

JESUIT EDUCATION: A CATALYST FOR SOCIAL CHANGE IN AMERICA

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Abstract: This research paper examines the history of American Jesuit Education through a Social Reconstructivist lens. With a mission rooted in Ignatian Spirituality, the Society was often called to serve the most impoverished and isolated members of society. Innovative educators were able to adapt the unique needs of their students in order to provide them the tools necessary for spiritual and educational improvement. Jesuit education reflects a tradition that has grown to provide resources that inform and inspire students to change the injustices they witnessed in American society.

Introduction

Since the *Society of Jesus* was founded in 1541, members of the community, most commonly known as Jesuits, have been instrumental in transforming the communities that embrace them. Although not originally part of his mission in establishing the society, Saint Ignatius has become closely associated with the field of education.¹ The first schools established by the society were meant to educate those looking to join the Jesuits in service “wherever they were needed,”² but as time passed the Reformation demonstrated that there was a need among laity to have a better understanding of the faith. As a result, Jesuit schools were made available for the general populace, and thus the foundation for religious and social change was put in place. It is in this Jesuit tradition that one can view the power that education has over society. In the following essay I will demonstrate how the Society of Jesus has influenced change in American society through the power of education both historically and presently.

Methods

In order to take a more deliberate look at the history of the Jesuits, it will be most helpful to view their efforts in education through a Social Reconstructivist lens. Social Reconstructivism is a philosophy which is perhaps best summarized by Brameld, “Education has two major roles: to transmit culture and to modify culture. When culture is in a state of crisis, the second of these roles—that of modifying and innovating

¹Norman O’Neal, *The Life of Ignatius*. Retrieved January 1, 2007. <http://www.stignatiussf.org.htm> (Accessed April 1, 2012).

² Ibid.

—becomes more important. Reconstructionism is a crisis philosophy.”³ In the following essay I have outlined the major events in Jesuit history, and it is amidst this backdrop that one can clearly see the effects of a Social Reconstructivist philosophy at work. Jesuit history illustrates that when society is in a state of crisis Jesuit educators have met the demands of their environment and effectively transformed the world that surrounded them.

The Colonial Era (1492-1763)

The first Jesuit missionaries to come to the New World arrived in South America and the first Jesuit school was established in Mexico in 1573 in San Pedro.⁴ Although these Spanish Jesuits eventually spread into California, harsh conditions did not allow for schools to develop in the area. Evidence of Jesuit presence in North America is found in the modern day location in and around Saint Charles County, Maryland. Areas such as Saint Mary’s City and Saint Inigoes are marked by the influence of Jesuits in their chapels and Churches. It is here on the 24,500 acres provided by Lord Baltimore to the Jesuits willing to embark on the “adventure” to the New World.⁵ According to Schroth, the community that developed in Maryland was unique because of the community’s Jesuit influence, “Whereas some English colonies, such as Virginia, replicated state church of the mother country, and other, for example Massachusetts, established a congregational model, Maryland offered a different relationship: no established religion and complete tolerance for all Christians.”⁶ It is upon these values which education in Maryland developed.

There is some debate on exactly when the first Jesuit school was established,⁷ but it is clear that the first Jesuit schools were founded with the task in mind of developing a college-level curriculum and were called Manor Schools. Among the first Manor Schools were Calvert Manor, Newton Manor, and Bohemia Manor.⁸ McNally notes, “There can be little doubt that these schools were mainly classical in character, some attention being given to history, geography, and mathematics, for students prepared to enter the

³ Theodore Brameld, *Education as Power*. New York/Chicago/San Francisco/Toronto/London, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc:1965. 75.

⁴ Ángel Santos Hernández, *Los Jesuitas en América*. Editorial Mapfre, Madrid: 1992. 206.

⁵ Raymond A. Schroth, *The American Jesuits: A History*. New York University Press, New York, NY: 2007. 21-24.

⁶ Ibid, 23.

⁷ According to McGucken, there were Jesuits living near the area of Newton as early as 1650, but lack of legitimate sources from the period raise questions about whether or not the school was established by Jesuits. William J. McGucken S.J., PhD, *The Jesuits and Education: The Society’s Teaching Principles, and Practice, Especially in Secondary Education in the United States*. Bruce Publishing Company. New York, NY: 1932.

⁸ William P. McNally, “The Secondary School,” *Essays on Catholic Education in the United States*. Catholic University of America Press, Washington, DC: 1942. 119.

celebrated College of St. Omer in France.” According to McNally, college preparation was an essential goal of Jesuit education even its origins in America, despite the fact that colleges would not arrive until around 1682 in Maryland. Like other schools of the colonial period, the Jesuit Manor schools were established as private institutions targeted at young men of upper-class families with a religious component.

Similar to many of the first settlers, colonial Jesuits faced obstacles and resistance in their pursuits. Despite the hardships, however, the society continued to spread to establish Catholic parishes and schools throughout colonial America. The Society of Jesus was part of colonies in New York and Canada and in each location there were numerous attempts to establish and promote education. Some of these schools failed as a result of disease, lack of resources, and disorganization. There were those that survived however, and it is these establishments that helped to maintain Catholic education and lead the nation into a new period of education history in America.

The Formation of the American Education System (1764- 1947)

In 1773 the Society was suppressed by order of the pope. Chappel, recounts the event saying, “Due to complex theological and political disputes, the Society of Jesus was suppressed beginning in 1759 when Portugal seized all of the Society’s properties within its domain...” Chappel points out that other countries in Europe such as France and Spain had similar reactions to their own Jesuit institutions. Education in America during this period was still largely unstable, and many institutions failed to stabilize in the changing status of America and the Society of Jesus.

In 1789 one Jesuit priest managed to overcome obstacles of a new nation and a controversial society, and founded the first Jesuit institution for higher learning. His name was Father John Carroll and his efforts yielded an institution known today as Georgetown University. The land for the school was purchased 1789. It was a 60-acre plot of land that Carroll dedicated to the purpose of education. Despite his association with the Society of Jesus, Carroll was named the Arch Bishop of Baltimore in 1808.⁹ Carroll used his influence as a bishop and the school’s founder to implement the relatively newly established U.S. constitution in his institution. Georgetown, therefore, was founded in the American model of tolerance, and separation of Church and state. The new school welcomed students of numerous religious backgrounds. Georgetown’s open attitude toward diversity in education (both in accepting students and new ideas) would prove to be an important instrument for social change in the following centuries.

In 1814 the Society of Jesus was restored as an order sanctioned by Rome, and with its re-established status came an infusion in enthusiasm for the traditional mission, and excitement about expanding on the society’s unique educational system as defined in *Ratio Studiorum*. The society’s vigor and unique emphasis would prove to be influential especially in America, a world ripe with new possibilities. As the U.S. grew to establish itself as a nation, and expand its reach beyond the east coast region, Jesuit missionaries also sought to spread their influence in faith and education throughout the nation. While the Jesuits had been active in the U.S. for many years prior to the expansion, the nation’s

⁹ “History” *Georgetown University*. Washington DC: 2010.
<http://www.georgetown.edu/about/history/index.html> (Accessed April 25, 2012).

efforts to move west allowed for new opportunities to spread the Gospel message to both pioneers and natives to the regions.

One region that has a well-documented history of the society's activity is modern-day Saint Louis, Missouri. In 1823, Bishop Louis W. DuBourg¹⁰ of Louisiana made an arrangement with a Jesuit named Charles Neale to set out on an evangelical and educational mission for the frontier to recover the struggling institution, Saint Louis College (Currently Saint Louis University). Like the many other Jesuit institutions that preceded it, Saint Louis College was established with values that education in academic and in Christ should be available to everyone. Of the Jesuit educational leaders present in Missouri, Miros writes,

Jesuit administrators and instructors shared the responsibility of awakening their students' sense of God and a proper relationship to the created world... The Missouri Jesuits' thinking and what developed at Saint Louis University stemmed from a particular model of education, outlined by Ignatius himself in the Constitutions and later crafted into the *Ratio Studiorum*. Important features in Ignatius' Constitutions, developing out of his personal educational experience, included his interests in educating laypersons, a high degree of openness and flexibility, and a concern to serve the common good through a liberal education...¹¹

Education was made available to any male inhabitant in the area, and throughout the region the Jesuit mission continued to take on the responsibility of introducing contemporary ideas on education and Western ideas that would be helpful in translating the Christian message to a new culture. Private schools like Saint Louis College continued to open throughout the expanding nation, the mid 1800's and enjoyed considerable success in their mission as private and public institutions coexisted relatively peacefully during this time.

It was not until the 1840's that private Catholic institutions in especially in urban locations such as New York City would raise questions about the nation's public school system. Tensions between the private and public sectors were largely due to an influx of immigration. Immigration to the United States came in two waves, and each brought more European immigrants from country such as Ireland, Germany, Poland, and Italy. The number of Catholics during the period between 1830 and 1870 doubled, and with the numbers came anti-Catholic sentiments that were manifested throughout society, and specifically impacted American education.

During this period of intense scrutiny, one prominent example of Jesuit social Reconstructivism is demonstrated in the efforts of Fr. John Delany. Delaney's efforts demonstrate an awareness of the importance of student experience in learning

¹⁰ According to University of Saint Louis' historical records, "Du Bourg a friend of Archbishop John Carroll, the first Catholic Bishop in the United States, had served as president of Georgetown College from 1796 to 1798." His close personal connection to the Society of Jesus and priority for quality education led to his motivations in establishing similar facility's in the newly acquired territory.

¹¹ Miros, 239.

characteristic of the social Reconstructivist philosophy. According to Brameld, "...inquiring...is man's capacity to engage actively and critically in the events of his cultural experience- to take them apart, as it were, and to rearrange them in more satisfying, efficient, workable ways than before."¹² In 1940 Fr. Delaney put his understanding of societal strain and education to use as he helped to establish the Xavier Labor School. The school was founded with the idea in mind that the family was the "foundation of the social order."¹³ His goal in developing the labor school was to empower his students to change their most immediate and personal societies- their families. The school helped its students to develop their understanding and participation in pastoral care and counseling, and essentially empowering the laity with many of the tools that had previously been secured by clerics. In order for students to best grasp these ideas, Delaney utilized teaching methods that placed the student in charge of his or her learning. He organized retreats, classroom activities, and workshops. Delany also deviated from the original restrictions of *Ratio Studiorum* and admitted female students. Through participation of both wives and husbands, Delany provided the setting and tools for social change within the family unit to begin through education.

Delaney's efforts may also have been successful because, according to Counts, "Education must be...a form of social action. . . . The educator fails if he refuses to step out of academic cloisters, . . . reject the role of a disinterested spectator, take an active part in shaping events, make selections among social values, and adopt, however tentatively and broadly, some conception of social welfare."¹⁴ Counts highlights the importance of student self-interest in taking social action in light of their education. Delany was able to develop a program that appealed to the interest of his the Jesuit social Reconstructivist aims and the needs of his community.

While the nineteenth century was indisputably a challenging time for the Society of Jesus, and indeed all American Catholics, the Jesuits were able to survive the violence and negativity affiliated with immigration that challenged their way of life. Jesuit institutions and Catholic Schools in general grew in popularity in the twentieth century at least in part because they provided a refuge for those immigrant Catholics looking to preserve their culture.

Education for An Improved Life (1948-1980)

Jesuit efforts during the mid through late nineteenth century continue to demonstrate a relationship between social Reconstructivism that were especially effective in light of Americans' increased interest in educational opportunities. According to O'Hare, "...the years since the second World War were a period of very rapid growth. Americans returning from the war flocked to the campuses of the nation. Throughout the 1950's and 1960's Jesuit institutions expanded in size and complexity."¹⁵ Although

¹² Brameld, 102.

¹³ McDonough, 111.

¹⁴ George S. Counts, *The Social Foundation of Education*. Scribner's Sons Publishing. New York, NY: 1934. (2-3) by means of Michael Schrio, *Curriculum Theory: Conflicting Visions and Enduring Concerns*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA: 2008. 152.

enrollment increased during the period, a large number of the Catholic population did not have access to higher education. In 1951 Fr. Edward Duff found a way to educate Catholics on the issues most relevant to their both faith and society through the magazine called the *Catholic Social Action in American Environment*.

The publication's history began as early as 1947 under the leadership of Father Walter Hogan and was released on a monthly basis as part of a program called the *Institute of the Social Order* (ISO). From its origin, the ISO was envisioned as an "...intellectual powerhouse, formulating, and disseminating policy."¹⁶ According to Peter McDonough, the ISO was developed to mirror the European think tanks, which would like *Action Populaire* in Rheims. McDonough recounts, "Ideally it was to incorporate basic research that would feed in to practical and potentially direct action on social issues."¹⁷ The publication was originally intended only for members of the Society of Jesus, but in 1951 the publication was made public. At the end of the 1950's the editor, Edward Duff began introduced a new series of articles entitled, *Catholic Social Action in American Environment*. These articles specifically targeted the notions of morality in the political sphere. Although perhaps, not the most traditional model of education, the magazine served as a tool for learning and shaping political society. They were especially useful given the historical background of Catholics in the 1950's.¹⁸ Many Catholics during the 1950's were growing in economic prosperity and therefore access to higher education. This magazine served, then, as a way of informing Catholics on how to live morally and inline with their tradition while participating in public life. According to McDonough, this "disjuncture between private morality and public policy..." was a growing issue across the nation, and this publication made both the contemporary issues and the means to social reform accessible to the populace.

Modern Trends in Jesuit Education (1981-Present)

In modern education there seems to be one overwhelming trend that has already defined our era: technology. One way in which one may see technology and education shaping one another is through distance learning. As schools begin to adapt to the idea of online education, each faces the challenge of how to transmit the unique mission and identity of the school without the student necessarily ever placing a foot on the campus. According to McMurtie,¹⁹ Jesuit institutions have begun to address this concern,

¹⁵ O'Hare, 149.

¹⁶ Peter McDonough, "Social Order, Social Reform and the Society of Jesus." *The Jesuit Tradition in Education and Missions: A 450-Year Perspective*. University of Scranton Press, Cranbury, NJ: 1993. (112)

¹⁷ McDonough, 112.

¹⁸ See Part I.

¹⁹ McMurtie, Beth. "Jesuit Colleges Try to Bring Their Values to Online Education." *Chronicle Of Higher Education* 46, no. 36 (May 12, 2000): A45. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed April 15, 2012).

Twenty-four of the country's 28 Jesuit colleges and universities have joined forces to offer online courses through a new network, JesuitNET. The consortium, formally known as the Jesuit Distance Education Network, began as a way to pool resources and attract students, but its success may rest on whether the Jesuit style of education-- which emphasizes personal instruction and attention to ethical issues--can translate into cyberspace.

Although the idea of personalizing distance learning remains a challenge, it is clear that leaders of modern Jesuit Universities maintain that it is goal worth pursuing in order to stay connected to their mission.

Another aspect of technology's impact on education is the evidence of how information has in many respects made the globe a smaller place. Globalization is one issue that has brought the Jesuit Institutions of Higher Education in America together. As of July 1970, twenty-eight Jesuit Colleges and Universities came together to form the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU).²⁰ According to Lowden, globalization is an issue that is of particular interest to the AJCU because of the rich history of missionary work that characterizes the Society of Jesus. Lowden explores the efforts that have been made in the past and the possibilities of what efforts in globalization weighing out the most optimistic and pessimistic possibilities, and concludes that with regard to changing technology and global connectedness the schools founded by Society of Jesus will face a number of advantages and challenges in the future:

All participants believed that in order to maintain the Jesuit tradition on all remaining campuses of the AJCU, emphasis on mission offices is essential. Those institutions that strengthened their mission offices in 2009 will most probably succeed in passing on the Jesuit tradition to the lay administrator-dominant institutions. Most probably, by 2030, the majority of the remaining members of the AJCU will operate under lay administrative leadership as opposed to the centuries-old tradition of Jesuit leadership. Institutional adaptation is critical to the livelihood of all remaining Jesuit institutions...²¹

While it is impossible to say for sure what the destiny of the AJCU or Jesuit Schools in general holds for future, it is certain that despite many obstacles, the Society of Jesus has survived for 500 years. If their ability to adapt and change with the needs of the society of the past is any indication of its survival rate for the future, the Jesuits certainly seem to be here to stay, and with a new means of reaching those societies most in need, the

²⁰ *Jesuit Colleges and Universities*. "About AJCU." Accessed April 15, 2012. <http://www.ajcunet.edu/About-AJCU>

²¹ Melissa Lowden. "Ethnographic Futures Research: The Future of Jesuit Higher Education in the United States." *World Future Review* 2, no. 4: 19-25. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed April 15, 2012). 23-24.

Society of Jesus will no doubt continue their rich history of social action.

Conclusion

From their very beginning as a religious community, the Jesuits were a group of Catholics dedicated to fulfilling the needs of those that surrounded them. The most dynamic Jesuits leaders throughout history were able to guide society to grow into a better place where all could learn about God and themselves. Today, these aims to recognize the evils in the world and address them remain consistent in Jesuit education and mission. It is clear that the Society of Jesus was able to shape the society that surrounded them through the power of education, and I believe that all educators have a similar ability. When faced with social injustice, education takes on the responsibility of equipping students with the information they will need to survive and better society.

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