

Psychosexual Issues & Boundaries with International Candidates

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Agenda

- Raising our own cultural awareness:
an exercise
- Identifying areas of concern
- Recommendations for formation
 - A model for Sexual Identity
 - Keeping Church teaching at the center
 - Teaching & practicing etiquette &
customs





Cultural Awareness

- Begins with an awareness of our own cultural biases.
- Questions:
 1. What do these advertisements tell us about our own cultural perspective relative to sex roles & gender?
 2. What do these advertisements tell us about what we value in the US?

Cultural Awareness

- Cultural competence begins with awareness of one's own cultural biases.
 - Including the potential limitations of our cultural perspective, held beliefs, customs, etc.
 - Awareness of our cultural limitations facilitates openness to the cultural perspective of another.

Cultural Awareness

- Some challenging questions:
 - Was there anything of value left behind from previous generations?
 - What was the wisdom of a previous generation / of another culture?
- These are not meant to negate the importance of our current perspective.
- They potentially move us from seeing someone else’s perspective from “wrong” to different and still having value.

Cultural Awareness

- Further, moves us in the direction of seeing the potential for the “other” to teach us something.
- When this is the case, defensiveness decreases and learning is facilitated.

What are the more frequently encountered issues?

- Sex roles /Gender expectations:
 - What are appropriate roles for women versus men.
 - Includes work
 - Authority relationships
 - Distribution of domestic responsibilities

What are the more frequently encountered issues?

- Appropriate ways of relating physically and socially with persons of the opposite sex:
 - Appropriateness of touch
 - Appropriateness of language
 - Understanding romantic/sexual assertiveness of some women.

What are the more frequently encountered issues?

- Dealing with a culture that is more open in discussing emotional and sexual issues.
 - May be a challenge in formation
 - May also be a threat in pastoral situations or community life

What are the more frequently encountered issues?

- Cultural differences in how homosexuality is regarded.
 - In some countries homosexual activity is illegal and may bring grave consequences
 - Some may see homosexuality as a western or American phenomenon. (“We do not have homosexuality in our country.”)
 - May lead to difficulties in pastoral situations or even community life.

Strategies for Formation/Acculturation

- Work to raise candidate’s awareness of his/her cultural perspective while sharing yours
 - “What is surprising you so far about how men and women in the US relate to one another?”
 - “What are you noticing so far about how women function in US society? How is that different than in _____?”

Strategies for Formation/Acculturation

- Look for commonalities between cultural perspectives:
 - Difference between urban and rural perspectives
 - May need to reference historical similarities

Strategies for Formation/Acculturation

- When sharing the US cultural perspective, be open in sharing benefits and limitations. For example:
 - Greater openness around sexuality may have led to greater promiscuity
 - Greater openness around sexuality has resulted in better addressing issues of sexual abuse and exploitation

Strategies for Formation/Acculturation

- Invite international candidate to think critically about the benefits and limitations of their own culture's perspective.
- Invite a conversation about what we in the US can learn from his/her cultural perspective.

Strategies for Formation/Acculturation

- Offer an adequate and accurate education on sexual identity.
 - Sex
 - Gender
 - Sexual Orientation
 - History of Sexual Experiences
 - Attitudes and Values re: Sexuality

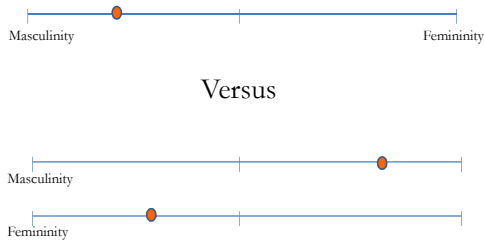
Strategies for Formation/Acculturation

- Offer an adequate and accurate education on sexual identity.
 - Sex** – biologically determined status as male or female

Defining Sexuality

- **Gender**
 - A more internal, psychological experience of ourselves as male or female
 - Masculinity / Femininity
 - Many determining factors
 - Manifest in our affect, behavior and cognitions
 - More continuous – not dichotomous like Sex
 - Androgyny (Bem, 1974)

Androgyny (Bem, 1974)



Sexual Identity

- **Sexual Orientation**
 - An area of particular sensitivity and cultural influence with respect to attitudes and understanding.
 - Stay very close to scientific findings:
 - Defining
 - Prevalence (in US)
 - Determining Factors

Sexual Identity

• **Sexual Orientation**

– Stay very close to Catholic Church teaching:

- Church distinguishes between orientation and homosexual acts.
- Does not consider it sinful to have a homosexual orientation
- Uses Thomistic principles to conclude that homosexual acts are “disordered” or sinful.

Sexual Identity

• **Sexual Orientation**

– Stay very close to Catholic Church teaching:

- Church recognizes the dignity of all people, including individuals with same-sex attraction.
- Church recognizes that individuals do not “choose” their sexual orientation (different than choosing to identify oneself as homosexual or same-sex attracted).

Sexual Identity

• **Sexual Orientation**

– Anticipate where/when candidate is likely to encounter situations involving issues of sexual orientation:

- Confession
- Pastoral counseling situations
- Couples in parish
- Disclosures by friends or community members

Sexual Identity

• **Sexual Orientation**

- Anticipate where/when candidate is likely to encounter situations involving issues of sexual orientation
- Help candidate outline what are appropriate pastoral responses in these situations.

Strategies for Formation/Acculturation

• **History of Sexual Experiences**

- It can be helpful to educate candidates on what are “normative” sexual experiences and expressions of physical affection in the United States.
 - Laumann, et al (2000) *Social Organization of Sexuality*
- Shock is not pastoral response!

Strategies for Formation/Acculturation

• **History of Sexual Experiences**

- Includes the possibility of harmful or traumatic sexual experiences:
 - Sexual assault / rape
 - Sexual abuse
 - Bullying / shaming

Strategies for Formation/Acculturation

- **Attitudes and Values re: Sexuality**
 - Good to assist the candidate in identifying and clarifying his/her attitudes and values
 - Discussing these issues may be a challenge for some international candidates
 - More easily overcome when provided with accurate vocabulary and concepts to discuss.

Strategies for Formation/Acculturation

- Offer an adequate and accurate education on sexual identity.
 - Sex**
 - Gender**
 - Sexual Orientation**
 - History of Sexual Experiences**
 - Attitudes and Values re: Sexuality**

* Goal: to avoid conflating these constructs

Etiquette and Boundaries

- Cultures differ in many and subtle ways with respect to what is appropriate when interacting with people of the same and opposite sex.
- Misunderstandings are best avoided when we can anticipate and provide guidelines for appropriate interactions.

Etiquette and Boundaries

- **Addressing women:**
 - Err on the side of formality, esp. at first
 - When married: Mrs. Smith
 - When single: Miss Smith
 - If uncertain: Miss Smith
 - If they have invited you to call them by their first name, then feel free to do so.
 - Don't use terms of endearment or diminutive names: honey, sweetie, darling, babe, sugar,

Etiquette and Boundaries

- **Physical contact:**
 - Upon introduction: a nod or bow, or extend a hand to shake
 - As you become more familiar, shake hands, possibly hug, but let the other initiate a hug & be careful
 - A hug should be brief with the upper part of the body
 - A handshake ordinarily should be brief

Etiquette and Boundaries

- **Physical contact:**
 - Don't kiss
 - Avoid touching lower back, neck, legs, face, anywhere on the front or lower half of the body
 - Safest to avoid touching in general
 - The other person may interpret the touch differently than you

Etiquette and Boundaries

- **Personal space:**
- Body space is important to consider.
 - Stand at least 2-3 feet away from someone you are talking to
 - Standing closer suggests greater levels of intimacy
 - this differs from culture to culture

Etiquette and Boundaries

- **Commenting on attractiveness:**
- Compliments are nice; however one must be careful.
- It is safer to comment on someone's apparel than their general appearance
 - “What a beautiful dress” is safer than
 - “You look beautiful today” is safer than
 - “You look very sexy today” or “If I weren't a priest...”

Etiquette and Boundaries

- **Commenting on attractiveness:**
- It is safer to comment on general appearance than specific aspects of a person
 - “You look very nice today” is safer than:
 - “You're hair is very beautiful.”
 - “You have beautiful eyes.”
 - “You look like you exercise a lot.”
 - “You have a beautiful body.”

Etiquette and Boundaries

- **Commenting on attractiveness:**
- When making comments on physical appearance, it is better to do it in public than in private.
- Be careful about staring or “ogling” – it is impolite and makes the other uncomfortable.

Etiquette and Boundaries

- **In making conversation:**
- Women are considered equals in conversation, in the workplace, in the Church, in general society
- When addressing a couple, direct conversation to both the man and the woman
- Eye contact with women is appropriate
 - Certain kinds are not: winking, staring, flirting

Etiquette and Boundaries

- **In making conversation:**
- The opinions and ideas of women are to be invited and listened to the same as men
 - Women are often as educated if not more educated than men
 - Women may have advanced education in theology

Etiquette and Boundaries

- **In the workplace:**
- Women are considered collaborators and colleagues, not underlings
- It is inappropriate and offensive to leave certain jobs to women only:
 - Make the coffee
 - Do the parish linens
 - Do your laundry
 - Do the cleaning
 - Cook for you

Etiquette and Boundaries

- **In the workplace:**
- You may hire or ask for volunteers, but this request should be made to men and women
