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Interfacing Catholic Social Meanings, Sociology, Self, and Pedagogical Practices

Erratum

A new version adhering to APA guidelines replaced the original version on 12/01/2015.

Interfacing Sociology, Self, and Catholic Social Meanings

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What connects Catholic Social Tradition with Sociology? How do each inform the other and how do they, together, flow through and animate the sociologist? Within a student-driven learning community pedagogy, this course builds on the humanistic aspects of Sociology as a scientific perspective à la Peter Berger's Invitation to Sociology. This foundation is then filtered through a social psychological understanding of self with a sense of vocation through which persons' deepest passions meets humans' greatest needs. Biographical vignettes of sociologists' careers of study that address issues of racial and gender inequalities and psycho-social shifts in values over the life course exemplify linkage of social science and social justice. These portrayals of scientist-activists' dedication to describing and explaining inequalities are complimented by case studies of sociologically-informed community activists struggling to change unjust structures and empower disadvantaged communities through initiatives that embody efforts to "live the Catholic Social Tradition." Themes of humanistic social science, self and vocation, committed social scientists, and empowering community organizers for a more just society are then woven into an overview of Catholic Social Tradition around issues of globalization, spirituality, and justice. Finally, the course moves toward the universal issues developed within the larger Catholic social tradition—namely, common good, universal solidarity, personal dignity, and institutional subsidiarity—in an attempt to include other religious traditions and motivate all persons committed to a more just and peaceful social order.

See, Judge, Act: this trilogy informs action within Catholic social tradition writ large and situated in today's world (e.g. Gaillardetz, 2005, p. 76, discussing the thought of Paul VI). This trilogy echoes the virtue of prudence that must inform moral actions. The three moments in exercising prudence are: first, the "reflection and consultation" to study the question; second, an evaluation "as the reality is analyzed and judged in the light of God's plan;" and third, a "decision, . . . based on the preceding steps" making it possible to act morally here and now (*Pontifical*, 2005, p. 238).

A "new evangelization" enlarges Catholic understanding of acting in the world from indoctrination to evangelization, from communicating teachings to proclaiming the "Good News" in every era (Francis, 2013). "The 'new evangelization,' which the modern world urgently needs. . . must include among its essential elements a proclamation of the Church's social doctrine [emphasis added]" (*Pontifical*, 2005, p. 230). Proclamation, however, should generate action to realize the social teachings. "The need for a new evangelization helps the Church to understand that 'today more than ever . . . her social message will gain credibility more immediately from the witness of action [emphasis added] . . .'" (*Pontifical*, 2005, p. 231). The call to know society in order to act morally within that world is both a scientific and a vocational call to see, judge, and act. And according to Pope Francis, one's vocation is to do it joyously and not as "disillusioned pessimists, sourpusses" (2013, p. 44).

The challenge to see the social world as it is prompted our development of an undergraduate course interfacing sociology and Catholic social tradition. To "live the Catholic tradition" fuses Second Vatican Council's "signs of the times" into transformative action for solidarity, peace, and justice (Kelly & Weigert, 2005).

Sociology plus Catholic social tradition generates a call for a vocation informing students' lives. C. Wright Mills characterized sociology as the study of meanings arising from

the intersection of biography and history. Analogously, John A. Coleman (2005a, 2005b) characterizes "social Catholicism" as more than hierarchical teaching, institutional structures, and Biblical sources (p. 525). He outlines a historically grounded set of understandings, which inform how Catholics may see, judge, and act in pursuit of an ideal community – an approximation to a Kingdom of God on earth encompassing a cosmopolitan pluralism. Living their biographies and joining in social action, believers answer the call to act in ways that make the world more just, peaceful, dignified, and sustainable. Catholic social tradition, akin to sociology, emerges from the intersection of history and biography.

We suggest that moral action is a vocation within all universal religions, though we do not address this here (Groody, 2007, p. 122ff). We speak from a Christian, specifically Catholic perspective, in both the proper and common noun sense of that Greek term for "inclusive." Our entry into this large issue is through humanistic sociological perspectives writ small but hopefully suggestive enough to engage the issues.

Building on Humanistic Sociological Perspectives

We build on Peter Berger's (1963) *Invitation to Sociology* framed by George H. Mead's American pragmatism and manifest in the dynamism of social movements for positive change. Berger speaks of sociology as a "form of consciousness" emerging since the 19th Century and informing most contemporary cultures. He positions sociology as a globalizing continuation of classical "liberal education" for critical reason, inclusive dialogue, and peaceful and just social relationships. He epitomizes a critical perspective of empirical sociological consciousness in the epigram: nothing is as it appears to be. Analysis finds the powerful controlling appearances for their own purposes. They literally fashion the social world. Informed seeing imposes a moral task to critique interpretations of the world as it appears -- a first step in a sociological vocation.

A critical sociological perspective enables us to see society as sets of behavioral, cognitive, and affective “social controls.” Public order emerges and collective actions are routinized and predictable, for the most part. The power of social controls allows for contingent predictions about group actions and probabilistic expectations about individual actions. Social controls are institutional arrangements that structure our lives, like a 7 AM factory whistle calling workers in a one-factory town. We live in society as though in a factory town.

Social Location Makes a Person

Each of us is socially located on a map composed of institutional, group, and interactional structures. Social location is a way of knowing a person as socially real. Just so, Dan Groody’s (2007) introduction to Catholic social tradition starts with “social location.” His application illustrates the interpretive sequence he weaves into Catholic social thought: first describe and interpret the world by recognizing self’s place in it. Social location is at once self location – two keystones of the empirical world in which self lives his or her vocation. Critical self knowledge starts with critical awareness of one’s social location.

Society applies social controls relevant to self’s location. Contrast controls applied to a wealthy business owner or hedge fund entrepreneur with those exercised over a fast food worker or an unemployed minority. Self internalizes these social pressures through socialization into one’s social location. We see a definitive internalization: external social controls become internal personal controls. Social control becomes self control; visible constraints become invisible norms. In well-ordered societies, social controls rarely apply the police power of the state’s final control through imprisonment, violence, and death. We want to follow social norms without experiencing external controls.

Identities and roles are rewarded, imposed, and enacted in actions that we seek, expect, avoid, or fear. They control us as though they were physical forces. Social controls are social facts and personal motives. Society exists in us as pre-packaged desires, pathways, and anticipated futures.

Berger’s (1963) humanistic sociology underlines social controls that bind us like chains. Eventually, however, he insists on a meta-sociological freedom, a capability that lies outside of social science, indeed, of science in general. Yet, only a barbarian denies human freedom. We learn to see society’s chains in order to exercise our freedom to whatever degree possible. Knowing society as a prison, paradoxically, liberates us. Coping with the chains that bind us leads to an understanding of society as acting upon a stage with some dramaturgical and moral indeterminism. Human freedom is dialectically restricted, but we do experience a mode of freedom, even if it is no more than the ability to see the puppet strings causing us to act, think, and feel as society imposes — at least before critical reflection.

Once we see the strings moving us, we can interpret their effects and become improvisational actors, or more realistically, interactors, and fashion new meanings and emergent futures. Now our social world is overlapping worlds: a prison into which we are socialized before reaching critical thinking; a puppet theater in which we are behaviorally controlled whether or not we agree with the paths the strings take us; and finally a stage on which we address the powerful, the less powerful, and mere spectators, with our scary free will and limited control over, yet with moral responsibility for, our words and deeds. And remember that nothing is as the powerful make it appear to be!

Self Transcends Social Location

Building on awareness that nothing is as appears and that the powerful fashion appearances, sociological consciousness questions typical “of course” statements that underwrite official worldviews. Appearances serve someone’s interests, so appearance-makers serve their own interests over less powerful others’ interests. Theoretically, markets function through exchanges of equal values, yet the historical result is inequality – stratification is a universal feature of societies. Theoretically, a market is a win-win situation in which exchangers achieve preferable value-added, thus everyone is better off. That is theory. In the real world of inherited social locations and inter-generational well-being or poverty, there are insufficient win-win situations to lessen inequalities. Indeed, consumption driven markets plus growing populations threaten equitable wealth production, finite life support systems, and fragile environmental sustainability.

Societies are more than theoretical markets. Thus the necessity for moral and juridical frameworks to control unequal social outcomes and unsustainable environmental effects of unbridled capitalism, as John Paul II wrote in “Centessimus Annus.” Berger (1963) insisted that a humanistic sociology demands that we posit freedom as a condition for authentic agency and the possibility of socio-cultural change. Empirically, freedom requires the means to exercise that freedom.

From Sociology to Self and Vocation

Locating sociology as critical consciousness that is continuous with concerns in liberal education and relevant for contemporary issues, we work with self-as-social within American pragmatism, especially the writings of George H. Mead (Gecas & Weigert, 2003). Mead’s pragmatic, democratic, processual, and meliorative self-as-social fits Berger’s (1963) humanistic sociology and Catholic social tradition’s person-in-community. These perspectives reject the abstracted starting point of a free-standing autonomous individual. Self as inherently social and moral underwrites both Catholic social tradition and pragmatic humanistic sociology.

Pragmatic sociological humanism addresses self and society as two dimensions of a more inclusive community of cooperation and competition and not conflict and violence. Pragmatic

sociology is inclusive – there are no apriori membership criteria such as beliefs, ideologies, or party affiliations. Secondly, pragmatic sociology is meliorative but not utopian in the sense of a planned organization of a future society. As Mead states, humans must democratize science, including social science, as a cognitive engine that drives policy and action, both collective and individual. He sees experimental science in the service of reconstructive actions to build a fairer society that is continuously reformable. What we have is a democratic method, not an imposed blueprint. The best hope for viable futures is scientifically informed action based on empirical knowledge and democratic reasoning. Putting knowledge into action makes it moral. A morally aware actor must strive to take account of all other persons affected by that action, just as a scientist must take account of all other explanations of the phenomenon. Sociology recognizes that today's global context of interacting societies demands democratic communication and agreeable cooperation without moral authoritarianism.

In short, a sociologist faces moral demands within her or his scientific vocation emerging from shared understandings in the service of larger social goods (Feagin and Vera, 2008, pp. 52-54). An emergent democratic self protects a sociologist from a tyranny of methods implying an automatic inference and from the rigidity of ideology or the illusion of prophecy.

Berger and Kellner (1981) transition from social science to self as a moral agent by contrasting value-free methods of research with value-guided vocations. They understand “method” in a larger sense to refer “not to the techniques of research . . . , but to the logic of their scientific investigations” (Berger and Kellner, 1981, p. vii). By contrast with value-free methods, vocation typically “refers to an ethically self-conscious reflection about one’s work” (p. vii). Ethical reflection addresses issues such as choice of subject matter and interpretive perspective that re-affirm or debunk appearances, power, and privilege. The tense dialectic of these principles highlights both what social scientists do and how they do it, as well as who the scientist is and who he or she should be. Ideally, sociology as a science is value and ethically neutral, but really, sociologists as selves are never neutral nor are their actions. Berger and Kellner end their essay with a claim informing an appeal. Reflections on method and vocation straddle issues of science and ethics. They understand a sociologist’s vocation as cautioning against engaging “technocratic professionalism” on the one hand, and “ideological pseudoprophecy” on the other – a difficult balancing of knowledge making and value seeking (Berger and Kellner, 1981, pp. 170-171).

Whether social analysts admit to it or not, they are living a vocation – a value trajectory by selves aware of their social locations (Blasi & Weigert, 2007). Within Catholic social tradition, vocation carries an aura of its Christian history. The early Church was an ecclesia, a people called out of the surrounding society. This “call” then moved to reference individuals who answered a special call to join religious life or the clergy. Luther’s theses brought vocation out of the monastery and into the world for everyone. And Max Weber

argued that the Protestant Ethic gave birth to rational capitalism via a worldly vocation, a “Beruf” or “profession,” motivating everyman to live rationally in the world. Finally, consider today’s professional – a specially recognized and privileged vocation-as-career, such as medicine, law, science, or sociology.

Pragmatic Sociologists at Work

Do professional sociologists reflect values in their studies? Consider *Our Studies, Ourselves: Sociologists’ Lives and Work*, a selection of sociological research with ethical applications (Glassner & Hertz, 2003). These studies illustrate that choices of subject matter and study populations are inherently value informed. Scientific methodology properly done may be value free in pursuit of empirical description and causal models, but the study as a whole arises from moral decisions concerning sociologists’ scarcest resource, life’s energy and time. *Our Studies, Ourselves* address principle sources of inequality underlying access to creation’s goods -- race, class, and gender, and offer treatments of identity change – a feature of everyone’s vocation.

Sociologists’ analyses of and engagement with inequality and injustice challenge their personal meanings. The challenges generate conflicts, time pressures, and shifts in careers. Hector Delgado notes that pursuit of the two dimensions demand sacrifices to work the interface between sociology and activism (2003, p. 32). As he married and parented, family responsibilities made career decisions more complex and constricted time for activism.

How may one better the lives of those whom sociologists struggle to document and explain to themselves and to the world? Barrie Thorne notes in her studies of meanings among ethnically and physically diverse elementary school students, “Struggles for justice are also struggles with the self” (Glassner and Hertz, 2003, p. 172). In short, to work for social justice is to work for institutional and cultural change, which inevitably changes one’s social location. In traditional religious reflection, a vocation involves metanoia, a conversion to work for social inclusivity, justice, and peace – a solidarity built on the common good at the heart of Catholic social thinking (Curran, 2011; Whitmore, 2005).

Social change arises from multiple causes. It may be imposed top down by the powerful; emerge from institutional dynamics; be initiated by a charismatic leader; or arise from social movements among the disadvantaged. Verta Taylor sees gendered meanings and unequal power informing movements among women and excluded gendered identities for realizing their potential within patriarchal structures. Such activism continues the “struggle . . . for the kind of just and peaceful world” sought by social activists (Glassner and Hertz, 2003, p. 275).

From Knowing to Doing: See, Judge, Act Revisited

Social activism is sometimes in tension with a vocation to do social science. The classical, “Knowledge for What” tension ebbs and flows through the history of sociology into current “liberation sociology.” Liberation sociologists live conflicted careers, yet may reach the peak of their profession through scholarly productivity (Feagen & Vera, 2008).

A sociological perspective looks to social movements as a key dynamic for change. Social movements are processes of change typically bottom up, that is, individual selves realize a collective identity and take to the streets and channels of communication to confront the powerful who make things what they appear to be. Within Catholic social tradition, social movements refer to emerging collective responses to Teachings and Thought.

Consider categories in the John A. Ryan Institute for Catholic Social Thought website at the University of St. Thomas (<http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst>). The foundational category is “Catholic Social Tradition” with sub-categories of “Teaching, Thought, and Practice.” We reference this as CST:TTP. This grouping includes the Judeo-Christian Tradition and related religious movements; institutional Teachings; emergent Thought by theologians and intellectuals; and the enacted Practices of activists. Tradition and Teaching bring the past into the present. Thought and Practice move the present into the future.

Within pragmatic thinking, practices may coalesce into social movements that in turn move Thought and Practice into Teaching and Tradition (witness current demographic driven movements around the Globe). So too, Catholic social movements give practical life to Catholic social tradition and further the development of Teachings and Thought. As mentioned, John Coleman (2005a, 2005b) notes that “no robust exegesis of ‘official’ encyclical teaching is possible that cuts it off from broader social movements.” His “*social Catholicism*” encompasses “official” teachings from above and “unofficial” thought and practice from below (Coleman, 2005a, pp. 524-525).

Social movements seek new remedies to crucial issues, often from the perspective of those most in need. Movements may have exclusivist or inclusivist dynamics, either seeking social goods only for insiders like us, or working to enlarge the range of the social mortgage on Creation so that all have an opportunity to meet basic needs and lead dignified lives. The dialectic of Practices and Thought informing Teachings slants possibilities of creative responses to emerging issues that keep Tradition alive and hopeful.

Acting in social movements realizes metanoia as activists claim and live deeply felt identities. In a word, engaging in social movements elicits intense psychological outcomes. The collective movement may aim to change the world, but that outcome may not be achieved. Acting in the movement, however, changes the self. The psychic rewards are intense,

and so are the costs. Movement activists need to guard against burnout and find hope to persevere through challenges and resistance.

Living Catholic Social Tradition

The “see-judge-act” triad fills the movement-like case studies in *Living the Catholic Social Tradition* (Kelly & Weigert, 2005). The opening idea is “Living,” that is, taking action. The title highlights the primacy of right action. Alexie Torres-Fleming working for greater justice in a South Bronx neighborhood notes that “Catholic social teaching is . . . written in the affirmative . . . the dignity of human life, the dignity of work, solidarity” (Kelly & Weigert, 2003, p. 103). Positive inclusive values inform narratives that offer the hope of enlisting others who share the vision, regardless of other identities.

Most of the cases start with Catholic actors; some evolve into more inclusive movements; and some are not Catholic in origin. Some cases depict historical developments; others illustrate Catholic tradition trending toward more inclusivity in pursuit of a more just world -- akin to the new evangelization. The pursuit typically starts with an empirical sketch of the unjust or violent situations in the neighborhoods. The sites are South Bronx, Chicago, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Oakland, San Antonio, Immokalee, Baltimore, and a sampling of University campuses opposing unfair labor practices in making scholastic clothing .

Promoting justice reflects “orthopraxis” or right action. Issues of “orthodoxy,” or right beliefs, are extrinsic to promoting justice. By their fruits ye shall know them – especially for the least of them. Catholics promoting justice and working for peace join with others regardless of religious identities, always in pursuit of a better future. Intra- and inter-faith social alignments complicate questions of collective identity and dynamics of organizational authority. Nevertheless, keeping one’s eyes on the prize can generate local action initiatives and a dialectic of social identities in pursuit of better futures by those who otherwise may not agree.

This living dialectic reaches worldwide proportions in contemporary globalization. Worldwide transportation, communication, travel, migration, markets, violence, conflict, and increasing contacts among peoples, ideologies, ecosystems, and nation-states are generating a new era in social relations and challenging CST:TTP in new ways (Coleman and Ryan, 2005; Groody, 2007).

Primers on Catholic Social Teachings

This essay started with seeing the empirical world to guide moral action. To paraphrase Karl Marx, the call is not only to understand the world but to change it. Seeing leads to Practice (e.g. CST:TTP) which changes the starting point for the next step: living the Catholic social tradition.

Contrast this perspective with that of a text with official teachings referenced earlier. Kevin McKenna’s *A Concise Guide to Catholic Social Teaching* presents “major papal teachings as

well as teachings from the Episcopal conference of the United States” (2003, p. 13). In general, papal statements are more abstract and Episcopal letters are more concrete and local – mirroring a moral syllogism moving from principles to application. By contrast, Groody (2007) begins with an empirical global “over-view,” then an “under-view” of income and wealth distributions, followed by an “inner-view” of the human heart as a metaphor for spirituality and solidarity.

Todd Whitmore (2005) privileges “common good” as the foundation for interpreting Catholic social teaching, rather than the co-principle of personal dignity. The idea of a common good balances the hyper individualism informing much of American culture: only individuals are real; individuals are the only judges for moral action; and individuals are the origin and endpoint of the good. Grounding CST:TTP primarily on personal dignity runs the risk of an individualistic understanding of these teachings. Noting that community precedes individual, Whitmore grounds common good in an understanding of personhood as a “social self,” an individual-in-relationships-with-others.

Similarly, Charles Curran’s (2002) depiction of the “anthropology” underlying Catholic social thinking emphasizes common good as shared dignity. CST:TTP rejects extreme characterizations of personhood either as autonomous individuals whose interests are the source of moral judgments or as fused manifestations of an all-encompassing social mass. Rather, CST:TTP begins with person-in-community – a mirror of person as a social self, a dialectic of “both-and” as person is always both an individual and member. Recall perennial wisdom: a solitary person is either a beast or an angel; and personal dignity is a divine gift arising from shared love.

Perennial wisdom adumbrates cosmopolitan formulae for a globalizing world struggling to retain core identities and yet be open to more inclusive identities – a welcoming shift from “either-or” (self is either one of us or one of them) to “both-and” (self is one of us and open to them). Curran (2011) nuances CST:TTP in an etymological and inclusive reading of “cath-olic” indicating a “universality” in personal dignity and common good.

Daniel Groody (2007) explicitly addresses the dialectic of CST:TTP with social science and dynamics of globalization. He emphasizes one’s social location (Groody, 2007, p. xvii). He introduces the call to a “right relationships” with God, self, and others through an overview of inequalities among seven billion humans that perpetuate physical, social, moral differences and affront solidarity and human dignity.

Catholic social tradition is historically prior to and morally broader than sociology. The Tradition stays in dialectic with Thought, Teachings, and Practices to remain vital in the contemporary lives of the people of the Church and the cultures in which those people and the Church exist. So too, we believe that Catholic social thought and Teachings must

stay in dialectic with social sciences in order to see the world empirically through empirical methods for describing and interpreting actual developments. Likewise, official Teachings must stay in dialectical contact with Tradition, Thought, and especially Practices to remain relevant for emerging dynamics within globalization’s social movements, technologies, markets, inequalities, and violence.

CST:TTP enters into the interpretive moments in which we judge, that is, interpret what we see to motivate us to act in the world for the benefit of all, not only for Church members. The inclusivity and universality of right action informed by CST:TTP radiates from the first principles of the anthropology underlying it, namely, all are endowed with the dignity of persons made in the image of our Creator and with the communitarian self of a Triune God.

Cultural desires and luxuries transformed into human needs and necessities threaten the common good and generate inequalities. CST’s central idea of the “social mortgage on Creation to meet the basic needs of all” is prior to the claim that the “wants and luxuries” of the few take priority. Consider ecological outcomes on global environments from consuming material goods in pursuit of unbridled wants and unlimited luxuries and not merely to meet our needs. Excessive waste is often a sign of inequalities that result in part from the imperative to define desires as needs, luxuries as necessities, and scarce materials as conspicuous consumption.

Coleman (2005a, 2005b) and others question whether official social teachings influence transnational corporations, nation-states, and young populations. Charles Curran (2002) notes that “Catholic social teaching has little or no visibility in the wider philosophical . . . discussions and writings in the United States” (pp. 250-251). In-house, authoritative church teaching takes away from the potential appeal of teachings to other religious or secular actors.

Our view is that Teachings are only as effective as their links with social movements among the laity and engaged clergy. We look to charismatic hierarchs akin to Pope Francis’ appeal, who at times give institutional support to justice and peace on the ground rather than only to abstract criteria.

An authoritarian tone teaches to believers rather than addressing all of good will in contemporary American social reasoning. In-house teaching is akin to indoctrination for members rather than an inclusive new evangelization. Think of some Catholics’ reactions to President Obama’s honorary degree at the University of Notre Dame and selected Catholic faculty’s letter addressed to John Boehner on his visit to Catholic University of America. The former was met by some with condemnatory rhetoric including stand-up verbal protests at Commencement, and the latter with an invitational rhetoric to dialogue over the relevance of Catholic social tradition.

A hope of this essay is that CST:TTP develops an effective openness to social science illustrated by Berger’s humanistic

and Mead's pragmatic approaches. Such openness may appeal all who wish a better future for their descendants. Such openness suggests that contemporaries acquire a cosmopolitan sense of self connected to others who are not like us. If traditional religious identity starts from an either-or dichotomy such as You are not I for all eternity, then a cosmopolitan religious self emerges from affirmations of self and other as persons in the image of the Creator and who works to share common goods.

Cosmopolitan selfhood is implied in the etymology of catholic as a self beyond tribe and place. Fifty years ago, Berger (1963) saw sociology leading to a cosmopolitan self, and nearly a century ago Mead emphasized "international mindedness," a proto-cosmopolitan theme (Abouafia, 2001; Berger, 1963, pp. 52-53). Globalization tends toward one world in which strangers intermingle in a global community seeking a shared ethics for a common future (Appiah, 2006). We see resonances of cosmopolitan selfhood in Catholic social tradition writ global and occasionally read resonances in our students' final research projects. A cosmopolitan Catholic identity locates a self who addresses justice and peace challenges of a globalizing world in an effort to realize *social Catholicism* in conversations with others not like us (Schmidt, 2015).

We reread the dialectic of history and biography as institution and self informing the Practices of activists to form a more just world. Living the Catholic social tradition both results from Teachings and in turn generates emerging Teachings to address the new challenges to form a peaceful and just world. Intrinsic to the logic of this dialectic is the empirical social scientific task to describe, explain, and make sense of the world that is there. Abstract doctrinal pronouncements link with the real world via social scientific studies. Humanistic social science also addresses the staffed and bureaucratized Church in its mission as an *Ecclesia semper reformanda*. A dynamic, pluralistic, and emergent community requires democratic pedagogical practices engaging top-down Teachings and bottom-up Thought and Practices. We end with a brief depiction of pedagogical practices as they emerge in our course.

Pedagogical Practices

In 2007, the authors, one specialized in social movements and the other in sociology of religion, introduced a course interfacing Catholic social tradition and sociology (subsequent courses taught by AW). The grounding pedagogy is a student-driven discussion seminar.

"Student driven seminar" is the foundational process for our learning community pedagogy as a spiritual journey through participatory discussion (Brookfield and Preskill, 2005; Palmer, 1993). Two students are assigned (following alphabetic order of last names) to be "catalysts," aka agents of other students' reactions to the assigned reading. Also, intrinsic to learning community pedagogy is an analogy of three "texts": the literal text of assigned readings; the biographical text of students'

own experiences; and the interactive text emerging from group discussion.

The catalysts prepare a one page handout with "evocative questions" and "juicy quotes" as means of generating discussion. Catalysts announce the sequence of foci, beginning with "housekeeping": any experiences, encounters, or communications with family, friends, roommates, other classes, etc. that are relevant to themes already discussed. This is a mild attempt to realize the biographical text and extend the scope of the learning community beyond classroom walls. The links occasionally generate pointed or wide-ranging proto-communitarian links.

After housekeeping, catalysts guide discussion. They sometimes break into small groups for preliminary discussion of questions and quotes and then return to a plenary session. Other catalysts prefer plenary sessions. Variety appears to help dynamics, link more students (since they tend to sit in the same seats around the circle), and defer the dampening effects of routine. And variety elicits wider trust and allows more students' voices to be heard.

We believe the analogous texts and discussion processes fit Coleman's (2005a, 2005b) construct of "*social Catholicism*." We interpret the construct as akin to Newman's "sensus fidelium" and to an analogy of Catholic Church as "Qahal YHWH" which we non-theologians take as the "people of God," a communitarian, even democratic vision of Church membership and participation suggested in the original Apostolic community.

After several weeks, I distribute two pages of "actional norms" of learning community pedagogy for discussion. The norms emphasize finding one's voice and critically evaluating the "objects" formed by students' comments and figuratively placed inside the discussion circle to separate them from commenters' egos and making neutral analyses more likely. The difficult endless step is to separate ego from issue.

The larger goals are critical self awareness and social dynamics such as inclusion, peace, justice, and sustainability through engaged conversation open to all. We build on the metaphor of "con-versation" from Latin roots picturing a "turning toward each other" re-enacted by the learning community's circle of seats.

The learning community is participatory democracy writ small. And as students are enacting a learning community among themselves, so are they empowered to practice the same with others, even strangers most unlike themselves. As my German mother used to say, Practice makes perfect.

In the current semester, we introduced two additional pedagogical practices. First, we add a "community based learning" component to elicit students' experiential learning (*Guide, nd*). Each student commits 20 to 30 hours volunteering at the South Bend Center for the Homeless. Students offer to

perform a wide range of work such as teaching French, mentoring children, or staffing the front desk. They interact with the homeless guests, staff, and other volunteers. We provide a simple paradigm for generating “field notes”: describe, interpret, and theorize your interactions with concepts and themes from class content and integrate in a final research paper.

Finally, we introduced a five minute “examen” during each class. Examen is adapted from the Jesuit practice of daily meditative reflection upon one’s goals, values, and actions. Catalysts decide when to dedicate the five minutes – some opt for the beginning of class, others at a mid-point (none chose the final five minutes). We look forward to hearing students’ reactions to the examen experience at course de-briefings!

We hope these practices informing student driven, learning community pedagogy re-actualize received contents and institutional dynamics of social Catholicism. And we hope they are a step toward a more inclusive, peaceful, just, and sustainable cosmopolitan pluralism needed in today’s world.

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