The Sexual Diversity Pastoral Care Group and the Catholic Schools in Chile: An Attempt to Confront Heteronormativity in School Spaces

Pablo Astudillo Lizama and *Jaime Barrientos Delgado*

INTRODUCTION

Queer theory "as a perspective to read and act against normative and normalizing power" (Ben-Moshe, Gossett, Mitchell, & Stanley, 2015, p. 267) has been used by various scholars and researchers to deconstruct and dismantle normalizing practices in schools (Malmquist, Gustavson, & Schmitt, 2013; Miller, 2015, 2016; Renold, 2004). Schools are spaces where individuals produce dominant discourses about sexuality, in which

P. Astudillo Lizama (✉)
Facultad de Educación, Universidad Alberto Hurtado, Santiago, Chile
e-mail: pastudil@uahurtado.cl

J. Barrientos Delgado
Facultad de Psicología, Universidad Alberto Hurtado, Santiago, Chile
e-mail: jbarrientos@uahurtado.cl

a hierarchy of what is considered morally good or bad, different or "normal," is reproduced and sustained. Nevertheless, this social process is always in conflict with dynamic and changing expressions of identities, affections, and sexualities. For this reason, schools might emerge as spaces where these power relations can be contested, debated, and even questioned.

In this chapter, we analyze and discuss the outreach work of a Catholic LGBTI organization, *Pastoral de la Diversidad Sexual* (Sexual Diversity Pastoral Care Group[1]), which intervenes in Chilean Catholic schools through the testimony of its members. Focusing on its quest to change the attitudes toward sexuality and gender diversity in Chilean society, we will analyze the tension between power and resistance, and the possibilities of transforming the hetero-cisgender norms within religious schools by sharing personal experiences. Drawing on Michel Foucault's (1988) understanding of the workings of power, we demonstrate in this chapter, the technologies of power not only regulate sexuality, but they also confront and disturb what is normative.

Sexuality, Gender, and the Individual Experience

In the third volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1988) identifies two basic factors in understanding how contemporary sexuality is organized. The first one is the establishment of what he calls *culture de soi* (literally translated as a culture of oneself), which refers to the obligation of taking care of our soul and the establishment of a personal ethic in terms of pleasure. Consequently, this ethic regulates behavior, practices, and the moral dimension of sexuality. The second factor is what Foucault describes as the establishment of *scientia sexualis*, clinical and scientific knowledge about sexuality and sexual desire. The science of sexuality exercise vigilance over what could be considered a "deviation" from the norm as scientifically established. Foucault identified these processes as the panoptic vigilance model, that is, power and control technology incorporated in all social relationships and institutions. Both factors are essential for establishing a biopolitical regime regarding sexuality, linking power (and the consequent individual sovereignty) and the individual body.

This Foucauldian understanding of sexuality has been widely used and revisited by cultural studies and *queer* theory in order to draw attention to the underlying power dynamics that not only regulate the manifestations

of sexual activity, but also, the way these devices have been internalized by individuals, creating the illusion of a norm related to an eminently non-normative sexuality. This illusion is maintained by means of symbolic mechanisms that somehow, "disguise" power technologies through sexuality discourse (Binnie, 2004; Wittig, 1980), configure masculinity and femininity ideals as eminently heterosexual (Butler, 2010; Rubin, 1984), or silence everything that does not lie within the "norm," which is the case of homosexuality in Western societies (Eribon, 2012; Halperin, 1995, 2012).

This process can then produce new ways to resist this "will to knowledge," as identified by Foucault in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. Due to the mutability and everyday nature of these technologies of power about sexuality, individuals may experience difficulties in recognizing their effects on their lives. Considering the invisibility of these power mechanisms, it is appropriate to wonder how individuals organize an account of their own sexuality, and from there, recognize the discursive production of experience, but also the agency of the subjects within this framework (Scott, 1991).

Certainly, from a Foucauldian viewpoint, the confessional device and practices—religious first and psychoanalytic afterwards—make up a particularly privileged power technology because, through the act of confession, the subject compares his own experience with the dominant norm. As Jeffrey Weeks (2011) states, sexuality has played an important role in individuals' self-understanding in Western societies: it reveals their interiority in a way that other dimensions of their individuality do not. This acquires special importance when it becomes clear that personal identity is always constructed in relation to the way others reflect what the individual chooses to project (Singly, 2010).

As Eva Illouz (2014) describes, the massification of psychotherapy (and the consequent trivialization of psychological thought) emphasizes the individual's role in changing him/herself and his/her environment. This process should not be understood in isolation, but rather within a social framework that requires the individual to take responsibility for him/herself and be recognized for doing so. Consequently, for individuals, confession technologies can also be described as a space for personal agency. Therefore, it is necessary to observe this ambivalence in order to recognize how subjectivity is constructed through the way individuals report on their sexuality.

From this perspective, for example, knowing about the structuring effects of the technologies of power does not necessarily mean that the individual will avoid subjectification and become "emancipated." As Emma Renold (2004) points out, some individuals take advantage of the technologies of power for their own benefit, positioning themselves against the norm and obtaining returns from it. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the subjective experiences of the subjects in order to understand both the weight of the structures in the individual narrative and the way the subjects position themselves regarding the norm.

Thus, sexuality is a kind of mirror for social relationships, configuring the notion of the individual. In observing the reflexivity of the self, it is somehow possible to give an account of the different forms of personal agency and the understanding of intimacy within power relationships in history (Bozon, 2009). An example can be found in what occurs within two social spaces that can operate complementarily to one another to regulate sexuality: schools and religious communities.

The Regulation of Sexuality in Schools

As stated above, gender identity and sexuality are subjected to specific forms of discipline produced in the context of cultures that render heterosexuality as the hegemonic norm. As Teresa de Lauretis (1989) points out, this norm has consequences in terms of what is understood by gender, sexuality, and bodies: for a female body, the only desire possible is that of a male body, and vice versa, and this lies at the base of the binarism of the sex/gender system.

In the context of schools, the regime of gender and sexuality is reproduced and sustained through dominant discourses and cultural codes. Every educated subject is sexed and gendered at the same time (Epstein & Johnson, 2000). School becomes a key space for the proliferation, change, and endless inscription of gender discourse and sexual desire, apart from the production and reproduction of "compulsive heterosexuality" (Youdell, 2005). As Raewyn Connell and Rebecca Pearse (2015) identified, different spaces within schools (curricula, classroom, corridors, social interactions etc.,) produce a symbolic gender (sexuality) regime that entails a specific positioning of men and women, perpetuating, at the same time, the assumption of heterosexuality as the norm in terms of sexuality.

In this regard, Kerry Robinson, Peter Bansel, Nida Denson, Georgia Ovenden, and Cristyn Davies (2014) and Cheri Pascoe (2007) demonstrated that students who identify as LGBTI face discrimination at school, expressed through physical and symbolic violence. This is not limited to North American or European countries. In Chile, as María Teresa Rojas et al. (2019) show, advances in the recognition of gender identities and sexual diversity are partial and fragile. Respect for diversity is a principle present in the discourses of school actors, but this does not question the hegemony of heteronormativity in the curriculum or teaching practices, producing new forms of homophobic violence. Similar patterns can also be found in Mexico (Baruch-Dominguez, Infante-Xibille, & Saloma-Zúñiga, 2016); Brazil (Carrara, Nascimento, Duque, & Tramontano, 2016), Argentina (Molina, 2013; Stambole, 2017) or southern African countries (Francis et al., 2019), where culture (and often religion) perpetuate specific forms of LGBT discrimination within schools.

This disciplinary logic is supported by a heteronormative discourse that constructs normality around particular gendered and sexual identities (Wittig, 1980), either by making the plurality of bodies invisible or by explicit negation of people's right to be recognized according to their sexual and gender expression (Miller, 2015). Nonetheless, this negation must be interpreted in the ambivalent context described above: The norm is not always visible, and individuals can claim spaces where they experience agency. As Renold (2004) argues, in the case of schools, the heterosexual norm can be responded to through an active personal positioning where the students can strategically use the rules of hegemonic discourse.

Particularly in Chile, this reflection must respond to a specific context characterized by social ambivalence about non-heterosexual sexualities. As Jaime Barrientos (2016) stated, the LGBT population has gained civil rights in recent years. Today, discrimination due to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression is illegal, and a same-sex civil union law is now in force. This normative transformation goes hand in hand with a change in the population's attitude toward this group, particularly among the younger generations. Thus, for example, in Chile, the latest National Survey for the Young (INJUV, 2016) shows that only 28% of young people agree that a heterosexual couple raises children better than a same-sex couple, and only 24% agree that it is preferable for school teachers to be heterosexual rather than homosexual. Nevertheless, these progressive

changes have not broken down some of the barriers affecting LGBTI youth.

Schools are an ideal place to observe the workings of these legal changes. Even though the law prohibiting discrimination based on sexuality and gender diversity is in place,[2] schools still discriminate against LGBTI youth due to institutionalized homophobia and heterosexism. Aurore le Mat (2014) warns about the privileges given to heterosexuality in the curriculum, such as in sex education and biology, which can be understood in Foucauldian terms as a disciplinary device. Furthermore, as Le Mat points out, the homosexual experience is also silenced when schools emphasize that it is a private issue and, thus, not given any space in the classroom curriculum to discuss and teach sexuality and gender diversity. When this topic is raised, according to Carlos Cáceres and Ximena Salazar (2013), it is usually introduced as something from the "outside," about the Other, that may give rise to a debate about morality. Homosexuality is also presented as a "matter of individuals," and within the educational system there is an ambiguous discourse of tolerance in accepting a non-heterosexual sexual orientation.

Even though there is a social consensus against discrimination, it will remain unchallenged as long as the acceptance of sexual diversity operates from an unstable discourse. As Pablo Astudillo (2016) states in Chile, from a conservative viewpoint, homosexuality is particularly presented as a category that is essentially different from heterosexuality, it can be visible and talked about as long as it is made quite clear that homosexual behavior is not what is expected from a subject. From a progressive point of view, however, homosexuality is seen as a "possible orientation," "legitimate" but always understood as an individual question. As a result, the homosexual individual becomes isolated. His or her experience does not question heterosexuality, and the discourse on normality is not questioned at all.

Thus, within school spaces, the possibilities for resisting power technologies concerning sexuality and gender diversity are still limited. As discussed earlier, the conditions for constructing "a good image of the self" for non-heterosexual individuals at school are not assured in the same way as they are for heterosexual subjects (Miller, 2016). This principle is also observed in religious spaces open to sexual diversity.

(Homo)Sexuality and Gender Identity in Religious Spaces

Foucault emphasizes the important role religion has played in contemporary sexuality construction and the (re)production of the *culture de soi*. An example of the display of disciplinary forms and power technology in relation to sexuality can be found in religious spaces. We will not delve into this type of analysis; instead, we focus on the way the individual agency is understood within the religious discourse on sexuality.

First, we must address a certain moral ambiguity in relation to sexuality and gender in Chile. The country is experiencing an important secularization process and, at the same time, a greater acceptance of homosexuality (Barrientos, 2015). In this regard, the country is replicating a tendency already observed in countries in the North (Pew Research Center, 2013). However, this movement cannot be understood without examining how certain conservative positions have consolidated their power and influences at the same time (Morán, 2012). For example, in Chile, when the National Congress discussed the Gender Identity law in 2017, conservative groups organized protests and supported the "Bus of Freedom," which drove around the streets of several cities spreading tendentious messages against the law.

In addition, universities that teach Catholic theology in Santiago have organized seminars on "gender ideology" and promoting therapies to "cure" homosexuality. This counter-discourse or narrative is in line with what Kath Browne and Catherine Nash (2017) have identified as the advance of hetero-activism in Western societies with the aim of marginalizing those sexualities and gender identities that are outside the "heterosexual matrix." Nevertheless, Irma Palma (2008) argues that religion is only one part of self-regulation. In Chile, at least, differences in sexual practices are more related to gender, social class, and age, which explain personal distance from the religious discourse on sexuality. Therefore, the question of self-positioning becomes relevant.

Thus, the matter of personal choice becomes an essential element for analysis. Particularly, Catholic discourses create particular subjective positions beyond mere religiosity. According to Angélica Thumala (2007), Catholic education is basically characterized by paying attention to character formation, which entails emphasis on "the art of self-governance." This "care of the self" is highly present in the Catholic discourse that subjects draw on and that influences every aspect of their lives: habits,

orientation to work, and personal vocation. From this perspective, character cannot be formed without disciplining the body through the strategic management of pleasure and desire. However, it needs to be emphasized, following Martine Sevegrand (2002), that religious discourse on sexuality is not independent from the way it is constructed and understood within societal discourse. Thus, pleasure, and especially sexual pleasure, becomes an aspect of life that must be organized according to a "sense of the world," which is socially constructed. Regarding different matters related to sexuality, an effort to link sexual morality to the principles of modern intimacy has been made since the 1980s, that is, an intimacy that assumes that coherence lies in the individuals themselves and their capacity to recognize themselves as a creature with a certain goal. This is known as the personalistic ethics characteristic of "conservative modernity" (Kristeva, 2009; Sevegrand, 2002).

Hence, we can assume that individuals would recognize themselves precisely in their capacity for sovereignty over their will. Thus, it is important to analyze not only the values system organizing this government of the Self, but also the personal way of governing oneself. Sexuality analysis should consider all these elements: personal narratives about self-control and choice, social values learned, and the context producing it. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the aspect of paternalism in relation to sexuality in religious contexts[3] (Morán, 2012; Vaggione, 2012). This paternalism based on obligations and prohibitions, expressed in laws and ethical projects, necessarily affects the way individuals take care of themselves and comprehend their sovereignty and the choices of other individuals.

Drawing on Foucault, subjects have agency to resist this kind of technology of power, but it cannot be understood outside the power dynamics that are being resisted (Sevegrand, 2002). Thus, if heterosexuality is presented as the dominant and natural norm to organize sexuality and sexual desire, the question then remains: How can an alternative subject position be understood in this context? According to Butler (2010), in the process of affirming a difference in matters of sexual diversity or gender, the political mechanism that gives rise to the distinction is recreated and reinforced. In this regard, the affirmation of a non-heterosexual identity would be a useful effort to revert the heterosexual consensus and achieve subjects' fair treatment. However, the identities operate in anchors that are necessary for social life. As François de Singly (2010) points out, in contemporary societies, subjects are permanently confronted with observing the identities to which they are assigned. In the process, subjects can

choose which labels they will accept as their own and which ones they will reject. The subject is an agent of his or her own social presentation. For this reason, the question about the strategies and ways of positioning oneself regarding a norm, in this case, sexual and gendered, is still a necessary one.

Methodology

The chapter examines the work of the *Pastoral de la Diversidad Sexual* (Sexual Diversity Pastoral Care Group), an NGO established in Santiago de Chile in 2010. It is a platform for gay and lesbian youth and adults who have children identifying as non-heterosexual. Since its establishment, this organization has organized talks and outreach work at different Chilean schools, particularly Catholic ones. In these schools, the context of school-based regulations on sexuality intertwine with those produced by Catholic discourses. In this regard, it provides a good opportunity to understand how these sexuality norms are reproduced and resisted.

For this purpose, a descriptive qualitative approach was used. To do this, ten volunteers or educational workers at the *Pastoral* were interviewed: two youth workers and two mothers who visit schools and talk to students on behalf of the organization, one general coordinator of the association, one priest and one nun accompanying the group, and three people in charge of organizing these activities at different schools in Santiago de Chile. All the participants are cisgender between the ages of 23 and 66 years old; five of them are male, and five are female. Only three of them identify as homosexuals. All the subjects interviewed have completed higher education; nine present themselves as Catholics, and eight live in high-income districts of the city. All the interviews were conducted in Santiago de Chile between November and December 2018.

Each of them was interviewed by using a semi-structured interview guide that included three main topics: the experience of giving and listening to testimony, the way of organizing the testimonial activity, and the results perceived of the activities carried out. The interviews lasted for an average duration of one hour. Interviews were later transcribed and analyzed by coding the material obtained according to discourse analysis. After detailed transcription of every interview, the extracts were grouped up under different thematic areas, guided by research questions. Then, specific patterns and recurrent organization of ideas were explored. In this case, and according to Gavin Kendall and Gary Wickman (2003), we

search for: (i) norms that delimit the sayable and (ii) rules that create the spaces in which new statements can be made. The purpose of this coding is to recover the analysis of the experience proposed by Joan Scott (1991), in terms of considering that subjects' experiences are the result of a political production of the discourse, and where the social norm is represented in the descriptions given by the individuals of their own practices and limits.

CHANGING THE ATTITUDES TOWARD SEXUALITY AND GENDER DIVERSITY: BETWEEN POWER AND RESISTANCE

The outreach work by the *Pastoral de la Diversidad Sexual* at Chilean schools highlights the ambiguity when recognizing contemporary sexuality and the resulting subjectivity construction, both in schools and religious spaces. There is no mention of gender issues or transgender identities because within the *Pastoral* there are no transgender individuals.[4] In the end, testimonies mainly present experiences about homosexual marginalization and do not reflect on how gender is politically constructed.

To organize the discussion, personal testimonies will be compared to the confession devices described by Foucault (1988) because they articulate public expression of an intimate process. In the case we analyze, the testimony always has two components: what individuals say about their sexuality and what they do to confront an ecclesiastical norm that can accept or reject sexuality itself. Later, the power technologies coexist with the ambivalence of subjects who identify and want to resist the norm, but, at the same time, must describe and validate the framework in which they understand their sexuality. To address this ambivalence, we propose three axes for analysis: the way they confront the religious norms that regulate sexuality, the strategic use of certain visibility devices, and the explicit negation of the political nature of the norm that produces the differences in matters of sexuality.

Identification of Norms Regulating Sexuality

In the outreach work, the *Pastoral* aims to reconstruct sexuality vis a vis the dominant discourse using the narrative method. In doing so, it

is working with two conflicting discourses on sexuality and sexual identity: on the one hand, the Catholic one, based on the Vatican understanding of non-heterosexuality, in which it is assumed that it cannot give rise to a lifestyle per se (Vaggione, 2012); and on the other hand, the self-affirmation discourse, which draws on LGBTI pride and acceptance (Halperin, 2012). This latter principle, self-affirmation, is a characteristic element of different religious LGBT organizations, where the Vatican norm about sexuality is set aside to highlight the love that arises from the spiritual experience of feeling loved and created by God (Rodriguez & Ouellette, 2000; Tan, 2005).

In the case of the *Pastoral*, testimony is a strategy that seeks to nurture empathy for the Other and, based on it, transform reality. Then, what is "confessed" is exactly the way subjects organizes their own life and the steps they have taken to achieve their current position. The result is that the testimony always refers to two elements: first, the personal strategy to overcome the established norm; and second, the individual capacity to live without having to deny or separate two dimensions of his/her own individuality.

> More than speaking from theory, what the Pastoral has always done is to talk about personal experience, especially considering this context of a permanent conflict with Catholic doctrine. Then, the strategy has always been the testimony, speaking about what happens to us, about this experience of faith and sexual diversity, how they can be experienced at the same time, and that is what calls people's attention. (General LGBT group coordinator)

Here, sexuality occupies an important place in individual identity construction. It is a source of both self-recognition and social recognition. Interviews with youth workers and mothers show that testimonies always present the inherent suffering of a lifestyle outside the heterosexual norm, through a series of more or less defined steps: first, the evidence of not adjusting to the norm; second, the difficulty of experiencing rejection from a significant social space (in this case the Church); and third, the specific possibility of overcoming this suffering by drawing on something that is greater than the individual. God's action is not mentioned as the mechanism that restitutes ties and solves the identity conflict; instead, this mechanism consists of what the individual does due to feeling loved by God.[5]

In the case of the *Pastoral*, the subject is presented as someone who can go beyond the conflict, protected by concrete social support retold along with individual experience. The accepting family and some non-orthodox priests are presented here as invaluable. The support of these actors allows the individual to finally recognize him/herself in a positive way. In this case, personal identity construction cannot avoid the way a subject understands that s/he is observed (Singly, 2010). For this to be possible, it is always necessary to accept sexuality as something given, and where these actors cannot be separated from their acts, a narrative that goes hand in hand with advances in modern sexology and psychology.

This premise makes it possible to enter Catholic schools because the Vatican norm operates under the same principle of sexuality as "given data" (Morán, 2012). At the same time, sexual education in Catholic schools reproduces the idea that sexuality is a privileged expression of individual interiority (Astudillo, 2016). Testimonies collected always articulate the same rule of personal coherence and self-affirmation, which is accompanied by accepting oneself as a creature, but also as an agent of oneself. In this way, the notions of fecundity, donation, and love can also be associated with homosexuality. Thus, heterosexuality is no longer represented as the only valid experience, depriving other individuals of the possibility of organizing "good sexuality" (Rubin, 1984).

Here, the testimony is used as an instrument to move the limits, not necessarily to change them. However, the strategy of the testimony never deals with how the association between homosexuality and "bad sexuality" has been politically constructed. This is not because people renounce denouncing arbitrariness, but because the individual experience is defended, without making it explicit how this is produced within a specific social framework (Scott, 1991). In this way, in the testimonies, sexuality is never presented as an active construction.

Identification of Visibility Devices

Presenting the personal strategy of "accepting" one's sexuality is not only a question of discourse, but also a particular staging. For the Pastoral testimony, it is chosen as an essential tool, not only because it can present the subject and his/her subjectivity, but also because it produces a necessary emotional shift in the audience. For most of the interviewees, this production of emotions is necessary to begin to imagine the social reality

outside their known framework. Therefore, speaking in the first person is essential.

Emotionality is what ultimately allows mutual recognition. What is relevant here is not personal sexuality, but rather the act of being a person, something that both the witness and the audience have in common. However, as Singly (2010) states, there must be certain social conditions for this recognition to occur because only in some contexts can subjects choose the category in which they want to be identified. Thus, the testimony cannot be understood without analyzing the scenario where it unfolds. Not just any place or any school can be chosen to talk about personal experience, but only those where there is certainty that the subject will be recognized as witness. The members of the Pastoral know from past experiences that, for the testimony to work, the subjects in the auditorium must be willing to revise their premises about the ecclesiastic discourse on homosexuality.

> In the context of these (Catholic) schools we are talking about, what makes the difference is the fact that we have faith in common. Then, when people listen to family testimonies that tell you that it is possible to be a diverse family, that it is possible to be happy and not feel guilty, that it is possible to keep your faith and not feel that you are in sin, when they see that you are congruent (with your faith), you show that the Vatican norm by itself is not the most important, because what is written by priests today is obsolete. (member of the parents' group)

> I have never been in a situation where someone told me that I am sick, a pervert. Never. Let's say, when people have concern, have empathy towards homosexuality, then, that is when there is a real space for dialogue. (LGBT group member)

As a result, testimonial confession does not operate, regardless of the way the audience is represented: as allies or not. In the case of Pastoral, the political scenario is formed by the ones who listen (who have a dialogue) and those who, on the contrary, are not willing to talk. For the purposes of our analysis, however, it is more interesting to show how personal resistance strategy is constructed in tune with the recognition of resistance that others may also articulate.

Following this principle, personal coherence is not independent of the way the subject feels observed. Thus, the personal strategy is not independent of the social relations the individual establishes (Singly, 2010),

where different factors can affect his/her possibility of agency. For example, gender predisposes a way of organizing privacy and intimacy. It is not anodyne that men are those who speak in the first person, whereas women those who speak for their children as Sexual Diversity Pastoral Care Group consists mainly of homosexual men and mothers of gay and lesbian children. Second, the expectations of what each subject can or cannot say or do about sexuality are intersected by social class (Palma, 2008), so that special attention should be paid to the eventual asymmetries that can be established between witnesses and audience when talking about homosexuality.[6]

Any of these variables can influence the school audience, even though this influence is not a topic for the interviewees. Making it explicit would strain the ideal of equality sought by the testimonial action. In this regard, we can return to showing the ambiguity of this strategy. Although testimonies can be synonymous with emancipation and resistance to a particular norm, at the same time, they do not manage to escape certain ways of organizing and discussing the truth. In this regard, testimony reinforces a dominant norm in contemporary societies: static identities are necessary to understand sexuality (Binnie, 2004; Wittig, 1980). Self-affirmation is essential, but it can only be interpreted within shared codes. This becomes evident when comparing the Pastoral objectives with the effects that may be produced by other LGBTI associations that want to speak about the same issue:

> (Unlike other organizations) this is a group looking for social change from an intimate, spiritual, and communitarian experience, something we can share with others who also believe in God's good news. Sexual diversity is not a problem, it is not a source of fear, we must understand it as part of Christianity. (LGBT group member)

This quote, however, comes into conflict with other possible representations of the same action, as shown in the following interview:

> We must be moderately cautious. In this school, we have very conservative and very liberal families, and they coexist perfectly. But we require a precise political management (…) We must say that Pastoral does not have one millimeter of objectivity, so we decided to cancel a meeting with parents because Pastoral is an activist organization, and we could not bring such a group banded together. Maybe it works with our teachers, but not with our parents. (Catholic school representative)

The quotes above show that it is difficult to draw a limit of objectivity in terms of identities and ways to represent them. It is difficult to think of a personal positioning strategy based on the idea of fluid sexuality or deconstructed personality. What the last quote suggests is that there is a limit in representing the fight. Empathy does not necessarily require understanding that the homosexual experience, as different as it may be, has consequences for the way heterosexuality is constructed. Heterosexuality's normality is not questioned, and if it were questioned, it would be at risk of being discredited for being a political issue. However, the way heterosexuality is constructed, as opposed to homosexuality, is well known to scholars of sexuality (Katz, 2007).

However, the technology of power operates here on two planes: in renouncing the testimonial strategy as a way to question the political nature of difference and, above all, in the difficulty of questioning the fact that the testimony does not require an active counterpart that is included in its notion of normality. The people in the auditorium—all supposedly heterosexual- have never been and never will be obligated to give testimony. The privileges generated by the technology of power continue to be invisible.

Confronting Power Technology

We want to propose a final axis to analyze the ambiguity between the recognition of a power technology and the way subjects choose to behave within these coordinates. From the point of view of experience, it is necessary to recognize the capacity to choose, which every subject describes for him/herself. The capacity to choose makes it possible to comprehend the decision to avoid political reflection about that which produces differences in matters of sexuality.

Pastoral testimonies are articulated precisely on the capacity to choose. On the one hand, the subject listens and accepts certain norms, while, at the same time, rejecting others and articulating new ways of confronting them. Catholic institutional discourse about homosexuality does not erode, but instead, paradoxically, it may strengthen the sense of belonging to the Catholic church, precisely because the testimonies consolidate the idea that a subject can transcend difficulty due to his confidence in being loved by God. Based on this, it is also possible to reaffirm the social norm of Catholic schools that hold that religion is an essential part of the individual's well-being as a subject. However, the strategies of

moving the limits of normality make it necessary to examine the nature of the limits themselves. To do so, it is necessary to examine what is omitted, what is not heard when individuals want to present themselves. Certainly, there are gender and class differences that are not dealt with, but we refer here to another type of omission that lies at the center of the normative dispute about sexuality—the doctrine as can be seen in the following transcripts.

> *[M]any times, (other priests) ask me, what do they do with the moral issue? I say that I also used to worry about that, but I talked to another priest that was already at the* Pastoral *and he told me, simply, we do not speak about this topic here. We do not speak about moral doctrine. We do not deal with that topic.* **Researcher: Do you refer to the moral condemnation of homosexual acts?** *Yes, simply, we do not refer to that topic because if we did and had to spread the Church doctrine, there would be a mess here. We start laying one brick and begin to discriminate, exactly what we do not want to do. We want to be a care group.* (Priest)

> *The Catholic Church is also quite diverse, and you listen to some priests saying atrocities on TV and then you listen to others who have a very different point of view. Then, in the end, I feel confused about the actual position of the Catholic Church. I do not know about Mormons and other religions, but it seems to me that Christians are still so obsessed with the Bible, with the Bible purism, that then it is good that these priest and nuns come to our school to reaffirm this new position.* (Catholic school representative)

There is currently a dispute between theologians and Catholic moralists about the correct interpretation of certain biblical passages explaining homosexuality's condemnation. The question here has to do with the correct exegesis of texts (Awi, 2001). However, this dispute is still understood within a framework of institutional authority that is not questioned. For this reason, priests and nuns are a sort of credential reinforcing the Pastoral testimony, according to the second interviewee. In this standing, the political will of certain actors who choose certain biblical passages or religious dogmas (and not others) to construct a canon about the Christian lifestyle is not at play.

Therefore, the *Pastoral* action in schools is supported by the conviction of its members that not everything has been said about sexuality and, at the same time, that it is possible to distance oneself from Vatican arbitrariness about homosexuality issues. As we said in Pastoral outreach

work, the experience of being a Catholic is not defined by adhesion to what others say, but rather to "what I say about myself." Nevertheless, this critical view never confronts the way religious authority is understood, thus omitting the way the moral is reproduced around "good" sexuality. The Pastoral testimonies in the Catholic schools foster a sense of belonging rather than a discussion about the norms that politically define the characteristics of the Catholic identity.

The aforementioned raises a new question within the frame of the Church's paternalism. This has been described as the subject's prerogative in defining the way individuals should live a good life, being suspicious, at the same time, of their capacity to make good decisions. In this regard, voluntary suppression of political discussion about the norm condemning homosexuality—both from biblical exegesis and the ecclesiastic teaching tradition—keeps the testimonies from showing the political structure that produces the testimonial action itself. Therefore, Catholic schools are not questioned about how they normalize heterosexuality, thus creating an otherness in sexual matters. However, we must recognize that, at the same time, they are challenged to make an internal movement, both to confront homophobic violence within them and to change their discourses and practices toward homosexuality. In this regard, power technology does not impede the expression of a form of agency that gives rise to inclusion experiences, no matter how paradoxical this may seem.

As the interviews reveal, testimonies open a new conversation and present new points of view about something previously invisible. For this reason, despite abandoning the political reflection around the production of difference, the resistance strategy associated with the testimony continues to be valid. As Lynda Johnston and Robyn Longhurst (2010) remind us, the sense of belonging must be analyzed in the multiple geographic scales it combines. Testimony allows us to recognize ourselves as equal in Catholic spaces, and, at the same time, it reminds us of an equity principle enshrined by the same law that shaped the school institution and, thus, appeals to reflecting on shared humanity characterized by a moral sense. The queer question, regarding the way the truth regimes produce differences between subjects, also responds to this same ethical purpose.

> *There is a need to give sense to the issue of sexual diversity, and this forces you to engage in a mental exercise, because prevailing social discourse is always centered on social demands, on protecting rights (…) Here, we are expecting demands, parades, and revindication, but I have the feeling that there is*

lack of sense about homosexuality, and maybe this is the other search that we can satisfy (what Catholic schools are doing). (General LGBT group coordinator)

As this paragraph shows, the opportunity is missed to recognize how certain individuals, and not everybody, are forced to account for their position within the sex/gender system, in order to offer a transcendent sense of homosexuality for both heterosexual and non-heterosexual individuals. Perhaps a more stable acceptance of homosexuality in Catholic schools would require dealing with this inequality. Only then would it be possible to reflect on the way individual sexuality is socially constructed and not just something given, which would require the modification of the frontier of normality.

Conclusions

In Chilean catholic schools, the recognition of gender identities and sexual diversity are still partial and fragile, because school actors do not question the hegemony of heteronormativity in their discourses and practices. But as several studies show, this is something inherent to the contemporary school institution. As Foucault (1988) proposes, the power technologies have the capacity to infiltrate subjects' daily life, naturalizing an organization of sexuality and gender that has been politically constructed and institutionalized in Western societies.

However, this statement must be contrasted with the experience told by the individuals. As Scott (1991) suggests, the experience lived, narrated, is understood only within the framework of discourses with a historical origin. As history shows in relation to gender and sexuality, categories lack an ultimate and transcendent meaning and, at the same time, are full of visible definitions and other alternatives silenced by subjects. From this point of view, the testimonies of the Sexual Diversity Pastoral are understood as a historically situated effort, where an attempt is made to modify the effect of a power technology. In this regard, the experience of the witnesses represents an achievement, evidence of a possible change. Indeed, the terrain itself shows some limitations, but this does not keep us from recognizing the transforming effect of its action on the discourse of the Catholic schools.

Later, and based on the ambiguity of the experience, the power technology should be inspected. As the evidence gathered shows, it is difficult

to reproduce a movement without including the idea of stable categories. As Singly (2010) states, the identity of the individuals is defined by a permanent interplay of gazes, where the subjects recognize each other based on common terms that can be claimed by an individual or not, but that exist in that they are common to both. However, this is not the greatest tension.

As Foucault (1988) and Butler (2010) propose, the power technologies regulate not only sexuality and gender, but also the way the norm is dealt with. The Pastoral testimonies in the Catholic schools illustrate this point well, considering the absence of any reflection on how gender and sexuality are politically constructed, and due to their explicit willingness to not go against the discourse of Catholic teaching. But we must not forget that this choice is what makes it possible to show a normative movement in the schools and state with good reason that homosexual marginalization can be modified. Thus, queer criticism would have to be transferred from the construction of the norm to the experience of personal agency. This would open a new field of complexity because of the refusal to look at the political construction of sexuality conflicts with the feeling of well-being achieved when resisting an apparently invincible norm.

Often, for activism, the only strategy is to fix identities in order to combat the norm and create a transformative space. This reminds us that, even when defending a fluid identity condition, the possibilities of allowing its display in a social space must be considered. As Lise Nelson (1999) stated, performativity cannot be understood outside specific historical and geographic anchors through subjects' situated biographies, and identities are articulated in a permanent exercise of transit and fixation. It is here where the individual's active role in his/her own life can be observed. The testimonies of the *Pastoral de la Diversidad Sexual* in Catholic schools unintentionally clearly show this.

Notes

1. Here we use the name that the group itself employs against other similar organization that make up the Rainbow Catholics network, which in some way illustrates a tension that will be noted throughout the chapter: its communitarian and non-political nature, which appears more clearly in English than Spanish.
2. Law of School Inclusion in 2012, Circular No. 0786 on "The rights of transgender boys, girls, and children in the educational environment" in

2016, and "Orientations for the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersexual individuals in the Chilean educational system" in 2017.

3. From the perspective of the political sciences, paternalism is defined as a form of exercising power, where a subject accepts for himself the responsibility for individuals to have a "good life" and, at the same time, is systematically suspicious of the capacity of those who have enough abilities to make good decisions (Magni-Berton, 2011).

4. During 2018, the mother of a trans girl went to the meetings of the parents' group. Without any explanation she left the Pastoral a few weeks later.

5. This is something that Fassin (2016) and Vaggione (2005) identify with the secularization of religious discourses. In this case, there is an emphasis on the way subjects can set goals for themselves, according to a political context characteristic of individualized societies.

6. The interviews carried out only provide marginal material in this regard, except when mentioning the authority of the speakers who accompany their education.

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