

## REVIEW OF RESEARCH

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# EXPLORING VALUES IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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*The past 30 years have been a busy time for Catholic school researchers. Once focused almost exclusively on historical research, Catholic school research in recent years has diversified and multiplied to include new descriptive and comparative studies. This article summarizes the findings of the most significant studies from 1966-2002 concerning values, the Catholic school effect, and apparent sector effects. Suggestions for future research are also proffered.*

This review of research considers the historical, descriptive, and comparative research about values in the Catholic school, including a recent research focus on the internal organization of the Catholic school, shared values, and conflict in aims and purposes. Prior to the mid-1960s, research on Catholic schools was predominantly historical. From 1966 to 1982, studies were basically descriptive. In the early 1980s, research was comparative. The body of literature from the mid-1960s until the present indicates that academic, religious, social, and family values are characteristics of Catholic schools. From the late 1980s, research began to focus on internal organization. The literature from 1982 to the present, in particular, supports the notion that a primary characteristic of the Catholic school is a set of values shared by students, parents, and staff at the school. Although there is ample research to suggest the presence of shared values in the Catholic school, there is also research which indicates that there is disagreement in regard to aims or purposes of the Catholic school. Additionally, this research suggests that students, parents, and staff in Catholic schools differ in their values and aspirations.

As recently as 2000, Youniss, Convey, and McLellan in *The Catholic Character of Catholic Schools*, stated that “one would think that with all the publicity given to Catholic schools since the 1980s, we would know much more about them, how they operate. Yet, when one looks at published studies, few details are available” (pp. 7-8). The empirical studies are few and include those of Greeley (1982) and Coleman and Hoffer (1987), which are based on data collected by the federal government. The best of the studies

that offer valuable hypotheses about the features that make the Catholic school successful and distinctive is that of Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993).

## A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Prior to the mid-1960s, research on Catholic schools was predominantly historical and descriptive. There was little research on the effects of Catholic education (Convey, 1992; Fichter, 1958; Greeley & Rossi, 1966). The first major research on Catholic education was published in 1966. With the publication of *The Education of Catholic Americans* (Greeley & Rossi, 1966) and *Catholic Schools in Action* (Neuwien, 1966) extensive study on Catholic schools became available. These early studies as well as *Catholic Schools in a Declining Church* (Greeley, McCready, & McCourt, 1976) were predominantly descriptive.

Neuwien's (1966) *Catholic Schools in Action*, also known as the Notre Dame Study, reported data from about 84% of the Catholic secondary schools and 90% of the elementary schools in the United States. The collected data were used to examine achievement, finances, and enrollment. The data were based on questionnaires completed by principals and teachers. The data were collected from all dioceses except those in New Jersey. Statistics were compiled from 9,451 elementary schools and 2,075 secondary schools. Thirteen dioceses were chosen for in-depth study, from which 218 elementary schools and 104 high schools were sampled based on size, ownership, student organization, students' socioeconomic background, school location, and ratio of lay faculty to religious faculty. In the study, data from 8th and 12th grade students were obtained by on-site observers. In addition, 23,502 randomly sampled parents of 1st, 8th, and 12th grade students provided information.

With regard to achievement, the Notre Dame Study (Neuwien, 1966) showed that the scores of Catholic secondary students were higher than the national norm. Moreover, many graduates went to college. The average scores of high school seniors were in the 55th to the 79th percentile on the subtests of the Metropolitan High School Battery. The study showed a successful picture of the academic achievement of Catholic school students. With regard to the financial data, tuition was charged at approximately 75% of the secondary schools and approximately 50% of the elementary schools. An important consideration in the operating expenses of the school was the hiring of additional lay teachers. Enrollment data showed that growth had slowed since the appreciable increases between 1953 and 1959; by 1962, enrollment increased by 9% in the elementary schools and by 20% in the high school.

The Notre Dame Study (Neuwien, 1966) also tried to measure students'

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knowledge of Church law and doctrine, attitudes on religious moral values, family values, social-civic responsibilities, educational goals, and opinions on Catholic school goals and influences on their religious development. The religious understanding, values, attitudes, and opinions of students were measured in a three-part survey called the Inventory of Catholic School Outcomes (ICSO). Students completed a survey that assessed their understanding of Catholic Church law, doctrine, and liturgy; in the first part of ICSO, students chose one of five different responses which represented five different levels of understanding on items of belief, moral teaching, and worship. The survey found that variables such as family background influenced students' attitudes. It also found a relationship between the family's religiosity and the students' attitudes. Predictors of students' attitudes included the extent of their religious practice and their own religiosity; 48.3% of the students surveyed indicated that parental example was the most important influence on their religious development. The inventory found that students were satisfied with their Catholic school education and believed their schools met the academic, moral, and vocational goals.

The study has been criticized for its structure and limitations (Conley, 1966). The Notre Dame Study tended to describe rather than evaluate. Statistics to support findings were absent from the research. The study lacked a random sample and was criticized for selectivity bias and absence of appropriate controls. However, McCluskey (1968) believed the most important contribution of the Notre Dame Study was the Inventory of Catholic School Outcomes which measured students' religious knowledge, values, and attitudes.

Although *Catholic Schools in Action* (Neuwien, 1966) does not mention shared values specifically, it provides documentation of the importance that parents place on the religious/moral values and academic values of the Catholic school. When parents rated 31 statements as goals of Catholic education, there was agreement between what parents considered important and what they believed Catholic schools achieved; namely, academic goals and religious/moral goals.

## **RESEARCH ON THE EFFECT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

Because of the American emphasis on education and the size and importance of the Catholic school system, Greeley and Rossi (1966) published a systematic study of the effects of Catholic education, *The Education of Catholic Americans*. The major focus of this study was a comparison between Catholic students who went to Catholic schools and those who did not. Their research indicated that those who went to Catholic schools were better

Catholics. A better Catholic was defined by such behaviors as attending Mass, receiving Communion, going to confession, accepting the right of the Church to teach, knowing the official Church teachings, and being more charitable. The researchers found the differences between those who attend Catholic school and those who do not “impressive” and these differences were “statistically significant” (p. 54). In order to measure religious practice, Greeley and Rossi developed a Sacramental Index; 37% of Catholic adults who were educated entirely in Catholic schools scored highly on this index, while only 14% of Catholic adults who had no Catholic school education scored highly on this index. In addition to finding that those who attend Catholic schools were better Catholics, Greeley and Rossi found that the school can contribute to the development of value-oriented behavior only when the family reinforces the values of the school.

*Catholic Schools in a Declining Church* (Greeley et al., 1976) replicated *The Education of Catholic Americans* (Greeley & Rossi, 1966) in order to examine whether the effectiveness of the Catholic school had changed since the first National Opinion Research Center (NORC) study of 1963. Greeley et al. (1976) gave five reasons for studying Catholic schools: (a) they are a superb laboratory to study the conditions under which value-oriented education is effective; (b) they are an alternative to public education; (c) they are a laboratory to study the circumstances under which specific goals are or are not achieved; (d) they are concerned with the transmission of values which may or may not be shared by family, peers, or mass media; and (e) they are a major matter of public policy debate.

The replication enabled researchers to establish a relationship between the effectiveness of a value-oriented education and the survival of a Catholic school system during a time of great pressure in the Church and society (Greeley et al., 1976); the pressures were due to the Second Vatican Council, the papal encyclical, *Humanae Vitae* (Paul VI, 1968), the Civil Rights Movement, and the Vietnam War. The 1963 NORC study found that Catholic schools successfully promoted activity in Church organizations, generated ethical values and transmission of the official views of the organization (Greeley et al., 1976). In replicating the study, the researchers found that the correlation between the number of years of attending Catholic school and adult financial contributions, participation in church functions, positive attitude toward church leaders, and prayer increased; the correlation between the number of years in Catholic school and Mass attendance, celebrating sacraments, acceptance of formal church teachings, and respect for the Magisterium, the teaching authority of the Church, decreased. Two important conclusions of *Catholic Schools in a Declining Church* (Greeley et al., 1976) were that Catholic education is more important than parental religiosity for predicting adult religiosity and Catholic schools were more important

than they were at the time of the earlier study; Catholic schools are more important in a time of crisis than in a time of stability.

The importance of the studies of Greeley and his associates during this period was that they measured the effects of a value-oriented Catholic education. The research provided evidence that the Catholic schools had an effect on the religious attitudes and practices of those who had graduated from them. In later studies, Greeley (1985, 1990) reviewed the findings and suggested that Catholic schools have an effect on those who attend them because of a closeness to the Catholic community that the experience of attending a Catholic school generates. Thus, the findings in these early studies on a Catholic school effect anticipate Coleman's theory that the Catholic school is strengthened by and contributes to a functional community based on shared religious values.

Schneider, Rice, and Hoogstra (2004) found that schools that emphasize participation in clubs and activities could help adolescents develop altruistic behaviors even if there is not a strong religious emphasis in their families. The results of their research support the recommendation that schools need to give young people the opportunity to exercise moral judgment, ethical behavior, and care and concern for others. This recent research suggests that schools can aid young people in developing values such as altruism, judging morally, behaving ethically, and caring and showing concern for others.

## COMPARATIVE STUDIES

In the 1980s, the major research on the effectiveness of the Catholic schools focused on a comparison with the public schools. Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore (1982b) found that students in Catholic schools scored better on achievement tests in reading, vocabulary, and mathematics than comparable students in public schools. Data used were from *High School and Beyond*, a longitudinal study of U.S. high school seniors and sophomores; 36 sophomores and 36 seniors were drawn randomly from the students enrolled in each selected school. Students completed questionnaires for 1 hour and took a battery of tests prepared by the Educational Testing Service with a testing time of approximately 1.5 hours.

After controlling for background characteristics such as family income, education of mother and father, race, whether or not the family was of Hispanic origin, number of siblings, presence of both parents, and whether the mother was working before or when the child was in elementary school, the researchers found that students in Catholic schools had higher scores on tests measuring cognitive outcomes.

The researchers attributed the higher cognitive outcomes to the disciplinary climate, student behavior, and course work; the factor, which made the

most difference, was the behavior of students in the school as a whole. Four major conclusions by Coleman et al. (1982b) were: (a) the somewhat greater effectiveness of Catholic schools relative to public schools in their sample; (b) Catholic schools were beneficial to the disadvantaged; (c) higher levels of discipline and more rigorous academic demands account for the differences between the private and public school level of achievement; and (d) Catholic schools do not have more of a segregating effect than do the public schools.

The findings of Coleman et al. (1982b) raised many criticisms which included reliability and validity of test scores, selectivity bias, and the validity of the "common school" hypothesis (Cain & Goldberger, 1983; Noell, 1982). According to Noell, Catholic school students did no better nor worse than public school students except for a statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) advantage on sophomore reading tests. Cain and Goldberger questioned the reliability of the test scores because of the brevity of the subtests in reading, vocabulary, and mathematics and because of the elementary content of the tests that measured high school achievement. They also questioned the regression models and statistical inferences. In regard to the "common school" hypothesis, Cain and Goldberger made two claims: (a) Catholic schools are no more effective than public schools in reducing achievement disparities among low and high socioeconomic students and (b) the results that supported the "common school" hypothesis are merely due to the selectivity of Catholic schools with respect to the students that they enroll.

Morgan (1983) used a new data set to address the finding of Coleman et al. (1982b) that the average Catholic school produces higher achievement than the average public school. Using data from the *National Longitudinal Surveys of Youth Labor Market Behavior*, Morgan found that there is little difference in the amount of learning produced in public and Catholic schools when the appropriate background and curriculum controls are introduced. Coleman et al. (1982a) addressed the criticisms of Noell (1982) and Cain and Goldberger (1983) in "Achievement and Segregation in Secondary Schools: A Further Look at Public and Private School Differences." Coleman and Hoffer (1983) answered additional criticisms of Cain and Goldberger and offered a critique of Morgan's analysis in "Response to Taeuber-James, Cain-Goldberger and Morgan."

Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) claimed that Jencks (1985) offered the most balanced summary to the controversy: "The accumulated evidence indicates that average achievement is somewhat higher in Catholic high schools....Catholic high schools may be especially helpful for disadvantaged students" (p. 58).

In *Catholic Schools and Minority Students*, Greeley (1982) found that Black and Hispanic students in Catholic high schools exhibited higher academic effort and achievement than their public school counterparts. The

higher achievement was due in part to the characteristics of the school; these characteristics included quality of instruction, discipline, and religious community ownership. Research from 1965 through the 1990s indicated that minority and at-risk students benefit from Catholic schools in the area of educational outcomes (McGrath, 2002).

In "The 'Eliting' of the Common American Catholic School and the National Education Crisis" (1998), Baker and Riordan claimed that Catholic schools are becoming proprietary schools that educate a growing number of students who do not consider themselves religious. They suggested that academic preparation is more important than indoctrination in the Catholic faith. They believed that the Catholic schools were on the verge of an identity crisis and that the Catholic schools had drifted from their original mission. Baker and Riordan cited a 1996 U.S. Department of Education study that found 45% of Catholic high school principals identify "religious development of the student" as their school's primary mission. The same study found that almost one third of the principals see academic excellence as the chief objective of their schools. Baker and Riordan suggested that Catholic schools are accepted as academically viable institutions and stated that the public message has become that "Catholic schools produce higher achievement than public schools" (p. 21). Baker and Riordan also suggested that some Catholic leaders are worrying about the pressure to increase the academic focus and move away from the religious training. In their conclusion, Baker and Riordan stated that there is still something to learn from the Catholic schools of the 1990s for the improvement and reformation of the public schools. They found the better-focused curriculum and the higher sense of spirit among faculty and parents useful.

In "The So-Called Failure of Catholic Schools," Greeley (1998) contended that Baker and Riordan distorted the history of the Catholic schools. Greeley believed that the study was based on a single new finding that the social class composition of the Catholic school had changed and stated that evidence in literature proves that Catholic schools were successful both academically and religiously in the past. Greeley (1998) argued that Baker and Riordan disregarded the work of other schools and noted their failure to quote in greater detail Bryk and associates (1993). Greeley (1998) also argued that Baker and Riordan misrepresented the work of himself and others when they stated that the most notable effects of Catholic schools are limited to the economically disadvantaged.

Riordan (2000) presented a comprehensive view of the Catholic high school population from 1972 to 1992 and found the enrollment more economically elite, more non-Catholic, and more diverse. Riordan's findings challenged the notion that Catholic schools mainly serve the upwardly mobile as they had in the past when they educated the predominantly

Catholic immigrant urban working class.

Hallinan (2000) stated that Catholic schools have a small but consistent academic advantage over public schools. Carbonaro (2003) pointed to findings that differ from prior research, suggesting that while Catholic high school students outperform public high school students by a modest amount, the advantage of this Catholic school effect may be limited to the high school. Carbonaro's findings suggested that Catholic school students do not enjoy the same advantage in learning when they begin their school careers as they do when they finish high school. Most recently, Ellison and Hallinan (2004) concluded that Catholic schools are more successful than public schools in using ability grouping to promote student learning. Ellison and Hallinan also concluded that the Catholic mission to include all people leads to "a more inclusive environment that supports and helps all students to be successful academically" (p. 126). The research indicated that Catholic school students outperform their public school counterparts at all ability group levels.

These comparative studies provide provocative evidence that support some claims that Catholic schools are generally more successful in promoting academic achievement than their public and private school counterparts. The research attributes this greater achievement to discipline, student behavior, teachers' expectations, and structured coursework, although many methodological issues remain unresolved. The research suggests that part of the Catholic school effect is academic success. While academic achievements are important to consider when we look at the Catholic school effect, Catholic schools are more than academic institutions. Is there evidence that religious practice, knowledge and attitudes also are part of the Catholic school effect?

## **INTERNAL ORGANIZATION OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

In the late 1980s, research began to focus on the internal organization of Catholic schools. Greeley (1982) suggested that the environment and community were important to the effectiveness of the Catholic schools; Catholic schools seemed to have an effect on those who attend them through the closeness to the Catholic community that attendance at a Catholic school generates; and the Catholic school integrated youth more closely into the institutional community of the Catholic Church. "Research demonstrates that it is precisely the 'community-forming' component of Catholic education which makes them [Catholic schools] effective" (Greeley, 1990, p. 178).

It was this theme of the importance of the Catholic school's community, which was developed by Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore (1982b). In 1987,

Coleman and Hoffer published a second study of the questions raised in the 1982 study; the findings were much the same but they were able to elaborate on the reason for the Catholic school advantage. The 1987 study made use of longitudinal data gathered in 1982 and 1984 rather than the cross-sectional data from 1980 that was used in their 1982 study. In *Public and Private High Schools: The Impact of Communities* (1987), Coleman and Hoffer traced the advantage to the community. They concluded that the success of Catholic schools is a result of the fact that the Catholic schools are a functional community.

Bryk and Driscoll (1988) presented an alternative view of community. In their research they built on the classical theory of Tonnies (1965), who provided two seemingly contradictory sociological concepts for looking at the school as community: "Gemeinschaft or communal relationships based on subjective understandings...and Gesellschaft or associative relationships based on rational assessments of common interests or purposes" (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988, p. 9). Bryk and Driscoll indicated both relationships are present in the school community: Gesellschaft is evident when students, faculty, and administrators work together to achieve the goals of the school, and Gemeinschaft is evident in the traditions, rituals, and values that tie individuals to the school community.

Coleman and Hoffer built on the sociological concept of school as community and distinguished between a functional community and a value community. Coleman and Hoffer (1987) suggested the notion of shared values as present in a value community and in a functional community. They distinguished between the two communities. The value community is characterized by a consistency of values among those who choose a particular school. This consistency of values results from the fact that participants choose a particular school because it represents characteristics they value, such as academic excellence, a certain philosophy of education, and a certain school environment. A school can have a value consistency and not be a functional community, which implies something more. Coleman and Hoffer (1987) noted that the success of the Catholic school is the result of the fact that the Catholic school is a functional community. In a functional community we have value consistency and shared relationships among those who choose a particular school. Participants know one another outside the school and share membership in overlapping organizations. Coleman and Hoffer argued that religious schools, such as Catholic schools, have both value consensus and preexisting social networks, often created from parish ties. In a Catholic school, which is a functional community, most of the people with whom the students interact in and outside of the school have multiple relationships with multiple stakeholders.

Such overlapping ties produce a value consistency between students and their friends, between parents and their friends, and between children and parents. Thus, Coleman and Hoffer (1987) lead us to look at shared values in the

following ways: the sharing that takes place in the everyday interpersonal interactions; the sharing that takes place at worship, work, and play; and the sharing that takes place in the student-parent-faculty interaction and involvement. The Coleman and Hoffer study points us to explore shared values as they promote social relationships, particularly those outside of the school.

Kreitmeyer (1997) suggested that Catholic education must take the notion of community seriously, telling us that at the core of Catholic identity there is “a religious and social vision in which the idea of community plays a defining role” (p. 30). Groome (1998) insisted that one of the values that will save schools is an emphasis on community, an understanding that we need and must care for each other in order to offset the reigning “me” attitudes.

Sikkink (2004) suggested that discipline maintained by the principal is a distinctive religious school effect. This research finds that this effect is “consistent with the claim that religious schools operate within a stronger functional community” (p. 361). Sikkink found that the communal form of organization in religious schools fosters a collective identity and a strong normative climate. According to Sikkink, the experience of this communal form of organization in the religious schools provides an education for civic life.

There is a greater likelihood of school being experienced as community in Catholic schools for several reasons. The religious nature or purpose of the school provides a mission, which fosters certain goals. There are common academic experiences and a commitment on the part of teachers who view their work as ministry. Parents have definite expectations, which include a high quality academic program and a formal program of religious education.

## **SHARED VALUES AND CONFLICT WITHIN THE INTERNAL ORGANIZATION OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

Bryk and associates (1993) believed that the comparative research of Coleman et al. (1982b) and that of Greeley (1982, 1985, 1987, 1990) did not tell enough about the internal organization of the Catholic school. Their research focused on how aspects of the internal organization of the Catholic school affect its overall effectiveness. In *Effective Catholic Schools: An Exploration*, Bryk, Holland, Lee, and Carriedo (1984) described those features which were central to the Catholic character of the seven schools they visited. The researchers combined survey data from all Catholic schools that participated in *High School and Beyond* with field data from seven Catholic high schools in five archdioceses and one diocese. The superintendent of schools in each of the six dioceses was asked to nominate good schools that Bryk and colleagues might find interesting to visit.

In their studies, Bryk et al. (1984) examined the conflicts and shared values of Catholic schools. The researchers found a conflict over how the schools are Catholic. This conflict was observed in the difference between a traditional form of religious instruction and a Socratic form of religious instruction. These conflicting orientations were also present in the content and organization of retreats and in the importance given to apostolic service activities. Conflict was observed between the parents who emphasized the vertical dimension (religion as primarily a relationship with God) of faith and the teachers who gave equal importance to the vertical and horizontal dimensions (the need to care about others and promote social justice) of religion. The conflict can be explained in the change of the school from "Catholic in a narrow, orthodox sense to an ecumenism, which reaches out to minorities and non-Catholics" (p. 101).

The researchers reported a consensus among teachers, students, and parents about the purposes of the school. Bryk et al. (1984) found that the Catholic character of the school was reflected in the "commitment of students, parents and faculty to a shared set of humanistic values" (p. 15). They found that each of the Catholic high schools offered a traditional curriculum with an emphasis on core academic courses. The study found a consensus among educators regarding academics. Teachers had high expectations of all students and took an interest in the personal lives of their students. The research found that students were relatively homogeneous in their "commitment to actively engage in the instructional process and the life of the school" (p. 102). Their research concluded that "the consensus of values extends beyond academic goals to a broad set of purposes for the school: there is ample space for concerns about building community, human relations, social justice, and racial harmony" (p. 102). These findings as well as findings from additional research and investigation were brought together in *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993). The study argued that a common core of academic experience with limits to student choice, the idea of the Catholic high school as community, and the influence of an ideology that shapes the actions of its members contribute to the overall effectiveness of the Catholic school. Bryk and associates (1993) showed that the curricular structure is quite homogeneous and argued that the academic organization is the mechanism which transforms background differences into achievement differences among students.

Bryk et al. (1993) argued that the idea of the Catholic high school as a community is grounded in the shared understandings about what students should learn and how students and adults should behave. Catholic high schools confidently prescribe a college preparatory curriculum for all of their students and foster rapport between students and teachers. The researchers found evidence of the influence of ideology in the school's academic organ-

ization, in the content of shared values, in survey opinions by students, in the teacher's personal ways, in the teacher's work, and in the principal's leadership role. The researchers believed that schools cannot be renewed without spiritual energy and ideals.

Mulligan (2003) found that Catholic school parents are more involved in the school context than public school parents despite the fact that they have fewer formal opportunities for involvement. This is regrettable, for it suggests that structurally Catholic schools have yet to find ways to involve diverse stakeholders effectively in governance.

Lesko (1988) presented a study on the internal organization of a Catholic high school from the perspective of social analysis. Lesko found that Catholic schools exhibit a "tension between an emphasis on education in skills and self-interested achievement and a religious-based education emphasizing character and development" (p. 19). Lesko argued that the community and the individualistic definition of education would come into direct conflict in any Catholic high school.

## THE CATHOLIC NATURE OF EDUCATIONAL VALUES

Within the research on the outcomes and organizational effectiveness of Catholic schools, there are those studies which provide additional insight into Catholic education and its purpose. This research centers on the importance of the Catholicity of the school. In these studies, the goals of a Catholic school reflect the intellectual, affective, moral, and physical reaches of the person. The goals of a Catholic school must aim at "total student wellness" (Buetow, 1988, p. 93). Thus, we look at a framework that enumerates and names the values. Not all of this work, however, distinguishes between values that are doctrinally Catholic and values compatible with this tradition that may be shared by other believers and non-believers alike.

Some recent work in Catholic education used a framework based on classical humanism. Here, the goal of education is to encourage students to achieve their potential spiritually, mentally, physically, and emotionally. In *The Catholic School: Its Roots, Identity, and Future*, Buetow (1988) claimed that based on Church law, the aim of a Catholic school is the integral formation of a person. The goal of a Catholic education must be the harmonious development of the physical, moral, and intellectual talents of the person.

The values shared in the Catholic school described by Buetow (1988) would include achievement of the maximum point of intelligence, a moral formation to do the will of God, freedom to develop to one's full potential, sensitivity to others, reflection upon meanings, values, and problems, and firm roots with family and bonds with the community.

Like Buetow (1988), studies from the National Catholic Educational

Association from 1985 to 1990 suggested that the values important to the Catholic school demonstrate a commitment to the mental, spiritual, and emotional. These studies provided additional insight on the purposes and definition of a Catholic school. Yeager, Benson, Guerra, and Manno (1985) argued that the common core in the Catholic high school includes mission and sense of community; academic, religious, and co-curricular programs; a caring and disciplined school climate; and a predominantly Catholic staff and student body. Benson and Guerra (1985) defined the effective Catholic school as "one that nurtures a life-orienting faith; it fulfills an academic purpose and simultaneously promotes disposition to service, sparks a passion for justice, and creates a commitment to community" (p. 1).

Guerra, Donahue, and Benson (1990), in studying the non-academic outcomes of the Catholic school argued that the effectiveness of the Catholic school is more than academic achievement. In their research, they found that there are significant value and behavior differences between seniors in Catholic and public schools and made the assumption that the same factors which explain positive academic effects can also explain the other outcomes. In describing the mission of Catholic schools, Guerra et al. included academic learning, a concern about the student's faith, values, lifestyle, and commitment to Church.

Catholic identity according to Cook "encompasses a religious mission as well as academic excellence centered on the liberal arts" (2001, p. 11). Cook described Catholic identity as a three-pronged equation. Catholic school identity equals academic excellence, religious mission, and globalism/multiculturalism. Cook maintained that Catholic schools make Gospel values and mission a priority in selecting, developing, and evaluating faculty and staff.

In 1997, the Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE) focused, as it did in 1977, on the nature and distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school. In *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, the CCE (1997) stated that the Catholic school should educate for a technical and scientific society. At the same time, the Catholic school must impart a Christian formation. The Congregation suggests that in the Catholic school there can be no separation between time for learning and time for formation. The document gave careful attention to fundamental characteristics of the Catholic school such as "a place of integral education of the human person through a clear educational project of which Christ is the foundation; its ecclesial and cultural identity; its mission...; its service...; and its traits" (CCE, 1997, §4).

Church documents are helpful in describing what values are shared among all and whether or not they may be unique to Catholicism or compatible, but not exclusive, to Catholic education. Among the values enumerated are:

- “To develop in the school community an atmosphere animated by a spirit of liberty and charity...[to] orient the whole of human culture to the message of salvation” (Vatican Council II, 1965, §8).
- “Of the educational programs available to the Catholic community, Catholic schools afford the fullest and best opportunity to realize the threefold purpose of Christian education[: mission, community, and service]” (National Conference of Catholic Bishops [NCCB], 1972, §101).
- “Generally these [Catholic] schools are notably successful educational institutions which offer not only high quality academic programs but also instruction and formation in the beliefs, values and traditions of Catholic Christianity” (United States Catholic Conference, 1976, §2).
- “[To integrate] all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught in the light of the Gospel” (CCE, 1977, §37).
- “To help foster community among themselves [staff] and students,...[to introduce] the idea and practice of Christian service,...[to] foster a social conscience sensitive to the needs of all” (NCCB, 1979, §232).
- “The lay Catholic educator is a person who exercises a specific mission within the Church by living, in faith, a secular vocation in the communitarian structure of the school” (CCE, 1982, §24).
- “A Catholic school needs to have a set of educational goals which are ‘distinctive’ in the sense that the school has a specific objective in mind, and all of the goals are related to this objective” (CCE, 1988, §100).
- “The person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ’s teaching: this is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school” (CCE, 1997, §9).

Hunt, Joseph, and Nuzzi (2001) suggested that the question of Catholic identity is still open. Nuzzi (2002) found that “three distinct categories serve to contain all that has been said about the Catholic identity of Catholic schools” (p. 19), detailing three relationships that express the categories. To be Catholic, a school must possess, celebrate, and strengthen a relationship with Christ, the local bishop, and the wider civic and ecclesial community. Nuzzi maintained that the Catholic school is dependent on a relationship with the local bishop, makes Christ present, and is a place where the example and life of Christ is incarnated daily. The Catholic school is essential to the overall educational mission of the Church.

These studies provide additional insight into values. This research looks at values that are Catholic and compatible with the Catholic tradition. However, little research has been done on the religious outcomes of Catholic schools during the past decade and this remains a serious concern (Meegan, Carroll, & Ciriello, 2002). Religion remains the least researched curricular area in the Catholic schools (Hunt et al., 2001).

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