Sex Education and Religious Discipline: A Biopolitical Negotiation of Sexual Citizenship in Malta

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Submitted to:

Central European University
Department of Gender Studies

In partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Arts in Gender Studies

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Budapest, Hungary
2011

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Abstract

There is a need to reexamine both biopolitical and sexual citizenship theories in the context of individual experience. In this thesis I examine development of sexual citizenship within a framework of biopolitical theory, and look at negotiations of power in the process of sovereignty, focusing specifically on the role of religion in these negotiations. Through the incorporation of these ideas into the specific context of sex education debates as covered in two Maltese newspapers and a series of interviews conducted with Maltese university students, I first I explore the emphasis on both the health of the individual and the health of the Maltese population as a whole, arguing that there exists not only a struggle to define the parameters of sex education but of the Maltese sexual citizen. I then look at the emphasis on the education and surveillance of youth in Malta by the older generations, asserting that the perceived "repression" of the young by the old has resulted in the a partial rejection of attitudes expressed by the older generations, particularly by well-educated and affluent young Maltese citizens. The final section of this project is concerned with the creation of a gendered moral standard for Maltese sexual citizenship through both individual sex education experiences and the media debates. I show that while an emphasis is placed on women's emotional health and moral integrity, there is more a focus on physical health and safety in terms of male sexuality, which is validated by the way in which the Catholic Church monitors and punishes "inappropriate sexual behavior. I conclude that the Church as a religious institution in Malta is active in the biopolitical negotiation of sexual citizenship as monitored through the validation of certain patterns of sexual behavior over others.

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Introduction

In this thesis I explore the impact of religion on the biopolitical negotiation of sexual citizenship in the context of the recent sex education debates in Malta. Biopolitical theory typically leaves religion out of the equation, and I argue that it can be brought into a biopolitical analysis of a specific, concrete situation in which the negotiation of sexual citizenship is occurring. The situation I examine is that of the recent debates over sex education on the island state of Malta. I argue that in the Maltese context, the Catholic Church interacts as a significant force in the process of decision-making vis-à-vis sexual citizenship.

I begin with an overview of theories of biopolitics, sexual citizenship, and secularization. I argue that there is a need to reexamine both biopolitical and sexual citizenship theories in the context of individual experience, and examine the way that biopolitical theory provides a framework in which the sexual citizen is developed as an individual through negotiations of power. I end the chapter by focusing specifically on the current lack of academic investigation into the role of religion in these negotiations. I then incorporate these ideas into the specific context of the sex education debates in *Times of Malta* and *The Malta Independent* as well as text from my interviews to examine the way that theories of biopolitics, sexual citizenship, and secularization function in this scenario. In the third chapter I explore the emphasis on both the health of the individual and the health of the Maltese population as a whole, arguing that there exists not only a struggle to define the parameters of sex education but of the Maltese sexual citizen. I then look at the emphasis on the education and surveillance of youth in Malta by the older generations in the fourth chapter, asserting that the perceived "repression" of the young by the old has resulted in the rejection of attitudes expressed by the older generations, particularly by well-educated and affluent young Maltese citizens. The fifth chapter is concerned with the creation of a gendered moral standard through both individual sex

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education experiences and the media debates, and I show that while an emphasis is placed on women's emotional health and moral integrity, there is more a focus on physical health and safety in terms of male sexuality, which is validated by the way in which the Catholic Church monitors and punishes "inappropriate sexual behavior. I conclude that the Church as a religious institution in Malta is active in the biopolitical negotiation of sexual citizenship as monitored through the validation of certain patterns of sexual behavior over others.

Malta's history provides an interesting situation in which to explore the larger themes I am concerned with. As a colony of England until 1964 (and of other empires since at least the Roman era), the island's relatively recent independence has resulted in a perceived need to establish a strong "Maltese" identity. A large part of that identity has involved embracing Catholicism as an essential part of the Maltese character, including the recognition of Catholicism as the country's official religion in the Maltese constitution and the continued presence of church personnel in many public debates concerning a variety of government policies effecting Maltese citizens. At the same time, since joining the European Union in 2004, many in both the Maltese government and the larger Maltese community have pushed for a more "secular" approach to governance similar to that seen in many other European Union member states. While Maltese is the language spoken in most homes and primary and secondary schools in Malta, the island has two official languages, the other being English, which the majority of Maltese citizens also speak. As an exchange student in Malta from 2006 until 2007, I noticed the various ways in which the Maltese students defined the nation as both European and separate from Europe and as "traditional" and Catholic but becoming more "modern" and "secular." Thus, when I began contemplating the theories I deal with in this project, Malta jumped straight to mind.

Given the limited time and length of this project, I chose to concentrate on a single current, political issue in Malta through which to examine issues of religion and the biopolitical regulation of

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life. After examining current debates being covered in the news in Malta, I decided to focus on sex education. Recent studies concerning the rate of teenage pregnancy and the increasing prevalence of sexually transmitted infections among young Maltese have resulted in a call for a more comprehensive program of sex education within schools. The debate has been seen as especially important following a study in 2007 regarding the sexual behavior of young EU citizens which reported that seventy-percent of sexually active Maltese citizens under the age of 35 were not using contraception of any type (Massa 2007). However, the tensions between the "holistic" approach advanced by many politicians and members of the Maltese medical community, and the abstinence-focused programs called for by the Catholic Church and other groups focused on the preservation of "Maltese values" have resulted in a large public debate regarding the administration of sex education in Malta. The abstinence-focused programs teach students, as the name suggests, that abstinence is the best way to avoid the unwanted consequences of sex. They do not include information about contraception or STIs and instead focus on the emotional and psychological aspects of sex. The "holistic" approach advanced, and finally passed in 2010, by the Maltese government includes many of the same topics as the abstinence approach, including the encouragement of abstinence. It also, however, includes information on condoms, birth control, and other aspects of "safe sex" as secondary alternatives to abstinence.

I employee a theoretical framework of biopolitics and sexual citizenship in order to conduct a media analysis of articles concerning the sex education debates. I drew the articles I examine from the two Maltese daily English-language newspapers with the highest circulation, *The Malta Independent* and *Times of Malta*. There are also several daily Maltese-language newspapers that I was unable to analysis since I don't speak Maltese, and while it would have been ideal to examine papers written for a solely Maltese audience, I was happy to discover from one of my interviewees that many articles *The Malta Independent* are actually a direct translation from *Il-Nazzjon,* the Maltese-language

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paper with the highest distribution. The articles are from the period of 2006-2010, the main time period of the debate, and include both editorials and news pieces. In the news articles I focused mostly on quotes from various actors in the debates since my concern was with the interactions between those actors rather than the media coverage itself.

In addition to the media analysis, I conducted interviews with eight Maltese citizens concerning their personal sex education experiences, their viewpoints on sex education in Malta, and how their sex education has influenced their personal views and experiences of sex and sexuality. My interviewees ranged in age from nineteen to twenty-nine, split evenly between male and female. They were all university educated and from middle or upper class backgrounds, and so often had very similar experiences and opinions about sex education, the most notable difference being between the men and the women. The interviewees had various occupations, four of them, Giulia, 19, Sarah, 19, Matthew, 22, and Andre, 23, were currently enrolled at the University of Malta. Of the other four Anna, 23 and Elena, 23 worked as teachers in public secondary schools, Nathan, 24, worked for a betting company, and Luca, 29 owned and ran a small hostel. I began my project by contacting Anna and Elena, who I knew from my days as an exchange student, about interviewing them. Anna in turn introduced me to Giulia, Matthew and Sarah, who were friends of hers from university. I met Luca when I stayed at his hostel during my research period, and he was able to introduce me to Andre and Nathan, who he played rugby with.

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Biopolitics, Religion and the Negotiation of Sexual Citizenship

Many feminist theorists have recognized that the tendency to view sexuality and citizenship as existing in two separate spheres of life is problematic. Part of the package of rights called for by the "new" citizen is the recognition of rights not only to freedom of speech or movement, but to sexual freedoms as well. As Jeffrey Weeks says, "the sexual citizen then makes a claim to transcend the limits of the personal sphere by going public, but going public is…about protecting the possibilities of private life and private choice in a more inclusive society" (Weeks 1998). Sexuality becomes not only a private matter, but also a private matter allowed or not allowed as a result of public discourses. The issues surrounding citizenship are, for Weeks, about a societal negotiation of individuals' private rights.

Many of the theorists working on sexual citizenship have argued for the importance of viewing sex and sexuality not as issues existing within a secluded cultural or private space, but as issues invasive of many aspects of the modern state and society (Bell 2000). The public debates over rights are simply the most obvious example of the falseness of the public/private dichotomy that is so often stressed in political debates, especially in those revolving around the issue of citizenship. Brenda Cossman points out that this negotiation isn't simply a debate of who has rights and who does not, however. The process of negotiating citizenship "is about the way subjects are constituted as citizens and the way citizenship itself is constituted. It is about discourses and practices of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, and the many shades in between"(Cossman 2007). This concept of the sexual citizen, then, is not only about the legal giving of rights or a simple decision of who is or is not a citizen. It is about the way that individual subjects come to see themselves as citizens and non-citizens, and how these individual perceptions impact public discourse.

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While the work that has been done on sexual citizenship raises many interesting points, there are several areas in particular I wish to explore, including the implications of the negotiation of sexual citizenship within a biopolitical framework. First and foremost, the biopolitical sovereign exercises power over life. Thus, the process of sovereignty clearly must concern itself with the sexual behavior of its subjects, since "sex [is] a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species" (Foucault 1978, 146). To the extent that sexual rights are seen as biological as well as political rights, they become extremely important in the biopolitical context. It is not coincidental that Michel Foucault first used the term biopower in his *History of Sexuality*. Sex, always linked to the health of the population through both its social and reproductive roles, becomes a key site for witnessing the negotiations of the institutions of sovereignty in the biopolitical state.

Though in traditional use the term "sovereign" indicates a single person or institution, it is clear that in biopolitical theory a sovereign is not one, simply defined entity (Agamben 1995; Foucault 1978). Aside from the basic idea of what the sovereign does—decides—it is difficult to get a clear picture of what exactly is part of this process of decision-making. Foucault says "the disciplines of the body and the regulations of the population constituted the two poles around which the organization of power over life was deployed" (Foucault 1978, 139). The sovereign in this model isn't an entity that controls this organization of power, but the organization of power itself. Despite the frequent usage of the term biopolitical state, it is not only the obvious, visible forms of state authority that are included in the process of decision making, but the myriad of modern medical associations, data-collection agencies, and other institutions focused on the well-being of the population as whole and individual bodies in particular. These institutions and individuals involved with decisions made regarding the population are clearly part of the process of sovereignty, though none are *the* sovereign in and of themselves.

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While much attention is paid to a wide range of institutions such as public health departments or census bureaus in biopolitical scholarship, one type of institution is almost always overlooked. Religious organizations are generally ignored by authors concerned with biopolitics, as if an abolishment of all religious influence automatically accompanies the disappearance of "the ancient right to *take* life or *let* live" (Foucault 1978, 138). Even in an article by Penelope Deutscher, that addresses the issue of abortion debates in a biopolitical framework, there is no mention of religion. This omission seems odd given the frequent references to various religious texts and authorities in almost any abortion debate one finds in the contemporary world. When Deutscher asserts that "the fetus represents the zone of contested and intensified political stakes around the threshold between what some would consider "prelife" and what is to be identified as nascent human life, meaningful human life, and/or rights-bearing life," there is no mention of the role of various religious institutions in the negotiation of this threshold (Deutscher 2008, 58). The treatment of religion as a non-entity in biopolitical scholarship creates a situation where a part of the process of sovereignty, that in many situations has the potential to be rather influential in the decision-making process, is consistently overlooked.

Perhaps part of the reason that religion is so often overlooked in biopolitics is the little-questioned belief that the emergence of contemporary frameworks of power has been accompanied by an ever-increasing secularization of society, and that "since the organizing principles of life have become detached from religious interpretations, there has been a process of 'secularization' at the level of the individual" (Dobbelaere 1993, 26). Many scholars studying secularization have argued, however, that religious institutions have not actually lost their influence completely, but have simply reshaped themselves in order to exercise new forms of power. Secularization scholars theorized "that a new, institutionally less visible social form of religion was emerging, and that it was likely to become dominant at the expense of the older forms. Churches and sects would henceforth have to

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exist in a radically transformed social structural and cultural context" (Luckmann 1996, 73). This new context did not necessarily mean a complete diminishment of religious influence, however. In fact, "there is much dispute about whether contemporary society is less religious than past societies, whatever one understands by religion" (Hamilton 1995, 189).

Clearly, religion has undergone a major change in contemporary society, and, perhaps, does not hold power to the extent that it once did. It does, however, still play a role in power negotiations. In public debates concerning issues such as sex education and reproduction especially, there is often a religious undertone due to the association of the issues with "morality." Morals and ethics remain an area of power in which religious authorities still dominate (Luckmann 1996). While morals and ethics may at first glace seem rather outside the realm of biopolitics—they are not, after all, directly concerned with the biological life of the subject—they are not wholly disconnected from the domain of the discipline and regulation of the population. Scholars of secularization pretty uniformly agree that "the process of secularization is far from a uniform, continuous or even, perhaps, irreversible one," and given that this is the case, religion must consequently operate in different forms of power in various societies (Hamilton 1995, 205). Within the biopolitical framework, this means that religion plays varying roles in the process of sovereignty. In many cases, this role may be as an instigator of a moral disciplining of individual subjects, designed to facilitate the regulation of the population as a whole.

A deeper exploration of the role of religion in biopolitical theory is needed if there is to be a better understanding of the way that power negotiations take place within this framework, particularly in the context of such issues as sexuality and reproductive rights. Sexual citizenship within this framework is not decided solely by government institutions, but by a process of negotiation between various locations of power. Impacts of the negotiations of issues related to the population as a whole are often explored in both theories of sexual citizenship and biopolitics. What

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is often missing, however, is an analysis of the impact of these negotiations on the individual. Given the extreme variability of religion's role in specific societies, it is likely that an overarching theory of religion's role in the biopolitical framework would be exceedingly difficult, and possibly impossible to establish. What could more easily be examined, and is perhaps more useful in terms of accessibility and applicability, is religion's role in individual situations in which biopower operates, particularly in terms of situations in which issues of "morality" are especially prominent in debates related to sexual citizenship. I will examine these ideas in the specific context of the sex education debates in Malta.

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Sex Education and the Health of the Nation

The most intensely debated issue in the discussion surrounding sex education in Malta has been the inclusion of topics such as contraception and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Rather for or against this inclusion, articles in both the *Times of Malta* and *The Malta Independent* tend to include statistics meant to show the dangers posed to the Maltese population by growing numbers of teenage pregnancies and the spread of STIs. These statistics and the arguments made concerning the health of both individuals and the population as a whole hint strongly at the biopolitical undercurrents of the issue of sex education. The youth, representing the future of Malta as a nation, are the focus of this issue—their behavior is seen as needing to be monitored and corrected in order to preserve a healthy populace. This focus on issues of health is not only important in these media debates, however, but is also a major area of concern for all of my interviewees in both their own lives and in their views on sex education as a national issue.

Articles in both of the newspapers raise public health concerns through statements such as "a recent EU-wide health survey showed that 75 per cent of Maltese never used a condom. This supported findings by the Genitourinary Clinic in December showing that about 70 per cent of the 14,000 who visited the clinic since 2000 admitted to never using condoms" (Calleja 2009). Generally a statement such as this is followed by a reminder of the "risk of unwanted pregnancies and sexually-transmitted diseases" associated with the behavior the statistics are highlighting (Calleja 2009). Sometimes this reminder comes in the form of a statement from a medical professional, such as Dr. Philip Carabot[1], who reports "regularly seeing patients with syphilis, and an increasing number of patients with gonorrhea [that is] resistant to the commonly-used antibiotics" (Busuttil 2006). At other times the potential consequences of "risky" sexual behavior are reinforced through

[1] Dr. Carabot is the head of the Genito-Urinary Clinic at Sir Paul Boffa Hospital, which was the first GU clinic to operate in Malta.

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the words of prominent politicians like Evarist Bartolo[2], who remarks that "many of our students have casual sex, teenage pregnancies are on the rise and sexually transmitted infections continue to spread" (Borg 2009). The articles create a feeling of this debate surrounding sex education as something of a watershed moment in Malta—an issue that is not only about what children are taught in schools, but that is closely connected with an ongoing debate about what it means to be Maltese.

Abstinence and Moral Health

Those arguing for an approach to sex education that stresses the practice of abstinence and excludes topics such as contraception and STI prevention tend to warn of the dangers associated with the "westernization" of Maltese society. Following a report that "eighty per cent of baptisms in Paola, 45 percent at St. Dominic's Valletta, and 35 per cent in Cospicua are registered as 'unknown father'" Fr Paul Galea[3] lamented that "cohabitation in Malta [is] on the increase…and although it [does] not compare with Western countries, an eye [has] to be kept on the growing tendency towards the "privatization" of relationships." (Debono 2009). This portrayal of Malta as different from "Western" countries is common amongst articles promoting the need for a sex education that focuses on abstinence. Malta is often depicted as a sort of last defender of "traditional values" that are under attack. In the context of these debates, the "traditional values" tend to be closely tied to references to teachings of the Catholic Church in Malta, and the "defenders" of these values are often Church officials themselves, who fear that "the Church no longer [has] the moral strength of the past, when it was a pillar of Maltese society as regards values and behavior" due to "a rapid transformation within the span of a generation" (Debono 2009). This "transformation" is generally

[2] Mr. Bartolo is a member of the Malta Labour Party and has been a member of the parliament since 1992, serving as the editor and head of news of the Labour party media, as well as the party's main spokesman on education.

[3] Fr. Galea is a lecturer at the University of Malta, and serves as both the Head of the Department of Pastoral Theology and the Deputy Dean of Faculty of Theology.

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linked to the increasing influence of "Western" culture in Malta since the island nation's EU accession, as well as the proliferation American and Western European media.

The United Kingdom is perhaps the most commonly cited attacker of "Maltese values." Comparisons of Malta and the U.K. typically emphasize the perceived failures of sexual health policies in Britain—statements such as "although free condoms are handed out in school to teenagers, pregnancies in England and Wales have risen to their highest level since 2002" are often used to argue for an abstinence-based sex education policy (Vincenti 2009). As the last colonial power to exercise control over the Maltese islands, the United Kingdom has become a measuring stick for many Maltese, that against which they define themselves as a nation. This is particularly true in areas such as education, in which Malta has at various times striven to "follow British practices" and at others to "make curricula more responsive to the local situation…reflecting Maltese and Mediterranean concerns" (Sultana 1997). For those arguing against a sex education approach based off of "Western" models, "the direction of that slippery slope down which Britain and other countries have slithered" must not be followed if Malta "is not to extinguish itself altogether as a civilized form of existence" ("Roamer's column" 2008). They see this as part of "the challenge to modern day society…to reaffirm basic values, not abandon them and accept something else" (Busuttil 2006).

Similarities between Malta and "western" countries like the U.K. tend to be downplayed by those taking this viewpoint. When faced with statistics indicating that Malta's rate of teenage pregnancy is comparable to that of the U.K., Paul Vincenti[4] argues that "unlike in other nations…abortion is illegal in Malta—which distorts the true pregnancy rate"(Vincenti 2009). The policies promoted by countries like England are thus portrayed as not only morally bankrupt but ineffective, as opposed to policies that promote "what we [Maltese society] have always believed to

[4] Mr. Vincenti is the founder and president of Gift of Life, the largest anti-abortion organization in Malta.

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be our true values." (Vella 2006). Approaches to sex education that teach children about condoms and other forms of contraception "is tantamount to giving them permission to have sex"(Busuttil 2006), according to those promoting an abstinence-based model in Malta. "Children are not born to be promiscuous, they have to be cultured to become so. It is not their natural state" (Busuttil 2006). Through this dialogue, policies that promote contraceptive use are set up as attacking children with "unnatural" and "immoral" ideas—ideas that threaten "Maltese values."

These values are generally seen as very much linked to Catholicism, and Church officials are often quoted in support of abstinence-based approaches. Monsignor Anton Gouder[5] argues that

> Youngsters are being confronted with a defeatist attitude because they are being told they are incapable of controlling themselves and that everybody does it…with this approach, we are telling the young and not so young, who are making an effort to behave properly, that they are the ones who are not normal, instead of helping them feel proud of their behavior. It's a disservice to education. (Grech 2009)

This "disservice" is not simply about a perceived promotion of sex as "normal" behavior, however, but about a fear of losing "strong family values"(Busuttil 2006). Fr. Euteneuer, a visiting American priest suggests that "Maltese people seem to be imbued" with these values and encouraged them to remain so. Fr. Euteneuer encourages the view that "basic values" are under attack in Malta, claiming that "my country and Western Europe are exporting different values but you have the right to keep them out"(Busuttil 2006). In these arguments, the "West" is seen as peddler of faulty goods—a vendor of immorality that seeks to strip the people of Malta of their "strong family values."

When abstinence education advocates address issues of sexual health in Malta, then, it is not only about the physical health and wellbeing of individuals, but about the moral health of the nation as well. Concerns about the proliferation of STIs and teenage pregnancies are cited in most of these arguments as indicative of a 'moral crisis' in Malta. One article, which examines the "alarming

[5] Mgr Gouder has served as the Pro-Vicar General of the Catholic Church in Malta since 2007.

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number" of children born to 'unknown fathers' in Malta's recent past, includes a 'fact box' dealing with "the marriages situation in numbers"(Debono 2009) This 'fact box' contains statistics dealing with the increase in "mixed marriages"—Maltese who marry non-Maltese. The "mixed marriage" statistics are directly below numbers concerning the rise of separations in Maltese marriages and directly above those indicating an increase in cohabiting, non-married couples and in children born to mothers under 16 (Debono 2009). The structure of this 'fact box' gives the impression that the "breakdown" of traditional values demonstrated in the increases in separations, etc. is directly correlated to the influence of outsiders who are threatening Maltese "traditional values." This further reinforces the claim of those who push for a focus on abstinence in sex education that their movement "seeks to restore the values that we, as a Maltese community, all shared till some time ago"(Vella 2006).

The "Holistic" Model and Bodily Health

This idea of the need to preserve Malta as a nation does not emerge only in the arguments of those advocates focused on abstinence. Those who promote a "holistic" approach to sex education—a model including encouraging abstinence but also informing students about STIs and contraceptive use—are also concerned about the health of the Maltese nation, and of young Maltese in particular, though their focus tends more towards physical concerns. Reminders of the dangers of infection from unprotected sex such as "everyone always mentions pregnancy…that's the thing most people are scared of…young people [think] of pregnancy as the main consequence of sexual activity and [do] not really factor in STIs" are common (Calleja 2009). There is generally a push in these articles for Malta to become a more informed society about sexual health issues, especially in terms of the potential consequences of sexual behavior and means of avoiding those consequences. Statistics such as "63 per cent of Maltese respondents said they took precautions when having sex"

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are usually quickly followed by a statement such as "we have to promote education…and especially safer sex as complacency leads particularly the young to underestimate the potential risk." (Camilleri 2006) Often these articles reference other European Union countries as examples of what Malta should be doing, promoting the idea that the Maltese nation should work towards becoming a more "modern" one with a "national strategy that shall focus on awareness, responsibility, children and parent's education, surveillance, treatment and research." ("Sexual health strategy will be based on education, prevention, responsibility and loyalty" 2009)

Those who promote this holistic approach to sexual health point to the "widespread liberalization in sexual attitudes across the Western world" (Bonello 2010) as generally a good thing, and unlike their abstinence-focused sex education counterparts, tend to include Malta as part of the "Western" world rather than under threat by it. Institutions in Malta are generally seen in these pro-holistic education arguments as in need of updating, rather than scaling back. It is seen as good that "it [the post-secondary National Minimum Curriculum]…seeks to direct students to 'handle emotional responses in a mature manner' and develop their communication skills" but unfortunate that "it does not…mention the sexual development of post-secondary students" (Times of Malta, 14 January 2010). In these arguments the establishment of a national sexual health policy that will try "to comprehensively determine the path that must be pursued in an attempt to effectively enhance the sexual health of the population" is absolutely necessary (Malta Independent, 27 November 2008).

It is clear throughout both the abstinence and holistic education arguments that the debate surrounding sex education is about more than the specific lessons that children should be taught in school. And when Health Minister Joe Cassar says that "the long-awaited sexual health policy, which is not based solely on the physical aspect, contraceptives or prevention of spreading STIs…is intended to ensure the sexual wellbeing of individuals"(Bonello 2010), it is not at its core simply

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about the health of individuals, but about how those individuals are educated as part of the Maltese population, how they are taught to become a "good" sexual citizen in the Maltese body politic. The question of how the individual citizen shall be educated about sex is, at its core, one of discipline of the reproductive body, "the parallel increase of its usefulness and docility" to the continuity of the body politic as a whole (Foucault 1978, 139). This "holistic" approach seeks to regulate the bodies of the youth of Malta, and consequently the sexual health of the Maltese population, in several ways. First, and most obviously, through education in methods of contraception and STI prevention, there is a regulation of the bodily health of the Maltese youth, and to limit reproduction to an "approved" period in their lives. More subtly, through the inclusion of "information about relationships, love and intimacy" which promotes a "respect for oneself" ("The writing's on the wall" 2010), there is an attempt to regulate morality in the youth of Malta as well. Essentially, this sex education framework works to prevent sexual behavior seen as "risky" for the health of the population (i.e. casual sex) through the disciplining of individual behavior while simultaneously regulating the sexual and reproductive health of the population.

Individual Concerns with Sexual Health

These concerns with the health of the Maltese population are echoed in my interviews. None of my interviewees expressed satisfaction with their sex education, often complaining about the lack of focus on health issues such as pregnancy and STI prevention. Nathan, for instance, felt that several important topics were left out of his sex education "like HIV, that sort of thing… how you can avoid things…using condoms" (Nathan 2011). His formal sex education consisted of a few short lectures, which he said covered the "very basic, technical aspects of sex…like what parts a guy and a girl have, and what they do with them"(Nathan 2011). Nathan felt that more attention needed to be paid to the idea of "safe sex" in these courses rather than simply the message of "this is how it

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physically works, but you really shouldn't be doing it until marriage or something like that" (Nathan 2011). These sentiments were also expressed by Matthew, who said,

> I would have liked to have more in the way that it would have been very good for my own health protection, you know. I had a clue that you should wear a condom, but I didn't know why, as such. I mean, was it mainly to not impregnate the girl or was it for, you know, STDs, I mean what was more important, you know (Matthew 2011)?

The concern for their own bodily health was prevalent in all of the interviews. Several of the interviewees recalled the decisions they made in the face of this dearth of knowledge, learning about sex through "experimenting and talking to friends" (Luca 2011). Generally, this was seen as an unfortunate circumstance—something that occurred due to a lack of proper education. Elena said, "Not having been taught so much, I had to experiment to learn… I always had some thought in my brain, I was always cautious about the way I experimented…but the sex education wasn't much help" (Elena 2011). She noted that several friends were not as cautious as she, and often found themselves faced with both physical health and social problems.

Elena found herself reflecting not only on her past (and that of her friends), but on her new job as well. "I mean, now that I'm a teacher in a school, I myself see that students at the age for sex, they ask mostly their peers…at least there would be good sources asking teachers rather than browsing around the internet, which offers good knowledge, but they wouldn't be able to filter it as much at certain ages" (Elena 2011). Looking back at her own teenage years, and at the fourteen and fifteen-year-olds she now teaches, Elena felt that it is undesirable when many young people lack the knowledge necessary to take care of their own health. This was a common concern among those I interviewed—the danger posed to young Maltese by a lack of information. Sarah felt that she learned a lot from her friends, who were very open about sex, but felt that in regards to sex education in schools "there should have been much more, especially for smaller children. Not everyone has the luxury of having your friends talk about it openly and stuff like that, you have to be

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aware not everybody is able to access that. It has to be more effort when you're young (13 April 2011).

These concerns with health posed by my interviewees, though they may not phrase it as such, often shows an individual engagement with biopolitical mechanisms of the disciplining of bodies and regulation of the population. Several interviewees expressed the need for an educated sexual population in Malta, "because when they start getting, everyone starts getting very experimental, and you can't just experiment, it's not good, because...it's not something you can try, it's something you have to know" (Sarah 2011). The general consensus of my interviewees seemed to be that in order to be ensure one's sexual health (and therefore be a better sexual citizen of Malta), one must be properly disciplined in terms of STI and pregnancy prevention.

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Sexual Regulation and the Younger Generation

Both sides of the sex education debates in Malta put a clear focus on the education of the Maltese youth. Echoing a call from the World Health Organization's regional adviser in sexual and reproductive health, is the "stress that sexuality education should start from a child's birth" (Vella 2010). The younger generations, particularly those in their teenage years, are seen as needing discipline and guidance in their sexual decisions in order to both become responsible sexual citizens later and to avoid becoming sexually active too early. Dr. Carabot asserts that "we are duty bound to give children the widest possible information so that they are fully aware of the pros and cons. Twelve and fourteen-year-old children are the most prone to effects of STIs…at that age their bodies are not yet equipped for sexual activity, that is why it is important that sexual activity is delayed" (Hansen 2010). There is a consensus that in any national sexual health policy, the most important group to target is children, rather the concern is centered around their physical well-being, as it is in Dr. Carabot's statement, or around their emotional or spiritual health.

It is a generally accepted fact in these articles that "a section of [Maltese] young people are having high-risk, casual sex while being clueless about the consequences" (Cristina 2008). There is a major focus on parental as well as school involvement in the sexual education of Malta's youth in order to avoid "the social problems and the havoc wrought in young lives where wrong choices are made. So many parents seem to assume that because today's young "grow up" at an earlier age they know all there is to know about sex and relationships. The truth is the opposite…The maturity clause is absent in so many young people prematurely indulging in sexual practices" (Cristina 2008). These debates are not simply deciding how to educate the Maltese as sexual citizens, they are helping to demarcate the Maltese sexual citizen as "mature" and informed. Children are not considered

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"ready" for sex—they have neither the proper body nor the appropriate education—and therefore cannot be considered legitimate sexual citizens in any of these debates.

These debates, then, are not about how to educate the Maltese sexual citizen of the present, but that of the future. Youths are portrayed as "works in progress" who must be molded into the properly shaped sexual being (Cristina 2008). Timing becomes a key point of concern in the debate. When is it too early to provide sex education? When is it too late? "Young people are not a homogenous group. [Some felt] that sexual education was reaching them at a stage earlier than they could even comprehend at the time. On the other hand, they are receiving little to none when they need it most" (Psaila 2008). This is where parental involvement is seen as extremely important. Since each person's sexuality is tied to their own, individual body and experiences, the state is not equipped to handle the complete sexual education of each child, but must work in cooperation with parents to ensure that children are receiving the correct information at the proper time in their sexual education.

The problem with this is that apparently "Maltese parents find it extremely difficult to talk about sex with their children. The children might perceive this as an indication that sex is taboo and not something one talks about so freely" (Azzopardi 2007). Often the concern is that aside from being too embarrassed to talk to their children, parents simply are not informed enough themselves to competently educate their children in issues of sexuality. Questions have been raised in the debates of how to ensure that parents are able to pass along the information that their children need, especially given that the children who are most at risk of teenage pregnancy and STI infections are those whose parents are poorer and less educated (Borg 2010).

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Parental Guidance and Societal Surveillance

My interviewees all agreed with the idea that parents should play a major role in their children's sexuality education. The stereotype presented in several of the articles that Maltese parents

were uncomfortable talking to their children about sex held true in all but one of my interviews. Despite the fact that her mother gave her very explicit and detailed information about sex, Anna felt that while openness about sex varied even among her generation, they were on average far more comfortable with topics of sexuality than their parent's generation.

> I guess some people are just more private than others and don't really like sharing, it depends on how close you are to certain people, but yes, it varies, but I think the majority are more open to it, our generation at least… The older generation, yes, are a bit more reluctant to perhaps talk about it—I think my mom is quite an exception, but I know a lot of parents, a lot of my friends, were shocked when my mother told me those things. Yes, I think the older generation is a little less open. My friends are quite open about it.

Anna remembered friends asking her about things such as contraception because their parents wouldn't talk about it with them. She very much preferred her mother's approach, feeling that in order for children to be healthy in their sexual behavior as adults they needed to receive a proper sexual education, including information about both emotional and physical aspects of sex.

> These are things that they will all encounter, and they should [be educated] in a way that doesn't portray sex as a this forbidden thing which only gives rise to problems. They should say…they should be like, okay, yes, it can be a nice thing, but there can be problems like STDs and teenage pregnancies…it has more to do with the attitude….because if you sort of grow up thinking sex is forbidden and sex is wrong and sex is bad you are most likely to rebel and experiment, especially when you're at that age…the students I teach are like 14, 15, and they *want* to be bad and to do their own thing because that's what they think they should. And if you portray it in that way then they will obviously have sex, they will have unprotected sex because they know it's not what they should do. So it's not all about the message, it's about the attitude as well (Anna 2011)

These theories on the need to rebel by doing what they think they shouldn't do are hardly unique to Anna. Foucault's critique of the repressive hypothesis struck a similar nerve—that the impression of repression makes people want engage in lots of expression, or rather that a major discourse is being formed around sexuality even as my interviewees say that it isn't talked about. The key to sexual health in Malta is seen as the ability to talk in the open about sex—to reap that ultimate prize

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of the "speaker's benefit" (Foucault 1978, 6) by overcoming the "repression" of years past. This is seen by several of my interviewees as a step towards a more "modern" Malta. "We're more conservative as a culture, some people are much more open about these things, and if you go to Amsterdam for example, it's the norm to see somebody half naked on the balcony. In Malta you wouldn't dare do that. So yes. And also education wise, I think most European countries have more education regarding the subject" (Sarah 2011). Luca feels that more education and less focus on "tradition" and religion is necessary if Malta is to succeed as a European country, something he very much wishes it to do. "There's a lot of people that just follow tradition as such, and obviously this tradition stems from everyone being religious, being so devout…I think the general attitude in most other European countries is a lot more open about sex. In Malta it's a bit of a taboo still" (Luca 2011).

Several other interviewees also expressed the view that the attitude that 'sex is wrong' is a problem in Malta. Sarah felt that her parents were very typical Maltese. "In Malta, sex is sort of a sore subject and people don't talk about it in an open way, especially when you're young and need to get to know about these things. The basically make it where you can't talk about it. It's not that open" (Sarah 2011). She received the majority of her information about sex from friends and the internet, but felt as if these sources weren't at all adequate. "When it got to the point that I wanted to start, you know, experimenting, I was lost. I had gotten some stories from my friends, but they didn't really know anything either, and so here I was, starting to be sexually active, and knowing almost know…like seriously, I barely even knew the mechanics of intercourse" (Sarah 2011). Sarah's feeling of not knowing enough about sex is indicative of the idea that "it is through sex…that each individual has to pass in order to have access to his own intelligibility" (Foucault 1978, 155). There is a feeling that the individual cannot know him or herself as a sexual citizen without first knowing sex.

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Sexual knowledge becomes a way of gaining self-knowledge, and the first step to this knowledge is the ability to speak of sex, openly and without shame.

Elena was pushing for her parents to better educate themselves so that they might assist her younger brother and sister in their discovery of sex. "I think they should be more open. We tend to be very…it tends to be a very hot topic, among some families and their kids, so I think with sex education they should be taught how to teach their children" (Elena 2011). Her parents, like many other she knew, found talking about sex difficult, and preferred not to do so when they could avoid it. "They just told me I shouldn't do it. End of story"(Elena 2011). Andre's parents took a similar approach. "They know we've all had sex before, but they don't like it, sort of, not a good thing. They are…not open-minded. Some people, they are open-minded, but some sort of "good quality" family they are not…like old days, after marriage" (Andre 2011). His parents, he said, felt that talking about sex was "crass and beneath them," but he and his two older brothers often spoke of sex to each other, generally without very accurate information. (Andre 2011). This tendency to "hide" sex was not unique to his family, he claimed. "It's very much an elephant in the room, but…we pretend it's not there, and it makes them happier, I guess" (Andre 2011).

Both Elena and Nathan expressed the view that this "hiding" of sex was not limited to silence between parents and children, but also included a national tendency to be extremely secretive about one's sexual behavior if it might be perceived as outside the ordinary. Elena mentioned that many European guys who come to visit have the impression that Maltese girls are "prudish." She felt that this wasn't the truth of the matter, however. "Even though we tend to be a small island, we still do these things, but I think we're better at covering them up. But then….how can I say this? I think, as I said, it is quite similar, but we are capable of covering it. There is too much a culture of everyone watching everyone, and talking about everyone else for people to do any differently." (Elena 2011). Anna also noted this culture of community surveillance. When we were discussing the

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availability of contraception in Malta, she noted that the difficult part of getting condoms or the pill was not the lack of pharmacy that sold them, but the lack of pharmacies empty of friends of parents and grandparents.

> In terms of getting birth control I think it's relatively easy…. The problem is that sometimes, since we're such a small country, and the chances are that the person who owns the pharmacy would know you mother or someone related to you so sometimes, people are less willing to use contraception, even because of that, even pregnancy test. For example, you would never, I know people who would go on the other side of the island to buy a pregnancy test because they would be so scared that they would…the pharmacy owners, the pharmacist, would tell the parents about their daughter or son buying condoms (Anna 2011).

The closeness of the community can be nice, she added, but at times the feeling of being watched is everywhere one goes. Anna lamented this, saying that the need to hide the fact that someone was having sex was "dangerous—people aren't using condoms, or keeping from being pregnant because they're too afraid that they're parent's friends will tell their parents that they saw them getting these things" (Anna 2011).

Teaching Parents to Teach Their Children

All of the interviewees agreed that any sexual health policy needed to include not only a way to teach children about how to practice safe sexual behavior, but also a way to teach parents to talk to their children in a meaningful way about sex. Matthew said,

> I think….you first have to educate the parents about it, about educating their children, they need to see the importance of it. And I think in Malta, the only way to get through, to families, and especially to the majority of people who are unfortunately…don't have the availability of a good education, that's what I, where the root of the problem lies, I think. So the only way they can be educated is through radio and television (Matthew 2011).

As in the newspaper articles, Matthew saw the problem as mainly with the poorer and less educated Maltese, despite the fact that his own parents, who are lawyers, never provided him with

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much information about sex. He was not the only one who felt that a medium such as television would be a more effective tool than reading materials. Luca thought back to his childhood and how certain societal problems were addressed through public service ads.

> They often have campaigns. I remember in the late 80s, when there was, um a mentality where you can throw anything, all rubbish, out of your window, and if you had a packet of cigarettes, a packet of crisps, anything, you just threw it, the state was going to clean it up. But at the same time the country looked a mess, you know. They had a huge campaign on television, they introduced a national animal, which was a hedgehog, to sort of represent that, you know, the hedgehog doesn't like dirty streets and the dirty fields and everything and used that as a cartoon figure, it went out on TV and radio and it, it worked. Fantastically among the people, and you don't see the people…now you see them telling other people not to dirty the streets, telling them off, which is a complete 360. And that, I think, is the only way to get the message across, especially a message like this (Luca 2011).

His idea was to create programs accessible to both children and adults "as a way of getting them to talk together" (Luca 2011). This regulation of the population through the self-disciplining of individual bodies speaks strongly to the biopolitical undercurrents of the Maltese sex education debates. Parents are encouraged to help shape their children into proper sexual citizens through the encouragement of delayed sexual activity, and "safe sex" thereafter. Matthew, Andre, and Luca all noted the more "conservative" ideas towards sex held by those who were poorer and less educated.

> Their attitude is different I think. The more Maltese people I know who are exposed to different traditions and who have travelled and who are educated a bit better would have my opinion [about contraception] as well, but I think that's the minority. The majority are, obviously, educated in a different way, and obviously brought up in a different way, to thinking that sex before marriage is wrong, and that sex out of relationship's just…one-night stands are just wrong as well. Though having said that, in the villages where I've had various business I see that there's a lot of underage sex there as well, a lot of girls getting pregnant very young, but that's down to lack of education as well, and also….it is, I think, partly society's fault for not providing alternatives, you know? (Andre 2011)

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In this context it becomes something of a privilege to be able to educate oneself about sex, an indication that that person is well educated and probably rather well off financially as well. Women in this position especially are seen to be at a great advantage over their less-educated counterparts, because they are less likely to become pregnant and get married at an early age. "We tend to uh, refer to the married life as being settled, having your own place, family, which family's very important, but, uh, more youths nowadays, that we've entered the European Union, we're seeing more and more opportunities to further our career abroad, and I guess the chance for a choice is giving us more level of opportunity" (Elena 2011). Elena noted that these opportunities were not open to everyone—"mostly it's the upper and middle-class women who really get these chances, you know, and that's kind of sad. Because those girls from poor families in the villages, a lot of the time they end up with one or two kids before they're eighteen, and often they'd don't even complete secondary school, and they're just stuck" (Elena 2011).

Elena said that often those supporting sex education programs that focus on abstinence were in these small villages, where most of their education came from priests or nuns. Giulia, who lived in one of these southern villages until she was fifteen, recalled the strangeness of their sex education lessons in secondary school. "I remember sex education was taught to me by my science teacher, but during PSD lessons it was by a nun and by a father, so it was quite awkward learning about my body parts from a nun, and about French kissing from a father, a priest. I mean, yeah, seriously, it was" (Giulia 2011). While Giulia supported a holistic sex education approach, many of her friends from the village did not, and she said that it had been a point of contention between them. She felt that her religious beliefs had very much shaped her views on sex (she planned to wait until she was married), but she also had many friends at university who had chosen differently, and she supported their right to do so. It was good, she felt, that they had the ability to keep themselves safe. Elena said that she had been taking birth control pills since she was sixteen, and had many

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friends who did the same, from around the same age. "I think that educated people do…do use contraception, yeah, it's more about the level, I think, the level of education of a person, the awareness of it. Even geographically, you can see that most, going back to um, least approve of sex before marriage would get girls pregnant near the south region of Malta, where the education tends to be lower" (Elena 2011).

Despite these geographically differences in opinions on sex before marriage, there were certain things about which almost everyone in the older generations agreed, according to both Anna and Elena. The most prominent of these was the inappropriateness of living together before marriage. "If you live with someone without being married, yes people will…I guess they're a little bit less judgmental than they used to be before, but yes, they will refer to you as "the woman who's living with that man who's not her husband"….they will say it, people will know about it, for sure" (Anna 2011). This idea of community surveillance emerged again, as well as the perceived changes in attitudes between generations. While the older generation continued to find such living arrangements as distasteful, all of the interviewees felt that their generation was far more "open-minded." In reference to living together before marriage Elena said that "in Malta it used to be very…a taboo. But, nowadays people are getting used to even girls having kids before marrying, so I think it's becoming more used to it, to the idea. Not accepted, but it's becoming more so….it's changing gradually" (Elena 2011).

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Sex, Love and Gendered Morality

In regards to religion in the contemporary world, Karel Dobbelaere argues that

> On the *societal level*, 'Religion has lost its presidency over other institutions' overarching and transcendent religious system of old is being reduced in a modern, functionally differentiated society to a subsystem alongside other subsystems, and religion's overarching claims are losing their relevance. As a result, religion has lost its societal significance, and is no longer backed by other subsystems, especially the polity. Consequently, it can no longer be imposed on citizens, and must now be marketed." (Dobbelaere 1993)

Dobbelaere is not entirely incorrect, religion has indeed lost much of the power it once expended over various societies, including Malta. But in the Maltese context at least, to say that it has lost its societal significance is simply not true. Through its interactions with other forms of power in biopolitical issues such as sex education, The Catholic Church, Malta's most prominent religious institution, has managed to stake a claim as part of the decision-making process of sovereignty. The Church has not disappeared or become irrelevant in Malta, but is instead in the process of reinventing itself as an institution tied to values that are not simply "Catholic" but Maltese.

While the final national sexual health policy passed by the Maltese Parliament was structured on a "holistic" framework rather than the abstinence-focused model the Church had backed, several aspects of the sexual education model used in Catholic schools in Malta were incorporated into the final draft. These included the promotion of "respect for one's body" and abstinence as a first choice method of preventing STIs and pregnancy. While contraception still managed to work its way into the policy, there is clearly a good deal of influence with regards to "morality," the major focus of the Church, including a focus on sex based in loving, stable relationships and the many dangers, physical and emotional, of casual sex. Through this debate the church is able to negotiate itself into a position of moral authority, thought perhaps not quite as broad as the position it once occupied.

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Gender Differences in Education

The inclusion of "relationship and morality education" in PSD (personal, social development) classes in girls' secondary schools is nothing new, as all four of my female interviewees could attest. Sarah recalled being told "practically, the stuff like now you've become a woman, you have to be more careful about what you do, about how you portray yourself, especially to boys, but not deep, no details. They'd love it if everyone stopped, had sex after marriage, but the main thing is responsibility, that something ties you to the other person" (Sarah 2011). The emphasis was never one protection of one's body, Sarah said, but rather on the protection of one's heart and soul. The girls in her classes were told that they should be careful with how the presented themselves to boys, never be too easily available, and if they were going to have sex before marriage to make sure they were in love. For Sarah, this advice seemed good, and she maintained that she condoned sex only within a relationship, and felt that most other Maltese girls would say the same.

In Anna's classes "they told us what intercourse was, but there was nothing about STDs…it was very…they kind of promoted abstinence….and respect for ourselves and our bodies. Mostly about how we should look at sex. (Anna 2011) Once again, sex was promoted as something for which love was a necessary component, and which, when done without love or outside of a relationship was simply wrong. While she felt that her teacher was sometimes a bit too forceful with her message, in general she felt that the message was a good one. However, she would have preferred something in addition to those messages. They learned almost nothing about "practical aspects" of sex. "

> We knew that we would get pregnant from sex but we didn't know anything about why it was such a…not a bad thing, but why we had to be careful. They told us we had to be careful because we had to respect ourselves and our religion and all that but the truth is that there were other, more practical things that they could have given us… they kind of portrayed it as something that you shouldn't do, perhaps—Because, you know, since we're Christians, and sex should come after marriage…yes, it was more something that we would do in the future, but in the very far

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away future, not right then, and the truth is at that point there were girls who were, perhaps not sexually active, but they had serious boyfriends (Anna 2011)

Anna does support the idea that sex should always be based on a healthy, loving relationship, and feels that many Maltese women would agree with her. She argues that the Maltese are different from "other Europeans" when it comes to sex.

> For us, having sex is not about...I'm sure there are exceptions, but for the average person, having sex is quite a big deal in the sense that you wouldn't…I don't think one-night stands are that common here, I think most people would sleep with someone that they're in a relationship with, or at least, seeing. And the guys that we meet that are not Maltese, for them, sex is kind of, part of a date. I'm not saying that they look at you…that they bully us into having sex, but they don't really understand why it's such a big deal for us, and I guess it's just the way we were brought up, the way we were educated about it….it's not just something that you do, you sort of have to have good reasons…to justify it….For us, sex is love, sort of, you can't be attracted to someone and just have sex, it's a bit more than that, or at least you have to care deeply about someone, again I'm sure there are exceptions, but I think that is the way, that's the general feel that…I think it should be in a relationship. The age is a bit tricky....but definitely, you should be in a relationship. (Anna 2011)

This depiction of the Maltese as cherishing sex more, or as feeling as if its more special for them, is in many ways a rewording of many of the arguments advanced by the Catholic Church and its abstinence education allies. It is essentially a belief in superior morality of the Maltese people due to their more "justified" sexual behavior. It is not a extreme as the wording of abstinence education advocates, but it is nonetheless an adaptation of the same sentiment.

What follows is a description of "troubling" teenage relationships by Anna Maria Vella, the president of the Cana Pro-Abstinence Movement. The dramatic description reflects a strong stand against casual sexual encounters, particularly among teens, who she depicts as too emotionally immature to handle any sort of responsible, loving, sexual relationship.

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When the young couple find themselves alone, they start becoming intimate and somehow it is all very difficult to stop the whole vicious cycle. It is as though everything starts to happen and they cannot stop or reverse the whole story. The young girl thinks a lot when alone and promises herself that next time she meets her partner she will broach the subject cautiously…but then when they meet she becomes tongue-tied and somehow does not know from where to start.

The young boy, on the other hand, is totally unaware of what is troubling his girlfriend. She has always been obliging and has never shown any resistance. Therefore, he assumes that she has no problems. If he himself has queries, his urge to experiment gets the best of him. He knows that his friends are behaving like him; that is what they tell him at least. And so life goes on…
The girl thinks when alone… "It seems that everybody is doing what I am doing. Maybe it is that I am a bit naïve, maybe there is nothing wrong with what I am doing? My friends do not seem to complain. If I try to stop my boyfriend, he may leave me and find another girl who will not complain. I love him a lot and want him for myself. Therefore, I will not say anything…"

And life goes on without anybody of us saying what we are going through. We do not express our fears, our sorrows, our hurts, our thoughts. Then the whole passionate relationship is over, and everybody is left with a sour taste in the mouth. (Vella 2006)

The stereotyped gender roles in this description are striking. The girl is depicted as too weak to stand up for what she "knows" is right, while the guy clueless to her feelings and entirely controlled by his sexual urges. Vella shows the girl as the one who is insecure, who should be able to stop herself, who should know better than to be having premaritial sex. The boy, egged on by his friends and his hormones, apparently has no major emotional issues with the sex. While in many ways the story is a rather hyperbolic, some of the basic gendered roles in terms of Maltese sexual citizens are reflected in my interviews as well.

While the girls were learning about the emotional side of sex in school, all of the guys' sex education classes focused on the biological—how things worked, who does what, every so often,

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what consequences can result and how to avoid those. None of their classes addressed the importance of relationships, and they were conducted in a very basic, "clinical" manner. All of my male interviewees said they felt comfortable with one-night stands and casual sexual encounters—so long as protection was involved. Their focus was on bodily rather than emotional health when talking about sex. The consequences they mentioned were always physical, while the girls sometimes talked about the psychological consequences of casual sex as well. A major part of interacting with friends growing up for Matthew was about bragging to his friends. "Some of the stories, you know, which we heard when we were kids I think back now and you know, it was just completely made up, just impossible, but we all bragged, you know like boys do when you're 16, bragged about your sexual experiences, which were half the time lies, I think" (Matthew 2011).

Reputations and Gender

This idea that guys should be braggarts and girls more sexually pure was evident in views my interviewees expressed on male versus female sexual behavior as well. All of them agreed that "promiscuous" sexual behavior was treated very differently depending on the person's gender. According to Andre, "Guys always talk about a girl, it's different. I think boys, in my opinion, are more open to things. …If you see a girl doing a lot of sex most people won't be nice, eh, but for a boy it's not such a bad thing to do" (Andre 2011). Luca also felt that girls were typically judged more harshly for "inappropriate" sexual behavior.

> It's much harder for a woman to be promiscuous than a man, I think. I mean, if you at….it's geographical as well, that, in particular, as you go south. The further south you go, I mean you know that women in Arab countries are shunned out of society or even, you know, it's the biggest sin a woman can commit in many southern countries, and not to that extent, but in Malta, women are very easily given, branded with a bad, with a bad, uh, light if they're seen to be sleeping around, whereas for men it's, I guess it's acceptable more. (Luca 2011)

While he didn't feel that Malta was one of the most biased societies, he certainly did not feel that men and women were given equal treatment.

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My female interviewees were even more adamant about the double standard being at play. "I think people have different opinions…for example, I think that if a young girl is pregnant, in Malta at least, there's a lot of…there's a lot of gossip, but if a guy gets the girl pregnant, or has sex with lots of girls it's not as much of a fuss about it…It should change. (Giulia 2011). This focus on women as supposedly more capable of resisting temptation, and therefore more culpable for giving in is not accurate, the girls argue. "No, not at all. I think that generally the view is that when a guy gets laid, it's an accomplishment and he needs to brag about it. A girl with a lot of sexual activity people see as she's cheap or wrong….I'm saying this outside of a relationship, obviously, inside a relationship it's fine, normal. It's very hard to change people's perception of these things" (Sarah 2011). Once again, the focus on the relationship surfaces in terms of acceptable female sexual behavior. The female interviewees didn't seem to have a problem with this focus on the relationship; it was the blatant double standard for men and women that troubled them. "When, for example, two people are in a loving relationship together and know each other well, it's fine for them to have sex, I'm not going to judge. But people who just have casual sex, guys or girls, should be viewed in the same way" (Giulia).

Anna noted than the "reputation" a girl had was much easier to tarnish than to build up. I think that the girl always has it a bit harder. It's much easier for a girl to be labeled as being easy than a guy, yes I think that hasn't changed at all. If you're in a club and you're being inappropriate, people will look at you, and some will give you bad looks, others will ignore you, but…yes, people will make fun of you, definitely, and start hateful rumors, I've seen that before" (Anna 2011).

Nathan on the other hand, had no problem with casual sex for guys or girls, although he did think that boys in Malta were more likely to have casual sex than their female counterparts. "Maybe guys are more get down to it, and girls are more conservative, feel when the moment is right, you

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know "(Nathan 2011). While Nathan said that girls who had casual sex didn't bother him, he knew a lot of Maltese men who were. He had more of a problem with the focus on relationships that he felt many Maltese women put into their sexual decisions. "Maltese are a bit more conservative…they want it to be more serious. They can't just let sex be about having fun or being in the moment. It's not good, that's what being young is for." (Nathan 2011). For Nathan, actually, the appropriateness or inappropriateness of casual sex was not about gender, but about age. "Well, when you get to a certain age, you know, you need to settle down and have kids, you know, so reckon it's about knowing when to stop" (Nathan 2011).

Sarah, while acknowledging that Maltese girls "perhaps tended to be more discreet" about casual sex, this did not mean that they were not having it. "Some people are very relaxed, friends wise and social wise, so sometimes sex is not given the amount of importance it should be, for example, some girls tend to purposefully be very easy, to very bluntly put it. But I think we should focus on something more meaningful"(Sarah). When asked about whether sexual behavior of guys and girls was treated equally in Malta, she replied that it wasn't, mentioning a few female friends who she felt had gotten undeserved reputations as being promiscuous. But, she said not every bad reputation was undeserved.

> It depends…because some people flaunt it, they flaunt it, you know…they sleep with lots of people and they flaunt it. On the other hand, there are others that keep everything private. I think it should be that way, but in the end it's up to the specific individual. It's not someone that one would start a relationship with very easily, because automatically they consider their past—for example, they'll talk about how easy they were to get someone to have sex with them, something like that. (Sarah 2011)

This community surveillance of female sexual behavior becomes a way to enforce a certain approved sexual behavior—not through physical force, but through a rather disciplinary approach through which the "good" girls are rewarded with a clean reputation and the possibility of "serious" relationships with men in the future, while "bad" girls are punished with a poor reputation and the lack of such relationship prospects so long as that reputation persists.

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This disciplining of sexual behavior is not only carried out by these student's peers at school and older community members at home, but by the Church as well. Elena recalled the way in which a girl she knew was "punished" through the withholding of Church services. She told the story of

> …a friend of mine, a good girl, who only ever had sex with her boyfriend, who she's still with. But she never learned about how to protect herself, you know, and had a kid at the age of 16, and when she went to baptize her kid, the priest wouldn't baptize the kid with other children, and when she told him that she still sleeps with her boyfriend, he was like, so I will definitely not even baptize him on the altar, so she had to go downstairs in the church, it was so shameful for her (Elena 2011).

In the beginning of our interview Elena mentioned that she fully supported a holistic approach to sex education. This story of her friend is quite reflective of that approach—the need for a certain moral standard (in this case, the regulation of sex to within a relationship), but a standard that allows for the dissemination of information that will help to prevent undesired reproduction (unwed teenage pregnancy and motherhood). It is also indicative of a religious institution involved in the community's disciplining of individuals' sexual behavior.

In this case, the priest, as a representative of the Church, "shames" Elena's friend as punishment for her failure to conform to the "normal" sexual standards called for by the Church. It is not simply a case of juridical punishment, however. The girl's abnormal behavior of giving birth as an unwed, teenage mother was punished by not allowing the child's baptism alongside other children. Had she "corrected" her behavior following that period of inappropriate behavior and chosen to abstain from pre-marital sex following her son's birth, she would have been rewarded with the option to have her son baptized on the church altar, albeit separately from his peers. Due to her failure, once again, to follow prescribed patterns of behavior, she was given a second "shaming" by being forced completely away from the "sacred" space of the church. Elena indicated later that had her friend chosen to marry her boyfriend before her son's birth, he would have been able to be

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baptized with the other children, a reward for attempting to raise herself through the performance of appropriate sexual behavior.

Through this community monitoring of sexual behavior, the Maltese youth are taught to behave in "appropriate" ways. What is "appropriate" varies depending on the audience and the subject—what is deemed appropriate by the religious community is a bit different from what most of my interviewees felt their peers deemed appropriate, for example. And, of course, there were different perceptions regarding what was appropriate behavior for males versus females. While the Church is certainly not the only arbiter of appropriate behavior and normality in Malta, it still functions as part of the disciplinary power operating on the bodies of the Maltese. The Church essentially sets a sort of "golden standard"—it designates who is at the top of the hierarchy of sexual behavior, in this case, those who abstain from sex until marriage. While most of my interviewees felt that this was a bit of an unrealistic standard for themselves, several of them did express the opinion that, as Luca put it, "it is a nice ideal." Since what is at the top of the hierarchy influences what is "normal" and what is at the bottom, or abnormal, the view of my female interviewees that is was more "appropriate" to have sex inside a stable relationship that with a variety of casual partners is not surprising, given that a relationship is more similar to the marriage ideal.

There are many possible explanations for the different hierarchies in place for males and females identified by my interviewees. Perhaps one of the more likely reasons is that the more obvious physical consequences of sex appear on women's bodies rather than men's. Pregnancy, in particular, is a major concern—in the sex education debates, and in Elena's example of her friend's dealings with the church, there is major concern with teenage pregnancy as a cause for sex. The female subjects tend to become more concerned with pregnancy that their male counterparts because it is on their bodies that the pregnancy will become obvious. And it is the girl who cannot escape the community's punishment for the "inappropriate" timing of her pregnancy, and therefore

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is more likely to find it important to adhere to these guidelines of sexual behavior exhibited in the community's monitoring of good and bad reputations.

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Conclusion

Through the preceding examination of both the debates surrounding sex education and my interviews with individual Maltese citizens, it becomes evident that the Catholic Church in Malta functions as part of the process of sovereignty concerned with the sexual health of the Maltese population. The Church is in some cases involved with the disciplining of individual bodies, as in the case of Elena's friend who was "shamed" to encourage a change in her sexual behavior. At other times the Church functions as part of a regulatory process, wherein it plays a part in the negotiation of defining Maltese sexual citizenship alongside other institutions concerned with sex education. In the context of these debates in Malta the Church is, in many ways, working to portray itself less as a religious institution, and more as a "Maltese" institution. This incarnation of the Catholic has learned to speak in the language of discipline and regulation rather than being pushed completely to the sidelines.

Church representatives often seems to be attempting to recreate the Church as more than a spiritual leader—through their interactions with the populace, the government, and the media in the sex education debates, these representatives work to show sexual behavior as needed moral as well as well as physical regulation. Looking at this discourse through the lenses of biopolitical theory, it can be seen as a continuation of the disciplinary and regulatory technologies Foucault associates with biopower. In this case the control of the 'life' of the populace is not simply about the disciplining of bodies as such, but about a regulation of all aspects of those bodies, including the way in which those bodies engage with other bodies. The Church's stance on appropriate sexual behavior in terms of morality can be seen as arguing for a moral disciplining of the individual bodies as a way to regulate the sexual behaviors of the population as a whole. Malta is not exactly a paradigmatic biopolitical state. It does, however, employ technologies of discipline and regulation in many aspects

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of its subjects, and particularly in the case of sex education. Sex education concerns not only the disciplinary molding of the present sexual behavior of the individual bodies as a way to prevent the deterioration of their health, but also the regulation of the future population through dialogues of health and reproduction.

Through this project I have examined the interactions of the Catholic Church with the sex education debates in the media and through the views and experiences of individual subjects in Malta as a way of beginning to examine the role of religion in biopolitical theory. The parallels between the negotiations of power in the debates and the statements made by my interviewees suggest that a better understanding of the various institutions and other actors involved in the negotiations of biopower is needed. Religion especially often factors into decisions made by states involving issues of sexuality and reproduction. Given the extent to which regulation of sexuality and sexual behavior effects way that many individuals function in daily life, it is important to understand its exact role in the decisions made.

That the majority of the evaluations of biopolitical institutions remain either overwhelming theoretical or focused on institutions and actors more explicitly concerned with 'life' as such is disappointing. While examining the roles of medical institutions or psychiatrists on individual subjects' lives is quite interesting, and also not often done, in some ways the evaluation of the role of institutions less obviously concerned with life (i.e. religion) is perhaps even more important. Since the influence of these institutions in the biopolitical state is harder to see, it is often overlooked and perhaps assumed to be essentially non-existent. This situation provides a sort of cover for the actions of these actors by encouraging an idea that they are less powerful, or less influential than they in fact are.

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Further Research

The length and time constraints of this project have resulted in many avenues of interest involved in these interactions remaining inadequately explored. There are several topics in particular that could proof especially interesting for future research. First, and perhaps most obviously, is a deeper exploration of religious institutions as related to biopolitics. Beyond the example of Malta, and the issue of sex education, how do institutions such as the Catholic Church operate? Given that the religious institutions vary from situation to situation, it would be interesting to explore this topic within another context, perhaps in a state considered either more or less "secular" than Malta. Also, the differences between the idea of religion and religion as an institution could be farther picked apart to explore how concepts like "values," or perhaps more interestingly, "afterlife" function in biopolitics. Can the belief in an afterlife be seen as a rejection of biopower, a way of escaping the control of the biopolitical state? Or does the sovereign itself take the promise of an afterlife and spin it to its own advantage, as a way of disciplining bodies through religious ideas?

Within the specific example of Malta itself, there are also several topics that warrant further exploration. The works of authors like Susan Gal and Gail Kligman could be applied to an examination of the attempts to define what it means to be Maltese through the sex education debates could certainly be further picked apart in terms of the function of reproduction in the politics of national identity in the Maltese context. It would be helpful in this case to conduct interviews with a wider variety of people in order to better understand interactions between various generations and social classes. The function of ideas of east/west and north/south dichotomies in these debates would also be very interesting given Malta's interesting position of being identified variously as a post-colonial state, as a member of the European Union, as a devoutly Catholic nation and/or as Western or not-Western.

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