When these areas become mutually influential and self-replicating, dominant bodies reassert a stronghold atop an institutionalized hierarchy. Salzman and Lawler focus primarily on homosexuality in their treatment of heterogenital complementarity, but the emphasis on heterogenital complementarity has equally negative consequences for peoples of nondominant sexualities as well as nondominant sexes and genders. It should also be mentioned here that whereas NNLT has arguably taken heterogenital complementarity-based sexual ethics to new extremes, the Church likewise asserts such teachings. The institutional Church’s position on complementarity is illustrative of the implications for women and gender variant people in addition to sexual minorities.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF)’s 2004 *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World* sheds more light on the relationships between these categories and how

¹⁸⁸ Salzman and Lawler, 65-66 It should be noted here that Salzman and Lawler propose alternative modes of complementarity that go beyond genital complementarity; personal complementarity seeks to evoke a complementarity that relies on unitive complementarity for couples that are not necessarily heterosexual. This distinction exceeds the scope of this paper, but is useful to understand. (Salzman and Lawler, 65-66) Salzman and Lawler, 65-66.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 66.

they serve to subordinate people of nondominant sexes and genders. The letter states: “Above all, the fact that human beings are persons needs to be emphasized.”¹⁹⁰ This distinction between “human” and “person” is interesting, perhaps once again suggesting that natural law is superior to mere biology.

The excerpt continues by alluding to a complementarian interpretation of the creation account, stating, “*Man is a person, man and woman equally so, since both were created in the image and likeness of the personal God.*”¹⁹¹ Here, the Church’s perception of personhood/human dignity once again roots itself in gender and genital complementarity: Man and woman’s “equal dignity as persons is realized as physical, psychological, and ontological complementarity.”¹⁹² A generous reading of the above might note that as compared to NNLT, the CDF’s letter emphasizes heterogenital coupling as only one aspect of complementarity. It is also noteworthy that Ratzinger, who later became Pope Benedict, also authorized the 2004 letter as head of the CDF at the time.

In reality, the letter aligns physical/sexual and psychological/social complementarity with what the letter refers to as ontological complementarity. Because gender complementarity is tied to the creation story, complementarity assumes an existential quality. On a certain level, men therefore were created at least in part to insert their penises into women’s vaginas, and women were therefore created at least in part to be receptacles of men’s penises. Since complementarity works on lines not only of sex but also gender, women possess an existential mandate to be receptive and passive not

¹⁹⁰ Letter on men and women.

¹⁹¹ Letter on men and women, para. 8, original emphasis.

¹⁹² Ibid.

only sexually, but also socially. This alignment, of course, elides all other gender expressions.

Salzman and Lawler are correct in their assertion that New Natural Law Theory takes heterogenital complementarity to even more radically conservative extremes than the Church's official position, which already aligns sex, gender, and sexuality, and closely regulates these categories. A closer reading of a primary NNLT text that addresses the topic of homosexuality will prove even more illuminating in this regard. John Finnis' "Law, Morality, and 'Sexual Orientation,'" originally published by *Notre Dame Law Review* in 1994, provides a useful overview of NNLT's attitude towards homosexuality and sexual orientation. As Finnis' use of quotation marks would suggest, NNL theorists reject the category of orientation in favor of what they perceive as the only "natural" sexual inclination, heterosexuality.

Finnis' work in the above refers to sexual orientation specifically with regard to homosexuality, which he defines as "overtly manifested active willingness to engage in homosexual conduct."¹⁹³ His article focuses primarily on homosexuality in conjunction with laws in Europe that regulate sexuality. Like the Vatican, Finnis advocates civil laws that uphold natural law.¹⁹⁴ More specific to NNLT, Finnis alludes to basic goods throughout the text, referring to homosexual and other forms of sexual conduct as "bad

¹⁹³ John Finnis, "Law, Morality, and 'Sexual Orientation'" in Charles E. Curran and Leslie Griffin, *Catholic Moral Theology in the United States: A History* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2008), 313.

¹⁹⁴ "In what does the natural moral law consist? The natural law which is inscribed by the Creator on the heart of every person consists in a participation in the wisdom and the goodness of God. It expresses that original moral sense which enables one to discern by reason the good and the bad. It is universal and immutable and determines the basis of the duties and fundamental rights of the person as well as those of the human community and civil law." (*Catechism*, 416).

forms of life.”¹⁹⁵ In an interesting though not unsurprising move, Finnis also equates civil law more explicitly with morality and decency, by suggesting that laws governing sexuality maintain “the moral-cultural-educational environment” of the state’s “decent citizens.”¹⁹⁶ As Finnis moves more specifically to the topic of homosexual sexual activity itself, the specifically anti-homosexual views of New Natural Law Theory become increasingly clear.

Finnis continues: “Societies [...] draw a distinction between behavior found merely (perhaps extremely) offensive (such as eating excrement), and behavior to be repudiated as destructive of human character and relationships.”¹⁹⁷ Finnis then gives an example of behavior that he believes belongs to the second category; that is, behavior more offensive than eating excrement:

Copulation of humans with animals is repudiated because it treats human sexual activity and satisfaction as something appropriately sought in a manner as divorced from the actualizing of an intelligible common good as is the instinctive coupling of beasts – and so treats human bodily life, in one of its most intense activities, as appropriately lived as merely animal.¹⁹⁸

Here, Finnis compares homosexual sexual activity with bestiality/or with copulation between animals.

Since Finnis serves as one of the primary representatives of New Natural Law Theory, it is accurate to assert that NNL Theory quite literally dehumanizes homosexuality

¹⁹⁵ Finnis, 316.

¹⁹⁶ Finnis, 316-317.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 318.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

inclined persons to an unprecedented degree within Catholic discourse by rejecting homosexuality as a category, and referring to homosexual sex acts as on par with bestiality and more offensive than eating excrement. Finnis's apparent interest in excrement is no doubt symptomatic of homophobically charged fascinations with anality. Finnis continues in this vein: "The deliberate genital coupling of persons of the same sex is repudiated for a very similar reason" as a human copulating with an animal.¹⁹⁹ "It is not simply that it is sterile and disposes the participants to an abdication of responsibility for the future of humankind. Nor is it simply that it cannot *really* actualize the mutual devotion which some homosexual persons hope to manifest and experience by it."²⁰⁰ The real problem, according to Finnis, is that homosexual sexual activity "is deeply hostile to the self-understanding of those members of the community who are willing to commit themselves to real marriage."²⁰¹ A number of subtler issues are at stake here in addition to Finnis's overt assertion that homosexuality is more offensive than eating excrement. Note that Finnis refers to heterosexual marriage as the only "real" form of marriage. This rhetoric is not unprecedented, but it warrants closer analysis.

The reference to heterosexual marriage as "real" marriage serves not only to delegitimize but also to erase same-sex romantic and sexual unions. This is significant because, according to the official Catholic position on homosexuality (as opposed to NNLT), homosexual persons are called to abstain from sexual activity, but are welcome

¹⁹⁹ Finnis, 319.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, original emphasis.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*.

in the Catholic Church under the condition that they do so. In his 1986 letter, Ratzinger states:

It is deplorable that homosexual persons have been and are the object of violent malice in speech or in action. Such treatment deserves condemnation from the Church's pastors wherever it occurs. It reveals a kind of disregard for others which endangers the most fundamental principles of a healthy society. The intrinsic dignity of each person must always be respected in word, in action and in law.²⁰²

Certainly, further consideration as to whether the Church's official position on homosexuality lives up to Ratzinger's apparent condemnation of homophobia in the above quotation is warranted. However, it is even more strikingly apparent from Finnis's article that NNLT more actively operates a campaign that singles out same-sex attracted persons than does the Magisterium.

Finnis continues, "Now, as I have said before, 'homosexual orientation,' in one of the two main senses of that highly equivocal term, is precisely the deliberate willingness to promote and engage in homosexual acts – the state of mind, will, and character whose self-interpretation came to be expressed in the deplorable but helpfully revealing name 'gay.'"²⁰³ Here, again, is a common traditionalist approach to homosexuality, one which ignores the totality of the homosexual person and focuses instead on the homosexual act.²⁰⁴ The traditionalist aversion towards using colloquialisms such as "gay" is also not unique to Finnis. As mentioned previously, Francis was widely praised for being the first pontiff publicly to use the colloquialism "gay" in 2013, although his remarks were

²⁰² Ratzinger, 10.

²⁰³ Finnis, 319.

²⁰⁴ Fozard Weaver.

revealed to be somewhat sensationalized, when taken in their proper context.²⁰⁵ Even so, it is accurate that in comparison, many traditionalist Catholic approaches to homosexuality reject the term “gay” because it connotes an identity or membership in a group, or what Finnis refers to as an “ideology” or a “lifestyle.”²⁰⁶ Indeed, Finnis consistently uses quotations around the term “homosexual orientation” and at one point employs the term “homosexualist lifestyle.”²⁰⁷

Finnis’s rhetoric resonates with traditionalist rhetoric in general that considers the “gay lobby,” “gay lifestyle,”/or “homosexualist ideology” as a threat to traditional (or what Finnis refers to as “real”) marriage and family. Considering the negativity with which Finnis treats homosexuality, the fact that NNLT often gets conflated with institutional Church teachings on sexual ethics is problematic. Since New Natural Law theorists purport themselves to speak on behalf of the institutional Church (as seen by May et al’s *Defense* of institutional Catholic sexual ethics, for example), the Church’s complicity in homophobia, sexism, and transphobia into question. In addition to purporting its own systemically exclusionary sexual ethic, the Church refuses to

²⁰⁵ The reporter asked about a “gay lobby” in the Vatican, so perhaps Francis should be praised for expressing hesitation towards judging gay clergy. However, his use of the term “gay” is taken out of context unless one knows the reporter used the term first. In addition, because Catholic clergy are expected to be celibate, as are same-sex oriented people, he was also not deviating from institutional sexual ethics in a manner as progressive as was also suggested by some sympathetic readings of his comments. Francis, “Press Conference of Pope Francis During the Return Flight,” *Apostolic Journey to Rio de Janeiro on the Occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day*, July 2013, accessed March 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130728_gmg-conferenza-stampa.html.

²⁰⁶ Finnis, 319-320.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 324.

denounce an ideology that is even more extremely epistemically violent, and one that purports to represent the Catholic Church.

Finnis continues in a biologically and legally deterministic vein, asserting, “All who accept that homosexual acts can be a humanly appropriate use of sexual capacities must, if consistent, regard sexual capacities, organs and acts as instruments for gratifying the individual ‘selves’ who have them.”²⁰⁸ The use of quotation marks around the term “selves,” suggests that people who engage in sexual activities that deviate from T/NNLT’s perceived laws of nature are not fully formed human selves. While a traditionalist perceives the sex acts in question to be dehumanizing, one can make the same argument with regard to the polemical rhetoric in Finnis’s paper, which is demonstrative of NNLT proper. T/NNLT-based sexual ethics makes *a priori* assumptions about the purpose of sexual functions, the primary of which are procreative and unitive, all of which are conjugal, and none of which are supposed to be self-serving. Any sex act that does not allow for procreation is self-serving because it is not productive.²⁰⁹ Moreover, Finnis asserts, “Such an acceptance” of homosexual acts is “judged to be an active threat to the stability of existing and future marriages; it makes nonsense, for example, of the view that adultery is per se [...] inconsistent with conjugal love.”²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Finnis, 319.

²⁰⁹ Although the scope of this paper does not allow further exploration of this topic, the condemnation of acts that are deemed unproductive is itself a complex and fascinating topic and begs questions as to the influence of neoliberalism on natural law (though natural law certainly predates capitalism and neoliberalism) as well as ableist implications of such a position, to name only two possible implications (Salzman and Lawler; Finnis; May et al).

²¹⁰ Finnis, 319.

These assertions are informative for a few reasons. Though the rhetoric of same-sex rights imposing a threat on “traditional” familial and marital values is familiar, a close reading of natural law and especially NNLT makes it clearer how and why some so-called “traditionalists” make these leaps. Because natural law is, by nature, simultaneously immutable and hierarchical, natural law presupposes that humans are fixed at the top of the natural law hierarchy. Due to the infusion of complementarity with natural law and human dignity, (hetero)sexism becomes infused into this hierarchy as well. Since, according to Thomistic Natural Law Theory, the primary tenet of natural law is to do good and avoid evil, traditionalists posit that disruptions to traditionally gendered marital and familial structures quite literally invite evil into the world.

Note also that Finnis, a New Natural Law theorist amongst the more radically conservative of the traditionalists, is critical of same-sex inclusive sexual ethics because he believes it provides a potential apologetic for acts such as adultery. At the same time, Salzman and Lawler, revisionists, criticize NNLT approaches to sexual ethics because their overly biologically/physically-oriented ethic, which emphasizes the conjugal act to the neglect of other aspects, may possibly open the door to such acts as spousal rape. In either case, the problem seems to arise from natural law’s insistence upon an *a priori* essence to human nature, or what Judith Butler refers to as a “metaphysics of substance.”²¹¹ The institutional Church, NNL theorists and other traditionalist approaches to sexual ethics presuppose that there is not only an essential substance to human beings, but also an essential purpose (teleology) and duty (deontology). Per the Church’s concept

²¹¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 13.

of natural law *and* human dignity, that humans were made in the image of God dictates gender complementarity as well as how human beings are supposed to enact their sexuality. In short, natural law, human dignity, and traditional sexual ethics all simultaneously reinscribe each other and reinforce an extremely well-fortified gender binarism.

Human Dignity

Continuing with traditionalist approaches to natural law theory, it becomes readily apparent between Finnis’s “Law, Morality, and ‘Sexual Orientation’” and Salzman’s and Lawler’s secondary analysis that NNLT grounds human dignity not only in gender and genital complementarity, as does the institutional Church, but more specifically in the “basic good” of marriage. The negative ramifications of the resurgence in new natural law and the resulting and perhaps even more extreme emphasis on conjugal procreation are diverse and extensive. To illustrate this point, it is worthwhile to revisit the *Catechism*’s exposition on human dignity, which the Church describes as “rooted in [the human person’s] creation in the image and likeness of God.”²¹² How and why human dignity becomes so immediately tied to sex-gender – so written because the Church aligns these categories – occurs because the Church envisions man *and* woman as essentially, *not* incidentally, created in the image of God.

²¹² *Catechism*, 358.

The institutional Church likewise envisions the creation of Adam and Eve as a complementary, procreative, and nuptial event. At the same time, the *Catechism* defines natural law as follows:

The natural law which is inscribed by the Creator on the heart of every person consists in a participation in the wisdom and the goodness of God. It expresses that original moral sense which enables one to discern by reason the good and the bad. It is universal and immutable and determines the basis of the duties and fundamental rights of the person as well as those of the human community and civil law.²¹³

Note that the Church includes “fundamental rights” as comprising the meaning of natural law. For this reason, natural law - which exists as a discipline that exceeds Catholic discourse - has been influential in human rights discourse.²¹⁴ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for example, marked a concerted attempt to assert inalienable, fundamental human rights to which not only individuals but sovereign nations could agree on a global scale.²¹⁵ The influence of natural law on human rights discourse is clear and has been noted by various scholars.²¹⁶ Although the scope of this chapter does not allow a more extensive treatment of this issue here, the influence of natural law on human rights discourse calls into question whether human rights discourse itself should be re-envisioned in ways that reject ontological essentialisms about the nature of human beings. For the purposes of this chapter, it is worth noting that despite some overlap,

²¹³ Ibid, 416.

²¹⁴ Curran and Griffin, 328-346.

²¹⁵ The protections that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights afforded/or excluded individuals on the basis of sex, gender, and sexuality, for example, warrants further inquiry, but is beyond the scope of this study.

²¹⁶ Ibid, *Nature as Reason*.

traditionalist sexual ethicists and gender and sexual justice advocates have largely disagreed over the issues of human rights and human dignity.

Natural law appears influential in some human rights discourse, namely the fact that the assertion of fundamental rights and treatment of human persons presupposes an inherent human value, integrity, or dignity. For those who assert that equal protections of gender variant and same-sex attracted persons under the law is a fundamental human right, borrowing from the language of the Church, they might assert that such protections are fundamental to their human dignity.²¹⁷

The Church and traditionalist sexual ethicists have consistently rejected this argument. As previously mentioned, the Magisterium goes as far as to support civil laws that uphold its understanding of natural law, as does New Natural Law Theory, both of which, as stated previously, possess elements of biological as well as legal determinism. New Natural Law Theory, as evidenced by Finnis's "Law, Morality, and 'Sexual Orientation,'" rejects a human rights-based argument that supports sexual and gender justice, and like the institutional Church, supports laws that discourage same-sex sexual activity, deeming such sanctions a matter of "public morality."²¹⁸

Finnis states, "The state laws and state policies which I have outlined are intended to discourage decisions which are thus deliberately oriented towards homosexual conduct and are manifested in public ways."²¹⁹ One such law he cites which was in place at the

²¹⁷ Salzman and Lawler, 110-111.

²¹⁸ Finnis, 315.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

time of his article's publication (1994) included a law in England that had different ages of consent for heterosexual and homosexual activity, sixteen and twenty one respectively.²²⁰ Finnis further rejects human rights-based protections on the basis of sexual orientation.²²¹

Rejection of protections on this basis is certainly not unique to Finnis or New Natural Law theorists. As cited above, in of his statements on ideological colonization, Pope Francis not entirely dissimilarly to Finnis states, "Somewhat paradoxically, there is a risk that, in the very name of human rights, we will see the rise of modern forms of ideological colonization," no doubt alluding at least in part to sexual and gender justice movements.²²² Although rejections of human rights-based protections for queer and trans people exist outside of NNLT and even outside of Christian ethics, it is worthwhile to examine Finnis's NNLT-based reasoning further. He states:

Particularly as used by promoters of 'gay rights,'" the phrase "'sexual orientation' [...] ambiguously assimilates two things[...]: (I) a psychological or psychosomatic disposition inwardly orienting one *towards* homosexual activity; (II) the deliberate decision so to orient one's public *behavior* as to express or *manifest* one's active interest in and endorsement of homosexual *conduct* and/or forms of life which presumptively involve such conduct."²²³

Finnis further critiques "gay rights" movements – to which her refers using quotation marks – for interpreting the phrase sexual orientation, as used in legal discourse, as

²²⁰ Sexual Offenses Act 1967, Chapter 60, accessed May 2020, http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/60/pdfs/ukpga_19670060_en.pdf

²²¹ Or what for the purposes of this research might more accurately be referred to as sexual identity or sexuality.

²²² Address to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See for the Traditional Exchange of New Year Greetings.

²²³ Finnis, 317, original emphasis.

“extending full legal protection to *public* activities intended specifically to promote, procure and facilitate homosexual *conduct*.”²²⁴ Here, Finnis seems to conflate public protections with promoting homosexual conduct; such rhetorical concerns surrounding the gay agenda are extremely effective in excluding queer and trans people from public spaces.

Per Pope Francis’s language, in comparison, such protections amount to ideological colonization, as he has similarly criticized human rights discourse that advocates gender and sexual justice, and the Church as a whole supports civic laws that limit rights for queer and trans people.

Finnis likewise advocates relocating homosexually inclined persons to the private sphere public-private:

It is also widely observed that laws or proposed laws outlawing ‘discrimination based on sexual orientation’ are always interpreted by ‘gay rights’ movements as going far beyond discrimination based merely on A’s belief that B is sexually attracted to persons of the same sex. Instead (it is observed), ‘gay rights’ movements interpret the phrase as extending full legal protection to *public* activities intended to promote, procure, and facilitate homosexual *conduct*.²²⁵

According to Finnis, public protections of same-sex attracted people amounts to promotion of a “homosexualist” lifestyle; human rights-based protections of queer and trans people amounts to ideological colonization. Because natural law also aligns civil law with morality, Finnis as well as the institutional Church, in this case, approve of the application of not only moral and existential but also legal sanctions against homosexual and gender variant activity and expression. The Church’s concept of human dignity

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Finnis, 317, original emphasis.

proper similarly traverses all these categories. This calls into question the implications of Catholic teachings on human dignity proper.

It is significant that one of the institutional Church's foremost expositions on human dignity deals explicitly with human rights, a discourse which as illuminated by Finnis's piece, is not only socially but also politically significant. Pope Paul VI issued *Dignitatis Humanae* in 1965, in the final days of Vatican II. This document is also significant because it is demonstrative of the Church's reflexive relationship with contemporary social movements since the late nineteenth century. The papal encyclical on human dignity is specifically a declaration of religious freedom, which was one of the social concerns addressed during Vatican II. The argument in the encyclical is grounded in natural law, once again highlighting the close relationship between natural law, human dignity, and human rights discourse. *Dignitatis Humanae* commences with the following statement:

A sense of the dignity of the human person has been impressing itself more and more deeply on the consciousness of contemporary man, and the demand is increasingly made that men should act on their own judgment, enjoying and making use of a responsible freedom, not driven by coercion but motivated by a sense of duty. The demand is likewise made that constitutional limits should be set to the powers of government.[...] This demand for freedom in human society chiefly regards the quest for the values proper to the human spirit.²²⁶

The document also makes several claims explicitly rooted in natural law, for example: "It is in accordance with their dignity as persons-that is, beings endowed with reason and free will and therefore privileged to bear personal responsibility-that all men should be at

²²⁶ Paul VI, *Dignitatis Humanae*, December 1965, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html, 1.

once impelled by nature and also bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth.”²²⁷ Bearing these interpretations of human dignity and natural law in mind, the Church asserts unequivocally that ‘the human person has a right to religious freedom’ in terms of natural as well as civil law.

The findings of *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965) stood in stark contrast with the 1968 *Humanae Vitae*, which reaffirmed the Church’s ban on contraception, another major topic of debate during Vatican II. Part of this discrepancy is due to the fact that for the institutional Church and other traditional ethicists, issues such as women’s access to birth control is not (solely) an issue of social justice, per se. Historically, the Church has envisioned matters pertaining to life and sexuality as issues of bioethics and sexual ethics, respectively - it would seem, due in large part to T/NNLT. Its beliefs surrounding the meanings of these categories are, by definition, therefore, relatively static. This sharp distinction between human dignity and social justice as compared to issues pertaining to life and sexuality specifically continues to have far-reaching effects.

Because of this hard distinction between sexual expression and human dignity, from the perspective of natural law-based moral theology (of which bioethics and sexual ethics are both subsets), queer and trans expressions *detract* from human dignity rather than add to it. And, on a more fundamental level, these expressions detract from the overall good in the world rather than adding to it. This is likely a primary reason that natural law theorists feel compelled to govern the “public morality” of queer and trans people. From the perspective of contemporary sexual and gender justice movements,

²²⁷ DH, 2.

natural law serves as crucial barrier to queer and trans participation in the Catholic Church and in public spaces.

Chapter 3: Queer, Sex, and Catholicism: Modernity and its Effects on Social Justice and Moral Theology

This chapter analyzes the mutual influence between the development of contemporary social movements, particularly those situated in the U.S., and the development of institutional Catholic social doctrine.²²⁸ Sex, gender, and sexuality within Catholic studies are most commonly envisaged primarily, though not exclusively, within the realm of ethics. This chapter draws on bodies of work that envision sex, gender, and sexuality as inherently and primarily relevant to Catholic social thought . This focus accomplishes two interrelated ends. First, I seek to acknowledge the ways that sex, gender, and sexuality are socially constructed. The social constructions of these categories have both positive and negative potentials. Institutionally, the Church has capitalized on fields of discourse that pathologize non-normative genders and sexualities. The Church achieves this in large part by using natural law, an inherently static discourse, to dictate the parameters and limitations of what does and does not constitute fields such as sexual ethics, social doctrine, and human dignity. This is especially evident with the Church’s treatment of homosexuality as a disorder.

Secondly, the Church’s position towards sex, gender, and sexuality is demonstrative of a larger rejection of sexual and gender justice movements. This is apparent from the historical divergence between Catholic sexual ethics and social justice doctrine. Despite the Church’s social justice platform, which purports to seek protections

²²⁸ I intentionally use this term somewhat loosely here; I am broadly referring to paradigmatic shifts in thought (whether perceived or actual) that the Church was responding to in foundational moments during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Church typically refers to these discrete events under umbrella terms such as modernity or “signs of the times” (Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, December 1965, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html).

for society's most vulnerable members, the Vatican has categorically rejected platforms that frame people of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities as members of minoritized – and therefore socially prioritized - groups.

I focus on “official” social doctrine as defined by the Magisterium in order to examine not only what the Vatican accentuates in its social teaching and its sexual ethics but also to explore what it omits, particularly in the former category. The Magisterium ascribes the development of social doctrine as a systematic category to Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (RN: 1891), while also asserting that the Church's platform for social justice predates this event.²²⁹ Similarly, in this chapter I cast a slightly wider net that examines sociopolitical moments leading up to the development of official Catholic social doctrine. I begin my analysis with the events immediately prior to the First Vatican Council (1869-1870), as the Church and much contemporary analysis reads Vatican I as paradigmatically interrelated with modernization.²³⁰ These events include the European Revolutions of 1848, which occurred contemporaneously with the papacy of Pius IX (1846-1878), who went on to convene Vatican I.²³¹

The analysis that follows takes seriously the charge that like many systems of modernity, contemporary sexual and gender justice movements, many of which developed in the U.S. and elsewhere in the Global North and West, perpetuate systems of colonial oppression, which is one of the reasons for the supremacy of U.S. sexual and

²²⁹ Himes.

²³⁰ Henry Edward Manning, *The Vatican Council and its Definitions: A Pastoral Letter to the Clergy* (New York: D & J Sadlier, 1871).

²³¹ *The Pope Who Would Be King*.

gender justice discourse(s). I attempt to acknowledge this reality while also calling into question the institutional Church's continued and systematic rejection of social movements that foreground people of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities.

The social setting in Europe and its settler colonies was significant in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, as Europe and later the U.S. had a prominent hand, perhaps not always positively so, in setting the trajectories for many contemporary social movements related to gender and sexual justice that began in the late nineteenth century. Early women's rights movements, sometimes retrospectively referred to collectively as first wave feminism, took root roughly contemporaneously with the election of Pope Pius IX and the Revolutions of 1848. Cathryn Bailey suggests, "The first wave in the United States is often seen as having begun with the Seneca Falls Conference of 1848 and ending with the passage of women's suffrage in 1920."²³²

Many of these events might be looked at as contributing to the perceived threats of modernity to which the Church began to react in the latter half of the nineteenth century and onward.²³³ These events also coincided with the Franco-Prussian War, at which time Napoleon III, the unconstitutional and final monarch of France, was captured and exiled. Napoleon III was originally legally elected the first President of France during

²³² Bailey.

²³³ Bailey and other thinkers stress the importance of complicating narratives surrounding the waves of feminism and other social movements, particularly those that developed in Europe and its settler colonies. Some of these histories have been written in ways that have erased the contributions of women of color and other nondominant people, for example. Since my method is primarily genealogical, tracing the perceived developments of these events is still useful, as I am more interested in how and why these histories have been written – and questioning them when necessary – than their overall accuracies.

the Revolutions of 1848, which are often regarded as representing a paradigmatic shift towards nation-state-based authority throughout much of Europe.²³⁴ Although Napoleon III was regarded as an advocate for popular sovereignty, he also came to the aid of Pius IX and defended the Papal States from annexation by Italy during this time.²³⁵

Another foundational event that occurred contemporaneously during this time period was the invention of homosexuality and its use in European psychology and sexology.²³⁶ The term first came into use in German in 1869, the same year that Vatican II was convened.²³⁷ The invention (and subsequent pathologization) of homosexuality, as well as the development of sexology in the nineteenth century were socially and epistemologically significant.. In this chapter, I conduct an intentionally institutional analysis of these strategically selected afore-mentioned events, in order to illuminate the contextual power dynamics at stake. In popular consciousness, the development of concepts such as sexual orientation might also be considered a marker of modernization – whether legitimately or problematically so – and was likely also influential in post-Vatican I Catholic thought and praxis. As this chapter outlines, the Church’s reaction to social movements involving sexual and gender justice movements seems to diverge from other contemporary social movements essentially from the outset. Further examination of these movements illuminates these disparities.

²³⁴ Pierre Milza, *Napoléon III* (Paris: Perrin, 2004).

²³⁵ *The Pope Who Would Be King*.

²³⁶ It is worth pointing out that the concept of sexual orientation – including heterosexuality - did not exist at all before the invention of homosexuality.

²³⁷ Goss; Greenberg.

The First Vatican Council: Institutional Responses to “Modernity” (And Other Signs of the Times?)

Pope Pius IX convened the First Vatican Council from 1869-1870. The first of only two councils of its kind to date, like its ostensibly more famous successor, the First Vatican Council was marked by changing social trends of the time. Vatican I can largely be understood as responding to European ideals of enlightenment, liberalism, and modernization, to name only a few major (Western) shifts in thought occurring at the time.²³⁸ Much of the agenda during the Council centered around defining the relationship between “scientific history and the Catholic rule of faith,” as well as concerns towards the Church of England and other non-Catholic entities.²³⁹ One of the most famous doctrines stemming from Vatican I was the official institution of papal infallibility, which asserted that the Pope was free from the possibility of error when establishing “doctrine of faith and morals.”²⁴⁰ *The Vatican Council and its Definitions* (1871) explains papal infallibility:

[The First Vatican Council] defines the infallible doctrinal authority of the Roman Pontiff as the supreme teacher of all Christians. [...] The definition then affirms ‘that the Roman Pontiff, [...] when in the office of Pastor and Doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the Universal Church, [...] is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed for defining doctrine, regarding faith and morals. And that therefore

²³⁸ Hans Küng, *Christianity: Essence, History, and Future* (New York: Continuum, 1996), 744.

²³⁹ Manning, 120-145.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 65.

such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church.’²⁴¹

As the above quotation makes clear, the official institution of papal infallibility established three primary ends. First, note that the Council made sure to specify that infallibility rested in the authority of the Pope alone, as opposed to the entire body of the Magisterium. This served to limit the power of lower ranking clergy, and secondly, to limit the power of civil and state authority in surrounding Europe. Thirdly, infallibility doctrine represented a paradigmatic shift in which Church leadership deliberately reconsolidated its authority in light of the afore-mentioned “modern” social trends.

The verbiage solidifying papal primacy - that is, the authority of the pope, not just his infallibility with regard to doctrine – specifically, as opposed to magisterial supremacy in general, was a point of contention during the First Vatican Council. A small but substantial minority of the members of the Council thought infallibility should be conferred on the entire episcopate, giving other members of the Magisterium more authority.²⁴² The language placing infallibility solely upon the shoulders of the Pope is also thought to have been an attempt to thwart a movement called Gallicanism. Originating in France in the seventeenth century, Gallicanism rejected ultramontanism

²⁴¹ Ibid, 62-63.

²⁴² Richard Costigan notes that in the final days of Vatican I (July 1870), 88 of 601 officials voting on infallibility doctrine dissented with the language that specified that this authority came not from the Church but from the Pope (Richard Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility: A Study in the Background of Vatican I* [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005], 1).

(papal supremacy) and attempted to assert the authority of state and civil French authority as well as the authority of locally appointed clergy.²⁴³

Papal infallibility doctrine therefore can be seen as a direct attempt to limit the powers of lower ranking clergy – particularly those seeking to expand the authority of civic and state power. That endowing aptly named Roman Pontiff, as the original language dictates, with infallibility attempted to situate the Pope as a kinglike figure seems a valid comparison considering the social and political landscape in France, Italy, and elsewhere at the time, where the powers of church and state were still deeply intertwined. Indeed, common narratives have mythologized the separation of church and state and the stripping of divine power of European monarchs is commonly perceived as a paradigmatic marker of modernity.²⁴⁴

Significantly, Vatican I ended the same year that the Papal States fell. From the mid-eighth century until 1870, the Pope was the sovereign ruler of several territories in Italy. Vatican City remains a token of these Papal States today. David Kertzer remarks on the significance of the Pius IX's papacy and the rise and fall of the Papal States:

[Pius IX] would be the last of the pope-kings, a dual role central to church doctrine and a pillar of Europe's political order for a thousand years. The demise of the pope's kingdom on earth would mark a pivotal moment in the transformation of Europe, a revolution begun more than a century earlier with the spread of radical notions of consent of the governed and separation of church and state.[...] The revolutions that swept Europe in 1848 marked the beginning of the end for the aristocratic regimes that had ruled much of the continent for centuries.

²⁴³ Costigan.

²⁴⁴ *The Pope Who Would Be King*.

[...] Nowhere were these epochal changes more dramatic than in Rome, the Eternal City, capital of the Papal States.²⁴⁵

Vatican I as a whole and the institution of papal infallibility in particular, read in conjunction with these contemporaneous events, can most immediately be viewed as a final effort on the part of Pius IX to preserve not only his papal but also his temporal authority in the wake of modernization. Despite the controversy surrounding the language of the decree, infallibility doctrine might also secondarily be read as synecdoche for the larger Magisterium, which was also about to lose considerable social and political authority. Joseph Palacios remarks:

Ironically, [Vatican I's] major achievement, the doctrine of the infallibility of the pope, became a watershed modern event: it began a slow process of internationalization and politicization of the Church and the papacy, as well as a process of making the Church into a modern political state. As a result of Vatican I, the popes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have increasingly emphasized papal primacy and centralized church functions in the Vatican state. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, the papacy under John Paul II and then Benedict XVI had become not only the central image of the Catholic Church but also an international social and political actor in itself.²⁴⁶

This legacy continues under Pope Francis. Since the leadership of Pius IX in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, the Vatican has become increasingly adept at reconsolidating its authority in order to acclimate to modernity and postmodernity.

The First Vatican Council: The *Sitz im Leben* in Europe and its Settler Colonies

Vatican I and the ensuing years under Pius IX (1846-1878) served as the preamble to the development of Catholic social teaching, which largely developed as a

²⁴⁵ *The Pope Who Would Be King*, 4.

²⁴⁶ Palacios, 24.

result of the rise of modernity and subsequent contemporary social movements. Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) later applied the term “social doctrine” to describe the development of the latter as a discrete theological category when Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903), Pius IX’s successor, issued the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (new things) in 1891.²⁴⁷ Of course, the Church and secondary commentators on Catholic social teaching view the Church’s commitment to social justice as predating this event. Himes et al note that Pope Leo issued a number of encyclicals prior to *Rerum Novarum* that concerned socio-political topics.²⁴⁸ Even so, *Rerum Novarum* is widely regarded as the paradigmatic shift that marked a more concentrated focus on the modern category of “social justice.”

Conceived more broadly, Leo XIII was likely operating in succession with moves Pius IX had made to solidify papal authority in the wake of modernity. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, one common theme throughout Catholic social teaching is to re-solidify institutional and specifically papal authority.²⁴⁹ The Vatican has since compiled *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, released in 2005.²⁵⁰ The *Compendium* is “written as a systematic moral theology of all previous encyclicals, congregational documents, and papal statements related to the social doctrine.”²⁵¹ Notably, although the Vatican advertises the *Compendium* as an anthology of Catholic social doctrine proper without any new additions, it reflects Catholic social doctrine

²⁴⁷ Himes et al, 3.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ *Social Doctrine of the Church*.

²⁵¹ Palacios, 35.

“particularly as articulated by John Paul II and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith under the leadership of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.”²⁵² Additionally, although they postdate the publication of the *Compendium*, Benedict XVI (previously Ratzinger)’s *Caritas in Veritate* and Francis’s *Laudato Si’* are also regarded as social doctrine.²⁵³

There is no universal agreement amongst secondary experts as to what constitutes the vast body of Catholic social doctrine, as opposed to social teaching, social thought, and social ethics.²⁵⁴ This is due, in part, to the Church’s historical reliance on multiple sources of authority, including, but not limited to scripture, tradition, and hierarchy. To complicate matters further, these distinctions become even more blurred when considering institutional social doctrine, as compared to the ways other thinkers designate official doctrine as social teaching, as compared to broader social thought and ethics with which a variety of theologians engage. For these reasons, I begin the survey of official doctrine that follows with the content included in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, while supplementing my research with secondary analyses from Palacios’s *The Catholic Social Imagination* and Himes et al.’s *Modern Social Catholic Teaching*. Both texts provide useful analytical frameworks for understanding Catholic social doctrine proper, and flesh out the question as to what gets included and excluded in the construction of social doctrine.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Himes et al.

²⁵⁴ Himes, 3.

Like Vatican I, the official advent of Vatican social doctrine can be read in tandem with the evolving social milieu in surrounding Europe in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Its solidification in 2005, just before Cardinal Ratzinger took over the papacy as Benedict the XVI is also noteworthy, as this demonstrates an institutional legacy and also indicates that the *Compendium* was likely influenced by Ratzinger's/Benedict's socially conservative policies. Richard Gaillardetz remarks:

[W]hen the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the rise of modern science, the emergence of nationalism, and the age of reason, the medieval synthesis of church and society was lost, replaced in some church spheres by suspicion and animosities. The Catholic Church's stance toward the world moved from medieval Christendom's confident if often combative collaboration with the temporal social order to a growing siege mentality.²⁵⁵

Himes similarly notes the impact of modernization on the advent of social doctrine, stating, "The designation of *modern* [social] teaching is a customary way of dating those teachings that begin with the promulgation of *Rerum novarum* in 1891 by Leo XIII. [...] Without doubt, it was the 1891 encyclical that inspired a deeper and broader commitment by church members to social questions of the time."²⁵⁶ The axiomatic notion that the nation-state necessarily arose from modernity, specifically fueled by the perceived need for a separation of church and state continues to inform popular narratives. Thus, whether real or imagined, these events - and more importantly, the persistence of their narratives - impact Catholic social doctrine and broader contemporary social movements today.

Social doctrine developed with the publication of *Rerum Novarum*, which addressed what

²⁵⁵ Richard R. Gaillardetz, "The Ecclesiological Foundations of Modern Catholic Social Teaching" in Kenneth Himes, ed. *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2018), 76.

²⁵⁶ Himes, 3, original emphasis.

the Church now perceives as the paradigmatically modern problems of industrialization and globalization.²⁵⁷

Returning to the development of social doctrine, according to Palacios, “The social justice principles of *Rerum Novarum* have remained the basis for the ongoing construction of the teaching and the primary logic of the social theology. They are rooted in a natural law understanding of the family as the first societal organism.”²⁵⁸ Palacios’s observation offers insight as to why Church teachings on sexual ethics must be understood in tandem with natural law (and the role of the family in particular) as well as social justice.

RN specifically addresses the “rights and duties of capital and labor” in light of industrialization.²⁵⁹ The social encyclical defends the working class and condemns exploitive conditions under “economic liberalism and its defense of capitalism,” while also criticizing socialism.²⁶⁰ The encyclical advocates for the right to fair wages, to unionize, and set limits to work schedules.²⁶¹ As Palacios explains in his treatment of Catholic social justice and relations between Mexico and the U.S., RN set forth principles

²⁵⁷ The *Social Compendium* makes references to labor and “New Things” (the English translation for RN) as dealing with matters related to industrialization, though the original text does not use phrases such as modern(ity), globalization, or industrialization. Even so, the Church seems to have developed this understanding retroactively.

²⁵⁸ Palacios, 35.

²⁵⁹ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum: Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on Capital and Labor*, May 1891, accessed December 2019, http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html, introduction.

²⁶⁰ Palacios, 43.

²⁶¹ *Rerum Novarum*, 5, 49, 39.

of “common good, association, participation, workers’ right to organize, just wage as family support, and the dignity of work,” policies which Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers, for example, later emulated.²⁶²

The precedents that RN introduced are significant for at least three reasons. First, RN established the institutional Church’s vested interest in the plight of *certain* marginalized populations (in this case, exploited workers). Second, although this research focuses primarily on the Vatican’s relatively static reaction to sexual and gender justice movements, many Catholics, both lay and clergy, have historically attempted to engage in rich and dynamic ways with Catholic social justice and teaching. Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta and the UFW’s adaptation of Catholic social justice represents one such dynamic inflection of Catholic social teaching. Thirdly, despite some of the ways in which not only lay Catholic people but the institutional Church has used Church doctrine to defend the marginalized, lay Catholic social teaching has largely developed divergently with institutional sexual ethics. On the whole, the Church has rejected claims that attempt to ground sexual ethics in social justice on behalf of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities. This is largely due to the relationship between social doctrine and the Church’s understanding of the role of a traditionally gendered, hetero-nuclear family.

Palacios further observes a larger pattern through which Catholic social doctrine can be read, suggesting, “Catholic social justice teaching could be characterized as having a two-step social construction of negative reaction to social problems and positive

²⁶² Palacios, 83.

declaration of a new teaching: (1) reactive to social events of the time and (2) declaratory of the Church's understanding of the events.”²⁶³ Palacios’s model, in its simplicity, is useful for investigating the ways in which the Church has reacted to various social movements since modernity.

That Catholic social doctrine might be thought of as negatively constructed is worth noting, especially considering the analogies that modern social doctrine uses to envisage society, which for the Church, hinges upon normative views of the family. Moreover, according Catholic social justice logic, “As an organic body, society can be viewed as healthy or sick. The principles established in *Rerum Novarum* were seen as remedies to assist a body that had become chronically ill.”²⁶⁴ The implications of this metaphor are harmful for multiple minoritized groups. From a disability justice perspective, for example, likening oppression and societal problems to chronic illness reads as overtly ableist. In addition, the Church’s view of the family relies on cis-hetero-genital-normative complementarity. In any case, the centrality of the family as the bedrock for society informing Catholic social justice in combination with the Church’s vision of social problems as societal ills starts to answer the question as to why the Church remains unyielding in its sexual ethic.

Though the scope of this chapter does not allow an in-depth treatment of each statement comprising the entire corpus of official social doctrine, they are worth summarizing here as a means of parsing out which issues the Church addresses, which it

²⁶³ Palacios, 26.

²⁶⁴ Palacios, 36.

denounces, and which it ignores in its body of social doctrine. The next major social doctrine to follow *Rerum Novarum* was Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno*, issued in 1931, on the fortieth anniversary of the first social encyclical. QA was also a reaction to the events of World War I and included a condemnation of fascism.²⁶⁵ This is somewhat ironic, given the institutional Church has also been implicated in supporting later European fascist regimes.²⁶⁶

The *Compendium* then mentions Pius XI's encyclicals *Non Abbiamo Bisogno* (We Do Not Need: 1931) and *Mit Brennender Sorge* (With Burning Concern: 1937), which addressed fascism in Italy and Europe, respectively.²⁶⁷ Pius XI also wrote *Divini Redemptoris* (Divine Redeemer) in 1937, which criticized atheism and Communism.²⁶⁸ Though Pius XII did not produce any social encyclicals or other official statements, the *Compendium* includes Pius XII's Christmas radio messages, which reflected on social issues pertaining to World War II.²⁶⁹ Then, in 1961, John XXIII (the Pope who convened the Second Vatican Council) issued *Mater et Magistra* (Mother and Teacher: 1961),

²⁶⁵ Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, May 1931, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html; *Compendium*, 41.

²⁶⁶ Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); David Kertzer, *The Pope Against the Jews: the Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001); John Pollard, *Catholicism in Modern Italy: Religion, Society and Politics Since 1861* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

²⁶⁷ Note that unlike the other encyclicals, titled and written in Latin, these are written in Italian and German, and addressed to Italy and Germany respectively (Pius XI, *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*, June 1931, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_29061931_non-abbiamo-bisogno.html; *Compendium*, 41; Pius XI, *Mit Brennender Sorge*, March 1937, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_14031937_mit-brennender-sorge.html; *Compendium*, 42).

²⁶⁸ Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, March 1937, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19370319_divini-redemptoris.html; *Compendium*, 42.

²⁶⁹ *Compendium*, 42.

which criticized communism and addressed the relationship between settlers and colonized peoples in Latin America.²⁷⁰ *Mater et Magistra* was followed by *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), one of two encyclicals issued during Vatican II (1962-1965). The encyclical addressed the threat of nuclear war and the ongoing arms race, and was the first encyclical addressed to the entire world.²⁷¹ *Gaudium et Spes* (*Joy and Hope*), the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, issued under Paul VI, was written in reaction to “signs of the times,” and reiterated the Church’s position on the traditional family, while also advocating on behalf of the poor.²⁷²

Vatican II also produced *Dignitatis Humanae* (Human Dignity - 1965), which declared the Church’s position in favor of religious freedom.²⁷³ *Dignitatis Humanae* was followed by *Populorum Progressio* (trans. “On the Development of Peoples” but more literally translating to progress of the people – 1967) and *Octogesima Adveniens* (Eightieth Anniversary – 1971), both issued by Paul VI. *Populorum Progressio* addressed development in the Global South and the widening gap between rich and poor

²⁷⁰ John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, May 1961, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html; *Compendium*, 43.

²⁷¹ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, April 1963, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html; *Compendium*, 43.

²⁷² Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, December 1965, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html, *Compendium*, 44.

²⁷³ Paul VI, *Dignitatis Humanae*, December 1965, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html, *Compendium*, 44.

countries.²⁷⁴ As the name would suggest, Paul VI issued *Octogesima Adveniens* on the eightieth anniversary of the first social encyclical; the document addressed migration and displacement.²⁷⁵ John Paul II, often commonly regarded for his work in Catholic social justice, issued *Laborem Exercens* (trans. “On Human Work”), in 1981 on the ninetieth anniversary of RN. *Laborem Exercens* reiterated the Church’s critique of exploitive conditions under capitalist as well as socialist economic systems.²⁷⁶

In 1987 John Paul VI released *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (trans. “On Social Concern”), which addressed “persistent underdevelopment in the world” and the Cold War.²⁷⁷ *Centesimus Annus*, issued in 1991 on the hundred year anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, reacted to the collapse of communism but lamented the ongoing culture of consumerism.²⁷⁸ It is also worth noting that John Paul II oversaw the compilation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which created a systematized directory for all Catholic doctrine. Although there were ostensibly no new teachings presented in it, it was compiled “as a reaction to the plurality of theologies and methodologies that developed

²⁷⁴ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, December 1965, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html, *Compendium*, 45.

²⁷⁵ Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, May 1971, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html, *Compendium*, 45

²⁷⁶ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, September 1981, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html; *Compendium*, 46.

²⁷⁷ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, December 1987, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html; *Compendium*, 46; Palacios, 35.

²⁷⁸ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, May 1991, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html; *Compendium*, 4.

after Vatican II and the Vatican's desire to maintain a universal theological orthodoxy and hegemony of the natural law and Thomistic methodologies."²⁷⁹ John Paul II also oversaw the completion of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. These events can be considered pivotal in the Magisterium's attempt to solidify its authority in the postmodern context of the turn of the millennium.

The Magisterium has continued to issue social teaching since it released the *Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church* in 2005. Benedict XVI's *Caritas in Veritate* (trans. "Charity in Truth"), published in 2009, was originally planned in 2007 in commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of Paul VI's *Popolorum Progressio*.²⁸⁰ *Caritas in Veritate* addresses the 2008 recession, globalization, and the human ability to seek truth.²⁸¹ Francis's *Laudato Si'* (Praise to You), issued in 2015, was the first encyclical to center on the growing ecological crisis.²⁸² Although these latter encyclicals postdate the *Compendium*, there is general agreement that the Vatican considers them to be part of the Church's social doctrine.²⁸³

As stated, however, there isn't universal agreement amongst secondary analysts in terms of what constitutes social teaching proper: social thought and social teaching here

²⁷⁹ Palacios.

²⁸⁰ Charles E. Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching and Pope Benedict XVI* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2014), Kindle Edition.

²⁸¹ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, June 2009, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html; *Catholic Social Teaching and Pope Benedict*.

²⁸² Francis, *Laudato Si'*, May 2015, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html; Christiana Zenner Peppard, "Laudato si'" (sic) in Himes.

²⁸³ Himes et al; *Catholic Social Teaching and Pope Benedict*.

can be distinguished between what the Roman Curia institutes as social doctrine as compared to how other thinkers engage with social thought/teaching (Himes prefers the term social teaching over doctrine in part for this reason).²⁸⁴ For example, Palacios's summary of Catholic social doctrine includes *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (proclaiming the gospel), which Paul VI wrote in reaction to atheism, secularism, and consumerism in 1975, which is not included in the *Compendium*'s summary of major social documents.²⁸⁵ Himes et al also include *Justitia in Mundo* (Justice in the World: 1971) and *Familiaris Consortio* (Fellowship of the Family: 1981).

Justitia in Mundo (JM) was the result of a synod held that year, and the bishops wrote the document in response to globalization, pollution, and unequal distribution of wealth.²⁸⁶ John Paul II wrote *Familiaris Consortio* (FC), which reaffirmed the Church's position on the role of family and marriage.²⁸⁷ Conversely, Palacios does not mention Pius XI's letters *Non Abbiamo Bisogno* (1931) or *Mit Brennender Sorge* (1937) condemning fascism, or *Divini Redemptoris*, condemning communism, and Himes et al likewise offer no dedicated commentary of them, although they are included in the *Compendium*.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ Himes explains in his introduction that some thinkers such as Marie Dominique Chenu eschew the term doctrine for the top-down connotation it has developed. I choose to use this term for the very same reason, as I intend to critique the institutional Church for attempting to gatekeep Catholic social thought (Marie Dominique Chenu, *La 'doctrine sociale' de l'Église comme idéologie* [Paris: Cerf, 1979], cited in Himes, 4).

²⁸⁵ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, December 1975, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html; Palacios, 34.

²⁸⁶ Lise Sowle Cahill, "Commentary on *Familiaris consortio* (Apostolic Exhortation on the Family)," 377 in Himes.

²⁸⁷ Himes, 346.

Though Palacios makes no mention of Pius XII at all, John Langan's chapter offers commentary on Pius XII's Christmas messages in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*. Examining what is included and excluded, particularly by the Magisterium, sheds light on how the institutional Church produces knowledge about what constitutes social doctrine.

Tracing the Outlines: Social Doctrine and Social Movements, and Sexual Ethics

Slippage between the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, secondary analyses, wider Catholic social thought, and wider still, contemporary social trends, suggests that institutional social doctrine omits a number of other key documents that undoubtedly were nonetheless reactions to "signs of the times" in which they were written. Continuing with what the Church designates as social justice, some of the variances between the *Compendium* in comparison with secondary Catholic social thinkers are worth mentioning. While Himes devotes an entire chapter to JM, for example, no mention of it appears in the entire *Compendium of Social Doctrine*. This is significant considering the contents, which touch on the categories of poverty and development, as do other documents included in the official *Compendium of Social Doctrine*. Perhaps even more significant, some thinkers suggest JM was influenced by liberation theology, a movement although undoubtedly founded upon the principles of social justice, has been historically denounced by the Vatican, due in large part to its promotion of certain Marxist ideals.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ Himes et al explain that their inclusions and omissions are due primarily to time, space, and overlap. Even so, these considerations always have an impact on the resulting knowledge that is produced.

JM, unlike many other social documents, “was a call to action more than a doctrinal statement,” and was noteworthy due to “the self-criticism that church leaders engaged in as they described the mission of the Church in a world scarred by economic underdevelopment.”²⁹⁰ In comparison, official Church doctrine tends to focus on reinscribing Magisterial authority. Moreover, “Significant for this assembly was that more than half of the bishops came from countries of the third world.”²⁹¹ In comparison, “At Vatican II the European bishops were the dominant voice but at the synod ‘the bishops of the Third World were heard from in an unprecedented proportion.’”²⁹² These discrepancies and the document’s omission from the *Compendium* call into question not only the kinds of doctrine the institutional Church chooses to include - given its general disinclination towards liberation theology - but also the kinds of (primarily dominant) voices the Church chooses to center.

Turning to another addendum in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, Lisa Sowle Cahill, who writes prolifically on issues pertaining to bioethics and gender and sexual ethics in the Catholic Church,²⁹³ includes a commentary on *Familiaris Consortio* (FC) in a volume on contemporary Catholic social thought. FC traverses the subject of social justice, so this inclusion is not surprising, and is likely indicative of how gender and

²⁸⁹ Gregory Baum, “Class Struggle and the Magisterium: A New Note,” *Theological Studies* 45, December 1984, accessed March 2020, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/004056398404500404>.

²⁹⁰ Himes, 345.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 347.

²⁹² John F.X. Harriot, “The Difficulty of Justice,” *Month* 5 (January, 1972): 9, quoted in Himes, 347-38

²⁹³ See *Theological Bioethics: Participation, Justice, Change* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005); *Between the Sexes: Foundations for a Christian Ethics of Sexuality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985); *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

sexual justice activists tend to envision Catholic social thought different than does the Church. Cahill says the following about FC, an apostolic exhortation on the family issued by John Paul II in 1981:

[FC] attempts to address modern social challenges to family life, such as the increase in divorce, changing roles of women, the acceptance by many Catholics of artificial contraception, the pluralism of models of marriage and family in different cultures, and economic pressures on families, especially those in the developing world.²⁹⁴

The relationship between FC and institutional social doctrine proper is somewhat perplexing.

As stated, the *Social Compendium* does not list the letter in its summary of staple Vatican social doctrine (nor does Palacios's summary thereof). However, normative ideas of the family are the foundation of the institutional Catholic understanding of society, which is, of course, central to Catholic social doctrine. To that end, the Church includes an entire chapter devoted to the family in the *Compendium*, throughout which it primarily cites FC. This is perhaps another example of how the Church institutionalizes theological ideas retrospectively. Although the Church cites FC in support of its position on traditional family roles in the completed *Social Compendium* it produced in 2005, it did not consider issues pertaining to marriage and family to constitute social doctrine when John Paul II issued the document in 1981. Instead, the Church applied FC to its understandings of the family when it solidified the *Compendium of Social Doctrine* to reaffirm its understanding of the role of the family as a microcosm of society, and by implication, the traditional familial and gender roles that entails.

²⁹⁴ Cahill, 377.

Cahill makes similar observations in her commentary on *Familiaris Consortio* with regard to how the Church codes its teachings: “The decision to choose ‘family’ as the [theme of the document] made it possible to avoid confronting sexual ethics directly, as well as recognizing that sex and marriage have social ramifications that cannot be completely captured by talking about them in interpersonal terms.”²⁹⁵ In other words, the Church’s treatment of the family solidifies heteronuclear constructions thereof without signaling its condemnation of oppressed sexes, genders, and sexualities, or its disregard for other groups likewise marginalized by normative concepts of the traditional family.

Another way this is evident is with the Church’s relative lack of explicit use of the term “gender” until towards the turn of the millennium, in comparison with its prolific implicit engagement with the topic. For example, Cahill, an expert in sexual ethics, codes one of the topics addressed in FC as dealing with gender, and specifically gender complementarity, as does much of my own research. However, the term “gender” only appears once in the entire *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, unsurprisingly, in the chapter devoted to the family.²⁹⁶

The Church’s strategic approach to taking care as to how to define social doctrine as compared to sexual ethics is made clearer considering that FC reaffirms the teachings presented in *Humanae Vitae* (Human Life: HV), which also historically has not been regarded as social doctrine. This distinction is also noteworthy considering HV confirmed

²⁹⁵ Cahill, 381.

²⁹⁶ “Faced with theories that consider gender identity as merely the cultural and social product of the interaction between the community and the individual, independent of personal sexual identity without any reference to the true meaning of sexuality, the Church does not tire of repeating her teaching: ‘Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity’” *Compendium*, 101 #224 (I gathered these data by doing a search on the electronic version of the *Compendium*).

the Church's continued rejection of contraception and birth control, a decision that disproportionately affects a number of marginalized groups.²⁹⁷

FC additionally emphasizes the Church's procreationist view of marriage and its view on the complementary relationship between men and women. In the document, John Paul II refers to "the family as a 'domestic church,'"²⁹⁸ simultaneously echoing the language of HV and foreshadowing the CDF's later *Letter on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and the World*, which Ratzinger penned as head of the CDF and shortly before he took over the papacy as Benedict. The CDF's 2004 letter views gender relations as central to the function of the family, which serves as a microcosm for the church, society, and the world. The letter is additionally representative of a more concerted backlash against what the Church collapses into the category of "gender theory," but which actually refers to an array of discourses and movements surrounding gender and sexual justice, beginning around this time period.²⁹⁹

Notably, the *Compendium* and the letter on men and women were drafted around roughly the same time, and both were overseen in part by Ratzinger/Benedict. Benedict was known for his conservative and orthodox papacy, and his overlap with John Paul II should not be overlooked: While John Paul is often regarded as a more socially progressive Pope, Ratzinger served as his conservative counterpart for most of John

²⁹⁷ These include, but are not limited to, people with uteruses, communities with disproportionately high HIV and other STI transmission, and intravenous drug users, to name only a few.

²⁹⁸ Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, November 1964, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html, 11 quoted in *Familiaris Consortio*, 21, quoted in Cahill, 377.

²⁹⁹ Letter on men and women

Paul's tenure, and they collaborated in compiling the *Compendiums* of the *Catechism* as well as *Social Doctrine*.³⁰⁰

In addition to some of the discrepancies noted above with regard to what is included and excluded in the Church's *Compendium of Social Doctrine*, examination of official statements pertaining more directly to sex, gender, and sexuality makes the Church's historically imposed divide between social doctrine and sexual ethics even clearer. Kalbian analyzes Catholic sexual ethics in her works *Sexing the Church: Gender, Power, and Ethics in Contemporary Catholicism* and *Sex, Violence, and Justice: Contraception and the Catholic Church*. Several texts fall under the purview of sexual ethics or moral theology (of which sexual ethics is a subset) in Kalbian's research and elsewhere but that are not treated as social doctrine in primary as well as many secondary commentaries (with notable exceptions, as are included here).

Some of the statements Kalbian examines that are not historically considered social doctrine include *Casti Conubii* (Of Chaste Wedlock), issued by Pius XI in 1930, which in addition to promoting the Church's ideals of chastity and heteronuclear marriage, also prohibited the use of "artificial" or assistive birth control.³⁰¹ *Humanae Vitae*, issued by Paul VI in 1968, three years after Vatican II but clearly an outcome of central conciliar debates, reaffirmed said ban and declared contraception an affront to the dignity of human life. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) issued

³⁰⁰ Palacios, 1.

³⁰¹ Pius XI, *Casti Conubii*, December 1930, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19301231_casti-conubii.html; Aline Kalbian, *Sex, Violence, and Justice: Contraception and the Catholic Church* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 34-35.

Persona Humana: Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics in 1975, which cautioned against an increase in the “corruption of morals” in society and the “unbridled exaltation of sex.”³⁰² This declaration also specifically condemned homosexuality, and was reaffirmed in Ratzinger’s/the CDF’s 1986 *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, which likewise had implications for the status of contraception in the Church as well as sexual minorities.

In 1987, *Donum Vitae* (Gift of Life), a statement also produced by the CDF during Ratzinger’s tenure, addressed procreation and the Church’s opposition to invitro fertilization.³⁰³ John Paul II’s *Evangelium Vitae* (Gospel of Life, 1995) reaffirmed this position as well as the positions put forth in HV (1968).³⁰⁴ Also under John Paul II’s tenure, *Mulieris Dignitatem* (The Dignity of Women) discusses the role of women in the Church and society.³⁰⁵ The encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (Splendor of Truth) issued in 1993, self-described as addressing moral theology in light of moral relativism, specifically discusses issues such as contraception, natural law, and sexuality.³⁰⁶

³⁰² Franjo Seper, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Persona Humana: Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics*, December 1975, accessed March 2020, http://m.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19751229_persona-humana_en.html, I; Aline Kalbian, *Sexing the Church: Gender, Power, and Ethics in Contemporary Catholicism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 50.

³⁰³ *Donum Vitae; Sex, Violence, and Justice*.

³⁰⁴ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, March 1995, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html; *Sex, Violence, and Justice*, 20-21.

³⁰⁵ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, August 1988, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html; *Sexing the Church*.

Ordinatio Sacerdotalis (Priestly Ordination, 1994) reaffirmed that only men could become priests.³⁰⁷ Some of these texts warrant further treatment, as although they are not regarded as social doctrine, they seem to reflect changing signs of the time, so it is significant that the institutional Church has largely not incorporated them into their social doctrine corpus.

The documents in question, which the institutional Church categorizes as matters of moral theology and sexual ethics, could all be envisaged as part of Catholic social thought, inasmuch as they all pertain to social justice, or more specifically, sexual and gender justice, broadly conceived. Many of the documents pertain to reproductive justice, as well as (presumed cisgender) women's role in the Church and society. In the first case, the Church has consistently reaffirmed its position against artificial contraception, access to which greatly affects people of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities, as well as groups disproportionately impacted by sexually transmitted infections (STIs). In the case of women's role in the Church, the Magisterium further institutionalized women's lack of equal access to participation not only in the Church but also in society, as the documents outlining women's role in the home, the Church, and society suggest that the woman's first obligation should be to her family and her home.³⁰⁸ For this reason, some scholars,

³⁰⁶ John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, August 1993, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html; *Sex, Violence, and Justice*.

³⁰⁷ John Paul II, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, May 1994, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19940522_ordinatio-sacerdotalis.html; *Sexing the Church*.

³⁰⁸ *Lumen Gentium*, 12; *Familiaris Consortio*, 21; Letter on men and women; Paul VI, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, November 1965, accessed March 2020,

such as Cahill, read these and similar texts as part of Catholic social teaching, though they make little or no appearance in the *Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church*.

Kalbian similarly provides increased ways to understand these texts' positionalities within institutional Catholic thought. As the titles of Kalbian's works suggest, *Sexing the Church: Gender, Power, and Ethics in Contemporary Catholicism* and *Sex, Violence, and Justice: Contraception and the Catholic Church* both envision questions pertaining to sex, gender, and sexuality as embedded within larger social, intellectual, and justice-based discourses. Kalbian's analysis touches on some of the trends influential to contemporary forms of social justice activism. *Sexing the Church* calls into question the bride of Christ/church-as-female trope, and the gender complementarian roles the Church espouses more generally. Kalbian asserts, "'Sexing' the Catholic Church means revealing the profound interconnection between gender, power, and sexual ethics in the teaching documents of the Church."³⁰⁹ Kalbian further suggests that "Catholic discourse about modes of moral reasoning is intricately connected to Catholic sexual teachings," and that there is a link between sexual morality and church authority.³¹⁰ Kalbian's work in *Sexing the Church* as well as *Sex, Violence, and Justice* points out the connections between power and knowledge production,³¹¹ and the Church's stake in producing certain knowledges via official doctrines.

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html, 11.

³⁰⁹ *Sexing the Church*, 2.

³¹⁰ *Sexing the Church*, 2.

³¹¹ Foucault.

Sex, Violence, and Justice contextualizes the Church's position on contraception and its multi-faceted implications, which exceed the realm of reproductive or bioethics. Kalbian observes that "moral issues such as artificial contraception are often difficult to categorize" due to the complex way the Church weaves teachings pertaining to the human person; human dignity; natural law; and sex, gender, and sexuality, to name only a few factors that influence the Church's position on contraceptives and birth control.³¹²

Due to these complexities, Kalbian argues that the Church's historical relationship to contraception is better understood by examining a range of social and cultural factors, including reproductive justice and debates regarding its appropriate relationship to human rights and social justice discourses. Kalbian further asserts that by examining the Church's approach to sexuality holistically, "I discover a great deal generally about how discourses about sexuality, both in the Church and in culture more broadly, are often strongly tied to discourses of violence/harm and social injustice."³¹³ In short, "matters of sexual ethics are never just about sex."³¹⁴

The crux of Kalbian's argument that is central to the methodological framework in this research, in short, suggests that matters of sexual ethics do not exist in a vacuum. Within the context of the Roman Catholic Church, seemingly disparate issues often coded as moral discourse are "also about the vulnerability of the human body and the

³¹² *Sex, Violence, and Justice*, 3.

³¹³ *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

challenges humans face in trying to maintain just and loving relationships.”³¹⁵ In that vein, Kalbian suggests, “I hope to make a convincing case that the morality of artificial contraception is a window onto larger contemporary questions about sex, violence, and justice.”³¹⁶ Kalbian’s approach is beneficial because it demonstrates mastery of institutional Catholic doctrine, perhaps properly understood *sui generis*.³¹⁷

Vatican statements are complex documents literarily, historically, contextually, linguistically, and hermeneutically. Interpreting them often requires mastery of several areas and periods of Catholic theology. Kalbian’s approach, which like Mark Jordan’s, takes seriously the theological dimensions within the documents but also incorporates discourses related to social justice, expands modes of inquiry into Church teaching. Kalbian is interested in particular feminist lenses. For example, Kalbian points out how debates surrounding artificial contraception disproportionately affect certain marginalized groups, including people with uteruses, people disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS transmission, and survivors of penile-vaginal rape.³¹⁸

Kalbian sets out not so much to question Church teachings on issues such as contraception, but to ask key questions as to how to frame such debates differently. She succeeds in doing this by pointing out the ways that Church teachings are situated in much larger settings of power and epistemological entanglements. Catholic social

³¹⁵ *Sex, Violence, and Justice*, 3.

³¹⁶ *Ibid*, 4.

³¹⁷ Kalbian describes her approach as an attempt to understand Church statements “on their own terms” (*Ibid*).

³¹⁸ *Sex, Violence, and Justice*, 4.

teaching and moral theology further illuminate discourse surrounding sex, gender, and sexuality and the ways they define their understandings of the human person. Similar to Palacios, who observes that social doctrine developed in response to changing “signs of the times,” Kalbian observes that the Church’s “justificatory and rhetorical moves” in defense of its teachings occur in response to evolving “cultural and social forces.”³¹⁹

In other words, “Most religious traditions frame reasons for their moral positions in ways that are responsive to these” socio-cultural factors.³²⁰ Kalbian explains that “This does not mean that the [Church’s] responses conform to these realities, but simply that they take them into some account, either implicitly or explicitly.”³²¹ That is, although the Church has largely rejected contemporary gender and sexual justice movements, the effects of these movements on the evolution of Church doctrine can still be seen by the Church’s negative responses to them.

Kalbian’s understanding of Catholic institutional teaching as developing in response to evolving social and cultural milieux mirrors Palacios’s observation of Catholic social doctrine, which he describes as reactive to social events of the time and declaratory of the Church’s understanding of those events. Since social trends change over time, the ‘justificatory and rhetorical moves,’ as Kalbian describes them, that the Church makes to respond to those events, must therefore adapt to the ‘signs of the time.’ Examining the similar observations between Kalbian, who primarily discusses Catholic

³¹⁹ *Sex, Violence, and Justice*, 1.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

³²¹ *Ibid.*

sexual ethics, and Palacios, who primarily discusses social doctrine, further points out the ways in which various elements of institutional Catholic thought such as human dignity, natural law, and social justice are not easily disentangled, and from one another.

Reading Kalbian, Palacios, and other social justice-minded Catholic studies thinkers in conjunction, I surmise that one of the most useful ways of understanding Catholic thought resists the impulse towards taxonomy. Although Kalbian is apt to point out that the Church's mode of responding to contemporary social 'problems,' as Palacios describes the Church's understandings, may change, Palacios observes that the Church's position on certain issues remains relatively unyielding.

Palacios describes the dynamism between the Church and contemporary social justice as one of practicality: "The actual history of the construction of Catholic social justice teaching shows that, in fact, it has evolved more diversely, in fact, often inductively and pragmatically" in response to preterit or ongoing events to which the Church feels occasion to react negatively.³²² The declaratory nature of the Church's social doctrine formation prevents genuinely dynamic dialogue. Instead, Palacios argues:

Since the Church resists a truly dialectical process that would allow the teaching to become integrated with other social ideas and forces, the social justice doctrine is increasingly restricted to an internal ideology generating theological principles that active Catholics may find hard to make sense of or implement within external social spheres.³²³

³²² Palacios, 27.

³²³ Ibid.

Additional analysis of power dynamics provided by Kalbian further points out the implications of Church doctrine for non-Catholics/or what Palacios refers to as ‘external social spheres.’

Indeed, Kalbian notes, “Catholic ideas about procreation, sex, and marriage have provided the foundation of many Western ideas about marriage. Thus, even as the Church’s stances on divorce and contraception distinguish it from other Christian denominations, its impact on larger social ideas continues to be felt.”³²⁴ Interestingly, Palacios “take[s] it for granted” that social justice is distinct from moral theology (of which sexual ethics is often considered a subset) and moral philosophy.³²⁵ Palacios suggests, “Social justice is driven inductively and contextually to derive its principles, while Catholic moral theology principles are derived from sacred scripture and the natural law tradition, so that moral doctrine is given an immutable sense.”³²⁶

Palacios’s definition of social justice is based in part on his critique of the Church’s failure to respond reflexively and dynamically to evolving social justice needs. He also levels a critique at natural law and its impact on social doctrine, while only mentioning its impact on sexual ethics in passing, stating:

The natural law basis of Roman Catholic moral theology, particularly as applied by John Paul II and the theologians of his Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, headed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later Benedict XVI), has emphasized ‘eternal verities’ in ethics, particularly sexual ethics. According to the writings of

³²⁴ *Sex, Violence, and Justice*, 4.

³²⁵ Palacios, 29.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

John Paul II, the Church's social justice theologians and other social actors must use the natural law's deductive method.³²⁷

Palacios expresses concern about the influence of natural law on social justice doctrine, and responds by attempting to define social justice as distinct from moral theology., perhaps further demonstrating the pervasiveness of the problematic divide between sexual justice and the institutional Church's sense of "proper" social justice.

Palacios further suggests that part of the problem with the development of Catholic social doctrine is that it evolved without any systematic theological coherency or internal logic. These impulses to define concretely what does and does not constitute social justice are precisely the reason that interventions such as Cahill's and Kalbian's are useful to understanding gender, sex, and sexuality not only as *social* but as relevant to social justice proper and Catholic social justice specifically. Reading Kalbian in tandem with Palacios further points out the ways in which the Church, which operates as a power structure, impacts external social spheres, and why this should matter in terms of social justice theory.

The Queer, Trans, and Feminist Problem

Examination of primary and secondary materials on Catholic social doctrine in conjunction with Catholic sexual ethics has thus far revealed a tendency to exclude matters pertaining to sex, gender, and sexuality from the social justice sphere. Kalbian suggests that this impulse relates to power dynamics embedded in knowledge production, in which the Catholic Church maintains a stake. There have been several important

³²⁷ Palacios, 27.

interventions, including work such as Cahill's and Kalbian's, that envision sexual ethics implicitly or explicitly as a matter relevant to social justice.

It is not surprising that many of the purveyors of these frameworks have a personal stake in the impact of the Church's teachings on people of nondominant genders, sexes, and sexualities. Although it would be a vast oversimplification to suggest that the Church's unremitting sexual ethic is due solely to lack of representation from people of nondominant genders, sexes, and sexualities, the Church's refusal to recognize them as members of marginalized groups remains a serious obstacle to their social status within the Church as well as society. The problem here lies not so much within mere refusal to acknowledge their marginalization. The primary problem is the result of the Church's reactive-declaratory approach to social justice: The Church perceives queer, trans, and feminist people as problems.

In reacting negatively to a perceived social problem, which as Palacios explains, the Church envisions as a form of chronic societal illness, the Church goes beyond passive refusal to change its sexual ethic to committing active epistemic violence against nondominant peoples. It is the role of power and violence, Kalbian suggests, that goes largely unattended in traditional approaches to Catholic teachings. Additionally, since the turn of the millennium, it seems the Church has taken a more active role in condemning human rights and social justice-based theories that favor what the Church pejoratively refers to as "gender theory."

In the twenty-first century, the institutional Church has begun to systematize its overall approach to social doctrine; in addition, some Vatican leaders have begun retrospectively to tighten the seams that weave social doctrine and sexual ethics together. The beginnings of this process can perhaps be seen with the establishment of the *Compendium of Social Doctrine*, which occurred collaboratively between Cardinal Ratzinger (head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the time, and shortly before his papacy as Benedict XVI) and John Paul II. The attention to natural law in the *Compendium* which has existed throughout the development of Catholic social doctrine was crystalized by this collaboration.³²⁸

Further institutional moves to connect theologies of social teaching and sexual ethics can be seen during Benedict's papacy. Kalbian and Clark note that Benedict's only social encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate* (CV: Love in Truth, 2009), attempts to situate *Humanae Vitae*, Paul VI's 1968 encyclical that is most famous for condemning contraception, within the context of social doctrine.³²⁹ Although this was perhaps the first social encyclical to make such a move, Benedict seems to have begun bridging the gap between social doctrine and sexual ethics earlier in his papacy, with his first encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (DCE: God is Love), which he issued on Christmas day during the first year of his papacy, in 2005.

³²⁸ CV; Charles Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching: 1891-Present: A Historical, Theological, and Ethical Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 23-32.

³²⁹ *Sex, Violence, and Justice*, 146; Meghan J. Clark, "Commentary on *Caritas in veritate* (sic) (*On integral human development in charity and truth*)," 483 in Himes et al.

Although DCE is not regarded as a social encyclical by the Vatican or most social doctrine scholars, it refers extensively to Church social teachings. It is also worth noting that before his death, John Paul II wrote much of the content that appeared in the finished document.³³⁰ DCE defines the three Catholic concepts of love, focusing primarily on *caritas* or charity, a concept heavily influenced by social justice teachings.³³¹ The tone of the encyclical additionally suggests that “Benedict XVI understands the Church primarily as the institutional Church.”³³² Benedict also touches on sexuality, as a warning against conflating *eros* (from which the English word erotic derives) with sex.³³³ Benedict also makes several references to the family, which traverses sexual ethics and social doctrine in that the Church’s concept of family is rooted in normative assumptions about sex, gender, and sexuality. The family also informs the Church’s understanding of how the church (lowercase and uppercase “c”) and society should function. This aim to systematize Church doctrine became more apparent when Benedict issued CV in 2009.

Commenting on CV, Curran notes in *Catholic Social Teaching and Pope Benedict*, “Benedict, from the perspective of authoritative Church teaching, brings something new and different to the social teaching documents. He deliberately includes

³³⁰ *Social Teaching and Pope Benedict*.

³³¹ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, December 2005, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html.

³³² *Social Teaching and Pope Benedict*, location 99; Gaillardetz makes the same claim, suggesting that Benedict understands the Church to mean the clergy as opposed to the laity (850).

³³³ DCE, 3.

sexuality, bioethics, and the life issues in the social teaching of the Church.”³³⁴ As stated, part of Benedict’s rhetorical move in CV includes subsuming HV into official social doctrine. Promulgated on the fortieth anniversary of Paul VI’s social encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, CV suggests that HV should be read as part of Paul VI’s social justice corpus.³³⁵

This move is significant for several reasons. First, it adds to the mounting evidence that throughout his tenure in the Magisterium (as cardinal and then Pope), Benedict sought to cohere institutional doctrine. Clark suggests that Benedict attempts to establish a “unified vision” of Church teaching in CV.³³⁶ In this respect, Benedict is not unique, as social teaching on the whole has attempted retrospectively to systematize its own corpus. Palacios is justifiably critical about this point. I contend further that the problem lies not so much with the lack of systematization, but rather with anachronistic readings of previous statements.

Suggesting that *Humanae Vitae*, which reaffirmed the Church’s ban on contraception, was intended as a social encyclical to address the perceived social problems of the time, is akin to suggesting that the Bible has *always* condemned homosexuality. This is not historically possible, as the concept of sexual orientation, including heterosexuality, was not invented until a few thousand years after the Bible was written. Using traditional and authoritative sources to suggest that the Church has

³³⁴ *Social Teaching and Pope Benedict*, location 793.

³³⁵ CV, 15; Clark, 485.

³³⁶ Clark, 485.

“always” had a social platform upholds a particular sexual ethic at the expense of nondominant groups. In other words, Church authority figures use Vatican documents anachronistically to reify people of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities as perpetual problems.

Curran notes this trend to retroactively re-solidify ecclesiastical and specifically papal authority in what he refers to as “papal social teaching,” suggesting that “the authoritative nature of these documents together with the fact that they are often written on the anniversary of other documents tends to emphasize the continuity and does not give enough attention to the discontinuities in the tradition.”³³⁷ Indicative of this trend, “Benedict’s insistence [in CV] on continuity between pre-Vatican II and post-Vatican II approaches is totally consistent with his continual emphasis on Vatican II’s continuity with what went before in the life of the Church.”³³⁸ Per Clark’s, Curran’s, and Palacios’s analyses, at a minimum, *Caritas in Veritate* demonstrates an attempt to homogenize Church teaching.

This process of homogenization is more pointed in light of these authors’ additional observations that John Paul II and Benedict both strategically defined the Church in terms of the Magisterium throughout their tenures.³³⁹ Taken in conjunction with the fact that Vatican statements tend heavily to rely on previous official statements and to invoke prior papacies, one primary goal of institutional Church teaching seems to

³³⁷ *Social Teaching and Pope Benedict*, location 189.

³³⁸ *Ibid*, location 186.

³³⁹ *Social Teaching and Pope Benedict*; Himes et al.

be to solidify the authority of the official Church. Palacios observes that social doctrine in particular has served this purpose as it developed in the wake of papal infallibility, which in turn occurred in tandem with Vatican I and the fall of the Papal States.³⁴⁰

The scope of this chapter only allows a summation of the pattern the Church has established at treating people of non-dominant sexes, genders, and sexualities as social problems, but I will offer some concluding remarks here. The Church has decried contraception for as long as it has been widely and safely and available.³⁴¹ This is due in large part to its belief that life begins upon conception.³⁴² This is also justifiably due to the early relationship between reproductive technologies and eugenics movements.³⁴³

As eugenics has become most notoriously associated with atrocities committed by the Nazi regime during the Holocaust, the Church's condemnation of eugenics is admirable in that regard. However, similar to Francis's current condemnation of gender theory to the detriment of queer and gender variant people and women, the Church also ignores the negative consequences that lack of access to contraception and other reproductive technologies poses for people with uteruses. The Church's continued association of contraception with eugenics also stands in stark contrast with its support of

³⁴⁰ Palacios, 24; *The Pope Who Would Be King*.

³⁴¹ *Casti Conubii*, 1930.

³⁴² HV.

³⁴³ Kalbian offers a provocative analysis of public debates between Margaret Sanger, known equally for her involvement in establishing what became Planned Parenthood and her early involvement in eugenics, and members of the Catholic Church (*Sex, Violence, and Justice*, 148-155).

Nazi Germany and the Axis powers during World War II.³⁴⁴ These contrasts beg the question as to whether the Church is more interested in the plight of marginalized peoples or the preservation of its own institutional authority.

Divergences between issues pertaining to (nondominant) sex, gender, and sexuality became clearer during the period of social upheaval in the 1960's, which precipitated Vatican II. The signs of the times to which the Vatican responded (many of which were heavily influenced by the U.S.) included the civil rights movement; women's rights movements variously referred to as radical feminism, second wave feminism, and women's lib(eration); hippie counter-culture and the free love/sexual liberation movement. Related items on Vatican II's agenda included religious pluralism, the conflict in Vietnam, and artificial contraception.³⁴⁵

As mentioned previously, Paul VI (1963-1978) issued *Dignitatis Humanae* (DH), which declared the Church's position in favor of religious liberty, in 1965. The Church's official stance in favor of religious freedom might be read as being influenced by post World War II hindsight including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent human rights discourse. The papacy's declaration that there might be salvation outside of the Church may well be considered a step towards rectifying antisemitic moods leading up to the Holocaust as well as other previous harms caused by

³⁴⁴ Gellately; *The Pope Against the Jews*; Pollard.

³⁴⁵ *Dignitatis Humanae; Pacem in Terris*; Robert McClory, *Turning Point: The Inside Story of the Papal Birth Control Commission, and How Humanae vitae (sic) Changed the Life of Patty Crowley and the Future of the Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), cited in *Sex, Violence, and Justice*, 46.

the Church's previously more exclusive salvific ethos.³⁴⁶ The debates surrounding contraception had a rather different outcome. Although John XXIII convened a commission on birth control in 1963, Paul VI issued HV in 1968, officially reaffirming the Church's opposition to contraception.³⁴⁷ Dissent to the Church's position was considerable in the U.S. and elsewhere before and after the Vatican released HV.³⁴⁸

Mary Daly, probably an equally famous and infamous figure from the radical feminist era, published a timely book entitled *The Church and the Second Sex*, (1968) which as the name suggests, draws heavily on Simone de Beauvoir's 1949 *The Second Sex*. Perhaps not coincidentally, de Beauvoir was one of the final authors to be placed on the Vatican's Index Librorum Prohibitum (list of prohibited books) before Paul VI officially disbanded the practice of banning books in 1966 - demarcating, no doubt, a longstanding institutional opposition to gender and sexual justice theories.³⁴⁹ *The Church and the Second Sex* was written shortly before and published the same year that Paul VI released HV much to the dismay of many contraception advocates of the time, including Daly and others who identified as Catholic.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁶ Paul VI, *Nostra Aetate: Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions*, explicitly addresses the Church's relationship with Jewish people (October 1965, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html).

³⁴⁷ *Sex, Violence, and Justice*, 46.

³⁴⁸ *Sex, Violence, and Justice*.

³⁴⁹ Jesús Martínez de Bujanda, Marcella Richter, *Index des Livres Interdits: Index Librorum Prohibitorum 1600-1966* (Sherbooke: Centre d'Études de la Renaissance, 2002).

³⁵⁰ *Sex, Violence, and Justice*, 46.

This pattern of the Church's dismissal of dissenting approaches to sexual ethics and gender and sexual justice continued in the 1980s with the outbreak of HIV/AIDS, when the Church maintained its position against contraception even after it proved effective in preventing the transmission of the HIV virus. Early on, HIV spread easily through blood transfusion, shared needle use, and anal (and penile-vaginal, as later transmission trends would show) sex without a condom. For these reasons, HIV rates in the 1980s and 90s were prevalent amongst gay men; and AIDS was quickly stigmatized for being associated with homosexuality and intravenous drug use. HIV rates today are high in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, especially amongst women.³⁵¹ As with advocates who championed contraception as a means to control one's reproductive functioning, social actors, many of whom were Catholic, championed the use of condoms as a means to stave the HIV/AIDS pandemic.³⁵²

Relevant to the HIV/AIDS crisis, Ratzinger's 1986 letter on homosexual persons reiterated the Church's condemnation of homosexual sex acts. Ratzinger's letter on homosexual persons is perhaps most well-known for describing the "homosexual condition" as "intrinsically disordered," a "strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil," an "objective disorder," a "disordered sexual inclination which is essentially self-indulgent" and similar language throughout.³⁵³ The intent of the letter, which purported a message of ministry/pastoral concerns, seems to have had drastically

³⁵¹ *Sex, Violence, and Justice*, 67.

³⁵² *Sex, Violence, and Justice*, 63; *The Silence of Sodom*, 41; Petro.

³⁵³ Letter on homosexual persons, 3, 7.

different impacts for many same-sex attracted individuals and members of the gay community, as it was largely known at the time. Reactions to the CDF's letter paralleled reactions to *Humanae Vitae* less than two decades prior, as many Catholics had once again expected the Church to change its position on contraception in light of global events and were disappointed and surprised when it refused to do so.³⁵⁴

Ratzinger's letter can be read as similar in form to Catholic social statements, though it is not regarded as such. For one, the letter is clearly a reaction to the signs of the time. Ratzinger opens the letter by stating, "The issue of homosexuality and the moral evaluation of homosexual acts have increasingly become a matter of public debate, even in Catholic circles."³⁵⁵ He later expresses concern about the "pro-homosexual movement" and its "deceitful propaganda."³⁵⁶ The timing of the letter is indicative of its declaratory reaction to the HIV/AIDS crisis, as is his assertion that "Even when the practice of homosexuality may seriously threaten the lives and well-being of a large number of people, its advocates remain undeterred and refuse to consider the magnitude of the risks involved."³⁵⁷ Mark Jordan further suggests in *Silence of Sodom* that the letter "was also an administrative order that clamped down on a variety of pastoral activities, not least by

³⁵⁴ Jordan, 31.

³⁵⁵ HP, 1.

³⁵⁶ Ibid, 9.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

ousting lesbian Catholic ministries such as Dignity from church property.”³⁵⁸ He did so by simultaneously reaffirming the institutional Church’s authority:

[T]his Congregation wishes to ask the Bishops to be especially cautious of any programmes (sic) which may seek to pressure the Church to change her teaching, even while claiming not to do so.[...] For example, they may present the teaching of the Magisterium, but only as if it were an optional source for the formation of one's conscience. Its specific authority is not recognized. Some of these groups will use the word "Catholic" to describe either the organization or its intended members, yet they do not defend and promote the teaching of the Magisterium.³⁵⁹

Given Ratzinger’s tacit acknowledgement that HIV/AIDS, in combination with his decision to prioritize the authority of the Magisterium over other dissenting voices as well as the welfare of people with HIV/AIDS was condemned by lay Catholics, clergy, and Catholic religious alike.³⁶⁰

That is not to say that the Church did not view the HIV/AIDS epidemic, particularly as it impacted the gay community in the 1980s, as a socio-cultural problem. Anthony Petro outlines the Church’s response to the U.S. AIDS outbreak in *After the Wrath of God: AIDS, Sexuality, and American Religion*, suggesting that the Church’s reproach of homosexuality and contraception in the early height of the 80s AIDS crisis “represented a developing movement within the American Church hierarchy that took hardline conservative stances on issues of sexuality and the family and readily asserted the church’s influence in local and national politics.”³⁶¹

³⁵⁸ Jordan, 31.

³⁵⁹ HP, 14.

³⁶⁰ Kalbian; Petro; Jordan.

³⁶¹ Petro, 93.

Although Petro's analysis focuses on the U.S., his observations extend to the hierarchy in Rome, which likewise consistently demonstrates a preferential option for church hierarchy when it comes to people of marginalized sexes, genders, and sexualities. Petro continues, "Under [O'Connor's] leadership, the American bishops addressed the epidemic as a concern for all Americans, not just Catholics. By defining the epidemic in terms of sexuality, the American bishops re-inscribed AIDS as a *social* epidemic, but more importantly as a national moral crisis."³⁶² Petro's analysis makes it further obvious that one of very few exceptions to the institutional Church's tendency to separate social teaching and moral theology/sexual ethics is when doing so serves as a justificatory/rhetorical move to reassert its own doctrinal and institutional authority. This was seen by the twenty-first century efforts on the parts of John Paul II and Benedict. John Paul retrospectively systematized the *Catechism* and social doctrine; Benedict retrospectively asserted that *Humanae Vitae* should be subsumed as social doctrine in its attempt to cure the perceived societal ill of contraception.

Given some of the counter-examples provided, including the Church's developments on issues pertaining to religious pluralism, salvation outside the Church, as well as the relationship between civic and ecclesial authorities, it seems that the Church has a specific interest in preserving its sexual ethic. The majority of social attention that peoples of nondominant genders, sexes, and sexualities have collectively received on the part of the institutional Church has been in reference to societal 'ills' or 'problems.'³⁶³

³⁶² Petro, 93, emphasis added.

This trend has continued since the turn of the century, since the Church has begun to turn its attention more directly to gender theory/ideology. Indeed, the term “gender” does not emerge on the Vatican’s electronic archives until around this time, and often in quotations. The term gender theory/gender ideology appeared not long after the first appearances of the term ‘gender,” and always in a pejorative sense. These usages further illustrate the ways in which the Church conflates categories of sex, gender, and sexuality and indeed does not recognize these categories, but instead imposes a compulsory heterosexuality that it assumes is tied to the fundamental function of a human person. In short, gender (and sex, and sexuality) is a problem.

This chapter investigated the development of social doctrine in comparison and response to contemporary social movements, particularly as they have developed since modernization and in Europe and the U.S., which given the history of settler colonialism, remain culturally dominant (and supremacist) entities. Church teaching since Vatican I, which occurred primarily in response to modernization and other signs of the time, demonstrates a consistent effort on the part of the hierarchy to preserve its institutional authority. Examination of documents included in Catholic social justice, particularly as they diverge from contemporary gender and sexual justice movements, represents a tendency on the part of the institutional Catholic Church to separate issues pertaining to moral theology (under which sexual ethics is subsumed) from social teaching.

The primary divergence from this trend occurs when the Church addresses deviation from its sexual ethic (which since the turn of the century it variously terms

³⁶³ The Church’s platform here stands in contrast with the systemic sexual abuse on the part of clergy members that it has largely undertaken to cover up.

“gender,” “gender theory,” and “gender ideology,”) as a moral *and* societal problem; what Pope Francis has recently termed “ideological colonization.” I argue that this tactic is demonstrative of a larger strategy to silence gender and sexual justice movements that challenge the Church’s normative sexual ethic. The latest efforts to do so can be seen in Pope Francis’s attacks on gender theory as ideological colonization. Given the Church’s commitment to social justice, further assessment of the Church’s role in systems that prove violent to people of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities is warranted.

Chapter 4: Between Church and Nation: Catholicism, Colonialism, (Post)Modernity

This chapter traces European settler colonialism, the rise of modernity, and the advent of the nation-state. These histories, as they are typically produced, often overlook the entanglement between these forces and institutional, colonial Christianity. Settler colonialism eventually gave way to the rise of the modern nation-state, though it should be mentioned at the outset that settler colonialism is an ongoing structure and not an isolated event, as can be seen by many remaining institutions, including the ways in which the Magisterium currently exercises its authority. The rise of the nation-state resulted in contemporary nationalisms, which are at once raced, sexed, and gendered. This is demonstrated by the colonial legacy that led to the rise of the nation-state and nationalisms, as well as the gendered tropes often perpetuated by nation-state and nationalist imageries.

In this chapter, I highlight colonial Christianity's and especially the Roman Catholic Church's role in the afore-mentioned events. I then illustrate the ways in which contemporary nationalisms are rooted in colonialism, and point to the ways that the Catholic Church remains an institutional power via particularly nationalist rhetorics. Such rhetoric is visible within Francis's comments on gender theory, which he condemns as ideological colonization. Francis's comments demonstrate the larger colonial legacy of the institutional Catholic Church. I argue that the Church's colonial legacy has adapted and that it persists via modernist, post-nation state inflections.

Colonialism, Christianity, and Nationalism

Modern nationalism can be linked not only incidentally but directly to Christianity's role in colonialism. Prior to the modern era, the Roman Catholic Church entertained governmental influence over a large part of Europe.³⁶⁴ The role Christianity played in settler colonialism due to the intertwined powers of church and state - or perhaps more accurately, church and monarchy - must also be understood. As E. San Juan Jr. explains, "the nation-state emerged after the break-up of the medieval Christian empire. It has employed violence to accomplish questionable ends – colonial annexation of territories, conquest of markets, systematic extermination of natives."³⁶⁵

Since European monarchies and the Church were still intertwined powers during the late fifteenth century, both parties are responsible for settler colonialism and its campaign of dominion and extermination. Maria Wade's *Missions, Missionaries, and Native Americans* explains the collaboration between European monarchies and the Church during the onset of settler colonialism:

In 1494, the Treaty of Tordesillas cleaved the sixteenth-century world into two geographical areas cum religious domains. With the blessing of the church, the treaty and later negotiations formalized the "discoveries" made by the crowns of Portugal and Spain, imbued them with a religious mandate, and left the door open for an expanding universe of lands to be discovered and Christianized. The pope's protection and incentives guaranteed the Iberian crowns a divine right to dominate all peoples they encountered.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁴ *The Pope Who Would Be King*.

³⁶⁵ Epifanio San Juan Jr., "Nation-State, Postcolonial Theory, and Global Violence" in *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Anthropology*, vol. 6, no. 2 (Oxford, NY: Berghahn Books, 2002): 12, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23170149>.

³⁶⁶ Wade, 3.

These occupied territories started out as settler colonies conquered in the name of the colonizers' respective monarchies, which were tied to and blessed by the pontiff. However, settler colonies eventually became "nations," the social construct of which remains normalized today. The perceived divine right to rule translated easily to a professed right to conquer. This sentiment was the driving force of settler colonialism and carried over into European settler colonies such as the United States via mechanisms such as manifest destiny.³⁶⁷

Settler colonialism eventually gave way the institution of the modern nation-state and contemporary nationalisms: Conquered territories became sovereign nations, and allegiance to kings was displaced (though not entirely replaced) by allegiance to nations. A common thread permeating this trajectory that must be underscored is the relationship between certain colonial-Christian ideologies, which subsequently lent themselves seamlessly to nationalist ideologies.

In the reading I undertake here, I emphasize the Church's active role in colonialism and its adaptivity to this paradigmatic shift. Despite the reorientation in church and state powers that took place in Europe and its settler colonies in the nineteenth century, the Vatican retains global and political significance today, and must be re-examined in order to understand the direct links between colonialism and hegemonic Christianities and nationalisms. Indeed, there are concrete ways in which

³⁶⁷ M. Annette James, *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 67-68.

the institutional Church remains invested – and successful - in asserting itself not merely as a religious, but also a global power. Essential to understanding this relationship is institutional Christianity’s and specifically the Catholic Church’s role in the rise of the nation-state, an event that was ultimately rooted in the Church’s role in colonialism.

Benedict Anderson suggests that nations are properly understood as “imagined communities.”³⁶⁸ With the rise of modernity, both the Church and the state in many parts of Europe and its settler colonies were faced with reconsolidating their systems of authority. Anderson constructs his definition of nation in part around these events, defining nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently *limited* and inherently *sovereign*.”³⁶⁹ Settler colonialism eventually gave way to the modern era, which was marked, among other things, by the rise of the nation-state.³⁷⁰ Anderson defines the nation as simultaneously sovereign and imagined. He notes:

[The nation] is imagined as *sovereign* because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. [...N]ations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. [...] [I]t is an *imagined* community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the last two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.³⁷¹

³⁶⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

³⁶⁹ Anderson, 6, original emphases.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 4.

Anderson's research underscores modernity's paradigmatic shift away – ostensibly – from centralized religious authority to the authority of individual nation-states, which Anderson envisages as simultaneously sovereign and limited.

Within the context of Europe and its settler colonies, the role of colonialism in the advent of the nation-state must also be considered. Because church and state powers in Europe were largely intertwined prior to modernity, Christianity's role in colonialism must not be considered as a byproduct, but rather as central to the success of colonialism, and subsequently, the establishment of the modern nation-state, which largely arose from settler colonial territories.

Although Anderson is somewhat optimistic in his estimation that nation(alism) inspires its subjects to die rather than to kill, he is apt in his observation that one function of nationalism is to disguise the inherently vertical nature of the nation. In this line of thinking, mythologized western ideals such as the inherent goods of religious freedom, democracy, and so forth, may do more to preserve the power of the state rather than the safety of its inhabitants. Similarly, nationalist sentiments may do more to alienate members of one nation from other nations than to unify their own nation.

Interestingly, Anderson suggests that nationalism should be thought of as belonging with such categories as religion or kinship, rather than ideologies such as liberalism or fascism.³⁷² Other theorists do not view nationalism as quite so benign. In

³⁷¹ Anderson, 8.

³⁷² Ibid, 5.

recent years, nationalism has also widely been critiqued as being “one of the most potent agencies of destruction in the modern world.”³⁷³ Nationalism connotes fervent pride in one’s “nation,” and significantly, to the exclusion of other nations. Put differently, Anthony Giddens’ *The Nation-State and Violence* defines nationalism as “the cultural sensibility of sovereignty.”³⁷⁴ In this sense, nationalism cannot be stripped of this exclusionary component or this compulsion towards sovereignty.

Sovereignty, when joined with nationalism, most accurately reflects more than mere autonomy or independence, but rather dominion or supremacy. In “Nation-State, Postcolonial Theory, and Global Violence,” E. San Juan Jr. describes the relationship between nationalism and sovereignty as “a pivot of centralized authority and coercive power.”³⁷⁵ These coercive, exclusionary elements are what differentiates nationalism from, say, mere patriotism, or pride in one’s country.³⁷⁶ The mutually divisive and supremacist elements of nationalism, which hinges on coercive power and centralized authority, create a hierarchical temperament towards minoritized nations and peoples. In its most extreme iterations, nationalism has resulted in totalitarian and fascist regimes and

³⁷³ San Juan Jr., 11.

³⁷⁴ Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), 219, cited in San Juan Jr., 12.

³⁷⁵ E. San Juan Jr., 20.

³⁷⁶ Although the scope of this paper does not allow further comments, patriotism may well warrant its own critique). In that vein, critiques leveled at sovereignty, nation, and related concepts in this chapter are leveled at those constructions as they are impacted by and in collusion with colonialism. Important thinkers have offered anticolonial, Indigenous, and *Mesitaje* possibilities of nationhood and sovereignty (Pérez, “El *Desorden*, Nationalism, and Chicana/o Aesthetics” in Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcón, Minoo Moallem, *Between Woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

have raised questions about whether nationalism can be extracted from its colonialist roots.³⁷⁷

Partha Chatterjee illuminates the relationship between colonialism and nationalism in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, which analyzes nationalisms in the Global South and East. Chatterjee points out that nationalist movements are common amongst colonized populations, and ultimately used in movements that seek liberation from European colonization. However, Chatterjee argues that nationalism is rooted in western hegemony, thus creating somewhat of a paradox for anticolonial nationalist movements.

Chatterjee states:

Nationalist opposition to European rule is driven by a faith in a theory. Yet the theory itself, and the very attitude of faith in a theory, are gifts of Europe to the rest of the world. Nationalism sets out to assert its freedom from European domination. But in the very conception of its project, it remains a prisoner of the prevalent European intellectual fashions.³⁷⁸

In other words, Chatterjee is critical of whether postcolonial nationalist movements can successfully rid themselves of western colonial and ideological supremacy. He draws on work such as Edward Said's. Said makes a persuasive case that colonialism persists in many forms, one of which is through discourse.³⁷⁹ Paradoxically, Pope Francis seems keenly aware of the Foucauldian concept of knowledge production and Said's related concept of discursive colonialism when Francis's deploys the use

³⁷⁷ San Juan Jr.

³⁷⁸ Chatterjee, 9-10.

³⁷⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

of the term “ideological colonization.”³⁸⁰ To be sure, the ideologies to which the respective parties apply them seem are drastically different: this suggests a level of rhetorical skill on Francis’s part.

Related to Chatterjee’s analysis, which asserts that nationalism cannot be stripped Sikata Banerjee’s *Make Me a Man!* further explains that struggles between the colonized and the colonizer often (re)produce further constructions of what Banerjee refers to as “hegemonic masculinity.” Hegemonic masculinity is constituted in part by “Anglo-American” and westernized concepts of masculinity.³⁸¹ In other words, hegemonic masculinities are reproduced within nationalist movements, which are themselves necessarily linked to colonialism. Constructions of hegemonic masculinity juxtapose feminized symbols of the nation.

Using an intersectional analytical lens, it stands to reason that nationalism is therefore simultaneously impacted by gender dynamics as well as colonialism. Similar to Banerjee, Kaplan’s, Alarcón’s, and Moallem’s *Between Woman and Nation* similarly refer to “hegemonized masculinities.”³⁸² Drawing on Chatterjee’s critique of Anderson, in which Chatterjee summarily asks, “*Whose imagined community?*”,³⁸³ Kaplan et al point out that nationalism is not only interlocked with colonialism, but the concept of the nation-state is also the site of raced and

³⁸⁰ Foucault.

³⁸¹ Charlotte Hooper, *Manly States: Masculinities, International Relations, and Gender Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). Cited in Sikata Banerjee, *Make Me a Man! Masculinity, Hinduism, and Nationalism in India* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 7-8.

³⁸² Kaplan et al, 8.

³⁸³ Chatterjee, 19-22, original emphasis.

gendered relations.³⁸⁴ This makes Francis's use of nationalist rhetoric with regard to "gender theory" more significant and possibly demonstrative of a larger pattern of gendered-institutional supremacy in a (post)modern era.

In other words, nationalism can be understood as not only a byproduct but a central and strategic component of the rise of the nation-state, which in turn is a product of modernity. Identities are porous and intersectional, and the lines that were drawn to divide newly constructed nation-states were ultimately arbitrary: An inherent limit of the nation, according to Anderson, is that it "has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations."³⁸⁵ Due to the recognized boundaries of the nation, which often match up less than perfectly with the loyalties of its inhabitants, it was necessary for the state to devise a way to make subjects loyal to the nation, as opposed to other systems of loyalty, such as church, monarchy, and kinship, to which they were accustomed.

It stands to reason that the church, if it wanted to retain sovereign institutional power in the modern era, also had a stake in this goal. Nationalism continues to serve as one mechanism for achieving this institutionally supremacist end. In the following, I engage some of the related rhetorically nationalistic themes and strategies in which the Church has historically engaged.

³⁸⁴ Kaplan et al, 8.

³⁸⁵ Anderson, 8.

Women as Signs (...of What?)

A primary rhetorical (nationalistic) theme throughout Francis's statements on ideological colonization pertains to the Church's emphasis on cis-heteropatriarchal familial structures, which concomitantly reinforces "traditional" binary gender roles. These gender roles are reflected in the Vatican's view of the family, the Church, and the world. For example, in addition to banning women's ordination, the Magisterium and the wider Roman Curia (including other administrative bodies not directly responsible for defining official doctrine) envision the Church, to which it refers as "she," as the bride of Christ. The imagery of the Church-as-bride parallels "the ways in which quite fantastic images of the nation as female are rendered quite ordinary," the proliferation of which Elspeth Probyn points out in the edited volume *Between Woman and Nation*.³⁸⁶

Further, since the Church is the bride of Christ, and since, according to the Church, Jesus took the form of a cisgender man, then only cisgender men may possess official roles as heads of the Church. The image of the head of the Church as essentially cisgender and male is therefore dually reinforced. This is achieved by essentializing Jesus as a cisgender man and then making this component a requisite for ordination in the Church. The Church subsequently views all ordained men as symbolically married to the essentially female Church, or women religious, such as nuns, as married to Jesus.³⁸⁷

This system inverts the imagery of the bride of Christ when necessary so that women are always the acted upon subject, and men the active agent, and preserves the

³⁸⁶ Elspeth Probyn, "Bloody Metaphors and Other Allegories of the Ordinary" in Kaplan et al, 50.

³⁸⁷ Benedict XVI, "Saint Clare of Assisi," September 2010, accessed December 2019, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20100915.html.

Church's system of hetero-complementarity. Similarly, Probyn argues that "nation-building" and related nationalisms "in modernity [are] always predicated upon Woman as trope, displacing historical women, consolidating hybridity into totality, and erasing" the woman "into a single sign."³⁸⁸ In addition, the role of the woman is simultaneously essentialized as bride and mother. The imagery the Church uses towards women, and the role it dictates for them in the family, the Church, and in society, further reflects similar imagery of women as symbols of the nation. In an in-flight press conference in November 2016, during which he reaffirmed the Magisterium's longstanding ban on women's ordination, Francis explained this dualistic relationship between men and women. Francis suggested that this dualism is theologically reinforced by the "Petrine" and "Marian" doctrines:

As for the ordination of women in the Catholic Church, the last clear word was given by Saint John Paul II, and this holds.[...] But women can do many things better than men. [...] [T]here are two dimensions: the Petrine or apostolic dimension [...] and the Marian dimension, which is the feminine dimension of the Church. [...] [W]ho is more important in theology and in the mystery of the Church? It is Mary! And more: the Church is a woman. We speak of the Church as "she", not "it". [...] The Church is the bride of Jesus Christ. It is a nuptial mystery [...] including everything involving the motherhood of the Church, in the deepest sense. The Church does not exist without this fundamental feminine dimension, because she herself is feminine.³⁸⁹

Here, Francis reiterates Pope John Paul II's position as outlined in his 1994 Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (Priestly Ordination), at which time John Paul II doctrinally

³⁸⁸ Kaplan et al, 6.

³⁸⁹ "In-Flight Press Conference of His Holiness Pope Francis From Sweden to Rome," English translation, brackets added.

reiterated the historical prohibition on women's ordination.³⁹⁰ Francis's statement also reveals the Church's presupposition that there are two genders, male and female, which align with biological sex, and to which the Church assigns gender roles, man and woman, inherently masculine and feminine, accordingly.

Per the above logic, Jesus was (presumably) a cisgender man, and the Church envisions Peter, also (presumably) a cisgender man, as Jesus's rightful successor and the first official Pope. Therefore, the Church believes that all Church officials (what Francis refers to as the Petrine or apostolic dimension) must therefore also all be cisgender men. Assuming a seemingly "separate but equal" approach to the role of men and women, the Church asserts that women are consequently relocated to a complementarily opposite role to that of men. In emulation of Jesus's mother, "the Virgin Mary," women are envisioned simultaneously as brides and mothers; Francis refers to this phenomenon as the "Marian dimension" of the Church. Notably, as her commonly-applied title would suggest, Mary is revered in Catholicism for her virginity.

Since the Church associates the Marian role specifically with (cisgender) women, the importance of virginity also becomes disproportionately emphasized as a trait essential to women, once again perpetuating characteristics common to the woman-as-a-symbol-of-the-nation trope. As Banerjee and Probyn both suggest, nations are commonly described as not only feminine, but also virginal, and therefore in need of protection from penetration. This latter analogy reproduces not only traditional gender norms but also problematic rape/perpetrator imagery, placing femininity and feminized people in a

³⁹⁰ *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*.

perpetual state of needing protection from real or imagined victimizers. It further places an uncomfortable link between a woman's virginity and the well-being of her people or nation. These tropes can be detected in official Church documents, as I demonstrate below.³⁹¹

Using the Virgin Mary as its exemplar, the Church intertwines notions of woman-as-bride, woman-as-mother, and woman-as-virgin. The amalgamation of these categories is somewhat paradoxical given that the Church places a high priority on penile-vaginal procreation.³⁹² Although sexual intercourse is sanctioned within the confines of marriages within the Catholic Church, the somewhat contradictory values of virginity and procreative motherhood pose a potentially disproportionate burden for women in the Church as well as the home.

Practically speaking, no woman (except perhaps the Virgin Mary herself) can fulfill the roles of procreative mother and virgin simultaneously. Women held to these contradictory values are subjected to the virgin-whore dichotomy (relatedly, sometimes also referred to as the Madonna-whore complex).³⁹³ Women are therefore disproportionately shamed on the one hand, or held to disproportionately higher standards on the other. Women are additionally treated as mere symbol-objects in their essentialized roles as bride-virgin-mothers and valued for their representative and relational worth rather than as autonomous subjects or agents. Referring to the

³⁹¹ Banerjee; Probyn.

³⁹² Letter on men and women, para. 10.

³⁹³ Estella V. Welldon, *Mother, Madonna, Whore: The Idealization and Denigration of Motherhood* (London: Karnac Books Ltd, 2004).

relationship between Jesus and the Church as a “nuptial mystery,” the cis-heteropatriarchal interpretation of this relationship can also be seen within Catholic interpretations of the family structure.

Although the institutional Church decries “sexual discrimination” in society and the workplace, it maintains that the woman’s primary role is within the family structure. The 2004 *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and the World*, written by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), headed by then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (who in 2005 became Pope Benedict XVI, Francis’s predecessor) states:

[I]t cannot be forgotten that the interrelationship between [...] family and work – has, for women, characteristics different from those in the case of men. The harmonization of the organization of work [...] with the demands stemming from the mission of women within the family is a challenge.[...] Indeed, a just valuing of the work of women within the family is required. In this way, women who freely desire will be able to devote the totality of their time to the work of the household without being stigmatized by society or penalized financially, while those who wish also to engage in other work may be able to do so with an appropriate work-schedule, and not have to choose between relinquishing their family life or enduring continual stress, with negative consequences for one's own equilibrium and the harmony of the family.³⁹⁴

The implications in the above passage are clear. While it is permissible for women to work outside the home, work in the public sphere is primarily allocated to men, while women’s work is primarily allocated to the maintenance of the home and the family structure. The above quotation also reaffirms the Church’s institutionalization of gender

³⁹⁴ Letter on men and women, para 13, brackets added.

complementarity, which operates on a binary system based on biological sex, which the Church believes predetermines the performance of gender and sexuality.³⁹⁵

Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict)'s 2004 letter on men and women also demonstrates how the institutional Church doctrinally connects gender complementarity, which is ultimately rooted in genital complementarity, to the Church's understanding of marriage.³⁹⁶ This association further implicates women as symbols or signs: "[T]he human body, marked with the sign of masculinity or femininity, includes right from the beginning the nuptial attribute."³⁹⁷ Unsurprisingly, in the imagination of the institutional Church, femininity is uniquely marked. Indeed, Ratzinger talks about women as the "sign" of the Church:

It is appropriate however to recall that the feminine values mentioned here are above all human values: the human condition of man and woman created in the image of God is one and indivisible. It is only because women are more immediately attuned to these values that they are the reminder and the privileged sign of such values.[...]In the Church, woman as "sign" is more than ever central and fruitful, following as it does from the very identity of the Church, as received from God and accepted in faith. It is this "mystical" identity, profound and essential, which needs to be kept in mind when reflecting on the respective roles of men and women in the Church.³⁹⁸

In the above, Ratzinger praises women for being *more* valued as signs, while actually rendering them more objectified, and therefore less fully human. Such sentiments are

³⁹⁵ Tellingly, the *Catechism* posits the following about gender and sexuality: What responsibility do human persons have in regard to their own sexual identity? God has created human beings as male and female, equal in personal dignity, and has called them to a vocation of love and of communion. Everyone should accept his or her identity as male or female, recognizing its importance for the whole of the person, its specificity and complementarity (*Catechism*, 487).

³⁹⁶ Letter on men and women, para. 10.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid*, para. 6.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid*, para. 14.

supposedly praise for the feminine, while they strip women (or more accurately, people the Church identifies as women) of actual agency. Despite the fact that women are not allowed ordination within the Catholic Church, the Church perceives gender roles as different rather than unequal. In another line of thinking, it seems that women in the Church are simultaneously afforded disproportionately greater responsibilities (as “signs”) and fewer freedoms (in their inability to become ordained). Placing women in this role, valuing them as symbols and for their functional purposes but not as autonomous agents, is also commonly deployed within nationalist schemas.

As stated, the institutional Church’s treatment of women as signs bears similarities with the trope of women-as-symbols-of-the-nation commonly deployed by nationalist movements. In *Make Me a Man!*, Banerjee explains, “Male and female bodies as well as societal ideas defining cultural interpretations of masculinities and femininities are potent metaphors for expressing nation.”³⁹⁹ Banerjee describes woman-as-symbol-of-the-nation as a phenomenon that fits into “a more general narrative” in which women are valued as markers of men’s masculinity, and more importantly, as symbols of a prosperous nation.⁴⁰⁰ Commonly, the nation itself is expressed in traditionally feminine terms, often referred to as she, and described as in need of protection, idealized for being impenetrable, or conversely perceived as vulnerable due to its penetrability.⁴⁰¹ In

³⁹⁹ Banerjee, 2.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid, 3.

⁴⁰¹ Although the scope of this chapter does not allow me to analyze this further, the issue of penetrability-as-violability is additionally allegorically problematic in terms of rape culture. Protecting someone from

addition, metaphorical symbols of the nation are typically feminized.⁴⁰² Some examples from the U.S. include Lady Liberty and the female manifest destiny angel, both of which bear some similarities with the Virgin Mary and idealized feminine characteristics such as the church-as-bride in the Catholic Church.⁴⁰³

In *Make Me a Man!*, Banerjee identifies three common roles assumed by and/or imposed upon women involved in nationalist movements; these roles reflect their statuses as symbols of the nation:

[The] heroic mother, chaste wife, and celibate masculinized warrior.[...] [A]ll three representations of female behavior[...] draw on a common theme: female virtue and chastity. Whether as mother, wife, or warrior, woman's sexual nature is erased, and the need to be pure, modest, and chaste is emphasized.⁴⁰⁴

Parallels between the nationalist movements in Banerjee's study and the Catholic Church's nationalist rhetoric are clear. As articulated by Ratzinger in his 2004 letter, women in Catholicism are valued as markers of purity, and responsible for the well-being of the Church and the family. Consider the Virgin Mary: simultaneously a mother and "ever virgin," Mary paradoxically embodies at least two of the roles that Banerjee describes, a mother, and, in the eyes of the Catholic Church, perpetually chaste.⁴⁰⁵

violation and specifically penetration perpetuates the virgin-whore dichotomy, while simultaneously allowing the protector exclusive access to the protected. This harkens back to San Juan Jr.'s question as to whether nationalistically-imposed nations offer protection or dominions, especially when analyzed through the lens of masculinity studies and scholarship on rape (Smith, *Conquest*).

⁴⁰² Probyn.

⁴⁰³ *Religion in Today's World*, 117-118; *Between Woman and Nation*.

⁴⁰⁴ Banerjee, 3.

⁴⁰⁵ Further parallels might be drawn between celibate masculinized female-bodied figures throughout Catholic history, and the extent to which Mary has been used as an exemplar for women religious as well (*Catechism*, 99).

So important is the role of purity in Marian hagiography that the Church instituted the doctrine of Immaculate Conception, which stipulates that Mary was conceived without original sin and remained immaculate – and chaste – throughout her lifetime.⁴⁰⁶ Mary’s body remained virginal, and Jesus, to whom she gave birth, was conceived virginally, in order that Jesus would be born without sin.⁴⁰⁷ Note here, also, Mary’s relatively passive role in these events. Her body and her role in the Church are primarily valued for her utility in facilitating Jesus’s rise to power, and the patrilineal succession that has since persisted within the Catholic Church for some 2,000 years. The 2004 letter on men and women in the Church further suggests that “Mary is a mirror placed before the Church,” and praises “her dispositions of listening, welcoming, humility, faithfulness, praise and waiting,” all passive, submissive, mostly silent qualities.⁴⁰⁸ This once again indicates that Mary, who for the Church emblemizes *all* feminine values, is most highly esteemed due to her utilitarian attributes.

Considering the association of motherhood and chastity with the nation and nationalism, the “Virgin” Mary may well be understood as an example of a symbol of the nation *par excellence*. The same section of the CDF’s letter states:

Mary, the chosen daughter of Zion, in her femininity, sums up and transfigures the condition of Israel/Bride waiting for the day of her salvation. On the other hand, the masculinity of the Son shows how Jesus assumes in his person all that

⁴⁰⁶ Although traditionalist sources are careful to point out that the idea predates its institution as dogma, The Church instituted Immaculate Conception relatively late in Catholic history as well. Pius IX, to whom David Kertzer refers as the “last of the pope-kings,” established Immaculate Conception as infallible doctrine in 1854. (*Catechism*, 96; *The Pope Who Would Be King*).

⁴⁰⁷ *Catechism*, 97.

⁴⁰⁸ Letter on men and women, para. 18.

the Old Testament symbolism had applied to the love of God for his people, described as the love of a bridegroom for his bride.⁴⁰⁹

Although the scope of this chapter does not allow an in-depth inquiry as to the Church's relationship to the nation-state of Israel, some brief points are worth mentioning.⁴¹⁰

Incest implications aside (as the above excerpt also seems to evoke), that the Church invokes Israel, a historically complex nation culturally, politically, and geographically, and, since the mid-twentieth century (and notably, as a result of the Holocaust), a politically contested nation-state, is fascinating. "Israel" also connotes a "nation" in the sense of a people, tribe, or imagined/socially constructed community: this is the sense in which the term is used in the Bible, and likely the sense in which the 2004 letter on men and women appropriates it. Prior to the term "Israel/Bride," the above quotation also uses the term "daughter of Zion," which likewise originates from Jewish scripture. In one sentence, the quotation above evokes imagery of bride and daughter, both in reference to imagery of the people/nation of Israel. This further solidifies the link between nation (in this case "people") and femininity, and also (under)values women for their relationship to other people: daughter, mother, bride, and so forth. Indeed, the subject of the above quotation is Mary, the ultimate virgin mother known variously as the "Virgin Mary" and the "Blessed Mother."

⁴⁰⁹ Letter on men and women, para. 18.

⁴¹⁰ The Roman Catholic Church's relationship to the nation-state of Israel/or its position on Zionism beg further inquiry, as do the ethical implications of Christian invocations of the people of Israel (do such invocations amount to cultural appropriation?). Such inquiries are beyond the scope of this chapter, but are important considerations.

The CDF's 2004 letter on men and women describes these qualities, in conjunction with the passive quality of waiting as feminine, and then juxtaposes them with the masculine character of Jesus. In an interesting turn, the quotation then goes on to reinforce gender complementarity by describing Jesus as a bridegroom in the same passage that describes his mother as a bride, resulting in a fascinating amalgamation of nationhood (or what Anderson describes as 'nation-ness') and gender. Having briefly examined the Church's intriguing infusion of imageries of Israel, bride, groom, and nation, the complicated question arises, in the context of the Catholic Church, who is the nation?

Who (What) is the Nation?

There is no simple or monolithic answer to the question, If the Roman Catholic Church deploys rhetorics of nationalism, then who is the nation? To understand the most basic answer to that question, it is helpful to interrogate further the meaning of the term "nation." The word "nation" originates from the Latin word *natio*, which comes from the Latin verb meaning to be born. In this sense, the Latin term correlates with what people typically think of when they think of nationality, which is often described as one's country of origin.

This definition is further complicated by immigration status: does nationality more correctly correlate to where one claims residency? And if so, only legally so? These complicating factors are further reasons that concepts of citizenship should be contested, as they point to additional systems that are defined by exclusivity. Anderson makes a

remark with regard to nationality, which further points out that such categories are in fact constructs. He remarks on the “formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept – in the modern world everyone can, should, will, ‘have’ a nationality, as he or she ‘has’ a gender.”⁴¹¹ Using frameworks that now understand categories such as gender as constructed, it is possible to understand how the nation-state is similarly constructed, and perhaps also problematically so.

Returning to the matter of linguistic origins, another term used to connote nation is the Latin term *gentem*, which also means people. In fact, the term *gentem* is variously translated to mean people, tribe, nation, and race in English texts. Interestingly, the ancient Greek root *ethnos* is also often translated into English as nation or race. This is significant because the word ethnicity, which contains the Greek root word *ethnos*, is differentiated from social constructs of nation or race, at least as they are imagined in English language discourses. Ethnicity, as typically constructed, connotes ancestral heritage most commonly associated with blood ties and/or geography.⁴¹² The understanding that nation is used synonymously with state, a governing body, as opposed to a common people or imagined community, is a recent modern development.

Understanding “nation” to mean a particular “people,” it might be argued that the Magisterium is targeting a particular (exclusionary) Catholic people. Although Anderson defines nation specifically as an imagined political community, a broader definition of a people as an imagined, socially constructed community is helpful here. The people, in

⁴¹¹ See Kaplan et al for critiques of this assertion (Anderson, 5).

⁴¹² Though such an undertaking goes beyond the scope of this chapter, it would be interesting to examine if, and to what extent, translation has played a role in the slippage of these social constructions today.

this case, are most obviously, the Catholic Church. The term catholic is also interesting in this context, as is the term church. The term catholic, with a lower-case c, literally means universal.

On the one hand, Christianity is often imagined as a missionary religion; one which welcomes converts and is not bound to state or ethnicity. The Church espouses a meaning of the term universal that actually resonates closely with missionization. The *Catechism* states: “The Church is catholic, that is universal, insofar as Christ is present in her[....] The Church[...] is sent out by Christ on a mission to the whole of the human race.”⁴¹³ Note that “church,” in this usage, seems to mean the institution but also congregants or Christian people, inasmuch as the Church envisions all Catholics as responsible for the Church’s evangelical mission.

“Church,” in Catholic usage, can have various meanings, including “people of God, body of Christ, temple of the Spirit.”⁴¹⁴ On the other hand, there is slippage between church-as-building, church-as-Christ, church-as-(Catholic)-people, and church-as-institution. Interestingly, the English word church often comes from the Greek word *ecclesia*, which can mean church in the sense of congregants, but it more literally means assembly. Prior to Christianity, *ecclesia* connoted an assembly of Greek citizens. The linguistic evolution of this term, particularly as it relates to the term church and the question as to whether the Catholic Church operates as a meta-nationalist entity, is striking.

⁴¹³ *Catechism*, 166.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid*, introduction.

The tension between the Catholic concepts of church-as-people and church-as-institution, and how both concepts remain exclusionary, is of particular consequence in this chapter. Defining a Catholic people is as difficult as it is to define a nation or a citizen. Although self-identification may seem like the most obvious route, the institutional Church has the power – and continues to exercise it – to prevent people from full participation in the Catholic Church. According to official Catholic teachings, for example, one is not supposed to receive the Eucharist – perhaps the most central tenet of Catholic liturgy – if one has committed a mortal sin and not received absolution, which can only be granted by a member of the clergy; this is usually only granted after confession. Ongoing participation in a sexual relationship with a member of the same sex is considered a mortal sin, and officially, people who are doing so are not supposed to receive the Eucharist (also known as Holy Communion).⁴¹⁵ This teaching has had concrete implications in the U.S. on several occasions, highlighting some of the ongoing tensions between the Vatican and U.S.-based gender and sexual justice movements.

Bishops and archbishops in the U.S. have instituted bans on Communion for visibly gay people on several occasions, including as recently as 2017 when a bishop in Illinois disallowed Communion and funerary rights for same-sex spouses.⁴¹⁶ In 2010, Catholics wearing gay pride rainbow symbols in a church in Minnesota were similarly

⁴¹⁵ Catechism 304 reads: “Which sins must be confessed? All grave sins not yet confessed, which a careful examination of conscience brings to mind, must be brought to the sacrament of Penance. The confession of serious sins is the only ordinary way to obtain forgiveness” (*Catechism*, 304).

⁴¹⁶ Laurel Wamsley, “Illinois Bishop Decrees No Communion, Funeral Rites for Same-Sex Persons,” NPR, June 2017, accessed March 2020, <https://www.npr.org/sections/twotwo-way/2017/06/23/534127330/illinois-bishop-decrees-no-communion-funeral-rites-for-same-sex-spouses>.

banned from receiving Communion.⁴¹⁷ In doing so, LGBTQIA+ Catholics were not only forced to choose between their queer and trans identities and their Catholic identities; they were also forced to choose between participation in the two communities, as the bishop's ban demonstrated.

However, banning participation for those wearing the gay pride flag sent an additional message. It also forced cisgender/heterosexual supporters of the LGBTQIA+ Community to choose between Catholicism and LGBTQIA+-inclusive sexual gender justice movements, or more to the point, LGBTQIA+ people. This move, which occurred during Benedict's tenure, perhaps points to an institutional heritage of banning not only people of non-dominant sexes, genders, and sexualities, but also their supporters from participation in the Church, demonstrating the deep-seatedness of the Church's divisive tactics. Just as Francis condemns trans and gender variant people, he also seems to condemn their supporters as well as feminism and gender and sexual justice ideologies in general.

Of course, the question as to whether the institutional Church possesses the sole power to dictate the parameters, members, and meanings of the "church" informs the research in this project. Although the institutional Church celebrates "catholic" universalism, in another light, "universal" might be thought of as homogenizing or assimilatory in ways that effect conformity and erasure. In conjunction with the Church's historical evangelical mission, which at countless points in history has been implemented

⁴¹⁷ "Minnesota Archbishop Denies Communion to Gay, Lesbian Students," LGBTQ Nation, October 2010, accessed March 2020, <https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2010/10/minnesota-archbishop-denies-communion-to-gay-lesbian-students/>.

forcibly, an ethos of universality might rightly be conceived of as hegemonic, defined simultaneously by imposition and exclusion.

Continuing with linguistic explorations, it is possible to take the analogical conceptualization of Church-as-Nation a step further considering Banerjee's explanation that "nationalism" is a contested and constructed term, with some scholars distinguishing between "cultural" and "civic" nationalism. According to Banerjee, cultural nationalism can be determined by such markers as religion, ethnicity, race, or language. Civic nationalism, on the other hand, usually refers to "emphasizing an ideology (e.g., democracy), and legal rights (e.g., a constitution guaranteeing individual freedoms and rights.)"⁴¹⁸ In these distinct but related senses, nation can be used synonymously with state, similar to the sense in which Anderson defines nation and its relationship to nationalism.

Significantly, nationalism in the former sense can be used to denote an ideology of a particular people (or perhaps more accurately, a People), which coincides with the linguistic origins of the term nation as delineated above. It is evident that the Church defines itself as a distinct People. Given the historical slippage between church; nation; citizenship; and people, to name only a few, it might well be argued that the Church poses as not only a nationalist but a meta-nationalist/globalized entity in multiple usages of the term. Indeed, the Church maintains a prominent voice in legal/civic matters (consider John Paul II's influence during the Cold War and his avidly anti-communist

⁴¹⁸ Banerjee, 5.

position as only one such example).⁴¹⁹ Additionally, it is not insignificant that Vatican City is a sovereign country, adding an further layer of complexity to the question as to who (or where) is the universal/global Catholic Church.

The Rhetorics of Meta-Nationalism

That the Catholic Church is a sovereign nation in the Vatican but also a religion that exists globally is significant here in terms of how it operates both functionally and rhetorically as a socially constructed people and community. Francis operationalizes these structures in his public condemnation of gender theory as ideological colonization. Francis is a skilled rhetorician; Francis's rhetoric polarizes Catholics, particularly those affected by colonialism, by pitting anticolonial activism against gender and sexual justice movements. Francis's condemnation of "gender theory"/"ideology" targets trans- and gender variant persons and ideologies; this is evident by his lamentation that today's children are taught that they can choose their sex.⁴²⁰

Given that Roman Catholicism is a global religion, and more notably, that Francis is the first South American Pope, his use of the term "ideological colonization" seems deliberate. Francis's rhetoric is familiar to anticolonial audiences, and he seems acquainted with the warranted assertion that many gender and sexual justice movements perpetuate colonial systems of oppression. However, it must also be noted that like

⁴¹⁹ Gracjan Kraszewski, "Catalyst for Revolution: Pope John Paul II's 1979 Pilgrimage to Poland and its Effects on Solidarity and the Fall of Communism," *The Polish Review* 57, no. 4 (2012), 27-46, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/polishreview.57.4.0027?seq=1>.

⁴²⁰ Meeting with the Polish Bishops, 4.

historical gender justice movements, particularly those based in the U.S., the Church's relationship to colonialism and imperialism is also fraught. Although the Church purports to have a strong platform for social justice, as an institutional power, the Catholic Church remains enormously complicit in the legacy of colonialism.

Francis relies on rhetoric that insists all forms of sexual and gender justice are colonial impositions. Simultaneously, the Church maintains a sexual ethic that reinforces gender complementarity and essentializes conjugal procreation as the only acceptable sex act.⁴²¹ Francis is homogenizing postcolonial countries and the imagined Global South by imposing a seamless identity upon these Catholics.⁴²² The identity logic operates thusly: Proper Catholics must also be proper opponents to colonialism. Legitimate Catholics must recognize sexual and gender justice movements as neo-colonialism. These "good" Catholics *are* not and *cannot* be queer, trans, or feminists. Queer, trans, and feminist people therefore *cannot* be Catholics.

Thus, Francis's rhetoric is extremely effective in pitting gender and sexual justice movements against anti- and postcolonial movements, at least by subtle association. Although the Church espouses this rhetoric globally, it is far more effective towards parts of the world and members of communities that are justifiably distrusting of neo-colonial powers. The point of this chapter is not so much to suggest that the Global North and West are not complicit in ideological and other forms of colonization, but rather to point out that the institutional Church *remains* a

⁴²¹ Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2005, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium_ccc/documents/archive_2005_compendium-ccc_en.html, 71.

⁴²² Anderson.

neo-colonial power, a reality for which Francis does not sufficiently account.

Moreover, Francis's divide and conquer tactic is overtly nationalistic in overtone, particularly because it speaks to the character of his audiences' anti, post-, and decolonial commitments.

In homogenizing his intended (global) audience, Francis is employing a sort of meta-nationalism. Francis engages nationalist devices by imposing a rigid, exclusionary identity politics upon his Catholic subjects; one that excludes queer, trans, and gender variant peoples as well as gender and sexual justice activists. In addition, his language as well as his intended audience homogenizes the Global South and East in an attempt to put it at odds with the Global North and West. Both tactics try to identify a "nation" while simultaneously identifying a colonizer; this approach is common amongst nationalist movements in postcolonial regions but is complicated by the fact that the institutional Church itself is also implicated in colonialism.

Like nationalism as applied to nation-states, Francis seems intent on uniting his Catholics via assimilation to the exclusion of Catholics who identify as or are sympathetic to people of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities. Assimilation, when it implies normalization, often results in erasure, as the intertwined legacies of colonialism and nationalism have already demonstrated. Typical of nationalist tactics, Francis, applies a "divide and conquer" tactic as a means to preserve institutional authority over a larger body. As Francis is the head of a global religion with some 1.2 billion adherents, Francis deploys this rhetoric on rather sizable scale in term of numbers as well as area.

Most immediately, Francis seeks to establish contemporary gender and sexual justice activists as the colonizer. The singular here is intentional, as Francis has strategically homogenized these categories as part of his vilifying “gender theory” and turning it into an epithet. This results in reinforcing binaries between the imagined Global North and South, East and West, colonizer and colonized. The reality, however, is that neat lines cannot be neatly drawn between Catholic and gender variant, same sex-attracted and member of the Global South, feminist and anti-colonist.

Indeed, these lines that Francis is intent on drawing become more complicated when considering Indigenous populations and communities in diaspora, many of whom live in the settler colonial territories in question. This still does not account for the fact that many Catholics are simultaneously queer, trans, members of the Global South, anticolonial activists, gender and sexual justice activists, or some combination thereof, despite Francis’s insistence to the contrary. Privilege and oppression can and often do coexist simultaneously; oppressed people can perpetuate oppression; and the colonizer and the colonized cannot be so clearly delineated. Nonetheless, Francis’s rhetoric reinforces false binaries, simultaneously along the lines of Catholic and not-Catholic; anticolonial and colonizer. His twenty-first century papal rhetoric serves as the culmination of several centuries’ worth of similar tactics on the part of the colonial-institutional Church, some of which have culminated in violence and disaster.

Disasters of Nationalism

As E. San Juan Jr. reminds his readers, several “disasters” of nationalism have resulted in mass genocides as recently as the twenty and twenty-first centuries. Although some might interpret the implementation of nationalisms as the primary problem, the potential for harm begins with the ideology. In defining who one’s people or nation is, one simultaneously defines who one’s people or nation is not. In short, defining an “us” creates a “them.” Conceived of this way, nationalist rhetoric is foundationally exclusionary. Chatterjee further points out that nationalism is rooted in colonialism, including the divide and conquer mentality that serves to preserve institutional supremacy and suppress dissent amongst the colonized.

As mentioned previously, San Juan Jr. offers historically tragic examples of some disasters of nationalism, such as the Holocaust, and more recently, ethnic cleansing campaigns in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, and Sri Lanka. It should also be noted that examples such as Nazi Germany and fascist Italy are not necessarily outliers, but that nationalism can and often does lay the groundwork for harmful – or to paraphrase San Juan Jr., sometimes disastrous - results. Analysis of Francis’s statements demonstrates intimate familiarity with what might broadly be conceived of as contemporary social justice discourse. Excerpts from his comments on ideological colonization range from lamentations on globalization, nationalism, and xenophobia, to espousing rhetoric that parallels postcolonial and human rights discourses. Francis masterfully subsumes these discourses, while seamlessly subverting them in order to impose “gender theory” as not so much *a*, but *the* true form of “ideological colonization.”

Strikingly, Francis made his own reference to what San Juan Jr. refers to as “disasters of nationalism” in response to a question about ideological colonization in January 2015. Specifically, Francis made a comparison between gender theory and some of the most notorious examples of fascism in history. His assertions are telling:

Twenty years ago, [...] a minister of education asked for a large loan to build schools for the poor. They gave it to her on the condition that in the schools there would be a [...] school book [...] in which gender theory was taught.[...] This is ideological colonization. They introduce an idea [...] that has nothing to do with the people. [...] And they colonize the people with an idea which changes[...] a mentality or a structure. [...] During the Synod, the African bishops complained about this. [...] The same was done by the dictatorships of the last century. [...]. Think of the Balilla, think of the Hitler Youth.... They colonized the people.[...] Each people has its own culture, its own history.[...]. But when conditions are imposed by colonizing empires, they seek to make these peoples lose their own identity and create uniformity.[...] This is ‘ideological colonization’.⁴²³

Note that Francis begins by telling a story that seems to inform his later lamentation that children are taught gender theory in school. He goes on to express an indicatively nationalist in-group/out-group mentality by claiming that “gender theory” has nothing to do with “the people.” At this point, Francis simultaneously assumes an essentialist approach to certain peoples, and a strategic familiarity with the success of galvanizing nationalist momentum in anticolonial communities. He also effectively alienates multiple groups in the process, by labeling them as mutually exclusive. Francis’s subsequent reference to African bishops is also interesting, though not surprising. Francis intends to suggest that *The Global South* rejects same-sex attraction, trans identity and feminist movements as colonial impositions. This explicitly exclusivist, nationalist rhetoric became obvious in the earliest Vatican conversations surrounding gender theory, when

⁴²³ “In-Flight Press Conference of His Holiness Pope Francis from the Philippines to Rome.”

the Pontifical Council for the Family described gender ideology as destructive of nations.⁴²⁴

The westernized discursive colonialism that has lamentably permeated some historical gender and sexual justice movements, particularly those originating in the U.S., should always be reflexively acknowledged and duly critiqued. In tandem, it should also be pointed out that there is plenty of evidence to suggest that not same-sex attraction, gender variance, and gender and sexual justice homophobia, but rather transphobia, and sexism are the true products of colonialism.⁴²⁵ Generalizations about any minoritized group remain problematic. Specifically, in regard to Francis's remarks, it is critically, even existentially relevant that queer and trans people exist within Catholicism and in Africa and other parts of the Global South, despite Francis's claims to the contrary.

Perhaps the most surprising portion of the above quotation occurs when Francis compares "gender theory" to the indoctrination of children by the regimes in Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. Although Francis's critique of western hegemony is warranted, his invocation of some of the most notorious instances of genocide and mass extermination is both problematic and hyperbolic. Essentially, Francis is comparing *all* forms of gender and sexual justice activism to what is collectively remembered as one of the most horrific large-scale assaults against a specific group of people in recent history.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁴ *The Family and Human Rights*.

⁴²⁵ Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000).

By invoking the Holocaust, Francis also casts Catholics as a “similarly” minoritized group. Although this may have been historically accurate in certain specific contexts, Roman Catholicism remains one of the largest world religions and the Catholic Church was one of the greatest perpetrators of settler colonialism in what is now the United States. Such a claim, in addition to repeatedly subtly excusing the Church’s history of colonialism, has the potential to result in not only epistemic but also physical violence against people of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities, particularly those who are members of colonized communities.

What is also significant is that even if one were to concede Francis’s point that “gender theory” is a form of ideological colonization, the Church is *also* literally and directly implicated in campaigns of mass extermination. More to the point, although Francis condemns fascism in the above quotation, he neglects the fact that the Vatican has been implicated in supporting these same Axis powers during World War II.⁴²⁷ His repeated attempts to expel queer, trans, and feminist Catholics from the Church are strategically coupled with an excision of the Church’s complicity in colonialism. Francis invokes some of the most notorious disasters of nationalism in his condemnation of gender theory. The point that must be underscored here, of course, is that gender “theory” is a euphemism. The rhetoric in question targets actual peoples.

Thus, while obscuring the Roman Catholic Church’s actual role in facilitating fascists, Francis argues that gender theorists are the new fascists. He ignores the fact that

⁴²⁶ It should also be pointed out that the events of World War II were not the only or most recent perpetrations of such sort.

⁴²⁷ Gellately; *The Pope Against the Jews*; Pollard.

gender theory is often employed to protect some of the very same people targeted for extermination by actual fascists (e.g. homosexually inclined persons). And thus, the very gender theories that may preserve lives by offering greater recognition to gender and sexual minorities are tagged as fascist and implicated in genocide.

Perhaps not coincidentally, the Church's hierarchical matrix of gender and sexuality in many ways reflects the characteristics of what Banerjee refers to as "hegemonic masculinity," which she hypothesizes is rooted in various imperialist and colonialist mechanisms that reinforce the same sexed, gendered, and sexualized hierarchies that the Church institutionalizes. As the head of the Catholic Church, Francis is reasserting a particular Catholic identity. This identity specifically disassociates itself from contemporary social justice movements pertaining to sexual and gender equality. It does so while subsuming and subverting social justice and anticolonial language and sentiments with the goal of reinforcing the institutional teachings of the Church.

Francis's deployment of the term colonization makes the analysis of power dynamics at play somewhat more complex. As with issues pertaining to gender and sexuality, the Church's relationship to colonialism is sordid and should not be underscored. While the Church professes a preferential option for the marginalized, as an institutional power, the Catholic Church simultaneously remains enormously complicit in the legacy of colonialism. Francis's decision to invoke the rhetoric of colonization becomes all the more significant when we consider that countless individuals in the Global South are oppressed on the basis of sex, gender, and/or sexuality as well as colonization. This reality raises questions as to the Church's participation in this

oppression, and whether it has adequately accounted for its historical complicity in colonialism and imperialism. Despite the Church's legacy of colonialism, and despite the diverse and complex lived realities of Catholics in the Global South, Francis is imposing a seamless identity upon these Catholics: one that reinforces sexual, gendered and Church hierarchy, supposedly in the name of resisting colonization.

Francis relies on rhetoric that insists all forms of sexual and gender justice are colonial impositions. Simultaneously, the Church maintains a sexual ethic that reinforces systems of sexism, homophobia, and transphobia. Additionally, Francis pits sexual and gender justice movements against anti-, post-, and decolonial movements. Divisive tactics tend to prove the most dangerous to marginalized individuals, whom Francis claims to have a vested interest in protecting. As the history of contemporary social movements shows, this type of identity politics is more of a threat to intersectionally-marginalized individuals, such as those who might align themselves with multiple identities that Francis presents as mutually exclusive. Where does the Church's commitment lie? With the socially marginalized, or with the preservation of its own institutional power?

Francis employs a particular identity politics, aimed with special attention to Catholics in the Global South and East. Per Francis's assessment, a proper Catholic *and* a proper opponent to colonization will resist social justice movements based on contemporary gender theory. In doing so, Francis and the institutional Catholic Church reassert structural systems that intersectionally oppress many different groups on a global scale mobilizing the enormous power of the Catholic Church into an alliance with certain

nationalisms to more thoroughly exclude and oppress variant expressions of gender and sexuality. Given the Church's commitment to social justice, further assessment of the Church's role in systems that prove violent to people of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities is necessary. It is clear the Church has not reconciled its intentions with its impacts and thus continues to fuel homophobia, transphobia, and sexism, and a culture of violence towards marginalized peoples.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have conducted a genealogical analysis that situates Francis's statements on gender-theory-as-ideological-colonization within a legacy of institutional, traditionalist Catholic sexual ethics. The phrase "ideological colonization" marks simultaneously an adaptability to anticolonial modes thinking and new ways of preserving the Church's institutional authority in the twenty-first century. The Vatican's (post)modern campaign against gender theory and Francis's even more recent campaign against ideological colonization is the latest iteration of a long-stemming sexual hierarchy that subordinates peoples of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities. Thematically, in addition to referring specifically to gender theory/ideology as ideological colonization, Francis's statements typically invoke natural law, threats to the family, and the threat of modernity. I have historicized each theme in turn within the larger theological, social, and institutional context of the intellectual history of the Catholic Church.

The purpose of this project is to shed light on the complex ways in which theological discourses such as natural law, human dignity, social teaching, and sexual ethics are interconnected within Roman Catholic discourse, and in turn, the ways in which these teachings preserve and are preserved by the Roman Catholic institution. What I thought would be a project on Catholic sexual ethics quickly evolved into a much larger study on the politics of institutional power dynamics. I discovered that sexual ethics both precedes and proceeds the advent of modernity. I further discovered that despite the narrative commonly espoused in popular consciousness, the Church has adapted quite gracefully to the separation of church and state and to the rise of the nation-

state. What may have begun, simultaneously, with the institution of papal infallibility and the invention of (homo)sexuality in modernity, persists with the invention of gender theory and ideological colonization in (post)modernity and the twenty-first century.

As the head of the Roman Catholic Church, Francis is reasserting a particular Catholic identity, one that specifically disassociates itself from contemporary social justice movements pertaining to sexual and gender equality, and that more generally aligns itself with the institutional teachings of the Church. As with issues pertaining to gender and sexuality, the Church's relationship to colonialism is fraught. While the Church professes a platform for social justice, as an institutional power, the Church simultaneously remains enormously complicit in the legacy of colonialism.

A close reading of Francis's remarks on ideological colonization in tandem with Church's position on sexual ethics suggests that this legacy continues in the twenty-first century. Francis's decision to invoke the rhetoric of colonization is more significant when we consider that countless individuals in the Global South are oppressed on the basis of sex, gender, and/or sexuality as well as neocolonialism and imperialism. This reality raises questions as to the Church's participation in this oppression, and whether it has adequately accounted for its historical complicity in colonialism. Despite the Church's legacy of colonialism, and despite the diverse and complex lived realities of Catholics in the Global South, Francis is imposing a seamless identity upon these Catholics: one that reinforces sexual, gendered and Church hierarchy, supposedly in the name of resisting colonization.

Francis relies on rhetoric that insists that all forms of sexual and gender justice are colonial impositions. Simultaneously, the Church maintains a sexual ethic that reinforces systems of sexism, homophobia, and transphobia, that are violent to many individuals, including those in the Global South. The Catholic Church has yet to address adequately its complicity in the harm done to these individuals. In this line of thinking, it is worth questioning whether the Church's preservation of this hierarchy, particularly in the face of violence against people of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities, is itself a form of ideological colonization.

Additionally concerning is the pitting of sexual and gender justice movements against anti-, post-, and decolonial movements. Divisive tactics tend to prove the most dangerous to marginalized individuals, whom Francis claims to have a vested interest in protecting. As the history of contemporary social movements shows, this type of identity politics is more of a threat to intersectionally-marginalized individuals, such as those who might align themselves with multiple movements that Francis presents as mutually exclusive. Where does the Church's commitment lie? With the socially marginalized, or with the preservation of its own institutional power?

Francis employs a particular nationalist identity politics, aimed with special attention to Catholics in the Global South. Historical evidence suggests that nationalism is by definition exclusionary, and has been linked to inciting mass epistemic *and* physical violence. Per Francis's assessment, a proper Catholic *and* a proper opponent to colonization will resist social justice movements based on contemporary gender theory. In doing so, Francis and the institutional Catholic Church reassert structural systems that

intersectionally oppress many different groups on a global scale. Given the Church's commitment to social justice, further assessment of the Church's role in systems that prove violent to people of nondominant sexes, genders, and sexualities is warranted. Any such analysis must continue to ask whether gender and sexual justice movements, or homophobia, transphobia, and sexism are the true products of ideological colonization.

Pope Francis has obviously been the focal point of this dissertation. More broadly speaking, this is also a project on embodiment. In the above genealogy, I have offered an in-depth investigation several complex areas of Catholic theological discourse requiring expertise in linguistics, hermeneutics, ecclesiology, and several centuries' worth of Catholic theology and history. I have done so in an effort to resist institutional teachings that seek to sanction and erase non-dominant bodies. Despite their continued and important efforts to create spaces, non-dominant peoples have a history of being excluded from full and public participation in the Catholic Church. Similarly, institutional Catholicism has attempted to instill in me the notion that I am the wrong kind of person to become an expert in its field. I did it anyway.

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Appendix

Ideological Colonization

Through transcripts uploaded to the Vatican website by the Libreria Editrice Vaticana, the Vatican's official publishing house, I found a total of thirty-one instances in which the phrase ideological colonization appears between January 2015 (the first time the phrase appears) and January 2020. I have excerpted those data below, in chronological order. I have also included relevant contextual information such as the location, the name of the event, and the nature of the communication.

1. 16 January 2015. Apostolic Journey to Sri Lanka and the Philippines. "Meeting with Families."

There are forms of ideological colonization which are out to destroy the family. [...] The family is also threatened by growing efforts on the part of some to redefine the very institution of marriage, by relativism, by the culture of the ephemeral, by a lack of openness to life.⁴²⁸

2. 19 January 2015. Apostolic Journey to Sri Lanka and the Philippines. "In-Flight Press Conference from the Philippines to Rome."

Twenty years ago, in 1995, a minister of education asked for a large loan to build schools for the poor. They gave it to her on the condition that in the schools there would be a book for the children of a certain grade level. It was a school book[...] in which gender theory was taught.[...] This is ideological colonization. The same was done by the dictatorships of the last century. They entered with their own doctrine. Think of the Balilla, think of the Hitler Youth.... They colonized the people. [...] [W]hen conditions are imposed by colonizing empires, they seek to make these peoples lose their own identity and create uniformity.⁴²⁹

3. 21 March 2015. Visit to Pompeii and Naples. "Meeting with Young People on the Caracciolo Seafront."

⁴²⁸ "Meeting With Families."

⁴²⁹ "In Flight Press Conference of His Holiness Pope Francis from the Philippines to Rome."

The crisis of the family is a societal fact. There are also ideological colonializations (sic) of the family, different paths and proposals in Europe and also coming from overseas. Then, there is the mistake of the human mind — gender theory — creating so much confusion. So, the family really is under attack. What can we do in this active secularization? What can we do with ideological colonialization? How can we go on in a culture that doesn't care about the family, where marriage is not preferred?⁴³⁰

4. 15 May 2015. Address to the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of the Central African Republic on their “Ad Limina” Visit. Vatican City.

I cannot but encourage you to give marriage all the pastoral care and attention it deserves, and not to be discouraged in face of resistance caused by cultural traditions, human weakness or the new ideological colonization that is spreading everywhere.⁴³¹

5. 18 May 2015. Address to the 68th General Assembly of the Italian Episcopal Conference. Vatican City.

My questions and concerns arise from a global view — not only of Italy, but global — and especially from the countless meetings I have had in these two years with Bishops' Conferences, where I have noted the importance of what might be defined as ecclesial sensitivity[....] Ecclesial sensitivity which, as good pastors, helps us go out toward the People of God to defend them from ideological colonization which takes away identity and human dignity.⁴³²

⁴³⁰ Francis, , “Meeting With Young People on the Caracciolo Seafront,” Pastoral Visit of His Holiness Pope Francis to Pompeii and Naples ,21 March 2015, accessed May 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/march/documents/papa-francesco_20150321_napoli-pompei-giovani.html.

⁴³¹ Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of the Central African Republic on their ‘Ad Limina’ Visit,” 15 May 2015, accessed May 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/may/documents/papa-francesco_20150515_ad-limina-repubblica-centroafricana.pdf.

⁴³² Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the 68th General Assembly of the Italian Episcopal Conference,” 18 May 2015, accessed May 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/may/documents/papa-francesco_20150518_conferenza-episcopale-italiana.pdf.

6. 13 June 2015. Address to Members of the High Council of the Judiciary (Italian judicial officials). Vatican City.

Likewise globalization — as it was appropriately recalled — in fact also brings with it aspects of potential confusion and uncertainty, such as when it becomes a means of introducing customs, concepts, even rules, extraneous to a social fabric, with the consequent deterioration of the cultural roots of reality which should instead be respected; and this is the result of the tendencies proper to other cultures which are economically advanced but ethically debilitated. So many times I have spoken of ideological colonization when I refer to this problem.⁴³³

7. 8 July 2015. Apostolic Journey to Ecuador, Bolivia and Paraguay. “Meeting with Civil Authorities.” Bolivia.

Among the various social groups, I would like to mention in particular the family, which is everywhere threatened by many factors: by domestic violence, alcoholism, sexism, drug addiction, unemployment, urban unrest, the abandonment of the elderly, and children left to the streets. These problems often meet with pseudo-solutions which are not healthy for the family, but which show the clear effects of an ideological colonization.⁴³⁴

8. 9 July 2015. Apostolic Journey to Ecuador, Bolivia and Paraguay. “Participation at the Second World Meeting of Popular Movements.”

At other times, under the noble guise of battling corruption, the narcotics trade and terrorism – grave evils of our time which call for coordinated international action – we see states being saddled with measures which have little to do with the resolution of these problems and which not infrequently worsen matters. Similarly, the monopolizing of the communications media, which would impose alienating examples of consumerism and a certain cultural uniformity, is another one of the forms taken by the new colonialism. It is ideological colonialism (sic). As the African bishops have observed, poor countries are often treated like “parts of a machine, cogs on a gigantic wheel.”⁴³⁵

⁴³³ High Council of the Judiciary.

⁴³⁴ Meeting With Civil Authorities.

⁴³⁵ Second World Meeting.

9. 25 September 2015. Apostolic Journey to Cuba, the United States and Visit to United Nations Headquarters. “Meeting with Members of the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization.” New York City.

Without the recognition of certain incontestable natural ethical limits and without the immediate implementation of those pillars of integral human development, the ideal of 'saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war' (Charter of the United Nations, Preamble), and 'promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom' (ibid.), risks becoming an unattainable illusion, or, even worse, idle chatter which serves as a cover for all kinds of abuse and corruption, or for carrying out an ideological colonization by the imposition of anomalous models and lifestyles which are alien to people's identity and, in the end, irresponsible.⁴³⁶

10. 3 March 2016. Address to Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life. Vatican City.

I would like to repeat here something I have said many times: we must beware of the new ideological colonization that invades human and Christian thought, under the pretense of virtue, modernity and new attitudes. It is actually colonization, that is, it takes away freedom.⁴³⁷

11. 6 May 2016. Conferral of the Charlemagne Prize. Vatican City.

The community of European peoples will thus be able to overcome the temptation of falling back on unilateral paradigms and opting for forms of “ideological colonization”. Instead, it will rediscover the breadth of the European soul, born of the encounter of civilizations and peoples. The soul of Europe is in fact greater than the present borders of the Union and is called to become a model of new syntheses and of dialogue.⁴³⁸

12. 27 July 2016. Apostolic Journey to Poland. World Youth Day.

⁴³⁶ Meeting with UN.

⁴³⁷ Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life,” 3 March 2016, accessed March 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/march/documents/papa-francesco_20160303_plenaria-accademia-vita.html.

⁴³⁸ Conferral of the Charlemagne Prize.

In Europe, America, Latin America, Africa, and in some countries of Asia, there are genuine forms of ideological colonization taking place. And one of these - I will call it clearly by its name - is [the ideology of] “gender”. Today children – children! – are taught in school that everyone can choose his or her sex. Why are they teaching this? Because the books are provided by the persons and institutions that give you money. These forms of ideological colonization are also supported by influential countries. And this [is] terrible! In a conversation with Pope Benedict,[...] he said to me: “Holiness, this is the age of sin against God the Creator”. [...] God created man and woman; God created the world in a certain way... and we are doing the exact opposite.⁴³⁹

13. 1 October 2016. Apostolic Journey to Georgia and Azerbaijan. “Meeting with Priests, Religious, Seminarians, and Pastoral Workers. “

You, Irina, mentioned a great enemy to marriage today: the theory of gender. Today there is a world war to destroy marriage. Today there are ideological colonisations (sic) which destroy, not with weapons, but with ideas. Therefore, there is a need to defend ourselves from ideological colonisations. If there are problems, make peace as soon as possible, before the day ends, and don’t forget the three words: “can I”, “thank you”, “forgive me”.⁴⁴⁰

14. 2 October 2016. Apostolic Journey to Georgia and Azerbaijan. “In-Flight Press Conference from Azerbaijan to Rome.”

I have accompanied many people with homosexual tendencies and also homosexual activity.[...] When a person who has this condition comes before Jesus, Jesus certainly does not say: “Go away because you are homosexual.” No. What I was talking about has to do with the mischief going on these days with the indoctrination of gender theory. A French father told me that he was at the table speaking to his children – he is Catholic, his wife is Catholic, the children are Catholic, lukewarm Catholics, but Catholics – and he asked his ten-year old son: “And what do you want to be when you grow up?” – “A girl.” And his father realized that the schoolbooks were teaching gender theory. This is against the

⁴³⁹ Meeting with Polish Bishops.

⁴⁴⁰ Francis, “Meeting with Priests, Religious, Seminarians and Pastoral Workers,” Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Georgia and Azerbaijan, 1 October 2016, accessed March 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/october/documents/papa-francesco_20161001_georgia-sacerdoti-religiosi.html.

realities of nature. [...] I call this “ideological colonization.”[...] I want to be clear. It is a moral problem. It is a problem. It is a human problem.⁴⁴¹

15. 1 December 2017. Video Message for the Convention “Meeting of Catholics Who Assume Political Responsibility in the Service of Latin American Peoples” Organized by the Pontifical Commission for Latin America and the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM). Audience Bogota. Recorded from Vatican City.

We have to move towards mature, participatory democracies, free of the scourges of corruption, or of ideological colonization, or autocratic pretensions and cheap demagogues. Let us take care of our common home and its most vulnerable inhabitants, avoiding all kinds of suicidal indifference and unbridled exploitation. Let us raise again in a concrete way our demand for the economic, social, cultural and political integration of brother peoples to build our continent, which will be even greater when it brings together “all the bloodlines”, completing its fusion, as a paradigm of respect for human rights, peace and justice.⁴⁴²

16. 12 December 2017. “Holy Mass for Latin America.” Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Vatican City.

Dear brothers and sisters, within this dialectic of fruitfulness-barrenness, let us see the richness and cultural diversity of our peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean; it is a sign of the great richness that we are invited not only to cultivate, but also, especially in our time, to courageously defend from every attempt at homogenization which ends by imposing — with attractive slogans — a single way of thinking, of being, of feeling, of living; that ends by rendering pointless and barren what we inherited from our forebears; that results in making people — especially our young people — feel inadequate because they belong to this or that other culture. Ultimately, our fruitfulness demands that we protect our peoples from an ideological colonization that erases what is richest in them, be they indigenous, Afro-American, of mixed race, farmers, or residents of the periphery.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ “In-Flight Press Conference of His Holiness Pope Francis From Azerbaijan to Rome.”

⁴⁴² Francis, “Video Message for the Convention ‘Meeting of Catholics Who Assume Political Responsibility in the Service of Latin American Peoples’ Organized by the Pontifical Commission for Latin America and the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM),” 1 December 2017, accessed May 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2017/documents/papa-francesco_20171201_videomessaggio-cattolici-inpolitica.html.

17. 8 January 2018. Address for the Traditional Exchange of New Year's Greetings.

Vatican City.

It should be noted, however, that over the years, particularly in the wake of the social upheaval of the 1960's, the interpretation of some rights has progressively changed, with the inclusion of a number of "new rights" that not infrequently conflict with one another. This has not always helped the promotion of friendly relations between nations, since debatable notions of human rights have been advanced that are at odds with the culture of many countries; the latter feel that they are not respected in their social and cultural traditions, and instead neglected with regard to the real needs they have to face. Somewhat paradoxically, there is a risk that, in the very name of human rights, we will see the rise of modern forms of *ideological colonization* by the stronger and the wealthier, to the detriment of the poorer and the most vulnerable.⁴⁴⁴

18. 24 January 2018. "General Audience." In reference to Apostolic Journey to Chile

and Peru. Vatican City.

In Peru the motto of the Visit was: "Unidos por la esperanza — United by hope". United not in a sterile uniformity, everyone similar: this is not union; but in all the wealth of the differences that we inherit from history and culture. [...] Together, we said "no" to economic colonization and to ideological colonization.⁴⁴⁵

19. 27 October 2018. Synod of Bishops. *Young People, the Faith and Vocational*

Discernment. Vatican City. Official document.

Moreover, in some youth circles, there is a growing fascination for risk-taking behaviour as a tool for self-exploration, for seeking powerful emotions and obtaining recognition. Alongside the continuation of older phenomena, such as precocious sexual behaviour, promiscuity, sexual tourism, the exaggerated cult of the physical, today one notes the widespread diffusion of digital pornography and exhibition of the body online. Such phenomena, to which young generations are exposed, constitute an obstacle for serene maturation. They point to social forces

⁴⁴³ Francis, "Holy Mass for Latin America," Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, 12 December 2017, accessed May 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2017/documents/papa-francesco_20171212_omelia-guadalupe.html.

⁴⁴⁴ New Years Greetings, 2018.

⁴⁴⁵ Francis, "General Audience," 24 January 2018, accessed May 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2018/documents/papa-francesco_20180124_udienza-generale.html.

that are utterly new and that influence personal choices and experiences, making them fertile terrain for a kind of ideological colonization.⁴⁴⁶

20. 15 November 2018. Address to the Community of the Pius Pontifical Latin American College. Vatican City.

One of the phenomena currently afflicting the continent is cultural fragmentation, the polarization of the social fabric and the loss of roots. This is exacerbated when arguments are fomented that divide and propagate different types of confrontations and hatred towards those who “are not one of us”, even importing cultural models that have little or nothing to do with our history and identity and that, far from combining in new syntheses as in the past, end up uprooting our cultures from their richest autochthonous traditions. New generations uprooted and fragmented! The Church [...] is exposed to this temptation; since she is subject to the same environment, she runs the risk of becoming disoriented by falling prey to one form of polarization or another, or becoming uprooted if one forgets that the vocation is a meeting ground. The invasion of ideological colonization is also suffered in the Church.⁴⁴⁷

21. 7 January 2019. Address for the Traditional Exchange of New Year Greetings.

Vatican City.

It is clear [...] that relationships within the international community, and the multilateral system as a whole, are experiencing a period of difficulty, with the resurgence of nationalistic tendencies at odds with the vocation of the international Organizations to be a setting for dialogue and encounter for all countries. This is [...] partially the outcome of the growing influence within the international Organizations of powers and interest groups that impose their own visions and ideas, sparking new forms of ideological colonization, often in disregard for the identity, dignity and sensitivities of peoples.⁴⁴⁸

22. 20 January 2019. *Angelus* (Sunday address to St. Peter’s Square from Vatican window). Vatican City.

⁴⁴⁶ Synod of Bishops, *Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment: Final Document*, 27 October 2018, accessed May 2020,

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20181027_doc-final-instrumentum-xvassemblea-giovani_en.html.

⁴⁴⁷ Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Community of the Pius Pontifical Latin American College,” 15 November 2018, accessed May 2020,

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2018/november/documents/papa-francesco_20181115_collegio-piolatino-americano.html.

⁴⁴⁸ New Years Greetings, 2019.

On 24 January, we will also celebrate the first International Day of Education, established by the United Nations to highlight and promote the essential role of education in human and social development. In this context, I encourage unesco's (sic) efforts to help peace grow in the world through education, and I pray that this will be accessible to all and that it be integral, free from ideological colonization.⁴⁴⁹

23. 27 January 2019. Apostolic Journey to Panama. World Youth Day. "Press Conference on the Return Flight from Panama to Rome."

"I think it is important to teach sex education in schools. Sex is a gift from God. It is not for show; it is a gift from God in order to love. That someone would use it to make money, to exploit others, is a different problem. Objective sex education should be offered, as is, without ideological colonization. Because if sex education steeped in ideological colonization is taught in schools, it destroys the person."⁴⁵⁰

24. 4 March 2019. Address to a Group from the Pontifical Commission for Latin America. Vatican City.

In a few years' time [...] we will celebrate the Fifth Centenary of the Guadalupan event and, in 2033, the second millennium of the Redemption. It is God's will that [...] you may all work in spreading the social doctrine of the Church in order to arrive at [...] these dates with real practical lay fruits of missionary discipleship. I like to repeat that we always have to beware of cultural colonization, no, ideological colonization: there are economic ones because societies have a "colony" dimension; that is, of being open to colonization. And so we must defend ourselves. And in that respect I permit myself an intuition.[...] [I]f you do not wish to err on the path for Latin America, the word is "fusion". Latin America was born mestizo, will remain mestizo, will only grow mestizo, and this will be her destiny.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁹ Francis, "Angelus," 20 January 2019, accessed May 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/angelus/2019/documents/papa-francesco_angelus_20190120.html.

⁴⁵⁰ Original text that is translated as "for show" reads "el cuco," which literally translates roughly to the bogeyman (Francis, Press Conference on the Return Flight from Panama to Rome, 27 January 2019, accessed May 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/speeches/2019/january/documents/papa-francesco_20190127_panama-volo-ritorno.html), English translation.

⁴⁵¹ Francis, "Audience with a Group of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America," 4 March 2019, accessed May 2020, <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2019/03/04/190304e.html>.

25. 25 March 2019. *Christus Vivit: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God*. Official document.

In many poor countries, economic aid provided by some richer countries or international agencies is usually tied to the acceptance of Western views of sexuality, marriage, life or social justice. This ideological colonization is especially harmful to the young.⁴⁵²

26. 18 April 2019. Holy Chrism Mass. Vatican City.

“*The captives* are prisoners of war (in Greek, *aichmalotoi*), those who had been led at the point of a spear (*aichmé*). Jesus would use the same word in speaking of the taking of Jerusalem, his beloved city, and the deportation of its people (*Lk* 21:24). Our cities today are taken prisoner not so much at spear point, but by more subtle means of ideological colonization.⁴⁵³

27. 2 May 2019. Address to Participants in the Plenary Session of the Pontifical

Academy of [Social] Sciences. Vatican City. (Theme of Plenary Session: The Nation-state.)

Meanwhile, in Latin America, Simón Bolívar urged the leaders of his time to forge the dream of a Great Homeland, which knows how [...] to welcome [...] the richness of every people. This vision of cooperation among nations can advance the narrative by upholding multilateralism, opposing both new nationalistic impulses and hegemonic policies. Humanity would thus escape [...] the danger of economic and ideological colonization by superpowers.[...] Of course, it is imperative [to] assure that the states be effectively represented [...] so as to avoid the growing hegemony of powers and interest groups that impose their own visions and ideas, as well as new forms of ideological colonization, not rarely disrespectful of the identity, of uses and customs, of the dignity and sensitivity of the concerned peoples. The emergence of these tendencies is [...] resulting in [...]

⁴⁵² Francis, *Christus Vivit: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God*, 25 March 2019, accessed May 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html.

⁴⁵³ Francis, “Holy Chrism Mass,” 18 April 2019, accessed May 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2019/documents/papa-francesco_20190418_omelia-crisma.html, original emphasis.

the progressive marginalization of the weakest members of the family of nations.⁴⁵⁴

28. 7 May 2019. Apostolic Journey to Bulgaria and North Macedonia. Ecumenical and Interreligious Meeting with Young People. Skopje, North Macedonia. When I was a child, we were told at school that when the Europeans went to discover America, they took with them coloured glass. This was shown to the Indians, to the indigenous peoples, and they were enthralled by the coloured glass which they had never seen before. And these Indians forgot their roots and bought this glass in exchange for gold. So gold was robbed by means of coloured glass. [...] You, young people, please be on your guard, because today also there are those who want to conquer, those who want to colonize, offering you coloured glass: this is ideological colonization. They will come to you and say: “No, you must be a more modern people, more advanced, take these things and take a new path, forget older things: progress ahead.”⁴⁵⁵
29. 2 June 2019. Apostolic Journey to Romania. Homily. Dear brothers and sisters, today, too, we witness the appearance of new ideologies that quietly attempt to assert themselves and to uproot our peoples from their richest cultural and religious traditions. Forms of ideological colonization that devalue the person, life, marriage and the family (cf. *Amoris Laetitia*, 40), and above all, with alienating proposals as atheistic as those of the past, harm our young people and children, leaving them without roots from which they can grow (cf. *Christus Vivit*, 78). Everything then becomes irrelevant unless it serves our immediate interests; people are led to take advantage of others and treat them as mere objects (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 123-124). Those voices, by sowing fear and division, seek to cancel and bury the best that the history of these lands have bequeathed to you.⁴⁵⁶
30. 7 October 2019. Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region. Vatican City.

⁴⁵⁴ Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the Plenary Session on the Pontifical Academy of Sciences,” 2 May 2019, accessed March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/may/documents/papa-francesco_20190502_plenaria-scienze-sociali.html.

⁴⁵⁵ Francis, “Ecumenical and Interreligious Meeting With Young People,” Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Bulgaria and North Macedonia, 7 May 2019, accessed May 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/may/documents/papa-francesco_20190507_macedoniadelnord-giovani.html.

⁴⁵⁶ Francis, “Homily,” Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Romania, 2 June 2019, accessed May 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2019/documents/papa-francesco_20190602_omelia-blaj-romania.html.

And let us also approach the Amazonian peoples on tip-toe, respecting their history, their cultures, their good way of living in the etymological sense of the word, not in the social sense which we often attribute to them, because peoples have a proper identity, all peoples have their wisdom, a self-awareness; peoples have a way of feeling, a way of seeing reality, a history, a hermeneutic, and they tend to be protagonists of their history with these matters, with these qualities. And as outsiders we consider ideological colonizations that destroy or diminish the characteristics of the peoples. Ideological colonization is very widespread.⁴⁵⁷

31. 15 January 2020. Message to the Executive Chairman of the “World Economic Forum.” Vatican City.

In these years, the World Economic Forum has offered an opportunity for the engagement of diverse stakeholders to explore innovative and effective ways of building a better world. It has also provided an arena where political will and mutual cooperation can be guided and strengthened in overcoming the isolationism, individualism and ideological colonization that sadly characterizes too much contemporary debate.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁷ Francis, *Openings of the Works of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region on the Theme: “Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and for Integral Ecology,”* 7 October 2019, accessed May 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/october/documents/papa-francesco_20191007_apertura-sinodo.html.

⁴⁵⁸ Francis, “Message of the Holy Father Francis to Professor Klaus Schwab Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum,” 15 January 2020, accessed May 2020, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200115_messaggio-worldeconomicforum.html.