

AMERICAN CATHOLIC: ANALYZING THE ROLE OF A RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION IN A SECULAR WORLD
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF *AMERICA*, *THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY*, 1945 – 2009.

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Abstract of Thesis

American Catholic: Analyzing the Role of a Religious Institution in a Secular World
A Content Analysis of *America, The National Catholic Weekly*, 1945 – 2009.

The Catholic Church has always had a unique presence within the American environment. The United States is a country historically based on Protestant values, so Catholics in America have consistently worked at establishing their own identity and have created something of a religious sub-culture. However, as society in general secularizes, the continuing existence of religious sub-cultures is uncertain and many religious groups have adapted to mainstream society. Through a content analysis of editorials written from 1945 to 2009 in *America, The National Catholic Weekly*, this study analyzes how the Catholic Church negotiates its relationship with American society. By examining the issues deemed important to prominent Catholic editors, this study argues that the Catholic Church maintains a complicated relationship with mainstream society. Some secular issues are ignored or neglected within Catholic circles while other issues have been reframed in order to resonate with Catholic values. Only the test of time can determine whether or not these adaptations will be successful in preserving the Catholic Church in its distinctiveness as a functional contributor to American society.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The main purpose of this study is to examine the issues deemed important to the American Catholic Church in the latter half the 20th century. Given the secular and diverse nature of United States society, my key question is, how does the Catholic Church relate to its surrounding American environment? Catholics have been historically viewed as a marginalized and somewhat exclusive group, and what comprises general Catholic opinion is hardly common knowledge. It is, however, important to understand Catholic opinion due to the increasing Catholic presence within America. People depend on their system of meanings to make sense of social experiences; so one's religion helps shape how one interprets everyday events, social issues and political changes (Burns 1990). Since Catholics comprise approximately one quarter of the overall U.S. population, it is important to explore the extent to which they view the world through a Catholic lens. This is particularly significant because average Catholics are firmly placed within the middle class and are overrepresented in political leadership roles relative to the general population. For example six out of the nine current Supreme Court Justices are Catholic, highlighting again the significant presence and strength Catholics have within mainstream society (Froehle and Gautier 2000, Davidson 2005, Desjardins 2009).

However, within sociological literature, only limited attention has been given to how Catholicism shapes identity and in turn, opinion towards social issues. There is plenty of attention paid to how ethnicity, class and gender shape individual identity, but

one's religious and belief systems are seldom accounted for on their own. In order to gain some insight into this issue, this study has developed a content analysis of editorials in a weekly national Catholic newsletter, *America, The National Catholic Weekly*, continuously published since 1909.

There are currently no sociological studies of Catholic newsletters and periodicals. JT McGreevy (1996) has however investigated the broad issue I have raised by tracing the development of the Catholic Church in 20th century urban America. He analyzed how Catholic theological traditions help believers shape their surroundings and in turn attitudes towards the secular world around them. McGreevy (1996: 24) argues that Catholics frequently defined their surroundings in religious terms and were excellent in creating a system where a Catholic neighborhood in the beginning of the 20th century could be a "small planet whirling through its orbit, oblivious to the rest of the solar system." Catholic parishes were set up in a way that a church would be the center of a Catholic neighborhood and Catholics could generally have all of their needs met within those neighborhood boundaries. Catholics set up a religious organization for every secular counterpart: Catholic schools, colleges, hospitals, media outlets and professional organizations worked to socialize every adult and child in the faith. This practice actually depended on the Catholic belief that God is everywhere therefore faith is not to be focused on only during church, but also when going to school, engaging in political discussion or campaigning on behalf of social issues.

A media outlet that aids Catholics in viewing current events through a Catholic lens is *America, The National Catholic Weekly*. Established in 1909, *America* was organized by the Jesuits, a Catholic religious order, and is one of only a few national

Catholic magazines. *America* is published weekly and is a “journal of Catholic opinion” and unlike other Catholic publications, its founders tout its material as more wide-ranging so their readers might “find God in all things” (www.americamagazine.org 2009). As the Catholic Church makes its way more and more into mainstream, secular society, whether it be through the national debate on abortion and health care, the scandal of sexual abuse perpetrated by Catholic clergy members or the way the parochial school system and Catholic Charities affect the inner city, it is important to analyze how the editors of *America* explain the Catholic role within these *public* matters. Using Weber’s theory of elective affinities as framework, this study analyzes the Church’s role and teachings in a changing modern society. Weber argued that the role of a religious institution and its values can only be significant if it meshes with a wider social, economic or political force. Through the use of a content analysis of *America* editorials written from 1945 until the present, this paper argues that the role of the Catholic Church has been and will remain significant in society if the Church continues to bring its beliefs to bear on matters of a secular nature. These matters, which can be significant not only to Catholics, but also to the non-religious, include responding to the rising Hispanic population, securing the role of the Catholic school system in urban America and increasing the significance of Catholic Charities.

The thesis is presented as follows: Chapter Two briefly outlines the history and organization of Catholics in America; Chapter Three reviews the sociological literature on the role of religion and church structure on shaping identity and forming communities; Chapter Four describes the methodology of this study, a content analysis of randomly sampled editorials written from 1945 until 2009; Chapter Five presents the findings of

this content analysis; Chapter 6 discusses these findings and offers some conclusions suggested by this study.

Chapter 2: Research Context

With twenty-seven percent of the American population reporting itself as Catholic, Catholicism “is the most common religious identity in the United States” (Froehle and Gautier 2000: 3). Over the course of the 20th century, the Catholic population grew from 14 percent to 22 percent of the overall American population (approximately 80 million) due to immigration and the growth of the Baby Boomer generation, even though the United States continued to self define as a Protestant nation. The Catholic population growth rate in the United States is fourth highest globally and exceeds all growth rates in Europe. Within the United States, Catholics are less regionally concentrated than other religious groups, dispersed essentially in a pattern shaped by a history of immigrants who first settled in Northeast and Midwest cities and then migrated elsewhere due to changes in industry.

While the U.S. power elite is still equated with white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant backgrounds, Catholics are slowly beginning to hold their own within the marketplace. Approximately 32% of Catholics have graduated from college and nearly 40% of Catholics have family incomes of \$50,000 or more (Davidson 2005, Froehle and Gautier 2000). Approximately 78% of Catholics nationwide are white, 16% Hispanic, 3% Black, 2% Asian and 1% Native American. Obviously diversity among Catholics varies

regionally. For example, within the Louisiana Catholic population, African Americans comprise about 15%; in California, Asian Americans make up 7% of the Catholic population and finally in New Mexico, Native Americans make up about half of the state Catholic population (Froehle and Gautier 2000: 16).

In terms of political involvement, Catholics are somewhat unpredictable. In his analysis of Catholic voters in the twelve presidential elections from 1952 until 1996, political scientist Mark Brewer found that half or more of Catholic voters voted Democratic in eight of the past twelve elections, the most recent being in 1992 and 1996, while half or more voted for the Republican candidate in four of the last twelve elections, most recently in 1984. Some researchers argue that Catholics are slowly leaving the Democratic Party for the Republican Party primarily due to their support for more conservative, pro-life candidates and their rise in the economic ranks. However the vote is still fairly evenly split; Catholics in 2000 favored Gore over George W. Bush 50% to 47%, in 2004, they favored Bush to Kerry 52 to 47%; in 2008, they gave Obama 53% of their vote. (Davidson 2004, Sullivan 2008). These swings can be explained by the overall liberal Catholic stance on social issues, except for gay rights, school prayer and abortion. Sociologists Andrew Greeley and John Tropicman theorize that Catholics may think this way due to the unique “Catholic imagination” or as Tropicman describes it, the “Catholic ethic” - the idea that Catholics tend to view the world in a more positive and “graceful” way than other Christians and are oriented towards sharing and helping others more than towards wealth and achievement (Greeley 1981, Tropicman 1985).

Since the content analysis covers editorials written by Catholics from 1945 until 2009, it is useful to establish the historical context within which the editors were writing.

In the United States in particular, Catholics historically were not engaged with the wider social world, consistently defining themselves as “the other” in a society founded on primarily Protestant values. Catholics were also treated as “the other” so much so that Harvard historian Arthur Schlesinger defines American anti-Catholicism as the “deepest-held bias in the history of the American people” (Gibson 2003: 10) while sociologist Andrew Greeley (1977) describes discrimination against Catholics as America’s “ugly little secret.” In the beginning of their stay in America, Catholics actually defined themselves by their differences with mainstream society. Today however, most Catholics are fairly assimilated and engaged in American culture, yet they still locate religious authority in the Pope in Rome. The Pope and the Vatican, the main authority within the Catholic Church, are essentially not bound by any national or political affiliation. The Pope generally takes a stand that is opposed to American positions on human rights, foreign policy and economic issues. Catholics, attempting to remain loyal to the Pope in Rome, can valuationally branch away from the general American cultural consensus. Indeed, today’s challenge for American Catholics is one of “assimilating culturally without disappearing religiously” (Gibson 2003: 11). The Catholic Church in America is large, influential and different; attributes that are sources of pride and yet also embarrassment for American Catholics. These attributes are most distinct when the Church experiences change or is under greater public scrutiny.

Catholicism in America was based on a history of immigration where newly arrived immigrants turned to religion for the foundation of a cohesive identity. In the 20th century, Catholics in America arrived in two waves, the first, European immigrants, particularly from Ireland and Germany. Varacalli (2006: 34) argues that this period from

the late 1800s until the 1960s was one in which an attempt was made to construct a self-contained Catholic universe that “served as a mechanism that successfully socialized Catholics into their faith and also served as a vehicle to represent, protect, and promote Catholic political interests in the midst of a non-Catholic and hostile environment.” American Catholicism at this point was an “immigrant Catholicism removed from the mainstream” (Dolan 1985:241) that considered itself separate from secular institutions. Catholics were encouraged to include only other Catholics within their social circles, and to remain faithful to all Church teachings and to uphold the value of obedience to Church authority.

Catholics used the enclosed parish system to maintain their universe and to physically and culturally map out space in cities. Since the physical structure of a church is immovable, parishioners were encouraged by pastors to purchase homes within parish boundary lines; this would then guarantee the stability of church attendance and church collections. Real estate agents actually welcomed the coming of a Catholic church into a community as a precursor of permanent residents and stable homeowners; variables which tend to increase the value of neighboring property. Catholics are typically “loyal in church attendance; the church itself is as a rule an architectural asset; the coming of the church means the building of a parochial school sooner or later, and the presence of a parochial school is an attraction for other Catholic families” (Silcox and Fisher 1934: 69 as cited in McGreevy 1996: 21). What essentially developed were Catholic ghettos anchored by the church and the school and reproduced generation after generation.

Parochial schools offered stability, socializing children into the parallel-to-mainstream Catholic society. Catholics at the beginning of the 20th century felt that the

American public school system was not religiously neutral but instead a “vehicle of Protestantization” (Varacalli 2006: 162) of children. Catholic education is seen not just as a process where one merely imparts skills and knowledge, but as a means to evangelize to a young Catholic population, teaching them the basics of the faith. By 1890, the Chicago Catholic school system was a quarter of the size of the entire public school system and set the same academic standards as public schools (Skerrett, Kantowicz & Avella 1993). Catholic schools were very successful and were used as a springboard for upward social mobility for the Catholic working class and immigrant population (Miller and Kavanagh 1975).

After World War II, however this system began to deteriorate as Catholic ghettos were broken apart. The 1960s brought a cultural revolution which changed the national landscape and was also the time when the Second Vatican Council revolutionized Church ideas. The combination of these factors caused the Catholic Church to go through a secularization process; others have termed it as a “maturation” where the Church was cleansed of “antiquated ideas and traditions and made a move towards reason, science and individual conscience” (Varacalli 2006: 42). The late 20th century erosion of Catholicism can be seen in several ways. First, some Catholics left the church altogether, converting to other religious or secular alternatives, like Protestantism, Buddhism or even feminism. Second, the Church also went through a process known as *domestication* where it started to accept and mirror the values of its host culture as opposed to challenging mainstream society. Finally, the Church went through an *internal* secularization process where Catholic teaching and wording has been interpreted in a way to conform to secular thought.

The internal secularization process was brought on primarily by the Second Vatican Council, also known as Vatican II. Vatican II was convened in 1962 in Rome to attempt a transformation of the Catholic Church. Pope John XXII invited all the world's bishops to Rome in order to "throw open the windows of the Church so that we can see out and the people can see in" (Gibson 2003: 13). Vatican II was a revolution that altered the basic understanding of the Church and what it means to be Catholic and its council members took on the mission of attempting both to engage the Church with the modern world and to define the Church's role in the modern world (Varacalli 2006). The bishops and other council members worked for three years to reform the church structure and doctrine in order to create an institution that was more democratic, less ritualistic, more charitable, less authoritarian, less exclusive and more *catholic* in its literal definition of 'being open to all.' Although this mission may sound simplistic, it was actually revolutionary for an institution that considered itself "*the perfect society*" since the 16th century and is inherently reluctant to change (Gillis 1999: 88). Catholics leaders at this point recognized that they and their followers had been isolated from other faiths and felt the need to become a greater player within mainstream society instead of subculture on the fringe. Hoge (1986) compared the Catholic congregation before the Second Vatican Council to a river being blocked by a dam. Vatican II was essentially the floodgate that opened the stored-up pressure that had been built after decades of isolating and exclusionary practices. And when floodgates are opened, the water is very difficult to stop.

Many church members became invigorated by the messages of "open-style Catholicism" (Hoge 1986:291) that the Council promoted. The Church was re-described

as “the people of God” who promotes an “intimate union with God and all mankind.” It was re-defined as one which places its concern on “those who are especially lowly, poor and weak... weighed down with hunger, misery, and lack of knowledge.” Further, Catholics were instructed to place as their most important task to “be alert to the signs of the times... as the joys, hopes, griefs, and anxieties...[of the] poor or in any way afflicted are the same of the followers of Christ” (McGreevy 1996: 160). These themes shifted the focus from an authoritarian church to a servant church; one committed to social justice, including the issues of racism, peace and poverty. Other innovations such as allowing vernacular languages to be spoken during Catholic church services which had previously only allowed Latin or decreasing rules about abstaining from food during certain time periods were really radical changes in an institution so firmly rooted in preserving tradition.

Ironically, shortly after the revolutionary Vatican II council, a “conservative Golden Age” was revitalized by the ascendance of Pope John Paul II in 1978. John Paul II served as Pope, the head leader of the Catholic Church, from 1978 until his death in 2005 and while he has been praised for his work on social doctrine, the rights of workers and promotion of peace, some have deemed him to be too inflexible on issues like birth control, homosexuality and abortion. His condemnation of secular society as a “culture of death” made him very unpopular with some (Gillis 1999: 239) yet he has been very influential upon the path the Church is now taking. Today it has been inferred by some scholars that the church as an institution is reverting back to a fundamental and traditional agenda, led by the direction of conservative church leaders such as the late Pope. Plus the Church cannot really turn to young progressive leaders since, according to Schoenherr

and Sorensen (1982), the demographic transition in American dioceses is dramatically reducing the size of the clergy. Younger generations are not filling in positions left vacant as the older generation moves on. Bottomore (1975: 161-162) notes that a push for social change relies on the “continual circulation of the membership; by the elaboration of new ideas and values, younger generations clearly play a part in the de-structuring and restructuring of society; but they may also do so...by interpreting roles differently and by forming new groups which engage in different types of action.” Today however as the age structure and the value structure of the church is moving in the direction of an older, more conservative and more homogeneous institution, one must ask if its current agenda can be as progressive and outreaching as it was in the mid 20th century.

On January 6, 2002, the Catholic Church, an institution that has been a prominent fixture in the American landscape for over 200 years, was essentially brought to its knees by a simple news bulletin, when the *Boston Globe* published its first major story about a priest who had sexually abused at least 130 children while serving as a spiritual mentor for over thirty years in a Boston parish. This story revealed an issue that had been silenced in the Church for decades, if not centuries, and opened a door for victims to be heard. The accusations, church cover-ups and further victim resurfacing sent shockwaves all over the world as more and more cases nationwide were exposed. Tales of children as young as four years old who were drugged, raped and molested all within the confines of church property ran rampant. Over two thousand Catholic clergy members, dead and alive, were eventually implicated in sexual misconduct. Although it may be too early to gauge the full impact, this sexual abuse crisis has changed the image of the Catholic Church in America remarkably. The Catholic Church has faced hatred and contempt for

years for various reasons, however after this particular issue, many have looked upon Catholics and Catholic clergy with disgust and shame (Gibson 2003).

Polls showed that during this period, church attendance dropped and faith among the previously faithful dwindled. The media latched onto this issue and the representation of the Church within news and entertainment was salacious. Comics depicting the scandal ran almost weekly in national newspapers; one such comic presented a group of terrified children running from a church named “St. Paedophilia” followed by a group of priests and bishops (Gibson 2003: 7). The exposé of the scandal began months after 9/11, and news coverage compared the church and its hierarchy to radical Muslims and the Taliban due to their supposed level of corruption (O’Reilly 2002). The grave importance of the matter even infiltrated the judicial system when Michael Rodriguez, a man who had arranged the murder of his wife in Texas, was spared the death penalty partially due to his defense lawyer’s claim that the sexual abuse Rodriguez endured from a priest during childhood led him to commit the heinous murder (Graczyk 2007). Endless coverage and commentary brought the religious institution into a secular analysis.

As the rage and shock of the sexual abuse crisis eventually subsided, the shaken foundation of the Church did not stabilize. The Church in the US, something that was previously considered an authoritative institution suddenly became vulnerable and cracks within its structure became apparent. This vulnerability gave Catholics the feeling that something in the Catholic Church had suddenly changed and that there was a need to re-group and re-center the institution. Catholics in America were essentially forced to confront a Catholic identity crisis as the structure’s flaws were revealed. American Catholics, both church officials and lay members, sought meaning in an institution

experiencing major changes: Who makes up the church? Where does the church reside and what does it encompass? What is the church's mission and purpose? According to religion journalist David Gibson (2003: 10), for Catholics in the United States, all of these questions can be summed up in a single challenge: "How is a believer to be both American and Catholic?" As American society becomes more secular, what role does the Church play for American Catholics?

One Catholic publication which seeks to answer these questions is *America, The National Catholic Weekly*. *America* was first distributed in 1909 with the mission of being a "journal of Catholic opinion...to serve educated Catholics and other readers interested in intelligent examination of church and world affairs, seen through the lens of the Catholic faith and with the eyes of catholic reason" (www.americamagazine.org 2009). *America* was established by the Jesuits, the largest male Catholic religious order of priests and brothers whose mission is primarily focused on missionary work, human rights, social justice and higher education (Pollen 1912). A religious order is a mere segment within the overall Catholic organizational structure and it is formed simply so its members can unite cohesively around their selected Catholic causes. Like all Catholic religious orders, these Jesuit priests and brothers are essentially under the authority of the Pope, who is the worldwide leader of the Catholic. Since the Catholic Church has one main authority figure, it is assumed that there is continuity and consistency among the beliefs of all Catholics worldwide and it is one of the Pope's duties to guide that continuity and unity among his members. The writing in *America* should reflect Jesuit obedience and alliance with overall Catholic Church teaching.

The editorials that are the focus of this study are written by a portion of the 200 American or Canadian Jesuit editors who have been associated with the magazine since 1909. This means that all the articles were written by men in religious life who reportedly strove to “be faithful to authentic Catholic teachings and committed to airing legitimately diverse views” (www.americamagazine.org 2009). In 2007, *America* had over 45,000 subscribers and it offers a significant amount of its publication online for free without any need for registration. Thus *America*’s readership could essentially be much larger. When compared to other national Catholic publications such as *The National Catholic Register* which has a readership of 30,000, *The National Catholic Reporter* with 50,000 readers, *My Daily Visitor* which has 33,000 subscribers, *The Catholic Answer* with 34,000 and *The Catholic Digest* with 287,000 subscribers, *America*’s amount of 45,000 is fairly average (www.echo-media.com 2010). Of those who are *America* subscribers, 53% of the readership is male and over 55% is over the age of 65. Subscribers are overall highly educated as 89% have graduated from college while 62% of subscribers have a doctoral degree. The average income across readership is \$101,273 and over 50% have been subscribing to *America* for at least 5 years. Most of the readers are lay members of the Church (73%), while 27% of the subscribers are clergy members.

One of *America*’s most recent editors, Reverend Thomas J. Reese called the magazine the “Catholic PBS” (Butler 2005) yet unlike the attempted neutrality of the television network, *America* has been repeatedly criticized for being too liberal for the average Catholic. Jesuits as a religious order have been criticized for deviating from the Catholic norm, especially in terms of their stance on issues such as homosexuality, contraception and abortion (Davidson 2005: 6). It should be no surprise that their own

publication has come under attack for its liberal stance. In 2005, the aforementioned Reese resigned as editor of the publication after his dismissal was reportedly ordered by a high-ranking official in the Church. There were reportedly numerous complaints from American priests that the magazine questioned the official Catholic conservative stance on homosexuality, salvation for non-Christians and stem cell research (Newman 2005). Since 2005, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, a Catholic office which works to defend official Catholic teaching has been monitoring the publication and has suggested a committee of censors may be sent to oversee the publication (Goodstein 2005). CatholicCulture.Org, a Catholic watchdog group that evaluates various Catholic websites for their authenticity and their adherence to official Church teaching, rates the *America* website as “Danger,” a level which signifies that the site may tend to air “repeated views which contradict or undermine the teachings of the Church or its disciplinary authority” (www.catholicculture.org 2010). Thus in analyzing *America*’s editorials, the purported liberal bias of this newsletter needs to be taken into account. Yet from a secular viewpoint one may ask how progressive are these editors and how do their opinions fit in with mainstream society.

Chapter 3: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

According to sociologist Andrew Greeley (1967:19), American Catholicism has been “for two centuries caught in an ambivalence about the society of which it had become a part.” Catholics for so long have been steeped in preserving tradition and their own homogeneity, that the Church’s role in mainstream society has been minimal. In his theory of *contested accommodation*, Seidler (1986) notes that the Catholic Church only incorporates new and previously controversial contemporary values due to the introduction of the “scholarly inventions” of religious intellectuals into Catholic mainstream opinion. These “scholarly inventions” combine both progressive and traditional ideas in order to reconstruct a new Catholicism. During the 20th century, the traditional stance focused on maintaining homogeneity and preserving Church tradition while the progressive stance sought social justice in the forms of racial integration, human rights and poverty alleviation. What is currently happening in the Church appears to be a balancing act between maintaining both traditional and progressive stances.

Functionalist theorists have stressed that religion has served to consistently maintain the social order (Durkheim 1965; Parsons 1964), yet according to Solle (1984), “religion and religious institutions must be understood in their *double* function: as legitimation of the status quo in one hand, and as a means of protest, change and liberation on the other hand.” Guest and Lee (1987) build on this idea by noting that organizations such as religious institutions are not isolated islands; they are influenced by

more than their own internal social structure. They also evolve in response to their external environment and can work to change that environment. These theorists argue that organizations react to the demands and constraints placed on them by external forces and other interacting groups. Alternatively, according to Fichter (1988: 71), there exists no other voice in society as capable of “challenging the collective conscience in terms of higher moral values than religious institutions.” Yet another view is that religious institutions actually have the responsibility and should be held accountable to challenge policies and structures that do not serve the common good (Ebaugh 1991).

Douglass (1926) found that churches’ influence is immense due to their actual physical nature. This is particularly significant since for American Catholicism since many Catholic churches were built at the beginning of the 20th century in urban areas. Catholic communities were formed from immigrant groups who settled in urban areas and were anchored by Catholic churches. Their rich architecture makes it difficult to relocate, therefore the church may be the oldest institution in many urban neighborhoods. Douglass argues that long-term residence in an area increases a church’s sense of obligation to its surrounding community in the form of services it provides. Park (1925) echoes this idea as he notes that the stability of location for an institution produces a surrounding population with similar goals and characteristics. A long-term location for a church may lead to an extensive set of obligations and relationships with various individuals and other institutions in the community; this mutual dependence serves as an impetus to react to problems in the environment. However, Aldrich (2008) argues that when there is an observed demographic change in a church community, this may result in “organizational transformation” and the institution is forced to change its goals,

techniques or activity systems. As the demographics changed in urban America, Catholic churches (which are predominantly found in cities as opposed to rural areas) were forced to change their goals and respond to the increasing needs of urban communities who are daily affected by the interworkings of poverty, segregation and de-industrialization.

Hernes (1976) and Giddens (1979) argue that structure is the object and medium of social change. This dialectic nature of how change affects and is affected by structures is intricately defined in Seidler's theory of contested accommodation. Seidler, basing his theory on the premise that all religious groups have to face the challenges presented by the modern world, offers a macro-level explanation of the way in which Roman Catholicism, "as an organization or social system has changed throughout the 20th century to accommodate these challenges" (Seidler 1986: 847). Primary challenges posed by the modern world are the rise in secularization and the changing demographics of urban communities. Seidler (1986: 848) notes that while some religious groups resisted the massive changes that occurred in the "surrounding sociocultural milieu," the Catholic Church accommodated to the changing sentiments and demographics by changing its mission. This change resulted from efforts by the organization to change its role from that of an adversarial institution to an accommodating one.

Contested accommodation is a "complex and unfinished process" involving the stages of *evolutionary updating*, *religious reconstruction* and *power contention*. Seidler describes *evolutionary updating* as the situation in any organization where outside forces trigger inside mechanisms; the organization must then change its value system or their level of intervention (in terms of that outside force) in order to survive. "The fittest institutions, that is, those with updated structures which can interact with the social

milieu,” Seidler (1986: 861) argues, “will have the best chance of survival.” He further elaborates that organizational evolution relies on a dynamic interaction with the organization in question and its “host environment” (Seidler 1986: 862).

This dynamic interaction only can occur through *religious reconstruction*, the emergence of a new vision of Catholicism that smoothes the path for social change. This new vision, which is essentially created by theologians and other religious intellectuals, is a “coherent merger of contemporary and traditional religious elements” (Seidler 1986: 862). Forces such as increased secularization, growing economic inequality, increased suburbanization and other elements of a “changing world” (Seidler 1986: 863) obviously had an impact upon the beliefs of traditional Catholicism. Religious reconstruction in church practice and publications was used throughout the 20th century to construct a Catholicism more in touch with contemporary understandings.

In speaking of the process of *power contention*, Seidler argues that the mid twentieth century was a time where there was a conflict between Catholic fundamentalism and Catholic liberalism. Essentially Catholic liberalism “won” during this time period with the aid of a progressive Vatican II council which pushed social change and political Catholicism as a main church agenda.¹ Seidler’s use of the word ‘contention’ in this definition implies that agendas within the church always have an opportunity to be overthrown or changed so that the Church is consistently negotiating its relationship with its changing host environment. Gurvitch (1962: 14) highlights this idea

¹ Political Catholicism is an activist approach to Church teaching which stresses the values of equality, freedom and human dignity for all groups (Seidler 1986).

as well by arguing that “every social structure is a precarious equilibrium” which is consistently recreated.

In order to guarantee the Church’s survival, how does the institution recreate itself? Using his concept of elective affinity as framework, Max Weber would argue that a religious institution is only most effective when its ideas mesh with a wider secular force. If the church does revert back to traditional stance and is less consistent with secular ideas, its longevity is less guaranteed. Weber (1922: 282) argues that it is “*not* ideas, but material and ideal interests that directly govern men's conduct. Yet very frequently the world images that have been created by ideas, like a switchman, have determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest.” Weber compares religious values to railroad switchmen; like switchmen, religious meanings channel the direction of change and are only significant if the ideas run in line with wider material, economic and social forces which are essentially the railroad tracks. Religious values and ideas cannot generate change or a societal consensus on their own; instead they merely channel the direction of social action. However if these ideals are so far removed from the mainstream that they cannot even channel the direction of thought, they may simply die. Catholic ideals that are so far from the mainstream may die and the institution itself will lose significance.

The combination of a particular religious value along with a particular economic status or a particular political status creates a *culture complex* that advances all these spheres. Weber’s main example was the culture complex that was created when the nature of capitalist business practices coupled well with Protestant ethics in 17th century Europe and also in the United States in the 18th century (Weber 2003[1958]). There was

an elective affinity between Protestantism and capitalism which in turn propelled both institutions so successfully in the European and early American environment. In terms of Catholicism, Weber argues that the traditions of this religion fit well with the “civic strata” of the Western hemisphere. This group of people, whom Weber (1922: 284) defines as “artisans, traders, enterprisers engaged in industry and their derivatives” is modern yet it has been most ambiguous in terms of its religious stance. This group has a tendency towards a *practical rationalism* in conduct since their whole existence is “based on economic and technological calculations and upon the mastery of nature and of man” (Weber 1922: 284). As the civic strata gain more weight within society, that society provides grounds more favorable for a religion that calls for social action. Under these sorts of social conditions, “the preferred religious attitude could be the attitude of *active asceticism*, of good-willed action nourished by the sentiment of being God’s tool” in order to make an impact within society (Weber 1922: 284). If Weber is correct, what must happen within the Church is the adoption of the attitude of *active asceticism*.

Chapter 4: Research Methods

As Seidler (1986: 861) notes, the “Catholic Church only incorporated democratic structures and contemporary values according to the inventions of theologians and other religious thinkers, and only after long decades of resistance. The major impetus to change comes from scholarly inventions [which combine] old and new sociocultural elements.” This project uses a comparative approach to how Catholics addressed contemporary issues throughout the latter half of the twentieth century until the present by performing a qualitative content analysis of one source for these “scholarly inventions”: Catholic newsletter editorials.

This project employs a qualitative content analysis of a weekly Catholic newsletter called *America, The National Catholic Weekly*. *America* was established in 1909 and was chosen due to its lengthy publication history and due to its focus on offering a scholarly Catholic perspective regarding current events. In an editorial in 2005, the editor described the newsletter’s mission: “We are a journal of Catholic opinion. We serve Catholics and other readers interested in intelligent examination of church and world affairs, seen through the lens of the Catholic faith and with the eyes of Catholic reason” (Christiansen 2005). Examining scholarly interventions which are the major factors that lead to change within a religious organization will provide some insight into how Catholic intellectuals interpreted the role of the Church beginning after World War II. It is important to note that a potential shortcoming of this study is the fact that the

opinions analyzed are of those of Catholic intellectuals and may not necessarily represent the sentiments of the general Catholic population. Also as noted previously, *America* has been criticized and even noted as “dangerous” by some Catholic groups for its liberal stance consequently this study may present findings that are somewhat further “left” than analyses of other Catholic publications.

The time frame from 1945 until the present was selected in order to highlight the post-war period where the “Catholic sub-culture had reached its peak” (Varacalli 2006:38) and then the two subsequent periods of major change within the Church: the Second Vatican Council, which ran from 1962 until 1965 and the sexual abuse crisis which began in the 1990s and peaked in 2002. Obviously when sampling editorials from a time period this long, some precautions need to be taken. An important concern is that since there were many editors during this sixty year time span, the content of the newsletter may have shifted with each editor’s vision of what values the newsletter should uphold. Fortunately, the *America* newsletter consistently has at least 4-5 editors on staff, who may offer continuity of perspective better than the single editor model does.

The sampling strategy used in the over 5,000 issues of this century-long publication is as follows. One issue per year from 1945 until 2009 was randomly selected; each issue contained approximately 5 – 9 articles that were noted as “editorials”; 419 editorials were sampled in total. [Briefly it must be noted that upon completion of the study, it was determined that the selection of one issue per year may have left gaps in the content discovered. If there were opportunity for further research, it would be prudent to select instead two issues per year yet shorten the time frame to include only years post Vatican II until the present.] The sampled editorials were then

grouped together by decade. Content analysis followed these steps: each editorial was reviewed before a coding scheme was established in order to “capture key thoughts and concepts... in order to achieve immersion and a sense of the whole” (Heisgh and Shannon 2005). A coding scheme was developed out of this review and organized in terms of the theoretical focus of the research into both secular and Catholic categories (see Table 4-1).

Coding then proceeded based on the distinctions among these categories presented by the editorials. These categories will then be compared across the decades. Every editorial was coded and then was placed in a corresponding category due to the subject matter. Twelve major categories were established after an initial analysis of the text and are as follows: *Promotion of Peace, Communism as a Threat, Parochial Schools, Environmental Protection, Right-to-Life Issues, Aid to those on the Margins of Society, Combating Racism & Promoting Integration, Change in Church Structure, Diversity within the Church, the Sexual Abuse Crisis, Change in Culture and Catholic Theology.*

Table 4-1 gives detailed descriptions of the categories and then describes each category as either a secular or Catholic issue. Although not intended, six categories emerged dealing with secular issues while six categories were specifically Catholic issues. For example, issues like Environmental Protection and Combating Racism were categorized as secular issues since these ideas and missions extend beyond the Catholic community. Catholic Theology, the Sexual Abuse Crisis and Parochial Schools were categorized as Catholic since these issues are fairly contained within the Catholic community and are generally applicable to Catholics only. Finally, although the Right to Life Issue is one that is discussed within the general population, for this study’s purpose,

Table 4-I. Description of Categories

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Secular v. Catholic</i>
Promotion of Peace	Called for peace in the nation and across the world and called for the end of warfare in relevant parts of the world	Secular
Communism as a Threat	Called for the recognition of communism and those countries under a communist government that were threatening and harmful to the United States	Secular
Parochial Schools	Called for aid for Catholic high schools and elementary schools and recognized the unique significance of these schools	Catholic
Environmental Protection	Promoted the importance of a safe and healthy global environment	Secular
Right-to-Life Issues	Addressed abortion, euthanasia, stem cell research and any other policy violated the basic value of human rights, the gift of life	Catholic
Aid to Those on the Margins of Society	Supports aid or efforts to help those in need; examples include aid to the poor, the unemployed, welfare recipients, the incarcerated and addicts	Secular
Combating Racism & Promoting Integration	Disparaged any racist policies, legislation, attitudes or behavior and promoted integration and tolerance.	Secular
Change in Church Structure	Discussed various changes in church structure including incorporating laity more often during church procedures, strengthening ties between Catholics and those of other religions, and the increasing lack of finances within the Church.	Catholic
Diversity within the Church	Discussed how the Church is becoming more heterogeneous in terms of race	Catholic
The Sexual Abuse Crisis	Discussed the crisis, the effect it has had within the Church and the efforts that must be made in order to help the victims.	Catholic
Change in Culture	Described a change in American culture and lifestyle. Examples of these changes would include how messages in the media are harmful to young children's perceptions of the real world.	Secular
Catholic Theology	Discussed a teaching of Church dogma; essentially a religion lesson on a Catholic belief or practice	Catholic

it was intentionally categorized as a Catholic one. According to official Catholic doctrine, championing the Right to Life cause not only means condemning abortion, but also entails condemning contraception use, sterilization and pre-marital relations (Pope Paul VI 1968). The editorials categorized within the Right to Life category reflect these teachings.

This method of qualitative research intends to “capture historical process and to integrate an analysis of culture and human agency into a macrostructural analysis of social change” (Trimberger 1984: 211). However, this method can only theoretically construct how Catholic scholars presented the issues affecting their readers. Qualitative comparative research serves to identify patterns, make predictions and interpret significance. Another goal of qualitative research is to interpret historically significant phenomena; this project can in no way determine or prove that Catholic thought has an actual impact on society or that what was sampled is a perfect representation of what Catholics believe, yet it can provide better insight to how Catholics have been adapting to changes in society. This study constructs a different understanding of the Catholic organization and provides a snapshot of how the Church relates to its social environment.

Chapter 5: Findings

The data collected from the editorials of *America, The National Catholic Weekly* illustrates that from 1945 until the present, Catholics have maintained some consistency in the values and issues they uphold and see the need to discuss. What is most noteworthy is that the themes that were chosen to categorize the editorials persist over the period, consistently appearing in multiple issues of the newsletter over six decades. For example, the editors consistently promoted peace and aid to those on the margins of society, regardless of what was happening within political or social milieu of the day. Most of the themes, including racism, the promotion of peace, communism, aid to those on the margins of society, change in culture and the environment would be relevant subjects for any audience, Catholic or not. Other themes such as theology, right to life issues and change in Church structure were not mainstream topics and the reader would have to have some sort of Catholic background to understand the full argument and terminology.

Table 5-1: Presentation of Editorial Themes from 1945 – 2009

Topic	1940s**	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Communism	18%	19%	14%	7%	4%	2%	2% *
Change in Culture	6%	16%	14%	14%	17%	18%	4%
Change in Church Structure	6%	--	18.5%	8%	12%	4%	16%
Diversity in the Church	3%	4%	4%	9%	8%	5%	3%
Parochial Schools	3%	16%	9%	13%	12%	13%	7%
Racism	12%	10%	12%	7%	--	11%	7%
Right to Life Issues	6%	--	5%	13%	19%	16%	10%
Aid to those on the Margins of Society	21%	10%	12%	16%	15%	19%	12%
Promotion of Peace	18%	13%	5%	13%	8%	5%	15%
Sexual Abuse Crisis	--	--	--	--	--	2%	11%
Environment	--	--	3%	--	1%	5%	2%
Theology	5%	9%	1%	2%	2%	--	10%

*Denotes articles about terrorism, not communism. **Only articles from 1945 until 1949.

Trends in the 1940s

Table 5-1 divides the proportion of different editorial themes by decade. The frequency of the topic is a reflection of its importance to the Catholic community at the time. In the 1940s, most of the editorials dealt with the importance of combating communism (18%) and aiding those on the margins of society (21%). In these particular editorials, those on the margins of society were considered primarily the European populations suffering after the trauma of World War II. One editor pushed for aid for

those in Germany by encouraging Catholics to donate money to the National War Fund. “Though our contribution be minute,” the editor notes, “it will at least be a token of our desire to be humane to the Germans and to save Europe from further chaos that will certainly spread from a desperate Germany – for hungry men are desperate men.”²

These editorials in the 1940s were unique since they encouraged Catholics to aid those oppressed and suffering due to global as opposed to domestic forces.³ In 18% of all editorials in the 1940s, peace was promoted and the editors encouraged it be maintained since nations were still reeling from the devastation of World War II. The issue of racism was also prevalent in these early editorials (12%) but racism during this time period was also looked at in a global perspective; the domestic issues of racial tensions between African Americans and whites were not mentioned as often and instead the focus was on the racist mentalities that perpetuated Nazi supremacy in concentration camps or the discrimination against Japanese Americans in internment camps.⁴ This discrimination was noted in one editorial as a new form of racism that emerged during the war; the editor condemned the American government as hypocritical since on one hand, “the country was showing its anger at rampant racism in Hitler’s Europe,” while simultaneously invading the “rights of 112,000 Japanese-Americans on our own west coast. Their only crime was their blood, their color a mark of disgrace.”⁵ The one article that dealt with

² “Germany Must Have Relief,” October 20, 1945.

³ Examples include “World Famine Threat”, an editorial from May 4, 1946 or “Britain’s Economic Crisis” from August 16, 1947 which encouraged Americans to be charitable towards the post-World War II nations that were physically and economically torn apart from the violence.

⁴ “No Yank SS Men,” October 20, 1945.

⁵ “The Nisei Decision,” October 20, 1945.

American black and white race relations equated racism with sinful behavior:

“The bottom of this question is the monstrous system of Jim Crow which has humiliated, degraded and embittered a whole people and which, when carried over into Catholic institutions, betrays the essence of the Christian ethic which is charity. The authorities of schools, hospitals or orphanages who exclude applicants simply because of race sin against justice.”⁶

This idea was faced with backlash exemplified in a letter to the editor written by one reader who asked to be removed from the list of *America* subscribers. This reader could not believe that Catholic authorities were actually being denounced for “excluding Negroes from their schools.” The reader argued that attacking white school leaders for not being pro-integrationist is actually “encouraging racial conflicts.”⁷

While this reader attacked Catholic schools for being one of the first institutions promoting integration, an *America* editor applauded Catholic schools for bringing American Catholics out of isolation from mainstream society. The editor noted that in the past, the Catholic Church has missed some opportunities to be sociable and charitable with the rest of American society. However, the editor called for Catholics to be “conscious of [their] part in the community of the world. [Catholic] schools in particular have the task and the glorious opportunity to present to the nation’s youth this longed-for outgoing apostolate.”⁸ Another way Catholics could break their isolationist stereotype is to embrace the rising Mexican population in the United States. In the 1946 editorial “Christianizing Mexican Catholics,” the editor writes that Mexicans in America, who are

⁶ “Racial Segregation Violates Justice,” October 20, 1945.

⁷ “Letter to the Editor.” November 10, 1945.

⁸ “American Catholics in a Changing World,” August 16, 1946.

generally Catholic, may be slowly converting to other Christian faiths such as Lutheranism or the Baptist faith since these religious agencies “seem to be possessed of a strange longing to bring their Gospel to Spanish-speaking Catholics....by appealing to their poverty and emotions.” The editor argued that more can be done by Catholics to accommodate this growing population which by that time had already surpassed 3 million nationwide.⁹

Trends in the 1950s

During the 1950s, the largest percentage of editorials (19%) was devoted to issues about communism, a system which infringes upon the “freedom of religion and the freedom of education.”¹⁰ This amount of space (see Table 5-1) is explained by the Red Scare of this time period. According to the *America* editors, communism was basically seen as evil and immoral and one editor even compared the system to slavery. Editors frequently encouraged state leaders to maintain healthy ties with the Soviets and continue aid to Asia so the moves of the Chinese and Soviets and essentially a potential communist overthrow, could be tracked.¹¹ “What exists in Russia today,” an editor in 1959 argued, “is a society in which the state completely controls and dominates the people. The struggle today is not between capitalism and communism, but rather between democracy and totalitarianism, between freedom and slavery.”¹² Communism was seen as such a threat because if the state controlled everything, then the state could impose control over religious practices and religious education.

⁹ “Christianizing Mexican Catholics,” August 16, 1946.

¹⁰ “Can We Avoid War?” Editorial from April 1, 1955

¹¹ “What Are the Soviets Up to Now?” an editorial from September 15, 1956.

¹² “Communism versus Capitalism,” November 14, 1959.

At 16%, almost the same proportion of editorials in the 1950s was devoted to the theme of change in the American culture. Within this new post-war era, editors warned readers of the decline in the family structure that has resulted in a generation of young people who have little work ethic and assume everything should be handed to them.¹³ Lack of censorship was also to blame for reckless behavior of adolescents as editors noted the importance of limiting what should be read or what should be viewed by Catholics living in this modern era.¹⁴ The proposed solution to this change in American culture was the parochial school system, a topic that comprised 16% of all the articles sampled in the 1950s. The school system could get Catholic children and young adults back on track with help from a dose of “Catholic realism [which] recognizes the value of hard work and self-discipline. The Catholic educator sees the danger of giving pupils the impression that there need be no unpleasantness, no hardship, no difficulty, or no pain in life.”¹⁵ Secular schools, according to editors “cannot nourish Catholic men and women, and will in many cases certainly stunt the precious Christian life of an impressionable youngster.”¹⁶

Many Catholic parents during the post-World War II must have agreed with the sentiments of these editors since as early as 1950 editors were noting the overcrowding occurring in Catholic schools. One editor projected that by the mid 20th century,

¹³ “Many parents, doubtless, are selfish. They lack fortitude to see to it that their children are home from parties at a reasonable hour...they enjoy their children in a selfish way that shirks the duty of a patient, loving discipline. Yet on the other hand, many parents are themselves products of a bad education...and many of the nation’s 5.5 million working mothers with children have to hold down a job outside the home to keep their families going,” excerpt from “Pity the Poor Parents,” April 1, 1955.; “Dilution in Education,” November 3, 1951.

¹⁴ “Comics, Obscenity and the Press,” April 1, 1955 and “Danger: Hucksters Working,” May 3, 1958.

¹⁵ “Dilution in American Education,” November 3, 1951.

¹⁶ “Bishop on Secular Colleges,” September 15, 1956.

Catholics would bear the “full cost of educating over one-tenth of the nation’s grade-school children,” thereby causing a need for more teachers and expanded facilities.¹⁷ The editors stated that this role that Catholic schools serve should be compensated with a tax break from the federal government. One editor

offered the argument that:

“The public school cannot offer such courses...as religious activities and religious instruction. So if no tax monies can be used for religious education then neither may any form of religious education be taxed. If a public school classroom may not be used for prayers or catechism, then all expenses for prayers and catechism should be tax-deductible.”¹⁸

America editors also felt that the Catholic school system should be commended also for its work with integrating white and black students. One editor focused on the school system in 1957 Washington DC where “Negro public schools” were characterized by overcrowded classes and ill-trained teachers...primarily “due to the negligence and indifference of Congress” on the issue. Yet the “fine parochial school system” of the city with trained teachers had been integrated at the elementary and high school level years earlier “without any public fanfare or incidents.”¹⁹

What had been happening in Washington in 1957 was significantly different from the lack of progress made in the South during the same time period. In the 1957 editorial titled “The Climate of the South,” one editor theorized that the “new Negro attitude...is that of a weary acceptance of the status quo....Negro Catholics are

¹⁷ “Dilution in American Education,” November 3, 1951.

¹⁸ “Tuition or donation,” November 14, 1959.

¹⁹ “Profile of Washington,” June 15, 1957.

particularly distressed by the fact that integration policies enunciated months ago have yet to be reduced to practice.” But the editor noted that the hostile racial climate in the South was due to:

“A breed of men who are capable of approving integration and then, practically in the same breath, falling into a state of almost religious ecstasy as they hysterically extol the lore of the Old South of slavery, mocking birds, grits and bourbon whiskey.”²⁰

Trends in the 1960s

In the 1960s, it was not change in culture that was most important, but change in Church structure that the editors of *America* focused on. Over 18% of the editorials sampled during the 1960s discussed the radical changes that were occurring within the Church, primarily due to the efforts of Vatican II which began in 1962. Catholics were encouraged to see other religious points of view since Catholics “cannot force each other to see the same truth but we can love each other warmly, sincerely and unpatronizingly.”²¹ Examples of other changes within the church in the 1960s includes the stress on embracing all church members, regardless of who they are and where they are from²²; the revolutionary idea that Catholics need to be unified with members of other faiths²³ and finally the promotion of the rights of priests. Within this cause, the editors called for a change in church structure that allowed priests to have greater authority and the ability to make more reforms within their own parish, while being paid a salary that

²⁰ “Climate in the South,” June 15, 1957.

²¹ “Not Indifferentism,” April 6, 1963.

²² “Collegiality,” April 6, 1963.

²³ “No Indifferentism: The Age of Change.” April 13, 1963.

was high enough to be representative and respectful of the meaning of their work.²⁴ The majority of these changes helped Catholics slowly integrate into American society by promoting an air of inclusivity. Catholics during this time also felt more mainstream with the help of the first Catholic president, John F. Kennedy, described as “demonstrating a remarkable appeal to the young everywhere and... hailed by older residents for his intelligence and vigor.”²⁵

The 1960s were also the highpoint of the African-American Civil Rights Movement and racism and integration were discussed at length within the editorials (12%). One editor sarcastically condemned those who simultaneously celebrated America as the great melting pot yet condoned the nation’s racist policies. “We have erected and maintained for a hundred years a segregated social system based upon... a (literally) God-damned pride in the whiteness of our own skin. A kind of skinolatry. That’s what it means to be an American.”²⁶ This same article defines racial segregation as the biggest obstacle that Catholics have to overcome in order to attract others to the merits of Catholicism. An editor encouraged Catholic parents to help overcome this obstacle by supporting racial integration within the American school system since:

“Every child born into poverty and raised in a slum is at a disadvantage in many ways by cultural impoverishment. The success or failure of current programs to remove Negro children from schools in urban ghettos into the mainstream of American culture may set the tone of interracial relations for years to come.”²⁷

Integration at the school-level was deemed to be the first step in racial harmony and one editor cited a Catholic summer school in Washington DC which “allowed for a tangible

²⁴ “Reforms that Priests Want,” and “A Priest’s Work,” editorials both ran in the April 23, 1966 issue.

²⁵ “Two Americans Abroad,” June 17, 1961.

²⁶ “God Bless America,” June 17, 1961.

²⁷ “Racial Balance in Schools,” February 1, 1964.

demonstration of Christian unity and fraternal love between Negroes and whites.”²⁸ Even though most examples of interracial harmony would have to occur in diverse cities where blacks and whites interacted more frequently, one editor noted that full racial integration needs to remain the mission of the entire Church, not just for the priests and nuns who work in the inner city. While these urban personnel can “sell little-used property and reinvest in new projects in high-population areas and stabilize neighborhoods by sponsoring low-rent cooperative housing for families,” they should not be alone in the cause.²⁹ Editors encouraged Catholic integrationists by commending them for fulfilling the work of Americans such as Abraham Lincoln and (at the time) the recently deceased John F. Kennedy.³⁰

Trends in the 1970s

The progressive ideas from the various social movements throughout the 1960s were represented in the editorials of the subsequent decade. Some of the main topics discussed included Aid to those on the Margins of Society (16%), Change in Culture (14%), and the Promotion of Peace (13%). 14% of the editorials were devoted to the issue of Change in Culture including ranging from issues about suburbanization to the diffusing relationship between superiors and subordinates.³¹ Yet the highest number of editorials (16%) were coded as Aid to Those on the Margins of Society. Catholics were encouraged to help those at home and abroad, including the millions of refugees in

²⁸ “Mustard Seed Bible Schools,” March 13, 1964.

²⁹ “Detroit, Newark and the Church,” August 12, 1967.

³⁰ “A Fitting Memorial,” February 8, 1964.

Cambodia overtaken by dictatorship. The editor argued that the “Western reaction has been mute...to the dismemberment of an entire Asian nation.”³²

13% of the editorials also addressed the issue of the crumbling Catholic parochial school system. Catholic school attendance had peaked nationwide with a student population of 5.5 million in the mid-1960s yet that number has steadily declined due to the suburbanization of America and the white flight from downtown Catholic parishes to suburban churches (Gillis 1999: 199). A summary on a conference conducting an analysis on the status of Catholic schools highlighted a survey of numerous Catholic school superintendents, all of whom were nuns. The superintendents noted the decaying nature of the national parochial school structure and asked the organizers of the conference for the ability to “have genuine freedom in consolidating neighboring schools and closing ‘dying schools.’”³³

The 1970s were an unusual time period for Catholic Americans who were coming off the heels of being fully accepted into American society after the election (and unfortunate death) of an attractive and effective Catholic president. Catholics were also vocal during the Civil Rights movements and were highly visible in the aid efforts in urban communities yet Catholics during this time period struggled with a new issue, abortion, a practice legalized by the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court Case in 1973. As soon as Catholics were being accepted into mainstream society, the issue of abortion highlighted the difference between Catholic and societal values once again. The number of articles devoted to the right to life/anti-abortion cause went from only 5% in the 1960s

³² “Khmer Rouge: Bleak Utopia,” August 2, 1975.

³³ “Sisters Respond to Bishops,” March 23, 1978.

to 13% in the 1970s. In reaction to the case of *Roe v. Wade*, one editor wrote that “as a citizen of the United States, a Catholic priest and a teacher of law, I was not only shocked by the U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision on abortion, but I felt oddly reduced by it.”³⁴

Trends in the 1980s

The right-to-life cause was focused on even more strongly during the 1980s (19%) especially since the 1980s were designated by the Pope as “the decade of the family.”³⁵ Editors were concerned that the issue of birth control and abortion would essentially tear the family apart and this would then lead to a change in culture. Change in Culture editorials totaled 17% of those sampled in this decade and the editors discussed how American culture is turning into one where women could be paid to abort a fetus for scientific purposes, where children would not be valued as much, and that students would be taught about birth control at a young age as sex education courses became commonplace within the school system.³⁶ The *America* editors then appears to expand their definition of the right to life issue by not only promoting the right to life issues of the unborn facing abortion but also the right to life for those facing apartheid, tyranny and other oppressive forms of government policies.³⁷

Trends of the 1990s

The editorials called for aid to the ever-changing groups who existed on the margins of society and needed aid (19%). In the middle of the 20th century, the editorials

³⁴ “The Supreme Court as Moral Arbiter.” March 10, 1973.

³⁵ “The Church Struggles with the Family.” February 14, 1987.; “The Aborted Fetus: Commercial Prize?” January 23, 1988.

³⁶ “Sex and the Education of our Children.” February 14, 1987.

³⁷ “The Churches and Investment in South Africa.” March 3, 1984.; “Fairness for Haitians.” March 3, 1984.; “US Needs Better Refugee Policies.” January 5, 1985.

coded for Aid for those on the Margins of Society dealt primarily with poverty, asking for aid for the domestic and global poor and those on welfare. However as the century progressed, the editors of *America* expanded the definition of those who needed Catholic aid in the 1980s and 1990s to include alcoholics, drug addicts, those living with HIV and AIDS, incarcerated immigrants and even pedophiles.³⁸ Groups who may have been looked down upon as sinners as not worthy of aid in the past were now some of the main focus of the *America's* charitable efforts. Also in the 1990s sampled editorials, the issue of combating racism (ignored in the 1980s sample) reappeared as a mission that the *America* editors wished its audience would take on. One such editor noted that "Americans may go to hell" due to the "dismal situation faced by blacks in the United States" which had been caused by a history of racism.³⁹ Another editor labeled racism as the "never-ending story" in the American saga which is consistently perpetuated by discriminatory housing policies, judicial procedures and prison systems.⁴⁰

The problem with racism in America was also discussed in terms of the Catholic school system in this decade. Several editorials argued that Catholic schools across urban America could be a source of guiding light for inner city youth to break the cycle of poverty.⁴¹ However, financial problems across Catholic dioceses forced many schools to close their doors or cut programs even though students in Catholic urban schools were said to perform better than their public school counterparts.⁴² Right-to life issues were also covered again during the 1990s yet the issue was framed in the way that Catholics

³⁸ "Life in the 90s." June 8, 1996.; "Cityscape: A friend's death and life." May 4, 1991.; "Teaching incarcerated immigrants." February 10, 1997.; "Priests and Pedophilia." March 18, 1992.

³⁹ "Why Americans May Go to Hell." March 10, 1990.

⁴⁰ "Housing Discrimination: A White Collar Crime." May 4, 1991.; "Prisons and Money." July 17, 1993.

⁴¹ "Despise Not These Little Ones," March 10, 1990; "Brothers and Sisters to Us." June 10, 1994.; "Inner city students have the option of catholic schools." October 8, 1996.

⁴² "Right On Schools." May 27, 1997.

can help prevent abortions if they remain supportive of women who may be most at-risk to have them.⁴³ Instead of condemning those who may even consider an abortion, the editors of this time period argued that one can be a feminist and be pro-life since Catholics should stand by these women who have to make such an important decision usually all on their own.

A few sampled editorials in the 1990s touched on the issue of the mission of the Church as it enters its third millennium. One editor noted the challenges to the church include how increasing diversity within the church could change its structure, how an increasingly postmodern society may reject religion altogether, and finally how there is a disconnect between Catholic clergy and lay members.⁴⁴ This disconnection between priests and people was exacerbated even further in 2002 when stories about priests sexually abusing children were leaked to the press. *America* editors covered this issue extensively as 11% of all editorials sampled from 2000 until 2009 covered the crisis which one editor referred to as “the Catholic Watergate.”⁴⁵ The editors wrote about how the Church should uphold the zero tolerance policy for this sort of crime⁴⁶ and expressed concern for not only the victims,⁴⁷ but also for priests who may not be able to shake this detrimental stereotype.⁴⁸ This event was looked on most significantly through the eyes of young Catholics, for whom the sexual abuse allegations make up the first church crisis they have experienced. Impressionable young people, instead of remaining loyal to the

⁴³ “The Secret We Keep to Ourselves,” March 10, 1990, “Talking Sensibly About Abortion,” July 12, 1992. “Humane Vitae,” July 17, 1993, “Stand by Them!” September 8, 1998.

⁴⁴ “Popular Catholicism,” September 13, 1999.

⁴⁵ “Our Catholic Watergate.” June 17, 2002.

⁴⁶ “Zero Tolerance.” June 17, 2002.

⁴⁷ “Where Do We Go From Here?” May 24, 2004.

⁴⁸ “*The Times* and Sexual Abuse By Priests.” February 10, 2003.

church, may be likely to engage in “a secret satisfaction at watching the institution collapse.”⁴⁹

These young people may not have the same nurturing environment that the Catholic school system provided in previous decades. Instead, when parochial schools were discussed in the most recent decade of editorials, the focus was on serving Hispanic students or those students in inner-city, impoverished areas who needed these schools not primarily for religious enrichment, but instead since they have few promising educational alternatives. Critics of the maintenance of Catholic urban schools who teach students who are generally not Catholic were refuted with the argument, “[the schools] are here because *we* are Catholic, not because they are.”⁵⁰ However, whether the students in these schools are Catholic or not, there is still a literal price to pay for their education. As of 2008, the need for tuition aid is hovering around \$18 million. Similar to arguments made in previous decades, one editor called for governmental support of the Catholic schools that save local governments millions of dollars in tax expenditures for public schools. “The Catholic Church cannot be expected,” he argued, “out of the free-will offerings of the faithful and other donors—to continue to provide such a wide-serving system of successful schools all by itself.” Unfortunately, the trend is slowly turning towards closing the schools in the inner cities as Church leaders “shift Catholic education to the suburbs where there are more Catholics who can afford a Catholic education.”⁵¹ This specifically affects African Americans and Latino immigrants, the two groups who predominantly reside in urban areas. One editor noted that “it has never been easy being

⁴⁹ “Our Catholic Watergate.” June 17, 2002.

⁵⁰ “A Working Model,” August 17, 2005.

⁵¹ “How to Save Catholic Schools,” December 22, 2008.

African-American and Catholic in the United States. Many of us, along with our Latino brothers and sisters...have often been made to understand that we are invisible to many of our fellow U.S. Catholics.”⁵² What is surprising to note here is that for the first time in the editorials sampled, African Americans and other minorities were described as “we”, not “they.” What is unsettling however is despite the Church’s stress on unity and the acceptance of diversity among its members in previous decades, minorities in their own words were reporting they still felt excluded from the rest of the Church.

Trends in the First Decade of the 21st Century

The trend in the last decade of editorials sampled shows the Church to be turning inward. From 2000 until 2009, the editors frequently focused on issues that were solely pertinent to traditional Catholics. 57% of all the editorials sampled in the decade dealt with the “Catholic categories” including Change in Church Structure, the Sexual Abuse Crisis and Catholic theology. The number of editorials devoted to Change in Culture and Aid to Parochial Schools were the lowest percentages in decades yet the Promotion of Peace category was extensively discussed in the 2000s editorials, obviously due to the two wars currently being fought. Surprisingly the discussion of Diversity within the Church decreased during this decade even though the Hispanic population and its impact upon the Catholic Church escalated. Hispanics were still discussed like outside members of an insiders’ group; one editor noted that Catholics were doing little to accommodate this population. The editor noted that “groups such as Hispanics, Asian Pacific Islanders and African-Americans, constitute the majority of the American Catholic Church. They are beginning to assume more responsibility and leadership than in the past....however

⁵² “Real Americans, Real Catholics,” February 16, 2007.

many Catholic Americans are ‘hunkering down’ and sticking with those who have a similar cultural background.”⁵³

Many American Catholics also stuck with those of the same cultural background in the election of 2008. The presidential election of Barack Obama was a significant event in the late part of the decade and this particularly affected *America* readers when the President gave the University of Notre Dame 2009 Commencement Address. The University of Notre Dame is one of the most famous Catholic institutions and there was a major outcry among many Catholics when the President was asked to speak at the University. Anti-Obama supporters felt the pro-choice President should not be associated with Catholic value and thousands of pro-life supporters actually made the trip out to the campus to protest the commencement address. One editor who witnessed the graduation and the President’s commencement address heard many attendees make harsh comments such as “Who let him in here?” when the new President walked on the Notre Dame stage. Unlike those attendees, the editor praised the University for offering the invitation to the President who was described as embodying the “spirit of Vatican II” for his promotion of civility, dialogue and fraternity.⁵⁴ The editor finished his argument with the idea that if a “mainstream Catholic institution” such as the University of Notre Dame cannot side with the values of the President, then what kind of institution can?⁵⁵

⁵³ “The Future of a Multicultural Church.” September 22, 2008.

⁵⁴ “Barack Obama and Vatican II.” May 25, 2009.

⁵⁵ “The View from Row 13: Scenes from the Notre Dame Commencement.” May 25, 2009.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Based on the issues brought up by *America's* editorials, a few claims can be made in answer to the research question guiding this study, *how does the American Catholic Church relate to its host environment?* The discussion of these findings shows how complicated the Church's relationship with its American host environment truly is. The discussion in this chapter is organized into three sections: 1) A description of trends of the discussion of the thirteen themes selected over the period study; 2) A discussion of the three ways in which the Roman Catholic community, as portrayed in the data, responds to the environment; and 3) Recommendations of strategies the Church needs to pursue if it is to coexist successfully with its American environment.

Trends

The Catholic Church appears to oscillate between an open and permeable relationship with its environment and one that is closed and protective. In the beginning of the timeframe, immediately following World War II, the American Catholic Church was still rather isolated and it was not until the changes brought upon by Vatican II that opened church doors to new ideas and people. This is reflected in the editorials when there was a rise in discussion of diversity within the Church in the 1970s and a greater awareness of the effects of racism in the 1960s and an expansion of the various groups that are worthy of aid in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. However, progress appeared to be at a standstill in the 2000s, which is most likely to do with the exposure of the Sexual

Abuse Crisis. The Catholic Church finds itself looked upon negatively by secular society and has begun to turn inward. Here is where we see a rise in the discussion of Catholic theology, a decrease in the promotion of Aid to those on the Margins of Society and an increase in discussing Church structure.

Beginning with the topic of Communism, the number of editorials devoted to this issue remained rather high from the 1940s through the 1960s (18% in the 1940s, 19% in the 1950s and 14% in the 1960s). Communism was viewed as such a threat by Catholic editors since a communist regime could potentially control religious institutions. Atheism and communism were essentially linked hand in hand during this time period therefore editors in the 1940s and 1950s discussed its potential ramifications at length. Yet the issue dwindled in the editorials near the end of the century, mostly likely due to the end of the Red Scare which had swept the nation in the 1950s. After the threat of communism diminished, editors instead devoted that space to the Right to Life cause. Only 5% of editorials sampled in the 1960s covered the topic yet the percentages increased to 19% in the 1980s and 16% in the 1990s. Yet its coverage did decrease somewhat in the 2000s with only 10% of editorials sampled promoting Right to Life Issues. This may reflect an increasingly divided Catholic stance on the issue of birth control and abortion where the editors did not want to disengage either side.

The descending coverage of the Right to Life issue in the most recent decade may also reflect the overall change in American culture where issues like abortion and contraception were not taboo and considered socially acceptable. In the 2000s, editors instead may have wanted to cover other 'hot button' issues that were changing American culture and stimulating Catholic conversation. This is why the topic of the Change in

Culture was so important throughout the timeframe. As previously noted, Catholics were considered “the other” in society and worked to differentiate themselves from the general population. Yet any change in American culture would eventually come to affect Catholic congregations in some way so Catholics were rather wary of change and the *America* editors consistently reminded readers about how the culture around them was moving. The topic of Change in Culture (14% of editorials sampled in the 1960s, 17% in the 1980s, 18% in the 1990s) was so prevalent since editors essentially were noting how American society was changing yet Catholics still held on to tradition.

The topic of Change in Church Structure was not as prevalent however and its occurrence was rather irregular throughout the time frame. 18.5% and 16% of the sampled editorials in the 1960s and 2000s respectively discussed change in the Catholic Church structure however only 8% in the 1970s, 12% in the 1980s and only 4% in the 1990s discussed this subject. Since value has been placed on tradition and permanence, change in the Church was generally noted only when massive changes such as the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s and the sexual abuse crisis in the most recent decade took place. A component of a changing Catholic church, Diversity within the Church, was only slightly noted as well, discussed on average in only 5% of the editorials sampled per decade. One *America* editor described the Catholic Church as a “middle class church” and admitted that up to that point in 1989, it still hadn’t learned to preach to the poor in order to solve the differences in culture, class and language.⁵⁶ It also could be possible that editors did not broach this issue of Diversity in the Church often since the *America*

⁵⁶ “The Hispanic Poor in a Middle Class Church.” June 11, 1988.

readership is a rather homogenous group, predominantly made up of white males over the age of 65 who hold either a Bachelor's degree or higher (www.americamagazine.org).

Since *America, The National Catholic Weekly* is a Jesuit publication, what *America* readers do relate to are the teachings of the Jesuits that focus on charity and social justice. This is a possible reason why so many of the articles focus on Aid to those on the Margins of Society, the Promotion of Peace and the elimination of Racism. Aid to those on the Margins was the most frequent topic for the editorials sampled on average within the overall time frame. The Promotion of Peace was fairly prevalent among the editorials yet the percentages varied across the time frame. For example, 18% of the editorials sampled in the 1940s, 13% in the 1950s and 1970s, and 15% in the 2000s dealt with the Promotion of Peace; however only 5% in the 1960s, 8% in the 1980s and 5% in the 1990s discussed the same topic. The Promotion of Peace occurred most often during wartime; especially during World War II, the Cold War and then the Iraq War. The topic of combating Racism also varied throughout the time frame with 12% in the 1960s, zero editorials sampled in the 1980s and then 7% in the 2000s. Although many Catholic leaders and organizations are based in urban areas where there are histories of racial discrimination and tension and where most racial minorities currently live, it is surprising that the issue was not taken up more often.

Many parochial schools, however, are based in urban areas and the topic of Parochial Schools appeared fairly often among the editorials sampled. Yet how the issue was presented seemed to change across the study time frame. In the 1940s and 1950s editors encouraged readers to support the schools by sending their children there; therefore, those who attend Catholic schools were considered "we" or part of the

readership. In the latter part of the time frame in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, the population who attended Catholic school was considered separate and outside the dialogue. One editor argued that Catholics schools “are here because *we* are Catholic, not because they are.”⁵⁷ Those who currently use the Catholic school system are seen as separate from *America’s* intended audience. The percentage of editorials devoted to this issue slowly dropped from 16% in the 1950s, to 13% in the 1990s and then 7% in the 2000s, highlighting the potential that the crumbling parochial school structure may not be an issue for this group engaged in discourse. This is somewhat confusing since the Jesuits are extremely committed to the Catholic school system yet this mission was not reflected among the editorials sampled. Jesuits may be more concerned with Catholic universities and colleges consequently the crumbling elementary and high school system is not a priority.

Finally, there were three topics that appeared infrequently among the editorials: the Sexual Abuse Crisis, the Environment and Catholic Theology. Editorials dealing with the Sexual Abuse Crisis did not begin to appear until the 1990s and only 2% of editorials sampled dealt with the issue in that decade. However when reports of the abuse scandal became commonplace, the number of editorials devoted to the issue followed suite and made up 11% of editorials sampled in the 2000s. In terms of Catholic Theology editorials, their percentage was very low throughout the entire timeframe except in the 1950s (9%) and then in the 2000s (10%). Since editorials coded as “Catholic Theology” were explanations of rather complicated and unknown Catholic teachings, this topic would appeal to only a small group of people such as clergy members or traditional

⁵⁷ “A Working Model,” August 17, 2005.

Catholics. Catholic Theology was at its highest rate in the 2000s, the time period when the Church was turning inward and focusing primarily on exclusively Catholic concerns.

Responses to U.S. Society

Put succinctly, the American Catholic Church responds to its environment in three ways: first, the Church simply neglects to respond to some issues and instead turns inward and focuses on purely Catholic issues; second, the Church adopts certain issues completely and takes on a stance that mirrors the values of mainstream society; and finally is the third response where the Church takes on certain issues yet reworks them in a way that the response is congruent with Catholic values. It is important to note what issues are missing from this dialogue among Catholic intellectuals. While the editors of *America* strive to cover all issues and to ‘see God in all things,’ certain issues were notably nonexistent among the editorials. These would be the examples of the first response where there is an apparent overlook of dilemmas that Catholics are facing, yet no one is discussing. *America*, *The National Catholic Weekly* is consistently criticized for its radically liberal stance within the Catholic community itself yet it is rather unclear of how progressive and liberal it truly is. Admittedly, the magazine promoted integration during a time period when Jim Crow segregation was the norm, its editors advocated on behalf of alcoholics and drug addicts when others viewed their behaviors as simply sinful, and it also rallied support for a pro-choice candidate, something usually unheard of within Catholic circles. Yet women’s issues such as the role of women within the

Church in terms of leadership was rarely mentioned; other social problems such as the increase of violence against women, the hyper-sexualization of women within media and also the plight of women living as single mothers was never discussed. Homosexuality was discussed, yet primarily within the context of whether or not homosexual men should be allowed to become priests. The issue of gay men and women being allowed to marry, adopt or obtain other legal rights was not covered within the editorials sampled. Finally, while poverty and aid to the poor was consistently promoted by *America* editors decade after decade, corporate greed and Church opulence were not covered. While the editors cover most topics in a very progressive manner some issues that are extremely important to mainstream society were never covered. It is the attitudes and actions such as these that may cause the Catholic population to become increasingly isolated from the rest of society. It still needs to be determined whether the Catholic Church can avoid isolation and assimilate to the American culture in a way that does not compromise its religiosity.

Catholics attempt to accommodate for this through the second response noted earlier. When analyzing the editorials, there are certain issues where Catholics can immediately relate to with secular society. The editorials promoted the issues of peace and environmental protection and called for the end of racism and discrimination; ideas which inherently have nothing to do with religion. Yet the Church is obviously a religious entity, so it does need to maintain certain aspects of its own identity and tradition. This is why the third response of being able to relate to the secular environment yet still maintain Catholic values is so important. Like Weber's idea of elective affinity, when religious and secular ideas share the same interest, the cause will go farther than if religious values were pushed along on their own. Unlike categories such as Catholic

theology and the change in the Church structure, the issues that have *both* religious and secular value can gain more momentum and strength than those issues that are strictly contained within the Catholic community. These are the issues which champion for social justice for everyone, not simply Catholics.

Recommendations

There are four key issues that the Church can tackle that maintain Catholic values yet are also congruent with mainstream ideals: address the rising Hispanic Catholic population, re-establish the importance of Catholic Charities, address the status of the parochial school system, and attend to the various issues related to Catholics families and the debate on choice. By facing these issues, the Church can promote itself as an institution that is (respectively) receptive towards immigration, is providing services for those who have fallen between the cracks of other social service agencies, is working towards improving the education of inner city students and is adapting towards the attitudes and various reproductive technologies which are changing Catholic families.

The Browning of the Catholic Church

The face of the Catholic Church is becoming very diverse. As Hispanics progressively immigrate and also maintain higher fertility rates than the average American, it is estimated that one third of all Catholics in the United States are Latinos. Unfortunately, many Catholic parishes have become somewhat divided as daily masses, church events and even the priests are divided between Spanish-speaking or not. Despite hesitancy from older Anglo church attendees who may even be discriminatory against the newly-arriving ethnic group, if it weren't for a strong Hispanic Catholic population, many

churches would have had to have been closed. An issue that the *America* editors pointed at consistently was that the Church was not and is not accepting this population well and has not made the provisions to cater to their needs.⁵⁸ Hispanic Catholics obviously face language barriers and also are in need of job training and education as less than twelve percent of Hispanics have graduated from college. Their unique needs are not the best fit for a graying clergy who may not be able to devote the necessary time and resources to them (Gillis 1999: 268).

Hispanic religious habits however are a good fit with an older priest population since some researchers compare Hispanic Catholic religious habits with Anglo Catholic religious habits pre-Vatican II. Hispanic Catholics today tend to read the Bible literally, wear religious medals, keep religious statues displayed in their homes and pray as a family. Most of these practices faded within the white Catholic community after the 1960s. The differences between white Catholics and Hispanic Catholics have resulted in the latter feeling unwelcome within the Church and this feeling shows. Approximately 100,000 Hispanics reportedly leave the Catholic Church annually and turn to other Christian denominations (Gillis 1999). Mirroring this trend, the discussion of diversity in the Church in the *America* editorials was rather minimal and even decreased as time went on. This seems problematic. As the current Catholic population ages or stops practicing, the Church needs to take advantage of this booming immigrant population which generally already has a Catholic background. Churches can offer programs such as English literacy classes or citizenship training to not only attract new members but to also promote social justice for Hispanic immigrants.

⁵⁸ "The Future of a Multicultural Church." September 22, 2008.

Catholic Charities

One organization that is beginning to address the needs of the Hispanic community is Catholic Charities. In the United States, Catholic Charities is the second largest social services provider besides the federal government and works to “reduce poverty, support families and empower communities” all throughout the United States (www.catholiccharities.org 2009). This organization began in 1910 as a welfare system for ailing Catholics staffed by volunteer lay women. It has vowed to fulfill the words of the Gospel to “feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger and clothe the naked” (Matthew 25:31-46) yet recently it has aligned its mission with the “modern program of social justice that is aimed at removing the root causes of human need” (McKeown 1997: 242). Catholic Charities works to serve all faiths and aims to tailor programs that fit to the surrounding community. Some services provided include emergency housing, health care, disaster relief, adoption services, counseling, food pantries, child care and substance abuse services. In this study, the Aid to Those on the Margins of Society category within the *America* editorials epitomizes the work of this organization.

Due to its long history and funding from international sources, Catholic Charities are one of the few stable social services providers in American cities. While many providers that care for the poor and ailing are forced to close, Catholic Charities is about to celebrate its centennial in over 1,700 agencies. But like all non profit or social service agencies, Catholic Charities has been gravely hit by the economic recession of late. In 2009, Catholic Charities has been running \$2.6 million behind its goal for charitable donations. An increased demand of services coupled with a decreased supply of resources

is clearly taking a toll on who can be served. As the Church's image within mainstream society becomes rather flawed due to issues surrounding the sexual abuse crisis or due to the Church's radically conservative stance on pro-life and reproduction issues, many people may be hesitant to donate to an organization associated with the Church. Religious ideology aside, Catholic Charities should be seen for the valuable contributions it makes towards forwarding the movement of social justice. This impacts all society, not merely religious circles.

The Parochial School System

Catholic Charities is most successful for its target towards the root of poverty. One method of breaking the cycle of poverty is building a strong educational foundation for all. Over the years, Catholic Charities has formed partnerships with Catholic schools in order to aid neighborhoods torn by poverty or natural disasters (Bronston 2009). As of 2008, the Catholic school system still has a significant presence across the nation. There are currently over 2 million students enrolled in over 7,000 elementary and secondary schools during this academic year yet this has dramatically reduced from the 5 million students who were enrolled in parochial schools in the 1960s. Over 40% of all Catholic schools are located in urban and inner city areas and these schools are suffering extensively from the effects of white flight into the suburbs. At the turn of the 19th century, parochial schools had been used as springboards of upward mobilization for Irish, German and Italian Catholic immigrants. Students were taught by religious nuns and priests who made due with small salaries and dedicated their life's work to educating future Catholic generations into the faith.

Today, Catholic schools are primarily staffed by lay members who require higher salaries which take up a higher percentage of the school's annual budget. School staff members face unique modern problems as many schools are located in poorer neighborhoods where violence, unstable family structures and drug usage may all affect the academic environment. However, Catholic students are performing better than their public school counterparts even when both schools are in the same location. Parents surveyed by a superintendent in 1994 reported that they send their children to Catholic schools as opposed to the local public schools since the Catholic schools offer better college preparation, safety and discipline (Gillis 1999: 207). These attributes truly make a difference; for example, Holy Angels Elementary School in the Bronzeville neighborhood in Chicago has been in operation since 1887. Although three out of four people live in poverty in the neighborhood and the area is plagued by violent crime, four times as many eighth graders at Holy Angels score higher than the national average in a standardized exam than eighth graders in three area schools. The same trend continues in a Catholic high school in Detroit, East Catholic High, where the student population is made up of primarily all low-income minorities yet 75% of the students go on to college. Overall, Catholic schools nationwide have a graduation rate of 99.2% compared to 74% in public schools (Cattaro 2002: 105).

Catholic schools are struggling greatly with the dilemma of keeping their doors open while simultaneously charging low tuition that is fair for their students and their families. Like the *America* editors argued, it can be said that Catholic schools are really serving a public function upon providing high quality education to students in poverty-stricken urban areas. Within the *America* editorials, the importance of these schools was

consistently presented as aid for parochial schools was a topic which came up frequently within the newsletter. Statistically Catholic schools provide better value than their public counterparts and for a cheaper price: in 2002, it cost \$2,178 to educate a student in an average Catholic school nationwide while the average public school cost per child was \$6,505 (McDonald 2002). While debating whether or not Catholic schools are entitled to federal aid due to the vital role they play for all urban students is an entirely separate debate, this issue to be considered here is how will the Church embrace its role as an educational anchor within the urban community. The Church may simply focus its resources on suburban schools in areas where the parents are more likely to be able to afford the tuition and where there are admittedly higher numbers of students who are actually Catholics. Yet if Catholic leaders are accepting their self-determined mission of promoting and maintaining charity for all, they cannot abandon the foundations they have established in inner cities.

Catholic Families & Issues of Choice

As can be seen in the three previous examples, the Catholic Church plays a vital role in the lives of those who are not served by other institutions. When the Church does not inward, it does have the ability to respond to its environment and addressing its needs in a way that is progressive yet is still Catholic. The Church upholds its own mission and values by promoting the religious value of charity through the work of Catholic Charities, by increasing Church membership through engaging the rising Hispanic population and

by arguing there is still a need for Catholic schools through serving inner city communities. What is very significant however is the controversial issue within the Catholic Church that essentially does not fit within any of the three responses that are highlighted in the beginning of the chapter. This would be the Right to Life issue, in particular the condemnation of abortion and contraception, considered to be “part and parcel of a culture war over sexuality and the role of women” in America (Doerflinger 2004: 50).

First, Right to Life issues were obviously not ignored by the *America* editors, instead the editors consistently discussed these matters at length decade after decade. In terms of the second response, Catholics are not mirroring the secular value of promoting the Right to Life. The majority of Americans appear to be against the Right to Life movement. 42% of Americans identify as pro-choice as opposed to pro-life, 74% of Americans polled say that abortion should remain legal and over 98% of all women have reported to using contraception at least once (Saad 2009, Mosher 2004). Then finally in terms of the third response where the Church attempts to rework a secular value into its own teaching, there is little evidence to show that the Church is doing that and is instead holding its ground on the traditional teaching. If the Church is adamant about maintaining its right to life stance and cannot find some sort of compromise with general society, this may be the teaching that prevents the Church from relating to its environment.

As mentioned earlier, religious institutions, like every social structure, are “precarious equilibrium[s]” subject to constant recreation and power contention and are rather fragile in this modern age (Gurvitch 1962: 14, Seidler 1986). The right to life issue in America may be the main cause of the precarious nature of the Catholic Church at the

moment due to the fact that the Church is having difficulties reframing the issue in a secular way. The Church needs to recognize that its host environment is one that is generally not favorable towards the Catholic pro-life message that abortion should be illegal in all cases and that contraception should never be used. Even Catholic lay members themselves do not agree with the institution as 40% of Catholics surveyed nationwide report that abortion should be a matter of a woman's choice while only 9% of Catholics report that abortion should never be permitted.

When surveying the newest generation of Catholics, young adults, over 87% report that using contraception is up to the individual while only 11% believe contraception use is always wrong (Davidson 2005: 168). When comparing the content of the editorials across the past century, this shows that the Church did adapt to some changes within its host environment, particularly in terms of racial issues and advocating for the poor and misfortunate. But when there is such a disconnect between Church leaders such as the priests who write for *America* or other Church figures who condone the traditional Church policies, and the general Catholic population, this is disconcerting. Seidler (1986: 861) notes that the fittest institutions who have the best chance of survival are those "which can articulate with the social milieu" and maintain a dynamic interaction with its "host environment." The Catholic Church in America appears to be losing its ability to communicate and respond to the needs of not only its host environment, but also with the majority of its members. Further research is needed to determine what techniques, if any, the Church is using to relate to first its members and then the general public on the right to life issue in order to guarantee its survival.

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