

CHOICE AND SCHOOLS: AN ANALYSIS OF FREE MARKET FINANCING AND EDUCATIONAL VALUES

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In the public policy discourse about vouchers, many Catholic school advocates have been aligned with the new conservative critics of public schools. A review of the Dayton, Ohio, area Catholic schools reveals that need-based student subsidies, which are a variation on vouchers, might reverse the declining urban enrollment in Catholic schools and continue their tradition of educating poor and disadvantaged students. However, the case suggests that choice schemes can alter the educational aims of schools in unexpected ways.

Many public school advocates believe that free-market school choice financing schemes favor private schools over public schools. Thus, teacher union advocates (Rosenberg, 1989) and other public school advocates (Guy, 1992) argue against extending choice-finance schemes to private schools on the grounds that they would hurt public schools. On the other hand, advocates of free-market school choice financing schemes (Chubb & Moe, 1991) argue that choice-based finance schemes could improve the educational opportunities for poor children. To some extent, both sides of this debate are correct. That is, each side seems to recognize that choice-based finance schemes can favor certain groups. However, both sides overlook the fact that choice-based school financing is a technique to support schools, and, as with all finance techniques, this method can shape the values in schools that it supports (Ellul, 1964). As a result, choice-based school financing may help private schools financially, but it may also change those schools in ways that make them more like public schools.

In this paper, we take a step toward building a critical-empirical perspective on school finance by studying an example of financial reform within the Dayton Catholic schools. First, we consider the discourse on public finance of education showing how political ideology appears to influence the dominant constructs of school finance. Second, we examine the changes made by selected Dayton-area Catholic schools to illustrate how private school systems must contend with the basic mechanisms of school finance in much the same way that public schools do. Finally, based on our analysis of the Dayton case, we consider how the use of a choice-based technique of finance appears to have altered the aims of the Catholic schools studied in Dayton and, therefore, how its use might change all other schools.

SCHOOL FINANCE AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

The common school movement in the 1830s and 1840s created a new ethos of public finance. This happened because, during the nineteenth century, most conservatives and liberals agreed on parts of the progressive assumptions that underlay this reform. For example, both groups perceived a direct link between public investment in education and growth in economic productivity. However, conservatives valued the private benefits of the public investment while liberals tended to value the social benefits. This consensus existed from the last half of the nineteenth century, when states began to invest substantially in education, to the 1980s, when new conservative arguments about education gained acceptance. Two issues have come into question as central to this historic progressive pattern of public finance of education. These are the ideas of adequacy and equity (Burrup, Brimley, & Garfield, 1988).

The concept of adequacy has its origin in the belief that schooling should reach an adequate level for all youngsters. This belief was the basis for defining a state's role in educational finance from the late nineteenth through the middle of the twentieth century. The availability of elementary schools for all led to the growth of high schools that became comprehensive. Similarly, the length of the school day, the number of days required, and the types of curricula increased as a result of the escalating requirements associated with obtaining public funding. Thus, initially, the primary role of government was to provide an adequate education, and the number of elements included in the definition of an adequate common school escalated over time (Wraga, 1992).

The concept of equity is the notion that the state has to equalize the quality of schools. One implication of equity is that a state should offer equalizing funding grants to some districts. Another implication of equity is that the state government should provide additional opportunities for students with special needs. While litigation, starting with *Serano v. Priest* in 1968, led to

an emphasis on equality among schools within states, federal programs in compensatory education increased the availability of special resources for some students. Nonetheless, in both cases, the most common measures of equity were the resources available to the schools.

In the 1980s, conservative critics such as Finn (1990) contended that policymakers should use student learning or outcomes rather than the resources available to schools and students as a basis for assessing public investment decisions. The federal and most state governments began promoting excellence, using standardized test scores to judge its presence. To these critics, attempts to improve equity were less important than attempts to improve adequacy as measured by the test scores. Thus schools were not considered adequate when their test scores were substantially below average.

In addition, new conservatives linked arguments about school finance to a belief that school choice, and especially vouchers, are more appropriate than conventional approaches to the public funding of schools. In this belief, they turned to the economic arguments of Milton Friedman (1962), and contended that the market would provide a better mechanism for improving the quality of education than public bureaucracies (Nathan & Ysseldyke, 1994). Chubb and Moe (1991) went so far as to assert that, unlike public schools, private schools have to be effectively organized because if they cannot demonstrate success, they will lose student enrollment.

This conservative critique was and is directed against the equity approach that provides additional funds for those with special disadvantages. However, it may tip policy toward affluent students for the following reason. The conservatives contend that funds should go to schools with high scores, which tend to be the schools with advantaged students. Consequently, most liberal arguments against choice center on its apparent inequity and tendency to increase racial segregation (Boyd, 1992; Cookson, 1991; Howe, 1992; Kozol, 1992; Spicer & Hill, 1990; Trent, 1992). There have been proposals for modified choice schemes that place a greater emphasis on equity. For example, some advocates of choice have urged such things as magnet schools to increase racial desegregation (Rossell, 1990; Willie, 1991); other choice supporters say need-based vouchers could help low-income children attend private schools that are more effective than the public ones in their neighborhoods (Coons & Sugarman, 1992; Farrell & Mathews, 1990; George & Farrell, 1990; Underwood, 1991). Some commentators urge the development of private schools for African Americans (Jones-Wilson, Arnez, & Asbury, 1992; Farrell & Mathews, 1990). Such reconstructions of the choice argument suggest that children with special needs can be served by a free-market orientation. In this spirit, states such as Wisconsin and Minnesota implemented these modified choice schemes (Nathan & Ysseldyke, 1994; Underwood, 1991).

There is limited evidence that modified choice schemes lead to improved

quality. Some public school advocates fear that a choice scheme will decrease the comprehensive aspects of public schools (Guy, 1992; Wraga, 1992). However, it seems that the academic experiences of students in public high schools of choice differ little from the experiences of students in more comprehensive schools (Sosniak & Ethington, 1992). At this point, we turn the discussion to private Catholic schools where choice in some sense operates.

Catholic schools and public schools alike face similar problems with issues of equity. Kozol (1991) asserts that urban public school districts have far less money for teacher salaries and other resources than do suburban schools. The same inequity between city and suburban Catholic schools exists because Catholic schools are funded by a combination of tuition and subsidies from the parish, much as local common schools were funded through a mixture of finance strategies before states began to play a larger role in the development and financing of public education. This means that, despite financial aid from the diocese or archdiocese, Catholic schools in poorer parishes have fewer resources and higher tuition than do Catholic schools in wealthier parishes. Such issues of equity cause some Catholic school people to reconsider financial mechanisms. Furthermore, from 1983 to 1993, the number of Catholic schools in the nation fell as the costs associated with Catholic schools soared.

In 1980, the average parish elementary school operated with a budget of \$184,372. In 1993, the average cost rose to \$547,838. While a third of this increase came from inflation, two thirds came from increases in such expenses as teacher salaries (Harris, 1995). Since the average cost of Catholic schools in 1993 exceeded the total average parish revenue, schools had to do something. In 1990, the U.S. Catholic bishops called for the establishment of development efforts on behalf of schools in every diocese. In response, dioceses employed supervisors of development and Catholic high schools hired development directors who used professional marketing approaches to ensure successful fund drives and capital campaigns. In the Dayton area, as elsewhere, these directors maintained alumni relations and coordinated fund raising (Christopher, 1995).

Another course of action was for Catholic schools to imitate the ways in which private colleges in the 1980s responded to cuts in federal and state support for education. Those colleges raised tuition and increased their own subsidies for grants enabling them to compete with public universities (St. John, 1994).

Although many people think of these financial strategies as neutral, they may be value laden. That is, as Catholic schools seek increased enrollments and adopt a market mentality, this business orientation may cause those schools to replace their traditional purpose of education with a different, more secular, and more popular idea. To explore this possibility, we examine

changes in Catholic school financing in an effort to assess the wider effects of these school financing programs. Specifically, we explore whether choice schemes of school finance can make religious schools more like their public counterparts by emphasizing overall moral and academic development for students, rather than enhancing the spiritual growth of children from a narrower denominational perspective.

DAYTON-AREA CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Dayton, Ohio is a reasonable place to conduct a case study. Although lacking the attractions of larger cities such as Chicago or New York, Dayton reflects national experiences and moods. As a result, in preparing advertising campaigns or predicting national elections, strategists often consider Dayton and its suburbs as a microcosm of the nation. For example, on 14 September 1992, to predict what issues would decide the then upcoming national election, *Time* sampled the views of people in Ohio's Montgomery County in which Dayton lies.

Likewise, the Catholic schools in the Dayton area are similar to school systems found in other areas. They are part of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, whose school system is ranked the tenth largest in the United States. As in other areas, the attendance in Dayton's urban churches and enrollment in urban Catholic schools has declined. As a result, in 1994, the archdiocese consolidated the Dayton parishes from 17 to 13 (Rodrigues, 1994). However, parishes and schools in Dayton's suburbs flourish. Nonetheless, all parishes in Dayton suffer from school costs that rise more rapidly than parish resources.

In 1996-97, the office of the Dayton-area Catholic schools and the archdiocese of which it is a part had two programs that sought to change the financial picture of the schools. Although these programs were independent, they could hypothetically and realistically reinforce each other. The first program was called cost-based, need-based tuition while the second was entitled Fill-Every-Desk. These financial approaches led to the enhancement of a third called evangelization. Let us explain these programs in turn.

COST-BASED, NEED-BASED TUITION

Cost-based, need-based tuition represented an effort to change the traditional pattern of school funding. Traditionally, if a school was sponsored by a parish, the parishioners supported the school. Often they had raised the money to build it, and they contributed money from the general parish funds to the maintenance of the school. For these reasons, families who belonged to the parish were given priority for enrollment and the children paid a low rate of tuition. People who were not part of the parish paid higher fees. The new pattern under cost-based, need-based tuition specified that all families in

a parish would pay a tuition rate close to the actual per pupil cost of education. Reductions of cost would be available to families who demonstrated financial need on a disclosure form administered by the archdiocese (McCormick, 1994).

Cost-based, need-based tuition did not originate in Dayton. Since 1989, the Archdiocese of Baltimore has asked its schools to charge full tuition and change what was known as the parish subsidy into tuition assistance. This was part of Archbishop William Borders' school reorganization plan that was confirmed by his successor, William Keeler, now president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Cincinnati was not far behind. In 1991, Cincinnati Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk asked parishes with schools to adopt changes in two phases. First, he asked them to do away with the traditional subsidy and replace it with tuition aid to children. Second, he asked them to consider charging the parents the true cost of education per pupil within five years. As a result, in Dayton, by 1994, 11 parishes adopted cost-based tuition and 48 parishes began to formally assess the need of the families prior to distributing aid (McCormick, 1994).

Some people saw these changes as reasonable for at least three reasons. First, cost-based tuition enhanced the 1990 request of U.S. Catholic bishops to set up development efforts. The approach freed development directors from the impossible task of appealing to people to make up the difference between tuition and costs. Instead of seeking money to meet operating costs, the development directors could seek funds for attractive long-range activities (McCormick, 1994). Second, cost-based tuition allowed priests to use parish revenues for other activities they desired to implement. Implementation of the model served to prevent clashes similar to one that developed in a Dayton church between a priest who felt the school drained the parish and a congregation who believed the school was an essential part of religious formation. Third, at times, the strategy allowed parishes to claim a reasonable portion of the tuition from the State of Ohio. This third reason requires some explanation.

In 1996, the State of Ohio offered vouchers for low-income children in the city of Cleveland. These vouchers covered 90% of a school's tuition amount up to \$5,000. The average tuition of eight Catholic schools that accepted such students was \$1,272 per year. However, the actual cost of educating the children was \$1,849 per student. Unfortunately, the schools recovered only \$1,145 from the state; while the child's family is expected to make up the 10% difference between the amount of the voucher and the tuition, the schools still lost an average of \$577 on each student (Buckeye Institute, 1996). Had these schools used some form of cost-based tuition, they would have benefited much more from the vouchers.

More often, though, cost-based, need-based tuition was a move toward social justice. In the 1986 pastoral letter *Economic Justice for All*, the U.S.

bishops requested that all society make a commitment to education for the poor, and they pledged themselves to continue to make Catholic schools models to this end. Facing the question of how to pay for these schools, the bishops called for increased contributions from all members of the Church, not just the users. To some extent, cost-based, need-based tuition sought to live up to this ideal.

Within a parish, the cost-based tuition program tries to spread the revenues available to reduce tuition in an equitable fashion. The families that can afford to pay more do so. The families that cannot afford to pay as much do not. The model, however, does not easily extend beyond a parish, and that is where the greatest inequities lie.

The effect of the traditional pattern is that prosperous parishes in the suburbs can afford to subsidize their schools keeping tuition artificially low. Parishes in the city more strapped for funds cannot. For example, in the 1994-95 school year, a predominately black inner-city elementary school, Dayton Catholic Elementary, charged annual tuition of \$2,178. Serving three parishes, the school enrolled 162 students. At the same time, a suburban Catholic school in nearby Springfield, Ohio, St. Teresa's, that served middle-class, white students charged an annual tuition of \$375 and enrolled 220 students. The reason for the disparity in tuition is obvious. The three parishes Dayton Catholic Elementary served contributed a total of about three or four thousand dollars and the Archdiocese of Cincinnati extended a total of \$130,000 to help Dayton Catholic Elementary and reduce its tuition. However, St. Teresa's Church spent 74% of its total operating budget managing its parish school. This amounted to about \$341,000. The result was that tuition rates at the two schools were exactly opposite of what social justice would appear to require.

Naturally, the cost-based, need-based model of tuition has its critics. The first criticism is that it raises the cost of a Catholic education. Although the program is revenue neutral, it transfers the cost of schooling from the parish to the individual parents who send their children to the parish school (DeBrosse, 1994).

The second complaint is that cost-based tuition hurts Catholic families and benefits non-Catholics (DeBrosse, 1994). In 1995, among the 1,440 students in Dayton's seven inner-city Catholic schools, 34% were non-Catholics and 32% were African Americans. The difference is even greater when Dayton Catholic and St. Teresa's are compared. In 1995, at Dayton Catholic, 80% of the students were non-Catholic and 100% were minorities (DeBrosse, 1995). On the other hand, the students at St. Teresa's tend to be members of the parish and white.

Further, in any parish that adopts the cost-based, need-based model, it is possible that a low-income, non-Catholic family will pay less than a family that has supported the parish for years. In addition, cost-based tuition can

bring unexpected increases in costs to parents. Under the traditional pattern, parishes encouraged parents to contribute to the Sunday collection at least as much as the difference between tuition and the real cost of education. At least one parish in Dayton required parents whose children attended the school to fill out intent cards indicating how close they could come to making up the \$800 tuition subsidy their child received. Some people may have subtracted these donations from their taxable income even though the Internal Revenue Service may not have accepted the validity of such a deduction during an audit.

FILL-EVERY-DESK

The second program that could build on cost-based tuition is called Fill-Every-Desk. In 1995, the teachers at Dayton Catholic Elementary faced the likelihood that their school would close. Although the school had places for 270 students, only 96 students enrolled for the 1995-96 school year. The Fill-Every-Desk program originated with a visit from the president of a local bank. He emphasized to the teachers and the principal that the fixed costs would remain no matter if the desks were empty or full. He asked, "Why not fill the empty seats?" If the new students pay even one dollar, it would represent an increase in revenue.

The teachers found out that within the neighborhoods served by the school there were about 8,000 children whose average family income was \$13,000. These conditions suggested that a targeted (need-based) approach was needed to induce more students to enroll. Parents and teachers walked through the neighborhoods and visited families in June and July, 1995. Teachers discussed academic programs, led school tours, and assisted parents in filling out registration and tuition aid forms required by cost-based, need-based tuition. As more students enrolled, the cost per pupil dropped from about \$2,300 to about \$2,140. In celebration of this success, the school returned \$110 to 50 families (Christopher, 1996).

Fill-Every-Desk worked for two reasons. One was economy of scale. As long as costs were fixed, the school did not hire a new teacher or open a new classroom, and adding new students reduced the cost to teach each child. Another reason for its success was that the Ohio State Department of Education paid the school for such things as auxiliary service on a per pupil basis. Thus, even if parents paid only a nominal tuition, some extra monies came into the school (Dayton Area Commission on Education, 1996).

Unfortunately, Fill-Every-Desk alienated two groups of people. Public school administrators complained that Catholic school teachers walked the neighborhoods recruiting public school students away from their schools (Williams, personal comment, 1995). Parents in other parishes pointed to Dayton Catholic and said that the archdiocese seemed to be more interested

in helping non-Catholic African American children than in supporting long time Catholics (Parent interview, 1995).

Despite these complaints, the officials in the Catholic school office touted the success of Dayton Catholic Elementary teachers. They enlisted three other inner-city schools in a similar program for the next year (Dayton Area Commission on Education, 1996).

In the spring of 1996, teachers and principals from Holy Family, Resurrection, and Our Lady of the Rosary Schools met with the teachers of Dayton Catholic to learn what those teachers had done and how to do it themselves. Each of these three schools paid \$3,000 to join the campaign. Although the actual cost was \$4,000, the Miami Valley Catholic Educational Council advanced \$1,000 for each school that joined the program. This money went to hire consultants who would provide materials and target likely homes from which to recruit students (Dayton Area Commission on Education, 1996).

The results of Fill-Every-Desk in 1996 were as encouraging as they had been in 1995. The program was a success even when some schools increased less dramatically than others. Enrollment in Holy Family and Resurrection schools rose by 50% so that both had over 200 students when the 1996-97 academic year began. Our Lady of the Rosary School enjoyed an increase of about 18% when its enrollment rose to over 200. Furthermore, Dayton Catholic added 12 students, pushing its enrollment to 255 (Dayton Area Commission on Education, 1996).

None of the schools could add teachers or classes. As a result, some of the recruits could not fit into the class to which they were recruited. In many cases, another Catholic school that did not formally join the Fill-Every-Desk program accepted those students. Consequently, one school that was not formally a part of the program, Corpus Christi, suffered a far less serious decline in students than it would have had the other schools not made the recruiting effort. In 1996-97, Corpus Christi lost 18% of its enrollment, dropping to 174 from 214 the year before. Had the school not accepted students discovered by Fill-Every-Desk, its decline would have reached 23% (Dayton Area Commission on Education, 1996).

Corpus Christi teachers and parishioners may have had good reasons not to join Fill-Every-Desk. The enrollment in the school was weak but it was not declining at an alarming rate. Most of the students recruited by the program were non-Catholic. The teachers and the parishioners may have decided that they wanted to retain the traditional aim of religious formation of children who had already accepted Catholicism. However, the success of the program was such that, in 1997, Catholic school teachers and faculty met at Corpus Christi to enlist more schools in the Fill-Every-Desk program (Dayton Area Commission on Education, 1997).

Few educators can resist a change in educational aims when the exis-

tence of the school is in doubt. For example, one of the most traditional parishes in the city was part of Fill-Every-Desk. Holy Family is the only church in the Dayton area that has archdiocesan permission to celebrate the Latin Mass. However, the situation for Holy Family School was desperate; it had to find more students or close.

EVANGELIZATION

More important, the Catholic school officials and the members of the Dayton Area Education Commission did not see the shift in types of students served in these inner-city schools as a threat. In September 1996, the Dayton Area Education Commission reviewed an archdiocesan program for evangelization. The goal of the program was to create an evangelizing atmosphere throughout the school and parish utilizing all possible opportunities to share the Good News with active Catholics, inactive Catholics, unchurched persons, and persons of other faiths. The Education Commission saw the recruitment of non-Catholic students as such an opportunity. They spoke of the need for change with the times and new paradigms to meet new problems (Dayton Area Commission on Education, 1996).

Evangelization efforts are certainly not new to the Church. In his 1975 encyclical, *Go and Make Disciples*, Pope Paul VI defined evangelization as bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity in a way that transforms society. In 1988, Cincinnati's Archbishop Pilarczyk distributed a pastoral urging parishioners to become evangelists; and in 1990, Pope John Paul II called for a decade of evangelization. The aim is not to recruit Christians as much as it is to demonstrate to all people the love of God and God's concern for all people. Ultimately, perhaps, this could lead to a Christian renewal.

Frequently, such a model has been applied to Catholic schools in urban areas. For example, in 1994, a Franciscan Sister became the principal of St. Francis Seraph School in the disadvantaged area of Cincinnati called Over the Rhine. Out of the total student body of 145, only 14 students were Catholic. She justified her work by saying she was evangelizing, which she defined as trying to teach the children alternative ways to deal with bad situations (Hyle, 1994).

CHOICE SCHEMES AND EDUCATIONAL VALUES

While evangelization did not arise out of cost-based, need-based tuition or Fill-Every-Desk, those financial strategies did reinforce its application in Catholic schools. Inasmuch as these methods introduced students from non-religious families to the schools, the religious nature of the schools had to change. At the least, a focus on moral development replaced the traditional

spiritual growth emphasis.

However, other forces helped the process of secularization. There are serious questions about the extent to which Catholic schools enhance the faith life of their students. Some researchers contend that Catholic students in Catholic high schools are more likely to attend Mass and to consider themselves religious than their peers who attend other high schools (Convey, 1992). However, other researchers found conflicting evidence. For example, from 1976 to 1986, Patrick McNamara (1992) conducted in-depth interviews of graduating seniors from a Southwestern Catholic high school. While he found a few atheists and some traditional believers, he noted that 58% of the students had learned to be selective about their faith. That is, they agreed with some aspects of Catholicism while disagreeing with others. Ironically, the more controversial the issue, such as sexual behavior, the less likely the students were to think that religious leaders had any right to say anything about it. Importantly, he found that retreats and service programs served as countercultural experiences that opened the students to seeing economic questions as part of a larger vision of the human family (McNamara, 1992).

Thus, it may be that the academic programs of Catholic schools, simply by the nature of their emphasis on critical thinking, served evangelization more than religious formation outcomes. Furthermore, at least one group of researchers contends that Vatican II played a role in strengthening the emphasis on evangelization. Bryk and his colleagues (1993) point out that *The Declaration on Christian Education* urged Catholics to enliven their schools with a spirit of freedom and charity. Following this ideal, the U.S. bishops urged Catholic schools to be such communities that from them would flow service to all humankind. Bryk believes that since Vatican II was committed to pluralism, it opened the school to teach religion less from a position of doctrines to be lived and more from an orientation of dialogue and encounter.

In all, many forces served to change the aims of the Catholic schools. Nonetheless, the experience of Dayton-area Catholic schools with a choice scheme for finances shows that school finance plays a part. At best, choice schemes of school finance encourage blending the predominant values of the surrounding community with the ideals of the school. In this way, the customer will buy what the school offers.

There may be a final test to see how much the values of the school can blend with the values of the community. This is the case in relation to the teachers in the schools such as Dayton Catholic Elementary that adopted Fill-Every-Desk. In the 1995-96 school year, teachers in this school had 12 years' average length of service, yet the average salary was only \$24,200. Although they had benefits, neither their health plans nor their retirement programs compared favorably to those of teachers in the public schools. Worse, those teachers in Dayton Catholic could not earn extra money during June and July because they were recruiting students during those months. The only com-

pensation they received for those efforts was the knowledge that they could teach again next year.

This is not a new problem. Nationwide, Catholic teachers subsidized the schools and kept tuition low by accepting inferior salaries for many years. As vowed religious left the schools, the problems spread to the members of teachers' families who subsidized the schools by agreeing to live on less money than that paid to teachers in public schools. In the case of choice-based financing, the worst aspects of a business model have followed the use of professional financial planning.

CONCLUSION

The Dayton experience raises questions about the ways that the school finance constructs of adequacy, equity, and choice apply to Catholic schools. First, for advocates of Catholic schools, the adequacy construct has been historically linked to shared Catholic beliefs (Marsden, 1994). As the finance reforms brought more non-Catholics into Dayton Catholic schools, there has been a renewed emphasis on evangelization. While evangelization is related to religion, it represents a focus that is less denominational. Therefore the notion of what is adequate has changed as a result of the new financing schemes.

Second, the cost-based tuition strategy sought to equalize the tuition among Catholic schools. However, the new financing scheme generated resentment among some of the wealthier parishes. In this case, some Catholics concluded that the new financial strategy cost them money just as conservative critics complained about efforts to equalize the finances among public schools in cities and suburbs. Thus, promoting equity in financial schemes within the Catholic system can create tensions among parishes with different financial means, just as the integration of equity-based finance has created tension within the state public school systems.

Third, when the Fill-Every-Desk plan was coupled with cost-based pricing, it functioned as a targeted need-based scholarship or voucher. Since this strategy worked surprisingly well, it demonstrates that conservatives are correct in saying that many inner-city families would like a sense of choice. However, it also demonstrates that the conservatives may be wrong in thinking that choice-based schemes will substantially increase the alternatives available to people. Although many Catholic educators contend that the religious mission of the school is the reason that non-Catholics seek to come to the school, at best, this is only partly true. Studies of the reasons why parents choose Catholic education have long shown that for all parents academic quality and discipline are very important and most important for many parents (Convey, 1992). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that Catholic schools will continue to emphasize these nonreligious qualities as they seek to attract

and serve increasing numbers of non-Catholics. Consequently, the liberals may be correct in thinking that vouchers will favor private schools with respect to the flow of revenues. However, just as choice-based schemes favor private schools, they may favor particular groups of people. If choice schemes award aid based on financial need, as is the case in the Catholic-funded choice scheme in Dayton and the public-funded choice scheme in Cleveland, then students from poor families also benefit. However, vouchers may lead to private and religious schools becoming more like public ones.

Of course, any study can claim but limited applicability. The conditions in Dayton may not mirror those conditions elsewhere. However, the members of the Dayton Area Education Commission may be correct in deciding that programs such as Fill-Every-Desk and cost-based tuition will change the paradigm of Catholic education. If that is a possibility, it is vitally important that values and beliefs—and especially the ways they change as a result of new finance schemes—be a central concern in research on the new wave of school choice schemes now underway.

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