Chapter 4
Queering the Marianist Charism:
Narratives Offer Insights for Change

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ABSTRACT

Experiencing disparities between the philosophical stance of the Marianist charism and its practical implications as they inform equity, inclusion, and diversity on the University of Dayton campus, the researcher engaged in a qualitative study gathering information to foster changes that benefit the greater University of Dayton community. By using the mixed methods, participant narratives contextualize diverse personal and professional experiences on campus. Results indicate that the Marianist charism, while complex in its interpretations, simultaneously draws people to the university and becomes a barrier to full equity; it further marginalizes women, persons of color, and LGBTQ+ identified people. This chapter concludes with a call to queer the Marianist charism and include the unheard voices of those marginalized to further these efforts.

INTRODUCTION

On the way home from my on-campus interview at UD, I called my mother to tell her how impressed I was by the institution's commitment to community, to social justice, and to being an agent of change. As an art educator, I wanted to work where a call to social justice in preparing preservice teachers was not an ancillary aspect but the core of what is taught. In art education, like U.S. education in general, White females far outnumber male and female teachers of color in the field; they are often unprepared to teach in urban, public schools (Brown & Rodriguez, 2017). Yet the student makeup in K-12 schools is more economically, socially, racially, and ethnically diverse than ever before as the number of new immigrants in our schools increases (Tatum, 2017). Further, "educators, across the country, most of whom are White…are without an important interpretive framework to help them understand what is happening in their interactions with students, or even in their cross-racial interactions with colleagues (Tatum, 2017, p. 75). Future art teachers need to be aware of their implicit and explicit biases, understand how to create a welcoming, safe classroom community that challenges institutional racism, and be equipped with skills to foster holistic and pluralistic learning spaces.

While talking with my mother, I expressed my concerns, should I be offered the job, about being a queer art educator at a Catholic school. I was not overly concerned about being marginalized or having well-meaning Christians use the Bible to browbeat me. I had already experienced that. I did not buy into the dogmatic notions that I was a sinner because I was gay. I certainly was a sinner for many reasons – being quick to judge, often opinionated, and sometimes selfish, among other faults - but how I love was not among those sins. Yet, aware that people who identify with conservative religions have a long history of negative attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ+) people (Newman, 2002), I had concerns.

A certainty in God's love had finally made me immune to tensions within and among Christians and the Church. But in truth, that immunity had been hard won. I, like many of my heteronormative peers, experienced the deepest moments of insight and awareness about myself as a youth in connection to church, singing in the choir, and participating in youth groups. The Church provided experiences and moments of retreat that made indelible marks on

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