

FORDHAM CENTER ON RELIGION AND CULTURE

**Sex and the Soul: Romance, Religion and Responsibility
Fordham University, Pope Auditorium**

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Moderator

Peter Steinfels

Fordham Center on Religion and Culture

Panelists

Christine Firer Hinze

Fordham University

Barbara Dafoe Whitehead

Author

Thomas Smith

America Works

Kate DiGeronimo

Fordham University School of Law

Donna Freitas

Boston University

PETER STEINFELS: I would like to welcome you to the Fordham Center on Religion and Culture's Book Forum, *Sex & the Soul: Romance, Religion and Responsibility*.

There are a few seats up in the front here, but we're filling up rapidly and probably will fill up a little bit more, so don't hesitate to encourage people to come up in the front. The fact that we are having tonight's forum on the same night as the opening game of the World Series I think is evidence that what the people in the advertising industry say is true: If you want to grab people's attention, all you have to do is make sure that your title for the event contains a particular word, that being "soul."

My name is Peter Steinfels. I am the co-director of the Fordham Center on Religion and Culture, which, for five years, has been organizing forums, conferences, press briefings, and other events to encourage thoughtful and sustained attention to the religious dimension of issues in the public's mind, or at least in the minds of

those people who run the Fordham Center on Religion and Culture. One way that we have gone about that is to look at such an important question through its treatment in a book, in an art exhibit, or even in a movie.

The title of tonight's forum comes from a book, a provocative study of college students, by Donna Freitas, which we will be using to examine the changing and conflicted sexual and religious attitudes among young people. A Ph.D. in theology from the Catholic University of America, Donna Freitas embarked on this book as a result of her own teaching experience on both Catholic and secular campuses. I will introduce Donna more fully later, when she will respond to four reactions to her findings and her interpretation. She has also agreed, I point out, to sign copies of her book, which will be on sale in the lobby after tonight's forum.

But because most people here this evening have probably not had the opportunity to read *Sex & the Soul*, the first of this evening's reactions, by Christine Firer Hinze, will fill us in about the book at somewhat greater length than the reactions by the other panelists, each of whom I will introduce in turn. After this first round of reactions and a response to them from Donna, the panel and the author will exchange ideas among themselves and then turn to your questions. Please write your questions on the index cards that have been left at your places. During the course of the evening, after you have written a card, just raise your hand with the card, so that our student assistants can collect them and bring them forward. Please try to keep your questions brief and on tonight's topic. And please write legibly.

I add, since I'm in the mode of your seventh-grade teacher, out of courtesy towards the panelists and your fellow audience, please take this moment to silence your cell phones, beepers, BlackBerries, Game Boys, DVDs, travel alarms, whatever else you might have.

Christine Firer Hinze is a professor of theology at Fordham University. She, as well as her husband Brad, joined the department here in 2006. A graduate of the Catholic University of America, she earned her Ph.D. at the University of Chicago and has specialized in Christian social ethics, feminist ethics, and Catholic social thought about the economy, marriage, family, and work. She is the author of *Comprehending Power in Christian Social Ethics* and many scholarly articles. Among the courses she teaches at Fordham is Marriage in the 21st Century. I would like all of us to welcome Christine Hinze.

CHRISTINE HINZE: Thank you. In her timely, provocative

study, Donna Freitas combines intensive research and her own experience as a theologian and teacher to paint a moving portrait of the struggles of college students to reconcile two features of their campus life — spiritual longings and sexual freedom. Freitas conducted detailed online surveys of 2,500 undergraduates at seven campuses — two evangelical colleges, two Catholic liberal arts schools, two large secular private universities, and one public university. She then held in-depth follow-up interviews with over 100 students, who also submitted personal journals reflecting on their experiences. Freitas’s findings yield pointed challenges for those of us in higher education, especially schools like Fordham that embrace Ignatian convictions about finding God in all things and the care and the education of the whole person.

In her study, Freitas encountered two different social/spiritual cultures, each with its drawbacks. Evangelical colleges, on the one hand, she found, immersed students in a clearly articulated Christian culture that overtly connects sexual morality to faith and insists that all sexual intimacy be reserved for marriage. Students who fall short of these purity ideals often experience anxiety, confusion, and guilt, magnified, especially for women, by pressure to find a Christian mate while at college. As the joke went there, “A ring in four years or your money back.” But Freitas was also impressed to find on these campuses cultures where students habitually conversed seriously about the moral and spiritual aspects of their sexual journeys and where peers and mentors offer compassion, encouragement, and, when needed, forgiveness.

The second group Freitas dubbed — all the other schools, whether secular private, public, or Catholic — she called these “spiritual colleges,” so named because the majority of students there identified themselves as “spiritual but not religious” — a phrase that we often hear today. All had social and party scenes shaped by hook-up culture. Hook-ups refer to casual, physically intimate encounters that can involve anything from kissing to oral sex to full intercourse. Hook-up culture condones the pursuit of sexual fun and pleasure outside of relationships, free of moral limits other than individual choice and the rule “no strings attached,” and divorced from spiritual guidelines or values, even though students frequently spoke about sexual activity as having spiritual potential or spiritual aspects.

At these spiritual colleges, students accepted hook-up culture as the norm. They assumed that their peers were participating in it, more than they themselves usually were. But most expressed dissatisfaction with this state of affairs and spoke of wanting two things that hook-up culture explicitly rules out: romance and committed relationships. These young people rarely connected

romance with sexual activity. They spoke of romance in terms of tenderness, intimate communication, interpersonal connections. The number-one romantic experience described by these students? Intimate conversation — speaking, listening, being heard, accepted, and cherished.

Hook-up culture by definition divorces sex from romance and commitment. Ironically, though, most students interviewed regarded hooking-up as the usual venue for testing out candidates for romance and eventually finding a truly intimate long-term partner. Because, Freitas observes, “at the spiritual colleges, the first hook-up seems to have replaced the first date,” even those who spoke about wanting relationships were willing to hook up, though what they really desired was to talk or to walk hand-in-hand on a beach. Now, along with this troubling disconnect between sexual intimacy and romance, I want to mention two other important findings by Freitas in this book.

First, although hook-up culture appears to leave both men and women unhappy, it highlights a style of available sex divorced from commitment that has historically been the prerogative of powerful alpha males and disproportionately disadvantages women. At many points, *Sex & the Soul* could be read as feminist protest. Women students, especially freshmen, seek social affirmation and power by dressing seductively and engaging in behavior to attract male attention, but they risk being labeled or treated as “sluts,” something they worry about a lot.

In a party scene that combines alcohol, hooking-up, and costumed theme parties, with titles “CEOs and Office Hos” — and there’s a whole list of these — boundaries between consent and unwanted violation or even assault become alarmingly blurred. More frequently than men, women who hook up report morning-after regrets that range from self-recrimination and emptiness to dashed hopes when encounters don’t lead to something more. For all its purported freedom, women find this scene tough to negotiate, socially, sexually, and spiritually, and all the more so in short skirts and stiletto heels.

Sexual liberation and second-wave feminism have had positive impacts on women’s status, agency, and freedom. But the legacy, as it comes through in this study, is mixed. As Freitas documents, women and men alike find themselves in sexual and relational terrain that is in many ways uncharted. Many are uneasily aware that this terrain contains potentially serious moral and spiritual implications. And what most want — relationships and romance — is precluded by the rules of the hook-up game.

Freitas found students left on their own to seek their moral bearings amid a dominant ethos that treats virginity, especially for men, as something to be quickly outgrown or corrected and that celebrates non-committed hook-ups, yet condemns those, especially women, who participate or enjoy this behavior too much. I would note also that this sexually permissive ethos assumes widespread contraceptive use, combined with the pursuit of sexual satisfaction by means other than vaginal intercourse. That Freitas's interviewees so rarely mentioned contraception or pregnancy scares might reflect statistics that show most sexually active college students now use contraceptives. But on Catholic campuses in particular, these topics remain virtually undiscussed. As Freitas says, "In my experience, Catholics love 'ignorance is bliss.'"

The second finding is that most students, however spiritual they considered themselves, proved clueless, alienated, or apathetic about what their faith traditions might offer by way of insight or guidance concerning sex and relationships, or perhaps anything else. With the exception of evangelicals, students were remarkably unprepared to articulate or speak about religious matters. "Religion?" said one. "It's one of those no-no topics of conversation."

Lacking a sympathetic community that subscribed to some common framework, the majority found it difficult to freely explore questions of faith and values — something Freitas found students overwhelming wanted to do.

Many of the Catholic students Freitas interviewed were particularly apathetic about their faith tradition, and some, she reported, literally laughed out loud at what they considered, often inaccurately, to be Catholic teachings on sex. What most thought they knew of Catholic teaching could be summed up in one word: "No." Now, that the church condemns as seriously sinful sexual relationships pursued outside of marriage is clear. Official teaching has also condemned all deliberate separation by the use of contraception of the unitive and procreative aspects of sex within marriage. Although these condemnations are far from having the assent of all the faithful, they have been repeated at the highest levels. The media, popular culture, and many of Freitas's subjects tend to see — and maybe this isn't surprising — tend to see the church as the symbolic enemy of all contemporary changes regarding sexuality, from family planning to sex education, to gay rights, often, though, with little knowledge or regard for the distinctions that characterize even the strictest expressions of Catholic teaching.

Sadly, moreover, this blanket perception of "No," combined with a general failure by church leaders to address real-life situations of

contemporary single adults, leave most young Catholics unaware of respected voices in moral theology today that propose fresh, relevant perspectives on traditional wisdom, perspectives on sexual ethics that affirm and seek to integrate sexuality's capacities for erotic pleasure, for expressing and deepening intimacy, and for generativity and procreation. As Freitas notes, ethicists like Lisa Cahill, James Keenan, Margaret Farley are forging links between spirituality, social ethics, and sexual morality, as they think about how respect for the equal dignity of men and women and Christian virtues like fidelity, solidarity, and compassion might shape our intimate relationships.

Significant numbers of young Catholics — though none of Freitas's subjects — are also drawing inspiration from Pope John Paul II's theology of the body, which offers a body-affirming and deeply spiritual ideal of sexual self-gift in marriage as free, faithful, total, and fruitful. In these corners, rather than being defined by what one doesn't do, chastity in the key of "Yes" is being reimagined as the pursuit of sexual wholeness and integrity in the varied relationships and seasons of life.

For mounting robust alternatives to the sexual and spiritual culture of the hook-up, Catholicism — forgive me, because it's the World Series — has a strong lineup and a deep, varied bench. To the recent moral teaching and reflection that I just referred to, we can add heavy hitters like Ignatian spirituality, liberation and feminist theologies, and Catholic sacramental sensibilities and practices and piety. This tradition harbors resources that can appeal to traditional Catholics, to young people wary of institutional practice but receptive to the "yesses" about sex and love that a humanistic Christian vision holds, and even appeal to sexually active seekers, regardless of religious background, who intuit in their sexual and spiritual experiences deeper meanings and larger connections. But on most spiritual campuses, Freitas finds, students live their lives unaware of and unaffected by these resources, and their ignorance is far from blissful.

To change the situation, Freitas argues, requires finding ways to bridge the academic student-life divide on most campuses, in order to foster campus cultures where, as she puts it, spirituality can be sexy and sex can be spiritual. Spiritual schools need to cultivate diverse, resource- and mentor-rich, intellectually attractive, and emotionally safe contexts wherein young adults can converse and reflect upon their spiritual and sexual journeys. When these are lacking during the college years, some pretty important parts of the whole person remain neglected, and one's higher education, to that degree, is stunted.

Freitas slams school administrations for turning a blind eye to the realities of hook-up culture and a deaf ear to the concerns of the spiritual but not religious majority. But to improve things, top-down efforts won't suffice. Young men and women must be empowered to speak and contribute in their own distinctive voices about these matters.

Freitas found that young evangelicals are conversing and writing about faith, sex, and dating. When she asked Catholic students why they don't do the same, she says, they respond, "We can't. We're not allowed. We'll get excommunicated. You're not supposed to do that unless you're a bishop or a cardinal." Compared to their evangelical peers, the intensity of the disempowerment to speak about faith that Freitas observed among young Catholics was striking and disturbing — the intensity of the disempowerment to speak about faith among young Catholics.

Catholic universities have resources and reasons to set about mending these breaches — breaches in knowledge, breaches in discourse, breaches in practice — between spirituality and sexuality. Doing so will entail risks and mistakes, for it requires that we commit to entering truthfully and lovingly into the chaos of the concrete that attends both the spiritual search and the search for sexual integrity. Framing sexual and spiritual well-being in terms of cherished values rather than legalities, limits, and obsession with particular actions does not make everything permitted or easy or clear. To reimagine sexual virtue as integrity, attended by qualities of justice, wisdom, and mercy, is to choose a challenging path, one that invites us to embrace our fleshy embodiment in its perplexing finitude, its messiness, its wonder, and its grace.

What does it mean to be free, whole, and flourishing as sexual, spiritual, relational beings, to relate honestly, justly, and lovingly to self, partners, and community? These questions echo amid the voices and experiences recorded in *Sex & the Soul*. They are precisely the questions being pondered within faith communities, including Catholicism, today. Young adults and faith communities need one another, have much to teach one another, yet too often navigate these deep waters in mutual misunderstanding and isolation. Both sexuality and religion — a word that means "to bind together again," *religare* — shimmer with the yearning to connect.

What concretely must we do to make campuses, parishes, our faith communities more hospitable places for discovering these connections? A renewing tradition and the young people Donna Freitas so passionately represents await our response.
Thank you.

PETER STEINFELS: Thank you very much, Christine. We'll now have three briefer responses from panelists.

The first of them is Barbara Dafoe Whitehead. Barbara earned her BA from the University of Wisconsin and her MA and Ph.D. in American social history from the University of Chicago. In 1993, when then-Vice President Dan Quayle criticized the *Murphy Brown* comedy series for misrepresenting and glamorizing the reality of unwed motherhood, Barbara scandalized liberal opinion by writing a prize-winning article for *The Atlantic Monthly* titled "Dan Quayle Was Right." She is anything, however, but a one-article iconoclast. She has written many essays on marriage, divorce, child well-being, and, most recently, family debt, for *Commonweal*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and many other publications. She is the author of *The Divorce Culture: Rethinking Our Commitments to Marriage and the Family* and also a book titled *Why There Are No Good Men Left: The Romantic Plight of the New Single Woman*. For nine years, she served as the co-director of the National Marriage Project at Rutgers University. Barbara?

BARBARA WHITEHEAD: Before I begin, I just want to say one quick thing about Donna Freitas's book. It's just a wonderful read, for those of you who haven't read it. It goes down really easy, almost like a work of fiction. In fact, she is a novelist, so no surprise there.

What I want to do, briefly, is look at two broad historical trends in the early adult life course that have contributed to today's sexual hook-up culture on campus. Before I begin, I just want to say that much of the historical data I will cite are from the Census Bureau and other historical sources, and therefore it's limited to heterosexual individuals. But when we get to the contemporary scene, I think there's a lot there for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students to reflect on as well.

That said, the first historical trend is the lengthening period of time in the years between first sex and first marriage. It's not that college students in the past were never having sex. It seems to me, if I remember correctly, in the 1960s, we weren't exactly chaste, at least not all of us. But for earlier generations, the timing of first sex and entry into first marriage was a relatively short period of time, especially for women.

Moreover, the social scene on co-residential, co-ed campuses was actually geared to pairing off young people for eventual marriage, maybe not immediately upon graduation — I think, in a way, the

evangelical schools are stepping even back from the experience of those of us who came of age in the 1960s — but certainly a year or two or three after college. As recently as 1970, the median age of first marriage for women was 22 and for men, 23. This completely freaks out college students today, because they think, how could people so young be ready for marriage? But that was the experience of people of my generation.

What is historically new for this generation is that students are having sex, but putting off marriage into well beyond the undergraduate college years. So today the median age of first marriage for women is 26 and for men it's 28. That's the highest level that the Census Bureau has recorded since it began collecting these data. I might add that the median age that currently exists is for all first marriages. For college students, it's actually even later than the 26 and 28, and maybe edging up to ages 29 and 30. So that's a long stretch of time.

As a consequence, because of this gap between sexual initiation and activity and eventual marriage, many college students today will certainly spend their college years and a good share of their 20s as singles who continue to be involved in sexual and romantic relationships of varying duration and levels of commitment. So that's one big change.

The second historical change in the early adult life course is the reorganization of the sequence of steps leading up to what generally people think of as full-fledged adulthood. Marriage used to be the first and formative event in the pathway into adult life. You got married, you established an independent household apart from your parents, you formed a family, and you were an adult. Today it's a little bit different. First of all, getting married is often almost the last in a series of prolonged steps toward what some scholars call emerging adulthood, or the "odyssey years," where you wander around for a long time in your 20s. The phrase "emerging adulthood" makes me think that, for me and my peers, we must be submerging into senescence or something.

The sequence that exists today goes something like this. You get your college degree and maybe a graduate degree, you look for and hope to find a job, you pay off your student loans and credit card debts, you live independently for a while with a roommate or a romantic partner, you begin to try to get traction in the job market, a little bit of financial stability, and then, at that point, you begin to think seriously about finding a life partner.

So these two trends have reorganized sex, love, and commitment in the early adult life course for the generation of college students

today. They have contributed to this sexual culture in which there's lots of casual sex, sometimes love, sometimes romance, but no serious search or orientation for finding a life partner. For secular colleges and universities, this may not be such a serious concern; save for making sure that there's a safe sexual environment for all students and preventing sexual violence.

For religious colleges, as Donna so eloquently describes, of course, they do care about the sexual culture on campus, but so far have failed to engage these new realities of adult life completely. I would say that that is also true for the evangelical colleges. Yes, they usher students quickly from college into marriage, but they don't engage the realities that I'm describing, particularly the idea that women, in addition to men, are interested in pursuing further education and careers beyond undergraduate college, in many cases.

I'll close with this final reflection. In my experience, much of what college students know about sex, love, commitment, and marriage is a kind of hodgepodge of pop culture, therapy, stuff they read on the Internet, and social science factoids. I do agree that theology can provide a better and much richer understanding of the connections among all these experiences. But so, too, I would add, can engagement with the very practical questions that students have. Let me just conclude with some of the ones that I hear a lot.

What is the right age to marry? Where and how should I look for a life partner, a soul mate? How do I avoid divorce, which is so prevalent in our world today? And here's the best one: How do people stay together for forty or fifty years and still love each other? So those are the questions for which we need good answers.

PETER STEINFELS: Thank you very much, Barbara. Our next reaction will come from Thomas Smith. Tom Smith currently manages daily operations for an America Works job-placement and prisoner-reentry program in Newark, while he also pursues a degree in public administration at Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs. Tom received his bachelor's degree from Notre Dame in 2003 and then did a year of graduate work there in theology. From 2005 to 2009, he worked for the Diocese of Rockville Centre in a variety of highly responsible positions, including director of campus ministry for the diocese. He has also been a lifeguard, camp counselor, residential hall assistant, and a veteran of all sorts of programs and projects involving young people of both secondary school and university age. Tom?

THOMAS SMITH: First of all, thank you. It's a pleasure to be

here tonight. It's very interesting hearing about your age bracket while you are sitting in the room. I guess we're here tonight so that there will be nothing about us without us.

I'll direct my comments as a response to Christine, building on Donna Freitas's work, because I think you could come at this topic of sexuality from so many different angles, whether it's academic, to the heart, religiously, and somehow we are supposed to put these all together and get kind of a unified vision of what sex and the soul could look like.

With that in mind, I'll build briefly on three aspects of Dr. Hinze's comments that I think are of interest. One would be the feminist paradigm of college sexuality; two, the influence of the family; three, the Catholic legacy on sexual matters. My comments will come from this perspective of a younger professional who has emerged intact — or relatively intact, I should say — from the American college experience.

Number one, the feminist paradigm. It seems clear that the female college student is at somewhat of a disadvantage coming to sexuality, as she may experience more personally and powerfully the consequences of the hook-up culture. Not that this doesn't impact men in the same way, but some particular STDs or pregnancy, reputation, or the emotional aftereffects of a broken sexual relationship may impact a woman more heavily than a man, at least from the outlook.

A reading of the work *Sex & the Soul* as a feminist protest really does beg the question: Where are the good men? This question, though not directly addressed in the work, assumes a definition of "a good man." It is infrequently defined, yet is frequently understood what a good man could, should, would be. It seems to me that this good man is an important component to contributing to the fruits of feminism. If that is something that we could agree on, then I would ask the question, how does the American college campus promote the ideal of what it means to be a good man?

Number two, the influence of the family. Christine draws on Donna Freitas's depiction of the American college student who is largely dissociated from the religious traditions of his or her parents. Aside from the evangelical fathers, who seem to play a prominent role in the formation of a sexual purity culture for their daughters, there is little positive mention of the influence of parents in the formation of sexual, spiritual, and religious identities. It may be shocking to some, but the hook-up mentality of college culture does exist, and it does not only exist in college campuses. This experience is often preceded by high school- and middle school-

aged young people across the country, who would definitely have significantly more contact with their parents.

Christine acknowledges Freitas's challenge to school administrations to include a mentor-rich environment of sexual and religious openness for the purpose of dialogue and growth. A relevant discussion will include not only perceptions passed on from the parents, but, I think, also the wisdom that students of today would hope to pass on to the next generation. So we kind of get the understanding of this intergenerational passing-on of our understanding of the things that matter most. Additional dynamics that I think are worthy of attention include what the hook-up culture impact will be on marriage and family structure and then also what the impact of modern American family structure has been on young people's initiation into sexual matters.

Number three, the Catholic legacy on sexuality. Christine identified that the blanket perception of the Catholic on sexuality is "No," combined with a failure to address the contemporary single adult. There seems to be one word that could be a common perception or misperception of Catholic understanding of sexuality, and I think that word is "repressive." There are two definitions that come to mind when we think of "repressive" or "repression." The first one comes from Freud, who was the first to widely use the term regarding sexual repression. He believed that people's naturally strong instincts towards sexuality were repressed by people in order to meet the constraints imposed on them by civilized life.

A second definition, and one that I think might be more plausible, is put forth by Dr. Anna Terruwe, who was a Catholic psychiatrist from the Netherlands. Dr. Terruwe said it's the imposition of the emotion of fear and/or energy, as in the will, upon the emotion of desire that causes repression. Freedom from this fear and overdeveloped sense of utility would allow the emotion and other pleasure emotions to fully mature.

I have found that Terruwe's work in rational psychology is freeing in that it presents a framework for the emotional process of integrating sexuality that is both psychologically healthy and morally considerate. Rather than sending students off to discover sexuality without any particular roadmap, in general I think that a tested framework would be of assistance to young people yearning to unlock a deeply human and romantic creativity and still make the connection between their sexual, emotional, social, and spiritual lives.

With further investigation into the three topics of feminism,

family, and Catholicism, I'm confident that the twenty-first-century legacy left by young women and men today will be not one of repression or recklessness, but rather one of maturity and health expression.

PETER STEINFELS: Thank you very much, Tom. Our next reaction will come from Kate DiGeronimo, a 2007 graduate of Fordham University's Lincoln Center campus, right here, where her studies in theology earned her the Ignacio Ellacuria Award for highest honors in theology and religious studies. During her undergraduate studies, she worked for two years as a residential assistant and now, in her third year at Fordham School of Law, she still works closely with the undergraduate population as the senior residential assistant in McMahon Hall, the dormitory for this Lincoln Center campus. During her legal studies, Ms. DiGeronimo has continued to pursue her interests in theology and religious studies, most notably through her work with the Sikh Coalition, a nonprofit organization organized post September 11 to aid Sikh victims of hate crimes and discrimination. Kate?

KATE DIGERONIMO: I come to this as a recent graduate. When I sat down after finishing *Sex & the Soul* and attempted to gather my thoughts, I had a very hard time getting started. The feelings that this book evoked for me can only be described as a confusing mix of shock, disappointment, outrage, and encouragement. This is a good thing, though, because that is exactly how I feel about my generation's relationship to spirituality and religion, and *Sex & the Soul* captured it perfectly.

My choice to major in theology as an undergraduate has afforded me the luxury of being able to talk about religion with my friends and classmates without much difficulty. I realize, though, that this is not typical for the rest of my peers, even those who do attend Catholic colleges. Often I have been found guilty of breaking that unspoken rule of etiquette that one doesn't speak about religion in public. There have been a few times when the response to my chosen field of studies is a polite smile and the sight of a back walking away from me.

Just yesterday in the law library — this is true, and, literally, yesterday — I was talking with an undergraduate student about her application process to the graduate programs. She asked me what I studied. After hearing my response, one of the librarians said to me, "Well, that's more useful than English, but not by much," and walked away. I didn't get a chance to respond. Sadly, that reply is typical among faculty outside the theology department. I'm sure that these same professors would be surprised to learn that the usual reaction from my peers is much more positive. Most often,

they begin almost immediately to ask me about why I chose to study theology and are eager to tell me about their own beliefs and their own experiences.

My experience, which supports Ms. Freitas's reports in *Sex & the Soul*, is that my peers are eager to speak about their spirituality and religion, and when given the opportunity to do so, they will take it. It's as if when I tell them I'm a theology major, they think, "Oh, someone safe."

Just as *Sex & the Soul* relates, "I'm not religious, but I'm spiritual" is the cliché I hear from my peers again and again. I believe that this is because they fear being labeled with all the negative stereotypes about religion that permeate our society. For the majority of my friends, even those who claim to be atheists, being spiritual is a good thing. It's an indicator that one thinks about the world around one and one's role in it and lives a life with meaning. If you're spiritual, you're deep. On the other hand, "religious" is fraught with negative connotations. To most of my peers, someone who is religious is someone who accepts without question a set of beliefs that they were just handed. While the spiritual are perceived as deep thinkers, the religious are considered brainwashed. That's where the disappointment came in.

While *Sex & the Soul* resonated with my experiences among my peers with regard to spirituality and religion, it did manage to shock me with its accounts of rampant hook-up culture. Prior to reading this book, I had never heard of "pimps and hos" parties, which are a common feature of campus life at many universities. After reading about these parties in this book, I began asking my friends if they had ever heard of those parties. These are the friends who did not attend my college, and even those who did. The friends who did attend other colleges were shocked that I had not heard of them. My blissful ignorance, though, of "pimps and hos" parties has less to do with my college's Catholic mission than it does with the fact that the college I attended is so small — that is, the Lincoln Center campus — that large parties of any kind are simply impractical, and no party could possibly compete with Manhattan's nightlife.

What I like most about *Sex & the Soul*, beyond its frankness, is its ultimately hopeful message. I agree with Ms. Freitas that religion can be a positive force in changing campus hook-up culture. Before it became the dominant religion in the West, Christianity challenged the social structures and cultural practices it considered unjust. There are many figures in its history to exemplify this spirit. One that comes to mind is St. Macrina the Younger, who actually balked at marriage when she was about 12 years old and

decided to take up the monastic life, which was unheard of in the early period; women were for production of children, and that was your role.

Even today, the work of liberation theologians is focused on using Christianity to improve the position of those marginalized in our society. I believe that same tradition of challenging prevailing social attitudes can be a powerful force that can be used as a check on hook-up culture. Of course, to do this, Catholic institutions need to find the courage to truly own their tradition in ways that they currently don't. I understand the fear of alienating prospective students and faculty who have an aversion to all things religious. But I believe that there is a way to foster diversity on campus and welcome other faiths, while affirming the core values of the Catholic tradition. My hope is that college faculty and administrators here tonight will read this book and come to this conclusion as well.

PETER STEINFELS: Thank you very much. We give the author now a chance to respond. Donna Freitas, as has been indicated, is a writer of both fiction and nonfiction. She is a visiting professor of religion at Boston University. She's a graduate of Georgetown and has a Ph.D., as I mentioned before, in theology from the Catholic University of America. She has also taught at St. Michael's College in Vermont and worked in student affairs and residential life, four years at Georgetown and two at NYU. Donna is a frequent commentator on op-ed pages, online journals, National Public Radio, especially on questions of belonging and alienation with regard to faith, particularly among young adults, and especially young women. Her books include *Killing the Imposter God*, a controversial positive analysis of Philip Pullman, who is generally considered the anti-C.S. Lewis of children's literature, and a novel that she has written, *The Possibilities of Sainthood*. She is a native of Rhode Island. These days she lives mostly in Brooklyn and sometimes in Boston. Donna?

DONNA. FREITAS: Thank you all for being here, and thank you to Peter and Peggy and Patricia for putting this together, and to everyone on the panel. I can't believe you chose this over the Yankees game. But my husband is a Red Sox fan, so maybe he's happy you did. I probably shouldn't reveal that here.

What I'm going to do, briefly — I hadn't had a chance to hear ahead of time from Barbara, Tom, and Kate, but I did have a chance to read Christine's remarks earlier. We're all on a first-name basis, according to me, tonight. I hope that's okay. I'm going to make some brief comments about the last three papers you heard and then some more formal ones about Christine's remarks. Then

maybe, where to from here?

Barbara, one of the things that struck me so much when you were talking about this gap between first-time sex and lifetime partners is, in general, the fact that there is this very, very blank space, potentially for the rest of your life, between first-time sex and any sort of partnership, if you choose that route or if it's legal for you to take that route. There is the sense that the teachings that religious traditions give us, because they are so focused on marriage, which is a very exclusive term, in my opinion, in our society — that what you end up doing is really detaching religion and religious traditions from being able to speak to young people or single people about sexuality.

I think what's so interesting about the questions that she ended with is that they are so basic. How do you choose someone? What does it mean to be in love for forty or fifty years? Some of the questions that I see being asked when I'm going around talking about this project — and who knew that I would end up becoming a speaker about dating? — are things like: What do you do if you like someone when you're sober? How do you approach that person? Going so far as, quite humorously, someone saying, "Do you go up to them and say, 'I like your sweater' or would that be offensive? Would they just assume you're looking at their boobs?" Some of these questions that we just assume that young people know, perhaps by osmosis, they don't necessarily. So those questions that you posed at the end, I think, are so basic, but they are so important.

Tom, I love your question: What wisdom can students pass on to the next generation? That makes me think of the reason why I did the study in the first place, which was that I had a bunch of students in a class who did a newspaper — they decided to challenge hook-up culture with a newspaper, and I remember thinking, "Oh, gosh, I'm going to get fired," because the whole paper was going to be about hooking up. Then they were going to respond with spiritual wisdom. That was my students' effort to — they were so passionate about it. Once they figured out that no one in the room liked hook-up culture, they wanted to tell the whole campus about this.

What they wanted to pass on was some sort of spiritual positive wisdom. But they started with a lot of "don'ts," a lot of regrets, in many ways, with their experiences. Just like the students today don't like receiving all these "don'ts" from religious traditions, I think one of the questions that is good to ask is, what kind of wisdom do students have? I know that a lot of the students that I spoke with for this study — so much of *Sex & the Soul* has students

talking about their sadness with regard to their choices. We might want to wonder, how can we turn that around so that students have positive things to pass on?

Kate, I love your comments about being a theology major and how rare that is to be on campus, and how that gives you access to a conversation that so many students want, but at the same time have no idea how to get. Most students tend not to choose theology majors — no offense. But looking for opportunities to talk about spirituality, students will walk right in if you open that door. I know I have found that as a professor and I also found that for this study. I think it's just so true, what Kate said.

Just to give you an idea — and then I'm going to my more formal remarks — when I set out to do this study, I hoped for 400 people to take the survey and forty students to volunteer to do the interview. I remember thinking I was shooting high. When I was doing research for the study, there were a lot of studies where there were twenty-four interviews, and that's it. So I thought that would be a good number. The 400 was for the online survey.

When I opened up the survey, so many students took it so quickly that I ended up with over 2,500 students very, very quickly, to the point where I was shutting down the survey at different colleges and universities. It took an hour and fifteen minutes to take the survey. That's quite a lot of dedication, to sit down and go through that all. What you had was all of these students who were seeing the words "sexuality" and "spirituality" and clicking on the survey and taking it. That alone tells you about the interest in having an opportunity to talk about the topic.

Then, for the one-on-one interview, which required students to sit down with me in person for hours at a time, I had hoped for forty volunteers. I got almost 600. If I could clone myself, then I would have interviewed them all. I interviewed, I think, 112, because that's pretty much all I was capable of. Just those numbers, I think, tell you about the desire that's out there. To my more formal remarks.

I'm going to evoke some pop culture, and hopefully no one cringes. But I thought, to address the topic of hooking-up, we could think about the lyrics of a Vampire Weekend song that I can't get out of my head. Fittingly, Vampire Weekend is Columbia College grads. They got popular when they were still on campus. The song is called "Campus." It's very catchy. While I'm pretty sure they were singing about sleeping with a professor, the refrain that runs over and over in the song is a refrain that runs through the interviews with the students I spoke with and surveyed for the study. The

song begins, “I wake up, my shoulder’s cold. I’ve got to leave you. Before I go, I pull my shirt on, walk out the door, drag my feet along the floor.” I’ll spare you the tune part, because I can’t sing.

But the part that keeps getting in my head that it can’t get out — and I was singing this when I was going to sleep last night — is, “Then I see you. You’re walking across campus.” Then there’s this little part that you can’t understand. I think it’s the part about the professor. I looked up the lyrics. Then it says, “How am I supposed to pretend I never want to see you again?” When these lyrics are going over and over in my head, all I can think of is that question — how am I supposed to pretend I never want to see you again? — sung by a man.

We haven’t talked too much about young men tonight yet, in terms of the stresses that they feel in hook-up culture. This question really sums up the problems and stressors college students face within hook-up culture on campus. While, yes, a hook-up involves some form of intimacy — anything from kissing to different types of sex — it is casual, brief, transitory. Generally, a hook-up is intimacy that occurs one night, lasting anywhere from ten minutes to many hours. What really defines a hook-up is this last part — the pretending you never want to see the person again, and the fact that it is pretend and this feeling that goes along with it. How am I really supposed to pull that off when it’s time to face this part of a hook-up, the aftermath, which includes the emotional shutting-off, the shutting-down of anything that makes us feel attached to a person? Neither the men nor the women I spoke with were very good at or successful with this task. So, in many ways, there are a lot of failed hook-ups on campus.

This really comes to the heart of this project, this feeling that both men and women, and regardless of sexual orientation, expressed about how living in the context of a hook-up culture over a series of months or years makes them feel emptied out, exhausted, stressed, lost, unmoored, and, overall, like they just can’t go on pretending anymore. I want to mention, too, that more important than anything else is perception about hook-up culture, this perception that everyone is doing it and that you’re supposed to pretend like you don’t care, like it’s no big deal. It’s not so much that students think all hook-ups are bad or that they want to stop having sex altogether, but it’s cumulatively living in the context of this culture that is exhausting for them. They are beginning to recognize, somewhere during the college experience, that the sex they are having, whatever kind of sex that is, is not good sex; it’s not fulfilling sex. And they don’t know how to get out of this cycle.

These same students are highly interested in spirituality, even if

they are not quite sure what that means, to the tune of 80 percent of the campus population, regardless of whether their college is religiously affiliated. Many of these same students see spirituality — not religion, but spirituality — as a potential umbrella where they can seek shelter, so to speak, from hook-up culture and also potentially reconcile their romantic and sexual longings with their faith, and even pursue a healthy, fulfilling sex life. They want to know what spirituality might have to say to them in the way of negotiating hook-up culture, a question which helps us shift to an important issue that I want to address: Why spirituality, and why not religion?

To keep going with the umbrella motif and to address Christine Hinze's remarks about Catholic students in particular, at least those who participated in the study, students, especially the Catholic ones, tend to regard the umbrella their church provides on matters related to sex as much like one of those five-dollar umbrellas that you buy on the street during a rainy day like today, the kind that turn inside-out in the wind and provide virtually no meaningful shelter at all. You may as well go out without an umbrella than carry one of these.

Students' remarks about what the Catholic Church has taught them about sex growing up, in addition to their voices being drenched with sarcasm, generally involved a list of "don'ts," as Christine Hinze has noted, and what I have come to call the three-word teachings, of which there are the two most common: "Don't have sex," and, "Don't be gay." I'm sure many of you are cringing hearing this, perhaps for different reasons. The kind of cringing I get most often from colleagues is exactly the kind that Christine points out and that I share myself, the kind that makes us want to say, "Wait, but that view of Catholic teaching is so limited and impoverished. Look at such sexual ethicists as James Keenan and Lisa Cahill at Boston College and Margaret Farley at Yale."

Well, a resounding yes to that. But here's the thing. The chances of any young adult — in many ways, as Kate has pointed out — including one at a Catholic college, studying such interpretations of sexual ethics, are slim to none, never mind finding these in their catechism classes. That's CCD, religious education for Catholic kids growing up. Then much more central and widely available to students are such announcements as the one we had last week from the Vatican. I don't want to derail us from the conversation by raising this current issue, but, instead, draw on it briefly as a perfect timely illustration for understanding where and how students get such impoverished notions and summations about what, say, the Catholic Church says about sex.

Essentially, last week the Vatican offered up the Catholic Church as a refuge for those Anglicans who are uncomfortable with women priests and the affirmation of openly gay bishops and church members in openly same-sex relationships in general — a topic which has split the Episcopal Church in the United States. Here we have an example where, it's safe to say, the students' sense of the three-word teaching is pretty spot-on. What other teaching about religion and sex — and, in this case, same-sex relationships — does one take away from such announcements? While the statement, “Don't be gay,” may seem a rather base interpretation, it also seems like a pretty basic conclusion to make from what the Vatican has implied.

To push the implications for college students regarding such a Vatican further, whether it was for the study or in the many talks I have given since, the vast majority of college students want the very opposite kind of refuge on their campuses with regard, for example, to LGBTQ issues. I hear over and over from students, including at evangelical colleges — and Catholic colleges, for that matter — that they want safe space to talk about LGBTQ issues and for their campus to be a safe space for all students in this regard.

For many faculty, staff, and administration at religiously affiliated colleges, openly addressing same-sex on campus is pretty taboo, as is addressing hook-up culture in general. These are third-rail topics for the college campus. Offering courses or programming to respond to student questions or, say, Vatican announcements like the one above is akin to calling the Catholic identity of a school into question. To address hook-up culture is to acknowledge that students are sexually active on campus, which is to, at the same time, somehow announce that a college is not, in fact, Catholic. This is the sense.

As a result, too often, these topics simply go ignored. The theme of “ignorance is bliss” is not limited to students.

It's no wonder that there is a disconnect, a generation gap, between Catholic students and their church on matters related to sex. If we, faculty, administration, and staff, are afraid to negotiate these issues ourselves, how in the world are our students supposed to? To not address these subjects is simply unacceptable.

I want to end with talking about some good news or some positive ideas. That involves talking about loopholes. I love loopholes. As a young woman in the church, I feel like you have to master that technique. There are elements, which we have sort of danced around tonight, to the Catholic tradition that need no theological and ethical gymnastics when it comes to sex. In other words, reconciling sex and the soul doesn't have to be that difficult. I am

thinking about Catholic spiritual practices in particular, but spiritual practices and traditions in general from the world's religions are fantastic resources to help college students to tackle their feelings about hook-up culture and attitudes about sex, dating, and romance on campus. Let's remember that 80-percent statistic of interest and affinity with spirituality here. The same students who, when you say the word "theology," their eyes start to droop and they can barely stay awake, are also the same students who, regardless of their anger with Catholicism or how loosely they affiliate with any religious tradition, wake up and get all excited when you throw the word "spirituality" around.

Spiritual practices are really the key here. They provide at least one incredibly abundant area within religion, with much to offer students' questions about dating, romance, sexuality, and hooking-up. Students want to know how spirituality — not so much the Vatican, but spirituality — might respond to hook-up culture.

I want to give two examples, briefly. One of the things that I've been asking students to do when I talk about this project is to try on spiritual practices in their party life. One of the basic ones that is very popular in the Catholic tradition, but in many traditions, is discernment. We often think about discernment. Discernment is a tool for decision making, and spiritual practices are tools, generally, for faith formation, spiritual formation, for decision making. We often hear people talking about discerning a vocation.

So I ask students to discern a hook-up partner on Friday night. That leads them to all sorts of interesting conversation. Generally, discernment is a process. Sometimes it can take years. Imagine that. So they're going out on Friday night. It might take you years to discern a hook-up partner. So sometimes it takes years, and generally it involves a lot of conversation. Some of that conversation, if in the context of a religious tradition, is with God or some sort of divine relationship. Also a lot of it is with people who know you well. You might consult your friends, who have lots of advice for you, who really know who you are. You might consult your parents. You might consult experts on a particular topic. If you are discerning a vocation, you would want to talk to people who live out that vocation themselves.

When you start bringing in the community, and even your parents, and then you're talking about, "How do I discern a hook-up partner?" the first thing that students generally run into is drinking. Can you discern if you're drunk? Can you discern if you've only had one beer? So that's the first question.

Then the next question comes up: What if you discern that you like

somebody and you want to hook up with them? What if they're drunk? Can they discern that they like you? Do they need to discern you or can this just be a one-way thing? Can you talk to God at a party? Good question. Does God want to talk to you if you're drunk? Here we go with the alcohol. Then there's the friend issue. Friends are often great advice givers on people that you might be interested in. In this case, what if your friends are drunk? So a lot of talk about alcohol in the context of this conversation, as you can see, but it's important conversation, right?

Are you going to call your parents? Maybe you wait until tomorrow. Maybe you wait until everybody sobers up and then you talk; you do some more discerning there. But then how are you going to get in touch with the person again? Maybe you'll never see them again. Maybe you'll have to find another context in which to help them discern whether or not they want to be with you.

On and on this conversation goes. The biggest thing, I think, that bringing discernment into the context of hook-up culture does is, it slows people down. Hook-up culture is quick, quick, quick. It's easy access. It's efficient, essentially. Students talk about how it's very efficient. So hooking-up is very efficient; discernment is not. It could take years. It also opens up students' thinking about sexuality and their romantic partners to community. This is something that they often don't do, at least not sober.

In the interest of time, I will just throw out there — the other one is spiritual direction. What a wonderful thing. Why don't we do spiritual direction for the party scene, for when students go out to party? We don't think about adapting these practices for those kinds of spheres, but they are so ready for them. We don't even have to play around with them.

To conclude, we just aren't used to thinking about or putting these spiritual tools to work, so to speak, in light of hook-up culture and sexual decision making. But once we start expanding our sense of potential resources to respond to both our students' anxiety about hook-up culture and their hope that spirituality might have something to offer them on this front, the possibilities are exciting. We can't pretend the "don'ts" aren't there, but we can shift the conversation toward more useful avenues. After all, pretending can be an exhausting game. Thank you.

PETER STEINFELS: Thank you very much. I'd like to begin the discussion among our panelists. They can jump in with something that they want to say, regardless of what I'm going to ask them. Don't hesitate to do that. I'm sure that you are all skilled enough in that regard.

I would like to start out, giving you permission to jump in to react to one another's statements that may not fit into my question, beginning just where Donna ended. What do you think about her point of beginning this discussion around spiritual practices, which has not particularly been the traditional place for beginning it, rather than around, say, moral examination and so on? Anyone? Christine, I'm looking at you.

CHRISTINE HINZE: I actually agree with that very much. It's something that, in teaching classes on marriage and relationships, I have found very fruitful, to open up the notion of discernment. I think it can be done in so many ways, as Donna was suggesting — getting students to understand what some of the steps are and then apply them to this sort of atypical area. In a place like this, where we talk about Ignatian spirituality and the notion of examining your consciousness and asking where God was in the previous day — to expand that out and get conversations going about, maybe in the previous night and maybe in the party scene and so forth, I think it puts a finger on this finding God in all things in a way that could be very practical and honest and realistic for student lives.

I don't think that will appeal to everybody, but I think there are a lot of people that that would appeal to. I'd be interested to hear what the younger people think.

KATE DIGERONIMO: I actually really enjoy that idea. I think that a lot of my friends who balk and start to cringe when they hear "religion" or teachings from the church would actually find those notions interesting at first, and that's the way to hook them.

CHRISTINE HINZE: No pun intended.

KATE DIGERONIMO: So much of the problem, I find, among my generation is that they really don't understand — sort of what you were talking about with family — a lot of my generation's frustrations are handed to them by their parents. While they think that the religious-minded might be brainwashed, they are just as brainwashed, because they haven't actually gone out and tried any of these practices or know what they are. So to bring them to the fore and to challenge them to use these in their daily lives, in their situations, I think would be an interesting challenge that they would respond to and that they would then find are fruitful and have pertinence to their own lives, and maybe even expand out into other areas besides just their sexual lives.

BARBARA WHITEHEAD: I thought the discussion about discernment was interesting as well. I am a Catholic, but I'm

talking as a sociologist tonight, in the midst of all these theologians. I was thinking that most courtship systems in the world have been designed precisely for the process of discernment and for the process of pacing things out, slowing things down, so that there are third parties involved in helping one decide if this is the right person and how much time we should spend together. There's that kind of third-party discernment process that goes on in courtship systems across the world. That's why we have them. More than the two people involved have a stake in the outcome. So this idea of a spiritual practice discernment is really echoing something that is very traditional across cultures, and I think a brilliant adaptation. Great.

THOMAS SMITH: I would say I like the idea, too, mostly because it takes a spiritual tool and makes it very practical. I think most of the people in my generation, and even myself — I want to know, why does this matter? Where does this rule come from? Unless somebody really is a voracious reader, it's difficult to find people that can answer that question.

So I think, if we are coming at it from a perspective of, let's say, sharing or evangelization, then I would say yes. Let's start with that, because it really meets people where they are. It says, let's use these practical spiritual tools so that you don't bite off more than you can chew, so that it becomes practical, it becomes real, rather than just kind of religion and God way far away — something that's practical and saying, okay, this can really make a difference in my daily life.

I think if that's incorporated at younger and younger levels — I would say prayer, too. I think that hunger for something that's spiritual is something that is deeply mystical. It's an experience of God. I think if somebody has that something, then religion has life. I think those could be good tools.

PETER STEINFELS: Let me break in and be a little bit devil's advocate and challenging about this, which I think is a really interesting point of departure. Tom, I noticed, when you were speaking, you made a reference at one point to a roadmap toward the end of your remarks. You also talked about a tested framework. I'm not sure exactly what you meant. I'm not sure how this discussion, which you just affirmed — but with the phrase stuck in there of "evangelization" in the background or something like that — how that fits in with this approach through spiritual practices, discernment, spiritual direction. That's one part of my question.

The other part of my question, which goes more to you, Donna — one of the things that was very interesting about your book was

your challenging of what I suspect is a widespread negative attitude about evangelical campuses, where you had many criticisms, but you did affirm the strength of their communal character, that they had something together. Do you think you could get that from the starting point of spiritual practices or discernment, as you described it — that is, some sort of larger communal wisdom or legacy? The evangelical campuses didn't just get that from discussions among the students or, to use your word, "negotiating." That was an inheritance that they brought from a very strong faith commitment.

I think this is a wonderful starting point. But I want to say — I'm going to ask both Tom and Donna, I guess — how does it keep from being a kind of, as Barbara referred to, pop psychology or therapy? It does slow you down and it makes you think about these things, but is it really getting to spiritual wisdom?

THOMAS SMITH: I'll start off with part one of the question and maybe you can take part two.

When I talked about the spiritual tools of discernment and spiritual direction being a good starting point, I think it's just that: It's a good starting point, but coming in at the college level. That's why I mentioned evangelization, sharing with somebody who might not have an experience of spirituality or religion or even Catholicism. But I think that in itself is not enough. When I talked about a framework or a roadmap, I was thinking more of formation. That's why I spoke about parents as well. I think a lot of our understanding of sexuality, for good or for bad, comes from our families, and not just from our families, but from the communities in which we live and also from the church. I think, because there is a lot of fear surrounding the topic, because it's so personal — just like somebody talking about their relationship with God, somebody talking about their sexuality is almost like — unless you are talking about it in the objective sense or the third person, it's almost like this conversation never happens.

So I think a framework is, as mysterious as life can be, some sort of general principles that kind of have, I think, some theological significance, but also psychological practicality. I mentioned Dr. Anna Terruwe because there I have seen somewhat of a more comprehensive vision, taking a little bit from a psychological or psychiatric practice, but then also from theological tradition. That is kind of convincing, rather than just one, the other, none.

Young people — I think myself — at different stages, whether it was high school or college life, look, in many ways, to be led. We look to discover. If things are imposed, we're going to push back and

we're going to go our own way. But in many ways, an effective, not just parent, but also a mentor is able to kind of engage this conversation, but also say, "Okay, there might be something to look forward to," or, "This is worth really diving into, to try to understand for yourself." It's not a flat reality. It's something that's alive and vibrant, and should be life-giving. It should bring you to life. Sexuality is inherently life-giving. So that's kind of the answer to that first question.

DONNA FREITAS: A couple thoughts in response to spiritual practices in general in this realm. Part of why I have been trying to shift the conversation away from the big "noes" that you get from moral theology or a lot of the teachings where students get, "Don't do this," "Don't do that" — that kind of teaching — is that most people think about sex and religion as this big, antagonistic, melodramatic, horrific situation, when you are a young adult. Taking up different spiritual practices during your social life, even if it's just, "Today I'm going to try to discern who my hook-up partner is" — there's a playful aspect to that. So I think it disarms a little bit the idea that sex is dangerous and scary and horrible, and religion hates it.

So the playful aspect, I think, is important. It just lightens things up. Also the students' feelings about hooking-up — they are so depressed about it. So we need some levity in that realm. The other thing I would mention is that part of why I keep shifting in this direction is, as a young woman in academia who does feminist theory and gender studies, I am always looking at who has the power and whether or not things are inclusive, in every way that you can imagine that term. The idea of shifting power into the hands of people who are making these decisions, and so giving people a tool, giving young adults — giving ourselves, for that matter; discernment is useful for me, too, and for everybody — but giving us tools to help think about these decisions is really important.

But even more so, one of the things that I love about the spiritual practices that I study — my degree from Catholic U is heavy on the spirituality, if you can't tell — is the fact that people have been doing this for thousands of years. You are participating in history. One of the things that I love — we're always so worried about tradition. Will the tradition fall, et cetera, if students do X or if young people do Y or if women do this? It's a big job for tradition to stay around for thousands of years. It's really hard to accommodate everybody, especially today, with everything shifting so quickly. So I feel for religions, in many ways.

But there are these spaces, the loopholes, as I talked about them,

that really allow for that shifting without everything falling down. I think they allow us to experiment and to play around, but also to stay within the history of a tradition. There's something kind of amazing about having practices like that.

The last thing I would say about the community issue that you are posing, Peter — it was really extraordinary at evangelical college campuses to see how tight the communities were, in the sense that, regardless of how stressed students were about what their faith might have to say about their sexual practices or whether or not they were getting married or not getting married or if they were straight or gay, et cetera, one of the things that was really common ground for these students was their faith. They talked about their faith all the time. Faith was a huge source of intimacy for the community.

How could you take advantage of that or shift that to a more secular or spiritual community? I always go back to that 80 percent. That's four-fifths of the college student body is interested in religion and spirituality — not necessarily the same ones, but, still, that's a lot of interest. That's a lot of yearning.

I also think about college mission statements, which we never use. Colleges always have these lovely mission statements, but nobody ever really talks about them. They're just there on the Web site. They are supposed to be an identity statement. Is that a place where we can begin to come together about the values of the university? Do we take advantage of them enough? But also opening up opportunities to talk about these issues that students really care about — spirituality, dating, sex, a lot of the issues that faculty are terrified — not all of them, but faculty are terrified to open up in the classroom. I think, in particular, opening them up in the classroom is one of the most important places that we don't have that conversation. We tend to think about these issues as not so rigorous. But finding all those spaces in the community where that 80 percent of the population can begin to come together on this interest, I think, is really exciting as a possibility.

PETER STEINFELS: I have cheated here. Usually we wait a little bit more and this discussion goes on and then we switch to some of the questions that have been passed up from the audience. Since a number of the questions actually coincide with questions I still have, maybe the switch from one to the other won't be as clear-cut right now.

A whole set of questions here have come from different people about what you really think are the causes of the emergence of hook-up culture. There were, as we would expect, references to —

was it contraception or the pill or the sexual revolution in the 1960s? Was it the factor that Barbara referred to of the lengthening time gap between either puberty or first sexual activity and settling down in a marriage? What are some of the other causes of the situation?

I would like to add to that, a little more observations about the culture. In the book, sometimes I had the feeling that the seven campuses were isolated from the rest of the world. Peer pressure and peer reactions loomed very large in what students told you in the 112 interviews that you did. Parents were amazingly absent. I'm really glad that issue got surfaced here, although I would like to hear more about it, because Christian Smith and his studies of young people say it's actually a mistake of our culture to assume that young people and their parents are so disconnected as is generally the standard model of adolescent rebellion and so on. But also absent was the kind of culture, the manufactured culture, the culture of TV entertainment and comedy series and music, and even on a more sophisticated level, high art, visual arts, performing arts, art criticism, and the way in which this sets norms. To what extent does that play something in there? Does that need to be part of the conversation or addressed? The first part was about the causes, in which I was throwing in the question of culture.

CHRISTINE HINZE: I'll make a start. It sounds like everybody in the audience who sent up questions is giving good suggestions as to possibly some — I think it's multiply caused. One of the things that strikes me, reading the book and speaking with students, is that a thread in this culture, to me, seems to be the perennial question of everyone, which is, what does it mean to be okay? What does it mean to be successful, as a man, as a woman, as a young man, as a young woman? What does it mean to be someone who has fulfilled what I'm supposed to be at this stage in my life and what I want to be at this stage in my life? If I haven't had sex, does that mean I'm not fulfilled?

It seems clear that part of this culture is very much a sense that if I'm not sexually active or haven't been, then I am a rare exception, at best, and more likely, I'm not quite what I should be at this stage in my life, if I'm in college and am not sexually active. So that whole theme of what it means to be okay — and the media plays into this so much. If you grew up on *Sex and the City* and *Friends* and so forth and so on, sexual fun can be divorced from relationships. There's never an STD. There's never a pregnancy. There's never a real consequence in many cases.

So there is an expectation — and I love Donna's stuff about the disconnected emotions. I must train myself or be able to

disconnect my emotions from this very intimate activity. Therefore — I think you mentioned this, Kate — how am I preparing or not preparing for an actual long-term relationship by the things I'm practicing while I'm engaging in hook-up culture?

Just one more comment and I'll stop. In terms of causes, I think the lack of conversation about sex and spirituality — we can take that back to the post-*Humanae Vitae* adult Catholic generation. This generation, my generation, I think, may be part of the cause of the lack of conversation, because after *Humanae Vitae*, there were a lot of people in the 1960s and 1970s — Catholics, who were very invested, who said, "The Catholic Church and my sexual decision making do not go together. Therefore, I will live my faith very vigorously, but when it comes to my sexual decision making, I just know that the Catholic Church has nothing to offer me." That split happened, I believe, in the post-*Humanae Vitae* generation, who are the parents of many of these students. Therefore, aside from it being a difficult conversation to talk about your sexual journey, which it certainly is, or your spiritual journey, there's this split that these students have grown up with, even in very religious families.

PETER STEINFELS: Does anyone else have a thought about the causes?

BARBARA WHITEHEAD: I like the idea that both colleges and parents, I think, in recent years, have been much more focused — and Donna talks about this in her recommendation section — about students' career achievements than their happiness and success in relationship achievement. We don't pay attention to their desires in that realm of life nearly as much. Therefore, I think sometimes students engage in hook-up sex as a way to postpone true intimacy while they are busy working on all the very busy things they have to work on — meeting their class obligations, maybe working a job. They don't really want to be engaged in that sort of — in the movie *High Fidelity*, which is one of my favorite movies, with John Cusack, he is so confused. The women are indistinguishable in his life, until he finds one woman and he says, "This is the one. I'm going to pursue her." He suddenly gets energy and dynamism. He has a focus for his inner life. I think we have just neglected that, as parents so eager to see our children succeed in their careers. I'm speaking as a parent. I'm guilty of it, too, with my own kids.

DONNA FREITAS: I think Christine took responsibility for hook-up culture just a minute ago. I wanted to respond about the peer culture versus just larger culture issues. The peer ethos on campus is the ethos that students respond to. You can say whatever you want; students' perceptions about what their peers think about all

these different issues are what rule the day. The perceptions of masculinity and femininity, too, are just really extraordinarily difficult for students to negotiate. Actually, perceptions of masculinity — we get all sorts of perceptions. Here's where the culture part comes in — perceptions that hook-up culture is the best ever, especially for guys. Guys are supposed to love college because there's all this available sex.

I had guy after guy after guy that I was interviewing with telling me, "I know I'm supposed to love this, but what I really want is to be in a long-term relationship. But before I could ever even think of that, I need to prove myself as a guy by having this many hook-up partners, or at least the perception that I've had this many hook-up partners, because that's what it means to be a guy and to prove yourself with the guys on campus." So this perception that hook-up culture is the best ever, for guys in particular, is really influential.

The one other thing I'll say that's just evidence of — what has happened with hook-up culture? How has it evolved or sort of ratcheted up to be so high-stakes? When I say "high-stakes," I'm thinking, Barbara, of the comment you just made about this issue of paying attention to relationships in college. I had students who would say one encounter, one hook-up, can make or break your college experience. If that's true, then, oh, my gosh, don't we need to think about that when students are applying for college or when they are at college, if that's intense?

Let's talk about porn. Porn is a huge influence on hook-up culture. I don't know if you have already made the connection. We talked very, very briefly about theme parties. But let me tell you the popular theme parties. The classic is "pimps and hos." That's sort of the original theme party. Then they go down the line, from "CEOs to office hos," "golf pros, tennis hos," "millionaires, maids," "professors, schoolgirls," "politicians and prostitutes." You can just imagine. Keep going from there. They are all porn fantasies. They are porn archetypes. One of the things that we have had with technology is the proliferation of porn, the availability of porn. It has become ubiquitous, to the point where the typical college party themes — you can go to a college and ask, "So what theme parties were this weekend?" and just have students rattling off these. This is what students do on the weekends or what is available, often, at college. Students have no idea, necessarily, unless we open this up for them, that they are essentially playing out and living out porn archetypes. Porn used to be very, very closeted, in many ways, and now it's just kind of everywhere, to the point where it's so everywhere that students don't even notice when they're playing around with it when they go out.

PETER STEINFELS: I think that's a very interesting example of the lines crossing in these discussions. There was a time when I think most people of a kind of liberal point of view would flinch at hearing someone bring into the discussion the influence of porn. That was a specialty of more conservative and traditionalist types. But I have indeed recently heard that same report from a number of people, from anywhere on the religious spectrum.

Donna, thank you for also addressing a number of other questions here which were raised — you may want to expand on this at some point — about whether your book emphasized the situation of women too much and did not speak to the dissatisfactions or the stresses or the plight of male students within that. I would like to go back to Barbara's point about the prolonged gap. Is there anything to be done about that?

BARBARA WHITEHEAD: It's a question. I think that's a question. Could the college years be years that we understand that these are sexually interested, active, engaged young people who will be spending a long period of time before they settle down with a life partner? Is there a formation process involved in that? Is there a way to give them some guidance along this?

I interviewed, for a book that I did, women who were well beyond college and looking back on their college years. Inevitably, they said, "I just thought I was having fun. This was my fun time of life. I thought when I got to be about 27 or 28, my soul mate would appear." And he or she did not. They are just shocked.

It's a very basic thing. So should the college years be devoted to giving students a sense of the timeline? Do you fill those empty years with just sex of a casual kind? Is this a period of life where you try out several different kinds of relationships? One of the other misconceptions, I think, that many students have is that a number of bad relationships will teach you how to have a really good relationship. So heartbreak is woven into this whole period of time. You could call it the hook-up culture. You could also call it the breakup culture. Much of the angst, even well beyond college, has to do with longer-term relationships that are semi-serious and intimate, and not just hook-ups that then end. It's a big question. I don't have the answer, but I think it's a good question to ask ourselves.

PETER STEINFELS: I'll be even more radical and say, is it possible that religious communities and traditions should challenge the culture about its economic arrangements and its life patterns? Mormons do it. They have different expectations in terms of

family.

I actually brought this up in a small group of us talking about Donna's books, and it was immediately suggested, and I think with justification, that early marriage is to the disadvantage of women. But what was interesting was that two of us there had been married, respectively, at the ages of 21 and 22. The aforementioned Christian Smith has had the nerve to suggest this in print, that maybe Christian communities should think about this the way that Mormons or Orthodox Jews — at least more Orthodox Jews — do.

CHRISTINE HINZE: Maybe this is even more radical, but I think that the Catholic and Christian tradition has a whole other mine of resources. One does not have to have a life partner or have found a life partner to have a warm, vibrant, loving, friendship-filled, tenderness-filled, communally rich life. As matter of fact, it seems to me that's one of the things that Jesus challenges in the Jesus movement, the notion that marriage and family is actually what everybody is supposed to be doing, and until you are, you're sort of hanging around uselessly. It's Christian community, in different, creative forms of that, a community in which people can talk about their intimate concerns and their struggles with relationships or where they are sexually and so forth, but also supporting one another.

Some of the best things that happened in college are the friendships, I think. I would be interested to hear from you all if that's still true. How do you create context where young people can have those kinds of friendships that may actually open the door to the possibility that I don't have to be in a sexual relationship, necessarily, right now to be whole, to be a successful human being? That, I think, is really countercultural.

KATE DIGERONIMO: I think that it's definitely true today that the friends that you form in college are some of the best friends of your life. I have friends that I still talk to. Actually, it's funny. You were talking about discernment. Last night I was talking with a friend about whether or not I should text-message this guy. We tried all sorts of different things. I wish I had asked, what would God have said to me? This is so true. My roommate can vouch for this. What my friend told me to do was to ask iTunes. I'm not kidding you. Press "Random" and see what the song says.

CHRISTINE HINZE: Like opening Scripture.

KATE DIGERONIMO: Exactly. So I don't think that what you suggest is so far off at all. It's just changing the sources and

making people realize that the sources to which they have access and the sources that might have meaning for their lives are not what popular culture is telling you they are. *Friends, Sex and the City* — all those shows could easily represent just the closeness of people here. But it's not that the conversations aren't happening. It's what the content of them is.

PETER STEINFELS: I have two related questions from the audience. I'll just try to combine them. One is asking whether the emergence of hook-up culture reflects something about the extent of divorce in the society. The other question is forward-looking: Is this going to contribute to divorce in the society or to the general pattern of single-parent families? Barbara, you're probably the one to start off on that.

BARBARA WHITEHEAD: As I said, for young people, the one social science factoid they have in their minds is that 50 percent of all marriages end in divorce. We in the 1960s said, "Make love, not war." Fifty percent of all marriages end in divorce. This is an *idée fixe* that sort of affects their behavior to a large degree. There is both a fear of making a mistake in a relationship that is permanent — therefore, avoid commitment, try out a number of different relationships in the hope that you'll learn by doing, lest you have a bitter, horrible divorce. I think, in a way, that's an opportunity. Students today, young people today, desperately want to avoid divorce. My generation was somewhat more casual about it because we hadn't experienced it in our own family's life to the degree that young people do today. Here's another way to just have the discussion.

Then on the question about whether this actually sets people up for more divorce, I don't know the answer to that, but I do think the idea of serial relationships — nothing lasts, it's impossible to be in love for thirty or forty years — it doesn't exactly set one up for a successful long-term relationship or partnership. We should be helping young people think about their relationships in a way that they don't fear breakups and divorce to the degree that they do now.

DONNA FREITAS: A couple things. You mentioned before early marriage. Whenever we get into legislating about what people should or should not do, when we sort of take away their agency — so if we decide, as a culture, we're going to push people in this direction or that direction — I get kind of nervous. One of the things I found in the study was that whether you're living in hook-up culture or you're living in campus culture that promotes early marriage. "The senior scramble" and "A ring by spring or your money back" were really the taglines that I saw on evangelical

campuses all over the place; including the ones I have been to since I did the study. That works for some people, but it's an incredible pressure on students. I had women talking about how, "If I don't have a ring on my finger, people will think I failed college."

The pressures to get married or to hook up are incredibly oppressive. So the question we need to really ask is, how can we encourage students to have healthy relationships, whether they are going to get married, if they're legally allowed to, when they are 21 or 22, or they're going to wait or whatever? Then there's a whole conversation about marriage as an exclusive term, which I'm going to just mention.

But the other thing that you mentioned, Barbara, about magically meeting your soul mate at 28 was something that came up a lot, especially in the informal conversations I have had with students. I had undergraduate research assistants for this project. Every week I met with them. It was wonderful and hilarious and interesting. They were involved in the whole evolution of the study. But they used to get into these conversations: "I have no idea how to get into a relationship if I'm not drunk. How do people do that?" "What happens when we graduate? Do people get drunk in the workplace? What do they do?"

So there was this sense of, "How did this happen?" and also this hope that maybe this person will just show up and it will be magic.

The last thing I just wanted to mention — I love, Christine, that you brought up the single life. Anita Houck — I don't know if you're familiar with her work — talks a lot about singlehood and that particular aspect of Catholic spirituality, actually, and how to cultivate a really wonderful single life, with friendships, et cetera. One of the things, I think, that brings us back to hook-up culture if we're thinking about singleness as a kind of vocation for many years or for your entire lifetime — hook-up culture is drunken and it's frenzied. Pretty much you're in this cycle where every Thursday and Friday and Saturday, and maybe Sunday, too, or whenever there's a sporting event, like now, where you get ready, you get drunk while you're getting ready, you go out, you get drunker, you come home with someone, et cetera, and then you gossip about it the next day, and then you do it over again. So there's no real period for reflection or space to cultivate these kinds of things.

I think one of the things that we just keep talking about is, how can we give students some space to contemplate these different possibilities? When they get caught up in this whirlwind, it takes them a long time, often, to find a space where they can come out of it and say, "Wait a minute. What am I doing?" Often that doesn't

happen until they're juniors or seniors, and by then, they have that moment of, "I'm empty. I'm exhausted. I'm tired. What have I done?"

CHRISTINE HINZE: I do think there's a big difference — at least the students are telling me — between junior and senior years versus freshman and sophomore years. That gets to the point that there's wisdom that could be passed on, shared between students.

PETER STEINFELS: I want to pick up another question that came from the audience, though, that has to do with that wisdom to be passed on and start it out by reference to where we began, the spiritual practices and so on. It says that it certainly has potential to help, but who within a campus community is going to encourage such spiritual reflections in students? Chaplains, professors, health workers? How can we convince faculty and staff both of the problem and of the potential answers? We'll have a few quick answers from those who want to. Who do you see as the vehicles for any kind of change?

KATE DIGERONIMO: I think it really has to come from the student body. By that I mean the student leaders, residential staff members, like myself, and our programming. It should come from maybe even student groups.

I think that there is a tremendous fear to talk about these things, and especially at, maybe, Catholic schools, about what they are allowed to talk about in events that are being funded by the school, precisely because of the confusion about what Catholic tradition says about these issues. In my experience here, it has been getting much better. I think we have a lot of great administrators in charge who are open to hearing the needs of the students and the voices of the students that want these types of things. But I think it should be governed by administrators. They should encourage these things to be brought to the front by student leaders, because the students will listen to each other.

PETER STEINFELS: Donna, Christine?

DONNA FREITAS: I would echo what Kate said, especially as a former residential life person. But — there's a "but" here — one of the things that I can do in the classroom as faculty that you can't quite do in student affairs is that I can give my students assignments. One of the things that was so evident when I did the study was, with regard to spirituality and with regard to not hooking up, students feel like they don't have permission, so it's not okay for them to do the sort of spiritual exploration on their own and let their friends know about it. Even if the entire campus

is interested in it, talking about it is really scary.

With regard to dissenting from hook-up culture or deciding not to hook up or deciding not to affirm it passively, or however students are doing this, that's also something that they don't feel free to do, because they feel everybody loves hook-up culture. But one of the things that I have the freedom to do, and other faculty members on campus — in general, administration as well — I can come in and I can say, "You know what? We're going to try something out, and, in fact, you're going to get a grade for it." It opens the door to students. They have to then do it. It becomes this fun sort of assignment, but also a very rigorous one. We are doing so in the context of reading, for example, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Who knew that the *Nicomachean Ethics* was relevant to dating and hook-up culture?

Students want rigorous materials to reflect on these issues. One of the places you can really give those to students and show them how rigorous thinking about relationship, spirituality, et cetera, is, is in the classroom. It's designed for it. It's what universities are built around. I don't think we take enough advantage of that space for this kind of reflection.

The last thing I'll mention about this particular topic in the classroom — it's not for everybody. I'm very aware of that. In general, it's not for all students-affairs people. But I think we need to become aware on campuses about who good resources are — faculty staff, administration, and student leaders — to talk about these issues. Who's comfortable? Who's going to give these assignments? Who's willing to teach these classes? Who's willing to do the programs? If it's not me, then at least I could know who to refer my student to whom I see struggling.

I feel like that's what we need to begin to unpack. What's tricky about that is that people on campus — the student leaders, faculty staff, et cetera — we have our own anxieties about these issues. Part of what we need to do is to try to open up ourselves to figure out who can do this and who is maybe going to refer people, who is uncomfortable. That's really what I'm wondering: Where can we go with that kind of conversation?

PETER STEINFELS: I think I'm going to let that be the last word for right now. I have a number of questions up here, and I have a whole list of questions of my own that I hope to get to at some point in private conversation or in reading and continue this discussion with others.

I'd like to suggest that everybody interested in our programs sign

up and be aware of our Web site, www.fordham.edu/religculture. Get on our email list so we can keep you informed, especially of our next public forum, which will be held on December 9. It will be called "Becoming Latino: The Transformation of U.S. Catholicism." Much discussion of Latino Catholics has been understandably concerned with making sure they have a voice and a place at the table. But in twenty years, Latino Catholics will constitute a plurality, if not a majority, of American Catholics. An outstanding panel here will be discussing questions of pastoral practices, spirituality, church leadership, politics, what have you, when Latino Catholics are not just at the table, but the hosts at the table.

Donna Freitas agreed to sign copies of *Sex & the Soul*, which will be on sale in the lobby.

Now I'm sure that you will again join me in thanking her and the entire panel.

(Applause)