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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Challenge of Adaptation: Jesuit Schools in the United States in the Wake of Vatican II

Casey C. Beaumier, S.J.

Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA, USA

ABSTRACT

This article explores the historical development of Jesuit education in the United States, examining how Jesuit institutions balanced Catholic identity with American values from the 19th century through the 1960s in the wake of Vatican II. Highlighting Jesuit contributions to the parochial school system amid anti-Catholic sentiment, the study reveals the schools' role in fostering a socially responsible Catholic-American elite. By adapting to American democratic ideals while preserving religious principles, Jesuit schools exemplify the complex relationship between Catholicism and American identity. This analysis of Jesuit education sheds light on its enduring impact in promoting civic engagement alongside faith formation.

Keywords:
Catholic identity, cultural adaptation, American Catholicism, parochial schools, Vatican II

Correspondence:
Casey C. Beaumier, S.J., Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA, USA; email: beaumier@bc.edu

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Introduction

American Catholic historical roots stem from a large immigrant population, one that struggled not only with the issue of old-world nationalism and new American acclimation but also with hovering suspicions around their Catholicity and the question of their capacity for American loyalty. Catholics in the United States were suspect because of "popery," their allegiance to a religious authority across the ocean, and their anti-intellectual reliance upon revelation. "To be sure," preached Nicholas Murray, the moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly of America, Irish Catholics "are the adherents of popery; and that the pope and his priests should permit these masses . . . to remain in 'bestial' ignorance, the victims of the most gross deceptions, forms an argument against the system which all can see and feel."[1]

Along with other religious orders and dioceses, the Society of Jesus was instrumental in helping this Catholic population adapt to America. Its major contribution was in providing education for massive numbers of first- and second-generation immigrant Catholics as they adjusted to life in America in the first half of the twentieth century. James Hennessey notes that Catholic schools in America expanded quickly as a response to anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant nativism and that soon, "the parochial school became a fixture in parishes throughout the nation."[2] With a large number of newly arrived immigrants crowding cities and the negative reaction to their settlement, many immigrant families decided to keep their Catholic children away from what they perceived to be hostile, anti-Catholic public school classrooms. Nativism manifested itself in a variety of ways during this time. For these newcomers, as John Higham observes, "Americans have expected immigrants to move toward cultural homogeneity but not to crowd the social ladder in doing so. When a new group, relatively depressed at the outset, pushes upward rapidly in the status system, conflict almost surely ensues."[3]

Catholic bishops meeting at the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884 responded to this hostility by mandating the creation of a separate Catholic school system, built upon their vision for every Catholic child in America to attend a Catholic school.

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1 Nicholas Murray, *The Decline of Popery and Its Causes: An Address Delivered in the Broadway Tabernacle on Wednesday Evening, January 15, 1851* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1851), 17.

2 James Hennessey, S.J., *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 109.

3 John Higham, "Another Look at Nativism," *Catholic Historical Review*, 44, no. 2 (July 1958): 147–58, here 156.

Although the bishops' decree was not implemented everywhere or uniformly, what did emerge eventually was a massive private school system based entirely upon religious separation. Jay Dolan describes this situation of Catholic schools as "unique not only in the world of Roman Catholicism, but also in the United States."[4] Sociologists Christopher Jencks and David Riesman interpret this Catholic life as not merely an American subculture; "it can also be viewed as a self-contained world, within which almost every other sort of American subculture finds embodiment and expression."[5]

The creation of separate Catholic schools was an apparent success. When the bishop of Manchester, New Hampshire, spoke at Marquette University at a 1956 conference on education, Matthew Brady, known in that diocese as "Brady the Builder" for his massive expansion of Catholic schools and parishes in New Hampshire, offered a reminder of the purpose of Catholic schooling:

> To educate solely for "success" in life when we mean by success, comfort, ease, luxury, esteem, power, is laudable to a degree . . . material consideration alone cannot fulfill the longings, the ideals of man's soul, for his spiritual nature cries out for fulfillment in a realm that is above and beyond the omnipresent and encroaching world about him.[6]

For several generations, Catholics flourished in this distinct schooling system, which was designed to encourage religious formation, cultural assimilation, and the creation of an emerging influential elite that was both American and Catholic—a growing body of American-born Catholic doctors, lawyers, businessmen, and politicians. With regard to religious identity, this Catholic elite "tended to take a narrow view of their membership in the Church. Not only were they Americans first and Catholics second, but they were often lawyers or businessmen first and Catholics second."[7]

By the end of the 1950s, Dolan argues, the process of adaptation was relatively complete: "Catholicism in the United States had clearly come of age . . . Being Catholic was indeed compatible with being American." As these institutions developed in the United States, at their foundation they both promoted and experienced themselves as first Roman Catholic and second,

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4 Jay Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 242.

5 Christopher Jencks and David Riesman, *The Academic Revolution* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002), 339.

6 Matthew F. Brady, "Why American Catholics Conduct Schools," in *The Role of the Independent School in American Democracy: Papers Delivered at a Conference on Education, the Fifth in a Series of Anniversary Celebrations, May 8, 9, and 10, 1956* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1956), unpaginated.

7 Jencks and Riesman, *Academic Revolution*, 339.

American. This institutional religious identity helped foster the unique aspect of what it meant to be Catholic and American, and in that order, so that Catholicity was both safeguarded and elevated in the cultural context. As adaption continued in the 1960s, Dolan describes the presence within American Catholicism of "strong undercurrents of reform" that pointed out "what most Catholics did not want to hear: the church of the immigrants, with its own unique style of devotional Catholicism, was no longer making it in the twentieth century. A new age and a new people demanded a new Catholicism."[8]

The separate educational system that the immigrant church created needed ongoing adaptation too. Up until the 1960s, much of Catholic schooling retained its distinctively separate identity within American culture. For example, John McGreevy described the scene in the late 1930s, how "pervasive Catholic separatism—on philosophical matters and in schools, hospitals, and social organizations—posed an 'integration' problem. How would Catholics become democrats? . . . Democracy was a culture, not a set of propositions. Catholics obviously lived *among* Americans, but were they *of* them?"[9] While the greater cultural tension created by Catholic separation was a reality Catholics had to contend with, a benefit to this prolonged experience of separation afforded them, particularly through their schools, the opportunity to develop influential institutions, some of which would eventually become quite selective in their student body.

What divided the Catholic schools from the greater American system of education was not merely that they were religiously sponsored and focused. Non-Catholics found it odd that Catholic elementary school graduates went on to attend institutions that combined high school and college study. In other words, the Catholic system resisted the development of separate high schools. Catholic schools, including Jesuit schools, were modeled on the European Jesuit system, meaning that students would matriculate within them over a seven-year period, combining what is known today as both secondary and higher education. As Dolan states: "This meant that the two major Catholic schools in the early twentieth century were the elementary school and the college."[10]

Missing from the system, and, therefore, at odds within the American context was the newly emerged and distinctive high school. While American Catholics acclimated to life in the United States, their school structure did not. It was not until the first decades of the twentieth century that the

8 Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 417.

9 John McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 169.

10 Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 293.

separated Catholic high schools began to thrive. Catholic educators knew that high schools needed to be established "if they [Catholics] were going to compete with what the public school educators were offering."[11] The Jesuit system was criticized in particular for its nonadaptive position, most famously by Harvard's president Charles Eliot, who served from 1869 until 1909. Kathleen Mahoney describes the crisis involving Harvard's law school and its refusal to admit applicants whose degrees were granted by Jesuit colleges in the early 1900s. Eliot and the law school dean developed a policy in which law school applicants from Jesuit schools like Boston College would be admitted only to the sophomore year of Harvard College, suggesting that years of higher education at the Jesuit college were the equivalent of only one undergraduate year of study at Harvard.

The accusation of inflexibility by Jesuits within the American educational context was unique, for, historically, adaptation to changing conditions had been a hallmark of Jesuit education. Unlike this particular moment of tension with Harvard, Mahoney argues that past experience of the Society revealed "a willingness to adapt their educational practices to the circumstances they [Jesuits] encountered."[12] In its early years, efforts like Jesuit Matteo Ricci's work in China, Francis Xavier's mission to India, and Isaac Jogues's labors in North America demonstrate the idealism of the early Society and its desire to enculturate global Jesuit apostolic works in order to achieve a more universal good through their efforts. It was a strategic intention on the early Jesuits' part, for it enabled them, as their adage reveals, *to go in their door, and then come out ours.*

From their European beginnings, according to John O'Malley, "some evidence suggests that the Jesuits had their eyes primarily on persons in high places." Ignatius of Loyola, the Basque who founded the Society of Jesus in 1540, was a nobleman. The social class of some of the first Jesuits, along with the fact that they studied at the prestigious University of Paris, "were among the factors that first elicited the curiosity, the forbearance, and then often the support of the powerful. The first Jesuits sought that elite support, for they saw in it the indispensable means of accomplishing their goals."[13] In the text of principles for governing the Society of Jesus, the *Constitutions*, Ignatius proposed that

11 Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 292.

12 Kathleen A. Mahoney, *Catholic Higher Education in Protestant America: The Jesuits and Harvard in the Age of the University* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 241.

13 John O'Malley, S.J., *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 71–72.

> the more universal the good is, the more it is divine. Therefore, preference ought to be given to those persons and places which, through their own improvement, become a cause which can spread the good accomplished to many others who are under their influence or take guidance from them. . . . For that reason, the spiritual aid which is given to important and public persons ought to be regarded as more important, since it is a more universal good. This is true whether these persons are laymen such as princes, lords, magistrates, or ministers of justice, or whether they are clerics such as prelates. The same also holds true of the spiritual aid which is given to persons distinguished for learning and authority, because of that same reason of its being the more universal good.[14]

This vision contained within it the risk of a worldly temptation that inevitably Jesuits would sometimes entertain. O'Malley believes that "more lowly motivations were also at work. Some documents almost purr with satisfaction at favors received from those in high places."[15]

Critical perceptions of some American educators like Eliot toward the Jesuit system saw within it a rigidity that yielded a failure to adapt. That Jesuits did not run separate high schools confused the overall landscape of American education and made their colleges seem like extended high schools. Additionally, the curriculum their system promoted was dismissed as archaic. A growing perception was that "students felt the classical curriculum irrelevant to their future occupation goals or that college delayed their entrance into the race for wealth."[16]

Elite universities like Harvard had earlier abandoned the classical model in favor of the elective system. It was in 1883 that Charles Francis Adams Jr., the great-grandson of John Adams, addressed the Phi Beta Kappa chapter of Harvard, his alma mater. He presented a scathing critique of what he deemed to be the sickening worship of the supposed powers obtained from the study of the classics. He blasted Harvard for still requiring the study of "dead languages" when he matriculated there nearly thirty years earlier, and stated that he had been "incapacitated from properly developing my specialty … The mischief is done."[17] Adams likened the idea of gain-

14 Ignatius of Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms*, trans. George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970) (hereafter cited as Constitutions), part 7, no. 622d–e, 275.

15 O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 72.

16 Peter Dobkin Hall, *The Organization of American Culture, 1700–1900: Private Institutions, Elites, and the Origins of American Nationality* (New York: New York University Press, 1982), 254.

17 Charles Francis Adams Jr., *A College Fetich: An Address Delivered before the Harvard Chapter of the Fraternity of the Phi Beta Kappa, in Sanders Theatre, Cam-*

ing the imperceptible benefits of classical study to the spreading of manure, with manure being more successful; he observed that to actually produce a result, "manure must be laboriously worked into the soil, and made a part of it." One would not, Adams argued, haul manure across a field for the soil to smell it and then expect to get results, "yet even that is more than we did, and are doing with Greek." Adams's intention was to place responsibility for the study of stinking classics "where I think it belongs—at the door of my preparatory and college education."[18]

Such a scathing critique from a distinguished alumnus likely contributed to the university's eventual abandonment of the classical curriculum in favor of an elective-based curriculum and the subsequent animosity toward the Jesuit plan. Eliot believed that the elective system was "key to training individuals to face specialized tasks responsibly, to develop character while, at the same time, confronting a specialized world . . . By presenting students with a vast range of possibilities, they [Eliot and other educational leaders] were transforming the university into a model of the world."[19] Unlike the Jesuit system of a prescribed curriculum, it was through the exercise of choice, which was fast becoming an American educational ideal, that "President Eliot and the university reformers allowed their charges to discover the real consequences of their curricular choices, and through the possibilities offered by such freedom of choice, further to develop their capacities for responsibility."[20]

However, Jesuit educators saw within the elective structure a potential threat to the structured classical curriculum and impressive school network they had worked so hard to create. They were concerned that the allure of the elective system might encroach upon their distinctive Catholic clientele. This possible meddling hazard harkened back to the earlier anti-Catholic reception that immigrants experienced in the common school classroom, which had been the motivator for the creation of separate Catholic schooling. Here, it seemed to suggest the dismantling of the very structure that had been created for protection. As Catholics advanced successfully in intellectual life, their presence in non-Catholic schools became more attractive:

> Eliot knew that the untapped reserves of talent and intelligence in the United States were as extensive as the nation's material resources, and that the future of Harvard . . . and the nation itself depended on the ability of Harvard

bridge, June 28, 1883 (Boston: Lee and Shepherd, 1884), 13.

18 Adams, *College Fetich*, 20.

19 Hall, *Organization of American Culture*, 255.

20 Hall, *Organization of American Culture*, 256.

> and other private institutions to recruit promising youth, regardless of social background.[21]

Reeling from the law school debacle, Boston College president Read Mullan, S.J. (1860–1910) wrote to Eliot:

> We wish only to have evidence that Harvard understands our worth, and that in all honesty it judges us according to our worth. The tenor of recent utterances at Harvard, official and professional, in public and in private, indicates a strong anti-Catholic spirit at Harvard, and justifies the suspicion that Harvard is making a determined effort to discredit all Catholic education in order to fill its halls more surely with Catholic students.[22]

In a later letter, the final piece of correspondence between the two administrators, Mullan concluded "that you [Eliot] have determined to crush out Catholic education."[23] The result was an unwillingness of Jesuit high schools to recommend its graduates for schools like Harvard, a retrenchment back into distinctive separation. That only one Jesuit school graduate enrolled at Harvard in 1940 seems consistent with the response. The lack of Jesuit graduates was not limited to Harvard. Jerome Karabel notes that such exclusion of not only Catholics but also Jews was a commonplace among the Big Three—Harvard, Yale, and Princeton—and for quite some time:

> At Princeton, whose country club reputation was not without justification, Catholics and Jews together made up only five percent of the freshmen in 1900; at Yale, which was in a city with a large immigrant population, the combined Catholic–Jewish population was just 15 percent in 1908. Even Harvard, which was in a dense urban area with large numbers of immigrants from Ireland and southern and eastern Europe, the Catholic proportion of the freshmen was nine percent in 1908.[24]

Raymond Schroth argues that this conflict between Eliot and the Jesuits was actually beneficial to the Society's schools. Prior to the critique, the Jesuit course of studies "developed a man's ability to criticize the work of others but not the desire or ability to create something new and personal of his own."[25] Given the historical alienation and suspicion of Catholics

21 Hall, *Organization of American Culture*, 257.

22 Read Mullan, S.J., to Charles Eliot, January 11, 1900, Harvard University Archives, UAI 5.150, Box 55.

23 Mullan to Eliot, May 25, 1900, Harvard University Archives, UAI 5.150, Box 55.

24 Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 23.

25 Raymond Schroth, S.J., *The American Jesuits: A History* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 111.

in America, there was already a foundation of skepticism and sensitivity from Catholic leaders to non-Catholic authority, a tension that led to the creation of this distinctive Catholic education network. That such an extensive network of schools merely existed independent of public support was demonstrative of the Jesuits' creative force. That this system continued to grow was further evidence of the depth of this creativity.

Yet, the exchange with Eliot seemed inconsistent with the Society's historical way of proceeding. In an earlier context, the desire would have been to gain the confidence of someone powerful like Eliot so that his growing admiration for the Society would enable it to use his influence in the greater culture for the benefit of the Jesuits' own mission. In the context of the law school tension, the opportunity to influence an important and public person like Eliot at an important school like Harvard was missed. In Peter Dobkin Hall's view of New England institutional influence, this was most unfortunate:

> One should not restrict one's attention to elites. The most compelling powerful dimension of the New England influence lay in its ability to penetrate all levels of society. Not only were New England-educated men conspicuous occupants of high judicial, legislative, and business positions—and hence, objects of emulation . . . more importantly . . . they were able to expand the loci of character education beyond New England to the common schools and churches and to the most humble settlements and their lowliest inhabitants.[26]

Ultimately, Eliot's critique did penetrate even the Jesuits' level of American society, as it forced an initial series of reforms within the Jesuit system. In order to combat the negative publicity around its classical curriculum, and to improve public perception of Boston College, Father Mullan announced more rigorous standards for entrance into the college and a preparatory program that would last for four full years, just like a typical American high school. The local Catholic newspaper, *The Pilot*, reported that the preparatory school, "which from its inception has enjoyed an unrestrained commingling with the collegiate department, is now confined exclusively to the southern wing of the college."[27] The college division filled the northern wing and had been entirely remodeled in order to appear more attractive to potential students. The student newspaper, *The Stylus*, described how the high school and college students had separate entrances, "so that the collegian may now walk forth in the calm of manhood without fear of be-

26 Hall, *Organization of American Culture*, 93.
27 *Boston Pilot* 61 (September 10, 1898): 8.

ing hustled about by our small boys."[28] It was a taste of adaptation, more of which was to come.

Jesuit Education: For Whom?

Historically, the target population for Jesuit schools centered upon those on whom the Society hoped to have the most influence, a pursuit of great intelligence and compassion meant to transcend distinctions between richer or poorer students. Not only did the Jesuits strive to influence others through their schools but the students formed by the Society of Jesus also exerted an influence upon the Jesuits, perhaps foremost in that the Jesuits' future work was particularly dependent upon vocations from among their students. O'Malley believes that the most important impact the schools had upon the Society was cultural and sociological, for the schools inserted Jesuits "into secular culture and civic responsibility to a degree unknown to earlier orders." This encounter yielded a transformation "on the size of communities, on the practical demotion suffered by professed houses, on the implicit redefinition of aspects of Jesuit poverty when the vast majority of Jesuits began to live in endowed institutions, on a closer bonding with the socioeconomic elite."[29] This growing relationship with powerful citizenry revealed a tension that required the Society's sensitivity from its very foundation.

O'Malley describes how for the early members of the Society, "the ruling elite stood for order and stability, and the Jesuits came from social backgrounds that made it easy for them to identify with such values."[30] Special relationships with elites were fostered early in the order's existence, with popes, kings, dukes, and emperors. However, their presence in Jesuit circles would be "grossly misleading if they are interpreted to mean that the Jesuits directed their ministries primarily to the social and cultural elite. Almost the opposite is true, most certainly until the schools were founded in some number."[31] Yet O'Malley admits that "although not social revolutionaries, the Jesuits in theory and practice supported improvement of status through education."[32] The curriculum of an early Jesuit school reflected this, for Ignatius adopted a humanistic course of study for the Jesuit schools, requiring that boys attain basic skills prior to their being admitted to the Jesuit school. Jesuit humanism formed upright character and contributed to the formation of behavior and future vision, rooted in a system

28 *Boston College Stylus* 12, no. 7 (October 1898): 441.
29 O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 374–75.
30 O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 372.
31 O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 71.
32 O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 211.

of discipline that kept the channels of learning open. Though this provision had some exceptions, "it tended to exclude from Jesuit schools boys from the lower social classes, who had little opportunity otherwise to learn the skills prerequisite to admission."[33]

Nonetheless, as O'Malley observes, "one of the most striking features of the early Jesuits is the wide variety of people to whom they ministered, including many of the poor and outcast."[34] Yet as their European schools developed,

> it never occurred to them that they should make concerted efforts to break down traditional roles and class structures. . . . They depended for the endowment of their schools on the wealthy and powerful. They opened their schools, however, to all who were qualified and who would abide by their rules. They were to be "for everybody, poor and rich," Ignatius enjoined upon the Jesuits in Perugia in 1552.[35]

As the Jesuit schools expanded on a large scale, and with significant physical plants to maintain, they required a great deal of energy and talent: "This meant that an increasing amount of Jesuit energy would be spent on adolescent boys. Those boys were often, but by no means exclusively, drawn from the middle and upper classes of society. . . . From these classes of society, moreover, the Jesuits would tend to attract their own new members."[36]

It is from this historical context that the development of elite American Jesuit high schools would evolve. Early generations of American students at Jesuit schools benefited from improved social status through the Jesuit education they received. This momentum of upward mobility increased in later generations, particularly as legacies of families developed. While a Jesuit high school is not on the same level of wealth and social status as a Choate or Groton, prestigious and highly selective American secondary schools, it is distinctive in its shared formational outcomes for students. As Karabel writes, the Groton ethos was committed to "the nurturance of Christian gentlemen: men whose devotion to such virtues as honesty, integrity, loyalty, modesty, decency, courtesy, and compassion would constitute a living embodiment of Protestant ideals."[37]

This Christian gentleman of Groton seems very much like the gentleman of Campion, the Jesuit's boarding school in rural Wisconsin. Promo-

33 O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 211–12.
34 O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 72.
35 O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 211.
36 O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 240–41.
37 Karabel, *Chosen*, 32.

tional literature from 1941 described the ideal graduate of the Jesuit high school as being

> as thoughtful of others as he is forgetful of himself. His every thought is to make others happier and better for having dined with him, played with him, worked with him, lived with him. Such was Christ—the perfect gentleman. Such was blessed Edmund Campion, that gallant gentleman, saintly scholar, and fearless hero of Christ; and such may you always be—Knight of Campion and Knight of Christ.[38]

The formation goal of a gentlemen affirms the identity of an elite, as described by C. Wright Mills: they "may also be defined in terms of psychological and moral criteria, as certain kinds of selected individuals. So defined, the elite, quite simply, are people of superior character and energy."[39]

What is meant by this notion of emerging elitism at the American Jesuit school? It is slightly different from the political science understanding of the term. In his consideration of the theory of democratic elitism, Peter Bachrach observes that while on the surface seemingly contradictory, democracy and elitism coexist. The elite protect the social system against the masses. In a democracy, elites do not gain their position from heredity or privilege but from education and are regarded "not only as the energetic and creative forces of society, but, above all, as the source which sustains the system."[40] Therefore, schools naturally exist as the building blocks for the continued development of the elite in society. Though Catholic education grew out of exclusion in the United States, its system, and in particular the Jesuit schools within it, soon came to contribute to the elite structure of American culture. A 1993 study that considered Catholic schooling and public funding affirms this understanding. Anthony Bryk, Valerie Lee, and Peter Holland addressed two nonreligious arguments that have been used against public support of Catholic schools, "first that such schools are socially divisive and, second, that they are elitist."[41] Here exists a negative charge of Catholic elitism: that such separatist schools are "seeking out students who are easier to educate and leaving the remainder to the public sector."[42] While their research finds such an accusation ungrounded, they acknowledge that Catholic schools promote emerging elitism among stu-

38 *Good Manners* [brochure] (Prairie du Chien, WI: Campion Jesuit High School, 1941).

39 C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 14.

40 Peter Bachrach, *The Theory of Democratic Elitism: A Critique* (New York: University Press of America, 1980), 8.

41 Anthony Bryk, Valerie Lee, and Peter Holland, *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 339.

42 Bryk, Lee, and Holland, *Catholic Schools*, 340.

dents. "Many of these students are likely to move into powerful positions in society as adults and, as a result, will have disproportionate influence in the shaping of American culture."[43]

Jesuit Neil McCluskey observed these arguments against Catholic separatism at work decades earlier than the 1993 study:

> The charge of divisiveness laid at the doors of the parochial schools is a serious one and must be fairly faced by proponents of a separate system of schools for Catholic children. Catholics, for the most part, find it impossible to conceive of themselves as a threat. They are generally unconscious of the anxiety which at times they occasion in their Protestant and non-Christian neighbors by the display of their organized strength. Many outsiders, looking at the Catholic Church, see nothing but the closed ranks of a great power structure. And when in the social order they brush against the strong cohesiveness of the Church's selective conscience, they recoil at what seems to them a threat to their civic and religious rights. Since they rightly see in the schools the source of this strength, they raise the issue of parochial school education.[44]

The transformation that led to the emerging elite Jesuit high school was gradual. In its early inception, in American Catholic separatism, the formation of a boy at a Jesuit high school was designed to create the Catholic gentleman, considered earlier in the Campion example: rooted in the classics, eloquent, and devoted to the church. In an editorial, students at Boston College in 1899 described how as gentlemen they were "essentially placed in a religious atmosphere; but this does not mean that we are made pious idiots. It simply means that the student can hardly become dulled, where every day he individually consults men whose lives are examples of self-sacrifice, of noble Christian manhood."[45] Later external factors, like the GI Bill and accompanying postwar mobility, certainly contributed to this emerging elite, too.

The Campion and Boston College examples contrast significantly with the formation affirmed by the later vision established by the Jesuit Secondary Education Association, which recognized that Jesuit high schools had changed. Now their aim was the production of the socially concerned Christian, socially sophisticated, and, perhaps unintentionally, socially elite. The movements that fostered this transformation initially were unstable. James DiGiacomo, a Jesuit who has taught at both Regis High School and Fordham University in New York City, wrote extensively on the religious life of 1960s teenagers. In his 1972 work, *We Were Never Their Age*, he

43 Bryk, Lee, and Holland, *Catholic Schools*, 341.

44 Neil G. McCluskey, S.J., *Catholic Viewpoint on Education* (Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1959), 36–37.

45 *Boston College Stylus* 13, no. 8 (January 1899): 47.

sat with a Jesuit high school graduate who reflected upon his recently completed high school experience:

> Few come to Prep because it is a Catholic school. Most come because it has prestige and a name. They feel that a Prep diploma gets them into college, and that a good college diploma will get them a good job and a whole lot of money. These values don't relate to religion. Everyone is trying to get ahead by going to a "name" school, and the Catholic Church really has little to do with it.[46]

Emerging elitism brought with it cultural and religious changes that forced American Catholics to reexamine the relationship between their American and Catholic identities through institutions like Catholic schools. *Time Magazine* cultural critic William Henry explores the social tension in the United States since World War II and notes that "nearly every great domestic policy has revolved around the poles of elitism and egalitarianism."[47] He holds that there were underlying motives for sixties' radicalism, and that "many of its most aggressive proponents were those who felt the deepest elitist yearnings."[48] In his argument, Henry acknowledges that elitism contradicts the most nearly universal American ideal, the belief in upward mobility.[49] Yet it seems that in the American Jesuit high school context, upward mobility was motivated by a desire to become socially elite.

This assessment is suggestive of the transformation facilitated by elitism, and the complications that Jesuit schools encountered as they shepherded their schools through the tumultuous 1960s and early 1970s. Acknowledging the greater social context and the many historical factors at work within this period is crucial in understanding how the schools transformed.

The Problems of Periodization: Cultural, Political, and Religious Dimensions

The 1960s represent a major turning point for Catholic schooling because of the American cultural and religious crises that challenged all traditional institutions. The upheaval of the civil rights movement, the sexual revolution, the freedom to question authority, and the challenge of poverty and urban decline are all significant components of the cultural 1960s. Simultaneously, the religious updating called for by the Second Vatican Council intended to assist Catholics in their ability to function successfully and

46 James DiGiacomo, *We Were Never Their Age* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972), 156.

47 William Henry, *In Defense of Elitism* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995), 12.

48 Henry, *In Defense of Elitism*, 25.

49 Henry, *In Defense of Elitism*, 23.

effectively in this new world that was suddenly more liberal and radically active. As James O'Toole relates, it was "a distinct new age. Many lay people came to describe themselves as 'Vatican II Catholics,' a designation that marked their movement beyond the religious world of their parents and grandparents."[50]

As witnesses of these movements within faith and society, American Catholics began to explore more freely the relationship between their American and Catholic identities. The possibilities of liberalism, stemming from President John F. Kennedy's New Frontier to Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society, with the potential of *aggiornamento* (updating) in the church, produced great enthusiasm and expectation among American Catholics.

These potentials were also the source of tremendous anxiety and disillusionment, a religious echo of what James T. Patterson observes within greater American society, noting that President Johnson's vision suffered from "oversell," and that "hyperbole about the Great Society aroused unrealistic popular expectations" that would come to haunt American liberalism.[51] Likewise for Catholics, religious renewal and Pedro Arrupe's idealized preferential option for the poor promised sweeping changes blending together the social and religious fabric, which ultimately proved difficult to achieve in practice.

Public and Catholic schools were often the venues where such new ideas were tested. Unfortunately, historians of Catholicism have paid relatively little attention to how the upheavals of the 1960s played out in Catholic schools. Increasingly elite American Catholics began to question the value of religious separation in the schools and concluded that strict separation no longer benefited the Catholic community. The internal religious world that Catholic authorities established generations earlier was now facing a crisis of disillusionment. The result was confusion about what constituted a Catholic institution within an American context. As Robert Orsi describes it, the crisis

> provoked resistance and confusion, and in turn this resistance in the parishes to the new agenda heightened the resolve of its advocates. The result was a season of iconoclasm in the American church, more or less severe and traumatic

50 James O'Toole, *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 201.

51 James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945–1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 590. Additionally, J. Anthony Lukas offers a sobering view of what the desire for common ground in the new society came to look like through the integration process in the Boston public schools. See *Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986).

> depending on local circumstances. Old devotions were derided as infantile, childish, or as exotic imports from Catholic Europe, alien and inappropriate in the American context. . . . Sacrilege suddenly emerged as a popular genre of Catholic expression in the United States.[52]

In 1971, James Hitchcock criticized what he saw as the progressive Catholic population's rejection of Catholic institutions, a movement he feared was severely compromising American Catholic identity. "Without institutionalization—of belief, of piety, of organization, of love—the Church can never be more than an ineffective, ephemeral reality."[53] Schools in particular began to experiment with their identities, curricula, and leadership, struggling to remain relevant to a changing student body.

The historical context in which all of this occurred is complicated. Scholars have offered significantly different interpretations of this time in history—a frequent debate being the value of considering the decades themselves as useful frameworks of periodization for study. What popular culture names separately as "the sixties" and "the seventies" seems an attempt to simplify a rather unruly historical period in past America. Hugh McLeod recommends the concept of a "long 1960s, lasting from about 1958 to 1974. In the religious history of the West these years may come to be seen as marking a rupture as profound as that brought about by the Reformation."[54]

Some scholars hold that "the sixties" began with the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963 and concluded with the resignation of Richard Nixon in 1974.[55] Others grapple with the period as predominantly a "seventies" phenomenon, framing that particular decade as the key interpretive lens for understanding what was happening in American culture. This school of thought considers the 1970s as nurturing a narcissistic and apathetic citizenry, while another perspective finds the decade as preparation for what some scholars perceive as the great American revival of the 1980s with the emergence of the global economy.

Other scholars call attention to the end of the sixties as the end of the prosperous post-World War II era and, therefore, the logical focus for historical attention. The postwar baby and financial booms had their origins in a liberalism that positively valued the presence of big government in a

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52 Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 57.

53 James Hitchcock, *The Decline and Fall of Radical Catholicism* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1971), 131–32.

54 Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1.

55 Philip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 4.

variety of facets of American life: "The federal government permeated nearly every aspect of American life in the 1950s and 1960s—guaranteeing civil rights and voting rights for African Americans, sending astronauts to the moon, subsidizing farmers, regulating air travel, and uncovering the dangers of smoking."[56]

In his schema, Bruce Schulman sees the year 1968 as the break between the sixties and the seventies. In that decisive year, Schulman sees two major events as being the key to understanding the major cultural shift that yielded a growing disfavor among Americans toward their government. The first was the January 30, 1968 Tet Offensive in the Vietnam War and the resulting failure in American military strategy. Just prior to the offensive, only 28 percent of Americans opposed the war in Vietnam, while twice as many supported it.

One month later, the movements both for and against the war saw an even split at 40 percent. The Johnson administration was losing credibility in the eyes of many Americans.[57] The second event was the response of Chicago mayor Richard Daley to the preparations for the city's hosting of the 1968 Democratic National Convention. Daley promised organizers that there would be law and order during the event, and he assembled twelve thousand city police, six thousand National Guardsmen, six thousand army troops, and one thousand undercover intelligence agents from the FBI and CIA.[58]

Schulman sees these two moments as transformative especially among the nation's youth, particularly with regard to their perception of the greater culture. These events of 1968 produced frustration and alienation among the young and a desire to abandon

> the polluted, corrupt mainstream and live according to one's values. Young Americans believed they could do it right, without the phoniness and hierarchy, the profit and power, the processed food and three-piece suits, the evening news and suburban ranch house. They could build alternative institutions and create alternative families—a separate, authentic, parallel universe.[59]

Andreas Killen describes 1973 as that decade's pivotal year, a time in American life of "shattering political crisis and of remarkable cultural ferment."[60]

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56 Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 5.

57 Schulman, *Seventies*, 7.

58 Schulman, *Seventies*, 12.

59 Schulman, *Seventies*, 16–17.

60 Andreas Killen, *1973 Nervous Breakdown: Watergate, Warhol, and the Birth of Post-Sixties America* (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2006), 2.

He cites the end of the war in Vietnam and the significance of the first military defeat for the United States, the Watergate scandal and subsequent resignation of Richard Nixon from the presidency, and the economic complications stemming from the Arab oil embargo and growing stagflation as the circumstances highlighting the significance of 1973.

Alternatively, Killen names the Watergate scandal as the source for "the breakdown of traditional patriarchal authority" in American culture in general. The revelation of dishonesty produced an overwhelming sense of suspicion, which, according to Killen, trickled down through the structures of society. The result was the destabilization of the whole system of relationships between government and citizens, men and women, parents and children.[61] For Philip Jenkins, this breakdown was slow and gradual:

> Despite all the changes under way by the mid-1960s, most Americans carried on with their familiar lives, going to the same jobs and schools as they might have done in any other era. By the end of the decade, though, political conflicts and social changes were having a direct impact beyond the political elites and the major cities. At the height of the turmoil, between 1967 and 1971, there were real fears of mass social conflict and even a collapse of the social order. Following the urban race riots of mid-decade, talk of open race war did not seem fanciful.[62]

Edward Berkowitz sees general disillusionment among 1970s Americans and a lack of consensus among historians as to how to interpret the decade. Despite key legislation in education, health insurance, and civil rights, most Americans "believed that the laws had made things worse rather than better and that policy-makers needed to come up with new approaches in all of these areas. If the sixties were the age of 'great dreams,' the seventies were a time of rude awakenings" and diminishing expectations.[63] John A. Andrew III, a scholar of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, observes that the problem of the era was disenchantment: "Perhaps Americans always wanted a quick fix; perhaps the president [Johnson] had oversold the antipoverty program; perhaps the appearance of a more strident militancy among civil rights groups, youthful activists, and antiwar protestors led middle-class voters to value social peace over social change."[64]

Culturally, television was gaining significant influence as a pastime for entertainment. In 1973, the first reality television show emerged, *An Amer-*

61 Killen, *1973 Nervous Breakdown*, 55.

62 Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares*, 24.

63 Edward D. Berkowitz, *Something Happened: A Political and Cultural Overview of the Seventies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 4, 162.

64 John A. Andrew III, *Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1998), 76.

ican Family, "documenting both the sense of crisis within familiar order and the larger crisis of authenticity."[65] This twelve-part series followed the Louds, a family of seven who agreed to have video cameras placed within their homes to document their daily life. The family represented what Nixon named the "silent majority," the growing and increasingly affluent white middle class. The series quickly became a sensation with eleven million viewers following the drama, "crystallizing anxieties about divorce, women's lib, new sexual mores, and the generation gap."[66] It was a time of tremendous upheaval for a whole range of institutions.

Social commentator and journalist Tom Wolfe, who observed the seventies as they were happening, contrasts the movement from the sixties to the seventies. From his perspective, American concern moved from political transformation to personal makeover, centered upon personal rights. He is credited with naming this period as the "Me Decade," concluding, as described by Berkowitz, that "the rights revolution demonstrated what was wrong with the era. People clamoring for their rights were acting in a self-absorbed, hedonistic, narcissistic, selfish, and uncompromising manner. The rights revolution represented a retreat away from the social purpose that marked the liberal postwar era."[67] Wolfe believes that the affluence of the postwar years was producing an unprecedented yet unsustainable level of prosperity. The outcome of that untenable growth led people to self-preoccupation. "The crash-landing of the seventies," writes Killen, left Americans "turning inward, in search of the purely personal 'alchemical dream' of changing one's personality."[68]

Schulman described how this introspection affected gender roles. In the face of feminism, a shifting masculinity produced instability because of the uncertainty surrounding what American society thought of being a man. This created what the magazine *Esquire* named as the "Postponing Generation," young men who insisted on freedom and independence. "They feared responsibility and worried about stress. They did not want the heart attacks, the ulcers, the nervous breakdowns of their own Organization Man fathers."[69]

David Burner describes the status of 1960s liberalism as ironic:[70] "The momentum in civil rights, the extensions of the welfare state, the trans-

65 Killen, *Nervous Breakdown*, 55.
66 Killen, *Nervous Breakdown*, 60.
67 Berkowitz, *Something Happened*, 158.
68 Killen, *Nervous Breakdown*, 113.
69 Schulman, *Seventies*, 182.
70 David Burner, *Making Peace with the 60s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 4. For him, 1960s liberalism is "a persuasion founded in the New Deal,

formations that the Second Vatican Council was making in Roman Catholicism, an apparent brightening and sophistication in popular culture all promised a large future for liberalism. Yet liberalism only survived the era divided, confused, and devastated."[71]

In the world of education, the model for schooling in the United States was under pressure for dramatic transformation. Burner described what some experienced as

> an aloof academic style that appeared to deny the connection between discussion of a moral issue and acting on it . . . The situation that arose in the sixties, then, [Vietnam, civil rights] could not help but foster mutual misunderstanding and rage among politically active students, genteel professors, and bewildered administrators.[72]

A significant catalyst for the changes that occurred during this historical period was Johnson's visionary Great Society, with its legislative components that Johnson believed would strengthen the United States by reforming the very building blocks that structured society: education, housing, healthcare, and communication. There was much within Johnson's Great Society programming that emphasized the advancement of schooling in America, for he perceived education to be the great equalizer for and gateway to social advancement and opportunity. As a former teacher in poverty-stricken southern Texas, he had firsthand experience of the problems in education, and a desire to help remedy them. Earlier, Kennedy had wanted to legislate more in education, building upon the earlier National Defense Education Act of 1958, but his Catholicism was seen as a hindrance to such development. Andrew notes that Kennedy was sensitive to the issue of aid to parochial schools: "With anti-Catholic rumors circulating that the Statue of Liberty was about to be renamed Our Lady of the Harbor, John Kennedy wished to avoid any hint that administration policies would privilege Catholics."[73]

Johnson's administration side-stepped the potential tension of the church–state issue by tying federal aid to students rather than to specific schools through what became known as the child-benefit theory. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 provided federal aid for education, with much emphasis upon financially poor children, and in that year alone federal funds to support elementary and secondary education

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leavened by a concern for civil liberties and at least a mild concern for civil rights."

71 Burner, *Making Peace*, 10.

72 Burner, *Making Peace*, 135.

73 Andrew, *Great Society*, 116.

nearly tripled.[74] Higher education legislation provided loans and scholarships for college students.

A common perception is that Great Society programming centered exclusively upon its "War on Poverty." Yet there was much legislation that benefited the middle class. Burner highlights Medicare, higher education loans and scholarships, the establishment of the Kennedy Center in Washington and the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities as well as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting as Great Society works that contributed to the greater American culture.[75]

Still, the lasting interpretation was that Johnson's visionary program was a behemoth, a mismanaged political failure. Andrew holds that the major problem for Johnson's dream for society was that it was arrogant, too simplistic, and that ultimately, Americans became disenchanted with such idealism in the face of such a complicated reality.

Perhaps what was most controversial and complicated within the visionary restructuring of American society was the desire for integrated housing. The urban crisis was fast becoming the central social issue. Burner cites one example in Chicago, where the Gage Park–Chicago Lawn area had a population that was 90 percent Roman Catholic.

Within the neighborhood of 28,244 residents, there were two African Americans.[76] When the Kerner Commission, an advisory group established by Johnson to investigate the causes of the 1960s race riots in American cities, issued its report on February 29, 1968, "white racism" was singled out as the chief cause of the crisis. The racism inherent within the segregation of neighborhoods was one factor that contributed to the emerging system of segregated neighborhood schools. The process of desegregation of schools became federally legalized in 1971 with the Supreme Court case *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg*. It was this court decision that legally justified busing students from one neighborhood to another as a remedy for the racial imbalance in public schools, the intention being to transform the experience of the next generation through exposure to greater diversity in the classroom.[77] Reaction to government-supported busing produced another crisis in American culture. For example, in Boston the white population in the city's public schools dropped as white parents transferred nearly half of the city's white students to private, parochial, or suburban schools.[78]

74 Andrew, *Great Society*, 120.
75 Burner, *Making Peace*, 178–79.
76 Burner, *Making Peace*, 181.
77 Berkowitz, *Something Happened*, 175.
78 Berkowitz, *Something Happened*, 176.

Wolfe observed that Americans in the seventies were experiencing religious transformation in what he coined a "third great awakening," following a pattern of religious renewal similar to earlier religious revivals in the United States.[79] Religion became increasingly important during the decade, according to Leo Ribuffo, with the number of Americans reporting this as true for themselves rising from 14 percent in 1970 to 44 percent in 1978.[80] Berkowitz noted that

> religious conviction, in America's politely tolerant postwar society, was something always present but seldom mentioned except in the ritual endings to political speeches and in the invocations of religious leaders for religious tolerance. . . . In the seventies, those sorts of inhibitions ended, and all sorts of famous people in the mainstream rather than religious careers announced for Christ, including politicians like Jimmy Carter.[81]

Mark Massa considers the particular Catholic movement within the cultural framework of the American sixties and seventies. He sees clearly that the religious understanding within American social history is a significant dimension of American social life and takes issue with the "denominational" label that seems to dismiss or at least ostracize American cultural history as a whole. According to Massa, "such a dismissal in fact impoverishes our understanding of the larger cultural event of 'the sixties' precisely because for many Americans, and not just American Catholics, that era was refracted through religious no less than political, social, and cultural issues."[82]

In fact, one can see how the Great Society, coupled with Roman Catholicism's Second Vatican Council, produced an overwhelming dose of idealism for American Catholics. It was simply too much, in terms of the realm of possibility. In hindsight, perhaps one might say the same for Catholics as for Americans in general, when Andrew concludes that the Great Society struggled because of

> its lack of understanding and appreciation for the challenges it confronted. Once Americans saw the scope of the task, its complexity and costs overwhelmed them. The problems remained, the debates continued; but with the consensus frayed, the economy in decline, and the social fabric apparently unraveling, the national will atrophied.[83]

79 Berkowitz, *Something Happened*, 160.
80 Berkowitz, *Something Happened*, 161.
81 Berkowitz, *Something Happened*, 160.
82 Mark Massa, S.J., *The American Catholic Revolution: How the Sixties Changed the Church Forever* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), xii.
83 Andrew, *Great Society*, 199.

For Orsi, any significant study of this historical period must acknowledge this apparent unraveling in order to detect the different components that blend between religion and society:

> It is better . . . to think of the historical period at issue . . . as a braided one: many Catholics moved to the suburbs, many others moved into city neighborhoods or held fast there, some members of a family entered the white-collar workforce while others continued in industry and manual labor . . . Braiding means that the linear narratives so beloved of modernity—from immigration to assimilation, from premodern to modern, from a simple faith to a more sophisticated faith and so on—are not simply wrong but that they mask the sources of history's dynamics, culture's pain, and the possibilities of innovation and change. Braiding alerts us to look for improbable intersections, incommensurable ways of living, discrepant imaginings, unexpected movements of influence, and inspiration existing side by side—within families and neighborhoods, as well as psychological, spiritual, and intellectual knots within the same minds and hearts.[84]

What Massa names as the Catholic Sixties he sees as beginning in 1964, "when the first (and arguably most dramatic) implementation of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council (the reform of the celebration of the Mass) reached American shores."[85] Like Schulman, Massa considers 1968 as a critical year for study of the sixties but with different focus for the year's significance. While Schulman draws attention to the Tet Offensive and the Democrats' Chicago Convention as key events, Massa focuses upon an event within American history as crucial for what he names as the American Catholic Revolution. What is now known in history as "the Catonsville Nine" began in the afternoon of May 17, 1968, with a group of seven men and two women who gathered in Catonsville, a suburb of Baltimore, Maryland. Their intention was to enter the office of the Selective Service Board 33, housed on the second floor of the K. of C. Hall, in order to destroy draft cards.[86]

Massa holds that this event, with its mix of laity, religious, and priests, "represented the moment when the American Catholic engagement with history, and particularly the Catholic place in American history, entered into an identity crisis from which it has yet to fully emerge."[87]

"After the Catonsville Nine the American Catholic past wasn't what it used to be."[88] What took place in Maryland was revolutionary in that it rep-

84 Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 9.
85 Massa, *Catholic Revolution*, xiii.
86 Massa, *Catholic Revolution*, 103.
87 Massa, *Catholic Revolution*, 124.
88 Massa, *Catholic Revolution*, 128.

resented a profound change for American Catholic identity. Before Catonsville, Massa notes,

> Catholics in the United States had always been taught, or at least been taught since the massive waves of Catholic immigration began in the mid-nineteenth century, that being American and Catholic were balanced and complementary value systems: to be a good (practicing) Catholic was also to be a faithful (law-abiding) citizen.[89]

This emerging Catholic self-understanding

> announced the severing of that century-old and carefully woven cord that tied being a "good" Catholic to respect for law and order and an unhesitating support of U.S. foreign and military policy. A new cultural identity was born in Catonsville, and the fact that so many of the Catonsville protesters were priests or religious played an important part in legitimating that new identity. Priests and nuns were by definition good Catholics; indeed they were super Catholics because of their lives of heroic celibacy.[90]

This new cultural identity was the incarnation of what Jesuit scholar Walter Ong had described a decade earlier in *American Catholic Crossroads*. Contemporary American Catholics were different from their earlier generations. Their vocation was "not to be exclusive, not to be provincial, parochial, but to be open, conciliatory, unifying, via-à-vis the entirety of the human race. . . . The Catholic vision is a vision which opens lines of communication . . . the desire to close them, to keep to ourselves" would be to revert to isolationism.[91] As O'Toole writes in his study of Boston cardinal William O'Connell, the new American Catholic identity was one where "the church would abandon its self-description [as] a 'mystical body,' directed always by its head, and define itself instead as 'the people of God' . . . a more democratic image in which the lines of power were blurred."[92]

Trends in Education

In the transformation of Jesuit high schools, Jesuit administrators were very much interested in greater American educational movements, looking for external insights that might benefit their own work in schools. As described earlier, the 1960s brought sweeping changes to American society, and the

89 Massa, *Catholic Revolution*, 112.

90 Massa, *Catholic Revolution*, 113–14.

91 Walter J. Ong, S.J., *American Catholic Crossroads: Religious–Secular Encounters in the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 58.

92 James O'Toole, *Militant and Triumphant: William Henry O'Connell and the Catholic Church in Boston, 1859–1944* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 257.

classroom became an important battleground for these transformations. This was true both for the public and private school. Many different schools of thought were in vogue for classroom management, but the common current running through all of them was an underlying criticism of top-down management of the classroom and a need for shared governance without any central authority. The educational world was filled with grassroots experimentation. Paulo Freire, a Brazilian Catholic educator and theorist, developed a radical pedagogy focusing on the injustices of the oppressed. It was based upon what he named as the "teacher–student contradiction" and suggested a resolution for what he saw as an oppressive, unequal relationship within the classroom. Freire quickly became a global authority on contemporary educational theory. When his work was translated into English in 1970, it soon began its quick ascent among English-speaking educators. He advocated "revolutionary leadership" that would practice "co-intentional education."[93] He envisioned classrooms where both students and teachers are "co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality."[94] This new pedagogy revealed an egalitarian vision for learning, proposing that "through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers."[95]

Ivan Illich, a former Catholic priest from Austria who once served poor Puerto Rican immigrants in New York City, was a prolific writer and social critic of institutions and schooling. A graduate of the Jesuit Gregorian University in Rome and a joint professor at the University of Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania State University, Illich declared religious schools as socially divisive and advocated for their abolition in their current form. "The mood among some educators is much like the mood among Catholic bishops after the Vatican Council. The curricula of so-called 'free schools' resembles the liturgies of folk and rock masses."[96] Illich paralleled the authority of the church with the authority of schooling. He lamented that "children are protected by neither the First nor the Fifth Amendment when they stand before the secular priest, the teacher. . . For the child, the teacher pontificates as pastor, prophet, and priest."[97]

McGreevy describes how some within Catholic circles viewed Catholic schools in the mid-1960s as "embarrassing anachronisms."[98] Critics point-

93 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 79–80.
94 Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 69.
95 Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 80.
96 Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (London: Marion Boyars, 1996), 49.
97 Illich, *Deschooling Society*, 31.
98 John T. McGreevy, *The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century*

ed to concerns "that Catholic schools prevented public school integration, served a middle-class constituency, kept nuns trapped in educational servitude, promoted religious separatism, and doomed parishes to a perpetual sea of red ink."[99] Tensions ran high among Catholic religious who sensed that the student body was becoming more and more elite. McGreevy described one "outspoken nun who refused to become a 'money-saving device for middle-class society with middle class values,' while a colleague rejected work with 'comfortable Catholics.'"[100]

Specifically, at the secondary level educators were discouraged by the lack of development for American high schools. Edgar Friedenberg, a professor at Brooklyn College with a doctorate in education from the University of Chicago, perceived that the high school "has been getting worse for years."[101] He declared it "an ungracious institution . . . It cannot be counted on for generosity, for imagination, or for style. Its staff has on the whole too little confidence in its own dignity or judgment, and too little respect for that of others."[102]

Given this dour view of secondary education in America, it is no wonder that some administrators found themselves searching for new ideas in the quest for renewal. Some even looked overseas and were intrigued by the boarding school vision of the Summerhill School in England. They valued the unorthodox insights of Summerhill's founder, A. S. Neill, who believed that "the discipline of an army is aimed at making for efficiency in fighting. All such discipline subordinates the individual to the cause. . . . in a happy family, discipline usually looks after itself. Life is pleasant give and take. Parents and children are chums, co-workers."[103] Neill advocated a hands-off approach to discipline in schooling, declaring that "there may be a case for the moral instruction of adults, although I doubt it. There is no case whatever for the moral instruction of children. It is psychologically wrong."[104]

Given these contexts for the Jesuit high school in the United States, the pressure to adapt during this time was great. In 1965, the Jesuits' international governing body, the general congregation, instructed the order to investigate changes. DiGiacomo assessed the climate of Catholic schools within the greater cultural transformations: "It is no longer possible to re-

Urban North (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 236.

99 McGreevy, *Catholic Encounter*, 240.

100 McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*, 236.

101 Edgar Z. Friedenberg, *The Vanishing Adolescent* (New York: Dell, 1959), 79.

102 Friedenberg, *Vanishing Adolescent*, 125.

103 A. S. Neill, *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing* (New York: Hart, 1960), 156–57.

104 Neill, *Summerhill*, 250.

produce the kind of school conditions and classroom atmosphere which parents of teenagers would find familiar. Gusty winds of cultural change and religious freedom have blown into the buildings dedicated to Catholic education."[105] DiGiacomo described the pressure of adaptation as rapid and disorienting: "As the Catholic Church moves to adapt to the modern world and the changing situation of modern man, the experimenters and speculators are moving at a faster pace than the average Catholic parent."[106] He also noted the upward mobility of the Jesuit student and family when he lamented how "many so-called Christians have made a too-facile identification on Christianity with middle-class striving and respectability."[107]

Jesuit education developed as a network of colleges for the education of Catholic immigrants and faced some challenges that required adapting to the American higher educational system. They did so in a relatively consistent way, which enabled them to spread and flourish. With the Sixties, though, another historical wave of challenges was about to draw them into a new turbulent push toward adaptation, marked by rapid and disorienting tensions. Critiques of secondary education, like Friedenberg's indictment of high schools, and the appeal of contemporary, alternative models, such as Neill's Summerhill, signaled a broader cultural shift that Jesuit schools could not ignore. The 1965 directives from the Thirty-First Jesuit General Congregation reflected a growing awareness of the need to respond to these changes while maintaining the Jesuits' educational mission. As DiGiacomo observed, Jesuit institutions were increasingly challenged to reconcile the evolving expectations of families with their spiritual and pedagogical ideals. This moment of transition, though unsettling, opened a path toward renewal—but whether these efforts ultimately succeeded in transforming Jesuit education or merely reflected the pressures of the times remains an open question.

105 DiGiacomo, *We Were Never*, 148.
106 DiGiacomo, *We Were Never*, 150.
107 DiGiacomo, *We Were Never*, 179.