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Trauma, Oppression, and Identity: A Philosophical Approach to Justice in Catholic Communities

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Honors Thesis

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Department: Philosophy

Advisor: V. Denise James, Ph.D.

April 2016

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Abstract

Many disciplines have contributed to the evolving understanding of trauma and oppression. The discipline of philosophy offers us the opportunity to ask the question: what should we be doing to create conditions of justice in communities where people have experienced trauma or oppression in relation to their identity? In this thesis, I will use philosophy to propose ways that we can ameliorate injustice in social and religious settings, particularly Catholicism. By examining historical and contemporary questions around identity and the self, I hope to begin to articulate both a specific problem in the Church and identify possible paths toward creating more just communities for people who identify as LGBTQ Catholics.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

Thanks very much to my advisor Dr. V. Denise James, who stuck with me and helped open my eyes to the life of the mind; the University Honors Program; my many professors and mentors who challenge me to seek out a lifelong education; my family, and my friends.

This thesis is dedicated to the courageous individuals around the world who search for love, community, and an encounter with God amidst structures and societies that challenge their humanity.

