

# Young Women Imaging God: Educating for a Prophetic Imagination in Catholic Girls' Schools

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# **Young Women Imaging God: Educating for a Prophetic Imagination in Catholic Girls' Schools**

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**YOUNG WOMEN IMAGING GOD:  
EDUCATING FOR A PROPHETIC IMAGINATION  
IN CATHOLIC GIRLS' SCHOOLS**

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Abstract:

This dissertation considers adolescent girls and what they need from an all-girls' Catholic school that will prepare them, not just for college and career, but for life in a world that marginalizes girls and women. More than simply trying to make a case for single-sex schooling for girls, it suggests that the single-sex school is an important site for conversations about what it means for adolescent girls to be adolescent girls. This project names the patriarchal forces that marginalize girls and calls for a pedagogical approach that is rooted in the theological affirmation that adolescent girls are created in the image of God and called to exercise a prophetic imagination. Chapter one introduces the history of all-girls' Catholic secondary schools, a history rooted in the story of women's religious orders and the ministries of these women religious as educators at a time when the education of girls was not valued. Today's all-girls' Catholic schools are informed by this history and the Catholic Church's commitment to honoring the dignity of each student, thus grounding a commitment to a caring and liberative educational approach. Chapter two argues that contemporary adolescent girls, including those who attend these all-girls' Catholic secondary schools, are growing up in a cultural milieu that makes them vulnerable to the effects of the conflicting and impossible expectations to which girls and women are held. Chapter three investigates the *imago Dei* symbol as a theological foundation for fighting this toxic cultural milieu. Taking a cue from feminist

theologians who have explored embodiment and relationality as central expressions of the *imago Dei*, this chapter proposes that creating communities of God's *hesed* (loving-kindness) and resisting injustice are two ways that the *imago Dei* symbol can be expressed so as to best include adolescent girls. Chapter four suggests that, in order to realize this goal of affirming the *imago Dei* in adolescent girls by creating communities of God's *hesed* and resistance to injustice, a feminist prophetic imagination is needed. Drawing on Walter Brueggemann's identification of the prophetic imagination as the twinned process of denouncing the oppressive forces of the dominant culture and announcing a new and more just way of being in the world, it proposes a feminist prophetic imagination that engages in a feminist critique of the cultural milieu that girls experience and the construction of communities based in *hesed* and resistance to injustice. Chapter five takes up the pedagogical challenges of teaching with and for a feminist prophetic imagination. The liberative pedagogy of Paulo Freire and the caring pedagogy of Nel Noddings provide the resources for educating adolescent girls to participate in communities of God's *hesed* and in practices of resistance to injustice. Chapter six returns to the concrete situation of all-girls' Catholic secondary schools and imagines how these schools can speak to a commitment to educating for a feminist prophetic imagination in their mission and reflects on how a feminist prophetic imagination can be expressed and formalized in all Catholic schools.

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**INTRODUCTION**  
**ALREADY BUT NOT YET:**  
**ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN ALL-GIRLS' CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

Over the course of fifteen years as a teacher and administrator in an all-girls' Catholic secondary school, I have become convinced that these schools are important for adolescent girls. They are places that are focused on the flourishing of adolescent girls and, while they are not the right school for every girl, they are a needed option in the educational landscape. Often the focus of scholarship that considers all-girls' schools is on how effective they are: how well they prepare girls for the academic rigors of college, how well they prepare girls for careers in science and math, how well they prepare girls for leadership in college and career, how well they prepare girls to speak up for themselves. In other words, all-girls' schools are evaluated on how well they prepare girls to be compared to or in competition with boys.

While there is value in these measures, there is much more that all-girls' Catholic schools are able to do. The fact that they exist as a part of the institutional Roman Catholic Church plays an important part in understanding their value. The Church's educational philosophy and theological anthropology provide a foundation for all-girls' schools to be an example of what it means to appreciate adolescent girls as they are. At the same time, these schools exist in a Church that marginalizes girls, often judging them unsuitable for leadership because of their gender and unprepared to contribute to the life of the community because of their age. In this context and despite this judgment, all-girls' Catholic schools take girls seriously and make them the exclusive focus of attention. And in a world where girls are often held to unreachable expectations, all-girls' Catholic schools are places where those expectations can be critiqued.



This dissertation considers adolescent girls and what they need from an all-girls' Catholic school that will prepare them, not just for college and career, but for life in a world that marginalizes girls and women. More than simply trying to make a case for single-sex schooling for girls, I see the single-sex school as the site for an important conversation about what it means for adolescent girls to be adolescent girls. I take a feminist approach, calling into question the patriarchal and misogynistic forces that disempower girls and calling for a pedagogical approach that is rooted in the theological affirmation that adolescent girls are created in the image of God and that cultivates a feminist and prophetic imagination – an imagination that enables them to form communities grounded in the Christian ideals of love and justice.

Chapter one of this dissertation reviews the history of all-girls' Catholic secondary schools in the United States, connects that history with the overarching mission of Catholic education, and proposes that the particular mission of all-girls' Catholic secondary schools is a feminist mission, focused on the thriving of adolescent girls. Rooted in the early missions and ministries of women's religious orders, the first all-girls' Catholic academies were founded to provide adolescent girls with educational opportunities that would prepare them to pass on the Catholic faith to their children and to succeed in the social worlds of which they were a part. The schools and the women religious who ran them provided these educational opportunities to girls in a time when the education of young women was often thought unnecessary. Despite the hurdles presented by work on the frontier of the growing nation and resistance from those unconvinced of the value of educating girls, these schools provided their students with as rigorous an education as they could. As both Church and society changed over the more

than two hundred years since the first schools were founded, the all-girls' Catholic secondary schools have changed as well. Girls who attend these schools today are being provided with a high-quality college preparatory education that explicitly names them as leaders in the Church and in the world.

Chapter one also suggests that, since contemporary all-girls' Catholic schools participate in the educational mission of the Church they are, therefore, committed to inherent dignity and value of adolescent girls – as good, valuable, necessary, and created by God – and to preparing these girls for whatever challenges they will face. This educational mission is a feminist mission, even when this is unrealized or unspoken by the school. It is a mission that emphasizes the particular vulnerability of girls as marginalized members of society and proposes that Catholic education has the potential to be liberative and just. All-girls' Catholic schools live out the Church's commitment to a liberative education by inviting girls to think critically about living in a patriarchal society and Church and to propose ways of resisting these injustices. These schools are well-situated to help adolescent girls “to become visible, to have their questions heard, to have their answers listened to, to hear a word of theology that ennobles them, too, and to be sent”<sup>1</sup> into the world to make it a better place.

Chapter two argues that the girls who attend these all-girls' Catholic secondary schools, as well as other Catholic, private, and public schools, confront significant obstacles to their well-being. Adolescent girls, like all adolescents, are growing up in a cultural milieu that tends to isolate them from adults and from the kinds of caring relationships that should help them grow to a healthy adulthood. In addition to this

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<sup>1</sup> Joan D. Chittister, “Reimagining the Catholic School in this New Century,” in *Reimagining the Catholic School*, ed. Ned Prendergast and Luke Monahan (Dublin, Ireland: Veritas, 2003), 27.

isolation, adolescent girls are growing up in a cultural milieu that makes them vulnerable to the effects of what psychologist Stephen Hinshaw calls the triple bind – a set of conflicting and impossible to meet expectations to which girls and women are held.<sup>2</sup> Adolescent girls are expected to excel at nurturing relationships and other traditionally feminine tasks, to compete and succeed in the traditionally masculine areas of leadership, sports, and career, and to do all of this while meeting the highest standards of physical beauty. At the same time that the culture is defining these impossible standards, adolescent girls find that the Church is also a place of marginalization. Because of their age, they are kept from full participation in the life of the Church and, because of their gender, they are excluded from even considering leadership in the Church.

Chapter two also suggests that countering the effects of this cultural milieu is both possible and necessary; it proposes relationality and resistance as two ways of helping girls. In healthy relationships with parents and other caring adults, adolescent girls can develop the hardiness that they need to weather the stressors presented by the triple bind. But, because adolescents tend to be isolated from the adults in their lives, these adults need to be attentive to how communities support adolescents. By treating adolescents as resources to be cultivated instead of problems to be solved, communities in general and schools in particular have the opportunity to provide communities of caring relationships that can foster the healthy growth of adolescent girls. And, within these communities of care, girls can learn how to resist the influence and effects of the triple bind.

Chapter three takes up the *imago Dei* symbol, as one of the foundational symbols of Christian theological anthropology, and proposes ways to understand this symbol in

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<sup>2</sup> Stephen Hinshaw with Rachel Kranz, *The Triple Bind: Saving Our Teenage Girls from Today's Pressures and Conflicting Expectations* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2009), xii-xiii.

relationship to female adolescence. Deeply rooted in the biblical and theological tradition, the statement that human beings are created in the image of God grounds theological reflection on the human person; however, this theological reflection has, until relatively recently, prioritized the experiences of white males and de-centered the experiences of women and people of color. As feminist theologians and theologians of color have engaged in the theological process of deconstruction and reconstruction of this symbol, the *imago Dei* has been re-imagined in new ways – ways that are more life-giving for those who have traditionally been marginalized in the theological tradition. Feminist theologians, in particular, have re-appropriated the concepts of embodiment and relationality as ways of expanding theological understandings of the *imago Dei* beyond its traditional association with rationality and spirituality. However, feminist theologians have not yet considered the role that age plays in understandings of women’s experiences and, therefore, in theological anthropology. By excluding age from consideration, these theologians universalize the experience of middle-aged adult women and lose out on the perspectives and experiences of other age groups.

Taking a cue from feminist theologians who have taken up embodiment and relationality as central expressions of the *imago Dei*, chapter three proposes that viewing the *imago Dei* symbol through the lens of female adolescence offers new insights. Doing so focuses on the thriving and flourishing of adolescent girls, affirms that their identities are made up of multiple stories, and maintains the corporate nature of the symbol. The chapter then suggests that creating communities of God’s *hesed* and resisting injustice are two ways that the *imago Dei* symbol can be expressed so as to best include adolescent girls. Creating communities of God’s *hesed* provides girls with intergenerational

communities that can support them as they realize and grow into their status as created in the image of God. Cultivating practices of resistance provides girls with the examples, models, and resources they need to more effectively resist the triple bind and other experiences of marginalization in the Church and society.

Chapter four suggests that, in order to realize this goal of affirming the *imago Dei* in adolescent girls by creating communities of God's *hesed* and resistance to injustice, a feminist prophetic imagination is needed. Imagination is what makes it possible for human beings to make sense of their world, to critique it, and to propose novel ideas. The exercise of the imagination by an individual leads to creative and interpretive understandings of the world; but social imaginaries – the ways that society as a whole imagines its social existence<sup>3</sup> – also shape the ways that reality is understood. The biblical prophets understood this dynamic and exercised their individual imaginations to call for the shaping of the social imaginaries of ancient Israel. Drawing on Walter Brueggemann's identification of the prophetic imagination as the twinned process of denouncing the oppressive forces of the dominant culture and announcing a new and more just way of being in the world,<sup>4</sup> a feminist prophetic imagination engages in a feminist critique of a patriarchal social imaginary – as experience by adolescent girls in the triple bind – and the construction of communities based in *hesed* and resistance to injustice.

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 23.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 3.

Chapter five takes up the pedagogical challenges of teaching with and for a feminist prophetic imagination. The liberative pedagogy of Paulo Freire<sup>5</sup> and the caring pedagogy of Nel Noddings<sup>6</sup> provide the resources for educating adolescent girls to participate in communities of God's *hesed* and in practices of resistance to injustice. A pedagogy that takes a feminist prophetic imagination seriously is one that invites teachers and schools to educate *with* a feminist prophetic imagination and to educate *for* the development of a feminist prophetic imagination in adolescent girls. This commitment to the cultivation of a feminist prophetic imagination can be a part of the explicit curriculum of a school, but it is even more effectively taught when it informs the mission and identity of the school.

Chapter six returns to the concrete situation of all-girls' Catholic secondary schools and imagines how these schools can teach for this feminist prophetic imagination. All-girls' Catholic schools already do a great deal that would support this pedagogical commitment, including their exclusive focus on the thriving of adolescent girls and their grounding in the Church's theological affirmations of the creation of adolescent girls in the image of God and the call of all people to the work of resisting injustice. However, there are ways that these schools fail to educate for a feminist prophetic imagination – in particular, in the lack of attention given to the impact of the triple bind. This chapter suggests ways that all-girls' Catholic schools can root a commitment to educating for a feminist prophetic imagination in their mission; doing this establishes this pedagogical goal in the long-term agenda of a school and makes it a

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<sup>5</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1989); Paulo Freire, "Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed," in *The Paulo Freire Reader*, ed. Ana Maria Araujo Freire and Donald Macedo (New York: Continuum, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005).

criterion of evaluation for the school. The chapter closes with some reflections on how a feminist prophetic imagination can be expressed and formalized in other types of Catholic schools – for girls in coeducational schools and for boys in all-boys' and coeducational schools. Broader recommendations for how Catholic schools generally can consider how to educate all students with an eye towards those who are marginalized in society and the Church are offered at the close of the chapter.

**1.0 CHAPTER ONE  
GIRLS COME FIRST:  
THE HISTORY AND MISSION OF ALL-GIRLS' CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

In 1799, Archbishop John Carroll, the first bishop in the American colonies, asked three “Pious Ladies” to take over a failing school in Washington, DC that had been established by a group of Poor Clare nuns. Carroll was keen to provide a firm foundation for an American Catholic Church and he understood education to be central to achieving this goal. He envisioned Catholic schools as providing centers of Catholic learning that would make up for the fact that Catholic parishes were few and far between and Catholic priests were rarely available. Catholic schools would provide children with “instruction in the teachings of their church to discourage them from drifting toward one of the many Protestant denominations dotting the national landscape.”<sup>1</sup> The three “Pious Ladies” answered Carroll’s call and, in 1799, established an academy for girls that provided a comprehensive education for the daughters of the middle and upper classes of the new nation. This academy also funded the sisters’ ministry of education to the poor girls of the neighborhood.<sup>2</sup>

For over two hundred years, Georgetown Visitation Academy – now called Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School – has provided students with access to a challenging curriculum that prepared them for whatever their lives had in store. From the beginning, the Visitation sisters saw their mission in the new nation’s capital as one that included service beyond the education of the daughters of the

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret M. McGuinness, *Called to Serve: A History of Nuns in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 69.

<sup>2</sup> McGuinness, *Called to Serve*, 70; Eleanore C. Sullivan and Susan Hannan, *Georgetown Visitation: Since 1799*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Washington, DC: Georgetown Visitation Monastery, 2004), 106-108.



wealthy. Alongside and separate from the academy (which enrolled both boarding and day students), the sisters ran a school for poor girls, a Saturday school to educate slaves (in an era when this was illegal), a soup kitchen for the hungry, and an orphanage. Today, Georgetown Visitation is a college preparatory school which competes with some of the best and most elite private all-girls' schools, such as Emma Willard and Madeira. The school offers significant financial aid and embraces diversity (racial and socio-economic) as a core value, and it has positioned itself to be competitive and challenging, preparing young women to be leaders in the world.

In 1885 in Boston, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston founded Mount Saint Joseph Academy whose purpose was to offer young women a sound secular education combined with strong Catholic religious instruction.<sup>3</sup> The school opened with eleven students and four sister-teachers. After relocating from Cambridge to the Brighton neighborhood of Boston, the school rapidly grew in size. When it was founded, the school accepted students at both elementary and secondary levels, in both its boarding program and its day school; however, the elementary school and the boarding program were discontinued in the 1950s.

For the early part of its history, Mount Saint Joseph Academy provided a high-quality education to the daughters of mostly Irish immigrant families.<sup>4</sup> As the city around it changed, the demographics of the school changed. By the 1960s, the school became much more diverse, accepting large numbers of African American and Hispanic students as well as non-Catholic girls. However, these demographic

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<sup>3</sup> Mary Xaveria Sullivan, "The History of Catholic Secondary Education in the Archdiocese of Boston" (PhD dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1946), 104-106; Mount Saint Joseph Academy, *Mount Saint Joseph Academy, Brighton, Massachusetts: 1885-1985* (Brighton, MA: MSJA, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> Mount Saint Joseph Academy, *Mount Saint Joseph Academy, Cambridge* (Cambridge, MA: MSJA, n.d.).

changes did not alter the school's commitment to providing a challenging and college preparatory program to the students.<sup>5</sup> By the early 2000s, it became clear that the school was no longer financially viable and the Sisters of St. Joseph made the difficult decision that the school could not continue as an all-girls' Catholic school. In order to remain faithful to their mission of providing a quality education to the children of Boston, the Sisters closed Mount Saint Joseph Academy in 2012, merged with Trinity Catholic High School (a coeducational parish high school), and opened a new school on their original Brighton site. While grounded in the history of Mount Saint Joseph Academy, the new school, St. Joseph's Preparatory High School, is coeducational.<sup>6</sup>

Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School and Mount Saint Joseph Academy – just two of the many all-girls' Catholic schools in the United States – provide a glimpse into the rich variety of all-girls Catholic schools available in the United States. One school sees its history through the lens of the Revolutionary War and the nation's capital; the other tells its story through the lens of Irish immigration to this country. One has developed into an elite school that is among the most well-known girls' schools in the country; the other was forced to merge with another school in order to continue its mission of educating young women from a diverse neighborhood in Boston. While these two schools do not tell all of the rich history of all-girls' Catholic schools, nor do they fully describe the mission of these schools

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<sup>5</sup> Mount Saint Joseph Academy, *Mount Saint Joseph Academy*, 39.

<sup>6</sup> Bella English, "Boston Left with One All-Girls Catholic High School," *Boston Globe*, January 31, 2012, [https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2012/01/31/new-catholic-super-high-school-open-leaving-one-last-girls-school-standing-boston/wbBSSRdbvwwkPqT5Eisy7M\\_/story.html](https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2012/01/31/new-catholic-super-high-school-open-leaving-one-last-girls-school-standing-boston/wbBSSRdbvwwkPqT5Eisy7M_/story.html) (accessed June 24, 2016).

today, they do offer two instantiations of what such schools are like and the kinds of commitments they make to the young women they educate.

Historians of Catholic education usually deal with the single-sex academies as precursors to the history of parish elementary and diocesan high schools. All-boys' schools sponsored by male religious orders are often given pride of place in the early history of American Catholic schooling whereas all-girls' schools sponsored by women's religious orders are often presented as the ventures undertaken by the sisters prior to their staffing of the parish school system. However, by singling these all-girls' Catholic schools out from the all-boys' schools and the parish school system, the all-girls' schools can be seen as valuable in their own right and as living out a history of preparing young women for success in a wide range of pursuits.

In tracing the history and mission of all-girls' Catholic schools, it becomes clear that these were schools that took young women and their education seriously. While they often claimed to be preparing young women for marriage or religious life, they were, in fact, preparing them for much more than this. These were women to be valued in their own right and not as ornaments for future spouses. Yet, all-girls' schools have changed significantly over time, often mirroring and responding to the shifts in the wider culture. Today's all-girls' Catholic schools are explicit in their mission to prepare their students for leadership in the world and in the Church. They are committed to helping young women flourish and to seeing themselves as confident, intelligent, and faithful young women who can change the world.

This chapter explores the history and mission of all-girls' Catholic schools. It first places the history of all-girls' Catholic schooling both into the parallel story of non-sectarian all-girls' schooling as well as into the larger story of the women religious who founded and sponsor all-girls' Catholic schools in the United States. The chapter then turns to the mission of all-girls' Catholic schools in order to argue that all-girls' schools live out their Catholic mission by living out a feminist identity. Such an understanding of the mission of all-girls' Catholic schools provides a foundation for the attention given, later in this dissertation, to the individual girls who make up these schools.

## **1.1 THE HISTORY OF ALL-GIRLS' CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES**

In the early church, groups of women, usually identified as virgins and widows, joined together into Christian communities to focus on prayer and service of others. Within the first few centuries of the church, these women became involved in the teaching of others and, by the middle of the first millennium, nuns had the care and education of children as one of their primary ministries.<sup>7</sup> Monasteries, both male and female, routinely incorporated children into the life of the community. Some children were given as oblates or offerings to the community, destined to join the community once they were old enough; other children, especially girls, were entrusted to the monastery for their education until they left

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<sup>7</sup> Jo Ann Kay McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 125; John L. Elias, *A History of Christian Religious Education: Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Perspectives* (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 2002), 44. Elias, like many historians of Catholic education, traces the history to the monastic and cathedral schools; however, these schools were only for boys. The story of the education of girls in convents and by religious women is a story this is often overlooked when scholars only look to the monastic and cathedral schools as representative of early Catholic schooling.

to marry according to their parents' wishes.<sup>8</sup> For many women and girls, the opportunity for learning was one of the key draws of the monastery. Thus, by the end of the first millennium, even the education of girls who were not intended for consecration to religious life became more common. Most often, these girls were from the wealthier classes, sent to the convent, in part, to provide them with some education – usually in reading and writing – along with moral formation and to prepare them to participate in wealthy society.<sup>9</sup> Girls of the aristocracy were often sent to convents as a way of keeping them safe until advantageous marriages could be made. Convent schools were thus seen as a guard of the virginity and innocence of these young women.<sup>10</sup>

This tradition of educating children at convents and monasteries meant that, until relatively recently, all schooling was single-sex and faith-based schooling. In the last two hundred years, with the rise of state-provided schooling throughout the world, coeducation has become the norm. Nevertheless, significant numbers of single-sex schools continue to fill important niches in the educational landscape. In particular, single-sex schools for girls have historically provided educational opportunities for girls, not only by offering an education in the academic subjects, but also by providing the social and personal skills they needed to successfully

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<sup>8</sup> McNamara, *Sisters in Arms*, 135.

<sup>9</sup> McNamara, *Sisters in Arms*, 200. In addition, to a more formal (although rarely systematic) education at convents, recluses and anchoresses would often teach young girls from their windows. In fact, Aelred of Rievaulz found it common enough to complain about. See McNamara, *Sisters in Arms*, 241.

<sup>10</sup> For example, the Sisters of the Visitation of Holy Mary, founded in 1610 by Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal, became well known for their schools for girls operated within the cloister of the monastery. Girls educated in Visitation monasteries were thought to be virtuous and well-prepared for their lives as wives and mothers of the aristocracy in France. See Wendy M. Wright, “The Visitation of Holy Mary: The First Years (1610-1618),” in *Religious Orders of the Catholic Reformation*, ed. Richard L. DeMolen (New York: Fordham University Press, 1994).

function in their social worlds. All-girls' Catholic schools fulfilled a similar function for their students with the added goal on forming young women in the Catholic faith.<sup>11</sup>

The history of all-girls' Catholic secondary schools in the United States shares much in common with the history of non-sectarian all-girls' schools. These academies and seminaries provided the daughters of the wealthy with an education that rivaled that provided to boys and that prepared girls to take up their places as wives, mothers, and members of society.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, the education of Catholic girls also has roots in the convent schools of Europe and the women's religious orders who ran them.<sup>13</sup> When religious women came to the United States and began operating Catholic academies for girls, this model of convent schooling took on new life.

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<sup>11</sup> For example, the Society of the Sacred Heart, founded in France in 1800 by Mother Madeline Sophie Barat, was established with the goal of educating girls; an early document puts it this way: "The members believe that they can do nothing that would be dearer to the Heart of Jesus Christ than to devote themselves to the education of children who were always the dearest part of his flock" (Margaret Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart: History of a Spirit, 1800-1975* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978), 44). This commitment to education was lived out the the founding of boarding schools for girls of the aristocracy and wealthy classes. Later, the sisters added schools for poor girls as wells as other ministries focused on children (such as orphanages, schools for catechists, schools for disabled children).

<sup>12</sup> The non-sectarian all-girls' academies and seminaries were largely founded either by wealthy women who had had the benefit of a good education and who wanted to share that opportunity with others or by wealthy parents of girls who did not have access to a quality education. See Ilana DeBare, *Where Girls Come First: The Rise, Fall, and Surprising Revival of Girls' Schools* (New York: Tarcher/Penguin, 2004), 47-48.

<sup>13</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 219.

### 1.1.1 The Schooling of Girls in the United States

Schooling for girls in the American colonial period was a rather hit-or-miss proposition. The schooling of girls depended on the wealth of the family.<sup>14</sup> Wealthy families could afford to educate both their sons and their daughters, piecing together an education with tutors and governesses or sending children for a more formal education in Europe. In middle-class families, what money was available for schooling was often spent on the sons of the family and the daughters received little or no education. In poor families, there was no money to spare for luxuries like education for either sons or daughters. Schooling for girls also depended on the geographical location of the family. In the south, parents relied on tutors for their children while, in the mid-Atlantic states, there were some Quaker and Moravian schools for girls which focused on reading the Bible.<sup>15</sup> In New England, many children attended “dame schools” – a woman would collect a few boys and girls around her and teach them their letters and numbers as she went about her daily routine.<sup>16</sup> From there, the boys would attend town schools that would continue their education, but, in general, girls were barred from these town schools.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The following description of the all-girls’ academies and seminaries largely describes the schooling of white girls, but race was also a very significant factor in determining access to education in general and to education for girls in particular. Most of the literature around all-girls’ schools focuses on the education of white girls, which occludes the significant presence of all-girls’ schools for African American and Native American girls. See DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 100-124; Kristen Welch and Abraham Ruelas, *The Role of Female Seminaries on the Road to Justice for Women* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 76-90.

<sup>15</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 17.

<sup>16</sup> Welch and Ruelas, *Female Seminaries*, 64. Dame Schools, which had existed in England, were particularly common in New England.

<sup>17</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 17. In fact, at one point, there were only 12 schools in New England that explicitly or implicitly allowed girls to attend. DeBare cites a 1656 court ruling that demonstrates the expectations of the time: “The sons shall have learning to write plainly and read distinctly in the Bible, and the daughters to read and sew sufficiently for the making of their linens” (17).

In the post-Revolutionary period, schooling for girls changed radically. As wealth increased, people had the money to spend on their daughters' education and the girls had the free time to go to school. One of the first forms of education for girls was the "adventure school" in which a single teacher would invite local girls to learn a few subjects. There was no set course of studies; rather, the curriculum focused on the interests and talents of the teacher and what the local community thought was useful for girls to learn. Often these schools focused on teaching "accomplishments" such as music, dancing, and needlework.<sup>18</sup> Soon, a more formal option became available in the female academies or seminaries. While some academies were plagued by enrollment issues and a disjointed curriculum,<sup>19</sup> many began modeling themselves after the male academies and offered "male" subjects: geometry, chemistry, Latin, natural philosophy, and moral philosophy. Despite the radicality of offering such a curriculum to girls, these academies were still very conservative and traditional institutions and saw themselves preparing young women for marriage.<sup>20</sup> The study of the various academic subjects was a way of introducing mental discipline for girls. Educators did not really think that the young

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<sup>18</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 18; Welch and Ruelas, *Female Seminaries*, 65. Around the same period, some women ran boarding schools for girls. Like the adventure schools, there were often run by women, often widows, who took a few girls into her home and taught them what she knew. See, Welch and Ruelas, *Female Seminaries*, 30-34.

<sup>19</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 19-20.

<sup>20</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 33; Welch and Ruelas, *Female Seminaries*, 69. In fact, the founders of the first female seminaries used this argument as a way of convincing early investors and parents. For example, Emma Hart Willard, founder of the Troy Female Seminary (established in 1821, now the Emma Willard School), proposed that her school would prepare young women for "Republican Motherhood" – so that they would be able to "continue the propagation of civic ideals necessary for the continuance of the new country" (Welch and Ruelas, *Female Seminaries*, 121). See also, Laurie Lisle, *Westover: Giving Girls a Place of Their Own* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2009).



women would have any practical use of these subjects beyond introducing them to their children when the time came.<sup>21</sup>

With the rise of the coeducational public school around the turn of the twentieth century,<sup>22</sup> all-female academies found themselves under pressure. No longer the only place where girls could be educated, many academies focused on serving the daughters of the wealthy.<sup>23</sup> These elite institutions took two main forms. Some schools became “finishing schools”, so called because they finished a girl’s education.<sup>24</sup> Others of these girls’ schools became college preparatory schools, preparing girls for further study at one of the newly available all-women’s colleges.<sup>25</sup> Regardless of the curriculum they offered, all girls were taught how to behave in wealthy society through a series of etiquette classes, teas, and social events.<sup>26</sup>

During the second half of the twentieth century, girl’s schools began to change dramatically. The students and the faculties began to rebel against the stiff and old-fashioned rules and traditions of the elite academies;<sup>27</sup> girls’ schools opened their doors to African American girls and other minority populations.<sup>28</sup> The 1970s and 1980s saw a broadening of the curriculum options and a tightening up of the educational standards at most girls’ schools. The curriculum began to address

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<sup>21</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 33-36; Welch and Ruelas, *Female Seminaries*, 37.

<sup>22</sup> For a history of public schooling, both coeducational and single-sex, see David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, *Learning Together: A History of Coeducation in American Schools* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990); Rebecca S. Bigler and Margaret L. Signorella, “Single-sex Education: New Perspectives and Evidence on a Continuing Controversy,” *Sex Roles* 65, no. 9 (2011): 659-669.

<sup>23</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 51-52.

<sup>24</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 75.

<sup>25</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 75-76.

<sup>26</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 75.

<sup>27</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 158-163.

<sup>28</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 167-171.

women's and minority issues, expanded the career opportunities for girls, included more rigorous math and science classes, and offered competitive sports programs.<sup>29</sup> Minority students and faculty were recruited and financial aid was offered to middle and low-income families in order to widen the diversity of school populations.<sup>30</sup>

Towards the end of the twentieth century, with increasing awareness of sexism and discrimination against girls in coeducational settings, girls' schools received renewed attention. Researchers argued that coeducation was replicating the sexist gender stratification present in society as a whole and were socializing girls to be quiet and unassertive and to think that they could not succeed in science and math courses.<sup>31</sup> Even more troubling were instances of overt sexism in the classroom.<sup>32</sup> Because of the gender bias that is present in coeducational institutions, many students and parents began to reconsider the option of all-girls' education. While the evidence that single-sex schools achieve higher academic outcomes is mixed, proponents cite the non-academic outcomes that benefit girls,<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 189.

<sup>30</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 196-198.

<sup>31</sup> Valerie E. Lee, "Gender Equity and the Organization of Schools," in *Gender, Equity, and Schooling: Policy and Practice*, ed. Barbara J. Bank and Peter M. Hall (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 139-142; David Sadker, Myra Sadker, and Karen Zittleman, *Still Failing at Fairness: How Gender Bias Cheats Girls and Boys in School and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Scribner, 2009), 24; American Association of University Women, *How Schools Shortchange Girls: A Study of Major Findings on Girls and Education* (Washington, DC: AAUW, 1992).

<sup>32</sup> Lee, "Gender Equity and the Organization of Schools," 141. According to Sadker, Sadker, and Zittleman, math, physical education, and science classes were identified by girls as the classes in which they were most likely to be discriminated against (Sadker, Sadker, & Zittleman, *Still Failing at Fairness*, 169-173). This gender bias is compounded by race with African American girls receiving less attention from teachers as white girls and are even more likely to be shunted into less challenging courses (AAUW, *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, 60).

<sup>33</sup> Cornelius Riordan, *Single-Sex Schools: A Place to Learn* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015). For a recent review of the relevant literature, see Fred Mael, Alex Alonso, Doug Gibson, Kelly Rogers, and Mark Smith, *Single-Sex Versus Coeducational Schooling: A Systemic Review* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2005), <http://eric.ed.gov/?q=mael+alonso+gibson> (accessed January 24, 2016); Erin Pahlke, Janet Shibley Hyde, Carlie M. Allison, and Stephen P. Hinshaw, "The Effects of Single-Sex

such as providing safe environments for learning and exploring ideas and fostering a less biased and more orderly environment. Girls' schools also encourage girls to take more upper level math and science classes and students at single-sex schools report that they are more encouraged to explore their own interests and talents and are not as constrained by gender stereotypes.<sup>34</sup>

### 1.1.2 The History of Catholic Schools for Girls in the United States

In the United States, Catholic secondary schools for girls were rooted in the European history of the convent school<sup>35</sup> and these schools very quickly became one of the major ministries of women's religious communities in the United States. In fact, when the first women's religious communities were founded in the late eighteenth century, the sisters usually began an academy for girls as their first ministry. Because of their association with the histories and ministries of the women's religious orders, these academies followed a very different trajectory than their non-religious counterparts. While the female seminaries and the Catholic academies for girls encountered many of the same resistances to the education of girls and responded by providing superior educational opportunities in a social context that did not always value this, the close ties between the Catholic academies

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Compared With Coeducational Schooling on Students' Performance and Attitudes: A Meta-Analysis," *Psychological Bulletin* 140, no. 4 (2014): 1042-1072.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Carole B. Shmurak, *Voices of Hope: Adolescent Girls and Single Sex and Coeducational Schools* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998); American Association of University Women, *Gender Gaps: Where Schools Still Fail Our Children* (Washington, DC: AAUW, 1999). See Appendix A for a more comprehensive annotated bibliography of research about the efficacy of girls' schools.

<sup>35</sup> Several of the earliest schools mirrored the pattern of young women joining the sisters inside the convent and being educated within the context of the life of the convent. For example, at Georgetown Visitation, the academy and its dormitory as well as the poor school were all enclosed by a high wall and the schools were considered part of the convent. See Sullivan and Hannan, *Georgetown Visitation*, 53-54.

for girls and their founding and sponsoring religious orders means that the academies developed in very different directions than the female seminaries did.

Catholic education has been present on this continent since the earliest Spanish and French explorers.<sup>36</sup> However, almost all of these educational efforts were focused on boys; most of the male missionaries had little interest in educating girls.<sup>37</sup> However, by the eighteenth century, particularly in the period before the widespread establishment of parochial schools, the religious order-run single-sex school was the basic model of Catholic schooling for girls. For the most part, wherever communities of religious women went, they established schools for girls. Of the four earliest women's communities in the United States – the Ursuline sisters in New Orleans, LA, the Carmelite sisters of Port Tobacco, MD, the Visitation sisters in Washington, DC, and the Sisters of Charity of Emmitsburg, MD – three of these communities founded girls' academies immediately upon their foundation.<sup>38</sup>

The stories of some of these early communities can illustrate this pattern. In August of 1727, twelve Ursuline sisters arrived in the French colonial city of New Orleans. Within three months of their arrival they had established a boarding school for girls that enrolled “twenty boarders of European descent, seven enslaved boarders, and ‘large numbers of day students and Negresses and Indian girls.’”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Harold A. Beutow, *Of Singular Benefit: The Story of Catholic Education in the United States* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1970), 5-26.

<sup>37</sup> There were some French Ursuline sisters who began schools for Indian girls on the Canadian frontier in the mid-seventeenth century, but these efforts were limited by the sisters' rules of enclosure; the sisters soon retreated to Quebec to run a school for French girls. McGuinness, *Called to Serve*, 18-19; McNamara, *Sisters in Arms*, 479-481.

<sup>38</sup> Only the Carmelite community did not immediately found a school. George C. Stewart, Jr., *Marvels of Charity: History of American Sisters and Nuns* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1994), 77-78.

<sup>39</sup> McGuinness, *Called to Serve*, 68-69.

The sisters saw themselves as preparing girls of all social classes for their roles as mothers of a Catholic population. The curriculum included reading, writing, spelling, math, needlework, and the catechism.<sup>40</sup>

In 1809 and at the invitation of Archbishop John Carroll, Elizabeth Ann Seton moved to Emmitsburg, MD to open St. Joseph Academy, a boarding school for girls. “The boarding school quickly became a noted academy for girls, providing the main source of income for the free school.”<sup>41</sup> Students flocked to the academy and women flocked to Seton’s community, the Sisters of Charity; by 1814, the original Emmitsburg community was sending out sisters to new foundations in Philadelphia and New York.<sup>42</sup>

In 1811, Mary Rhodes, who had been educated at the Visitation school in Georgetown, arrived in Kentucky, then considered the frontier, to teach her brother’s children in his home; this effort attracted so many nearby children that she founded a school to accommodate them all. Soon Rhodes and two companions decided to found a religious community, the Sisters of Loretto,<sup>43</sup> that would be devoted to teaching. They soon established a school for girls; this school quickly became well-known and well-regarded along the Kentucky frontier. The school also accepted orphans – who were not housed in a separate orphanage, but included among the boarders in the academy. By 1823, their community and school had

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<sup>40</sup> McGuinness, *Called to Serve*, 69.

<sup>41</sup> Stewart, *Marvels of Charity*, 58-59.

<sup>42</sup> Barbara Misner, “*Highly Respectable and Accomplished Ladies:*” *Catholic Women Religious in America, 1790-1850* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988), 28-29.

<sup>43</sup> Formally known today as the Sisters of Loretto at the Foot of the Cross, their original name was the Friends of Mary at the Foot of the Cross. These sisters of Loretto should not be confused with Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, commonly known as the Sisters of Loreto, founded by Mary Ward in 1609; this community is a well-known teaching order with schools for girls in England, Ireland, Canada, Australia, Kenya, and India. For an account of Mary Ward’s community, see McNamara, *Sisters in Arms*, 462-464.

grown enough for them to establish a daughter house, with its own school for girls, even further west in Missouri.<sup>44</sup>

This became the common pattern: the sisters, either from an established European congregation or in a newly established community, would start an academy for girls from wealthy and middle-class families first; they would then use the proceeds from this academy to support a vast number of other ministries including, most frequently, a school for poor girls.<sup>45</sup> Because many of these religious congregations were founded with the specific purpose of educating poor girls, the sisters were using the academies as ways to fulfill this original calling. Over time, the poor schools merged with the academies or were closed due to the availability of other Catholic schooling options, particularly parish-based schools.

Religious women and the communities they founded also played an important part in the settling of the west. The Sisters of Loretto were just the first in a wave of communities of religious women who set out to educate girls across the new nation, often arriving on the frontiers with the first settlers. For example, when the Sisters of Providence, a French community, was asked to supply sisters for a school for girls in Indiana in 1839, the small group of sisters found themselves in a thick forest with no roads, a cathedral that was no better than a shed, and a sparse population spread out over a wide area. Nevertheless, the sisters were able to open a school for girls within a year and, by 1856, had founded “twelve schools in Indiana and Illinois, two orphanages, one for girls and one for boys, and pharmacies where

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<sup>44</sup> Stewart, *Marvels of Charity*, 61-62; Misner, “*Highly Respectable and Accomplished Ladies*,” 33-35.

<sup>45</sup> In addition to schools for poor girls, the sisters also tended to open orphanages, homes for the aged, hospitals, and, occasionally, schools for boys – all supported, at least at first, by the proceeds from the academy for girls. See Misner, “*Highly Respectable and Accomplished Ladies*,” 250-251.

those in need could receive medicine.”<sup>46</sup> Religious women endured harsh conditions and extreme poverty in their work to establish the church on the frontiers.<sup>47</sup> But the sisters not only survived, they thrived; pioneering sisters who set out to found new communities were often met by local girls and women eager to join the congregation. And, usually in fairly short order, communities established on the frontier were sending out their sisters to found daughter houses and establish new ministries even further into the frontier.

Women religious were also at the forefront of efforts to provide education to African American girls. Women’s religious communities have an ambiguous history around slavery; many communities, especially in the South, owned slaves and engaged in the buying and selling of slaves.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, religious women also provided educational opportunities for slave and freed black girls. The sisters at Georgetown Visitation provided free education for the slave and free women attached to the school. They also provided material and personal support to Maria Becraft who, in the 1820s, ran a school for free black girls across the street from the convent. Communities such as the Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first religious community for black women, opened schools for black girls in which they taught both academic and domestic subjects.<sup>49</sup> The Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in

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<sup>46</sup> McGuinness, *Called to Serve*, 43.

<sup>47</sup> McGuinness, *Called to Serve*, 49. Stewart describes the hardships this way: “Various terms describing poverty and hardships become redundant as they appear in the accounts: “shack,” “snow through the cracks,” “bad food,” “consumption,” “early deaths,” “lost in the wilderness,” “no money,” and other descriptive words and phrases. Repetition should not dull the senses – the sisters experienced true poverty and real hardships” (Stewart, *Marvels of Charity*, 178).

<sup>48</sup> McGuinness, *Called to Serve*, 20, 61-62.

<sup>49</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 109-110. For a fuller history of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, see Diane Batts Morrow, *Persons of Color and Religious at the Same Time: The Oblate Sisters of Providence, 1828-1860* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

Charleston, SC were founded, in part, to educate free black girls and to give religious instruction to slave girls; they persisted in this ministry in the face of significant local opposition.<sup>50</sup> In Chicago, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd transformed an orphanage for black girls into the Illinois Technical School for Colored Girls, a boarding school that “accepted girls ‘of parents of medium or small income or of homes broken by death or divorce’ as boarders.”<sup>51</sup> The Loretto Sisters adopted a policy welcoming African American girls into their schools well before the Chicago public schools or the Archdiocese of Chicago schools were integrated.<sup>52</sup>

Providing an education for Native American girls, while an early apostolate of nuns in Canada and Mexico, was not a significant part of the mission of religious women in the United States. Often the concern was that the location for a school for Native American girls was too far from the support of motherhouses and local parishes. Nevertheless, some communities did take on this ministry. For example, in 1847 a group of Loretto sisters moved to Missouri to run a school for Native American girls; by 1850, the school enrolled 29 students (with a maximum capacity of 20 – they were overenrolled) and taught “spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography; and besides, certain hours are set apart for knitting, sewing, marking, embroidering, etc. Between school hours they are engaged in the occupations of domestic economy.”<sup>53</sup> Katharine Drexel’s Sisters of the Blessed

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<sup>50</sup> Misner, *“Highly Respectable and Accomplished Ladies,”* 205.

<sup>51</sup> Suellen Hoy, *Good Hearts: Catholic Sisters in Chicago’s Past* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 73.

<sup>52</sup> Hoy, *Good Hearts*, 108-113. The sisters announced that Loretto Academy would accept “‘Negro as well as white students’ in a ‘pioneering’ effort to ‘[break] down racial prejudice’” (108). They faced a good bit of opposition to this decision and, ultimately, it led to the school being classified by local parents as a “black school.” By 1972, it was no longer able to attract sufficient numbers of students to remain open.

<sup>53</sup> Misner, *“Highly Respectable and Accomplished Ladies,”* 206.



Sacrament for Indians and Colored People was founded in 1889 and, by the time of her death in 1955, more than 15,000 students (both boys and girls) were attending the 69 schools for black and Native American children.<sup>54</sup>

The rapid growth that resulted from the efforts of these religious women was not without controversy and resistance from Protestants and nativists fearful of a supposed Catholic plot to take over the country. Convents and schools were an easy target for anti-Catholic movements; and the “escaped nun” trope was an easy way for preachers to whip up anti-Catholic feelings. In one of the worst examples, the Ursuline convent and school in Charlestown, MA were burned by a mob enraged by anti-Catholic preaching.<sup>55</sup> The irony of this burning was that most of the tuition-paying students at the school were daughters of the Unitarian elite of Boston.<sup>56</sup> In fact, throughout the country, and particularly in the Midwest, Catholic academies for girls often educated a significant number of non-Catholic students. The academies were seen as bastions of European gentility in a nation where there were few educational options for girls. Often, and especially on the frontier, the schools relied on Protestant families; they supplemented the tuition income from wealthy Catholic families and allowed the sisters to continue their other ministries.<sup>57</sup> While the teaching of religion was paramount to the missions of these schools, the sisters were

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<sup>54</sup> Stewart, *Marvels of Charity*, 343. By 1899, the sisters had opened the Institute of St. Francis de Sales in Rock Castle, VA to educate black girls (they also founded a school for black boys called St. Emma’s on an adjacent property). St. Michael’s Indian School in St. Michaels Mission, AZ, an industrial and boarding school for Navajo girls, was founded in 1904 and the Academy of the Immaculate Mother in Nashville, TN, for black girls, was founded in 1905.

<sup>55</sup> McGuinness, *Called to Serve*, 57-59; DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 220-221.

<sup>56</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 221.

<sup>57</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 219.

sensitive to the fears of Protestant families and the accusations of the nativists. Most schools refrained from direct efforts to convert non-Catholic students.<sup>58</sup>

After the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884, at which the bishops mandated that each parish establish an elementary school and that all Catholic parents send their children to a parish school, the number of Catholic schools vastly increased. This decision also began a shift from schools founded, financed, and staffed by religious congregations to parish schools founded and financed by a parish but staffed by religious women.<sup>59</sup> While women religious took on the prodigious task of staffing these parochial schools, they still maintained their all-girls' academies.<sup>60</sup>

The all-girls' academies were innovative and rigorous institutions. They provided an extensive education for girls at a time when many considered this unnecessary; this education often mirrored the educational opportunities offered to boys. While the curriculum did include classes in "ornamental" subjects, the girls also studied a wide range of academic disciplines. For example, in the mid-1800s, the Visitation academy was offering its students the following courses:

Religion, Orthography, Reading, writing, Arithmetic, Grammar, English, Composition, Sacred and Profane History, Ancient and Modern Chronology, Mythology; most important and interesting experiments in [natural] Philosophy and Chemistry, Rhetoric, Versification, and Poetic Composition, Geography, Astronomy, the Use of Maps and Globes, French and Spanish Languages, Music on the Harp and Piano Forte, Vocal Music, Painting in

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<sup>58</sup> Stewart also speculates that educating Protestant girls helped to ameliorate the nativist tensions. Protestant women educated by the sisters would raise their children to be more tolerant of the Catholic faith. See Stewart, *Marvels of Charity*, 113; Misner, "Highly Respectable and Accomplished Ladies," 177.

<sup>59</sup> Stewart, *Marvels of Charity*, 325.

<sup>60</sup> Stewart, *Marvels of Charity*, 421. For example, by 1965, the Sisters of Mercy were staffing 817 parochial schools and 187 diocesan high schools; they were also operating 18 academies for girls. In addition, they operated 5 junior colleges, 22 colleges, 115 hospitals, 4 convalescent homes, 18 orphanages, and 19 homes for the aged.

Water Colours, Painting on Velvet, plain and ornamental Needlework, Tapestry, Lace Work or Embroidery on Bobbinet, Bead Work, and Domestic Economy.<sup>61</sup>

In addition to this impressive listing of courses, the students were able to study physics (called natural philosophy) using the most modern equipment and conducting hands-on experiments, at a time when Harvard College did not. The sisters even took the girls out onto the roof of the Academy building at night to look at the stars through what was then the most advanced telescope available.<sup>62</sup>

Compare this with an announcement from the Washington Henry Academy, a school for boys in Virginia, from 1825: “The following branches of Education will be taught, viz: The Latin, Greek and English Languages, Grammatically; Arithmetic, Geography, &c., Translation and composition of the French: The Elements of Chemistry and Natural Philosophy, *so far as knowledge of these science can be conveyed without the apparatus necessary to their perfect illustration.*”<sup>63</sup> While religious education was the primary goal of the academies, the sisters provided their students with as rigorous an education as they could muster.<sup>64</sup> While not all schools maintained this high standard – and, as with the non-sectarian girls’ schools, there was criticism that some academies were merely finishing schools for Catholic girls – most of the all-girls’ academies provided their students with a better

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<sup>61</sup> Eileen Mary Brewer, *Nuns and the Education of American Catholic Women, 1860-1920* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1987), 9.

<sup>62</sup> Sullivan and Hannan, *Georgetown Visitation*, 86-89. “The records of 1828 show an expenditure in April for ‘Apparatus with freight, \$829.82’; and in December, for ‘Apparatus and appendages, \$1618.50¼.’ A handsome expenditure for any school; for an American school for young ladies in 1828, it must have been unheard of. With it ‘the sisters are enabled to demonstrate the theories of many useful branches of natural philosophy – such as astronomy, pneumatics, electricity, Galvanism, chemistry, Chaldni’s Acoustic figures, etc. They have an increasing collection of minerals and Hauy’s Primitive Forms to assist in the study of crystallography’” (86).

<sup>63</sup> Misner, “*Highly Respectable and Accomplished Ladies*,” 188 (emphasis in original).

<sup>64</sup> Brewer, *Nuns and the Education of American Catholic Women*, 35.

education than they would otherwise have received. In fact, most of the girls' academies were at least as good as, and in many cases better than, the all-boys' academies and were, in most cases, significantly better than the diocesan high schools.<sup>65</sup>

In addition to the many "secular" subjects offered in the academies, students also experienced a thorough-going Catholic religious education. While for some a concern was the role that Catholic schools played in keeping Catholic children from straying into Protestantism, the larger focus was on passing on the faith to new generations of Catholic girls. The belief in the role of mothers as those who pass on the faith to their children spurred most women's religious communities to focus on the education of young women regardless of social class.<sup>66</sup>

The academies were first and foremost religious institutions, aimed at inculcating the precepts of Catholicism. "All the chief points necessary for salvation should be taught each year in a manner suited to the age of the students, so that if they leave after that year, they will know enough to save their soul," noted a 1909 teachers' manual for a Sacred Heart school in St. Louis.<sup>67</sup>

Therefore, religious education was always one of the prime concerns of the academies and this religious education was never confined to catechism classes. "Nuns used daily observances, religious celebrations, retreats, sodalities, religious models, and spiritual literature to develop a piety which would keep both students

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<sup>65</sup> Stewart, *Marvels of Charity*, 327-328. "Academic standards were generally so high that those [all-girls'] academies would almost qualify as junior colleges today... Academies generated vocations and had secured desperately needed support for the Church among the upper classes... Academy experience promoted female independence, scholarship, intellectual curiosity, and created networks often lasting a lifetime... Academies for boys were operated by various male religious orders, Jesuits and orders of brothers generally catered to the Catholic middle and upper classes. While some of their academies were the academic equals of the elitist Episcopal and private prep schools, they never achieved the wide reputation of academies operated by sisters and nuns." See also Beutow, *Of Singular Benefit*, 278.

<sup>66</sup> McGuinness, *Called to Serve*, 69.

<sup>67</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 221.

and alumnae faithful to [school and Church] values.”<sup>68</sup> The structure of the day mirrored the monastic structure of the convent and the lives of students were saturated with Catholic symbols, devotions, and practices.<sup>69</sup> By providing catechism classes and surrounding their students with the sights and sounds of Catholic faith, the academies created the conditions where their students were prepared to practice their faith in a society often hostile to Catholicism and to pass that faith along to their own children – even on a frontier that saw few, if any, Catholic priests.

At their peak in the mid-twentieth century, all-girls’ Catholic schools provided solid educational experiences for the daughters of middle- and upper-class families and prepared many of them to continue their educations at Catholic all-women’s colleges.<sup>70</sup> In addition to providing a solid academic foundation for all students, many schools offered girls a variety of curricular programs. Girls could choose from college preparatory classes, vocational training for careers in business, and domestic arts classes for those who anticipated marriage.<sup>71</sup> While these were couched in the language of the traditional options available to women, these all-girls’ schools also took seriously the need to produce well-educated young women

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<sup>68</sup> Brewer, *Nuns and the Education of American Catholic Women*, 79.

<sup>69</sup> Brewer, *Nuns and the Education of American Catholic Women*, 79-80; DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 222; Barbara Johns, “In Their Own Image: Shaping Women’s Education at Detroit’s Immaculata High School” in *Building Sisterhood: A Feminist History of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*, ed. Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

<sup>70</sup> Kathleen A. Mahoney, “American Catholic Colleges for Women: Historical Origins” in *Catholic Women’s Colleges in America*, ed. Tracy Schier and Cynthia Eagle Russett (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). Catholic women’s colleges came later to the American scene than did colleges for men. The first to be founded were academies for girls that were transformed into colleges: the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, St. Mary’s College (South Bend, IN), Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College (Terre Haute, IN), the College of Saint Elizabeth (Convent Station, NJ), and the College of New Rochelle (New Rochelle, NY). In 1900, Trinity College in Washington, DC was the first women’s college to be founded as a college. By 1905, there were ten women’s colleges. By 1968, there were 170 colleges and 70 Sister Formation colleges; Catholic colleges for women outnumbered both non-Catholic colleges for women and Catholic colleges for men.

<sup>71</sup> Johns, “In Their Own Image,” 325.

prepared to succeed in whatever path they chose. For example, at Immaculata High School in Detroit,

parents could be assured that their bright young daughters would be trained to become cultivated, accomplished, and faithful Catholic women, prepared for the university, the workplace, and the home, fit in mind, body, and spirit to take their places in Catholic culture. As the [prospectus'] text also subtly made clear, however, their daughters would learn to assume these roles under the direction of women who knew their own strength and who took pride in it – women who had, in fact, been capable of undertaking monumental institution-building for nearly a hundred years.<sup>72</sup>

Like the girls who had been attending all-girls' Catholic academies for the past one hundred fifty years, girls during this time were being inculcated into a Catholic church that saw itself as a bulwark against Protestantism and, increasingly, secularism. The closed nature of the all-girls' environment and the strict discipline and daily routine that characterized both convent and school meant that the students formed intense bonds among themselves and with the nuns. "The religious rituals, music, and medals blended with the nuns' visible faith to inspire students. [Students] gradually came to understand that the stifling rules were aimed at nothing less than the perfection of [their] souls."<sup>73</sup> And, often, the perfection that was sought was very much in the image of the nuns who ran the school. At many schools, the teaching of religion involved not just learning about the faith; it meant becoming loyal to the institutional Church, to the vision of the Church held by the religious congregation, and to the founding congregation itself.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Johns, "In Their Own Image," 325.

<sup>73</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 223.

<sup>74</sup> Johns, "In Their Own Image," 326; Brewer, *Nuns and the Education of American Catholic Women*, 79-80.

The schools and the women religious who ran them were also very attuned to changes in the Church and society. In the mid-twentieth century, Catholics participated in a wide variety of devotional activities – rosaries, novenas, scapulars and holy medals, devotion to Mary and the saints, and daily prayers. Lay Catholics supported many ministries, either directly or through their parish giving; they supported their parishes “and contributed in second collections for foreign missions, Indians and Negroes, Peter’s Pence, and special causes.”<sup>75</sup> Catholic lay organizations flourished; “the 1960 edition of the *Catholic Almanac* listed 223 different groups, including such organizations as the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO), Legion of Mary, Grail, Serra Club, and Holy Name and St. Vincent de Paul Societies.”<sup>76</sup> The importance of Catholic Action movements meant that there was greater attention to the role of the laity in the Church and a commitment to engage issues of poverty, racial injustice, and discrimination.<sup>77</sup> These shifts in American Catholic culture were reflected in the all-girls’ schools. By the mid-twentieth century, most Catholic all-girls’ schools included a number of activities that emphasized social justice and the importance of an active life of faith. Students were exposed to a wide variety of social and faith issues including race relations, labor issues, foreign missions, and poverty. At many all-girls’ schools, this interest in Catholic Action and in cultivating an active faith took the form of clubs and

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<sup>75</sup> Stewart, *Marvels of Charity*, 416.

<sup>76</sup> Stewart, *Marvels of Charity*, 416. Stewart explains this religiosity among Catholics: “The parish church reinforced family teaching by the example and instruction of priests and a sacramental system that provided for the critical moments of life. Emotion also played a part in religious fervor: ethnic cultural loyalties, fear of hell, and a special love for the Blessed Virgin Mary... But it was sisters who were central in the development of the spiritual life of the millions of Catholics who constituted the devotional Church” (417).

<sup>77</sup> Jeremy Bonner, Jeffrey M. Burns, and Christopher D. Denny, “Introduction,” in *Empowering the People of God: Catholic Action Before and After Vatican II*, ed. Jeremy Bonner, Christopher D. Denny, and Mary Beth Fraser Connolly (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 1-18.

sodalities. While these sodalities often claimed to be interested in the personal holiness of students, they also provided girls with access to conversations about the important social justice issues of the day.<sup>78</sup> And, even when, on the surface, these sodalities seemed to be reinforcing the traditional expectations for women of the day, Catholic Action groups proposed that women could take up unaccustomed roles and to think of themselves as leaders. Even girls who

were not interested in social action nevertheless saw and heard a singular message being driven home in all of the assemblies and mission drives: women had the skills – and the obligation – to make a difference in the world. In fact,... [all of the activities], even the ones that seemed to prescribe women’s roles very narrowly, accomplished purposes other than conveying a particular content or message to the girls... What did matter were the leadership skills they were learning and practicing, skills of importance to their teachers and of immense importance to women.<sup>79</sup>

Catholic all-girls’ schools of the mid-twentieth century, then, were very much focused on providing their students with the skills that they would need to be active, productive, faithful, and generous leaders in whatever they chose to do.

The 1960s brought upheaval to both the Church and U.S. society. The civil rights movement, the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, John Kennedy, and Robert Kennedy, the Vietnam War and the anti-war movement, and the sexual revolution meant that this was a time of radical change. At the same time, the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), which redefined the Church’s relationship to the world and modernity and the role of lay people within the Church, had a profound impact on Catholics. The Council had a particularly important impact on religious women; while it firmly reminded religious women that they are laity and

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<sup>78</sup> Johns, “In Their Own Image,” 335-338.

<sup>79</sup> Johns, “In Their Own Image,” 338.



not clergy, it also freed them to re-imagine their ministries in ways that brought them into solidarity with the poor.<sup>80</sup> At the all-girls' schools run by women religious, the sisters changed their habits (sometimes modifying the traditional habits, sometimes doing away with them entirely), their rules of cloister, their names (often returning to their baptismal-names), and their ways of interacting with students. The sisters, in turn, "proposed to their young students personal freedom, individual responsibility, critical inquiry, solidarity, and action for justice" as the values to be cultivated by young Catholic women.<sup>81</sup> Schools began changing their curricular and extra-curricular offerings to meet the more wide-ranging interests of students.<sup>82</sup>

By the 1970s and 80s, many all-girls' Catholic schools faced competition from less expensive coeducational diocesan high schools. And, because of declining numbers of available sisters, schools relied more heavily on lay faculty and administrators. This presented a financial burden for schools. These schools had been founded and staffed by women religious who served with very little compensation. Lay faculty required competitive and just salaries that exceeded the very small stipends that had supported the sisters. While tuition at these all-girls' Catholic schools was raised to meet these new needs and they tended to be much

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<sup>80</sup> McNamara, *Sisters in Arms*, 629.

<sup>81</sup> Johns, "In Their Own Image," 344.

<sup>82</sup> Johns, "In Their Own Image," 343. At Immaculata High School, "the English department, for example, began a course that introduced seniors to experimental drama and to African-American literature. Likewise, the history department introduced a course in Asian studies (with an emphasis on Japan, China, and India) and dispatched students to open housing meetings at Cobo Hall and to lectures by the national housing-rights activist James Groppi. Classroom activities in all disciplines emphasized discussions, student presentations, problem-solving group work, collaborative projects (including calculating the economic effect of the 1968 World Series on the Detroit economy), and simulation games. Throughout, expectations of intellectual commitment were high, a message made explicit in 1967 by the launching of a full-scale advanced honors program" (343). See also, DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 235-236.

more affordable than other private schools, they were no longer very low cost. For example, at Holy Names High School in Oakland, CA, tuition was \$625 in 1974, \$4,350 in 1994, \$7,995 in 2002,<sup>83</sup> and \$15,290 in 2015.<sup>84</sup>

Because of these challenges, many academies were forced to close or merge with all-boys' schools. Many of the schools that closed were located in urban areas; originally founded to educate the daughters of Catholic immigrants, they now found that most Catholic families had moved to the suburbs, which were largely served by coeducational Catholic schools.<sup>85</sup> Other urban schools found the demographics of their neighborhood had shifted and the populations of middle-class white families they had served were replaced with African-American and Hispanic families. These demographic shifts caused tensions within schools as they confronted the racial tensions of the day although, generally, the women religious were committed to racial integration as a matter of social justice and living out their charisms.<sup>86</sup> And increasing racial diversity in the schools and shifting neighborhood demographics brought an increase in the number of non-Catholic students<sup>87</sup> and a decline in the overall enrollment in these schools.<sup>88</sup> The financial challenges coupled with the

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<sup>83</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 238.

<sup>84</sup> Holy Names High School, "Tuition," <http://hnhsoakland.org/admissions/tuition/> (accessed February 5, 2016).

<sup>85</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 239.

<sup>86</sup> Johns, "In Their Own Image," 349-350. The principal at Immaculata in Detroit named their school's mission this way: "Perhaps the most valued reason I see at this time for keeping Immaculata open is the fact that racial integration is just beginning in a big way and the challenge to help the... white girl understand her black sister would be a unique contribution to our city... at this time" (350).

<sup>87</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 240. For example, "at Holy Names in Oakland, increasing numbers of African-American girls began enrolling in the mid-1960s. Today 35 percent are African-American and a total of 73 percent are girls of color. In an even more dramatic change, about half of today's Holy Name students are non-Catholics who come for the college-preparatory academics, the safe campus, the all-girls environment, the strong arts program – or simply in search of an alternative to the troubled public schools" (240).

<sup>88</sup> Johns, "In Their Own Image," 350. See also, DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 239.

changing character of the student bodies, led to the closure of many all-girls' Catholic schools.<sup>89</sup>

Of the academies that remained, many began to compete with the private school sector – charging higher tuitions and touting their ability to prepare girls for elite colleges. Others have successfully managed their shifting demographics and reflect a continuing commitment to the education of middle-class and poor girls – usually the original commitment of their founding religious orders. As the schools are no longer populated almost exclusively by white, mostly Irish, Polish, and Italian, girls, the academies reflect more closely the racial make-up of the surrounding population; at most all-girls' Catholic schools, non-white students typically comprise nearly a third of the student body.<sup>90</sup> In addition, progressive financial aid programs mean that these schools, even the most elite, are no longer the preserve of the upper- and middle-classes.

The history of all-girls' Catholic schooling demonstrates the commitment of women's religious congregations to the young women in their charge. Called by their founders to educate girls, these women provided their students with an outstanding education. The women religious were extremely successful in founding new religious communities and establishing academies for girls. Between 1727 and 1852, women religious founded 133 schools for girls. There were more than 200 academies for girls at the end of the Civil War; by 1910, there were over 700.<sup>91</sup> Today, the National Catholic Educational Association lists just 217 all-girls' Catholic

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<sup>89</sup> For example, St. Paul, MN used to have six all-girls' Catholic schools; today there is only one. See DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 239.

<sup>90</sup> DeBare, *Where Girls Come First*, 240.

<sup>91</sup> Stewart, *Marvels of Charity*, 328; Brewer, *Nuns and the Education of American Catholic Women*, 15.

secondary schools in the United States.<sup>92</sup> The all-girls' secondary schools which remain continue to be under the sponsorship and, in many cases, the direct ownership of their founding religious community and the education of young women continues to be one of the defining apostolates of many women's religious congregations.<sup>93</sup> For many communities, what was once a mission to prepare young women to participate in a cultured life as a wife and mother has now become a way of providing young women with the skills and confidence to be actors for good in the Church and society.

## 1.2 THE MISSION OF ALL-GIRLS' CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Catholic schools exist as an important part of the mission of the Roman Catholic Church. Education in general has been a part of the Church's ministries since the very beginning and schools in particular have been a part of the institutional structure of the Church for more than a millennium. However, because many schools were founded and run by religious orders, both male and female, there has not been a great deal of coordination in educational efforts in the Church

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<sup>92</sup> Dale McDonald, PBVM, and Margaret M. Schultz, *United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools, 2014-2015: The Annual Statistical Report on Schools, Enrollment and Staffing* (Arlington, VA: National Catholic Educational Association, 2015), 11. This report notes that there are a total of 371 single-sex Catholic secondary schools (30.9% of all Catholic secondary schools) and that there are 154 all-boy's Catholic schools. Further, there are 36 all-girls' elementary schools (although many of them are elementary levels of K-12 schools). Of the 217 all-girls' Catholic schools, 16 are in New England, 81 in the Mideast, 30 in the Great Lakes region, 15 in the Plains states, 27 in the Southeast, and 48 in the West and Far West.

<sup>93</sup> See *Code of Canon Law* (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1998). Under canon law, all Catholic schools are under the authority of the local bishop, even those operated by religious communities (canon 802, §1). At the same time, these are ministries canonically sponsored by the religious community (which exists as a public ecclesiastical juridic person [canon 116, §1]); the religious community retains control over the operations and mission of the school (canon 801). So, Catholic schools sponsored by religious communities are, in a broad sense, institutions of the Catholic Church even while not directly administered by the hierarchy of the Church.

as a whole. While individual orders might have had a coherent plan,<sup>94</sup> it is only in the last century that the Church has begun to articulate a common vision for Catholic schools.<sup>95</sup>

At the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the Church began shifting its orientation from suspicion towards the modern world and began to see its mission as reaching out to the world in love and service. In 1965, the Council released its document on Christian education; *Gravissimum Educationis* called Catholic schools to abandon their fortress mentality, in which they tended to see the school as a haven from the “evils” of society,<sup>96</sup> and to embrace an openness to the world.<sup>97</sup> *Gravissimum Educationis* makes four key claims about Catholic education: that parents are the primary educators of their children; that schools should reflect the gospel values of love, charity, and freedom; that schools should try to relate all human culture to the good news of salvation; and that the various branches of knowledge have a rightful autonomy.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Elias, *A History of Christian Religious Education*, 100-108. The Jesuits were among the first to provide central control and structure to their educational ministries. The *Constitutions* of the Jesuits (written in 1556) indicate that, from the beginning, education of boys was to be a primary ministry of the order. In 1599, the Jesuits published the *Ratio Studiorum*, which outlined how a Jesuit school should be run. In a similar way, the Christian Brothers (founded by John Baptiste de la Salle), the Salesians of Don Bosco (founded by John Bosco), and the Sisters of Mercy (founded by Catherine McAuley) provided their communities with similar plans for educating students. The only other attempt to outline a program for the education for girls is the *Traite de l'education des filles*, written by Bishop Francois Fenelon in 1681. In this he recommends that girls receive an education appropriate to their place in society.

<sup>95</sup> Stephen J. Denig and Anthony J. Dosen, “The Mission of the Catholic School in the Pre-Vatican II Era (1810-1962) and the Post-Vatican II Era (1965-1995): Insights and Observations for the New Millennium,” *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* 13, no. 2 (December 2009): 138-139.

<sup>96</sup> For a discussion of this fortress mentality in Catholic schools, see, for example: Gerald Grace, *Catholic Schools: Mission, Markets and Morality* (New York: Routledge Falmer, 2002), 7-10; Sullivan, *Catholic Education*, 10.

<sup>97</sup> Sullivan, *Catholic Education*, 9.

<sup>98</sup> Sullivan, *Catholic Education*, 75. As the document puts it: “No less than other schools does the Catholic school pursue cultural goals and the human formation of youth. But its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through baptism as they develop their own

*Gravissimum Educationis* provided the beginnings of a new way of understanding Catholic education; the Church has continued to explore the same issues in a number of subsequent publications including *The Catholic School* (1977), *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979), *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (1982), *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988), *The General Directory for Catechesis* (1997) and *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1998).<sup>99</sup> In particular, the release of *The Catholic School* in 1977 brought further clarification and nuance to the general claims made in *Gravissimum Educationis*. Schools are to be concerned about the “integral formation of the whole person”<sup>100</sup> and claim Jesus as the foundation for the educational enterprise.<sup>101</sup> *The Catholic School* asserts that the task of the school “is fundamentally a synthesis of

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personalities, and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life and man is illumined by faith. So indeed the Catholic school, while it is open, as it must be, to the situation of the contemporary world, leads its students to promote efficaciously the good of the earthly city and also prepares them for service in the spread of the Kingdom of God, so that by leading and exemplary apostolic life they become, as it were, a saving leaven in the human community” (Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education [Gravissimum Educationis]* (1965), §8, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_gravissimum-educationis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_en.html) (accessed on February 10, 2016)).

<sup>99</sup> Sullivan, *Catholic Education*, 76-85. Sullivan offers an excellent discussion of the development of thought across these documents. See also, Sean Whittle, *A Theory of Catholic Education* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015). Whittle argues that, while there are a number of important educational and formational goals addressed in all of these documents, Church statements about education in general and Catholic schooling in particular tend towards being vague and laden with unexplored theological assertions. Fine-sounding but vague slogans “give the impression of coherence but in reality stifle and hinder discussions about the distinctiveness of Catholic education and schooling” (43). Whittle calls these slogans “Catholic edu-babble,” a term he borrows from Terence McLaughlin. See Terence McLaughlin, “The Distinctiveness of Catholic Education,” in *The Contemporary Catholic School: Context, Identity and Diversity*, ed. Terence McLaughlin, Joseph O’Keefe SJ, and Bernadette O’Keefe (New York: Routledge Falmer, 1996), 136-154.

<sup>100</sup> Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School* (1977), §26. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_19770319\\_catholic-school\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19770319_catholic-school_en.html) (accessed on February 10, 2016). Sullivan notes that, while this phrase, “integral development,” appears in this document and has become an influential expression, its meaning has not yet been fully explored. Subsequent documents give it more “thickness,” but it is never fully explained (Sullivan, *Catholic Education*, 76-77).

<sup>101</sup> *The Catholic School*, §34.

culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life.”<sup>102</sup> The document goes on to reiterate that the various academic disciplines have their own autonomy and that students should be provided with the critical thinking skills necessary to work across disciplines and the ability to make critical judgments about what they are studying.<sup>103</sup>

In its most recent document, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, published in 1998, the Vatican argues that schools are about the promotion of the human person and that all the disciplines in the curriculum function together to aid in the development of the student.<sup>104</sup> Key among the goals of the Catholic school should be the development of a sense of reciprocity that can lead towards the integration of faith and life. This document also stresses that Catholic schools have a mission that includes reaching out to all people and making education available to all.<sup>105</sup>

In addition, Catholic schools are called to recognize and live out the Biblical mandate to live in right relationship with others and to ensure that all people have access to the goods and services that enable their full flourishing as human persons. Catholic schools appropriate this mandate when they educate young people with a commitment to both the dignity of each individual person and the common good of

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<sup>102</sup> *The Catholic School*, §37. Sullivan suggests that the document does not explain how faith and culture are to be integrated; given that cultures vary widely and often have elements at odds with the Church, the process of integrating faith and culture is bound to be fraught with difficulties which this document passes over (Sullivan, *Catholic Education*, 77).

<sup>103</sup> *The Catholic School*, §39-42.

<sup>104</sup> Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1998), §9. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_27041998\\_school2000\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_27041998_school2000_en.html) (accessed on February 10, 2016).

<sup>105</sup> *Threshold of the Third Millennium*, §11.

all people.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, Catholic schools, as a ministry of the Church, are themselves a work of justice.<sup>107</sup> The mission of the Catholic school is one that does justice by offering educational opportunities to those who have been marginalized by society and who might otherwise not have access to a high-quality education and, in the course of providing this education, the school also forms students who are prepared to live out the Church's call for justice in their own lives.

These and the other documents on education reveal the foundations of a philosophy of education for the Church. The documents propose that Catholic schools are to be focused on the education of the whole person, to understand the depth and breadth of human knowledge and learning, and to see faith and culture as collaborative rather than combative.<sup>108</sup> In other words, Catholic schools are forming young people in the faith and providing them with an education that will enable them to engage the world in productive and transformative ways. Focusing on the formation of young people for lives of faith and the common good means that the religious dimension of the school is not just added on to the other "regular" parts of

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<sup>106</sup> Thomas H. Groome, "What Makes a School Catholic?" in *The Contemporary Catholic School: Context, Identity and Diversity*, ed. Terence McLaughlin, Joseph O'Keefe, SJ and Bernadette O'Keefe (New York: Routledge Falmer, 1996), 122.

<sup>107</sup> In their 1971 statement, *Justice in the World*, the Third Synod of Bishops proclaimed that "education demands a renewal of heart, a renewal based on the recognition of sin in its individual and social manifestations... It will likewise awaken a critical sense, which will lead us to reflect on the society in which we live and on its values; it will make people ready to renounce these values when they cease to promote justice for all people." (World Synod of Catholic Bishops, *Justice in the World* (1971), <https://www1.villanova.edu/content/dam/villanova/mission/JusticeInTheWorld1971.pdf> (accessed on February 16, 2016), §51). The USCCB echoed this; see The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *To Teach as Jesus Did* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1972): "The unfinished business on the agenda of Catholic schools, like many other schools, also includes the task of providing quality education for the poor and disadvantaged of our nation" (§121). In their 1976 document, *Teach Them*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops expanded this call to serve the poor to include all those who are marginalized (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Teach Them* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1976), 9. Quoted in Thomas Oldenski, *Liberation Theology and Critical Pedagogy in Today's Catholic Schools: Social Justice in Action* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 34.).

<sup>108</sup> Sullivan, *Catholic Education*, 85.



the educational process. Rather, everything in the school – mission, values, curriculum, discipline, extra-curricular activities, campus ministry and liturgy, arts, and service programs – is to be understood as a part of the formation of students.

### **1.2.1 All-Girls' Schools Living Out This Mission**

As schools founded and sponsored by women's religious orders, all-girls' Catholic schools play an important role in this educational mission of the Church. As the needs of the young women that they were educating changed over time, women religious were able to adjust the ways that they thought about their mission. This resiliency enabled the schools that survive into the twenty-first century to continue to meet their mission of preparing young women for whatever lives they chose to take up. In the formation of empowered, confident, and well-educated young women, today's all-girls' Catholic schools are living into their fullest potential as Catholic schools and are providing girls with an educational space that resists reproducing the sexism of the Catholic Church and the dominant culture.

One way to think about the mission of all-girls' Catholic schools is to think about the mission of Catholic schools as described above and to read that through the lens of the history of the all-girls' context. In addition, the mission statements of all-girls' Catholic schools can reveal the significant core values of these schools.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> There is significant literature showing that school mission statements can be effectively assessed and used to identify core values of a school. For a study using these techniques to look at the mission statements of Catholic colleges, see Sandra M. Estanek, Michael J. James, and Daniel A. Norton, "Assessing Catholic Identity: A Study of Mission Statements of Catholic Colleges and Universities," *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* 10, no. 2 (December 2006): 199-217. For a larger study of public schools in ten states, see Steven E. Stemler, Damian Bebell, and Lauren Ann Sonnabend, "Using School Mission Statements for Reflection and Research," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (November 2010): 391.

By looking at some of the key words and phrases that are used by all-girls' Catholic schools in their descriptions of themselves, it should be possible to discern three of the ways in which the mission is taken up by the schools: they are concerned for the education of the whole person, they are committed to the human ability to think rationally, critically, and creatively, and they are called to be places of justice.<sup>110</sup>

First, Catholic schools in general are committed to the education of the whole person; they are concerned not just about the learning of knowledge and skills that would equip students to take up further study and to be successful in the career of their choice. Catholic schools are concerned about the moral formation of students, their emotional needs, and the spiritual and religious identity of the school community. This emphasis necessitates a focus on what Thomas Groome calls the “being” of students – on who they are and who they will become. “Catholic education intends to inform and form the very ‘being’ of its students, to mold their identity and agency – who they are and how they live.”<sup>111</sup> Groome notes that this ontological concern means that the Church is approaching Catholic education from a very different standpoint than other schooling systems. By valuing who students are and who they will become more than the knowledge and skills they will be learning, Catholic schools are, in fact, counter-cultural.<sup>112</sup> Because of this ontological

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<sup>110</sup> See Appendix B for a collection of mission statements from approximately 70 all-girls' Catholic schools. While it is not possible to look at the mission statements of every all-girls' Catholic school, there are enough recurring ideas to give a sense of the common themes present across the various schools.

<sup>111</sup> Groome, “What Makes a School Catholic?” 121. Groome also makes this argument in more detail: Thomas H. Groome, *Educating for Life: A Spiritual Vision for Every Teacher and Parent* (Allen TX: Thomas More, 1998).

<sup>112</sup> It is important to note that Groome is not arguing that Catholic schools don't teach knowledge or skills, rather that these are placed into a larger philosophical and theological framework that honors each student's being. In their landmark study of Catholic schools, Bryk, Lee, and Holland echo this when they point to three characteristics of Catholic schools that set them apart from other schools: “an unwavering commitment to an academic program for all students, regardless of background or life expectations, and an

concern, Catholic schools embrace a theological anthropology that recognizes the essential goodness of each student: “it recognizes our capacity and ‘proneness’ for sin, but insists that we are essentially more good than evil. Though ‘fallen’, our divine image and likeness was never totally lost through original sin. Rather we retain our innate capacity for good and for God.”<sup>113</sup> For Catholic schools, students are not fundamentally broken, sinful, or defective; they are and must always be viewed as good, as whole, and as holy.

All-girls’ Catholic schools live out this commitment to the education of the whole person. In the past, this concern was reflected in the balancing of the religious and educational goals of the schools. Girls were steeped in a Catholic ethos that was intended to form them as faithful Catholics prepared to transmit the faith to the next generation. Along side of this spiritual and religious formation, girls were provided with a challenging and thorough academic preparation that was, oftentimes, combined with training in the “ornamental” skills that women of each era needed – needlework, dancing, and painting in the early days; household management and secretarial skills in the early twentieth century.

Today, all-girls’ Catholic schools continue this commitment to the whole person. Not only are these schools committed to the religious formation of students – usually articulated as educating girls to be faithful Christians shaped by the particular charism of the sponsoring religious order, they also explicitly commit

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academic organization designed to promote this aim; a pervasive sense, shared by both teachers and students, of the school as a caring environment and a social organization deliberately structured to advance this; and an inspirational ideology that directs institutional action toward social justice in an ecumenical and multicultural world.” Anthony S. Bryk, Valerie E. Lee, and Peter B. Holland, *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 10.

<sup>113</sup> Groome, “What Makes a School Catholic?” 109.

themselves to preparing students for success in college and career and for making a difference in the world. Demonstrating this commitment to the education of the whole person, the mission statements use phrases like: “the dignity of each person;” “values the uniqueness of each individual;” “respects individual differences;” “individuality, talent, and aspirations;” “educating the whole person for life.” Mission statements signal the schools’ commitment to preparing young women to successfully take up whatever they want to do is indicated by phrases like: “become a competent and compassionate Christian woman;” “discover her unique place in the world;” “live lives of consequence;” “prepared to challenge, shape, and change the world;” “women who believe that life has a purpose.” And they indicate that an education at an all-girls’ school is broader than simply acquiring knowledge and skills: “preparing her to live fully and wisely;” “empowered intellectually, spiritually, and morally;” “able to make informed and values-driven decisions;” “spiritual formation and academic excellence;” “women of courage, compassion, and scholarship.”

Second, Catholic schools are committed to providing students with an appreciation of the depth and breadth of human knowledge and of the necessary connections between faith and culture. This means that Catholic schools are committed to the importance of rationality and the human ability to think rationally, critically, and creatively.<sup>114</sup> Catholic schools do not reject the knowledge and skills that humans have developed over the millennia; rather, students are encouraged to

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<sup>114</sup> As Groome notes, “Striking a path between fideism (blind faith) and rationalism (sufficiency of reason), Catholicism has been convinced that understanding and faith, reason and revelation, need and enhance each other” (Groome, “What Makes a School Catholic?” 119).

engage those knowledge and skills and to make informed decisions about what they think. They trust students to think for themselves, to weigh the evidence from all branches of human knowledge, and to discern how they can best use this knowledge for making better their lives and the lives of others.<sup>115</sup> In addition, Catholic schools recognize that knowledge and skills by themselves are insufficient for success in college or career; rather education also means the ability to evaluate knowledge and skills and to understand them in the context of the moral complexities of the wider world. Brazilian educator Paulo Friere named this as conscientization – the need for an education that does not simply deposit information into students, but teaches them to evaluate it, to reflect critically on their own lives, and to commit to working to end oppression and for the common good.<sup>116</sup>

For the all-girls’ Catholic school, this commitment to the depth and breadth of human knowledge is reflected in their commitment to academic excellence. Historically, all-girls’ Catholic academies were among the only schools where young women could get a rigorous education – where they could get as thorough an education as their brothers did. Even when all-girls’ Catholic schools saw themselves as preparing young women for marriage and childrearing, they provided their students with as comprehensive an education as possible. And, because many of the teaching sisters who staffed these schools were also graduates of the schools, they took seriously the need to prepare the next generation of teachers. By the mid-

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<sup>115</sup> Groome, “What Makes a School Catholic?” 121.

<sup>116</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1989), 33; Oldinski, *Liberation Theology and Critical Pedagogy*, 88-93. Oldinski notes that Freire’s pedagogy is both shaped by and shapes Roman Catholic liberation theology. He notes, in particular, these points of overlap: both “(1) begin with a concern for the poor and the oppressed, (2) encourage solidarity with the poor and oppressed in developing a humane and just community, (3) offer hope, (4) offer change in how I see myself and my world, and (5) perpetuate themselves even as they achieve change” (93).

twentieth century, all-girls' Catholic schools were preparing young women for career (mostly careers as teachers, nurses, and office workers) and for college (particularly at an all-women's Catholic college). While not often describing their work as the process of liberation, all-girls' Catholic schools were schools that attended to the needs of a marginalized population. In times when women's voices were not valued, when women's ambitions were seen as limited to the home or the cloister, when women were expected to conform to societal expectations of meekness and self-abasement, the all-girls' Catholic school provided girls with a women-centered community that was led by competent women and was intended to form competent women.

Today, all-girls' Catholic schools demonstrate this commitment to academic excellence by emphasizing the critical thinking skills that are necessary for success in the twenty-first century. And, while they still do not tend to use the language of liberation, these schools definitely position themselves as preparing young women to be leaders in the world, prepared to make a real difference in striving to make the world better for all those who are marginalized. To draw attention to the development of critical thinking skills, schools use statements such as: "excellence in scholarship;" "intellectual inquiry;" "academic and real-life experiences;" "critical thinking and problem solving;" "embrace challenges;" "to question, to reflect, and to challenge." To emphasize that these critical thinking skills are oriented towards liberation and justice – that the skills are about conscientization, schools claim: "to seek faith, knowledge, and truth;" "wise freedom;" "learning linked to faith, family, and community;" "students who think critically, embrace knowledge, respond with

moral and ethical integrity, and make responsible choices;” “the belief that educated, caring, empowered young women are essential to our world;” “critical thinking and courageous action;” “to make a difference; independence of judgment, personal freedom, and strength of character.”

And, finally, Catholic schools are called to be places of justice. They are not only called to act out a preferential option for the poor by providing an education for those who are excluded by society and to participate in the kind of education that engages students in critical reflection on their own lives and on the oppression and marginalization that they see in their world. Catholic schools are also called to educate students to become committed and passionate participants in the struggle for justice.<sup>117</sup> Documents since the Second Vatican Council have consistently asserted that the climate and culture of the Catholic school is to be one where justice is integral to the school’s identity. The pursuit of justice for their own students and by students for others, then, is to be a constitutive part of the identity of the school.<sup>118</sup>

Historically, all-girls’ Catholic academies were themselves a work of justice. By opting for the education of girls, women religious were providing an excluded

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<sup>117</sup> Joseph M. O’Keefe, “Catholic Schools as Communities of Service: The US Experience,” in *Reimagining the Catholic School*, ed. Ned Prendergast and Luke Monahan (Dublin, Ireland: Veritas, 2003). O’Keefe frames this call within the Church’s commitment to the preferential option for the poor: “Wealth and privilege often render the poor invisible. It is the challenge of prophetic leadership to see the needs within and beyond the school and to have the courage to act accordingly. Catholic schools should also raise the consciousness of students to the glaring and widening discrepancies of wealth between developed and developing countries” (97).

<sup>118</sup> Harold A. Beutow, *The Catholic School: Its Roots, Identity, and Future* (New York: Crossroads, 1988), 84. Beutow puts it this way: “Catholic schools face a risk in presenting justice as a goal. If they accept a role as a carrier of messages for justice, an agent of change in society, they risk offending the rich and powerful, some of whom support Catholic institutions. But the risk must be taken, because the result of justice and love will be the peace on earth which all people seek.”

and marginalized group with access to education.<sup>119</sup> In addition, these women religious saw the education of girls as an effort that crossed race and class distinctions; from the beginning, women religious educated white students and students of color, girls from wealthy and from poor families. When the sisters used their academies to fund schools for poor girls, they were living out a commitment to educating the marginalized girls of their communities.

Today, all-girls' Catholic schools continue to see themselves as providing an education for a marginalized population and as educating students who will work for justice. Despite the fact that women have achieved significant levels of equality in the United States, many of these achievements are partial and fragile. Further, the intersection of gender with race and class means that female students of color and from poor families still do not have access to the same educational opportunities that wealthy, white girls do. All-girls' Catholic schools demonstrate their commitment to providing an education to marginalized populations with phrases like: "girls from diverse backgrounds;" "a culturally diverse and safe learning environment;" "without regard to ability to pay or immediate preparedness;" "multicultural education." Schools can signal their focus on the preferential option for the poor with descriptions such as: "love for the poor;" "global community;" "promote human dignity;" "global justice;" "unshakable commitment to the common good;" "respect for human rights and respect for the goods of the earth." And they can indicate their focus on helping students act for justice and liberation in their

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<sup>119</sup> Mary Darmanin, "Empowering Women: The Contribution of Contemporary Catholic Schools," *International Studies in Catholic Education* 1, no. 1 (March, 2009): 87. Darmanin points to the papal document, *Consecrated Persons and Their Mission in Schools*, which argues that the education of girls is a work of justice.



own lives with phrases like: “educated to the needs of society;” “social awareness that impels to action;” “change the world;” “prepared to challenge, shape, and change the world;” “social responsibility on behalf of global justice;” “make a profound impact on the world.”

### **1.2.2 The Feminist Mission of All-Girls’ Catholic Schools**

Given their commitment to educating the whole person, to providing a thorough, critical, and liberative education, and to understanding education as a work of justice, the mission of all-girls’ Catholic schools is a feminist mission. All-girls’ Catholic schools are concerned about girls – about prioritizing the education of girls in a society that does not always value women and girls. While not denying the need for quality education for boys in all-boys’ schools or for girls and boys in coeducational schools, the all-girls’ Catholic school is committed to the empowerment of girls so that they can take up whatever future they want. Even when schools hesitate to name it as such, this is a feminist mission.

Feminist pedagogy draws from two distinct sources: liberative pedagogy<sup>120</sup> and feminist theory. It then interrogates schools and schooling practices to determine the influence of a patriarchal culture and it proposes pedagogical approaches that both include the voices of women in the curriculum and that model ways of knowing that speak to the experiences of women. Feminist pedagogy is not merely adding some examples of women to a curriculum that is written by and from the perspective of men; nor is feminist pedagogy simply about the education of

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<sup>120</sup> Liberative, or critical, pedagogy will be taken up in more detail in chapter five.

women or education about feminist perspectives. Rather it is an approach that reimagines the entire learning experience in a way that privileges the experiences of women and seeks to foster a dialogue that will lead to the transformation of society.<sup>121</sup>

Catholic schools and feminist educators both hold the conviction that the student is inherently good and to be valued. Feminist educators would put a priority on the recognition of the goodness of female students so that they do not get lost in either an uncritical assumption that boys and girls have similar experiences of school and so that the female students aren't socialized into a dualistic anthropology that privileges the male experience. Catholic schools and feminist educators both put significant stress on the role that critical reasoning plays in personal growth. A feminist pedagogy, borrowing from the work of Paulo Freire, insists that critical reflection on the experience of oppression is foundational for ending that oppression and establishing a world where each person will flourish. Finally, Catholic schools and feminist educators both have a profound concern for the establishment of justice. For feminist educators, the creation of a more just world is the central concern driving all of the analysis and the classroom and school

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<sup>121</sup> Robbin D. Crabtree, David Alan Sapp, and Adela C. Licona, "Introduction: The Passion and the Praxis of Feminist Pedagogy," in *Feminist Pedagogy: Looking Back to Move Forward*, ed. Robbin D. Crabtree, David Alan Sapp, and Adela C. Licona (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 4. It is important to note that feminist pedagogy is a large and diverse reality; the ways that feminist pedagogy is engaged is determined, in part, by which feminist theories are utilized. For an excellent discussion of the variety of these, please see Carolyn Zerbe Enns and Ada L. Sinacore, "Second-Wave Feminisms and Their Relationships to Pedagogy" in *Teaching and Social Justice: Integrating Multicultural and Feminist Theories in the Classroom*, ed. Carolyn Zerbe Enns and Ada L. Sinacore (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2005), 25-39; Ada L. Sinacore and Carolyn Zerbe Enns, "Diversity Feminisms: Postmodern, Women-of-Color, Antiracist, Lesbian, Third-Wave, and Global Perspectives" in *Teaching and Social Justice: Integrating Multicultural and Feminist Theories in the Classroom*, ed. Carolyn Zerbe Enns and Ada L. Sinacore (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2005), 41-68.

practices and policies. Without a concern for justice, feminist pedagogy is hollow and useless.

In an interesting study, Mary Rose McCarthy surveyed and interviewed teachers at several all-girls' Catholic schools and found that the school policies, curriculum, and classroom practices reflected a feminist pedagogy.<sup>122</sup> McCarthy found that the teachers and administrators at these all-girls' Catholic schools viewed their work as service to women and as providing students with the tools they would need to create their own futures. They saw the tensions that existed between their goals and practices and the expectations of mainstream society and the Catholic Church. They were influenced by the feminist movement and were actively creating feminist educational strategies that drew on the spiritual heritages of their schools.<sup>123</sup> Of particular interest is the way in which the teachers in these Catholic all-girls' schools understood their students:

In their philosophy, the individual has dignity and worth as God's creation. The school communities' understandings of womanhood include the sense that women are capable and competent; that they are responsible and autonomous human beings; that they are, as God's children, the subjects of their own lives; and that they are accountable to communities in which they live and work.<sup>124</sup>

Interestingly, many of the teachers made a distinction between the ways that their Catholic faith had positively shaped their understanding of women and their

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<sup>122</sup> Mary Rose McCarthy, "Feminist Pedagogy and Teachers in Catholic Women's High Schools," *Journal of Women and Religion* 17 (1999): 57-68. The study involved 430 teacher surveys at 85 all-girls' Catholic high schools and sought to answer the following questions: "We wanted to know if [the teachers] saw education as a political project in which relationships between systems of class, race and gender oppression must be acknowledged. We wondered if they challenged traditional forms of educational structures and if women's narratives of their experiences were seen as valid sources of knowledge. Did their curricula reflect a balance of perspectives, including those that have been neglected in the past? Did their classroom practices promote critical thinking about society and the educational process? Did they negotiate the power relationships among themselves and their students?" (58-59).

<sup>123</sup> McCarthy, "Feminist Pedagogy," 59.

<sup>124</sup> McCarthy, "Feminist Pedagogy," 64.

frustration with the institutional Church and its failures to promote gender equality.<sup>125</sup> McCarthy concludes that all-girls' Catholic high schools do, in fact, reflect a feminist pedagogy in their approach to school policy, curricular decisions, and classroom practices.

All-girls' Catholic schools, as places that value girls, are living out a feminist pedagogical perspective. By explicitly claiming to educate the whole person, to provide a thorough and challenging curriculum that is liberative, and to educate for justice, these schools are feminist institutions.

Every dimension of school life is lived by pupils and teachers in girls' single-sex schools as if there should be no difference between the future aspirations of women and men... [At girls' schools], girls learn "how to be" not only full participants in the Catholic, female tradition, but also, through a learning trajectory, what "sort of person they wish to become."<sup>126</sup>

If the Catholic school is to be a conscientizing and liberating place for those who are marginalized and oppressed, then the all-girls' Catholic school is a place where girls are invited to think critically about the patriarchal forces that ground society and the Church and to engage in resistance to those patriarchal institutions. All-girls' Catholic schools have the opportunity to help girls "to become visible, to have their questions heard, to have their answers listened to, to hear a word of theology that ennobles them, too, and to be sent, as the Samaritan woman was, to evangelise cities where, as scripture says clearly 'Because of her thousands were converted that day.'"<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> McCarthy, "Feminist Pedagogy," 65.

<sup>126</sup> Darmanin, "Empowering Women," 97.

<sup>127</sup> Joan D. Chittister, "Reimagining the Catholic School in this New Century," in *Reimagining the Catholic School*, ed. Ned Prendergast and Luke Monahan (Dublin, Ireland: Veritas, 2003), 27.

### 1.3 CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this chapter, the stories of Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School and Mount Saint Joseph Academy stood as instantiations of the wide variety of all-girls' Catholic schools in the United States. Today, the mission statements of these two schools are apt illustrations of the Catholic mission of all-girls' schools. In its mission statement, Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School commits itself to the education of young women who are valued in their own right, educated to think critically about the world, and empowered to find their place in making the world a better place.

Georgetown Visitation, founded in 1799, is a college preparatory school rooted in the Roman Catholic faith and Salesian tradition, committed to educating young women from diverse backgrounds. We are a faith-centered community dedicated to educational excellence, enriched by co-curricular and service programs. Our mission is to empower our students to meet the demands and challenges of today's rapidly changing and morally complex world. We guide our students to become self-reliant, intellectually mature, and morally responsible women of faith, vision, and purpose.<sup>128</sup>

Students who attend this school are provided with the very best of educational opportunities and are expected to live lives that make a difference. The school recognizes the diversity among students and the ability of students to engage the world around them. They are valued as unique expressions of God's care and as made in the image and likeness of God. As young women of "faith, vision, and purpose," these students are being called to lives of full human flourishing as they enable others to also flourish in communities of justice and care.

Before its closure in 2012, students at Mount Saint Joseph Academy were

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<sup>128</sup> Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School, "Mission Statement," <http://www.visi.org/about-us/mission-statement/index.aspx> (accessed March 26, 2017).

similarly valued as persons created by God and as called to great things. In its mission statement, the school committed itself to preparing young women who would succeed at college and in whatever they were called to do.

Mount Saint Joseph Academy, a Catholic High School for young women, provides a college preparatory education in a community of lived Christian values. Founded and sponsored by the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Boston, Mount Saint Joseph Academy promotes academic excellence, cultivates respect for all people, fosters unity and reconciliation, and educates young women for compassionate leadership and service.<sup>129</sup>

The school saw women as leaders who will, through their work with others, make the world a better place. Living out of their common Christian values, the students of Mount Saint Joseph Academy belonged to a community that claimed to respect others, to create community with others, and to lead or serve that community as needed. Sent out into the world, these were students prepared to live out these commitments.

The stories of these two schools speaks to the larger history of communities of women who took seriously the education of women and the roles that women played in society. All-girls' Catholic schools were and continue to be committed to the education of girls as girls – as valuable in their own right. By preparing students for whatever challenges they will face, these schools evidence a confidence in the abilities and potential of young women. Not only are girls understood as basically good (as demanded by Catholic teaching), they are valuable, necessary, and created by God. In short, the history and mission of all-girls' Catholic schools reveals a set of institutions that recognize that girls are made in the image of God and, therefore, are

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<sup>129</sup> *The Mount: The Voice and Vision for Mount Saint Joseph Academy Alumnae, Students, and Friends*, Spring 2009, 1.

valuable members of schools communities, of the Church, and of society as a whole.

Young women who attend all-girls' Catholic school not only receive a challenging academic education, they are helped to see themselves as persons created in the image of God. As such, they are valued in their own right; they are invited to be who they are, to embrace the sometimes-messy givenness of adolescence, and to become self-confident young women who value themselves and others. As persons made in the image of God they are empowered to resist the cultural forces that seek to marginalize women and, especially, adolescent girls and to work to fight the patriarchal worldviews that shape the sexism of their society and Church. All-girls' Catholic schools, because of their grounding in the larger mission of Catholic education and their often unacknowledged feminist approach, are able to help girls confront the challenges of being a young women in the twenty-first century, to counter the conflicting and impossible expectations laid upon girls in the United States, and to resist the pressure to conform to the expectations of others. With this perspective, all-girls' Catholic schools are not institutions that reproduce the patriarchy of the dominant culture; rather, they are sites where these can be identified, analyzed, and challenged by girls who are then prepared to make a real difference in the world for other girls, women, and marginalized people.

Given this discussion of the history and mission of all-girls' Catholic schools and given the profound commitments to the girls who are students in these schools, it is appropriate to turn next to the girls themselves. Girls who attend all-girls' Catholic schools are not removed from the cultural norms and societal pressures of the twenty-first century. And, if all-girls' Catholic schools are going to be feminist

institutions prepared to challenge the patriarchy of the dominant culture, then the ways that that dominant culture is experienced by girls must be explored.



## **2.0 CHAPTER TWO CAUGHT IN A BIND: ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

At an all-girls' Catholic school, one much like Mount Saint Joseph Academy or Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School, there is a young woman named Katie.<sup>1</sup> Like most girls her age, she seems to have everything going for her. She is white and middle-class, lives in a safe neighborhood, and is growing up in a stable family with sufficient resources to send her to a private Catholic school. Her parents support her in her choices of friends and activities. Katie is the second of four children in her family; her brother is a freshman at college and her two younger sisters are in elementary school. Both of her parents work outside the home and, with her brother away, Katie has been pitching in more around the house, making sure her younger sisters get their homework done. Katie is a good student, working hard and earning mostly As, well respected and well-liked by her teachers. She is involved in the Model UN, the breast cancer awareness club, and has a small role in the school musical this year. Katie is a rising star on the soccer team, having played competitive soccer since she was five years old. She wants to be a lawyer when she grows up, following in her mother's footsteps. After studying about racism in her theology class, she thinks she might want to use her future law degree to help fight racism and other forms of discrimination. Katie has a number of good friends, some girls from her elementary school who now attend different high schools and a couple of close friends at her school. Katie is not currently dating anyone, although she has been hanging out with a group of boys from a local all-boys' Catholic school and she has

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this dissertation, Katie represents a fictionalized portrait of the girls who attend schools like Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School and Mount Saint Joseph Academy, which were introduced in chapter one.

developed a crush on one particular boy. She's really hoping that he will ask her to his school's homecoming dance.

On the surface, it seems like Katie has everything going for her. But a closer look at Katie's life reveals that things are really not all that great. Katie is overwhelmed, stressed out, anxious, and showing signs of depression. She is chronically sleep deprived, spends the vast majority of her time either at school, in classes or at soccer practice, or alone in her room doing her homework. She only gets to see her parents when they are driving her and her sisters to school; she rarely eats meals with them anymore. She only sees her friends at school and at the occasional weekend party, where the pressure to drink and "hook up" with boys is intense. She is anxious about getting good grades and not letting anyone down. The stress of her life means that she does not always eat regularly and a recent drop in her weight brought compliments from her parents and friends. Lately, Katie has been avoiding eating – it is easy to do since her family does not eat together. In a life that feels out of control, Katie is finding that she can control her eating and that the weight loss compliments make her feel valued.

Katie's story is a disturbingly typical one. Women have made significant advances in the last fifty years; girls no longer grow up assuming that they will simply marry and have children. Instead, they can, and are encouraged to, pursue careers in every field and to combine family and career. However, even with all of these advances for women, adolescent girls are experiencing such distress that a significant minority of them is at risk for a range of maladaptive behaviors such as eating disorders, self-mutilation, aggression, and suicide. And even girls who do not engage in these extreme

behaviors are experiencing significant amounts of stress.<sup>2</sup> Rates of anxiety and depression are rising and many girls find that the pressure to “do it all” is profound.<sup>3</sup>

Katie’s story is an important one because it points to the ways in which changes in society have impacted the milieu in which adolescents in general, and adolescent girls in particular, are growing to adulthood. Robert Putnam suggests that the America of the 1950s, while certainly less just in its treatment of women and racial minorities, was a place where teenagers could grow to adulthood in communities that supported them.<sup>4</sup> Communities were more economically diverse, with children of the wealthy, of middle-class business owners, of factory or farm workers all “mixed unselfconsciously in schools and neighborhoods, in scout troops and church groups.”<sup>5</sup> Teenagers were known to the people in their communities and adults looked out for them; the institutions of the community – schools, churches, civic organizations, and even neighborhoods – were focused on the communal responsibility to raise children to become functioning members of the community. These kinds of communities no longer exist – or, at least, they do not exist for the majority of adolescents. Adolescents no longer grow up in communities where everyone knows their name or is concerned for their futures. The web of community institutions that could help adolescents make healthy choices, could give

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<sup>2</sup> Martha B. Straus, *Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Intervention and Hope* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 50-61; Stephen Hinshaw with Rachel Kranz, *The Triple Bind: Saving Our Teenage Girls from Today’s Pressures and Conflicting Expectations* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2009), x-xi.

<sup>3</sup> Straus, *Adolescent Girls in Crisis*, 54-55; Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, 27-46. For an account of depression in adolescent girls, see Timothy J. Strauman, Philip R. Costanzo, and Judy Garber, “Depression in Adolescent Girls: Challenges for Basic Science,” in *Depression in Adolescent Girls: Science and Prevention*, ed. Timothy J. Strauman and Philip R. Costanzo (New York: Guilford Press, 2011), 3-24. For more on the prevalence of depression in girls, see David S. Bennett, Paul J. Ambrosini, Diana Kudes, Claudia Metz, and Harris Rabinovich, “Gender Differences in Adolescent Depression: Do Symptoms Differ for Boys and Girls?” *Journal of Affective Disorders* 89, no.1 (December 2005): 35-44. For more information about anxiety in adolescent girls, see Primrose Letcher, Ann Sanson, Diana Smart, and John W. Toumbourou, “Precursors and Correlates of Anxiety Trajectories From Late Childhood to Late Adolescence,” *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology* 41, no. 4 (2012): 417-432.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Putnam, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Putnam, *Our Kids*, 4.

them examples of various ways of living, and could provide them with access to opportunities and resources beyond the local community are no longer available for most adolescents.

Katie's story is also important because it reveals the pressures that adolescent girls in particular experience while growing up in today's society. A teenage girl's life is most likely to be characterized by busy-ness, pressure to succeed and conform to expectations, and a sense of being isolated from the adults who care for her. She is trying to negotiate her growing up in a world that is characterized by consumerism, globalism, individualism, technology, and a highly sexualized vision of what it means to be a woman.<sup>6</sup> This relentless pressure puts teenage girls into what Stephen Hinshaw calls a "triple bind" – a set of expectations that are contradictory and impossible to meet. Girls are expected to be good at all the things that girls are supposed to be good at, all the things that boys are supposed to be good at, and to do this while conforming to unreasonable expectations for physical appearance. It is no longer enough for women to be kind and nurturing while at the same time being competitive and successful; they must also be pretty, sexy, and thin.<sup>7</sup>

Katie's story demands our attention because she attends an all-girls' Catholic school. Throughout their long histories, all-girls' Catholic schools have made girls a priority in their mission. And this mission, as discussed in the previous chapter, focuses on preparing young women to succeed in a wide variety of areas – as leaders, as professionals, in their families, as those who care for the poor and oppressed, as those who can make the world a better place. But all-girls' Catholic schools operate within the

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<sup>6</sup> Straus, *Adolescent Girls in Crisis*, 6-10.

<sup>7</sup> Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, xii-xiii.

same culture that leads to the isolation of adolescents that Putnam describes and the triple bind that Hinshaw describes. Katie's story points to the ways that all-girls' Catholic schools, in teaching students that they can do whatever they want, are in fact telling girls that they have to be everything and to be that perfectly. Furthermore, as part of the larger Catholic Church, all-girls' Catholic schools are operating in an ecclesial culture that marginalizes the experiences of women and girls, reinforcing some of the gendered messages the girls receive from the culture about what it means to be a woman, especially those messages relating to women's roles in families and women's relationships with men. All-girls' Catholic schools, then, have a responsibility not to teach girls that they can "have it all," that they can be both successful professionals and nurturing care-givers. Rather, as institutions within the Catholic Church with an implicit feminist mission to educate young women in a patriarchal society, these schools have an opportunity to help girls understand the pressures that they experience, to help them resist the need to be perfect at all aspects of the triple bind, and to empower them to break down these expectations and create a society that truly does value the contributions of all women and girls.

This chapter describes the milieu in which adolescents in general and adolescent girls in particular are growing up. It first traces the ways that adolescents have, in general, become separated from the adults who care about them and experience a sense of isolation. Second, the chapter demonstrates that this isolation is compounded for girls because of the triple bind: adolescent girls must navigate their growing up in a toxic environment that demands girls meet impossible expectations for success and for appearance. Third, the ways in which the Catholic Church reinforces the triple bind that

adolescent girls are experiencing will be explored. And, finally, some ways of resisting the triple bind will be suggested, setting up the need for a more nuanced understanding of adolescent girls in theological anthropology.

## **2.1 ISOLATION: ADOLESCENCE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

Today's white, middle-class teenagers<sup>8</sup> live in a world that, on its surface, seems wonderful.<sup>9</sup> These adolescents tend to come from what appear to be fairly stable families who support them in their choices and activities; they attend schools that provide them with an education that can prepare them for college and career. Their access to electronics, technology, the internet, and, in particular, social media, means that they can form and maintain relationships with a wide variety of people all over the world. The entertainment industry provides them with movies, TV shows, and video games that play to their interests and glorify youth and beauty. Because of their increased buying power, stores – whether brick-and-mortar or online – cater to their desires.

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<sup>8</sup> This chapter focuses on the experiences of white and middle-class adolescents. Since most all-girls' Catholic schools are majority white and middle-class, the focus on white and middle-class girls is appropriate. While there is significant research showing that the pressures described below are also experienced by Black and Hispanic adolescents, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully describe these experiences. See, for example, Iris Jacob, *My Sisters' Voices: Teenage Girls of Color Speak Out* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2002); Horace R. Hall with Andrea Brown-Thirston, *Understanding Teenage Girls: Culture, Identity, and Schooling* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2011); Jill Denner and Bianca L. Guzman, eds, *Latina Girls: Voices of Adolescent Strength in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> For more information on adolescence as a distinct stage in life, see Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2007), 4-11. Arnett defines adolescence as the time between physical maturity at puberty and the taking up of full adult responsibilities. Because different cultures define adulthood in different ways, their understandings of the tasks of adolescence vary as well; in this way adolescence is socially constructed. For a description of childhood and adolescence in non-Western cultures, see Karen Wells, *Childhood in a Global Perspective* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009). For a history of childhood in Western Europe, see Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2001).

But, looking below the surface, this life may meet the immediate desires of adolescents, but it is not providing them with what they truly need as they grow into adulthood. Robert Putnam contrasts his own adolescence in small-town Ohio with the experiences of adolescents today and suggests that communities are no longer formed around the common purpose of raising children to adulthood. He describes communities where teens, “whatever their background, lived with two parents... and in neighborhoods where everyone knew everyone else’s first name.”<sup>10</sup> The family structures of today’s adolescents are more variable; some live with two parents, some with one parent, some with a parent and step-parent, and some in some other family arrangement. And, even when these family structures are stable, parents are often working long hours in order to maintain a middle-class lifestyle. Also disappearing are the kinds of neighborhoods where people know each other. It is increasingly common for people not to know their neighbors and to not feel any sense of responsibility towards these neighbors or the children of the neighborhood.<sup>11</sup>

For psychologist David Elkind, this shift is characteristic of the transition from late-modernity to postmodernity. In this shift, the needs of children and adolescents have ceased to be central in the lives of adults. Elkind contends that, prior to the 1960s, families, schools, and communities were generally oriented towards nurturing adolescents and protecting them until they could grow to adulthood.<sup>12</sup> In contrast,

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<sup>10</sup> Putnam, *Our Kids*, 7.

<sup>11</sup> Putnam, *Our Kids*, 206-212.

<sup>12</sup> Elkind is not arguing that this earlier time was a “Golden Age” to which we need to return. In fact, there were significant ways in which this kind of community orientation failed young people – silencing those seen as “other” because of race, gender and gender identity, and sexual orientation – and reinforced a sense of forced communal cohesiveness. He is suggesting instead that, in the drive to post-modernity, institutions in communities no longer are primarily oriented towards raising up the next generation. See David Elkind, *All Grown Up and No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1998), 240. Chap Clark echoes this concern that institutions that, in the past, were primarily focused on the needs

today's adolescents are viewed as socially sophisticated, technologically savvy, sexually active, and, according to Elkind, prematurely adult.<sup>13</sup> Having reached puberty, adolescents are pushed into a world of sophisticated marketing, highly sexualized entertainment, and adult choices even before their cognitive development has a chance to catch up to their physical development.<sup>14</sup>

Because of the premature adulthood of adolescence and the lack of a protective community, Elkind argues that adolescence in postmodernity is one that is characterized by stress.<sup>15</sup> This stress means that teenagers are anxious, frustrated, and angry; they do not know how to react to the stress in their lives because they have few adult models to show them how. This stress can lead to anxiety and depression and to a variety of maladaptive behaviors: violence and aggression; risky behaviors such as drinking, drug use, unprotected and promiscuous sex, and dangerous driving; eating disorders and self-harm; and suicide.

In his insightful book, Chap Clark investigates this sense that teenagers in the twenty-first century feel isolated from the adults in their lives. Like Elkind, Clark believes that society, at least in the United States, has reoriented itself from being focused primarily on the care and nurturing of children and adolescents to meeting the needs of adults. Clark names this as an abandonment of adolescents by the adults and communities in their lives.

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of children and adolescents, are often now more focused on institutional continuity. See Chap Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 35.

<sup>13</sup> Elkind, *All Grown Up*, 5-7.

<sup>14</sup> Elkind, *All Grown Up*, 167. Elkind argues that schools, especially public schools, no longer provide a protected place for adolescents where the adults know them well and support their development. Rather, "large schools, unfortunately, make it more difficult for young people to find meaningful relationships with mentor, a necessary condition for constructing a healthy sense of identity" (167).

<sup>15</sup> Elkind, *All Grown Up*, 215-216.



Adolescents have suffered the loss of the safe relationships and intimate settings that served as the primary nurturing community for those traveling the path from child to adult. The most obvious example of this is in the family. The postmodern family is often so concerned about the needs, struggles, and issues of parents that the emotional and developmental needs of the children go largely unmet.<sup>16</sup>

To compensate for the lack of time and attention that they give to their teenagers, parents will often get their teenager involved, often from childhood, in a variety of extracurricular activities. This kind of over-scheduling, Clark argues, both reinforces the sense of abandonment that adolescents feel and puts a great deal of pressure on them to be successful at all of these activities.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, adolescents have a sense that the adults that are in their lives – teachers, coaches, youth ministers, and so on – are there because they are paid to be there and because they want something from the adolescent such as good performance, team wins, a robust program.<sup>18</sup>

For Clark, one of the results of this abandonment of adolescents by the adults and institutions that should be nurturing them into a healthy adulthood is that adolescents are left without any guidance. At a time in their cognitive development when adolescents need support to develop the more complex ways of making meaning that are required in adulthood, they find that they are left to fend for themselves. Because of this, Clark argues, they have a sense of multiple selves that function in the varying social roles in which they find themselves: son or daughter, sibling, student, athlete, youth group member, volunteer, friend, boyfriend or girlfriend, worker, and so on. While this is

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<sup>16</sup> Clark, *Hurt 2.0*, 35.

<sup>17</sup> Clark, *Hurt 2.0*, 30. “We have evolved to the point where we believe driving is support, being active is love, and providing any and every opportunity is selfless nurture” (31).

<sup>18</sup> Clark, *Hurt 2.0*, 34. Clark puts it this way: “Organizations, structures, and institutions that were originally concerned with children’s care, welfare, and development have become less interested in individual nurture and development and more interested in institutional perpetuation (or the competitive, even pathological, needs of the adult in charge)” (34).

developmentally appropriate,<sup>19</sup> the number and variety of roles that adolescents are asked to juggle makes the task of developing an integrated sense of a self that operates in a variety of roles more difficult.<sup>20</sup>

The analysis that Clark offers of the systematic abandonment of adolescents by adults, including parents, and by institutions, including schools and churches, is an important and useful one. However, as suggested by Theresa O’Keefe, his analysis ascribes an intentionality to adults that is unwarranted and fails to prescribe solutions (other than that adults need to do better).<sup>21</sup> Rather, she argues that the isolation (a term she prefers to abandonment) that adolescents experience is due to changes in how society is structured. In particular, there have been significant changes in the number of relationships that adolescents must manage, the mobility of adolescents through a variety of cultural and value worlds, and in the kinds of interactions that adolescents have with adults. Adolescents of the past needed to know the people in their immediate community; today, changes in travel and technology make it possible for adolescents to establish and maintain connections with people not only in the local community, but potentially from a wide variety of geographical, social, and value worlds. Furthermore,

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<sup>19</sup> Robert Kegan, for example, describes this as characteristic of the transition from second to third order thinking. In this transition, adolescents are acquiring the ability to see themselves as a part of a relationship. However, they are not yet able to stand apart from those relationships and think about them or to think about how those relationships interact with each other – this is a characteristic of fourth-order thinking. In this transition, adolescents can see themselves as a self in relationship, but the self they construct in one relationship may be very different from the self they construct in a different relationship – and they are not yet able to see that there is a difference. See Robert Kegan, *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 24-28. Joann Wolski Conn describes the difficulties that result from these multiple senses of self: “My personal conflicts are not really conflicts about what I want and what someone else wants. On closer examination, they consistently turn out to be conflicts between what I want as a part of *this* shared reality and what I want as a part of *that* shared reality. To ask me in this evolutionary balance to resolve such a conflict by bringing both shared realities before me is to touch precisely the limits of this way of making my self and the other.” See Joann Wolski Conn, *Spirituality and Personal Maturity* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989), 54.

<sup>20</sup> Clark, *Hurt 2.0*, 51.

<sup>21</sup> Theresa O’Keefe, “Growing Up Alone: The New Normal of Isolation in Adolescence,” *The Journal of Youth Ministry*, 13, no. 1 (Fall 2014): 65.

managing this quantity of connections can make it more challenging for them “to know and to be known well by any one of them.”<sup>22</sup> In an increasingly mobile world, adolescents will routinely meet people from other towns, states, and countries and will travel widely and often; the sense of the protected neighborhood or village that Putnam described has vanished for most adolescents. These broad networks of relationships and the mobility and wide exposure of today’s adolescents means that the kinds of relationships that they have with adults has changed. In the past, adolescents spent the majority of their time in the company of adults – watching them, learning from them, working with them; now, adolescents spend the majority of their time in the company of their peers without significant interactions with adults. Changes in the way that adults live and work – no longer on farms or in small industries – means that adults are not available to form the same kinds of relationships with their adolescent children.<sup>23</sup>

O’Keefe stresses that these changes – in the scale, mobility, and types of relationships that adolescents have – have resulted in a *separation* between adults and adolescents; this separation has led to adolescents feeling isolated and lonely. Adults have not intentionally or systematically abandoned adolescents; rather, in the challenge to manage their own lives, they have become separated from their teenaged children.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> O’Keefe, “Growing Up Alone,” 79.

<sup>23</sup> O’Keefe, “Growing Up Alone,” 81. According to O’Keefe, mandatory schooling plays into this separation because it meets two needs: “the need to keep youth safely occupied while parents were away from the home; and the need to prepare youth for the demands of eventual employment as adults” (81).

<sup>24</sup> O’Keefe, “Growing Up Alone,” 81-83. This separation is what has changed in the ways that postmodern adolescence is experienced. “What has been lost over the centuries were the multiple means by which youth were initiated into the social, cultural, and value worlds of adults. Quite simply, they spent their lives together, doing the normal work of living. In that social framework, adults were acting simply as adults accomplishing the work of life (labor, family, community membership, religious practice, etc.) and the adolescents were present for it all. Additionally adults were not interacting around adolescents *primarily* in their role relative to the adolescent (teacher, master, tutor, or coach), so adolescents had the chance to see the multi-faceted nature of adult lives. Over time it has been the separation of youth from the ubiquitous and ongoing company of multiple significant adults that has necessitated the need for programming and services designed for youth” (82-83).

This separation and its accompanying sense of isolation means that adolescents are having to negotiate their growing up by themselves. Adolescents are reaching puberty at earlier ages, are being pushed into a premature adulthood, and, because of their comfort with digital technologies,<sup>25</sup> are presenting a façade of sophistication. Adults and institutions, distracted by their own concerns, no longer are primarily focused on guiding adolescents into adulthood. For adolescent boys, this milieu is difficult enough; for adolescent girls, this milieu is complicated by the set of conflicting pressures put on them by Hinshaw's triple bind.

## **2.2 VULNERABILITY: FEMALE ADOLESCENCE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

As with adolescence in general, the United States in the twenty-first century would seem to be the ideal place and time to be a white, middle-class adolescent girl. As Katie's story shows, adolescent girls are told that they have an equality of access, a sense of freedom to be whatever they want to be, and the opportunities to participate in the world and to make a difference. However, there are still significant challenges that adolescent girls face and these challenges can put so much pressure on some girls that they are unable to cope.

Since the women's movement in the 1960s, women in the United States have made great strides towards gender equity. While a complete parity with men, a pervasive justice in the treatment of women, and a breaking down of the structures of patriarchy

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<sup>25</sup> For more information about young people as digital natives, see Marc Prensky, *From Digital Natives to Digital Wisdom: Hopeful Essays for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2012); Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less From Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

have not yet been achieved, women in the twenty-first century do not face the same exclusion and marginalization that their mothers and grandmothers did. Women are no longer limited to home and family nor are their professional options limited to nursing, teaching, and secretarial work. Despite the fact that women are still underrepresented in the ranks of Fortune 500 CEOs and in the United States government, there are enough women who have broken through the “glass ceilings” that girls can reasonably dream of being the CEO of Yahoo or president of the United States. Women are also underrepresented in science and technology careers, but more girls are being encouraged to study science, math, and engineering and there are prominent examples of women who are astronauts, physicists, doctors, and architects. And, while women still earn less than men for similar work and while the bulk of childrearing and housekeeping duties still often devolve to women, there are no longer explicit barriers for women with families to work outside the home.<sup>26</sup> For adolescent girls, the paths trod by women have opened up opportunities for them. They can legitimately dream of attending any college, of training for any career, of combining career and family if they wish, and of making a difference in the world across all of these contexts.<sup>27</sup>

Along with this widening of the opportunities available to adolescent girls, researchers have also begun focusing their attention on the lives and experiences of adolescent girls. With the publication of Nancy Chodorow’s psychoanalytical approach

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<sup>26</sup> For more information on the history of the women’s movement, see Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women’s Movement Changed America* (New York: Penguin, 2006); Rory Cooke Dicker, *A History of U.S. Feminisms* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> Psychologist Dan Kindlon describes the emergence of “alpha girls,” adolescent girls who are succeeding and thriving in the newly opened paths available to them. See Dan Kindlon, *Alpha Girls: Understanding the New American Girl and How She is Changing the World* (New York: Rodale, 2006). In Claire Bischoff’s analysis of Kindlon’s work, she describes alpha girls as high-achieving, highly motivated, and highly successful girls; they are “marked by independence, autonomy, self-sufficiency, ambition, competence, and a desire to be challenged and engaged” (Claire Bischoff, “Towards Tensegrity: Young Women, Narrative Agency, and Religious Education,” PhD Dissertation, Emory University, 2011, 12).

to gender identity,<sup>28</sup> Carol Gilligan's groundbreaking work in girls' moral development,<sup>29</sup> and the effort to understand women's learning processes undertaken by Mary Field Belenky and her colleagues,<sup>30</sup> researchers in the social sciences were not only taking the experiences of women seriously, they were looking at the developmental process from adolescence into adult womanhood. At the same time, educational researchers began critiquing the educational system and the ways that it marginalized, silenced, and disadvantaged girls. The American Association of University Women released a series of books looking at how public co-education neglects girls, effectively providing them with a second-class education.<sup>31</sup> David and Myra Sadker as well as Cornelius Riordan have documented and analyzed the incidence of sexism in the American public school classroom.<sup>32</sup> Greater awareness about the problem of sexism and harassment in schools has resulted in programming designed to counteract these problems in order to provide girls with a more adequate education. Schools have programs that encourage girls to take

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<sup>28</sup> Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978).

<sup>29</sup> Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

<sup>30</sup> Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*, 10<sup>th</sup> anniv. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

<sup>31</sup> American Association of University Women, *How Schools Shortchange Girls: A Study of Major Findings on Girls in Education* (Washington, DC: AAUW, 1992). The AAUW also issued a number of important follow-up studies: Judy Cohen, Sukey Blanc, and American Association of University Women, *Girls in the Middle: Working to Succeed in School* (Washington, DC: AAUW, 1996); Susan Morse and American Association of University Women, *Separated by Sex: A Critical Look at Single-Sex Education for Girls* (Washington, DC: AAUW, 1998); American Association of University Women, *Gender Gaps: Where Schools Still Fail Our Children* (Washington, DC: AAUW, 1999); Christianne Corbett, Catherine Hill, and Andresse St. Rose, *Where the Girls Are: The Facts About Gender Equity and Education* (Washington, DC: AAUW, 2008); Catherine Hill, Christianne Corbett, and Andresse St. Rose, *Why so Few? Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics* (Washington, DC: AAUW, 2010); American Association of University Women, *Crossing the Line: Sexual Harassment at School* (Washington, DC: AAUW, 2011).

<sup>32</sup> Myra Sadker and David Sadker, *Failing at Fairness: How America's Schools Cheat Girls* (New York: Scribner, 1994). This volume was updated fifteen years later: David M. Sadker, Myra Sadker, and Karen Zittleman, *Still Failing at Fairness: How Gender Bias Cheats Girls and Boys in School and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Scribner, 2009). See also Cornelius H. Riordan, *Girls and Boys in School: Together or Separate?* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1990).

STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) classes, history books include more stories of women, and more novels by women are included in English classes.

However, Katie's story, from the chapter's opening pages, also serves as a reminder that, for all the strides that have been made for adolescent girls, they still face significant challenges.<sup>33</sup> In 1994, a book written by clinical psychologist Mary Pipher captured the attention of parents and teachers of girls. In *Reviving Ophelia* she discussed what researchers had been seeing for some time – that many adolescent girls were in serious trouble. According to Pipher, adolescent girls

crash and burn in a social and developmental Bermuda Triangle. In early adolescence, studies show that girls' IQ scores drop and their math and science scores plummet. They lose their resiliency and optimism and become less curious and inclined to take risks. They lose their assertive, energetic and "tomboyish" personalities and become deferential, self-critical and depressed. They report great unhappiness with their own bodies.<sup>34</sup>

Pipher aligned the unhappiness of girls with a realization of their own lack of power in a patriarchal culture; they come to realize "that men have the power and that [girls'] only power comes from consenting to become submissive adored objects... Adolescent girls experience a conflict between their autonomous selves and their need to be feminine, between their status as human beings and their vocation as females."<sup>35</sup> Growing up in

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<sup>33</sup> Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, 15-18. Hinshaw discusses the dark side of all the supposed gains made by girls and women: "True, female college students now outnumber males, and women have nearly caught up with men in terms of med school and law school enrollment. But at the same time, women are earning only 77 cents for every dollar earned by men – despite the fact that 37 percent of women over the age of sixteen work in management, professional, and related occupations, compared to only 31 percent of men. Women still predominate in such low-paid, low-status jobs as preschool and kindergarten teachers (97.5 percent female), child care workers (95.5 percent), dental assistants (97.3 percent), dental hygienists (96.1 percent), and secretaries and administrative assistants (96.7 percent)... Likewise, although the new acceptance of women in sports is a huge step forward, inequality persists there as well. On both the college and the professional level there is a major gender gap in terms of scholarships, funding, and salaries" (15).

<sup>34</sup> Mary Pipher, *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* (New York: Grosset/Putnam, 1994), 19.

<sup>35</sup> Pipher, *Reviving Ophelia*, 21-22.

this cultural milieu means that adolescent girls “can conform, withdraw, be depressed or get angry.”<sup>36</sup>

In the twenty years since Pipher’s book described the experiences of adolescent girls in these ways, more researchers have been exploring the challenges faced by adolescence for girls. But the importance of Pipher’s work lies in the way she captured the attention of the general public. No longer were the problems of girls seen as individual problems of particularly troubled girls; Pipher pointed to the ubiquity of the unhappiness among adolescent girls. And, by drawing the connection to the effects of sexism and patriarchy in the culture, she helped parents and teachers to see that even the girls who did not seem unhappy were still growing up in a toxic environment with confusing demands.<sup>37</sup> Even though most adolescent girls will eventually grow into an adulthood that seems healthy, the negative effects of a sexist culture will have shaped them in profound ways.

Like all adolescents, girls are developing into the adults that they will become; their brains, bodies, and ways of thinking are all changing in dramatic ways. And, even while these dramatic changes are taking place, our culture is bombarding these girls with messages telling them how they are supposed to be in the world as women. Messages of who they are supposed to be come at them from many different value worlds – family,

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<sup>36</sup> Pipher, *Reviving Ophelia*, 43. Patricia Davis describes it this way: “The central fact of every North American adolescent girl’s life (whether she realizes it or is mystified by it) is this: she is indeed a stranger in a strange land. She inhabits a world that presents itself as safe, but which will, in actuality, probably ignore, devalue, or hurt her” (Patricia H. Davis, *Counseling Adolescent Girls* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 18).

<sup>37</sup> Hinshaw draws the analogy: “Imagine what might happen if we forced our teenage daughters to remain for several hours each day in a room that was full of cigarette smoke. Distasteful (and unethical) though this would be, the vast majority would probably emerge relatively intact. Yes, some would develop lung cancer (probably those with genetic vulnerabilities), and a few more would come down the emphysema, asthma, bronchitis, and other respiratory ailments as a direct or indirect result of the smoke... Most, however, would not require medical care or hospital treatment. But does that mean they would be truly okay?” (Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, xvi).



peers, school, church, local communities, movies and TV, and social media – often saying vastly different things.<sup>38</sup> These conflicting messages mean that girls can experience adolescence as a time of contradictions and confusions, especially around feelings of confidence, the strength of their emotions, and their search for independence.

First, adolescence for girls often comes with a sense of confidence in their abilities (and a belief that they know more than the adults in their lives) yet, at the same time, they often have “paralyzing feelings of inadequacy, ugliness, indecisiveness, and impotence.”<sup>39</sup> Girls often feel like the bar is always being raised for them, that they are being held to higher and higher standards, and that the bar is being raised just out of their reach. This can result in behavior that seems strange to adults: girls can swing from moment to moment from being wildly grandiose in their expectations to being consumed by despair at their failures. And both of these feelings are absolutely true to the girl at that moment.

Second, girls are confronted with the message that “good girls” should be agreeable and gracious, never passionate or angry. At the same time, girls feel things very strongly – anger, “jealousy, sexuality, sadness, embarrassment, irritation, insecurity, loneliness, greed, disappointment, boredom, upset, stress, devastation, guilt.”<sup>40</sup> Girls often suppress these strong emotions because they do not yet have the life experiences to know how to resolve emotional conflict, because they believe that having these strong emotions makes them vulnerable, and because the ways that girls are socialized discourages the expression of strong emotion. “Instead, they learn to say what they’re

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<sup>38</sup> Theresa O’Keefe, “Companioning Adolescents into Adulthood: Secondary Schools as Communities of Care and Growth,” in *Education Matters: Reading in Pastoral Care for School Chaplains, Guidance Counselors, and Teachers*, ed. James O’Higgins Norman (Dublin: Veritas, 2014), 132-133.

<sup>39</sup> Straus, *Adolescent Girls in Crisis*, 17.

<sup>40</sup> Straus, *Adolescent Girls in Crisis*, 18.

supposed to say, careful not to be hurtful or rude... Girls learn by early adolescence that they are supposed to be friendly, passive, compliant, and gentle. And they learn that when their feelings do not correspond to these behaviors, they should keep these feelings to themselves.”<sup>41</sup>

Third, girls struggle with the seemingly contradictory impulses to be both reliant and defiant. They are still reliant on parents and other adults to meet many of their needs and wants. Even highly independent girls need help getting up in the morning, remembering commitments, and getting places. At the same time, girls are in the midst of an adolescent desire to separate themselves from their parents – they are “seeking ways to get power over their own lives, to disconnect from their child selves, and eventually to forge adult connections with their parents.”<sup>42</sup> But girls are socialized to see resistance of authority as inappropriate for girls and they hear mixed messages about what it means to be reliant.

We tell them we want them to become competent and independent. At the same time, they’ve been saturated through the years with a compelling fantasy (the point of many fairy tales) that someone will come along to take care of them. Astonishing numbers of girls still plan on marrying a rich man. And many girls really do believe and expect that someone should take care of them... We also unwittingly contribute to the mixed messages they are trying to sort through. We tell them: you can look and act like an adult but be home by nine; be assertive but don’t talk back; think for yourself but do what I say.<sup>43</sup>

Like all adolescents, because of the cultural demands placed on the adults in their lives, girls find themselves isolated from those who could best help them navigate this confusing time. Modern teenagers tend to spend the majority of their time either in the

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<sup>41</sup> Straus, *Adolescent Girls in Crisis*, 18. See also Carol Gilligan, Annie G. Rogers, and Deborah L. Tolman, *Women, Girls, and Psychotherapy: Reframing Resistance* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1991).

<sup>42</sup> Straus, *Adolescent Girls in Crisis*, 19.

<sup>43</sup> Straus, *Adolescent Girls in Crisis*, 20.

company of other teens – in school, in their extra-curricular activities, in church youth groups, in social situations – or alone – either at home before parents return from work or alone in their room while family members are in other parts of the house.<sup>44</sup> According to clinical psychologist Martha Straus, adolescent girls, on average, spend about half of their waking hours at school or working for pay. Of their out-of-school time, adolescent girls spend only ten percent with their peers. Given the importance of peer relationships, this is a surprisingly small percentage of their time.<sup>45</sup> Importantly, however,

teenage girls are alone 20% of their waking hours – more than twice as much time as they spend with friends... This percentage translates to about 3½ hours each day... Teenaged girls are mostly alone, even during the few waking hours of their day with other family members are also home... On average, they are conversing with parents (when talking is the primary activity) less than 45 minutes a week.<sup>46</sup>

Many teenage girls are spending the majority of their non-school time alone and, the more they are alone, the less likely they are to be productive with that time or happy being alone. Straus insists that “too much solitude can be stressful. Teenagers report having lower self-esteem, being less happy, enjoying what they are doing less, and feeling less active when they are alone.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Clark, *Hurt 2.0*, 34-35.

<sup>45</sup> Straus, *Adolescent Girls in Crisis*, 7. Of the time that girls spend with peers, only 25% is spent socializing (hanging out, partying, talking, and engaging in other social activities); the rest of their time with peers is typically spent this way: 25% is spent doing homework; 25% on eating, moving from place to place, and on their appearance; 15% on watching TV and playing video games; and 10% on hobbies and exercise.

<sup>46</sup> Straus, *Adolescent Girls in Crisis*, 7. Because they spend relatively little time with their parents, adolescent girls may feel inadequately connected to them. They no longer need their parents to meet their basic needs and can seem to be functioning in fairly self-sufficient ways. But this also means that there are fewer natural opportunities for adolescent girls to connect with parents. Family meals have also decreased: “there as been a 33% decrease over the past three decades in families who say they have dinner regularly. In the typical American household (including those with younger kids), the average number of dinners eaten together is three per week; the average length of dinner is 20 minutes” (8).

<sup>47</sup> Straus, *Adolescent Girls in Crisis*, 8.

In this isolation, the multiple, confusing, and contradictory cultural messages about what it means to be female surround girls and put them under considerable stress.

As Straus suggests, this is damaging:

Girls feel deeply the pressure to be either one or the other: pure or sexual, passive or active, feeling or thinking, selfless or selfish, good or bad – in essence the same old dichotomy: feminine or masculine... To respond to this new awareness, girls behave in a variety of ways, some of them quite self-destructive. This gender-based stress crosses race and class lines. In its most simple and obvious form, even the most articulate and entitled girls struggle with the same old oppression: popularity (as defined by whether high-status boys like them) via a desperate slavery to appearance and artifice, even if it betrays the girl's core sense of self. And with such pretense as a goal, the chances for disappointment and self-loathing are virtually guaranteed. Those who resist entirely face ostracism; those who concede face loss. Accommodating to the stress of these rigid gender roles, therefore, leads to a near-universal experience of sadness shared by even the most furious and defiant girl.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to this sadness over these contradictory and sexist expectations, girls are often also angry – and they are often told that this anger is inappropriate or should be unexpressed.

In a myriad of subtle and overt ways, girls get the message that they aren't supposed to be angry. Given how passionately they feel most of the time, and the range of injustices and losses they experience, they pay a mighty toll for even trying to give up their anger. Later, though maybe not until they become adult women, they often find they've turned their rage into depression.<sup>49</sup>

Girls also display a variety of other emotional reactions to their confusion: aggression (directed at others or at themselves), self-doubt, defiance, and withdrawn silence. And, like their anger, they tend to turn these emotions inward and instead present a public face to the world that belies their emotional depth and turmoil.

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<sup>48</sup> Straus, *Adolescent Girls in Crisis*, 9. Lyn Mikel Brown puts it this way: "At early adolescence girls seemed to see the patriarchal framework for the first time and name its effect on their lives: they would have to narrow their feelings and modulate their voices if they were to make a smooth transition into the dominant culture. Strong feelings like anger would push people away; full use of their bodies and their brains would make people uncomfortable" (Lyn Mikel Brown, *Raising Their Voices: The Politics of Girls' Anger* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), x).

<sup>49</sup> Straus, *Adolescent Girls in Crisis*, 11.

All of this turmoil means that many girls are at significant risk during their adolescence. Research suggests that 25 percent of teenage girls are at immediate risk of serious harm from self-mutilation, eating disorders, violence, depression, or suicide.<sup>50</sup>

There are many reasons for this startling rate of mal-adaptive behaviors among adolescent girls including the following:

Our culture's overly sexualized images of girls and women play a role. So does the spread of consumerism, the loss of community, and the growing influence of cyberculture and the media. And let's not forget the way both parents and children are facing ever-harsher competition, whether for jobs or for college admissions, so everyone in the family is working way too hard. For parents no less than for their teenage children, the pressure to perform is relentless.<sup>51</sup>

And more and more adolescent girls are being diagnosed with depression and anxiety at younger and younger ages. As many as twenty percent of adolescent girls experience episodes of major depression while the average age of first diagnosis is falling into the early to mid-teens. Nearly ten percent of adolescent girls report having made a suicide attempt and more girls who attempt suicide are succeeding.<sup>52</sup>

The relentless pressure of this sexist and patriarchal culture places girls in what Stephen Hinshaw has named as the triple bind. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Hinshaw is describing the experience of girls finding themselves held to three sets of expectations that are contradictory and impossible to meet. First, girls are expected to be good at all the traditional girl stuff like friendships and relationship building, being nice, obedient, cooperative, helpful and nurturing. They are expected to attract boys and be a

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<sup>50</sup> Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, x; Straus, *Adolescent Girls in Crisis*, 23. For an account of aggression in adolescent girls, see Rachel Simmons, *Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Agression in Girls* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011).

<sup>51</sup> Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, xii.

<sup>52</sup> Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, 30.

good girlfriend while at the same time knowing how to manage their own sexual feelings and those of their boyfriends.

The essence of these girl skills is maintaining relationships: doing what others expect of you while putting [others'] needs first. It's the quality that leads a girl to spend all evening talking a friend through a crisis rather than using those hours to write her own A-level paper. It's also the quality that might lead her to suppress her own abilities or desires in order to boost a boyfriend's ego or reassure an anxious parent.<sup>53</sup>

Second, girls are expected to be good at all the things that had traditionally been the domain of boys. They are expected to play sports, compete for school government offices, fight to get into a top college, seek and succeed at a competitive career. Girls are told that they should be "a winner at anything you undertake, regardless of your own or others' feelings."<sup>54</sup> And girls are expected to approach dating in the ways that many boys do, engaging in multiple brief and casual sexual encounters that are devoid of meaning and relationship.<sup>55</sup> And third, girls are expected do all of this while conforming to an unrealistic standard for what is expected of women's appearances. It is no longer enough for women to be kind and nurturing while at the same time being competitive and successful; they must also "fit the ever-narrower standards for looking pretty, hot, and model-thin."<sup>56</sup> As Hinshaw argues,

despite the apparent wealth of choices, our girls are ultimately presented with a very narrow, unrealistic set of standards that allow for no alternative. A seemingly boundless and hermetic culture insists on every female looking thin, pretty, and sexually available, whether she's a political pundit, a professional

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<sup>53</sup> Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, 7.

<sup>54</sup> Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, 8.

<sup>55</sup> Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, xii. For a discussion of the hook-up culture, especially as it is played out at the college level, see: Donna Freitas, *The End of Sex: How Hookup Culture is Leaving a Generation Unhappy, Sexually Unfulfilled, and Confused* (New York: Basic Books, 2013). This is a follow-up to her earlier book: Donna Freitas, *Sex and the Soul: Juggling Sexuality, Spirituality, Romance, and Religion of America's College Campuses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). For an account of how this culture is experienced by high-school aged girls and how it is impacted by internet use, see: Nancy Jo Sales, *American Girls: Social Media and the Secret Lives of Teenagers* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2016).

<sup>56</sup> Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, xiii.

athlete, or a ten-year-old girl, even as it also demands that every girl aspire to being a wife (lesbian or straight) and mother – and all while climbing to the top of her career ladder, becoming a millionaire, and triumphing over every possible competitor.<sup>57</sup>

The triple bind is particularly insidious because it disguises the narrowing of options for girls in this veneer of a proliferation of choices; girls are told they can do anything they want, but only as long as they do it the way the culture demands.

The pressures of the triple bind are especially stressful because they are impossible to meet and demand a level of perfection that makes nearly every girl feel like a failure. It is not enough to be mostly nurturing or a little bit competitive or moderately good looking; today's adolescent girls are under pressure to be the perfect friend, daughter, and girlfriend, the perfect athlete, leader, and student, and the perfectly thin and sexy woman. Not only do girls have to be perfect at all three aspects of the triple bind, they also have to make it all seem effortless. Girls are being asked to “present their appearance, their abilities, and their unique identities not as the product of enormous labor but as the ‘natural’ expression of their inner beauty.”<sup>58</sup> And, as Hinshaw suggests, the alternative lifestyles and identities that used to be available to girls who did not wish to or could not conform are no longer options either.

Girls used to be able to escape the narrow demands of femininity through such alternative roles as beatnik, tomboy, intellectual, hippie, punk, or goth. They'd embrace the ideals of feminism to proclaim that women didn't always have to be pretty, nice, and thin... Or girls might follow a counterculture that challenged the notion of ascending the corporate ladder or fulfilling men's notions of the ideal woman. They'd imitate pop stars who presented alternate looks and styles of femininity: Janis Joplin, Patti Smith, Tina Turner, Cyndi Lauper. They'd take up basketball or hockey; they'd turn into bookworms or dream of being president. All of these alternatives to traditional female roles gave independent girls a little breathing room...<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, 10.

<sup>58</sup> Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, 64.

<sup>59</sup> Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, 8-9.

In the triple bind, the culture is not only narrowing the definition of what it means to be a successful woman, it is also eliminating the choices for those women who might want to resist this vision of womanhood. It is saying to girls that there is only one way to be a woman and that no other constructions of womanhood or femininity are acceptable.

It is important to remember that the vast majority of girls move through adolescence into a healthy and productive adulthood. But today's society exerts the same pressures on almost all of these young women. Even the 75 percent of girls who are not diagnosed with depression or anxiety or require treatment for some mal-adaptive behavior can find themselves significantly stressed by the contradictory expectations of Hinshaw's triple bind. Girls often feel like they are disappointing someone if they fail to fully live up to all of these expectations. They are often frustrated, anxious, overwhelmed, sad, and tired.<sup>60</sup> And many must learn to navigate adolescence without significant help from the adults in their lives.

And despite the illusion that girls can choose to do whatever they want, this culture that is played out in the triple bind is a deeply sexist and patriarchal. The sexism of the triple bind is hidden, but, by being hidden, it is even more pervasive and harder to fight. The sexist cultural messages presented to women in, for example, the 1960s were much less subtle – women are weaker, women should not work outside the home, all women should be wives and mothers. The sexism of the triple bind hides behind the proliferation of options presented to girls and women today. Girls “are confronted with a seemingly endless parade of options that are nonetheless relentlessly similar: all pretty, hot, and thin; all seemingly happy with perfect boyfriends or husbands and children (or

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<sup>60</sup> Straus, *Adolescent Girls in Crisis*, 10-16.



sometimes same-sex partners and children); all eagerly striving for power, money, and corporate success.”<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, by insisting that women must meet the unrealistic standards of beauty that are a part of the triple bind, by insisting that they must be “model hot” and skinny, no matter whether they are a stay-at-home-mother, a waitress, a teacher, or a neurosurgeon, the triple bind reduces women to their physical attributes. In fact, in this culture, physical attractiveness trumps success in either of the two other areas; it does not matter how successful a woman is, if she is not pretty and sexy, she is not really a success.<sup>62</sup>

The triple bind is both a result of a patriarchal culture and reinforces that culture. As women seemed to be gaining ground in the fight for equality with men, the triple bind has functioned to limit women’s choices so that women cannot pose a threat to male power. Women who have to master all three aspects of the triple bind are no longer a threat to men. When girls are taught that the only way to be a success is to be perfect at everything, then they, and those around them, are justified in treating them as less than successful when they do not meet these standards of perfection. The subtle messages of a patriarchal culture are still there: women must take care of others, particularly children; women must look the way men want them to look and act the way men want them to act; women must fashion themselves to meet the desires of a culture that objectifies and commodifies them. The objectification of girls is particularly pronounced around the area of sex and sexual expression. The emphasis on achieving the “right look” – skinny,

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<sup>61</sup> Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, 103-106. As Hinshaw describes: “Yes, you might be able to do something ‘alternative’ and unique – you can become the first female Indy driver, like Danika Patrick, or the first female presidential contender, like Hillary Clinton – but you still have to pose in a sexy outfit for *Playboy* or obsess publicly about your weight” (10).

sexy, and pretty – sends a dangerous message to girls: “not to experience your feelings from the inside out, but to view your body from the outside in.”<sup>63</sup>

One of the reasons that the triple bind is such a danger to adolescent girls is that it has become embedded in the social imaginary of contemporary culture. A social imaginary, according to philosopher Charles Taylor, can be defined as “the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations.”<sup>64</sup> A social imaginary is the largely un-reflected-upon understanding that the people in a society have of the way things work. The triple bind has become a part of the social imaginary: it is largely un-reflected-upon but shapes the way that girls and women understand themselves and their relationships with others. And, because it has become such a ubiquitous part of how people expect the world to be, it becomes that much harder to dislodge. Resisting the triple bind, then, is not simply about recognizing it, denouncing it, or even deciding to be an adolescent girl in a different way. Resisting means fighting one of the underlying assumptions of our culture, the assumption that governs the ways that girls and women are to be in the world.

This is the story that Katie was telling. She felt that she needed to be a good daughter and friend, look out for her siblings, pick up the slack at home, cultivate and maintain peer relationships, and find the right boyfriend. At the same time, she needed to earn outstanding grades at school, be a leader on her sports team, be involved in all the right activities, get into a top-notch college, and have a high-powered career. And she

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<sup>63</sup> Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, 107.

<sup>64</sup> Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 23. See also Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

needed to do this while looking pretty and making it all seem effortless. No wonder she was exhausted and overwhelmed.

### **2.3 MARGINALITY: ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

The Catholic Church is often experienced as a place of liberation and empowerment for many people, and it has a long tradition of standing up for those in the community who have been marginalized and oppressed. However, the experience of many adolescent girls with the Catholic Church is much more conflicted. In fact, in the day-to-day lives of adolescent girls, it would seem that the Catholic Church's teachings and practices reinforce the triple bind rather than challenging it or empowering girls to resist it.

Adolescents in general and adolescent girls in particular are excluded from the theology, teachings, and practices of the Catholic Church. In theology and the official teachings of the Church, the model for the human being is usually the adult male. Women, children, adolescents, the elderly, the disabled, and the sick are routinely excluded from theological view.<sup>65</sup> The experience of children and adolescents in the Church is largely one of marginalization and isolation. Consider, for example, sacramental preparation of children. Baptism receives children into the community, but they are not yet allowed to participate in the Eucharist, the community's primary sacramental celebration of unity in community. They receive their first communion as children and then are told that they are still not full members of the community until they are confirmed as adolescents. They get confirmed as adolescents and named as adults in

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<sup>65</sup> Michelle A. Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image: An Introduction to Feminist Theological Anthropology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), x. This will be explored in more detail in chapter three.

the eyes of the Church; but, in many places, they are often told that they cannot be Eucharistic ministers or serve on the parish council until they are legally adults.<sup>66</sup> At each sacramental marker of their membership in the community, children and adolescents are reminded that they are really marginal members or future members, but not full members.<sup>67</sup> Beyond the sacramental life of the Church, adolescents are further separated from the larger Church community. Religious education classes and youth groups serve the good function of providing developmentally appropriate learning opportunities for young people, but they also serve to keep young people away from the adults in the community. Adolescents do not get to see what being an adult in the Church means because, outside of the Mass, they do not get to see adults engaged in the work of the Church. And, similar to Chap Clark’s argument about schools, the adults that they do interact with in youth groups are required to be there – either as paid or volunteer staff. In these and many other ways, adolescents are told that they are the future of the Church and not that they are the Church.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> For example, in the Archdiocese of Washington, DC, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist must be eighteen years old (in addition to having been confirmed at around the age of fourteen). See Archdiocese of Washington, *Liturgical Norms* (2010), § 6.10.10, <http://adw.org/liturgical-norms/> (accessed May 16, 2016). While each bishop sets the rules for his diocese, this pattern of restricting the participation of adolescents because they are not yet legally adult is not uncommon.

<sup>67</sup> Beyond the scope of this dissertation is an engagement with the Church’s sacramental theologies and how children and adolescents are initiated into the Church. Nevertheless, the language and practices that surround their experience of these sacraments seem at odds with the stated sacramental theologies of the Church. For a fuller evaluation of Catholic sacramental theology, see Susan Ross, *Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology* (New York: Continuum, 2001).

<sup>68</sup> David F. White, *Practicing Discernment with Youth: A Transformative Youth Ministry Approach* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2005), 24-25. White traces this experience of adolescents in mainline Protestant congregations; however, the experience is mirrored in Catholic parishes. “Youth ministry for much of the twentieth century supported the dominant myth of adolescence, affirming the expectations of preparing youth for an increasingly distant future – not so much to empower youth as agents of faith in the contemporary world, but as a holding environment awaiting a promised adulthood. We in youth ministry have been largely uncritical of the myth of adolescence that sees the suppression of adolescent energy as the natural way of things... If the church is to have credibility and relevancy in the world, we cannot allow culture to unilaterally establish our perspectives that shape our understandings of ministry” (24).

Adolescent girls experience a double sense of marginalization in the Catholic Church. Not only are they marginalized and isolated as adolescents; but, as female, they are further marginalized and excluded by the Church. The Church's official theological anthropology is one that suggests that women exist in a relationship of complementary dualism with men, that women and men are created by God, but as different from each other in ways that have theological significance. For women, this means that their primary vocation is to motherhood and the nurturing and care of others.<sup>69</sup> It also means that they are excluded from ordination and, therefore, from most positions of authority and leadership in the institutional Church.<sup>70</sup> At the same time, there is a profound discomfort in the Church's official teachings with the bodies and sexuality of women.<sup>71</sup> Women and girls in the Church are presented with role models, such as the Virgin Mary and many of the female saints, who affirm a vision of adult womanhood that is focused on mothering (both literally by birthing and raising children and metaphorically by

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<sup>69</sup> John Paul II was a major proponent of this perspective on the role of women. See, for example, John Paul II, *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1981). In one homily on Genesis 4, the pope stated: "the mystery of femininity is manifested and revealed completely by means of motherhood... The woman stands before the man as a mother, the subject of the new human life that is born into the world. Likewise, the mystery of man's masculinity, that is, the generative and 'fatherly' meaning of his body, is also thoroughly revealed" (155). The pope expanded this argument in John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006). In his apostolic letter on women, the pope speaks of how unmarried women (particularly professed religious) live out this vocation to motherhood: "the renunciation [of physical motherhood] makes possible a different kind of motherhood: motherhood 'according to the Spirit.'... Spiritual motherhood... can express itself as concern for people, especially the most needy: the sick, the handicapped, the abandoned, orphans, the elderly, children, young people, the imprisoned and, in general, people on the edges of society" (John Paul II, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women [Mulieris Dignitatem]*, § 21, [http://gsearch.vatican.va/search?q=cache:37xZOKXLmPQJ:www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_15081988\\_mulieris-dignitatem\\_en.html+mulieris+dignitatem&client=default\\_frontend&output=xml\\_no\\_dtd&proxystylesheet=default\\_frontend&ie=UTF-8&access=p&oe=ISO-8859-1](http://gsearch.vatican.va/search?q=cache:37xZOKXLmPQJ:www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_15081988_mulieris-dignitatem_en.html+mulieris+dignitatem&client=default_frontend&output=xml_no_dtd&proxystylesheet=default_frontend&ie=UTF-8&access=p&oe=ISO-8859-1) (accessed June 30, 2016).

<sup>70</sup> For a fuller description of complementary dualism and its effects on women and theology, see Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image*, 112-116. See also, Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, 10<sup>th</sup> anniv. ed. (New York: Herder and Herder, 2002), 22-28.

<sup>71</sup> For a discussion of this, see, Doris M. Kieser, *Catholic Sexual Theology and Adolescent Girls: Embodied Flourishing* (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2015), 59-68.

nurturing and educating children) and that does not challenge the exclusion of women from ministerial leadership.

This experience of girls in the Church reinforces the messages that they receive from the culture in the form of the triple bind. They are told that they must excel at femininity and caring for others, like the Virgin Mary or St. Therese of the Little Flower or Mother Theresa; they are told that this femininity is what women are created by God to do. At the same time, they are presented with conflicting messages about their adult roles in the Church. They can exercise leadership in the corporate world, but not in the Church; they can help and heal others as doctors, but not as priests.<sup>72</sup> And, finally, the third aspect of the triple bind – that girls must meet unrealistic standards of beauty – goes essentially unchallenged by the Church. Homilies rarely challenge the ways that women are portrayed in the media or the ways that teenaged girls are sexualized by the consumer culture.<sup>73</sup> The messages that girls receive from the Church not only implicitly supports the message of the triple bind, it also reinforces the pressure to be perfect. For example, the Church’s saints are meant to be role models of faith; however, the ways that they are often presented to adolescent girls is as models of perfection – perfectly holy, perfectly virgin, perfectly womanly. This can serve to reinforce for girls that to be a faithful

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<sup>72</sup> The young female editors of a book about young Catholic women put it this way: “Vocation can be a tricky thing for young Catholic women. In our lives outside the church, we have more career opportunities than Catholic women before us – and we expect that same expanse of opportunity in our church lives... We seek active roles in our faith communities. [We] attend seminary with laymen and priests-in-training, ever aware that we are unable to answer calls to ordained priesthood” (Kate Dugan and Jennifer Owens, “Introduction” in *From the Pews in the Back: Young Women and Catholicism* ed. Kate Dugan and Jennifer Owens (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), xxii.)

<sup>73</sup> Often the only references to the ways that adolescent girls look is when they are criticized for what they wear and those critique almost always center on protecting boys from the sexuality of girls. And Catholic schools have not been exempt from the conversations over sexism and dress codes. See, for example, David Chang, “School’s Prom Dress Code, Pre-Approval of Gowns Spark Controversy,” <http://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/local/Pennsylvania-Schools-Prom-Dress-Code-Pre-Approval-of-Gowns-Spark-Controversy-297466141.html> (accessed May 16, 2016). See also, Valerie Williams, “Sexist School Dress Code Includes 1 Line of Directives for Boys, 4 Paragraphs for Girls,” <http://www.mommyish.com/2015/03/16/catholic-school-dress-code-encourages-girls-to-be-modest/> (accessed May 16, 2016).

Catholic woman is also to be perfect and that to fall short of that perfection is to fail at being a Catholic.

At the same time, the pressures of the triple bind reinforce the marginalization and separation that adolescent girls experience in the Church. The triple bind teaches girls to be nurturing, to be leaders, and to be pretty. These are all sought after qualities in traditional Church youth groups; youth ministers want these girls involved in their ministries. Not only will these girls be interested in the relationship building and social justice activities (the caring and nurturing side expected of girls), they will want to take on leadership roles (the success oriented side expected of boys); in addition, they will always be aware of how they look, what they wear, how they present themselves at the youth group activities. The triple bind teaches girls to challenge authority, but not so much as to damage relationships. Thus, Catholic girls do not challenge their exclusion from the practices, theology, and ministries of the Church. The insidiousness of the triple bind becomes clear when we see the ways that it is played out in the Church.

#### **2.4 RELATIONALITY AND RESISTANCE: HELPING ADOLESCENT GIRLS**

While seeing the pressures and challenges that face adolescent girls in the twenty-first century is vitally important, it is not enough. But seeing these pressures and challenges helps the adults who care about adolescent girls better understand some of the ways to help them. Nor is it enough to focus attention on those girls who will experience significant and debilitating problems – the girls who develop depression or anxiety, who develop an eating disorder, who self-harm, who lash out in violence, or who attempt suicide. For even the majority of girls, who grow to adulthood without experiencing

these extreme problems, experience the pressures of the cultural expectations put on them. During adolescence, all girls need support so that they can develop the skills they need to arrive at as healthy an adulthood as possible.

In the twenty-first century in the United States, adolescence is a time for young people to develop the skills, both practical and emotional, to become functioning adults. However, the toxic environment in which adolescent girls are growing up is one that leaves them unable to accomplish some of these tasks of adolescence. Because of the isolation of adolescents from the adults who care for them, described by Elkind and Clark, and the pressures of the triple bind described by Hinshaw, adolescent girls in particular need help countering this toxic environment and developing the positive skills they need. In particular, girls need help in developing skills of relationality so that they can form communities of care and skills of resistance so that they can counter the effects of the triple bind.

Relationality, the ability to create and maintain close relationships with a variety of people, has traditionally been considered one of the quintessential skills of adolescent girls and women. And it is true that adolescent girls tend to be oriented towards peer relationships.<sup>74</sup> This assumption that girls are good at forming and nurturing relationships is at the heart of the first part of the triple bind – that they are to master the cultivation of relationships with family, friends, and romantic partners. But, today’s

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<sup>74</sup> The classic exploration of this is Carol Gilligan’s work. For the adolescent girl, “her world is a world of relationships and psychological truths where an awareness of the connection between people gives rise to a recognition of responsibility for one another, a perception of the need for response” (Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, 30).



adolescent girls are isolated from the adults who care for them; they are not spending enough time with adults to see what healthy relationality can look like.<sup>75</sup>

In the past, when adolescents spent the bulk of their time in the presence of adults, watching them and working alongside of them, they could see what healthy relationality looked like because they saw these relationships happening around them. They saw family relationships, work relationships, social relationships, relationships between superiors and subordinates, and relationships between peers. They saw the good relationships and the bad ones, what worked and what did not work. Because they spent their time in this adult world, adolescents were also a part of these webs of adult relationships. As adolescent members of the community, they were usually junior members of these relationships, but they were embedded in these relationships. However, today's isolated adolescents do not have access to this kind of observation and participation in adult relationships. An adolescent girl will likely have positive relationships with her parents, a teacher or teachers, a coach or youth group minister. But she may rarely get to see how her parents relate to other adults, how her teachers relate to other teachers or with their own families, how their youth group minister relates to the rest of the parish staff or with other professionals. Thus, as this girl is seeking to form healthy relationships with her peers, she does not have a deep well of role models from which to draw.

Similarly, adolescent girls need to develop skills of resistance, the ability to recognize, name, and protest that which is wrong in their world. This draws on the skills

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<sup>75</sup> Even when girls do have good relationships with adult women in their lives, often times these women are also trying to negotiate the tensions and pressures of the triple bind. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to address the challenge of helping adult women resist this cultural milieu, but it is necessary if these adult women want to model more healthy ways of relating and resisting for the adolescent girls in their lives.

that the second part of the triple bind asks of adolescent girls – the ability to be assertive and self-advocating. But, as with relationality, the isolation that adolescent girls experience means that they often do not have adequate adult models of what resistance looks like. And, for many girls, developing the skills of resistance puts the two parts of the triple bind into conflict. They are encouraged to be assertive and self-advocating, but not to jeopardize any of the relationships or to make other people feel uncomfortable. So girls need help learning how to manage this tension and how to develop the skills of resistance that can complement, rather than conflict with, their relationality skills.

When adolescents were more embedded in the day-to-day lives of adults, they could see and hear adults recognize, name, and protest injustices. They also participated in social movements to change societal structures and to correct injustices.<sup>76</sup> They were also able to see how practices of resistance can function to build up communities and relationships. But today’s adolescent girls, isolated from the adults who could teach them these skills of resistance, do not have good models for this. For example, they might read about women who fought for women’s suffrage, in the movement to end slavery, or in the temperance movement. They might even read about other adolescent girls who are doing extraordinary things, like Malala Yousafzai or the adolescent girls featured on sites

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<sup>76</sup> David White provides examples of relatively young people becoming leaders in movements for social change. “David Farragut, the U.S. Navy’s first admiral, had his first commission as a midshipman at ten years of age, and his first command of a vessel at age twelve. Thomas Edison ran his own printing business at age twelve. The men who won the American Revolution were barely out of high school – Alexander Hamilton was twenty, Aaron Burr, twenty one, Lafayette, nineteen. What amounted to a college class rose up and struck down the British Empire” (White, *Practicing Discernment with Youth*, 16). While White only provides examples of males who achieved success at a relatively young age, there are, of course, numerous women; for example, Cleopatra (pharaoh of Egypt at 18), Joan of Arc (leading the French army at 17), Queen Victoria (queen of England at 18), Anne Frank (writer at 13), Nellie Bly (journalist at 18).

like “A Mighty Girl” or “Girls for a Change.”<sup>77</sup> But, without adults to mentor them and support them, most adolescent girls are not prepared to engage in this kind of work.

The psychologists who work with and write about adolescent girls, including Gilligan, Pipher, Straus, and Hinshaw, all argue that girls can develop the skills they need to grow into a healthy adulthood when caring adults are involved in their lives, when those adults model the behavior we wish girls to learn, and when girls are able to talk with caring adults about the full range of their experiences and feelings. Some researchers suggest that these kinds of supportive relationships with caring adults help girls to develop “hardiness.” Developing hardiness assumes that the environment in which the girl is growing up is a stressful one and that hardiness provides girls with an important set of skills: the ability to make choices under stressful conditions and to develop a repertoire of coping skills; the ability to draw on communities of support that provide the girl with a belief system, purpose, community, and resources; and the ability to know where to go for support, how to be persistent, and how to be a force for change.<sup>78</sup> Hardiness is distinct from resilience; resilience is the ability to recover from a set-back whereas hardiness is the ability to weather the set-back without allowing it to derail or disrupt a girls’ life. Girls who develop hardiness do so within a context of positive relationships with the caring adults in their lives. Research suggests that, contrary to the popular opinion that adolescent girls do not want relationships with adults, girls are

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<sup>77</sup> “A Mighty Girl,” <http://www.amightygirl.com> (accessed May 18, 2016). This site provides resources for girl children and adolescent girls, mostly books and toys. But they also have a strong commitment to providing examples of girls doing amazing things to break down gender stereotypes. Their Facebook presence is particularly noteworthy. See “A Mighty Girl,” <https://www.facebook.com/amightygirl/> (accessed May 18, 2016). Girls for a Change focuses on empowering girls and teens to make changes in their communities. See “Girls for a Change,” <http://www.girlsforachange.org> (accessed May 18, 2016).

<sup>78</sup> Elizabeth Debold, Lyn Mikel Brown, Susan Weseen, and Geraldine Kearse Brookins, “Cultivating Hardiness Zones for Adolescent Girls: A Reconceptualization of Resilience in Relationships with Caring Adults,” in *Beyond Appearance: A New Look at Adolescent Girls*, ed. Norine G. Johnson, Michael C. Roberts, and Judith Worell (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1999), 190.

actually deeply desirous of these kinds of relationships. Terri Apter argues, for example, that “girls want to be engaged in vibrant, searching, and challenging relationships – relationship in which they could experience control and commitment.”<sup>79</sup> Both parents and non-parental adults, such as teachers, coaches, and youth ministers, can provide girls with the supportive relationships that help girls develop the kind of hardiness that will enable them to better resist the conflicting messages of the triple bind. Such relationships with adults who are involved in girls’ lives can provide the foundation for helping girls to form and participate in communities of care and to develop practices of resistance.

How are girls supposed to gain access to these kinds of positive and caring relationships with adults who model healthy relationality and resistance? In the past, girls would have been embedded in a community that was primarily made up of adults who could model these skills and provide support as she learned them. Today’s girls, because of their relative isolation from adults, need more intentional efforts from adults. However, it is important to recognize that no one adult in a girl’s life needs to be responsible for providing all of the support and guidance. In fact, no one adult can provide all of this.

For psychological researcher, Richard Lerner, it is the whole community that provides the web of networks that can best support adolescents in general and adolescent girls in particular. Lerner suggests an approach that focuses on the thriving of young people – what it takes for adolescents to, within their particular context, take actions that serve their own well-being as well as the well-being of family, friends, community, and

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<sup>79</sup> Debold, Brown, Weseen, and Brookins, “Cultivating Hardiness Zones,” 191. The authors are quoting from Terri Apter, *Altered Loves: Mothers and Daughters During Adolescence* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990).

society.<sup>80</sup> Such an approach recognizes that this thriving puts young people on a positive life trajectory, but it can only happen in a social context that values and supports the ability of young people to make positive contributions.<sup>81</sup>

Within communities committed to the thriving of young people, Lerner suggests that there are community assets that support the development of young people. These community assets are not necessarily physical or material assets; rather they are often attitudes, commitments, and relationships that function in the community to support adolescents' growth. These community assets are the "developmental nutrients" that increase the probability of thriving.<sup>82</sup> While there are assets that are internal to the adolescents themselves – such as caring, honesty, decision-making, and a sense of purpose, there are significant assets that are external to the adolescents and within the purview of a community. These community assets provide support so that adolescents are able to develop their internal assets and the context within which they can practice these internal assets.<sup>83</sup> These community assets do not guarantee that an individual adolescent will be able to thrive, but they do provide a community structure that is more likely to support the thriving of adolescents.<sup>84</sup>

Just as no one adult can provide all of the support that an adolescent girl needs, neither can any one institution in a community provide all of the community assets that adolescent girls need. However, within the broader network of a community, schools can

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<sup>80</sup> Richard M. Lerner, *Liberty: Thriving and Civic Engagement Among America's Youth* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004), 4.

<sup>81</sup> Lerner, *Liberty*, 43.

<sup>82</sup> Lerner, *Liberty*, 107.

<sup>83</sup> Lerner, *Liberty*, 116-118.

<sup>84</sup> It is also important to note that these community assets are not all clustered around any one institution. Families, schools, religious communities, civic organization, after-school programs, and many more community groups all work together to provide as many of these community assets as possible, but no one organization is responsible for all of it.

and should play an important role. Because adolescent girls spend the majority of their waking hours at school, the ways in which schools support girls can make a big difference in their lives. In particular, schools are places that can be communities of care for adolescent girls, ones that can serve as what Robert Kegan calls “holding environments” – places that model the skills that adolescent girls need and where girls can practice those skills.<sup>85</sup> They are places where adults and adolescents come together to learn, grow, and develop the skills that girls need to counter the stresses of a cultural context like the triple bind. As a community of care, schools can be places where girls have the chance to explore different ways of being in the world without the pressure to be perfect at everything. They can also be places where girls are not held to unrealistic physical standards or expected to be prematurely adult.

When schools operate as holding environments, they recognize that there are skills that adolescents need but do not yet have. Rather than expecting adolescents to figure out for themselves how to learn these skills, the holding environment should provide them with enough support that they feel comfortable with what they currently know and can do and provide them with enough challenge that they stretch themselves to learn new skills.<sup>86</sup> Holding environments, then, are the ways that the adult culture of the school coaches adolescents into new ways of thinking. When they are functioning as holding environments, schools are places that both model the behavior and skills that adolescent girls need to learn and provide a safe place for them to try out those behaviors and skills.

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<sup>85</sup> Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 42. Kegan describes holding environments as “an ingenious blend of support and challenge.”

<sup>86</sup> Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 43.

If adolescent girls need solid relationships with caring adults and if they need those relationships to form part of a wider community of care that can provide the support to counter cultural influences like the triple bind, then all-girls' Catholic schools can and should play a role in meeting these needs. The mission of all-girls' Catholic schools is rooted in a history of providing adolescent girls with the educational resources that she needed for the particular context in which she was growing up. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that meant providing girls with the knowledge and skills that they needed to survive during the early years of settlement, expansion, and immigration. During the mid-twentieth century, that meant helping girls to understand the multiple forces at work in the Church: the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the sexual revolution, the Second Vatican Council. Today, this means helping girls to see, name, and resist the toxicity of the triple bind.

As institutions in the Catholic Church, all-girls' Catholic schools are called to help girls counter the triple bind because it inhibits their flourishing as human beings. Catholic schools have a responsibility to nurture the critical thinking skills of students so that they can both appreciate and critique the connections between faith and culture. They also have a responsibility to inculcate in girls a sense of justice, helping them to recognize and fight against the injustices that they see in the world, including injustices perpetrated against them by the triple bind. As schools with a feminist mission, all-girls' Catholic schools also have a responsibility to counter the sexism and misogyny that are perpetuated by the triple bind. As feminist institutions that have a focus on justice, all-girls' Catholic schools are in a position to help girls counter the problems that arise because of the triple bind.

All-girls' Catholic schools are places where communities of care can be nurtured. Girls have the opportunity to establish relationships with adults who care about them and who are committed to forming girls in particular shared values. These shared values – valuing the whole person, a commitment to a liberative and critical education, and a commitment to justice – provide a context within which girls can explore what it means to be a community of care. Adolescent girls need places where they can explore a variety of relationships with peers and with adults who care about them; all-girls' Catholic schools are one place where these relationships can happen and where girls can learn the skills they need to form their own communities of care.

All-girls' Catholic schools are also places that can nurture a healthy sense of resistance to injustice. In the context of caring relationships with adults committed to companioning adolescent girls into a healthy adulthood, the injustices that girls routinely face because of the toxicity of the triple bind can be recognized and countered. In particular, these schools have the opportunity to help girls see these injustices for themselves, to name them as injustices, and to develop their own practices of resistance to them.

While there are many challenges facing girls like Katie as they grow to adulthood in a culture and a Church that can seem arrayed against them, all-girls' Catholic schools are rooted in a history and mission that can help adolescent girls meet these challenges. And, in doing this, these schools have important resources in the Catholic commitment to a positive theological anthropology rooted in the understanding that all people, including adolescent girls, are created in the image of God.



### 3.0 CHAPTER THREE

#### BEING FULLY HUMAN WHILE BECOMING ADULT: CLAIMING THE *IMAGO DEI* FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS

In the last chapter, Katie, a fairly typical white, middle-class adolescent girl, was buffeted by the cross-pressures of life in the early twenty-first century. Katie, even with a stable family life and caring parents and teachers, is still finding it difficult to navigate the waters of female adolescence. Feeling overwhelmed by the expectations of others, she is becoming depressed and is manifesting destructive behaviors. Katie is dealing with the contradictory expectations of what Stephen Hinshaw describes as the triple bind – the pressure to develop all the skills traditionally associated with being a girl, to develop all the skills traditionally associated with being a boy, and to do it all while looking effortlessly beautiful.<sup>1</sup> She is trying to find her way through adolescence to a healthy adulthood in a world that does not always seem set up to help her do that.

But, Katie has at least one asset to help her make sense of her world: she understands that she is created by God in the image of God. As a student at an all-girls' Catholic high school, she has heard the creation story: that God created the light and the dark, the water and the dry land, the plants and the animals. And she has heard that "God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27 [NRSV]). While she does not know the complexities of how this idea that she is created in the image of God is debated by biblical scholars and theologians, she does know that it says something about who she is: that she is created, that God created her, that God loves her. And, ultimately, she has an instinct that being created in the image of God applies equally to all people. She believes that all people are

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Hinshaw with Rachel Kranz, *The Triple Bind: Saving Our Teenage Girls from Today's Pressures and Conflicting Expectations* (New York: Ballentine, 2009), xii-xiii.

in the image of God, regardless of their race or ethnicity, their gender, or their socio-economic status. The Church has taught her well that being pro-life means honoring the value of life at all of its stages, from conception until natural death, because each person is created in the image of God. So, Katie intuitively feels that, as an adolescent girl, she is herself an expression of the image of God and that this symbol can mean something for her. But, of course, being an adolescent, while she knows it to be true, she does not reflect on this in any depth.

This chapter explores this foundational symbol of theological anthropology: the creation of humanity in the image of God. After reviewing its grounding in the Genesis creation story and some of the ways it was taken up by the theological tradition, this chapter focuses on the contributions of feminist theological anthropology to our understandings of the *imago Dei* symbol and how feminist understandings of this symbol can be complicated when we consider age. The chapter then proposes resources that can build an understanding of the *imago Dei* symbol that supports the goal of finding a way to affirm the full humanity of adolescent girls. Finally, the chapter suggests that this symbol provides a way of naming resistance to injustice and building communities of God's *hesed* (loving-kindness) as aspects of the *imago Dei* in adolescent girls.

### **3.1 BACKGROUND TO UNDERSTANDING THE *IMAGO DEI***

The symbol of the *imago Dei* – the image of God – has formed one of the cornerstones of theological anthropology's attempts to understand what it means to be a human person. Rooted in the first creation story in Genesis 1, this symbol claims that humanity is created in the image of God – that, in some way, we are similar to God and

participate in God's plan for creation. In claiming that humans are made in the image of God, we are affirming that while humans are creatures like the rest of the created order, we are also distinctive within creation in some way. There is a paradox in our claim to be made in the image of God – we are both creaturely and creative at the same time; we are both a part of creation and able to transcend it in some way.

For nearly two thousand years, Christian theologians have found the idea that humanity is created in the image of God to be a fruitful way of thinking about what it means to be a human person in relationship to God, other humans, and the rest of creation. The idea that humanity is created in the image of God necessarily implies that humanity is created and, therefore, dependent on God. At the same time, humanity has been created as persons with freedom and, therefore, possessing some independence.<sup>2</sup> The mystery of how humanity can be both dependent creature and independent person is at the core of theological anthropology's questions.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, in the history of theological reflection on the human person, reflection on the *imago Dei* is one of the few areas where male theologians have seriously considered the relationship between men and women and how women image God. Unfortunately, this reflection often resulted in the denigration of women, assuming that they reflected the image of God in imperfect or deficient ways or only through relationship with a man who fully imaged God.<sup>4</sup> By tracing the biblical roots of the *imago Dei* symbol and some of the ways that it has been taken up by theologians over the past two thousand years, we can see both the promise and the challenges presented by this symbol.

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<sup>2</sup> Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Michelle A. Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image: An Introduction to Feminist Theological Anthropology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007), x.

### 3.1.1 Biblical Roots

Theological reflection on the statement that we are created in the image of God is rooted in Genesis 1:26-27. A part of the first creation story, composed by the Priestly writer in the post-Exilic period,<sup>5</sup> the passage names humanity as both created by God and as different from the rest of creation. This difference resides in the idea that humanity, unlike the other creatures, is made in God's image. Biblical scholar Richard Middleton summarizes the standard approach to the Hebrew notion of the *imago Dei* as rooted in royal theologies, understanding the human as fulfilling a royal office as God's representative on earth in much the same way as an ambassador serves as the representative of a king.<sup>6</sup> However, unlike royal theologies that draw on parallels with Ancient Near Eastern myths of violence and combat-in-creation, Middleton argues that the biblical *imago Dei* symbol was a reversal of the Mesopotamian power structure. "Rather, by its alternative depiction of God's non-violent creative power at the start of the biblical canon, the text signals the creator's original intent for shalom and blessing at the outset of human history, prior to the rise of human (or divine) violence."<sup>7</sup> Middleton grounds his understanding of the image of God symbol in God's generous self-giving in creation and God's invitation to humanity "to participate in the creative (and historical) process."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 66. The dating of the Priestly source remains controversial among biblical scholars, but most agree that, while it may be collecting stories in circulation before and during the Exile, the final forms of the stories was achieved after the return from the Exile in the mid-fifth century BCE. See also E.A. Speiser, *Genesis: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday, 1962), xxv-xxvi; Lawrence Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 103-104; Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 123.

<sup>6</sup> J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 26-27.

<sup>7</sup> Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 269.

<sup>8</sup> Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 297.

Interestingly, while this idea of humanity created in the image of God became the foundation for Christian theological reflection, it is not a theme much explored in the Old Testament. In fact, there are only two other explicit references to the *imago Dei* in the Old Testament and both occur in other Priestly texts in Genesis (Genesis 5:1 and 9:6).<sup>9</sup> Further, as Middleton notes,

With the exception of a few apocryphal or deuterocanonical references (Wisdom of Solomon 2:23; Sirach 17:3; and 2 Esdras 8:44), the idea that humans are made in God's image does not surface again until the New Testament. Even then, however, only two texts speak of human *creation* in God's image (I Corinthians 11:7 and James 3:9). The rest either exult Christ as the paradigm (uncreated) image of God or address the salvific renewal of the image in the church.<sup>10</sup>

It seems that the *imago Dei* is a symbol that, while useful in its Priestly context, didn't turn out to be useful for later Jewish reflection on the relationship between God and humanity.

Feminist biblical scholars, returning to this ancient understanding of the creation of humanity in the image of God, have found it to be a rich foundation for reflection on an egalitarian understanding of humanity.<sup>11</sup> In particular, feminist scholars noted that the text's naming of humanity is through the use of a collective noun, referring to a class of things and not to a particular individual.<sup>12</sup> Further, noting the use of a parallel and repetitive structure, which is also characteristic of Hebrew, we get the claim that God created humanity, differentiated into male and female, in the image of God. The use of

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<sup>9</sup> Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 16.

<sup>10</sup> Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 16-17.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Susan Niditch, "Genesis," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998). Feminist biblical scholars also draw attention to the second creation story in Genesis 2. While it is traditionally assumed that, in this story, God creates the male first and then the female is created from the rib of the male, feminist scholars point out that the original creature is not sexually differentiated. A male and a female only exist after the creation of the second being. See Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 94-97.

<sup>12</sup> Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 18.

both singular and plural pronouns for humanity point to the differentiation of humanity into two creatures: male and female.<sup>13</sup> Feminist biblical scholars are also careful to note that there is no attribution of masculine or feminine characteristics to the male and female humans. Rather, the metaphor shows us that there are both similarities and differences between created humans and God. As Phyllis Tribble puts it, “God creates, in the image of God, male and female. To describe male and female, then, is to perceive the image of God; to perceive the image of God is to glimpse the transcendence of God.”<sup>14</sup>

While feminist biblical scholars and theologians have found Genesis 1:27 and the *imago Dei* symbol to be a helpful way of grounding a critique of patriarchal theologies, they have also noted that it is anachronistic to presume an egalitarian theology in the biblical writers. As Anne Clifford points out, “since the Priestly writers probably had no experience of an egalitarian society, it is unlikely that *imago Dei* is an explicit claim for women’s equality with men.”<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, feminist theologians, bringing new interpretations to this passage, have found it supple enough to support an expanded egalitarian perspective.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 18; Niditch, “Genesis,” 16.

<sup>14</sup> Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 21. See also Phyllis A. Bird, “Sexual Differentiation and Divine Image in the Genesis Creation Texts” in *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Borresen (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> Anne M. Clifford, “When Being Human Becomes Truly Earthly: An Ecofeminist Proposal for Solidarity,” in *In the Embrace of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Ann O’Hara Graff (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 183. See also Bird, “Sexual Differentiation,” 11. Bird ties the sexual differentiation of the first humans to the fecundity motif of the first creation story: “Unlike God but like the other creatures, *adam* is characterized by sexual differentiation... *Adam* is created like (i.e. resembling) God, but *as* creature – and hence male and female.”

<sup>16</sup> In addition to the directions explored later in this chapter, feminist theologians have taken up the issue of “dominion” and the *imago Dei* symbol in ways that deconstruct the idea that humanity must exercise control over creation. See, for example, Celia Deane-Drummond, “In God’s Image and Likeness: From Reason to Revelation in Humans and Other Animals,” in *Questioning the Human: Toward a Theological Anthropology for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Lieven Boeve, Yves De Maeseneer, and Ellen Van Stichel (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014). Evolutionary and genetic research has made the boundary between humans and non-humans more porous, calling for new interpretations of the *imago Dei*. Deane-Drummond rejects a broadening of the *imago Dei* to include animals; rather, she focuses on the ethical imperative of the *imago Dei*: “divine-image-bearing is more properly understood as a call to particular

### 3.1.2 Historical Developments

The doctrine of human creation in the image of God is a central theme of theological reflection beginning in the patristic period. In patristic theology, the Biblical notion of creation in the image of God was linked with Greek philosophical ideas about the ontological nature of humanity that understood soul or mind and body as separate aspects of being human.<sup>17</sup> And, while Greek philosophers “disagreed about the relation of body and soul, they located reason in the soul as the primary difference between humans and animals.”<sup>18</sup> As early Christian theologians tried to puzzle out the ways that this underlying Greek ontology could be understood alongside of the Biblical witness that humans are created in the image of God, they took up a Greek dualism of mind or soul and body. They

reasoned that because God does not have a body, whatever likeness exists between humans and the divine cannot be located in the body. Therefore, they turned to concepts of the soul to tease out the meaning of the *imago Dei*. Following Plato and Aristotle, early Christians identified reason and virtue with the soul. God as “all-wise” and “all-good” was imaged in the rationality and virtue of humans.<sup>19</sup>

Feminist theologian Michelle Gonzalez summarizes their thinking this way:

For many of the church fathers, the *imago Dei* was intimately linked to their understanding of the soul and spirituality. The image was most fully realized in the act of contemplation of God. Human beings do not truly realize themselves unless they go beyond their selves and return to the being in whose image we are

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actions to act responsibly toward other creaturely kinds, in accordance with a religious vocation” (75). For the argument for expanding the *imago Dei* to include animals, see Ruth Page, “The Human Genome and the Image of God,” in *Brave New World: Theology, Ethics and the Human Genome*, ed. Celia Deane-Drummond (London: SCM Press, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> For a helpful review of Greek philosophical categories, see John V. Luce, *An Introduction to Greek Philosophy* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1992). For examinations of how Greek philosophy was taken up by the patristic theologians, see Hubertus R. Drobner, “Christian Philosophy,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). For a good discussion of how Greek philosophy influenced early Christian thought about the *imago Dei* symbol, see Megan K. DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female, and Intersex in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2015).

<sup>18</sup> DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology*, 108.

<sup>19</sup> DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology*, 118.

created. This is the most profound sense of the patristic theology of the *imago Dei*. The church fathers contend that the *imago Dei* is a dimension of the human soul and mind.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, because of the influence of Greek philosophy, the church fathers made a distinction between soul or mind and body. They then associated the rational soul more closely with men and the body with women. This meant that in considering the *imago Dei* in women, they tended to affirm that women are created in the image of God but then had to explain how this happened in spite of women's bodiliness.<sup>21</sup>

While many of these early patristic theologians struggled to make sense of the *imago Dei* symbol,<sup>22</sup> Augustine is a particularly important representative since his theology so strongly influenced the development of theology in Western Christianity. For Augustine, humans image God in our minds, in particular in our rationality; he argues, "the mind is God's image par excellence in virtue of its capacity for knowing God... The perfection of the divine image in the mind is the divine gift of wisdom, by

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<sup>20</sup> Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image*, 27.

<sup>21</sup> Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image*, 27.

<sup>22</sup> See Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image*, 28-36, for a survey of how the *imago Dei* is taken up by patristic theologians, particularly Irenaeus of Lyons and Gregory of Nyssa. While this chapter traces the theological lineage of the *imago Dei* symbol through Augustine and Aquinas, it is important to note that patristic theology was quite diverse in its explorations of this symbol. Irenaeus, for example, understands creation in the image of God in light of the incarnation and sets forth an understanding of image and likeness that is dynamic. "When [the Son of God] was made incarnate and made a human being, he recapitulated in himself the long history of humankind, procuring salvation for us in the compendium, that what we lost in Adam, that is to be according to the image and likeness of God, this we would recover in Jesus Christ" (Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, trans. Dominic J. Unger (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), III, 18, 1). Because of this connection to the incarnation, Irenaeus connects the image of God with our bodies; drawing on the Greek philosophical category of forms, he argues that "the image of God in the person is in the flesh. This sense of image corresponds to form, and form inheres only in matter... Consequently the image of God in the human being must exist in matter, that is, in our very flesh" (Mary Ann Donovan, "Alive to the Glory of the Lord: A Key Insight in St. Irenaeus," *Theological Studies* 49, no. 2 (1988), 294). Gregory of Nyssa, on the other hand, locates the image of God in the soul and suggests that key to being in the image of God is our imitation of God. "The image is not something static that is merely implanted within humanity. Instead, it is something that exists dynamically within us and is intimately tied to our spiritual life" (Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image*, 33-34).



which the mind becomes aware of God, and is not only ‘in’ God, but ‘with’ God.”<sup>23</sup>

Further, for Augustine, we image God most completely in contemplation:

As we said of the nature of the human mind that if as a whole it contemplates the truth, it is in the image of God; and when its functions are divided and something of it is diverted to the handling of temporal things, nevertheless that part which consults the truth is in the image of God, but the other part, which is directed to the handling of inferior things, is not the image of God.<sup>24</sup>

For Augustine, men and women do not image God in the same way. In this life, only men can fully image God. Because they are embodied as women, women on their own are incapable of reflecting the image of God until they reach the afterlife. Women can only reflect the image of God in this life when they are united with a husband.<sup>25</sup>

Like Augustine, Thomas Aquinas locates the image of God in the rational mind as the highest power of our soul and he suggests that we most fully image God when we turn our mind towards higher things. His is a threefold understanding of the imaging of God:

First, inasmuch as man possesses a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God; and this aptitude consists in the very nature of the mind, which is common to all men. Secondly, inasmuch as man actually or habitually knows and loves God, though imperfectly; and this image consists in the conformity of grace. Thirdly, inasmuch as man knows God actually and loves Him perfectly; and this image consists in the likeness of glory.<sup>26</sup>

In other words, it is only when we achieve perfect knowledge and love of God that we can reflect the image of God perfectly. But, for Aquinas, men and women do not reflect

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<sup>23</sup> Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. John Hammond Taylor, SJ (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), book 3, ch. 19.

<sup>24</sup> Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, book 12, ch. 7.

<sup>25</sup> Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, 38-41. See also Kari Elisabeth Borresen, “God’s Image, Man’s Image? Patristic Interpretation of Gen. 1,27 and I Cor. 11,7,” in *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Borresen (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 200. “Human female beings are theomorphic *in spite of* their bodily sex, whereas men’s spiritual God-likeness, *imago Dei*, corresponds to their exemplary maleness. Exclusion of femaleness at the divine level remains basic in Augustine’s God-language.”

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, question 92, article 4. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.toc.html> (accessed August 15, 2016).

the image of God equally: “the image of God, in its principal signification, namely the intellectual nature, is found both in man and woman... But in a secondary sense the image of God is found in man, and not in woman, for man is the beginning and end of woman, just as God is the beginning and end of every creature.”<sup>27</sup> So, women have the first level of imaging – being created to know and love God – but they cannot grow in that imaging of God because of their inferior bodies. A weak body represents a weak soul and mind and, ultimately and following Aristotle, Aquinas excludes women from fully imaging God:

As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active power in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness according to the masculine sex; while the production of woman comes from defect in the active power, or from some material indisposition... On the other hand, as regards universal human nature, woman is not misbegotten, but is included in nature’s intention as directed to the work of generation.<sup>28</sup>

As Gonzalez reminds us, this statement reflects an un-biblical understanding of creation in the image of God; rather, it reflects Aristotelian biology (an incorrect biology as we now know). This reflects a moment in the history of Christian theology when a non-Christian philosophy rather than the biblical witness is driving theological conclusions.<sup>29</sup>

Thomas Aquinas’ work grounded the vast majority of theological reflection for the next seven hundred years. In fact, it is not until the twentieth century that Roman Catholic theological anthropology reconsidered, in any sustained way, Aquinas’ understanding of the human person.<sup>30</sup> However, with the profusion of theological

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<sup>27</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, question 93, article 4.

<sup>28</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, question 92, article 1.

<sup>29</sup> Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, 45.

<sup>30</sup> See Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, 51-84, for a survey of some of the major thinkers between the thirteenth and twentieth centuries. Gonzalez highlights Hildegard of Bingen, Martin Luther, Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Karl Rahner, and Hans Urs von Balthasar as the key theologians whose work takes up theological anthropology and the relationship between men and women in the *imago Dei*. Hildegard of Bingen, in particular, is interesting as woman whose theological reflections were preserved and who points

approaches that take the voices of the marginalized seriously, reflection on theological anthropology expanded greatly. Black theologians, feminist theologians, liberation theologians, and Hispanic theologians, for example, began taking seriously the experiences of historically marginalized persons and claiming the *imago Dei* for them. For feminist theologians, this meant taking seriously women's experiences and finding ways to understand women, not as deficient or partial in their imaging of God, but as fully imaging God in all of their particularity.<sup>31</sup>

### 3.2 *IMAGO DEI* IN FEMINIST THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

As feminist theologians<sup>32</sup> have taken up the *imago Dei* symbol, they have found it to be a very rich source for affirming the equality of men and women as created by God. The idea that women are created in the image of God becomes the foundation for an egalitarian theological anthropology that calls for the full flourishing of all women.<sup>33</sup> In particular, feminist theologians have retrieved two aspects of human existence,

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us to the ways that the *imago Dei* symbol was taken up by women mystics. Medieval historian Carolyn Walker Bynam notes that many women mystics explored this symbol, including Gertrude the Great, Margaret of Oingt, Douceline of Marseilles, Beatrice of Nazareth, Mechtild of Hackeborn, and Catherine of Siena. But, because these mystics were women, their work was generally ignored (with the exception of Catherine of Siena) until their "rediscovery" by feminist theologians in the mid-twentieth century. See Caroline Walker Bynam, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982); Caroline Walker Bynam, *Holy Fast and Holy Feast: The Religious Significance of Food for Medieval Women* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987). Nevertheless, Gonzalez makes a convincing case that it is not until the mid-1960s and the advent of black theology, liberation theology, feminist theology, and other contextualized theologies that theology took up the *imago Dei* symbol in any meaningfully different way.

<sup>31</sup> Mary Ann Hinsdale provides an informative overview of feminist critiques of patriarchal anthropologies, especially of the feminist critiques of the complementary dualism that is favored by the Vatican. See Mary Ann Hinsdale, "Heeding the Voices: An Historical Overview," in *In the Embrace of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Ann O'Hara Graff (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995).

<sup>32</sup> The category "feminist theologians" is a broad one and tends to reflect the work of white, Euro-American, middle-class female theologians working primarily in the academy. Womanist and Latina theologians have problematized the assumptions of many white feminist theologians, pointing out that the experiences of white, Euro-American, middle-class women is not the experiences of all, or even most, women. This critique of feminist theology is taken up in more detail later in this chapter.

<sup>33</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 113.

embodiment and relationality, aspects that were traditionally associated with women, and identified them with being in the image of God.

First, creation of male and female in the image of God affirms for feminist theologians not only that bodies matter, but that embodiment is good. “Through their retrieval of the body, feminist theologians transform a dimension of our humanity that was once the source of women’s marginalization into a site of our *imago Dei*.”<sup>34</sup> The tension for feminist theologians is to balance a recognition of the historical marginalization of women’s bodies by male theologians with an appreciation of biological sexual differentiation in a way that leads not to a hierarchical complementarity but to an egalitarian anthropology that values embodiment. Gonzalez argues that “through their scholarship feminists challenge three interpretations of the body: the dualistic construction of the body and mind; the liberal emphasis on the universality of humanity and insignificance of the body for this position, which ignores concrete contexts and inadvertently normatizes male experience; and essentialist constructions of masculine and feminine nature.”<sup>35</sup> Creation in the image of God as male and female means that the different embodiment of men and women has to be taken seriously in theological anthropology. But, for feminist theologians, it also means that these differences cannot be taken as a limitation of either men or women or as a way of relegating women to a subordinate or marginalized position.

Womanist theologians, in particular, have drawn on the *imago Dei* symbol to ground the claim that embodiment is good. Because both blackness and femaleness were traditionally associated more closely with the body and, therefore, in a hierarchical

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<sup>34</sup> Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, 121.

<sup>35</sup> Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, 123.

dualist worldview, valued less, womanist theologians explicitly claim black female embodiment as constitutive of the *imago Dei*. As Delores Williams puts it: “Black womanhood and humanity are synonymous and in the image of God,”<sup>36</sup> to devalue black women’s bodies is to sin. Shawn Copeland asserts that chattel slavery and white supremacy serve to deform the *imago Dei* in black women. Instead she proposes that

speaking about theological anthropology in these terms [of black female embodiment] interrogates the enfleshing of created spirit through the struggle to achieve and exercise freedom in history and society. To speak in this way is to recognize that the black body is a site of divine revelation and, thus, is a “basic human sacrament.” The body is the medium through which the person as essential freedom achieves and realizes selfhood through communion with other embodied selves.<sup>37</sup>

According to Karen Teel, womanist theologians remind us that “every person has a body, and the body is more than one characteristic among others: it constitutes us as human... [And] having a body makes relationality – often cited as foundational to personhood – possible.”<sup>38</sup>

Second, feminist theologians, reflecting on the theological truth that creation in the image of God means being created in the image of a Trinitarian and relational God, have re-appropriated the notion of relationality for women. For feminist theologians, “the relational nature of humanity is grounded in God’s Trinitarian nature as relational and our reflection of this nature through the *imago Dei*.”<sup>39</sup> Understanding God as a trinity of relations, as being in communion, grounds a theological anthropology that envisions humanity as social and values the cultivation of relationships. “The nature of

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<sup>36</sup> Delores S. Williams, “A Womanist Perspective on Sin,” in *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering*, ed. Emilie M. Townes (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 146.

<sup>37</sup> M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 24. Copeland is quoting Michael Scanlon, “Postmodernism and Theology,” *The Ecumenist* 37, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 18.

<sup>38</sup> Karen Teel, *Racism and the Image of God* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 163.

<sup>39</sup> Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, 118.

humanity is relational. The mystery of what it means to be human is grounded in the relational Mystery that is the triune God. Human beings do not image God as individuals but in their right relations.”<sup>40</sup> Mary McClintock Fulkerson, for example, grounds her understanding of the *imago Dei* in this kind of relationality because, for her, it is the foundation for humanity’s ability to be in relationship with God. “The *imago Dei* indicates the attributes of the human being that make it capable of a relationship to God. More important, it conveys the theologically appropriate affirmation of the goodness of finitude – of creatures.”<sup>41</sup> By telling stories of female relationality in the image of God, women can see themselves in the Genesis claim that humanity is created in the image of God.

This also suggests that imaging God has an ethical dimension because it impacts the ways that we live together. According to Mary Catherine Hilkert, the relational nature of our imaging of God provides grounding for the fight for social justice. “The image of God is reflected most clearly in communities characterized by equality, respect for difference and uniqueness, and mutual love.”<sup>42</sup> For Hilkert, the *imago Dei* is not just something that is characteristic of humans at their creation; it is also their vocation. The *imago Dei* symbol functions to call humanity towards an eschatological sense that we are always working to image God more and more fully. In other words, as we struggle to find ways to live together justly, we are living out our vocation to image God. Where womanist theologians remind us of the ways that the white Christian tradition has failed

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<sup>40</sup> Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, 120.

<sup>41</sup> Mary McClintock Fulkerson, “Contesting the Gendered Subject: A Feminist Account of the *Imago Dei*,” in *Horizons in Feminist Theology: Identity, Tradition, and Norms*, ed. Rebecca S. Chopp and Sheila Greeve Davaney (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), 107.

<sup>42</sup> Mary Catherine Hilkert, “Cry Beloved Image: Rethinking the Image of God,” in *In the Embrace of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Ann O’Hara Graff (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 200.

to honor the *imago Dei* in the bodies of black women and other marginalized persons, the symbol also serves as a rallying point for creating a more just future. We are called, as persons created in the image of a relational God, to image God in establishing a world that honors the *imago Dei* in each person.

### 3.2.1 Theological Anthropology Done by White Women

As an important critique of feminist theology, some feminist theologians note that white feminist theologians tend to assume that the white woman's perspective is a universal one.<sup>43</sup> These critics argue that these white feminists are not only universalizing the experience of white women, they are silencing the voices of non-white women.

Women of color were quick to point out that while feminist theology contained a sustained and significant analysis of the function of sexism within the contemporary and historical Christian context, it did not explore the other dimensions of oppression, such as racism, classism, and ethnic prejudice. "Women of color have been critical of white feminists for universalizing their experience and thereby ignoring the experience unique to them. Social location plays a significant role in the liberation of women. No true liberation exists unless the difference of race, class, age, and sexual orientation make in people's daily lives is heeded." Some feminists of color contend that by ignoring these oppressive elements feminist theologians inadvertently perpetuated them within their work.<sup>44</sup>

Theologians from a wider variety of social locations have begun to explore the experiences of, among others, black, Latina, Asian, and lesbian women. And this theological work has expanded our understandings of what it means to be a human person in relationship with God. Because of this important critique, theologians now recognize

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<sup>43</sup> Serene Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 26-27. Jones provides a helpful definition: "Defined most broadly, essentialism/universalism refers to any view of women's nature that makes universal claims about women based on characteristics considered to be an inherent part of being female. The notion of universality highlights the all-pervasive scope of essentialist claims about women's nature, namely, the belief that features of womanhood cover women's lives in every place, age, and culture without exception."

<sup>44</sup> Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image*, 91-92. Gonzalez is quoting Anne M. Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 25.

“the challenge of articulating a theological perspective that gives voice to women, while not unintentionally silencing some women through a limited notion of women’s identity.”<sup>45</sup>

In particular, the ways that the *imago Dei* symbol has been taken up by white feminist theologians is, in some ways, problematic. Karen Teel notes that these white feminist theologians are actively exploring the ethical implications for our claims that all people are created in the image of God.<sup>46</sup> For Teel, these theological explorations are important because they recognize the brokenness of the world – that the image of God in some people is not being honored and that to be in the image of God means working to end this. However, she notes that they also reveal something troubling:

This call to the powerful to image God by standing in solidarity with the oppressed may indeed be one possible way for people who are privileged to live out the image of God. But what about the people who are weak, infirm, oppressed, violated? [Few theologians] speak to the moral situation of people who are oppressed or discuss how oppressed people image God. In this perspective, do people who are oppressed image God by caring for each other, or for themselves? Or, more disturbingly, are we to conclude that being oppressed renders people unable to image God? Although surely [theologians] do not intend it, [they] imply that although everyone may passively share in the image of God, only privileged people can image God actively, because we are the ones who can choose to “protect and care for the weak, infirm, and oppressed.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, 96.

<sup>46</sup> Teel, *Racism and the Image of God*, 45-46. For example, Kathryn Tanner writes: “To be created in the image of God means... to have a particular vocation, one of fellowship and communion with God in which one uses all ones’ powers to glorify God and carry out God’s purposes... Like the shepherd kings of antiquity, they mediate God’s blessings, as best they are able, both to their own kind and the rest of creation – for example, replenishing the earth and helping it to body forth bountifully, furthering the prospects for human community by protecting and caring for the weak, the infirm, and the oppressed” (Kathryn Tanner, “The Difference Theological Anthropology Makes,” *Theology Today* 50 (January 1994): 573-574). Similarly, Hilkert asserts that “the ‘image of God’ in human persons is revealed as an image desecrated, the image of Christ crucified. Only if human communities and individuals rise up in indignation, protest, solidarity, and action on behalf of those whose basic human dignity has been violated can the image of God also be revealed as compassionate love in solidarity with us even unto death” (Hilkert, “Cry Beloved Image,” 202).

<sup>47</sup> Teel, *Racism and the Image of God*, 46.



Teel's point is not to suggest that white feminist theologians are trying to claim that only some people can fully image God – something that these feminist theologians have been fighting against throughout their work. Rather, she is concerned with how easy it is for people in a place of privilege to forget their own privilege and power and, inadvertently, reproduce the same oppressive tendencies that feminist theology is trying to discard.

### **3.2.2 Theological Anthropology Done by Adults**

Just as theologians of color have justly critiqued white feminist theologians for universalizing the experiences of white women and effectively silencing the voices of people of color, the feminist theological tradition also has a tendency to universalize the experiences of adult women. Traditionally listed, along with gender, race, class, and sexual orientation, as a position of marginalization or discrimination, chronological age is, however, under-explored in theology. While most theologians will mention age as a category of difference, none of them provide any systematic reflection on what it means for humans created in the image of God to grow older. Feminist theologians who have taken gender theory seriously have noted that gender itself (and, therefore, women's experience of gender) is a relatively fluid category; nevertheless, categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, and even class tend to remain fairly stable over a person's life. Age, however, is never a stable category.<sup>48</sup> The experiences of an infant, a toddler, a girl-child, an adolescent, a young woman, a middle-aged woman, and an elderly woman are all very different. In particular, infancy, childhood, puberty, pregnancy and childbirth,

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<sup>48</sup> For psychological perspectives on age and aging, see Marc H. Bornstein and Tama Leventahl, eds., *Handbook of Child Psychology and Developmental Science* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2015); K. Warner Schaie and Sherry L. Willis, eds., *Handbook of the Psychology of Aging*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Elsevier/Academic Press, 2011). For sociological perspectives, see Richard A. Setterstein, Jr. and Jacqueline L. Angel, eds., *Handbook of Sociology of Aging* (New York: Springer Verlag, 2011).

and the physical decline of aging all provide very different understandings of female embodiment. Similarly, being in relationship with others means something very different for the child, the adolescent, the adult, and the elderly.

Theologians who consider childhood do affirm that children are created in the image of God and rightly insist that the *imago Dei* does not reside in any one human quality. Children remind us that rationality cannot be the sole locus of the *imago Dei*; children, like people with developmental delays, mental illness, or dementia, show us that imaging God cannot be dependent on how well we reason.<sup>49</sup> Despite the important work being done by these theologians, there is still a tendency in the theological tradition to assume that humans express the *imago Dei* in the same way at each stage in their lives even while we say that the *imago Dei* remains a constant in each individual from birth to death. It is also important to affirm that being created by God in the image of God is not something that we attain at adulthood. One does not grow into one's image of God, it is not something that develops in us, nor is it something that could decline as we age. No one images God partially or deficiently.

Returning to the two categories that feminist theologians have reclaimed for thinking about women as created in the image of God, it is instructive to think about how these aspects of the *imago Dei* open up new avenues of theological investigation when the unstable category of age is introduced. First, taking our cues from feminist theologians that creation as bodies is tied up with the *imago Dei*, it is important to consider the fact that our bodies change over the lifespan. Some object to thinking about embodiment and the imaging of God for precisely this reason. We find it hard to believe

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<sup>49</sup> See, for example, David H. Jensen, *Graced Vulnerability: A Theology of Childhood* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2005), 31-33.

that bodies that are helpless, weak, or changing can image God.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, there is freedom in understanding that the ways that we live into and reflect our status as *imago Dei* can, and indeed must, change over our lifespans. Taking embodiment seriously across chronological age means that our understandings of the *imago Dei* symbol have to become so much more capacious. We image God in our vulnerability and dependence as children, in our creativity and desire for independence as adolescents, in our ability to form and sustain relationships and to create new life as adults, and in our wisdom and frailty as elderly persons. When we limit ourselves to thinking that to be in the image of God is to be a middle-aged adult, we are excluding from our theological view a great variety of ways in which people image God.<sup>51</sup>

Second, the ways in which human beings form and sustain relationships change over the lifespan and, while these relationships often become more complex as we age, all healthy relationships are good and reflect the image of God. If, as feminist theologians have reminded us, the relationality of humanity reflects the relationality of the Trinity, then these relationships tell us something important about the wide variety of relationships that can and do image God. For example, we are right to note that the mother's care for her child is a reflection of the *imago Dei*; but the infant's relationship with her mother is just as much a living out of that infant's creation in the image of God. As with questions of embodiment, we do not generally want to think about relationships in which vulnerability, weakness, and receiving care are the primary category as being in

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<sup>50</sup> Teel, *Racism and the Image of God*, 42-43.

<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, taking the Incarnation as another Christian doctrine that affirms that bodies are good, Christians do not usually have any difficulty seeing the image of God in the infant Jesus nor do we question that the adult Jesus was fully living as the perfect image of God. But Jesus' untimely death has also robbed us of the ability to imagine an elderly Jesus imaging God up through the last moments of a natural lifespan.

the image of God.<sup>52</sup> The vulnerability and weakness of the infant, the clinginess of the toddler, the expressions of adolescent independence, the desire that adults have to form pair-bonds and to nurture children, and the companionship of old age all reveal different sides of what it means to live out a relational *imago Dei*.

In addition to helping us towards a more capacious understanding of what it means to live fully into our status as images of God, questions of embodiment and relationality take on new meaning when age is brought into conversation with gender, race, and class. What it means for an adult white woman to image God can be very different from how an older Latino man images God. When poor infants in the United States have a higher infant mortality rate than rich infants, it is clear that differing embodiment has consequences. Similarly, when the disproportionate incarceration of young, black men removes large portions of a generation from community and family structures, the ways that relationality is lived out are distorted.

The powerful Christian understanding of the human person as created in the image of God provides an interesting way of thinking about adolescent women as images of God as they grow into adulthood. As we move forward, we must claim for adolescent girls the insights that feminist theologians have had concerning adult women: as created by God, adolescent women are already fully imaging God – they are not deficient or incomplete images of God.<sup>53</sup> Not only does a consideration of age – and the change and

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<sup>52</sup> This is something taken up very fruitfully by theologians working in disability studies. See Nancy Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Towards a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994); Molly C. Haslam, *A Constructive Theology of Intellectual Disability: Human Being as Mutuality and Response* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

<sup>53</sup> Mary McClintock Fulkerson offers an important caution as we move forward in our consideration of adolescent girls and the *imago Dei*. In considering the *imago Dei* in light of a post-structuralist critique, Fulkerson suggests that feminist theologians generally argue from an “us, too” approach that often just reinforces a gender binary. Similarly, adding race and class as add-ons to the category of woman is insufficient; simply recognizing the excluded other does not change oppressive situations (Fulkerson,

fluidity that age implies – provide us with richer understandings of what women’s experience entails. It also impels us to complicate and rethink some of the key contributions of feminist theology to theological anthropology. We need to tell a story of the *imago Dei* that neither excludes some ways of being human nor pretends that all women experience humanity in the same way.

### **3.3 CONSIDERING ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND THE *IMAGO DEI***

As described above, feminist theologians have taken up the foundational symbol of human creation in the image of God as a way of grounding a theological anthropology that honors women, their embodiment, and their relationality. However, adolescent girls have not been explicitly considered in feminist understandings of theological anthropology or feminist retrievals of the *imago Dei* symbol. Some theologians have taken up the notion of childhood as a theological category and other researchers have delved into the spiritual and religious lives of adolescent girls. After reviewing some of the ways in which children and adolescents in general and adolescent girls in particular have been taken up by theologians, this section considers some theological resources for thinking about adolescent girls as created in the image of God.

#### **3.3.1 Adolescent Girls in Theological Scholarship**

Recently, theologians and religious educators have been investigating the religious and spiritual lives of teenagers in general and teenage girls in particular.

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“Contesting the Gendered Subject,” 102). Fulkerson’s caution applies also to considerations of age in the *imago Dei* – simply adding them to the mix will not change the ways that adolescent women are marginalized by theology and in society. Rather, we need a new story of the *imago Dei* that sees the humanity of adolescent women, one that “has an imperative to change, a commitment to value denigrated forms of creation” (112).

Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, using data from a national survey of teenagers and in-depth interviews with boys and girls from around the country, describe the faith-lives of teenagers in the United States.<sup>54</sup> While they provide a great deal of information about the faith practices of teens and some information about how teens understand their own faith, the authors do not attempt to provide a theological explanation of what it means to be a teenager. David Jensen's book, *Graced Vulnerability*, on the other hand, does try to come to a theological understanding of what it means to be a child. Jensen argues that a theology of childhood has to consider children as they currently are, rather than as they will become. In particular, he names the problem of providing a theological understanding of children: "The problem becomes even more acute once we recognize that those who typically define and assign difference tend to be those in power. Children, presumably, have little say in defining what a child is... To understand children in God's image, moreover, is to reject the multiple attempts to mold children in *our* image."<sup>55</sup> While Jensen asserts that his theology of childhood encompasses all children (from birth to adulthood<sup>56</sup>), he tends to focus specifically on younger children and does not consider adolescence as a separate stage from childhood. Similarly, while he recognizes that childhood is a time of vulnerability and powerlessness, he does not consider the possibilities of increased vulnerability for female

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<sup>54</sup> Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>55</sup> Jensen, *Graced Vulnerability: A Theology of Childhood*, 42-43.

<sup>56</sup> Jensen, *Graced Vulnerability*, 44. Kristin Herzog also tries to construct a theological understanding of children that includes everyone under the age of eighteen; she takes this age cut-off from the UNICEF definition of a child. While she recognizes that different cultures define the entry into adulthood in different ways, she does not consider at any length how adolescence might differ from either childhood or adulthood. Kristin Herzog, *Children and Our Global Future: Theological and Social Challenges* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2005), 5. See also, Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, *Let the Children Come: Reimagining Childhood from a Christian Perspective* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003); Joyce Ann Mercer, *Welcoming Children: A Practical Theology of Childhood* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005).

children.<sup>57</sup> However, Jensen does recognize the significant challenge of writing for and about a group of people to which one no longer belongs and he does claim that, because we are in relationship with children, we can speak authentically for children who are not yet capable of speaking for themselves.<sup>58</sup>

Several theologians have taken the faith lives of adolescent girls seriously. One of the first to do so is Dori Baker; her book, *Doing Girlfriend Theology*, describes a method for engaging adolescent girls in telling their own stories and connecting them to the stories of the biblical and theological tradition as a way of educating in faith. Baker's work recognizes that, as adolescents, girls often experience a loss of voice and the self-confidence to talk about themselves; her method tries to give girls a safe space in which to tell their stories, have them heard by peers and mentors, and to integrate those stories into their faith lives. As a part of her discussion of the missing voices of young women, Baker notes that feminist theologians, especially white feminist theologians, have failed to include the voices of young women in their theological reflections, often relegating girls to the footnotes of their work.<sup>59</sup> Baker defines girlfriend theology as an

attempt to address the problems of silenced selves, missing voices, and girls in the footnotes. It does so by constructing a method of religious education that begins with the voices and life stories of adolescent girls. It engages those stories with the stories of adult women who have found voice, and translates the resources of women's theological thought into the context of female adolescence. It is a meeting at the crossroads between adolescence and adulthood. It is a relational model of producing meaning.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Jensen, *Graced Vulnerability*, 65-78.

<sup>58</sup> Jensen, *Graced Vulnerability*, xiv.

<sup>59</sup> Dori Grinenko Baker, *Doing Girlfriend Theology: God-Talk with Young Women* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2005), 14-15. Baker does note that womanist theologians have included African American girls in their work and can, therefore, serve as a model for taking the faith lives of girls seriously in the construction of a feminist theology.

<sup>60</sup> Baker, *Doing Girlfriend Theology*, 17.

This is a very important task and, in fact, Baker understands this task as one of education, empowerment, and conscientization. However, Baker's project does not attempt to construct a theology of adolescent girlhood; she is not reflecting on the theological meaning of being an adolescent girl.

Similarly, Joyce Mercer's study of adolescent girls of faith and their understandings of what it means to be a faithful person is, like Baker's work, descriptive of girls' experiences. Mercer is critical of researchers who fail to consider the faith lives of girls even while investigating the many other aspect of their lives. She sees her work as filling that gap and providing a way of understanding how religion plays a role in the lives of girls. In her research, Mercer spoke in depth with young women of faith who were participants in a summer workshop on religion. She notes that "these girls made decisions about everything, from the clothing they purchased to their sexual activities, in relation to faith. Religion informed the ways they thought about and lived out their gender identities... In short, religion was central to who they understood themselves to be – a vital feature of their everyday lives."<sup>61</sup> However, like Baker's work, Mercer's approach tends to describe the spiritual lives and religious practices of young women, but it does not consider what it means to be a young woman from a theological perspective.

Finally, in *The Faith of Girls*, Anne Phillips considers the faith development of girls, with a particular focus on girls in early adolescence (approximately ages 10-13). Using and critiquing the developmental theories of psychologists like Eric Erikson, Robert Kegan, and Carol Gilligan and the faith development theory of James Fowler, Phillips attempts to describe how girls understand God and their faith. Phillip's purpose

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<sup>61</sup> Joyce Ann Mercer, *Girl Talk, God Talk: Why Faith Matters to Teenage Girls – and Their Parents* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), xxiii.



is to be descriptive of the experiences of young women, a preliminary step towards making their experiences available for reflection by theologians and by the girls themselves. In particular, she is concerned with recognizing that children and adolescents are gendered people and girls should be considered in their unique development and contexts. In addition, she is interested in how churches can recognize and hear the voices of these girls and counter the silencing that can often occur during this period in their lives.<sup>62</sup> However, like Baker and Mercer, Phillips does not reflect theologically on what it means to be a young adolescent girl.

### **3.3.2 Theological Resources**

Adolescent girls, then, have been the subject of theological research as theologians, particularly feminist theologians, have been turning to girls' experiences of themselves as female and Christian. The focus of this research has been mostly concentrated on the religious or spiritual experiences of adolescent girls; but, while this research is useful and necessary for understanding the faith lives of girls, it does not get to the question of what it means to be an adolescent girl who is made in the image of God. The particular challenge of reflecting theologically on adolescent girls as *imago Dei* is one of doing theology *about* and *for* a group of people, but not *with* them. Because adolescent girls are necessarily developmentally immature, they are not yet capable of participating in theological reflection on female adolescence. Womanist theologians, for example, as adults, are able to reflect on their experiences of blackness and femaleness; they have the modes of thinking and meaning-making that can ground this kind of

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<sup>62</sup> Anne Phillips, *The Faith of Girls: Children's Spirituality and Transition to Adulthood* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 7.

reflection. Children and adolescents, however, are not yet developmentally capable of engaging in theological reflection of this kind; and this obviously includes adolescent girls.

There is some danger, then, in taking up the challenge of speaking theologically about a category of persons to which we no longer belong. Nevertheless, as Jensen reminds us, because we did once belong to this category of adolescence and because we are in relationship with adolescent girls, it may be possible to do this theological work.<sup>63</sup> In order to move towards this goal of speaking about adolescent girls as fully imaging God, it will be useful to name three resources that will provide some insights.

#### 3.3.2.1 Thriving and Flourishing

As described in chapter two, Positive Youth Development is an approach to understanding adolescents proposed by developmental psychologist Richard Lerner. He argues that too often parents, psychologists, social workers, and educators – as well as, perhaps, theologians and religious educators – approach adolescence from a deficit model. As Lerner puts it:

I am convinced that many [adults] do not even have a useful vocabulary to describe teens who aren't "troubled." Although we're comfortable acknowledging academic achievement (usually in the form of school grades), when it comes to other aspects of their lives, we mostly describe "good" kids as either those who have learned to manage or cope with their shortcomings or ones who don't have problems. That is, we resort to negatives: good kids *don't* do drugs, *don't* hang out with the wrong crowd, and *don't* engage in risky behavior. To many [adults,] the absence of bad things is the definition of a good kid.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Jensen, *Graced Vulnerability*, xiv.

<sup>64</sup> Richard M. Lerner, *The Good Teen: Rescuing Adolescence from the Myths of the Storm and Stress Years* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007), 6.

One result of this kind of deficit model thinking is that it shapes the ways that adults interact with adolescents. This means that, with the exception of education and church-related activities, our institutions, policies, and practices with adolescents are aimed at fixing or preventing problems.<sup>65</sup> And even education and church-related activities often operate with an implicit assumption that what we are doing is helping adolescents avoid negative behaviors. So we teach them how to say no to drugs or premarital sex and we tell them (and their parents) that adolescents who go to church are less likely to get into trouble. What we tend not to focus on is nurturing the goodness that is already present in adolescents. And for the majority of adolescents who are not “problems,” it can be disheartening to find out that many adults view them as problems to be managed.<sup>66</sup>

In place of a deficit model of thinking about adolescents, Lerner argues that we should see them as resources to be developed.<sup>67</sup> When we approach adolescents as resources for families, churches, schools, and society, we focus more on who they are now (rather than only on who they might become) and on how we can nurture their growth in ways that enable them to be full participants in their communities. This leads to a focus on the thriving of adolescents. Lerner defines “a *thriving* young person as an individual who – within the context of his or her physical and psychological characteristics and abilities – takes actions that serve his or her own well-being and, at the same time, the well-being of parents, peers, community, and society.”<sup>68</sup>

This language of thriving echoes the language used by feminist theologians to describe the goal of feminist theologies: the full flourishing of women. As Elizabeth

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<sup>65</sup> Richard M. Lerner, *Liberty: Thriving and Civic Engagement Among America's Youth* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004), 2-3.

<sup>66</sup> Lerner, *Liberty*, 3.

<sup>67</sup> Lerner, *Liberty*, 4.

<sup>68</sup> Lerner, *Liberty*, 4.

Johnson names it, the flourishing of women becomes the criterion by which a theological statement is judged.

As a gauge it is applied in a practical way, the adequacy of a religious symbol or custom being assessed according to its effects, for if something consistently results in the denigration of human beings, in what sense can it be religiously true?... The criterion of the liberation of women toward human flourishing thus involves the whole of historical reality, reaching through the specific, multifaceted oppressions suffered by women to include every aspect of life on this planet.”<sup>69</sup>

Johnson is not the only feminist theologian to hold out this goal as the criterion for judging the adequacies of our theological statements. For example, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza claims the full humanity of women as the normative principle for judging the relevatory nature of a biblical passage.<sup>70</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, similarly, asserts that “the critical principle of feminist theology is the promotion of the full humanity of women.”<sup>71</sup>

Just as the goal and criterion of feminist theologies and theological anthropologies, then, is the full flourishing of women, the goal of any attempt to understand adolescent girls as created in the image of God seeks to ensure the flourishing and thriving of adolescent girls. Thus, going forward, any approach to the *imago Dei* symbol that enhances that positive view of adolescent girls – as already good and as a resource rather than a problem – is one that will be taken up.

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<sup>69</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, 10<sup>th</sup> anniv. ed. (New York: Herder and Herder, 2002), 30-31.

<sup>70</sup> Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1983), 70; Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, “Breaking the Silence – Becoming Visible,” in *The Power of Naming: A Concilium Reader in Feminist Liberation Theology*, ed. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 168.

<sup>71</sup> Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 18.

### 3.3.2.2 Hybridity and the Multi-Storied Girl

The work of Michele Saracino is particularly helpful in describing a sense of being in the image of God in a way that is continually being renegotiated and re-understood. She proposes a fluid approach that takes up the idea of hybridity to talk about the multi-faceted nature of human identity and its impact on interpersonal relationships. The fluidity that her approach provides is very helpful in describing the experiences of adolescent girls.<sup>72</sup> Originally used in the natural sciences to describe the genetic crossings that yield new organisms and, ultimately, new species, the notion of hybridity was taken up by scholars in the humanities to talk about identity in a way that does not reduce individuals to a single story. Postcolonial and feminist theorists and theologians, in particular, have taken up this concept as a way of describing “the experience of having no fixed or pure identity, and instead occupying various social locations or stories simultaneously.”<sup>73</sup> Saracino argues that this concept of hybridity has the potential to describe the reality of people’s identities as multiple and multi-faceted.<sup>74</sup> In fact, for Saracino, recognizing our hybridity can be liberating because we are no longer

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<sup>72</sup> Michele Saracino, *Being about Borders: A Christian Anthropology of Difference* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011). In her work, Saracino uses the concept of hybridity in order to talk about what it means to inhabit the border-spaces that can both complicate and enrich our relationships with one another. In this chapter, I rely on Saracino’s understanding of hybridity as a way of understanding identity construction in young women, but I do not engage her concept of borders and how this would inform our understanding of young women in relationships to others – both peers and adults.

<sup>73</sup> Michelle Saracino, “Moving Beyond the ‘One True Story,’” in *Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology*, ed. Susan Abraham and Elena Procario-Foley (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 11. Saracino notes that people do not all experience hybridity in the same ways and that concepts of hybridity have been used to exploit and dehumanize others. Some people are forced to take on hybridized identities because of the effects of conquest, colonization, or exile – the experiences of people of Palestine, for example. Other people are so defined by one particular aspect of their identity that they are denied the chance to explore their other stories – the experience of African Americans is a case in point. She draws on the work of Homi Bhabha, who uses hybridity to describe the ways of understanding how colonialism continues to impact meaning-making in the present, and Gloria Anzaldua, who uses the term “mestizaje” to reject binary understandings of gender and race. See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).

<sup>74</sup> Saracino, “Moving Beyond the ‘One True Story,’” 16-17.

bound by the “one true story” – the notion that there is only one right way to be human – and we are able to embrace the ways that our identities are shaped by the many different stories that make up who we are.

Saracino grounds this vision for a theological anthropology that takes our multi-storied identities seriously in her understanding of the *imago Dei* symbol. She sees, in Genesis 1:27, both the affirmation that men and women are equally created in the image of God and the insight that humans, created in the image of God, carry something of God in them. “When read this way, human beings are by nature hybrid, and what’s more, their hybridized identity is regarded as good in and of itself.”<sup>75</sup> In drawing on the *imago Dei* symbol, Saracino argues that our hybrid identities are a part of God’s intention in our creation.

This is very helpful for understanding adolescent girls as unique images of God. The divine story interacts with each adolescent girl, combining with her own story to form a unique and beloved-of-God identity. And that divine story, the image of God that she bears, will remain with that young woman throughout her life, even as the other aspects of her story change.<sup>76</sup> Saracino’s claiming of hybridity in our understanding of the *imago Dei* provides a useful way of thinking about how adolescent girls are changing over time. As Saracino insists, all of the aspects of her humanity combine and recombine, interweaving in new ways as each girl grows towards adulthood. Moving forward, Saracino’s use of hybridity will be helpful in naming the fact that adolescent

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<sup>75</sup> Saracino, *Being about Borders*, 30.

<sup>76</sup> The storytelling methods of Mercer and Baker would prove particularly useful here. “When we engage in the sharing of stories, we engage in a communal, saving work of reinterpreting our inherited traditions into forms and shapes that make sense in an emerging landscape” (Baker, *Doing Girlfriend Theology*, 32).

girls are created in God's image and that this is a stable aspect of her humanity even while many of the other parts of her story are changing as she grows to adulthood.

### 3.3.2.3 Imaging God: A Corporate Identity Rooted in God

A third resource, in addition to the focus on thriving and flourishing and the importance of recognizing hybridity, is the reminder offered by evangelical theologian John Kilner about the importance of precision in what theologians mean when we deploy the *imago Dei* symbol to talk about human beings. First, Kilner argues that theological reflection on this symbol tends to focus more on humanity than on God. He asserts that there is

a common misconception that being in God's image is about how people are (actually) "like God" and "unlike animals." This view understands being in God's image in terms of attributes that people have now, most commonly people's ability to reason, rule over (manage) creation, be righteous, or be in relationship.... Accordingly, people vary in the extent to which they have these attributes – and are in God's image. For many, that means how much people warrant respect and protection varies from person to person.<sup>77</sup>

In other words, when we claim that human beings are created in the image of God, we have a tendency to look at the qualities of humanity that we prize, such as rationality or relationality, and then assume that those qualities come from God who possesses those qualities in some more perfect way. But, then, we have a tendency to look around at humanity and see all the people who do not live up to our expectations for what it means to possess these qualities and we judge them less than fully in the image of God.<sup>78</sup> Kilner

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<sup>77</sup> John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), 3.

<sup>78</sup> This is, for example, the classic feminist critique of the *imago Dei* symbol in traditional theology: when theologians value rationality, ascribing that to God, and associate rationality with maleness and irrationality with femaleness, it is easy to assume that women cannot fully image God or image God deficiently. Mary Catherine Hilbert makes this point in her critique of the Vatican's complementary anthropology: "Since the theology of complementarity cites as its authority the biblical revelation that God created humankind in the

names this as a dangerous misunderstanding of the symbol: “People who are lowest on the reason, righteousness, rulership, or relationship scale are deemed least like God and least worthy of respect and protection.”<sup>79</sup> Instead of this misunderstanding, Kilner advocates a conception of the *imago Dei* symbol that focuses more on God than on humanity. In other words, he calls Christians to look to the Biblical witness to who God is and what God does. From this witness, we can identify some of the characteristics of God, such as God’s justice or loving-kindness, and investigate the ways that human persons can put those characteristics into practice.<sup>80</sup>

Second, Kilner makes the important point that it is not particular human qualities that determine our status as *imago Dei*; rather, being in the image of God is a statement about the whole person and about humanity as a whole.<sup>81</sup> He bases this on the Genesis 1 account of the creation of humanity – that it is a story of the creation of humanity and not a story of the creation of a particular human.<sup>82</sup> This allows us to keep both individual persons and humanity as a whole in view as we consider the image of God. As Kilner asserts:

Thus referring to particular people as being God’s image is legitimate; but that is always in the context of – and never separate from – their identity as (members of) humanity. Speaking of all humanity as created in God’s image is legitimate as well; but that is inclusive of – not to the exclusion of – particular human beings.<sup>83</sup>

So when we speak of the *imago Dei* symbol, it is important to remember that we are talking about both individual persons who are created in the image of God and about

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divine image as male and female, the viability of the symbol of *imago Dei* to foster gender justice, to promote appreciation of the multiple dimensions of human diversity, and to engender the flourishing of women’s spirituality continues to be questioned” (Mary Catherine Hilbert, “*Imago Dei*: Does the Symbol Have a Future,” *The Santa Clara Lectures*, 8, no. 3 (April 14, 2002): 7.)

<sup>79</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 18.

<sup>80</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 217.

<sup>81</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 95.

<sup>82</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 85.

<sup>83</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 87-88.



humanity in general. This also means that while each person reflects something of the image of God in her life, the totality of what it means to be created in the image of God can only come into view when we look to all of humanity.

As we consider adolescent girls, this means that we cannot exclude them from any understanding of the *imago Dei* symbol. When we say that adolescent girls are created in the image of God, we have to have both real individual girls and all of humanity in mind. Therefore, even though adolescent girls are still developing in their abilities to think rationally or relate to others or to make moral decisions, because they are human they are already fully participating in the *imago Dei*. It also means that, as we consider adolescent girls as created in the image of God, we can look to what the Bible ascribes to God and then ask how adolescent girls can reflect what God does.

### **3.4 ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND THE *IMAGO DEI***

Feminist theological anthropology has, among many other contributions, reclaimed embodiment and relationality as elements of being in the image of God. In doing this, they have taken aspects of humanity that were traditionally associated with women in ways that tended to subordinate women and have recast them as aspects of the *imago Dei*. We have also seen, in the sections above, that age is a complicating factor when we consider both of these aspects of humanity. In particular, adolescent girls provide a specific experience of embodiment and relationality that is not usually taken up by feminist theologians. Nevertheless, this perspective provides us not only with new insights into what it means to be an embodied human person and a human person in relationship with others. It also provides us with new ways of thinking about the

adolescent girls in our churches and schools and the kinds of experiences that they are having as they grow to adulthood.

First, during adolescence, girls' bodies are in a stage of rapid growth and change. The physical changes and hormonal upheaval of puberty mean that adolescent girls are often experiencing their bodies as confusing and foreign to them. But, if being embodied is part of imaging God, then these changes cannot be excluded from the *imago Dei*. Rather, this growth and change points exactly to how important our physical bodies are for our humanity; and, for girls, this change is as much about discovering ways of being in the world as it is about merely growing.<sup>84</sup> Further, including all of these rapid and uncontrollable changes of adolescence in our understanding of the *imago Dei* points to the importance of change, mystery, and surprise in God.

Second, girls are often experiencing a period of intense social and cognitive development; their ways of thinking, making decisions, and being in relationships are becoming more adult. And, girls are not only developing cognitive abilities, an aspect of humanity that has traditionally been associated with the *imago Dei*, they are also developing in their abilities to form and sustain relationships, to make decisions based on those relationships, and to see the interconnections among relationships – all abilities traditionally associated with women, but now seen as constitutive of the *imago Dei*. In fact, the forming and maintaining of relationships is one of the crucial skills of

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<sup>84</sup> In addition, in puberty, girls are discovering themselves as sexual persons and, while they often do not know how to manage these new desires, this process opens them up to new ways of being in relationship with others. And, as feminist theologians remind us, an embrace of embodiment entails an embrace of women's sexuality as an important part of our imaging of God. Adolescent female sexuality must not be construed as inherently sinful; the *imago Dei* symbol allows us to understand adolescent sexuality as constitutive of girls' humanity and not as an aspect of their being that needs to be suppressed or controlled. For an interesting discussion of adolescent female sexuality and Catholic moral theology, see: Doris M. Kieser, *Catholic Sexual Theology and Adolescent Girls: Embodied Flourishing* (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2015).

adolescence without which adult relationships are not possible. This stage of learning how to be in a relationship tells us a great deal about how we all learn to be in relationship with God. The ways that adolescent girls understand their relationship with God is going to be much more influenced by the quality of their other relationships – with parents, peers, friends, teachers, and other caring adults.

In the remainder of this section, two new ways of thinking about adolescent girls as being in the image of God are proposed. Following the lead of feminist theologians who have, as discussed above, reclaimed understandings of embodiment and relationality in their appropriations of the *imago Dei*, the ways that adolescent girls can participate in the *imago Dei* by forming communities centered on God’s *hesed* (loving-kindness) and resistance to injustice are constructed. These two aspects of living out the image of God are aligned with the three resources outlined above: they focus on the thriving and flourishing of girls, they play into an understanding of girls as hybrid and multi-storied, and they situate a corporate understanding of the *imago Dei* firmly in the biblical witness to the actions of God. These aspects of living out their status as created in the image of God lay the foundation for thinking about how adolescent girls can participate in a feminist prophetic imagination, which is explored in chapter four of this dissertation.

### **3.4.1 Creating Communities of *Hesed***

In the Exodus story, we have a statement of God describing God’s self to Moses: “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation...” (Exodus 34: 6-7). In this passage, the Hebrew word *hesed* is translated as steadfast love

and describes the idea that God is oriented towards Israel in love and care, but this Hebrew word is an expansive term that is difficult to translate into English. The most common English words used are: love, loyalty, mercy, kindness, steadfast love, and loving-kindness.<sup>85</sup> According to biblical scholar Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, *hesed*

is generally used in the OT in the context of a relationship where one person is in significant need of help from the other, help that typically may go beyond the usual expectations of such a relationship, and help that often is essential to the basic well-being or even the survival of the needy person. When used of God, [*hesed*] lifts up the foundational commitment God has made in covenant to the Israelite community and to the Davidic line of kingship. This commitment... goes far beyond even the best human [*hesed*]; it not only meets human need for deliverance from various kinds of disaster but it also overflows into forgiveness, as an ultimate expression of rescue from distress so that a relationship can be preserved.<sup>86</sup>

In the Hebrew Bible, *hesed* is used to describe the relationships between humans, such as the relationship between Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan, and Joseph and Jacob.<sup>87</sup> God also displays *hesed* when responding freely in love, loyalty, and mercy to the people of Israel: *hesed* “can evoke in a single breath both the commitment of God to the community of faith and the radical freedom of the One who can in no way be coerced by the people with whom relationship has been established.”<sup>88</sup> And, because of God’s *hesed* towards the people, the people are called to act with a *hesed* that flows from God. So, the prophet Micah, in telling the people what God want from them, says this: “[God] has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). The prophet is

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<sup>85</sup> Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, “Khesed,” in *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 3:495. For an expanded study of *hesed* in the Hebrew Bible, see Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978); Gordon R. Clark, *The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1993).

<sup>86</sup> Sakenfeld, “Khesed,” 495-496.

<sup>87</sup> Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *Faithfulness in Action: Loyalty in Biblical Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 26-35.

<sup>88</sup> Sakenfeld, *Faithfulness in Action*, 40.

calling the people to love *hesed* – to love kindness, to love loyally, to love steadfastly; and they are to love those most in need. *Hesed* “involves active concern for the well-being of all the people of God, but particularly for the weak and underprivileged among them – the poor or any whose status offers no ready advocate in the society.”<sup>89</sup>

So, for the biblical writers, one of the primary ways of understanding how God acts in the world is with this word *hesed*. And, because this is the way that God acts in the world, humanity is called to act out this *hesed* in their own communities. As we saw above, feminist theologians have argued that relationality – the ability to form and be formed by our relationships with self, others, and God – is a constitutive part of what it means to be human and, therefore, a part of what it means to be created in the image of God. Gonzalez, for example, asserts that

Our *imago Dei* is our ability to be relational. Through our relationship with God, our fellow human beings, and the rest of creation we reflect the image of God within us. The human being is not self-contained but rather is constituted by relationships... The image of God calls us to be in relationship and community with one another as we mirror the relational life of the trinitarian God.<sup>90</sup>

While this idea of relationality is a powerful approach to understanding what it means to be created in the image of God, it does require qualifications. Not all relationships are good and not all ways of being in relationship, therefore, are in the image of the relational God. The biblical concept of *hesed*, however, provides a way of understanding both God

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<sup>89</sup> Sakenfeld, *Faithfulness in Action*, 102.

<sup>90</sup> Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image*, 159-160. Gonzalez is careful to note that not all relationships reflect the image of God: “Instead, relationships are judged against the norm of Jesus’ concrete life, ministry, death, and resurrection. Through our mirroring of Jesus’ justice-infused ministry we grow in the image of Christ, and consequently, in the image of God. Hierarchical relationships that privilege certain sectors of humanity are deemed un Revelatory, for they contradict Jesus’ inclusive vision of community. The relationship between men and women must use the criteria of Jesus, embracing an egalitarian vision of the human who is embodied distinctively as male and female. While we must take our biological sex seriously, we cannot reduce humanity to biology and assume that biological distinction equals a hierarchical and complementary model of gender relations. Instead, male and female reflect the image of God equally and express this image through their own historical, social, and cultural particularity” (160).

as God relates to humanity and our consequent call to relate to one another. God acts with *hesed* towards Israel when God acts with love, mercy, loyalty, faithfulness, loving-kindness, and steadfast love, even when Israel does not deserve such consideration from God. God's people act with *hesed* when they love kindly, loyally, steadfastly, and justly, displaying this towards everyone in the community but especially towards those most in need.

Communities constituted by *hesed* are communities where each individual is loved for who they are and not for what they can do or should be. They are communities where people show *hesed* – loving-kindness and loyalty – not only to those with whom there is already an established relationship of obligation (mother-daughter, friendship, teacher-student), but also in those relationships where the showing of *hesed* is a free choice (to distant friends, to acquaintances, to strangers). Individuals committed to *hesed* offer help, kindness, and love to those in their communities who need it, both friends and relatives and those to whom one's ties are more tenuous. Individuals live out God's *hesed* by providing care, loving tenderly, and acting justly.

Living out God's *hesed* is living out the *imago Dei*. As persons created in the image of God, we reflect the ways that the Bible tells us that God has acted in the world when we act with *hesed*. As we consider the ways that adolescent girls are created in the image of God, this notion of God's *hesed* provides ways of rethinking relationality so that it can function more helpfully for girls. Creating communities where people are called to image God's *hesed* provides girls with an intergenerational community of relationships where they are encouraged to try out new ways of being in community. Because *hesed* is a slippery and expansive word, it can point towards many different ways of relating with

others as long as those ways are all oriented towards God's care. Thus, girls image God's *hesed* in their relationships with age-peers, children, parents, teachers, and other adults. They image God's *hesed* by being fair, kind, and loyal with those they already know and by being welcoming, just, and attentive of those they are just meeting.

Looking to the three resources for a theological anthropology for adolescent girls that is rooted in the *imago Dei*, we see that understanding girls as created in the image of a God who shows *hesed* focuses on their thriving and flourishing, honors their hybrid selves, and is understood as a corporate identity that begins with God. First, a focus on *hesed* is a focus on the thriving and flourishing of everyone in a community. As members of a community that is characterized by *hesed*, adolescent girls will be treated with love, care, loyalty, mercy, loving-kindness, steadfast love. *Hesed* means that each girl is seen for who she is, is offered the care that she needs, and is encouraged to grow into the person that she is called by God to be. *Hesed* means, in turn, that each girl participates in the community by showing care to others, being loyal, being just, and being welcoming. A community constituted by God's *hesed* is one that is oriented towards nurturing each girl as she learns more and more how to live out *hesed* in her own day-to-day life.

Second, grounding an understanding of adolescent girls created in the image of God in this notion of God's *hesed* means that we can honor the hybrid and multi-storied nature of girls. As girls are navigating the multiple senses of themselves – as daughters, sisters, friends, students, athletes, and so on – they can incorporate a sense of themselves as people who do *hesed*. Not only can they incorporate this into each of their stories about themselves, it can become one of the stories they tell. They can understand

themselves as members of a community that acts with *hesed*; each girl understands herself as a girl who is kind and loyal and steadfast.

And, third, an understanding *hesed* as constitutive of the *imago Dei* emphasizes particularly well that the *imago Dei* is a corporate identity and one that is rooted in who God is. If being created in the image of God means reflecting the ways that God acts in the world, then acting with *hesed* is a good way of naming how adolescent girls can image God. In addition, being in the image of God and acting with *hesed* are both identities that belong to the community as a whole as well as to individuals in that community. This means that the community as a whole lives out the calling to act with *hesed*; each individual adolescent girl is called to participate in that commitment as best she can. No girl is going to live out this call to act with *hesed* perfectly since she is still learning how to be a person in relationship with others. At the same time, the community and the adults in it are modeling for her what it can look like to treat others with *hesed*. They do this in the way they treat each other, in the way they treat those who are marginalized, and in the way they treat the adolescent girls in the community.

### **3.4.2 Creating Communities that Resist Injustice**

God is a God of *hesed* – of steadfast love, loyalty, and care – and, because of this, God’s actions towards the people of Israel are just. God’s justice is described, for example, in the mouth of Moses: “The Rock, his work is perfect and all his ways are just. A faithful God, without deceit, just and upright is he” (Deuteronomy 32:4). And God’s words to Isaiah paint a portrait of a God who wants nothing more than to act with justice: “Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show



mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him” (Isaiah 30:18). God stands up for those who are most in need of protection and care and expects the same from the people: “For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 10:17-19). In calling the people to act with *hesed*, the prophet Micah also calls the people to act with justice: “[God] has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

So, for the biblical writers, God’s *hesed* and God’s justice go together. And, because God acts with justice towards us, we are also called to act with justice towards one another. The biblical writers consistently name our actions of justice as actions that ensure that the physical needs of the poor are met as well as their needs for safety and fair treatment. As feminist theologians have noted, these are largely embodied needs: food, shelter, clothing, freedom from harassment and harm. And, as feminist theologians have long recognized, those who are most often in need of justice are women and children.<sup>91</sup> As discussed above, embodiment is an aspect of the *imago Dei* that has been reclaimed for theological anthropology and, for feminist theologians, embodiment becomes a call for social justice. In her discussion of liberation theology, Susan Ross puts it this way:

Liberation theology was begun by a generation of Latin American theologians who had been trained in Europe and returned home to the awareness that the

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<sup>91</sup> See, for example, the United Nations accounts of women and poverty: United Nations, “Women and Poverty,” <http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/in-focus/poverty> (accessed September 1, 2016). See also Aruna Gnanadason, *No Longer a Secret: The Church and Violence Against Women*, rev. ed. (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 1997).

religious questions of the developed world, such as whether or not God existed, were not the questions of their compatriots. Instead, marginalized and oppressed people asked where God was in their suffering. Human beings, liberation theologians argued, cannot consider spiritual things if there is not adequate support for the basics of life and no political, social, or economic freedom which also have spiritual significance. Thus the poor, disenfranchised, oppressed, body in need of salvation was redefined in liberationist terms.<sup>92</sup>

Feminist theologians, like Ross, have reminded us that we exist as embodied persons and that, because of this, the care of people's physical well-being is as important as providing for their spiritual needs. The biblical concept of justice, as modeled by God, reminds us that working for justice in the world is a way of living our calling as created in the image of God.

For women and girls, particularly white, middle-class women and girls, there exists a tension in this call to pursue justice; women and girls can be both oppressed and oppressors. As women and girls, they are oppressed or marginalized because of their gender and, for girls, their age; but, as members of a privileged race and class, they participate in the structural systems that oppress and marginalize others.<sup>93</sup> Within the context of this tension, however, the biblical call to justice means that communities are called to be communities that resist injustice. In other words, despite their positions as both oppressed and oppressors, women and girls can, in addition to actively working to end oppression, form communities that empower people to resist the effects of injustice. Religious educator HyeRan Kim Cragg, in exploring communities that practice this kind

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<sup>92</sup> Susan A. Ross, *Anthropology: Seeking Light and Beauty* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 91-92.

<sup>93</sup> See, for example, Sharon Welch's naming of this intersection: "For me, to be a Christian is to become aware of the degree to which I am a participant in the structures of oppression, structures of race, class, and national identity. As a woman, I am oppressed by the structures of patriarchy. Yet as white, I benefit from the oppression of people of other races. As a person whose economic level is middle-class, I am both victim and victimizer of others. As an American, I live within a nation whose policies are economically, politically, and environmentally disastrous for far too many of the world's peoples." Sharon D. Welch, *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: A Feminist Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), ix.

of resistance to injustice, names remembrance and relationship-building as “important threads that weave a theology of resistance, a theology that uncovers realities of violence and reflects the faith and wisdom of people who work to overcome it.”<sup>94</sup> Remembrance, which goes beyond a simple knowing about an injustice, to an embodied and faithful remembering,<sup>95</sup> is a transformative practice that both recalls the injustices of the past and hopes for a more just future. Practices of remembrance become, therefore, practices of resistance; by remembering the injustices of the past and present, those injustices can be resisted and ended. Relationship-building – particularly the building of relationships across differences – functions to bind together in solidarity the community that seeks to resist injustice. “A theology of resistance as a relationship-building is a work of the body that touches and moves the soul of people. It ‘occurs only through the actual presence of people who have the courage to be physically present, to *be* in a place of hunger, violence, or despair.’”<sup>96</sup> Remembrance and relationship-building in communities of resistance function together; the stories told so that we recall injustice need both tellers and hearers.<sup>97</sup> In a community that resists injustice, adults in the community are called to reach out to adolescent girls in order to establish intergenerational relationships and to share their stories of marginalization and resistance. Not only does the sharing of stories help in the building of community, it provides girls with alternative ways of imagining the ways of understanding the social imaginary at work in their world.

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<sup>94</sup> HaeRan Kim-Cragg, “A Theology of Resistance in Conversation with Religious Education in the Unmaking of Violence,” *Religious Education* 110, no.4 (July-September 2015): 422.

<sup>95</sup> Kim-Cragg, “A Theology of Resistance,” 424. For Kim-Cragg, “Faith is an act performed by the body such that it comes to know. This bodily knowing, through the communal gesture of remembrance, continues to be learned in this physical gathering.”

<sup>96</sup> Kim-Cragg, “A Theology of Resistance,” 426. Kim-Cragg is quoting Laurel C. Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 206.

<sup>97</sup> Kim-Cragg, “A Theology of Resistance,” 427.

Living out God’s justice in communities that practice resistance is a living out of the *imago Dei*. When we participate in communities that are resisting injustice, we are practicing solidarity, living alongside those who are oppressed and marginalized, and acting in the world as God acts. In thinking about the ways that we can affirm the *imago Dei* in adolescent girls, creating communities of resistance provides a way of forming them in an embodied solidarity with those who are marginalized, poor, and oppressed. Because communities of resistance are built on a network of relationships that span all kinds of differences (in age, gender, class, and race), they can function to form girls in the real relationships that help them to image God’s justice in the world. And, because this formation is taking place in the context of a network of relationships, it allows for different girls to participate in the community even as the ways they participate can vary according to their cognitive and social development. So, girls can participate in communities of resistance by learning how to recognize injustice. This stage of conscientization is the grounding for all work of social justice and liberation – girls cannot work to end injustices that they do not yet see. Girls, as they begin to recognize the injustices in their world, can participate in the community of resistance by learning from other members of the community. “As women share stories of their own lives, a common experience of oppression and of resistance is recognized. This politicizing gives women the courage to persist in resistance, recognizing that their difficulties have not only an individual basis but a social and political basis as well.”<sup>98</sup> Practices of resistance – such as sharing stories of marginalization, participating in rallies and protests, petitioning government, raising funds, and engaging in dialogue across ideological differences – help girls see the ways that various injustice impact the lives of the people

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<sup>98</sup> Welch, *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity*, 41.

around them and how they can participate in the fight against these kinds of oppression and marginalization.

To return to the three resources for a theological anthropology for adolescent girls that takes seriously their status as created in the image of God, the imaging of God in communities of resistance honors the thriving and flourishing of girls, points to their hybridity and multiple stories, and identifies a corporate identity that is rooted in who God is. First, thinking about the *imago Dei* as rooted in communities of resistance to injustice provides for the thriving and flourishing of girls as both receivers and doers of justice. As persons who are marginalized because of their gender and age, adolescent girls can be on the receiving end of the joint efforts of a community of resistance. Such a community will, on behalf of its girls, resist the patriarchal culture that marginalizes adolescents and women and the cultural milieu, described by Hinshaw, that puts such conflicting demands on girls. As adolescents who are developing a sense of justice, communities of resistance provide girls with opportunities to develop practices of resistance. These practices of resistance give adolescent girls the tools that they need to participate in the remembrance and relationship-building that ground communities of resistance and their work of fighting injustice. In addition, girls are able to participate in direct actions that both resist injustice and work to alleviate its most direct effects.

Second, an understanding of the *imago Dei* for adolescent girls that focuses on communities of resistance is one that honors the hybridity and multi-storied identity of adolescent girls. As persons who are still developing the cognitive and social skills of adulthood, girls are in the process of trying out different ways of being in the world. A community that focuses on resistance to injustice can help form girls whose ways of

being in the world are shaped by stories of justice and resistance to injustice. As girls are creating a sense of themselves as recipients and doers of justice, a community of resistance can provide them with a story to tell about themselves. They can see themselves, along with the rest of the community, as someone who participates in practices of resistance.

Third, taking seriously a commitment to communities of resistance as a part of the way that adolescent girls can image God means taking seriously both the fact that it must be rooted in the biblical witness to God's actions and the corporate dimension of the *imago Dei*. As discussed above, the biblical writers were insistent that justice is constitutive of who God is: God is just, God acts with justice. Adolescent girls, like all humanity, are called to act in the image of God by acting with justice towards one another. Acting for justice and for the resistance of injustice are ways that adolescent girls can image God. In addition, this imaging of God is a corporate identity; humanity is in the image of God when we act with justice. The community as whole acts with God's justice and no one individual member of the community is expected to embody all aspects of God's justices. This allows any individual adolescent girl to still be learning about injustice, to still be growing in ways of resisting injustices. The members of a community of resistance model for each other ways of remembering and building relationships that allow everyone in the community to participate in practices of resistance.

### 3.4.3 Conclusions: Naming the *Imago Dei*

Feminist theologians have laid the groundwork for the construction of a theological anthropology that explicitly names adolescent girls as created in the image of God. Their explorations of themes of embodiment and relationality highlight the particular challenges and opportunities of thinking explicitly about how adolescent girls image God. But Kilner's reminders that creation in the image of God is a corporate identity means that the ways that adolescent girls participate in the *imago Dei* have to be understood in the context of communities. It is only in communities that the corporate imaging of God can be seen; focusing too closely on individual persons, including individual adolescent girls, only gives us the impression that no one can live up to the profound identity granted to us by God.

This chapter names two ways of thinking about this communal approach to the *imago Dei* in adolescent girls: people in communities live out their status as *imago Dei* when they act with God's *hesed* and with God's justice. Building on ideas of relationality and embodiment, these two aspects of living out the *imago Dei* are not meant to be exhaustive. The God in whose image we are created is more than *hesed* and justice, just as God is more than the rationality or spirituality that was posited by theologians from the tradition. Nevertheless, these two aspects of living out the *imago Dei* name two ways that adolescent girls in particular can, in the context of a community that supports them, try out a variety of different ways of living this out.

Adolescent girls like Katie have been told over the years – by parents and by teachers in their Catholic schools – that they are created in the image of God. But this idea can seem like an undefined theological concept, something confined to the

curriculum of a theology class or a pithy phrase in a school mission statement. For girls like Katie, really understanding what it means to be in image of God takes place in communities. It is in intergenerational communities brought together with a common commitment to God's *hesed* and practices of resistance to injustice that the *imago Dei* becomes concrete. For Katie this might mean that there are people in her school community who can see past the façade of effortlessness that she is projecting and see that she is overwhelmed by her sense of responsibility to all the people in her life. In a community of God's *hesed*, someone can reach out to Katie and help her choose not to participate in some of her activities or help her figure out how to talk to her parents about weight loss. Katie can see that, as a member of a community based on God's *hesed*, there are always people who are looking out for her and prepared to help her. In a community that is helping her to name and resist the effects of the triple bind, Katie might find teachers who are willing to tell their own stories of feeling overwhelmed by society's expectation. Someone can help her see the connections between her interest in becoming a lawyer, in learning about racial injustice, and the ways that feels confined to the prescribed roles laid out by the triple bind.

However, simply naming communities of *hesed* and resistance to injustice as two ways for adolescent girls to be in the image of God is insufficient if the goal is to help girls to see that being in the image of God is an identity that can help them resist the patriarchal culture of the triple bind that we investigated in chapter two. Turning again to the biblical witness, there are clues for how we can help adolescent girls to see themselves as created in the image of God by helping them develop a prophetic imagination. For girls like Katie, girls who know that they are made in the image of God



but who are struggling against the toxicity of a patriarchal milieu, the communities that are shaping them in God's *hesed* and justice can function as the biblical prophets did.

They can help girls like Katie to see things as God does.

**4.0 CHAPTER FOUR**  
**IMAGING GOD PROPHETICALLY:**  
**THE FEMINIST PROPHETIC IMAGINATION AS**  
**LIVING INTO THE *IMAGO DEI***

What do you want to be when you grow up? Do you want to play house? Or astronauts? When girls like Katie are growing up, they are invited to use their imaginations all the time. They are invited to imagine being a different age, living in a different place, having almost any occupation, or having a family. Even on their own, children will use their imaginations in play – the stick is not a stick, but a sword; fairies and elves inhabit the world; and elaborate games of make-believe can consume hours of the day. Even in the consumption of media, children are invited to put themselves in a different world. However, as children grow towards adolescence, imagination becomes more associated with creativity, particularly artistic creativity. And, outside of creative writing or art classes, schools do not always explicitly invite students to be imaginative – to use their imaginations to make sense of the world, to create new realities, and propose how the world could be.

Adolescent girls like Katie were invited to use their imaginations as children, but, too often, they are rarely invited to do so as adolescents. We do not always invite them to “dream big;” we tell girls that they can be anything they want to be, but then point out the obstacles in their way. We ask them to be realistic and pragmatic, to focus on futures that are achievable. Catholic schools, however, have the opportunity to continue asking imaginative questions of adolescent girls. The profound symbols, rich stories, and meaningful practices of the Catholic tradition offer adolescent girls and the adults in their lives many opportunities to explore the ways that Christians have made sense of the

world and the ways that God is calling Christians to make the world a better place. And, because of the ways that the cultural milieu of the twenty-first century United States is experienced by adolescent girls – as confusing at best and toxic at worst – they need ways to make sense of this world and to imagine ways that the world can be a better place.

This chapter proposes that one way in which humans can image God is through the exercise of a feminist prophetic imagination – an imagination that is founded on the biblical prophetic tradition of denunciation of injustice and annunciation of God’s *hesed* and takes seriously the flourishing of women, girls, and all those who are oppressed and marginalized. First, the chapter explores the idea of imagination and religious imagination, suggesting that imagination is what makes it possible to make sense of the world and to propose ways to change that which needs to be changed. Second, it explores biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann’s naming of a prophetic imagination and his thesis that prophets are those who denounce the dominant consciousness and announce a prophetic consciousness. Brueggemann’s proposal of the prophetic imagination is then viewed through a feminist lens in order to bring the needs of women and girls into focus. Third, this concept of the prophetic imagination is connected to the *imago Dei* and the formation of communities of care and resistance to injustice. Fourth, the feminist prophetic imagination is evaluated for its appropriateness for speaking about adolescent girls, using the same categories as were used to evaluate the *imago Dei* symbol in chapter three: that it enhances the thriving and flourishing of girls, that it recognizes the multistoried and hybrid identities of girls, and that it is a characteristic of a community and not simply of individuals. The final section of this chapter investigates the idea of a feminist prophetic imagination in order to determine its usefulness in

denouncing the toxic milieu of the triple bind,<sup>1</sup> in helping adolescent girls identify and resist injustices, and in helping them and the communities that care for them to create communities of God's *hesed*.

#### 4.1 IMAGINATION

Philosopher Richard Kearney, in his survey of the ways in which imagination has been understood in Western philosophy, theology, art, and literature, suggests that there are two main approaches to this ambiguous term. It is understood “1) as a *representational* faculty which reproduces images of some pre-existing reality, or 2) as a *creative* faculty which produces images which often lay claim to an original status in their own right.”<sup>2</sup> Kearney suggests that this broad understanding of imagination allows us to recognize in this term the way we use it in everyday language to refer to our “fantasies, dreams or conjectures,” the way it is used by artists to describe the creative process, and the way it is used by psychologists to analyze the human mind.<sup>3</sup> We use our imaginations to help us understand existing reality and to draw connections among the things we know; and we use our imaginations when we are creative, producing novel ideas.

Imagination, then, is not simply a forward-looking activity, focused exclusively on novelty. Rather, imagination is at play in the ways we engage with the past and

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Hinshaw with Rachel Kranz, *The Triple Bind: Saving Our Teenage Girls from Today's Pressures and Conflicting Expectations* (New York: Ballantine, 2009),

<sup>2</sup> Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination: Towards a Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 15. Kearney goes on to delineate four different meanings of imagination: “1. The ability to evoke absent objects which exist elsewhere, without confusing these absent objects with things present here and how. 2. The construction and/or use of material forms and figures such as paintings, statues, photographs etc. to represent real things in some ‘unreal’ way. 3. The fictional projection of non-existent things as in dreams or literary narratives. 4. The capacity of human consciousness to become fascinated by illusions, confusing what is real with what is unreal” (16).

<sup>3</sup> Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination*, 15-16.

present. As theologian Mary Elizabeth Moore suggests, imagination brings the past and the future into conversation with each other as a part of an ongoing process of evaluation and creation. Moore argues that the power of imagination

emerges from the process-relational nature of reality. As reality emerges, endless possibilities exist for rearranging the past and moving in radically new directions, even when heritage is strong and persistent. Indeed, heritage itself is complex, and the heritage that seems most monolithic and rigid holds seeds of novelty and change within itself.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, imagination involves how we make sense of our past and of our current reality and it projects how reality could change in the future. Similarly, for Mary Warnock, imagination cannot be separated from interpretation, from the ways we make sense of the world.

For we use imagination in our ordinary perception of the world. This perception cannot be separated from interpretation. Interpretation can be common to everyone, and in this sense ordinary, or it can be inventive, personal and revolutionary. So imagination is necessary... to enable us to recognize things in the world as familiar, to take for granted features of the world which we need to take for granted and rely on, if we are to go about our ordinary business; but it is also necessary if we are to see the world as significant of something unfamiliar, if we are ever to treat the objects of perception as symbolizing or suggesting things other than themselves.<sup>5</sup>

Imagination functions, according to Moore, to bring past and present into conversation with possibilities for the future and, according to Warnock, to engage in our everyday lives and to see beyond the everyday. It seems, then, that our imaginations are engaged

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<sup>4</sup> Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, "Imagination at the Center: Identity on the Margins," *Process Studies* 34, no. 2 (2005): 193. Moore gives the example of the musical imaginations of Ray Charles and Bobby Darin: "We can see this in the music of Ray Charles and Bobby Darin, which continued to emerge in new forms, always with echoes of each man's past and frequently with daring adventure, even when their adventures led them to create music that people could not yet appreciate. Such is the work of imagination, stirring new images of self, new possibilities for one's work, and endless variations in the music of life" (193).

<sup>5</sup> Mary Warnock, *Imagination* (London: Faber & Faber, 1976), 10.

in all human activity, from the most mundane to the most creative, in both individual and social activities, in providing interpretation and in creating novelty.<sup>6</sup>

Because imagination is so tied to how we make sense of the world that we live in and to how we engage this world in creative and novel ways, imagination is central to how we understand ourselves as individuals. For educational theorist Maxine Greene, imagination enables us to construct for ourselves a meaningful world and to engage others with empathy. This “is because, of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities. It allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions.”<sup>7</sup> Imagination is what allows us to question our reality:

only when the given or the taken-for-granted is subject to questioning, only when we take various, sometimes unfamiliar perspectives on it, does it show itself as what it is – contingent on many interpretations, many vantage points, unified (if at all) by conformity or by unexamined common sense. Once we can see our givens as contingencies, then we may have an opportunity to posit alternative ways of living and valuing and to make choices.<sup>8</sup>

Imagination is the first step in believing that things can change.

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<sup>6</sup> For an account of how developmental psychologists have theorized about the development of imagination in children, see Marjorie Taylor, “Transcending Time, Place, and/or Circumstance: An Introduction,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Development of Imagination*, ed. Marjorie Taylor (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Jerome L. Singer and Dorothy G. Singer, “Historical Overview of Research on Imagination in Children,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Development of Imagination*, ed. Marjorie Taylor (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). Particularly interesting is the research of Michele M. Root-Bernstein on the relationship between the creation of imaginary worlds in childhood and adult creativity. See Michele M. Root-Bernstein, “The Creation of Imaginary Worlds,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Development of Imagination*, ed. Marjorie Taylor (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Maxine Greene, *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Greene, *Releasing the Imagination*, 23.

### 4.1.1 Religious Imagination

Imagination is the interpretive tool that allows us to make sense of our reality by bringing it into conversation with our past and to project a future that is different from the present. For theologian Kathleen Fischer, imagination opens us up to the experience of God because only the imagination is able to see and attempt to understand mystery.

It is on the level of the imagination that we first encounter the divine in this world, for revelation is always given through the material; it is always symbolic, pointing to the ultimate through the finite. It is also on the level of the imagination that we formulate our initial response to the encounter with the divine; faith finds expression first as myth and ritual, sacrament, symbol, image and story. Only later does it become dogma and institution.<sup>9</sup>

Because religious imagination is concerned with mystery and symbol, it is impoverished when we insist on finding rational or logical explanations for religious experiences.

When we reduce faith to assent to propositional statements, we separate those statements from the imaginative process that produced them and we make it more difficult for religious imaginations to engage in the process of creating new understandings of the faith and imagining the world as it could be. The imagination is what allows us to hear a word of hope and “the imagination then become the power which enables us to share in creating this promised future... It grasps the Mystery which, while remaining mystery, lures us beyond our present actualities into ever new horizons.”<sup>10</sup>

Religious imagination functions particularly in helping us to interpret the stories that shape our religious communities. These stories function as paradigmatic events that become revelatory – “an event that so captures a community’s imagination that it alters

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<sup>9</sup> Kathleen R. Fischer, *The Inner Rainbow: The Imagination in Christian Life* (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1983), 10.

<sup>10</sup> Fischer, *The Inner Rainbow*, 23.

that community's way of looking at all of experience."<sup>11</sup> Paradigmatic stories, such as the Exodus or Jesus' resurrection, work to illuminate other areas of religious experience, helping us to interpret religious experience. These stories function as symbols with evocative power, "demanding participation so that it can have its effect," and making it possible for these stories to drive our imaginations.

Religious imagination is also involved in our concerns for morality and justice. For Fischer, the imagination is "essential in developing our ability to be moved, amused, angered, persuaded, and elated."<sup>12</sup> In particular, imagination is what allows us to put ourselves in the place of another, to imagine their needs and to will the good for them. When we are able to enter into the lives of others and to imagine that the world can and should be better for them, we are engaging in the work of justice as called for by the biblical prophets and by Jesus. For example, Jesus offered the symbol of the Reign of God to engage the imaginations of those who followed him; this symbol invited his followers to envision a different future. This vision grounded a hope that such a future would come into being and spurred Jesus' followers to act in more just ways.<sup>13</sup>

Religious educator Maria Harris' account of religious imagination reminds us that imagination is an ambiguous idea and that this ambiguity is what makes it a useful notion for thinking about how religious experience works in the lives of believers. She argues that imagination involves the intellectual workings of our minds and the physical

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<sup>11</sup> Fischer, *The Inner Rainbow*, 32.

<sup>12</sup> Fischer, *The Inner Rainbow*, 147.

<sup>13</sup> Fischer, *The Inner Rainbow*, 134. Fischer offers the example of Jesus' parables. "These are stories of everyday life lived in the presence of God, not lists of dos and don'ts. They show us what that presence means across a wide spectrum of situations in which we live with others and interact with them. They allow us to ponder our motives and actions within a context where God's perspective is part of the texture of the story itself. It is this perspective which opens up new possibilities for our imagination, shapes our moral vision, and sustains our hope" (135).



knowing of our bodies.<sup>14</sup> Like Fischer, Harris believes that religious imagination involves “a religious language that draws on the symbols and images of religious traditions. The words have a resonance in flesh and psyche born from centuries of human attempt to speak the divine, to say the Unsayable, to name the Unnameable. Set in the midst of ordinary discourse, they are attempts to address the nonordinary.”<sup>15</sup> Harris suggests that the religious imagination is that which allows us to see others in their radical uniqueness, to distance ourselves from others so that we can analyze a situation, to discover new ways of approaching a situation or solving a problem or revealing a truth, and to see the universal significance in our reality.<sup>16</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Social Imagination

Philosopher Charles Taylor provides a perspective on imagination that is particularly useful for thinking about how imagination can be harnessed in the quest for social change. Taylor adopts the term “social imaginary” which he defines in this way:

By social imaginary, I mean something much broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode. I am thinking, rather, of the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Maria Harris, *Teaching and Religious Imagination* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 8-9. “Imagination characteristically looks at reality from the reversed, unnoticed side; as such, it is the mind’s glory, the ample fullness of intelligence, rather than the thinness of reason alone. At the same time, however, since imagination is always a human power, rooted in the body and biography, it continually spills over the boundaries of mind so as to be always more comprehensive and comprehending” (9).

<sup>15</sup> Harris, *Teaching and Religious Imagination*, 15-16.

<sup>16</sup> Harris, *Teaching and Religious Imagination*, 17-19. Harris is drawing from the analysis of Philip Wheelwright who names these four as the confrontative imagination, the distancing imagination, the compositive imagination, and the archetypal imagination. See Philip Wheelwright, *The Burning Fountain* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1982). Harris takes these up as the contemplative, ascetic, creative, and sacramental imaginations. See Harris, *Teaching and Religious Imagination*, 19-22.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 23. Sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann put it this way: “The man on the street does not ordinarily trouble himself about what is ‘real’ to him and about what he ‘knows’ unless he is stopped short

While a social imaginary might be grounded in or explained by a social theory, it points to the largely un-reflected-upon understanding that the people in a society have of the way things work.<sup>18</sup> Social imaginaries, then, are the ways that societies as a whole imagine their social existence; it “is that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy.”<sup>19</sup> Social imaginaries, because they ground the ways that societies and their people think about reality, underlie both the good and the bad of those realities.<sup>20</sup>

Social imaginaries have historically been grounded in the religious imagination of a society. Taylor describes a time, particularly from the Middle Ages until the advent of what he names as secularity, when Western society was embedded in a social imaginary that was largely shaped by a religious perspective. In this social imaginary, belief in God was assumed and participation in the religious rituals, teachings, and practices of the community was unquestioned.<sup>21</sup> In this enchanted world, where mystery was understood to permeate all of reality, society was embedded in an understanding of time and reality that nurtured a religious imagination. Taylor argues that, in our modern, secular age, reality is not seen with this kind of embedded and religious social imaginary;

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by some sort of problem. He takes his ‘reality’ and his ‘knowledge’ for granted” (Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), 2).

<sup>18</sup> Again, Berger and Luckmann are helpful: “Only a very limited group of people in any society engages in theorizing, in the business of ideas... But everyone in society participates in its ‘knowledge’ in one way or another. Put differently, only a few are concerned with the theoretical interpretation of the world, but everybody lives in a world of some sort” (Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 15).

<sup>19</sup> Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 23.

<sup>20</sup> For example, the belief that, in a democratic society, all people have the opportunity to participate in the common decision making can make it so that people expect all institutions (such as the Catholic Church) to function democratically; we see democratic participation to be such an obvious good that we do not understand why all institutions are not democratic. On the other hand, those in positions of privilege in a democratic society tend to assume that all people participate in that democracy and all people experience the same results; this ignores the impact of structural oppression and marginalization (such as racism and sexism) on the ability of some to participate in the democratic process.

<sup>21</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 25.

nevertheless, societies are still profoundly shaped by their social imaginaries. And even though these social imaginaries, at least in the West, are not always explicitly religious, social imaginaries still shape the ways that we understand our social existence and how we imagine how the world can be.<sup>22</sup>

## 4.2 PROPHETIC IMAGINATION

Because imagination, particularly religious imagination, is what makes it possible for us to understand and interpret reality in light of the past and to suggest that the world is not as it could be, there is an underlying prophetic function in imagination. “It is the imagination which opens up such possibilities for our personal and communal actions. Nothing is possible until we have first imagined it.”<sup>23</sup> The prophet draws on the rich heritage and profound paradigmatic symbols of the religious tradition to provoke the imaginations of the people. The prophet uses symbolic words and actions to awaken moral concern and to spur action.<sup>24</sup> In the hands of the prophet, the symbols and stories of the people are reworked so that they can provide fresh insights into the present reality;

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<sup>22</sup> Nancy Pineda-Madrid provides an example of this in her investigation of the femicide in Juarez, Mexico. See Nancy Pineda-Madrid, *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juarez* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011). Reading Taylor alongside philosopher Octavio Paz and womanist theologian Emilie Townes, Pineda-Madrid suggests that social imaginaries participate in evil and suffering. “The structures that give rise to evil and thus social suffering are, in part, the product of the stories we tell ourselves about who we are and how we came to be... A consideration of these cultural representations and their accompanying stories, in light of the femicide, calls our attention to the perniciousness and insidiousness of this evil. By examining cultural representations, their narratives, and the messages they are made to carry, we learn something of how evil is produced by the power of seductive images and narratives that point us toward how we ‘ought to’ think about human brutality” (46).

<sup>23</sup> Fischer, *The Inner Rainbow*, 131.

<sup>24</sup> Fischer, *The Inner Rainbow*, 133. “By such imaginative speech and action Israel’s prophets tie their ethical injunctions to concrete possibilities and provide alternative visions to shape the future. Contemporary prophets use symbolic actions too to awaken our moral sensitivities: pouring blood on draft files to dramatize opposition to war; wearing masks of death in marchers which protest American military involvement in third world nations; hammering on instruments of war to move us to disarm; establishing symbols of peace... as centers of non-violent resistance to nuclear buildup. In trying to bring moral change, these prophets appeal primarily to the imagination. Like Martin Luther King, they ‘have a dream’ of what the future could be” (133-134).

the prophet makes the tradition relevant to the people by relating it to their present and then presenting the tradition as a way to see the world in new ways.

The prophetic tradition found in the Old Testament tells the story of an ongoing process of mediation between the divine and the people. We have stories of seers, diviners, people who enter ecstatic trances, people who work in the temple complex, people who challenge the cultic prophets, people who challenge the monarchy. According to biblical scholar Joseph Blenkinsopp, “prophets... could play either a supportive or a destabilizing role, and they could operate either within recognized and approved institutions or outside of them.”<sup>25</sup> But the biblical prophets are particularly noteworthy for their role as critics of the status quo; they brought injustice to the attention of the people and called them to create a world where such injustices ceased to exist. Blenkinsopp provides a way of understanding how these prophets functioned in their historical and cultural context.

Perhaps the closest we can come, making all due allowance for the perils of importing modern categories into ancient contexts, is to describe them as dissident intellectuals. What this is meant to say is that they collaborated at some level of conscious intent in the emergence of a coherent vision of a moral universe over against current assumptions cherished and propagated by the contemporary state apparatus, including its priestly and prophetic representatives.<sup>26</sup>

The preaching of these dissident intellectuals was primarily focused on a denunciation of the ruling elite, but also included critiques of urban life, government bureaucracy, and organized religion.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 3.

<sup>26</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet: Religious and Intellectual Leadership in Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 144.

<sup>27</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet*, 154. The prophets’ denunciation of organized religion was not focused on the spirituality of the people or an assumed tendency to understand sacrifice as a way of magically controlling the deity. Rather, it was a critique of the state-sponsored cult as a part of the systematic apparatus of state control and of the priests and prophets of the cult as mouthpieces of the state.

#### 4.2.1 Walter Brueggemann and the Prophetic Imagination

Walter Brueggemann's articulation of the prophetic imagination is particularly useful for describing how an ancient vision – the critique of their social context offered by the biblical prophets – can become a call to a renewed social imaginary today. For Brueggemann, the study of the prophets of the Hebrew Bible must draw the reader from an analysis of the prophets' message to their world to a continual re-reading and re-appropriation of the biblical message for our world. "The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us."<sup>28</sup> This alternative consciousness is one that is both critical of the dominant culture and energizing of the community in creating a new way of doing things. If our social imaginary is the way that we have come to understand our reality, the way things are, then the prophetic imagination is one that calls this social imaginary into question and pushes the community to continually reshape this social imaginary so that it conforms ever more closely with the vision of God's reign that is articulated by the prophets.

Brueggemann describes the work of the prophets as making a break with oppressive structures, as critiquing the dominant order, and as energizing the people in the creation of a new way of being community. First, the prophet calls the community to break with the triumphalism of the status quo and the oppressive political and religious structures of an unjust society. The prophet explicitly points out "the connection between the religion of static triumphalism and the politics of oppression and exploitation."<sup>29</sup> In

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Blenkinsopp also remarks, "It is remarkable that no other ancient Near Eastern society that we know of developed a comparable tradition of dissident intellectualism and social criticism" (154).

<sup>28</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>29</sup> Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 7.

providing this call to break with oppressive structures, the prophet is opening up a space where a new way of being community can happen. For the prophets, this was the interjection of God's call for freedom and justice as "an assault on the consciousness of the empire, aimed at nothing less than the dismantling of the empire both in its social practices and in its mythic pretensions."<sup>30</sup>

Second, the prophet, from this position of an alternative consciousness, offers a sustained and substantial critique of the dominant order. And, for Brueggemann, this critique must be grounded in the grieving of the people. It is in grief that the people come to understand most clearly that their experience is that things are not right.

The grieving of Israel – perhaps self-pity and surely complaint but never resignation – is the beginning of criticism. It is made clear that things are not as they should be, not as they were promised, and not as they must be and will be. Bringing hurt to public expression is an important first step in the dismantling criticism that permits a new reality, theological and social, to emerge.<sup>31</sup>

The public expression of pain is the foundation for a critical call for justice and a cry for a new social imagination. Without a public expression of this grief, the communal nature of suffering cannot be recognized and the collective call for change cannot find voice.

Finally, for Brueggemann, the alternative consciousness proposed by the prophet provides an energizing hope for the community. The prophet "creates the sense of new realities that can be trusted and relied upon just when the old realities have left us hopeless... We are energized not by that which we already possess but by that which is

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<sup>30</sup> Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 9.

<sup>31</sup> Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 12; Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper Collins, 1962). Heschel describes this as the prophet conveying the divine pathos. The prophet stands between God and the people, representing God to the people – communicating God's rebuke, wrath, comfort, and challenge – and the people to God – pleading their case and lamenting the evil they are experiencing. As someone who stands before the people representing God, the prophet has to convey God's anger without being broken by it. For Heschel, this is key: "This is the greatness of the prophet: he is able to convert terror to a song" (364).

promised and about to be given.”<sup>32</sup> In taking the side of the marginalized and victimized in history, the prophet calls for a renewed vision for how things should be and instills the hope and confidence that this vision is coming to reality. The prophet and the prophetic community engage in the collective re-shaping of the social imaginary by envisioning a new reality.

While the biblical prophets provide us with the models for what the prophetic denunciation of the dominant consciousness and the proposal of a renewed and energizing consciousness looked like in the ancient world, Brueggemann suggests that this prophetic imagination is one that continues into the contemporary world. God continues to call on prophets to mediate the divine pathos in history and to call the community to renewal in faith and the practice of justice. The most obvious examples of modern-day prophets – Martin Luther King, Jr., Oscar Romero, Dorothy Day, Dietrich Bonhoeffer – stand very much in line with the biblical prophets. They are the men and women who capture the attention of the world and draw attention in very particular and spectacular ways to prophetic denunciation and annunciation.

But the prophetic imagination stretches beyond the individual prophets who may stand out in the ways that they denounce the oppressive and unjust realities of the dominant consciousness and announce the need for a new consciousness that is oriented towards communities of care and justice. The prophetic imagination does not need to reside solely in the individual prophet; it can also become the social imaginary of the community. Brueggemann suggests that “prophetic imagination begins in the ancient covenant but it is carried, in concrete articulation, to current issue of the day, so that daily

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<sup>32</sup> Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 14.

transactions are delineated as instances of old covenantal commitments.<sup>33</sup> As a community allows itself to be shaped by the ancient witness to God's *hesed* and humanity's call to justice, the imagination of the community – its social imaginary – can become prophetic. Brueggemann reminds us that, as with the ancient prophets, this is a difficult task:

The prophetic act, now as always, is decidedly upstream and against the grain. Its work is to take deeply rooted memories (to which we still tip our hats in vague acknowledgement) and show how these memories continue to inform and shape and compel even now. It is an act that requires rereading contemporary context in the presence of YHWH, who is the subject of all our imaginings.<sup>34</sup>

Called to communities that practice God's *hesed* and justice, prophetic communities are those that continually seek to be shaped by the divine pathos and to bring that passion into the life of the community so that it shapes the imaginations of all those who belong to the community.

A community shaped by a prophetic imagination finds its primary inspiration in the biblical witness to God's love for humanity and desire for humanity to be transformed into communities that practice care and resistance to injustice. However, the prophetic imagination is also grounded in additional resources available to the Church. The Catholic social justice tradition, for example, provides a vision for what a transformed and renewed consciousness could look like. "Anchoring its social vision in the inviolable respect for human dignity and a moral sense of deep human solidarity beyond national borders, Catholic Social Teaching [seeks] higher visions of the common good and world

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<sup>33</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipating Word* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 31.

<sup>34</sup> Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination*, 40.



order and justice.”<sup>35</sup> According to Thomas Massaro, the Church’s social justice tradition offers a yardstick by which a society’s treatment of the poor and marginalized can be assessed.<sup>36</sup> Massaro points in particular to the example offered by Pope Francis and his predecessors who have engaged in a pointed and sustained critique of contemporary economic systems and their effects on the most vulnerable. This pattern of critique and engagement mirrors the work of the biblical prophets.<sup>37</sup>

Even more, however, the contemporary prophetic imagination is shaped by what Edward Schillebeeckx identifies as the negative contrast experience. This is the “vivid sense of what can no longer be allowed to go on, that to which I must cry a strong no as a violation of the image of God.”<sup>38</sup> It is the realization in the community of when the ways of the dominant cultural consciousness are not of God and cannot be allowed to continue. Schillebeeckx connects this negative contrast experience with the central symbol of the *imago Dei*:

If the fundamental symbol of God is the living human being – the image of God – then the place where human beings are humiliated, tortured, and forgotten, as individuals or as a community, by persons or violent structures, is at the same time, the privileged place where religious experience... becomes possible... Only then do we come home to the liberating communion of our creator and thus the depths of ourselves.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> John Coleman, “Catholic Wellsprings for the Prophetic Imagination,” in *The Future of Prophetic Christianity: Essays in Honor of Robert McAfee Brown*, ed. Denise Lardner Carmody and John Tully Carmody (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 68.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Massaro, *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 131.

<sup>37</sup> Massaro, *Living Justice*, 145-146.

<sup>38</sup> Coleman, “Catholic Wellsprings,” 70. See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Seabury, 1980), 817-819.

<sup>39</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, “The Other Face of the Church,” in *For the Sake of the Gospel*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 164. See also Mary Catherine Hilker, “*Imago Dei*: Does the Symbol Have a Future,” *The Santa Clara Lectures*, 8, no. 3 (April 14, 2002), 12.

The experience of this contrast between what is and what could be shapes the prophetic imagination of the community; even when it is not explicitly named by the prophet, it forms the imaginations of the people.

#### 4.2.2 The Feminist Prophetic Imagination

The feminist prophetic imagination is one that examines the ways that the dominant consciousness is functioning in the world – critiquing it as a patriarchal social imaginary that allows for the marginalization of women and girls, subjecting them to the cross-pressures of unrealizable societal expectations, and making it nearly impossible for them to protest this cultural milieu.<sup>40</sup> A feminist prophetic imagination names these situations of injustice, but places them within the divine pathos – God’s anger at the oppression of any of God’s people and God’s abiding *hesed*. This naming provides the foundation for the annunciation of the way the world ought to be, drawing on the paradigmatic symbols – such as the *imago Dei* symbol – of the biblical tradition in order to provide a renewed vision of justice. In Brueggemann’s terms, we see this as the critique of the dominant consciousness and the energizing of the prophetic consciousness – as deconstruction and reconstruction.

The [prophetic] consciousness to be nurtured, on the one hand, serves to *criticize* in dismantling the dominant consciousness. To that extent, it attempts to do what the liberal tendency has done: engage in a rejection and delegitimizing of the present ordering of things. On the other hand, that [prophetic] consciousness to

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<sup>40</sup> This is the cultural milieu that Stephen Hinshaw is describing as the triple bind. He suggests that this patriarchal social imaginary is one that is frustrating and confusing for girls and women and, at the same time, demands so much from them that they do not even have time to analyze their situation. “When teenage girls speak for themselves, one can sense vividly their utter frustration at not being able to name or fully describe their pervasive sense that they cannot hope to meet the contradictory, impossible challenges of acting simultaneously as nurturers and as competitors in an oversexualized, consumerist environment that offers few genuine alternatives. For unprecedented numbers of our daughters, the extraordinary opportunities of the current era have come to seem... like so many games of bait and switch, promising self-expression but delivering self-erasure” (Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, 26).

be nurtured serves to energize persons and communities by its promise of another time and situation toward which the community of faith may move. To that extent, it attempts to do what the conservative tendency has done, to live in fervent anticipation of the newness that God has promised and will surely give.<sup>41</sup>

This dynamic of deconstruction and reconstruction is also a fundamental task taken up by feminist theologians. Anne Carr, in her classic work *Transforming Grace*, notes that the earliest work of feminist theologians was to denounce the patriarchy of the Church, analyzing the ways that Christian symbols, stories, and practices have functioned to harm women. But following immediately on this critique is the constructive task – one that calls for a reconstructed theology that provides for a transformed way of living the Christian life.<sup>42</sup>

In this process of denunciation and annunciation, a feminist prophetic imagination provides the interpretive lens for understanding the negative contrast experiences of women and adolescent girls. By naming what cannot be, women and girls name the influence of the dominant consciousness in their lives and they call the community to resist this dominant consciousness and established a new way of living to counter it. Mary Catherine Hilbert puts it this way: “The absence of ‘what ought to be’ leads to dissatisfaction and action for change which leads in turn to a deeper awareness of what was only intuitively grasped in the initial ethical response: an awareness that human beings are indeed ‘created in the image of God’ and of inestimable value.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 3.

<sup>42</sup> Anne E. Carr, *Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women’s Experience* (New York: Continuum, 1988), 98-99. Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza puts it this way: “An intersectional kyriarchal analytic compels feminist the\*logy and studies in religion to articulate not only an analytic of domination but also alternative religious visions for bringing about the wellbeing of all the inhabitants of the earth and for inspiring planetary justice” (Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision: Explorations in Feminist The\*logy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 15).

<sup>43</sup> Hilbert, “*Imago Dei*: Does the Symbol Have a Future,” 11.

Thus, the negative contrast experience can be that which opens the eyes of a community and of its individual women and girls to the influences of a patriarchal social imaginary. It is this social imaginary that institutionalizes the second-class status of women and girls. More than simply the perpetuation of a “benign” patriarchy – one where men tend to view women and girls as in need of care and protection, the patriarchal social imaginary can and does silence women and normalizes violence against them. As womanist theologian Emilie Townes argues, it is an imaginary that is engaged in “the cultural production of evil.”<sup>44</sup> In a patriarchal social imaginary – or, as Townes names it, the fantastic hegemonic imagination – the imaginations of the community are structured so that oppression and suffering are “maintained by more heuristic forces that emerge from the imagination as emotion, intuition, and yearning” as well as by attempts at rational explanation.<sup>45</sup> The feminist critique of the patriarchal social imaginary, then, becomes an exercise of a feminist prophetic imagination. It is the denunciation of the dominant consciousness with the particular recognition of the ways that dominant consciousness impacts the lives of women and girls; it is also what recognizes and names the foreshadowings of the way things should be. In the community of the Church, we experience glimpses of what God is calling the community to be. Thus, Hilbert suggests that “without positive glimpses of what constitutes human dignity, happiness and fulfillment, the negativity of evil and suffering would lead to the conclusion that life is absurd and unjust and that there is no inherent dignity in human persons.”<sup>46</sup> These glimpses of hope provide the foundation for building a call to a renewed social imaginary

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<sup>44</sup> Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 12.

<sup>45</sup> Townes, *Womanist Ethics*, 18. For an analysis of Townes’ approach and how this fantastic hegemonic imagination plays out, see Pineda-Madrid, *Suffering and Salvation*, 45-46.

<sup>46</sup> Hilbert, “*Imago Dei: Does the Symbol Have a Future*,” 12.

based in the kinds of covenantal communities that the prophets preached – communities based in God’s *hesed* and justice.

### **4.3 PROPHETIC IMAGINATION AS *IMAGO DEI***

The claim of theological anthropology that humans are created in the image of God is the foundation, as explored in chapter three, of profound claims about what it means to be human. Following in the footsteps of feminist theologians who reclaimed embodiment and relationality as constitutive of what it means to be made in the image of God, chapter three suggested that the formation of communities of God’s *hesed* and of resistance to injustice is a necessary corollary of the *imago Dei*. Because the *imago Dei* symbol also describes a corporate identity, an identity that describes the attributes of the whole of humanity and not only of particular individuals, it challenges humanity to create communities that image God.

Simply naming humanity as called to living as the image of God in communities of *hesed* and resistance to injustice does not, in and of itself, result in the formation of these kinds of communities. However, the work of the biblical prophets was to argue in favor of creating these kinds of communities. They preached against a dominant consciousness that silenced and marginalized the most vulnerable members of society and they presented an alternative consciousness – a proposal that God’s desire was for people who resisted the injustice of the dominant consciousness and lived in communities of *hesed*. As Brueggemann persuasively suggests, the prophets presented the people with both critique – naming what is to be resisted – and hope – holding out a vision for renewed communities of care. The prophet is tasked with reminding the people of God’s

steadfast love, God's *hesed*; through the critique of injustice and the offer of hope, the prophet "returns the community to its single referent, the sovereign faithfulness of God."<sup>47</sup>

For Brueggemann, one of the key ways that prophets engage the imaginations of those to whom they preach is through the use of symbols. Symbols provoke our imaginations by helping us make sense of the past and to dream a better future. In the work of the prophets, symbols function to contradict the dominant consciousness and to energize the community.

In offering symbols the prophet has two tasks. One is to mine the memory of this people and educate them to use the tools of hope. The other is to recognize how singularly words, speech, language, and phrase shape consciousness and define reality... And so the offering of symbols is a job not for a timid clerk who simply shares the inventory but for people who know something different and are prepared, out of their own anguish and amazement, to know that the closed world of managed reality is false. The prophetic imagination knows that the real world is the one that has its beginning and dynamic in the promising speech of God and that this is true even in a world where kings have tried to banish all speech but their own.<sup>48</sup>

The prophet, then, is the one with the imagination to deploy the right symbols at the right time to challenge the dominant consciousness and to cultivate an imagination in the people that can envision resistance and *hesed*.

The *imago Dei* symbol has the potential to function in this way. First, it is a symbol that can provide a foundation for the prophetic imagination. As an ancient symbol that is foundational for the community, the *imago Dei* symbol is tied to a rich heritage that has the potential to speak with energizing hope to the present conditions. The history of the symbol in the theological tradition speaks to the ways that this symbol has been taken up by successive generations of theologians to try to understand the ways

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<sup>47</sup> Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 66.

<sup>48</sup> Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 64-65.

that humanity and God are related to each other. Because the *imago Dei* is an identity that belongs to the whole community, there is a need in the community for those who have a prophetic imagination and a prophetic voice. Being created in the image of God involves answering God's call for justice and care. The Biblical prophets answered this call by preaching a message of resistance to injustice and hope for communities of *hesed*. The prophetic imagination, as it is witnessed to by the biblical prophets, is one way to answer the call to image God.

Second, by naming humanity as created in the image of God, we are invoking a symbol that stirs our imaginations. The *imago Dei* symbol provokes passion and this passion reflects the divine passion that the prophets preached. The divine passion is rooted in God who

is a God with a name of his own, which cannot be uttered by anyone but him. He is not the reflection of any, for he has his own person and retains that all to himself. He is a God uncredentialed in the empire, unknown in the courts, unwelcome in the temple. And his history begins in his attentiveness to the cries to the marginal ones. He, unlike his royal regents, is one whose person is presented as passion and pathos, the power to care, the capacity to weep, the energy to grieve and then to rejoice.<sup>49</sup>

Since God is known by the depth of God's passion, engaging in God's passion is participation in the image of God. To do this requires the imaginative perspective of the prophets and the ability to name the ways that the world is shaped by the dominant consciousness and to call the community to a new consciousness shaped by resistance and *hesed*.

Third, the *imago Dei* symbol calls for the creation of communities of resistance to injustice and of God's *hesed*. God's own commitment to justice and God's witness to steadfast loving-kindness means that people who are created in the image of God are

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<sup>49</sup> Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 36-37.

called not only to imagine the ways that these divine qualities are cultivated in the community, but also to engage in the struggle to inaugurate such communities. For Brueggemann, the prophetic community connects to a rich tradition, which understands the present experience of pain, names the presence of hope, and has the language to cultivate that hope within the whole community.<sup>50</sup> The *imago Dei* symbol provides the imaginative link between the theological heritage of the community, the concrete situations of injustice in the lived experience of the community, and the hope for a better future that will come about because the community is organized around resistance to injustice and creating a community of *hesed*.

#### **4.4 ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND THE FEMINIST PROPHETIC IMAGINATION**

Because the claim that humanity is created in the image of God demands the development, within communities, of a prophetic imagination, this section explores the possibilities of claiming a prophetic imagination for adolescent girls. In order to do this, we return to the three criteria presented in chapter three: a concern for the thriving of girls, attention to their multi-storied identity, and an understanding of the corporate imaging of God. Here the goal is to explore whether a prophetic imagination, as a part of living out the *imago Dei*, can provide new insight into what it means to be an adolescent girl created in the image of God. Following this exploration, this section turns to the ways in which the feminist prophetic imagination in particular has meaning for adolescent girls and is appropriate for countering the patriarchal social imaginary that shapes the milieu of contemporary adolescent girls. Finally, this section suggests that a feminist prophetic imagination can help communities that include adolescent girls to

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<sup>50</sup> Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, xvi.



become communities reflective of God's *hesed* and responsive to God's call to resist injustice.

#### **4.4.1 Prophetic Imagination: Thriving, Multi-storied, Corporate Identity**

In order to understand how a feminist prophetic imagination in adolescent girls is an expression of the living out of the *imago Dei*, it is useful to return to the three criteria outlined in chapter three: that any understanding of adolescent girls, created in the image of God and participating in the prophetic imagination, must insure the full flourishing and thriving of girls, must allow for the multi-storied identities of girls, and must affirm the *imago Dei* symbol as a corporate symbol of who God is. The three criteria can also point us to how the prophetic imagination can be understood as a part of the larger *imago Dei* symbol when we consider adolescent girls.

First, a prophetic imagination is one that affirms the thriving and flourishing of all people and especially of adolescent girls. Feminist theologians remind us that the flourishing and liberation of women and all those who are oppressed is the criteria by which a custom or practice must be judged.<sup>51</sup> Thus, a prophetic imagination must also meet this goal of working towards the flourishing and liberation of women. The biblical prophets were concerned with both critiquing the dominant consciousness that actively thwarts the flourishing of people and proposing a new vision for the way the world could be. In doing this they were particularly concerned for the ways that the powers of the dominant consciousness oppressed and marginalized others in the quest for maintenance of the status quo. By naming the real situations of injustice and marginalization of those

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<sup>51</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, 10<sup>th</sup> anniv. ed. (New York: Herder and Herder, 2002), 30-31.

who are not a part of the dominant power structures, the prophets “bring to public expression those very fears and terrors that have been denied so long and suppressed so deeply that we do not know they are there.”<sup>52</sup>

Prophets, both ancient and modern, draw attention to the situations of real suffering and injustice in the lives of real people. This naming of the realities of an unjust situation is the first step in bringing about change. By offering symbols of hope, such as the *imago Dei* symbol, prophets engage the imaginations of those who are marginalized, reminding them of God’s enduring promises to the people. Those who employ a prophetic imagination to criticize the status quo are laying the foundation for the renewed imaginative task of creating a world where thriving and flourishing are possible.

Psychologists like Richard Lerner remind us that thinking about adolescent girls from a deficit model – one that seeks only to fix the problematic behaviors of adolescent girls – is insufficient for working towards their thriving.<sup>53</sup> Rather, when the thriving and flourishing of adolescent girls is put in the foreground, the concern becomes finding ways to help girls become resources in their communities rather than problems to be fixed.<sup>54</sup> In this context, the task of the prophet becomes not only to name the situations that deny adolescent girls the opportunity for flourishing, but to also to cultivate in adolescent girls the prophetic imagination to name for themselves that which both enhances and detracts from their full flourishing. In other words, under the influence of a prophetic

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<sup>52</sup> Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 45.

<sup>53</sup> Richard M. Lerner, *The Good Teen: Rescuing Adolescence from the Myths of the Storm and Stress Years* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007), 6.

<sup>54</sup> Recall Lerner’s definition of a thriving adolescent: “a *thriving* young person [is] an individual who – within the context of his or her physical and psychological characteristics and abilities – takes actions that serve his or her own well-being and, at the same time, the well-being of parents, peers, community, and society” (Richard M. Lerner, *Liberty: Thriving and Civic Engagement Among America’s Youth* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004), 4).

imagination, communities that are concerned for the flourishing and thriving of adolescent girls can name the situations where that thriving is being thwarted and invite the girls themselves to participate in the creation of a community that does support their flourishing.

Second, the prophetic imagination must be one that allows for the multi-storied identity of adolescent girls. As articulated by Michele Saracino, individuals have hybrid identities that embrace “various social locations or stories simultaneously.”<sup>55</sup> This not only allows us to understand people’s identities as multifaceted, but it allows us to reject the notion that there is only one correct way to be human.<sup>56</sup> An understanding of the prophetic imagination must also recognize both the multifaceted nature of identity and the multiplicity of identities that are found in any particular community. The biblical prophets, as those who spoke on behalf of the marginalized, were engaged in this process of recognizing the multiple stories that make up the communities of which they were a part. Part of challenging the dominant consciousness of the ruling elite was drawing attention to the fact that the stories of those in power were not the stories of those on the underside of society. They made clear that the narrative of those in power was not the whole story of God’s people and that the stories of the marginalized had to be attended to and recognized as valid. Further, in both critiquing the dominant consciousness and providing a voice of hope for a better future, the prophets suggested that, as each individual came to respond to God’s call for a renewed consciousness, it was possible to incorporate new stories and identities into one’s identity. Without anachronistically imposing modern understandings of individual identity on the ancient prophets, it seems

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<sup>55</sup> Michele Saracino, “Moving Beyond the ‘One True Story,’” in *Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology*, ed. Susan Abraham and Elena Procaro-Foley (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 11.

<sup>56</sup> Saracino, “Moving Beyond the ‘One True Story,’” 16-17.

that their approach allows for the possibility that individuals could change and incorporate new patterns of belief and behavior into their lives.

Saracino reminds us that individuals are made up, not of “one true story,” but of multiple stories and identities that weave together as each person works to establish their own identity. The task of the prophet then is to announce to the community that the many stories and identities that make up the community are all a part of the vision of God. The diversity of experiences in a community is, in the work of the prophet, brought into conversation with the theological tradition that announces that all are made in the image of God. This rich heritage and the present experience of multiple and hybrid identities then becomes the foundation for envisioning a future where God’s justice and *hesed* are the basis of the life of the community.

Adolescent girls, then, remind us not only that the community is made up of those with a wide variety of experiences, but they also reinforce the conviction that each person has stories or aspects that might determine their particular identity and role in the community. A prophetic imagination that honors the hybridity of adolescent girls must take seriously the claim that there is no “one true story” for adolescent girls, that there are many ways of living into the *imago Dei* as an adolescent girl. Furthermore, a community formed to nurture the thriving and flourishing of girls is one that prophetically imagines the possibilities for each girl’s unique story to form part of the whole community’s story as it dreams of how the world – a world that welcomes girls and all those who are marginalized – ought to be.

Third, the prophetic imagination is a quality or activity engaging the entire community. While individual prophets are called by God to preach a particular message,

the entire community is called to participate in the prophetic imagination. John Kilner reminds us that the *imago Dei* symbol describes an identity that belongs both to each individual person and to the community as a whole.<sup>57</sup> Just as the *imago Dei* symbol comes best into view when we consider not only individual human beings but also the whole of humanity, so too with the prophetic imagination. It best comes into view when we consider both the individual prophetic voice and the community whose imagination is being shaped by that prophetic voice. If the prophetic imagination is an identity that flows from our status as created in the image of God, then it makes sense that the prophetic imagination is something that can be attributed to the whole community.

The biblical prophets, as well as modern prophets who critique injustice and energize hope in our contemporary historical context, have to be seen in this larger context of the community within which they are preaching. The biblical prophets, even when they were independent of the cultic or monarchal system, needed the support of a particular, usually marginalized or peripheral, community.<sup>58</sup> Their words of critique and hope were spoken to and with a community that was prepared to participate in the prophetic imagination that gave rise to the prophet's voice. Similarly, the visions for a new and better future offered by modern-day prophets like Martin Luther King, Jr. become effective only because they were able to provoke the prophetic in the imaginations of their communities.

Kilner also reminds us that the *imago Dei* tells us more about God and God's actions than it tells us about the qualities that make humans "like God" and "unlike

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<sup>57</sup> John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), 95.

<sup>58</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet*, 142-143; Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 303-304.

animals.”<sup>59</sup> Thus, qualities of God, such as God’s justice and *hesed*, drive our thinking about what it means to image God. The imaginations of the prophets are similarly rooted in God, God’s actions, and God’s message to the people. The biblical prophets preached the words that came to them from God and, while these messages were expressed in the concrete historical contexts in which the prophets and their communities were situated, their messages about God were firmly rooted in who God is and what God does. The prophetic imagination thus is something that is founded on God and not on the imaginative capabilities (or lack thereof) of the prophetic community. The prophetic imagination calls on individuals and on communities to participate in God’s critique of the present order and God’s vision for the future.

Therefore, as we consider adolescent girls, it is important that the prophetic imagination becomes something that belongs to the whole community, is employed on behalf of girls, and is nurtured in individual adolescent girls. The imagination of a prophetic community that is committed to the flourishing of its adolescent girls is one that identifies the ways in which the dominant consciousness of a patriarchal social imaginary has been constructed to silence and marginalize girls; it is also one that announces that this social imaginary is contrary to God’s vision and that the world must be different for our girls. This is an imagination where resistance to injustice is cultivated and where communities of God’s *hesed* are created. Furthermore, as a way of imaging God, a feminist prophetic imagination is nurtured in adolescent girls, empowering them to name for themselves the situations of injustice, to denounce the patriarchal social imaginary, and to proclaim for themselves the ways that they can participate in building a better community of God’s *hesed*.

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<sup>59</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 3.

#### **4.4.2 The Task Ahead: What a Feminist Prophetic Imagination Means for Girls**

The feminist prophetic imagination is one that engages in the prophetic task of denunciation and annunciation – naming, critiquing, and resisting the patriarchal social imaginary and proposing a new and more just way of being in the world. Taking the lives of adolescent girls seriously, the feminist prophetic imagination is both employed on behalf of the girls in our communities and can become a characteristic of the community to which girls belong, forming them as participants in a feminist prophetic imagination. In other words, communities that are living out this prophetic imagination in relation to adolescent girls seek to imagine a better future for their girls and to help girls imagine their own futures. In this section, this dynamic of the feminist prophetic imagination is explored in relation to how it undergirds a critique of patriarchal social imaginary as it is experienced by girls in the triple bind, how it provides a foundation for practices of resistance, and how it encourages the formation of communities of *hesed*.

First, the feminist prophetic imagination provides the tools for confronting the aspect of the social imaginary identified as the triple bind. As was explored in chapter two, Stephen Hinshaw's concept of the triple bind is a useful way of understanding the pernicious and harmful ways in which the modern social imaginary is impacting girls and women in the contemporary United States. This aspect of the social imaginary insists that girls must conform (1) to the expectations of behavior and character traditionally put on girls (being nice, good at relationships, nurturing, and accommodating) as well as (2) to the expectations traditionally associated with boys (being assertive, successful, and driven). And they are expected to perfectly accomplish both of these while conforming (3) to a narrow definition of feminine beauty. The three aspects of the triple bind put

many adolescent girls in a position of near-constant anxiety as they struggle to meet these contradictory demands. And, because perfection is expected in all three areas, even girls who are largely successful feel like they are failures or letting someone down if they are not absolutely accomplished in all three aspects.<sup>60</sup>

One of the reasons that the triple bind is such a danger to adolescent girls is that it has become embedded in the social imaginary of contemporary Western culture. It is largely un-reflected-upon, but it shapes the way that girls and women understand themselves and their relationships with others. Most girls do not realize why they feel exhausted, conflicted, imperfect, and unlovable<sup>61</sup> because they do not realize the ways that their experience of the world is being shaped by these unspoken expectations. And, because the triple bind has become such a ubiquitous part of how people, including girls and women, expect the world to be, it becomes that much more difficult to dislodge. In fact, despite the best efforts of scholars, teachers, and activists to denounce it, the triple bind has proved remarkably resistant to denunciation and re-imagination. Resisting the triple bind, therefore, is not simply about recognizing it and telling girls to ignore it; rather it means fighting one of the underlying assumptions of our culture – the assumption that governs the ways that girls and women are to be in the world.

In response to the triple bind and the contradictory expectations it places on adolescent girls, a community that is shaped by a feminist prophetic imagination has the tools to identify and critique this aspect of the social imaginary. The feminist prophetic imagination, as a part of the prophetic task of denouncing the injustices of the dominant consciousness, can name the triple bind for the community and for the adolescent girls

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<sup>60</sup> Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, 64-67.

<sup>61</sup> Martha B. Straus, *Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Intervention and Hope* (New York: Norton and Company, 2007), 23-24.



who are a part of that community. Because the triple bind has become embedded in our social imaginary, its un-reflected-upon character must be challenged; and the first step in encouraging reflection is the naming of its existence. A feminist prophetic imagination, as a characteristic of a community, calls that community to name the ways in which any member of that community is being marginalized or oppressed. As members of a community characterized by a feminist prophetic imagination, this means that the community has the opportunity to educate itself about the dangers of aspects of the social imaginary, like the triple bind, that have a harmful effect on its adolescent girls. When the community engages in this kind of educational effort – recognizing and reflecting upon what had, until then, been un-reflected-upon, it is also forming its adolescent girls in the practices of seeing and critiquing the social imaginary. Girls, like most people, are not going to be able to see the ways that they are being influenced or shaped by the triple bind or any other aspect of the social imaginary until they are helped to see it. So, the act of naming the triple bind and its pernicious effects on adolescent girls helps to form them in practices of critical reflection on their own lives. This can happen in a variety of ways, including direct instruction; but the sharing of narratives among adult and adolescent members of the community is most effective. In the sharing of stories of how women and girls are impacted by the triple bind, adolescent girls can see that they are not alone in their experiences of being held to impossible to meet expectations.<sup>62</sup>

Second, the feminist prophetic imagination provides the foundation for the second part of the prophetic task of denunciation – the impetus to resist injustice. The call to

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<sup>62</sup> HaeRan Kim-Cragg, “A Theology of Resistance in Conversation with Religious Education in the Unmaking of Violence,” *Religious Education* 110, no.4 (July-September 2015): 423-425. Kim-Cragg names this as the practice of remembrance, which lays the groundwork for practices of resistance. “Remembrance is, thus, not simply a commemorative act that marks the past but also a transgressive and transformative act that corrects the past to shape the present and the future” (424).

resist injustice is an act of the prophetic imagination; the biblical prophets persistently called the people of Israel to live out God's justice in their lives and communities. For prophets like Micah, the call to justice is clear: "[God] has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). Modern-day prophets continue to call communities to live more fully the kind of justice that is identified with God's actions in history. As dissident intellectuals, the prophets and their prophetic communities, shaped by this prophetic imagination, have become awakened to the presence of injustices in the community and they cannot continue to act in support of a dominant consciousness that is oppressing people.

As suggested in chapter three, practices of resistance to injustice are built on remembrance and relationship-building in communities that stand in solidarity with those who are marginalized and oppressed.<sup>63</sup> These practices bring adolescent girls and the adults who care about them together to discuss the ways that women and girls are marginalized by the expectations of the patriarchal social imaginary and the actions that women engage in – such as protesting advertising that objectifies women or teaching about women role models – to counteract these contradictory expectations. These practices, which build on skills that have traditionally been associated with girls and women and which form a part of the triple bind's expectations of girls and women, then can become the tools for denouncing and dismantling the patriarchal social imaginary. As communities formed in a feminist prophetic imagination become more and more aware of the ways that the social imaginary is shaping how they experience reality, they become more aware of the need for remembrance and relationship-building as practices

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<sup>63</sup> HaeRan Kim-Cragg, "A Theology of Resistance," 422.

of resistance. Remembering the paradigmatic stories of the theological tradition – stories like the creation of humanity in the image of God – as well as the stories of past resistance to injustice – such as the civil rights movement or the women’s movement – can shape the imaginations of the community, enabling them to imagine a better world and a path for getting to that more just place. Relationship-building also becomes an act of solidarity as a community shaped by a feminist prophetic imagination seeks to resist injustices. No longer is the individual adolescent girl, for example, abandoned to manage the contradictory expectations and relentless pressures of the triple bind; rather, she is held in a multi-generational community where relationships of care and trust mean that she is taught to resist injustice. This means not only teaching adolescent girls about the injustices they may face – including those related to the expectations of the triple bind as well as the effects of sexism, racism, and ageism. It involves showing them that resistance to those injustices is allowed, expected, and supported by the community. It also means teaching adolescent girls about the particular practices of resistance that have been used by people of faith in the past and that can be useful in confronting and resisting the pressures of the contemporary patriarchal social imaginary. For example, the stories of women from the suffragette movement and the civil rights movement, as well as stories of women who are fighting for legislation to ensure equal treatment in the workplace, can be told alongside the biblical narratives of God’s call for justice.

Finally, the community shaped by a feminist prophetic imagination is not satisfied with merely identifying and denouncing the patriarchal social imaginary or with resisting the effects of its injustices. The prophetic community is one that proposes a new way of being in the world – a way that is shaped by God’s *hesed*. As it is described in the

biblical narrative, God acts towards God's people with *hesed* – loving-kindness, mercy, and forgiveness – and God's people are called to act with *hesed* towards each other.

Katherine Sakenfeld reminds us that *hesed* “involves active concern for the well-being of all the people of God, but particularly for the weak and underprivileged among them – the poor or any whose status offers no ready advocate in the society.”<sup>64</sup> The practice of *hesed* was a concern of the biblical prophets; again, the words of the prophet Micah make this clear: “[God] has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). Communities shaped by God's *hesed* are communities that are shaped by the values of care, kindness, generosity, hospitality, forgiveness, and mercy that are extended not only to those with whom there is a prior relationship, but also to all those with whom that relationship is more tenuous or does not yet exist.

As with practices of resistance, like remembrance and relationship-building, the formation of communities of *hesed* draw on characteristics that have traditionally been considered the domain of women and girls – the forming and nurturing of relationships among people. Under the influence of the feminist prophetic imagination, the formation of communities of *hesed* becomes an act of hope for newness.<sup>65</sup> Under the influence of a feminist prophetic imagination, day-to-day tasks like mentoring, advising, and learning all become opportunities for the giving and receiving of care, mercy, forgiveness, and loving-kindness. The task of the prophetic community is to exercise an imagination that cuts through the numbness and self-absorption that characterizes the dominant consciousness of the patriarchal social imaginary, providing both the language of lament

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<sup>64</sup> Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *Faithfulness in Action: Loyalty in Biblical Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 102.

<sup>65</sup> Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 40.

and of new hope.<sup>66</sup> For the community shaped by the feminist prophetic imagination, the creation of communities of *hesed* is the practice of announcing to the community itself and to the world the way that things ought to be, the way that God is calling the community to be.

This practice of the feminist prophetic imagination on behalf of a community's adolescent girls not only provides them with a community that is explicitly focused on the flourishing and thriving of girls (and all members of the community); it also works to educate adolescent girls in the practices of God's *hesed* and the formation of communities that practice *hesed*. As a practice of the community itself, creating communities of *hesed* is the creation of communities of care where each individual adolescent girl can be nurtured and cared for as she grows to adulthood in a wider social milieu that is often toxic for her. In addition, in the context of a community that practices God's *hesed*, adolescent girls can be informed about and guided in a critique of the aspects of the social imaginary that are harmful, aspects such as the triple bind. The practice of God's *hesed* in communities of care, through even the day-to-day activities of learning, mentoring, advising, and praying together, also serves to initiate adolescent girls into the community that is committed to imagining a new and more just world; this initiation provides them with the tools to exercise the feminist prophetic imagination as they form other communities of care throughout their lives. Forming communities of *hesed* creates space – both physical space and emotional space – where girls can explore their experiences of the world and work, in solidarity with others, for a more just world. This can happen in classrooms, in extra-curricular activities, and on sports teams – in, for example, the context of a Amnesty International letter writing campaign or the research

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<sup>66</sup> Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 45-46.

for a staging of a dramatic production or a conversation about the unequal treatment of female professional athletes.

#### **4.4.3 Conclusions: Naming the Feminist Prophetic Imagination in Girls**

Walter Brueggemann's insightful description of the prophetic imagination provides theologians with a way of describing not only the activities of the biblical prophets, but also a way to identify the work of contemporary prophetic figures. In the dynamic of prophetic denunciation and annunciation, Brueggemann holds together the deconstructive and constructive tasks of prophets, ministers, and theologians; the biblical prophets, in denouncing the dominant consciousness of their time and announcing a new prophetic consciousness, model the need for continuing to pair critique and proposal. Taking up the prophetic imagination through a feminist lens continues this insistence on pairing denunciation and annunciation; this has been the pattern followed by feminist theologians as well as by other liberation theologians.

This pattern also fits with the proposal, from chapter three, that resistance to injustice and formation of communities grounded in God's *hesed* are constitutive of the *imago Dei* for adolescent girls. Learning to identify and resist injustices, particularly the injustices of the triple bind, gives girls the tools they need to engage in the practice of prophetic denunciation; forming and being a part of communities of God's *hesed* is a prophetic annunciation of the way that communities can and should be. And, because this dynamic of denunciation and annunciation is learned and takes place in the communities that provide meaning and support for girls, they are able to learn how to

exercise their prophetic imaginations alongside adults who are modeling these skills and guiding them.

Participating in the prophetic task of denouncing injustice and announcing God's *hesed* might seem beyond the capabilities of an adolescent girl like Katie. Her daily schedule is already very busy and asking her to engage in a feminist prophetic imagination might seem like it is asking too much. However, when seen as a way of exercising her status as a person created in the image of God, the feminist prophetic imagination also becomes a way for Katie to see how her own life is impacted by a patriarchal social imaginary and how she can, in a community that supports her, resist the effects of this imaginary. For Katie, talking to her teachers about the ways that women are portrayed in advertising can help her to see that her experience of her body is influenced by airbrushed examples of feminine beauty – an expectation of perfection that no one can meet. Talking with her soccer coach about the unequal treatment of male and female professional soccer players can help her see the ways that even something like sports participation is colored by the cultural assumptions of the patriarchal social imaginary. Seeing the ways that the other women in her community have experienced injustice, marginalization, and oppression because they are women, how they have resisted these injustices, and the ways that they thrive as members of a community of care can help Katie name for herself the ways that she can refuse to be constrained by the expectations of the triple bind. And seeing glimpses of hope in a community that values her dignity as created in the *imago Dei* or in a teacher's attempts to establish a caring relationship with her offers Katie a vision for a world where women and girls are not held to the contradictory expectations of the triple bind.

For girls like Katie, understanding themselves as people created by God in the image of God means helping them to see that their status as *imago Dei* includes a call to participate in the prophetic imagination of the community and to exercise it for themselves in practices of resistance and *hesed*. But, since this formation in and exercise of a prophetic imagination takes place within a community, it is important to think about how the community educates for this prophetic imagination. If the exercise of a prophetic imagination is a living out of the common human status of being created in the image of God, then it is incumbent on schools to consider ways to engage in this kind of religious formation. This means that the school that Katie attends must be attentive, not just to teaching students about the faith, but also to the ways that the paradigmatic stories and people of the tradition can become transformative, especially for adolescent girls.



**5.0 CHAPTER FIVE  
KINDLING A FIRE:  
A PEDAGOGY FOR A FEMINIST PROPHETIC IMAGINATION**

As Katie has moved from girlhood into adolescence, she has found that the expectations put on her have become much more intense. Not only does her family count on her more, her friendships are becoming more complicated. The academic work of school has multiplied with the added expectation of increased extra-curricular participation and the need to prepare a good resume for getting into college. At the same time, she is being shaped by a variety of social imaginaries. On one side, she is shaped by a contemporary social imaginary that exerts significant influence on her. On the other side, she is shaped by the vision and values of the Catholic Church and of the Catholic schools she attends. In the midst of these competing influences, Katie is hoping to find her own place in her school community – a place that will help her make sense of the confusing and contradictory expectations she is often buffeted by.

This puts a new kind of pressure on the schools that girls like Katie attend. It is no longer enough for an all-girls' Catholic secondary school to reproduce the educational models of other types of schools. In light of the toxicity of the patriarchal social imaginary and the triple bind articulated by Stephen Hinshaw – the expectation that girls excel at traditionally feminine behaviors, at traditionally masculine behaviors, and at doing this while conforming to unrealistic standards of beauty,<sup>1</sup> all-girls' Catholic schools confront significant challenges in both day-to-day operations and in strategic and mission-oriented planning. Schools like Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School and

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Hinshaw with Rachel Kranz, *The Triple Bind: Saving Our Teenage Girls from Today's Pressures and Conflicting Expectations* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2009).

Mount Saint Joseph Academy identify a feminist mission in their mission statements.<sup>2</sup>

But simply claiming to prepare adolescent girls for success in college and career seems to fall into the same patterns that Hinshaw describes – girls are expected to do it all and do it all perfectly.<sup>3</sup> However, schools like Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School and Mount Saint Joseph Academy can prepare adolescent girls to meet the challenges of the contemporary world through the cultivation of a feminist prophetic imagination. This kind of formation requires a pedagogical approach that looks beyond the academic and programming side of education – although these are also important – and embraces a way of teaching that socializes girls into a community that practices resistance to injustice and creation of communities of God’s *hesed*.

In fact, one of the primary responsibilities of education, as it has traditionally been understood, is to participate in the socializing of each new generation. As children come into schools to learn how to read, write, and do mathematics, societies have taken the opportunity to shape the lives of these children. In public education, this has traditionally meant forming students in the civic ideals of a democratic nation.<sup>4</sup> In Catholic education, this has meant forming students according to the moral and faith

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<sup>2</sup> As discussed in chapter one, this claim is an implicit one. Given the hostility of the Catholic Church to some aspects of feminist theology and to secular feminism, most all-girls’ schools do not explicitly use the word “feminist” in describing their mission. Rather, this mission is couched in terms of developing leadership skills, preparing young women to compete in college and career, and so on. See Appendix B for a collection of mission statements from all-girls’ Catholic secondary schools in the United States.

<sup>3</sup> Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, 26.

<sup>4</sup> Young Pai and Susan A. Adler, *Cultural Foundations of Education*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall, 2001), 33. According to Pai and Adler, “Historically, the primary function of the American school system has been seen as the transmission of the core values of the society at large” (33). See also the discussion of Horace Mann’s vision for the common school system in Joel Spring, *The American School: 1642-2004*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2005), 80-84. Spring notes that Mann hoped that education would contain ““articles in the creed of republicanism, which are accepted by all, believed in by all, and which form the common basis of our political faith”” (81).

commitments of the Catholic Church, as well as in these civic ideals.<sup>5</sup> In public and Catholic education (as well as other forms of non-public education), schools form students into a wide variety of values both intended and not.

In his book *The Educational Imagination*, Elliott Eisner argues that there are three curricula that are taught in schools – the explicit, the implicit, and the null. First, the explicit curriculum is what the school intends to teach through its courses, textbooks, and formal programs.<sup>6</sup> Second, the implicit curriculum is what the school teaches through its culture and traditions – what it teaches in the “way we do things here.”<sup>7</sup> Third, the null curriculum is what a school teaches in what it chooses not to teach, the messages it sends in what it decides to ignore or fails to recognize.<sup>8</sup> The implicit and the null curricula can serve to reinforce the explicit curriculum of a school or they can undermine it.<sup>9</sup>

As schools seek to shape the next generation of young people and to induct them into the social imaginaries operant in society, they would do well to consider all three of

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal* (1988), §31-41, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_19880407\\_catholic-school\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19880407_catholic-school_en.html) (accessed January 17, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Elliot W. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall, 2002), 87-88.

<sup>7</sup> Eisner, *The Educational Imagination*, 95-97. “Thus, the implicit curriculum of the school is what it teaches because of the kind of place it is. And the school is that kind of place through the ancillary consequences of various approaches to teaching, by the kind of reward system that it uses, by the organizational structure it employs to sustain its existence, by the physical characteristics of the school plant, and by the furniture it uses and the surroundings it creates... Although these features are seldom publicly announced, they are intuitively recognized by parents, students, and teachers. And because they are salient and pervasive features of schooling, what they teach may be among the most important lessons a child learns” (97).

<sup>8</sup> Eisner, *The Educational Imagination*, 97-98. For Eisner, the null curriculum includes two dimensions: “One is the intellectual processes that schools emphasize and neglect. The other is the content or subject areas that are present and absent in school curricula” (98).

<sup>9</sup> For example, most schools have an explicit curriculum and a written policy that reject bullying. However, an implicit culture of competitiveness and a null curriculum that ignores instances of bullying only serve to counteract or undermine the efforts of the explicit curriculum. See, for example, Sabina Low and Mark Van Ryzin, “The Moderating Effects of School Climate on Bullying Prevention Efforts,” *School Psychology Quarterly* 29, no.3 (September 2014): 306-319.

Eisner's curricula.<sup>10</sup> In terms of the toxic and oppressive effects of something like the triple bind, it is especially important for schools to consider the ways that implicit or null curricular choices impact the messages that adolescent girls are receiving and the expectations to which they are being held. The explicit curriculum of most, if not all, schools is one that teaches that women and men are equal and that adolescent girls can choose among many different ways of being a woman in the world.<sup>11</sup> However, the implicit and null curricula at many schools reinforce the triple bind's toxic messages. Adolescent girls at schools learn that they should be involved in meaningful friendships and romantic relationships; that they should earn the highest grades, be involved in sports and student government, and engage in casual sex; and that being thin and attractive is the root of popularity and acceptance by peers and adults. The fact that schools are not explicitly teaching these messages does not mean that they are not being taught by the culture of the school and by the messages that girls fail to hear. Therefore, it is particularly incumbent upon educators to find ways that their explicit curriculum can serve to counter the ways that their implicit and null curricula may unintentionally reinforce the triple bind.

In order for schools to counter the effects of the triple bind, what is needed is a pedagogy that both speaks out of a prophetic imagination and forms adolescent girls in a feminist prophetic imagination. Since the cultivation of a feminist prophetic imagination is not something that happens automatically, this chapter proposes a pedagogical

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<sup>10</sup> For example, David and Myra Sadker do not use Eisner's three types of curricula, but describe the ways that sexism has influenced explicit curricular choices, the implicit curriculum of school culture, and the null curriculum of what is not taught in public schools. David Sadker, Myra Sadker, and Karen R. Zittleman, *Still Failing at Fairness: How Gender Bias Cheats Girls and Boys in School and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Scribner, 2009), 7-25.

<sup>11</sup> However, the Sadkers argue there is still a long way to go even on this. Sadker, Sadker, & Zittleman, *Still Failing at Fairness*, 87-98.

approach that can nurture a feminist prophetic imagination in adolescent girls. First, liberative pedagogy is explored through the work of Paulo Freire and bell hooks; particular attention is given to Freire’s proposals that education should lead to conscientization and involves a process of “reading the world and reading the word.” Second, this chapter probes Nel Noddings’ proposal of a caring pedagogy as undergirding communities of God’s *hesed*. Third, this chapter proposes that teaching for a feminist prophetic imagination provides a framework for educating for the creation of communities characterized by God’s *hesed* and resistance to injustice. And, finally, it suggest that a pedagogy oriented towards this feminist prophetic imagination is especially appropriate for adolescent girls because it affirms their status as created in the image of God and helps them to be actively involved in identifying and critiquing the triple bind and creating alternatives that are more life-giving and affirming.

## 5.1 LIBERATIVE PEDAGOGY

In order to provide students with an education that will equip them to form communities of *hesed* and to resist injustice, schools can be guided by the work of educational theorists who advocate for a liberative pedagogy. Liberative pedagogy is rooted in the work of progressive educators, like John Dewey,<sup>12</sup> and emphasizes a

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916); John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Touchstone, 1938). Dewey argued that democracy and education are intimately linked – that we cannot have one without the other: “The devotion of democracy to education is a familiar fact. The superficial explanation is that a government resting upon popular suffrage cannot be successful unless those who elect and who obey their governors are educated... But there is a deeper explanation. A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience... Obviously a society to which stratification into separate classes would be fatal, must see to it that intellectual opportunities are accessible to all on equable and easy terms. A society marked off into classes need be specially attentive only to the education of its ruling elements. A society which is mobile, which is full of channels for the distribution of a change occurring anywhere, must see to it that its members are

grounding of pedagogy in experience, problem solving, critical thinking, and social responsibility. Liberative pedagogy, used here as a general term for pedagogical practices rooted in social justice movements, is most closely associated with the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire.<sup>13</sup>

Freire argues that the role of the education is to educate for freedom and justice, to educate for conscientization. According to Freire, conscientization involves an educational system in which people, especially those who have traditionally been at the margins of society, learn how to name and change the reality of the poverty and oppression in their lives. By learning to recognize and analyze the situations of social, cultural, political, and economic oppression and marginalization in their lives, the poor become able to change these situations of injustice, transforming their lives and the whole of their world.<sup>14</sup>

Freire identifies the teacher as playing a crucial role in the process of socializing students to accept an oppressive status quo or educating for conscientization. On the one hand, the teacher can be someone who maintains the established order, thereby keeping the poor in their poverty and oppression. This teacher is a tool of the dominant class who works to reproduce the class structures that keep people in their places. They do this through an educational system that, according to Freire, seeks to deposit information in students and form them into people who will uncritically accept what they are told by the

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educated to personal initiative and adaptability. Otherwise they will be overwhelmed by the changes in which they are caught and whose significance or connections they do not perceive" (Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 50).

<sup>13</sup> Other common terms for this pedagogical approach include critical pedagogy and engaged pedagogy, which also focus on critical thinking, problem posing, dialogue, and experience as key factors in teaching for a more just world. Important voices around these approaches include Henry Giroux, Ira Shor, Donaldo Macedo, Peter McLaren, and bell hooks. I prefer the term liberative pedagogy because it focuses on the desired end – liberation.

<sup>14</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1989), 100.

dominant class and will meekly step into the roles prepared for them. On the other hand, for Freire, a revolutionary teacher is the one who rejects this “banking education”<sup>15</sup> and engages students in the process of problematizing, asking questions, dialogue, and conscientization.<sup>16</sup> This conscientization can only occur in the dialogical process in which teachers and students struggle together to understand and take ownership of some particular content. To do this, he argues that

it is impermissible to train engineers or stonemasons, physicians or nurses, dentists or machinists, educators or mechanics, farmers or philosophers, cattle farmers or biologists, without an understanding of our own selves as historical, political, social, and cultural beings – without a comprehension of how society works.<sup>17</sup>

There are two aspects to this dialogical process: the dialogue that happens among teachers and students as a part of the learning activities and the dialogue that happens between the content of the curriculum and the historical situation of the learners. The dialogue between teachers and students frames a pedagogical approach that rejects a “banking approach” to education and embraces the problem-posing and questioning approach that leads to conscientization.

Freire refers to the dialogue between the content of education and the context of the student as a dual process of “reading the world and reading the word.”<sup>18</sup> In this process, the concrete, historical, political, social, and religious context in which the learners are situated is taken as a profoundly important interpretive lens through which the content of the curriculum is viewed. The content of the curriculum – whether that is learning to read, reading history or literature, studying science or math, or engaging

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<sup>15</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 57-59.

<sup>16</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 67.

<sup>17</sup> Paulo Freire, “Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed,” in *The Paulo Freire Reader*, ed. Ana Maria Araujo Freire and Donaldo Macedo (New York: Continuum, 2001), 263.

<sup>18</sup> Freire, “Pedagogy of Hope,” 238.

theology and biblical studies – can become liberative because it is understood in dialogue with the context of the learners. Freire tends to speak of the reading of the world as if it precedes the reading of the word, but these two movements are better understood as working together.<sup>19</sup> Each movement shapes and grounds the other. Students learn to “read the word and read the world” – to see the content of the educational process in dialogue with their present realities. In doing this, they come to see that the way things are is not necessarily the way things must be. And, in this understanding, is born the struggle for change and justice.

One of the major critiques of Freire’s work is that it focuses almost exclusively on the oppression and marginalization that stem from socio-economic difference and that Freire fails to take other forms of oppression into account. Particularly, he does not account for differences in the experiences of oppression that are driven by gender and race. bell hooks draws attention to this when she discusses Freire’s contribution to her own thinking. On the one hand, hooks describes Freire’s work as opening a door for her and giving language to her struggle to see herself as a scholar and a teacher.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, hooks is critical particularly of the sexism in Freire’s work.

There has never been a moment when reading Freire that I have not remained aware of not only the sexism of the language but the way he... constructs a

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<sup>19</sup> Freire, “Pedagogy of Hope,” 260. Freire argues that understanding the historical context of the students has to precede the turn to the curriculum. At the same time, the curriculum and the students’ context must be held together throughout the educational process with the goal of allowing each to inform our understanding of the other. See also Paulo Freire, “Letter to a Young Theology Student,” *LADOC* II:29b (1970).

<sup>20</sup> bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 45-46. “When I came to Freire’s work, just at that moment in my life when I was beginning to question deeply and profoundly the politics of domination, the impact of racism, sexism, class exploitation, and the kind of domestic colonization that takes place in the United States, I felt myself to be deeply identified with the marginalized peasants he speaks about, or with my black brothers and sisters, my comrades in Guinea-Bissau... Paulo was one of the thinkers whose work gave me a language. He made me think deeply about the construction of an identity in resistance... this experience positioned Freire in my mind and heart as a challenging teacher whose work furthered my own struggle against the colonizing process – the colonizing mindset” (46).



phallogentric paradigm of liberation – wherein freedom and the experience of patriarchal manhood are always linked as though they are one and the same. For me this is always a source of anguish for it represents a blind spot in the vision of men who have profound insight.<sup>21</sup>

Peter McLaren, another scholar of critical pedagogy, echoes this critique:

The critical theory to which Freire's work speaks must be extended in order to allow women as well as minorities to emerge as critical, social actors on the stage of human transformation and struggle. Furthermore, the conceptual frameworks that purport to uncover and transform the constructions of subjectivity need to be purged of the phallogentrism, Eurocentrism, and masculinist ideologies.<sup>22</sup>

McLaren suggests that Freire's pedagogical approach to liberative education must never be allowed to stand without criticism and correction; to do so ossifies Friere's work and violates Friere's own commitments.

Despite this important critique, feminist scholars of liberative pedagogy find that Friere's work opens up useful ways of thinking about the purpose of educational efforts and the ways that education can be liberative for girls and women. First, a feminist pedagogy takes up Freire's concept of conscientization as "the process by which individuals recognize the systems of oppression in which they exist, articulate their roles and places in these systems, and develop concrete strategies to empower themselves and

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<sup>21</sup> hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 49. hooks describes her direct questioning of Freire about his sexism: "I did want to interrogate Paulo Freire personally about the sexism in his work... Immediately individuals spoke against me raising these questions and devalued their importance, Paulo intervened to say that these questions were crucial and he addressed them. Truthfully, I loved him at this moment for exemplifying by his actions the principles of his work. So much would have changed for me had he tried to silence or belittle a feminist critique. And it was not enough for me that he owned his 'sexism,' I want to know why he had not seen that this aspect of earlier work be changed, be responded to in writing by him. And he spoke then about making more of a public effort to speak and write on these issues – this has been evident in his later work" (55-56).

<sup>22</sup> Peter McLaren, "Critical Literacy and Post-colonial Praxis: A Freirean Perspective," *College Literature* 19/20, no. 3/1 (October 1992 – February 1993): 7-27. Cited in Jeanne Brady, *Schooling Young Children: A Feminist Pedagogy for Liberatory Learning* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1992), 24. Brady provides a useful overview of feminist critiques of Freire's work; see especially chapter two.

others to engage in social action.”<sup>23</sup> This conscientization happens through the processes of

(a) dialogic practice, which encourages those who have been silenced to speak for themselves; (b) praxical pedagogy, which emphasizes skill development that prepares individuals to ‘understand and intervene into their own history;’ and (c) a pedagogy of articulation and risk, which focuses on making connections or maps between different practices and theories to find methods that work.<sup>24</sup>

An education for conscientization is one that brings students and teachers together into communities where open dialogue and concern for those who have been silenced, marginalized, and oppressed combines with a commitment to act with them and on their behalf. Second, a feminist liberative pedagogy engages Friere’s process of reading the world and reading the word – understanding the content of the curriculum and the context of the student as being linked and in dialogue with each other. Feminist educator Bernice Fisher articulates this in her identification of five components of feminist pedagogy:

(a) cooperative, collective, and continuous activity that highlights students’ actions, experiences, cognitions, and emotions; (b) knowledge of and the willingness to challenge or resist unequal power dynamics; (c) the development of social action skills by examining the personal concerns of students and clarifying the connections to political meanings; (d) the examination of diverse experiences as they relate to oppression and liberation; and (e) the implementation of an accepting, nonjudgmental stance that both recognizes women’s unique experiences while also nurturing the critical thinking that is necessary for responding to “interwoven forms of injustice.”<sup>25</sup>

Fisher describes a pedagogical approach that honors the experiences and social contexts of students, helps them to analyze those experiences and contexts, exposes them to a wide range of resources for interpreting those experiences, and brings all of this into

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<sup>23</sup> Carolyn Zerbe Enns and Linda M. Forrest, “Toward Defining and Integrating Multicultural and Feminist Pedagogies,” in *Teaching and Social Justice: Integrating Multicultural and Feminist Theories in the Classroom*, ed. Carolyn Zerbe Enns and Ada L. Sinacore (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2005), 6.

<sup>24</sup> Enns and Forrest, “Towards Defining,” 7-8.

<sup>25</sup> Bernice M. Fisher, *No Angel in the Classroom: Teaching Through Feminist Discourse* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 44.

conversation with what is happening in the classroom while also encouraging action for justice beyond the school walls. In other words, a feminist liberative pedagogy strives to create communities of *hesed* and resistance to injustice through the processes of conscientization and reading the world and word.

A feminist liberative pedagogy also has the effect of nurturing the imaginations of students. hooks notes that “in dominator culture, the killing of one’s ability to imagine serves as a way to repress and contain everyone within the limits of the status quo.”<sup>26</sup> The recurring and unexamined experience of silencing, marginalization, and oppression that is experienced by girls and women is one that effectively stifles their imaginations, but a liberative pedagogy, one that focuses on conscientization and reading the world and word, has the power to counter this.<sup>27</sup> If, as hooks insists, “imagination is one of the most powerful modes of resistance that oppressed and exploited folk can and do use,”<sup>28</sup> then it is also the task of education to find ways to nurture the imaginations of girls. And, for hooks, this nurturing of the imagination is an engagement of the prophetic:

The power of the imagination [feels] prophetic. In Mary Grey’s *The Outrageous Pursuit of Hope*, she explains that “prophetic imagination is outrageous – not merely in dreaming the dream, but in already living out the dream before it has come to pass, and in embodying this dream in concrete action.” Individuals from marginalized groups, whether victimized by dysfunctional families or by political systems of domination, often find their way to freedom by heeding the call of prophetic imagination.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> bell hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 60.

<sup>27</sup> Annie Lockhart-Gilroy, “A Way Forward: Nurturing the Imagination at the Intersection of Race, Gender, and Age” *Religious Education* 111, no. 4 (July-September 2016): 422. She makes this argument about the experiences of black adolescent girls: “Having suffered the killing of one’s ability to imagine a different life, one is left with the belief that one’s perceived reality is not only an acceptable option, but the only true option. Therefore, to see a new vision, this imagination needs to be rekindled.”

<sup>28</sup> hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking*, 61.

<sup>29</sup> bell hooks, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 185-186. hooks is quoting from Mary C. Grey, *The Outrageous Pursuit of Hope: Prophetic Dreams for the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2001).

By engaging the imaginations of students, particularly the imaginations of those students from marginalized and oppressed groups, liberative pedagogies have the potential to enable students to analyze the world in which they live, to determine the ways that that world is unjust, and to propose new ways to engage that world in order to resist that injustice. In other words, a liberative pedagogy sets the stage for educating students in a prophetic imagination that denounces injustice and announces new ways of being in the world. Flowing from the perspective of a liberative pedagogy, practices of resistance to injustice become critical praxis – the cycle of informed action and critical reflection – rooted in a reading of the world and the word and engaging in prophetic imagining.

## 5.2 CARING PEDAGOGY

In addition to the resources provided by feminist liberative pedagogies, schools that are committed to resisting injustice and creating communities of *hesed* can turn to the work of educational scholar Nel Noddings. Noddings proposes an ethic of care as both an approach to moral decision making and as a way of thinking about the purposes of education and schooling. Drawing on the work of developmental psychologist Carol Gilligan, Noddings proposes that the concept of caring provides educators with a way of understanding the relationships among teachers and students in schools as well as a way of approaching pedagogy.

In her work with researcher Lawrence Kohlberg, Carol Gilligan noted that, in his original study of moral reasoning, all of Kohlberg's subjects were male and that, when women and girls were later included as research subjects, they seemed to perform less

well than men and boys.<sup>30</sup> Gilligan argued that Kohlberg's theory of moral development<sup>31</sup> portrays women as deficient in their moral development, wrongly suggesting that they are morally less sophisticated in their decision making than men. Through her own studies of girls and women and their moral decision making processes, she discerned a second model of moral development. She believed that this model, while not found only in women, is more characteristic of women's decision making and better captures the nuances of women's thought processes when confronted with moral dilemmas. Rather than progressing to a universal ethic of justice that is highly individualistic and abstract, she understands women's moral development as involving an ethic of care and responsibility that is centered in interpersonal relationships. In Gilligan's model, individuals progress from a stage where moral decisions are made to ensure personal survival and security, to one that recognizes a responsibility to care for and protect others, to a third stage that recognizes care for self along side of care of others, and finally to a stage that recognizes the mutual interrelatedness of all individuals and a sense of care and compassion due to self and others.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 22.

<sup>31</sup> For an overview of Kohlberg's work as well as of research into moral development prior to the work of Gilligan, see Joseph Reimer, Diana Pritchard Paolitto and Richard H. Hersh, *Promoting Moral Growth: From Piaget to Kohlberg* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1990). Kohlberg was particularly interested in the development of moral decision-making – how individuals make decisions rather than what decisions they make. In the process of moral development, individuals are developing “fairness, concern for others, cooperation, empathy, shared responsibility, mutual obligation, and democratic participation.” (259-260). For Kohlberg, as individuals become more sophisticated in their decision-making, they typically progress from a focus on immediate interests, through a focus on the familial or societal expectations, and eventually to an individual ethic of justice. This ethic of justice enables the individual to step back from their own worldview, to see universal ethical principles, and to apply them to moral situations. Kohlberg believed that, at this highest level, the individual could assess and critique the moral order in which they live; ethical principles are seen as having a truth that is independent of the social world in which the individual lives. See also Peter Feldmeier, *The Developing Christian: Spiritual Growth Through the Life Cycle* (New York: Paulist Press, 2007).

<sup>32</sup> Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, 22. Gilligan sees two parallel tracks of moral development with different emphases; they are not mutually exclusive and seem to complement each other well. Her model also explains why girls and women seemed to be less advanced on Kohlberg's scale of moral development. The

As taken up by Noddings, this ethic of care is rooted in relationship, connection, and reciprocity.<sup>33</sup> Like Gilligan, Noddings does not suggest that an ethic of care is descriptive of the ways that all women make moral decisions nor does she assume that men do not use an ethic of care. Instead, she locates “ethical behavior in human affective response”<sup>34</sup> and, therefore, names caring as a universal human characteristic. The caring relationship is, for Noddings, the basis for human social existence; using the work of philosopher Martin Heidegger, Noddings defines caring as “a connection or encounter between two human beings – a carer and a recipient of care, or cared-for.”<sup>35</sup> The caring relationship, then, is one in which the carer – the one initiating the care towards the recipient – is open to the cared-for. This openness means that the carer is genuinely concerned for the other and oriented towards her needs. At the same time, the recipient of care responds to this offer of care and receives it as best she can.<sup>36</sup> This ethic of care involves the obligation of the carer to act for the cared-for in ways that meet her concrete needs – the crying infant is picked up, the injured person is tended to, the lost person is

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problem was with the model, not with the women. Using Kohlberg’s classic moral dilemma in which a man named Heinz must decide whether or not to steal medication that his wife needs to live, Gilligan found that girls approached the problem with an eye on maintaining relationships. Comparing two children, she noted that “these two children see two very different moral problems – Jake a conflict between life and property that can be resolved by logical deduction. Amy a fracture of human relationships that must be mended with its own thread” (32). In her study, Gilligan found that the girls and women were just as sophisticated in their moral reasoning, but they were approaching the moral dilemma from very different perspectives.

<sup>33</sup> Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), 2.

<sup>34</sup> Noddings, *Caring*, 3.

<sup>35</sup> Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005), 15. Noddings is referencing Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962). Noddings names the person providing care as the “carer,” a term she prefers to “care-giver” which often invokes images of physical care provided to the very young and the very old. While she includes these types of relationships in her understanding of caring, she wants to expand this to encompass many more kinds of relationships and ways of providing care.

<sup>36</sup> Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, 16-17. “When I care, I really hear, see or feel what the other tries to convey. The engrossment or attention may last only a few moments and it may or may not be repeated in future encounters, but it is full and essential in any caring encounter... The cared-for receives the caring and shows that it has been received. This recognition now becomes part of what the carer receives in his or her engrossment, and the caring is completed” (16).

given directions, the child is taught.<sup>37</sup> Importantly, for Noddings, “caring is a way of being in relation, not a set of specific behaviors.”<sup>38</sup> Caring, therefore, describes the practices of an individual who is providing care and, even more importantly, the kind of relationship that exist between the carer and the recipient of care. Both Gilligan and Noddings argue that an ethic of care differs from traditional justice-oriented approaches in that the “emphasis is on living together, on creating, maintaining, and enhancing positive relations – not on decision making in moments of high moral conflict.”<sup>39</sup>

Because of this emphasis on forming and maintaining relationships, an ethic of care is not an easy or facile approach to moral decision-making. While it is based in the affective relationships among people, it is neither romantic nor irrational. Rather, an ethic of care is highly practical since it is rooted in the concrete situations of real people and real relationships. Noddings describes the toughness of caring; an ethic of care is tough because it is other-regarding, it tries to balance the needs of the individual cared-for and the needs of the community, and it is not simply dependant on agreed-upon moral laws.<sup>40</sup>

Noddings claims that the caring relation forms the basis of the educational enterprise. In the caring relationship, the carer, because he or she has the good of the cared-for in mind, is oriented towards care in devising the educational experience for students. In other words, the carer not only wants to care for the cared-for, he or she wants to help the cared-for learn not only how to receive care, but how to offer care as

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<sup>37</sup> Noddings notes that “we cannot refuse obligation in human affairs by merely refusing to enter relation; we are, by virtue of our mutual humanity, already and perpetually in potential relation” (Noddings, *Caring*, 86).

<sup>38</sup> Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, 17.

<sup>39</sup> Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, 21.

<sup>40</sup> Noddings, *Caring*, 98-103.

well. This undergirds a philosophy of education that is focused on nurturing children in the caring relationship.

The primary aim of every educational institution and of every educational effort must be the maintenance and enhancement of caring. Parents, police, social workers, teachers, preachers, neighbors, coaches, older siblings must all embrace this primary aim... Questions concerning the ethical arise in every aspect of human life, and nurturance of the ethical ideal cannot be assigned to any one or two institutions. All must accept responsibility.<sup>41</sup>

Noddings then sees all other educational activities as flowing out of this prioritizing of care as the driver of pedagogy; the providing of care and the nurturing of caring in students is the primary aim of education.<sup>42</sup>

Teachers necessarily play a primary role in this; they are the ones caring for the students with whom they have formed relationships. Using the language of Martin Buber, Noddings describes the relationship between teachers and students as an I/Thou relationship. The student “is encountered as ‘Thou,’ a subject, and not as ‘It,’ an object of analysis.”<sup>43</sup> Noddings is not describing an equal relationship between the teacher and the student; the teacher does have power in this relationship, but it is a power exercised with care. The caring teacher is a teacher who challenges students.

That means that the educator must arrange the effective world so that the child will be challenged to master significant tasks in significant situations... The child, as one cared-for, will often respond with interest to challenges proffered by the

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<sup>41</sup> Noddings, *Caring*, 174-175. In this way, Noddings echoes the work of Richard Lerner who suggests that schools are only one among many community institutions (or assets) that participate in the raising of children and teenagers. No one institution bears the entire burden of providing youth with what they need for a healthy adulthood; rather, all work together, providing different sorts of relationships that can enhance teen thriving. See Richard M. Lerner, *Liberty: Thriving and Civic Engagement Among America's Youth* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004), 116-118.

<sup>42</sup> Noddings, *Caring*, 174. “In pointing to the maintenance and enhancement of caring as the primary aim of education, I am drawing attention to priorities. I certainly do not intend to abandon intellectual and aesthetic aims, but I want to suggest that intellectual tasks and aesthetic appreciation should be deliberately set aside – not permanently, but temporarily – if their pursuit endangers the ethical ideal. We cannot separate means and ends in education, because the desired result is part of the process, and the process carries with it the notion of persons undergoing it becoming somehow ‘better.’”

<sup>43</sup> Noddings, *Caring*, 176. Noddings is referring to Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970).



one-caring, if the one-caring is loved and trusted by the child. As an initial impulse to engage particular subject matter, love for the adult and the desire to imitate her are powerful inducements. Further, working together on tasks makes it possible for the child to accept greater challenges and to maintain... motivation. What is conveyed to the child is that there is something delightful about the companionship that continues through every stage of developing competence.<sup>44</sup>

The teacher, as one providing care, is in the position to provide guidance for students and to help them to exercise care in their own relationships.

Noddings proposes a pedagogical approach based on this ethic of care and she names four components. First, a pedagogy of care involves modeling. Because caring is not about teaching students about the principles of care but rather to nurture them into the practices of caring, the modeling of care by teachers and other adults is vital. Teachers teach students how to care for others by caring for them; as students receive the care of their teachers, they learn what it means to offer and receive care. “We do not tell our students to care; we show them how to care by creating caring relations with them.”<sup>45</sup> Teachers function as guides and students are apprentices in the practices of caring.

Second, a pedagogy of care involves dialogue. Noddings draws on Freire’s understanding of dialogue as more than simple conversation. “Dialogue is open-ended; that is, in a genuine dialogue, neither party knows at the outset what the outcome or decision will be... Dialogue permits us to talk about what we try to show.”<sup>46</sup> In other words, dialogue gives teachers and students the opportunity to explore the caring relationship and its implications for what students are learning and how they live their lives. Dialogue is also crucial in the formation and maintenance of caring relationships

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<sup>44</sup> Noddings, *Caring*, 63-64.

<sup>45</sup> Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, 22.

<sup>46</sup> Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, 23.

because it allows the carer and the cared-for to know each other better and to grow in their relationship.

Third, the practice of caring is essential in learning how to receive and provide care. Noddings notes that attitudes are shaped by experiences and that training students in caring relationships involves providing them with opportunities to practice forming and maintaining those kinds of relationships.

If we decide that the capacity to care is as much a mark of personhood as reason or rationality; then we will want to find ways to increase this capacity. Just as we now think it is important for girls as well as boys to have mathematical experience, so we should want both boys and girls to have experience in caring. It does not just happen; we have to plan for it.<sup>47</sup>

For Noddings, providing students with the opportunity to practice caring for others and being the recipient of care has the potential to be transformative of students and schools. Students, given the opportunity to practice, under the guidance of adults, the providing of care to others, take on more of the attributes of a caring person. In other words, by being a carer, people can become better carers and, as more people become better carers, they take this caring out of the immediacy of individual relationships and into their school as well as their experiences and relationships with others outside the school.<sup>48</sup>

Finally, a pedagogy of care requires confirmation – an “act of affirming and encouraging the best in others.”<sup>49</sup> When teachers provide this kind of confirmation for their students, they are seeing the efforts and attempts to care and are encouraging the development of more caring relationships. Confirmation means that teachers must

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<sup>47</sup> Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, 24. Noddings is particularly attuned to the fact that nurturing an ethic of care has traditionally been characteristic of the formation of girls as they are raised to prioritize care of others in their thinking and acting. However, rather than being a continuation of the oppression and marginalization of women, an ethic of care can be a way of seeing how autonomy, skill, and love are expressed in a variety of relationships and by both men and women.

<sup>48</sup> Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, 25.

<sup>49</sup> Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, 25.

assume that students have good intentions even when they fall short of ideals – disapproval of an individual act must also include an affirmation of the possibility of growth and development in the student. Confirmation of students’ attempts to form and sustain caring relationships cannot fall to clichés and slogans; rather, it is a loving act that springs from knowledge of the student and his or her life, interests, motives, and concerns.<sup>50</sup>

Noddings believes that an ethic and a pedagogy of care should undergird contemporary schooling and provides a scheme for integrating all the other important aspects of education. In fact, she suggests that traditional liberal education fails to meet the needs of society and students because it focuses its educational efforts only on a narrow range of capabilities in students, such as logical or linguistic intelligences – and it does not provide all students with what they need.<sup>51</sup> As an alternative, Noddings proposes that using the notion of care as an organizing principle for education allows schools to tailor their programs to meet the capacities, needs, and interests of a wide variety of students.

In particular, Noddings argues that a pedagogy based on an ethic of care prioritizes relationships and situates the traditional disciplines of education within these relationships.<sup>52</sup> A school then does not provide just one type of education – the

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<sup>50</sup> Noddings contrasts confirmation as a practice for correcting unwanted behavior and shaping desired behavior in students with what she identifies as the approach of traditional religious training: accusation, confession, penance, and forgiveness. She suggests that “this sequence... depends heavily on authority, obedience, fear, and subordination... Our authority is emphasized, and the potential power of the offender’s own moral struggle is overlooked” (Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, 26).

<sup>51</sup> Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, 28. Noddings’ primary concern with traditional liberal education is that it focuses almost exclusively on linguistic and logical-mathematical reasoning. Not only does this neglect those aspects of life traditionally associated with women (caring, nurturing, teaching), it also ignores “feeling, concrete thinking, practical activity, and even moral action” (43).

<sup>52</sup> Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, 47-61. Noddings names six centers of care: care for self, care for one’s inner circle (family and friends), care for strangers and distant others, care for animals,

traditional liberal education made up of the subjects that defined the “gentleman”<sup>53</sup> – but provides students with multiple modes of learning “designed to accommodate the multiple capacities and interests of students.”<sup>54</sup> For Noddings, the ethic of care allows schools to embrace students in the entirety of their identities; she argues:

We need to recognize multiple identities. For example, an 11<sup>th</sup>-grader may be a black, a woman, a teenager, a Smith, an American, a New Yorker, a Methodist, a person who loves math, and so on. As she exercises these identities, she may use different languages, adopt different postures, related differently to those around her. But whoever she is at a given moment, whatever she is engaged in, she needs – as we all do – to be cared for. Her need for care may require formal respect, informal interaction, expert advice, just a flicker of recognition, or sustained affection.<sup>55</sup>

By caring for each individual student in all of her particularity, an ethic of care shapes the pedagogical approaches and the curriculum of the school, but, more importantly, it shapes the people in the school as they model and practice providing care to one another.

The work of Carol Gilligan, which grounds Noddings’ pedagogy of care, reinforces the importance of an ethic of care for adolescent girls. Gilligan, as a developmental psychologist, notes that, in early adolescence, girls often express a great deal of resistance to the increasing pressures they are under. As the world around them is telling them how girls and women are to be in the world, they see a disconnect between these messages and what they know to be true. But, all too soon, this resistance gets silenced as girls learn to conform to what society expects so that by mid-adolescence,

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plants, and the earth, care for the human-made world, and care for ideas. As described by Noddings, this approach has a great deal in common with the work of Maria Montessori. See, for example, Maria Montessori, *The Discovery of the Child*, trans. M. Joseph Costelloe (New York: Ballantine, 1972); Maria Montessori, *The Montessori Method* (Radford, VA: Wilder Publications, 2008).

<sup>53</sup> Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, 28.

<sup>54</sup> Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, 173.

<sup>55</sup> Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, 173. This echoes Michelle Saracino’s notion of hybridity in human identity. See Michele Saracino, *Being About Borders: A Christian Anthropology of Difference* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 30.

girls silence themselves in an attempt to conform to societal expectations.<sup>56</sup> As Gilligan claims, there is a “tendency in girls’ lives at adolescence for a resistance that is inherently political – an insistence on knowing what one knows and a willingness to be outspoken – to turn into a psychological resistance, a reluctance to know what one knows and a fear that one’s knowledge, if spoken, will endanger relationships and threaten survival.”<sup>57</sup> Gilligan argues that schools, as agents of socialization, have the opportunity to disrupt this; by situating the maintenance of girls’ sense of political resistance within the caring relationships, schools can define a sense of resistance to injustice that is relational.<sup>58</sup> For Gilligan,

central to this journey is the recovery of anger as the bellwether of oppression, injustice, bad treatment; the signal that something is wrong in the relational surround... Resistance then involves a kind of reverse alchemy whereby anger that has soured into bitterness or hatred becomes once again simply anger – “the conscious response to an awareness of injustices suffered or losses and grievances sustained... [the anger] which involves self-love and awareness of responsibility for making choices.”<sup>59</sup>

In this recovery of anger, Gilligan sees that resistance to injustice and to the marginalization that girls experience in adolescence must be grounded in an ethic of care. This is, in part, because an ethic of care tends to resonate with the ways that girls and women are socialized to think. But, more importantly for Gilligan, “it is a human ethic, integral to the practice of democracy and to the functioning of a global society.

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<sup>56</sup> Carol Gilligan, *Joining the Resistance* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011), 134. Gilligan tells the story of Anna a twelve year old girl who describes this perceived need to conform to societal expectations: “Sometimes I will get really mad, and I can’t be like that... I have to learn how to work with people because sometimes I just get really mad at people who can’t understand what I am saying, and I get so exasperated. It is like, ‘Why can’t you just...? What is wrong with you? Why can’t you see this my way?’” (130-131). Gilligan goes on to describe how, “a year later, when Anna is interviewed at thirteen..., her interview is peppered with ‘I don’t know’... Anna is fighting her reluctance to know what she knows and her inclination to suppress her voice and go along with the group” (133).

<sup>57</sup> Gilligan, *Joining the Resistance*, 115.

<sup>58</sup> Gilligan, *Joining the Resistance*, 153-154.

<sup>59</sup> Gilligan, *Joining the Resistance*, 154-155. Gilligan is quoting Teresa Bernardez, “Women and Anger: Cultural Prohibitions and The Feminine Ideal,” Wellesley College: Stone Center Working Paper Series, 31 (1987), 5, <https://www.wewonline.org/vmfiles/31sc.pdf> (accessed March 1, 2017).

[Moreover,] it is a feminist ethic, an ethic that guides the historic struggle to free democracy from patriarchy.”<sup>60</sup>

So, taking up the work of Gilligan and Noddings, a pedagogy rooted in an ethic of caring has the potential to help schools form themselves around the concepts of God’s *hesed* and resistance to injustice that are rooted in the *imago Dei* and form the basis of a feminist prophetic imagination. God’s loving-kindness and justice can ground the pedagogical approach that Noddings suggests. These are modeled by God, by the prophets and other holy people of the biblical and theological tradition, and by the caring adults in the lives of students. Stories of God’s *hesed* and practices of resistance become the subject of dialogue as students explore and practice what it means to operate with an ethic of care. And confirmation of students’ practice of caring becomes rooted in the larger narrative of God’s expressions of caring for all of God’s people.

### 5.3 FEMINIST PROPHETIC IMAGINATION AND EDUCATION

A pedagogy that nurtures a feminist prophetic imagination is one that takes seriously the importance of imagination in the ways that people make sense of the world. According to Mary Warnock, the imagination is the foundation of the ability to interpret experiences and to propose new ways of being in the world. Because of this, imagination is a part of intelligence and must be considered in the educational efforts of schools.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Gilligan, *Joining the Resistance*, 175.

<sup>61</sup> Mary Warnock, *Imagination* (London, UK: Faber and Faber, 1976), 202. “The fact is that we all of us use language; and we all of us can form images, well or less well, of what we are not experiencing at this minute, but we might experience in the future, or have experienced in the past, or would like to experience in an ideal world. Moreover, we all of us, all the time, attach some significance to the form which our experience takes, even if it is only to hail it as familiar, or sink back in it as, roughly, predictable. We are therefore in my view, inevitably exercising imagination in our daily conversations and in our practical uses of things in the world... [So] if we think of imagination as a part of our intelligence, universally, then we must be ready to admit that, like the rest of human intelligence, it needs educating... Imagination is

Inviting students to exercise their imaginations is not simply the effort to encourage them to create new things (through drawing, writing, and so on). Even more, it is an invitation for them to feel more deeply and to think more creatively about everything in their world. “The fact is that if imagination is creative in all its uses, then children will be creating their own meanings and interpretations of things as much by looking at them as by making them.”<sup>62</sup>

In taking on the challenge of educating for imagination, Maxine Greene notes that teachers are able to reach out to their students and challenge them to develop their imaginations. She notes that cultivating an imagination in students means helping them move beyond their ordinary and habitual ways of thinking. This is a challenge for teachers: “It may be a challenge to pose questions, to seek out explanations, to look for reasons, to construct meanings. It may be a provoking of dialogues within the classroom space.”<sup>63</sup> Greene suggests that the classroom space that is most conducive to education for imagination is one that provokes thoughtfulness and conscientization when teachers and students learn together in “a kind of collaborative search, each from her or his lived situation.”<sup>64</sup> This search must be rooted in hope. Following Freire, she asserts that “people trying to be more fully human must not only engage in critical thinking but must

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necessary, on the one hand, for the application of thoughts or concepts of things, and without such application no human discourse and no goal-directed activity would be possible” (202).

<sup>62</sup> Warnock, *Imagination*, 207. Warnock continues by reminding educators that they ought not try to control the imaginations of students by guiding or confining their imaginations: “I do not hold that children should be told what interpretation to place upon their experience, what, if it is taken as symbolic, it is symbolic of. In so far as they begin to feel the significance of the forms they perceive, they will make their own attempts to interpret this significance” (207).

<sup>63</sup> Maxine Greene, *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995), 26.

<sup>64</sup> Greene, *Releasing the Imagination*, 23.

be able to imagine something coming of their hopes; their silence must be overcome by their search.”<sup>65</sup>

In order to do this, Greene emphasizes the importance of the imagination of teachers. Teachers who are incapable of imagining new possibilities for their students are not going to be able to guide students in forming their own imaginations.<sup>66</sup> For teachers, exercising their own imaginations means being able to anticipate the needs of students, being able to put themselves in their students’ lives (even if in a limited way), being able to ask the questions that help students understand their own worlds a bit better, and being able to construct a curriculum that poses the appropriate problems so that students can imagine novel solutions. Teachers need their imaginations in order to engage students in the process of conscientization and of reading the world and word. This links imagination to the creation of community – teachers and students together imagining new ways of being community.

How are we to comprehend the kind of community that offers the opportunity to be otherwise? Democracy, we realize, means a community that is always in the making. Marked by an emerging solidarity, a sharing of certain beliefs, and a dialogue about others, it must remain open to newcomers, those too long thrust aside... Community cannot be produced simply through rational formulation nor through edict. Like freedom, it has to be achieved by persons offered the space in which to discover what they recognize together and appreciate in common; they have to find ways to make inter-subjective sense. Again, it ought to be a space infused by the kind of imaginative awareness that enables those involved to imagine alternative possibilities for their own becoming and their group’s becoming.<sup>67</sup>

Creating – imagining – community draws teachers into the lives of their students and engages them in the collaborative process of resisting injustices and living God’s *hesed*.

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<sup>65</sup> Greene, *Releasing the Imagination*, 25.

<sup>66</sup> Greene, *Releasing the Imagination*, 36.

<sup>67</sup> Greene, *Releasing the Imagination*, 38-39.



Paulo Freire believed that when liberative teachers engage students in the process of reading the world and the word that leads towards conscientization, they are acting as prophets in the world.<sup>68</sup> This suggests that the Biblical prophets were engaging in pedagogical techniques that can contribute to a liberative pedagogy and that some of their techniques can be appropriated for a pedagogy rooted in a feminist prophetic imagination. This also suggests that, as we engage in a liberative pedagogy that fosters a feminist prophetic imagination, the words of the biblical prophets can be the “word” that is in dialogue with our “world.”

As explored in chapter four, Walter Brueggemann reminds us that key to the prophetic imagination is the prophetic task of denouncing the dominant consciousness and announcing a new, more liberative consciousness.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, Freire argues that revolutionary teachers have a responsibility to both denounce and announce; they are to denounce the injustice that they see and experience and they are to announce the ways that the world can be changed.<sup>70</sup> In the process of asking questions, posing problems, and engaging in dialogue, the teachers and students together examine their world, read that world, and commit to changing it. In their actions and the words, prophets are both denouncing and announcing – denouncing the injustices and infidelity of the people and announcing God’s judgment, God’s *hesed*. The prophets announce God’s call for justice and *hesed* by asking questions, posing problems, and engaging in dialogue so that the people who heard their message would be converted to a new way of life and new faith in God.

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<sup>68</sup> Paulo Freire and Antonio Faundez, *Learning to Question: A Pedagogy of Liberation* (New York: Seabury, 1989), 66.

<sup>69</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 7.

<sup>70</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 40.

The prophets functioned as dissident intellectuals and, as Freire suggests, they read the word of their traditions and saw how that word challenged and problematized their world.<sup>71</sup> They serve as a model for engaging in critical reflection on situations of injustice and for communicating that reflection to the rest of the community in a way that calls that community to act. As dissident intellectuals, the prophets were particularly well suited for engaging in the kind of reflection that was needed.<sup>72</sup> The prophets were well-educated members of their society who had knowledge not only of their religious traditions but also of the complex national and international political realities of their time. They had a community that, while probably a peripheral community,<sup>73</sup> was capable of supporting them and their preaching and of preserving their messages for future generations.<sup>74</sup> The prophets used the pedagogical tools available to them in order to get their message across to others – including various speech forms, dramatic orations, and impassioned actions designed focus attention.<sup>75</sup> The prophets used these pedagogical tools to remind their hearers of the religious traditions they shared – the covenant with God, the call to *hesed* and justice, and the sense of a community founded and sustained by God – and they pointed out where their hearers had failed to live up to those community standards. The prophets read their word: they knew the religious and social traditions of the Israelite community, they knew what the covenant with God called them

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<sup>71</sup> Freire, “Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed,” 238.

<sup>72</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet: Religious and Intellectual Leadership in Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 142.

<sup>73</sup> For a fuller discussion of the characteristic behaviors of the prophets of Israel, see Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 135-295; Martti Nissinen, “Prophetic Intermediation in the Ancient Near East” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Prophets* ed. Carolyn J. Sharp (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>74</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet*, 144.

<sup>75</sup> For a fuller description of the various forms or genres found in prophetic literature, see Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, trans. Hugh Clayton White (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967; Barbara Green, “Genre Criticism and the Prophets” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Prophets* ed. Carolyn J. Sharp (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

to, and they knew that the God who had brought them out of Egypt was a God of power and justice. And the prophets read their world: they saw political corruption, they saw increasing disregard for the covenant, they saw the rising power of the centralized, bureaucratic state, they saw increasing concentrations of wealth among the rich, and they saw the poor becoming poorer.<sup>76</sup> Reading their word and their world, the prophets spoke out with a dramatic denouncing of this world that the Israelite elite had created and an announcing of the coming of God's judgment and justice. Following their model, we are called to read the word of our religious tradition and to remind ourselves of what God has called us to be – to be a community of faithfulness, mercifulness, loving-kindness, and justice. And we are called to read our world and to see the places where we have failed to enact this call. The problems faced by the Israelite prophets are not all that different from our own. They call us to be the dissident intellectuals – the ones who know the past and the present and can call the community to a new future.

#### **5.4 A PEDAGOGY FOR A FEMINIST PROPHETIC IMAGINATION AND ADOLESCENT GIRLS**

The biblical prophets engaged in the imaginative process of denouncing injustice and announcing God's *hesed*. As members of a faith community, adolescent girls are invited to participate in this ongoing tradition of prophetic denunciation and annunciation. Following in the footsteps of the biblical prophets and modern day

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<sup>76</sup> For example, in confronting the very specific historical circumstances of the Northern Kingdom of the mid-eighth century BCE, Amos and Hosea provide us with the language to speak about infidelity to God, to the dangers of centralized governmental decision-making, to the increasing gap between rich and poor, to the silencing and marginalizing of the poor. In reading their call for their own people to return to God and God's justice, we can see more clearly the places in our own world where we are failing to listen to God and to enact God's justice.

prophets, adolescent girls are empowered to exercise their own prophetic imaginations. In order to do this, however, they need a pedagogy that is both inspired by a feminist prophetic imagination and that educates for a feminist prophetic imagination. Liberative pedagogies and pedagogies of caring provide schools with the theoretical foundations that will undergird a feminist prophetic imagination. If schools take seriously the theological claim that adolescent girls are created in the image of God as well as the dangers to that identity presented by a patriarchal social imaginary as described by Hinshaw's triple bind, then these two pedagogical approaches provide insights into how schools can educate with and for a feminist prophetic imagination.

#### **5.4.1 Teaching WITH a Feminist Prophetic Imagination**

In order to form adolescent girls who are equipped to resist injustice and to form communities based on God's *hesed*, schools and teachers need to themselves be guided by a feminist prophetic imagination. This means that the commitments of the school in general and the pedagogical practices of individual teachers are inspired by this imagination. Teaching with a feminist prophetic imagination enables teachers to provide their students with an education that is theologically appropriate, that is liberative and caring, and that empowers adolescent girls to resist the triple bind.

First, teaching with a feminist prophetic imagination is a theologically appropriate pedagogical choice when considering the educational needs of adolescent girls; it honors the corporate and prophetic nature of the *imago Dei* symbol and focuses educational efforts on the ways that the community lives out God's call for resistance to injustice and for *hesed*. As discussed in chapter three, John Kilner argues that the *imago Dei* is an

identity that belongs to the entire community.<sup>77</sup> In other words, the community as a whole displays most fully what it means to be created in the image of God. Individual members of the community are fully created in the image of God, but the ways that each individual lives out this calling can vary from person to person. For adolescent girls, this means that each girl fully images God without exception and without regard to her developmental stage or chronological age. The community to which adolescent girls belong, then, models for them the many ways in which the image of God is expressed in humanity, relieving girls of the pressure to live up to one prioritized way of living out the calling to the *imago Dei*. This means that, if resistance to injustice and creating communities of God's *hesed* are ways of living out the *imago Dei* in a community, it is not necessary that adolescent members of the community know how to do this completely or perfectly. The adults in the community model this and propose to the girls that they are similarly called to this type of community. They do this explicitly by naming the many ways that actual girls in the community are living out the *imago Dei*. They do it implicitly when the culture of the school welcomes a wide diversity of experiences and ways of being female in the world; they do this by providing examples, role models, and stories of resistance and care.

A pedagogy inspired by a feminist prophetic imagination is also theologically appropriate for adolescent girls because it honors their “already-and-not-yet” status – their position in the community as imaging God as fully as any other member of the

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<sup>77</sup> John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2015). “Since God’s image has a corporate dimension to it and is not just something true of particular people by themselves, humanity’s existence in God’s image entails that everyone has this special significance of sacredness. There is a basic equality among members of the human community... As disabilities ethicist Hans Reinders observes, humanity’s creation in God’s image signifies that ‘in the loving eyes of God... there are no marginal cases of being human’” (315-316). Kilner is quoting Hans S. Reinders, *Receiving the Gift of Friendship: Profound Disability, Theological Anthropology, and Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 119.

community while, at the same time, being developmentally immature. Drawing on the work of Michelle Saracino, as in chapter three, a feminist prophetic imagination calls on teachers to understand them as having a hybrid identity, one that is made up of many stories.<sup>78</sup> One of these stories is their identity as a human being created in the image of God; other stories that make up each girl's identity shape the way that she interacts with the community and encounters the patriarchal social imaginary and the effects of the triple bind. When teachers take this hybridity seriously, their pedagogical strategies focus on the need for bringing those various stories into the dialogue. Girls are given the opportunity to bring any or all of the various aspects of their identity into conversation with the stories of the biblical and theological tradition. For example, in reading the stories of women in the Bible or of female saints, teachers can help girls see that these women were shaped by their families, their geographical and historical locations, and the expectations put on them by religious and societal institutions and that each of these factors shaped who they were.<sup>79</sup> In this girls can see that their own experience of being held to multiple expectations is not unique. And in this way, teachers and schools are able to model what it means to care for others. As Noddings suggests, a school that recognizes the multiplicity of identities that makes up each student is better able to provide the care that she needs and to create a community where each girls' gifts are recognized, appreciated, and nurtured.

Furthermore, teaching with a feminist prophetic imagination is theologically appropriate because it focuses on the thriving and flourishing of adolescent girls. A

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<sup>78</sup> Saracino, *Being About Borders*, 29-31.

<sup>79</sup> The story-telling methods of Dori Baker and Joyce Mercer would be particularly useful here. Dori Grinenko Baker, *Doing Girlfriend Theology: God-Talk with Young Women* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2005); Joyce Ann Mercer, *Girl Talk, God Talk: Why Faith Matters to Teenage Girls – and Their Parents* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008).

feminist prophetic imagination is one that not only denounces the silencing and marginalization of adolescent girls, it is one that engages in the announcing of a better way of being for them. Teaching with a feminist prophetic imagination calls educators to prioritize the needs of their students, something that most educators already do. And it calls educators to prioritize the equipping of adolescent girls with the tools to resist the injustices they encounter because of the patriarchal social imaginary and to imagine new ways of being in community built on God's continuing *hesed*. Since communities that practice God's *hesed* and resistance to injustice are focused on the thriving and flourishing of girls, they are places that honor the *imago Dei* in adolescent girls and educate with the goal of ensuring the continuing flourishing of girls. For example, when teachers engage students in the dialogical process of social critique (through curricular activities like research, case studies, or debates), girls can recover the anger that they can and should feel as a result of the triple bind. As Gilligan suggests, this recovery of appropriate anger foregrounds the legitimacy of their anger and undergirds attempts to resist the injustices they experience.<sup>80</sup>

Second, an education that is inspired by a feminist prophetic imagination is an education that is liberative. It is focused on the process of conscientization and the dialogue involved in reading the world and word. Building on the theological imperative of honoring adolescent girls as created in the image of God, a feminist prophetic imagination also demonstrates to adolescent girls what it means to engage in the prophetic practices of denouncing injustice, oppression, and marginalization and to announce practices of justice and *hesed*. In their pedagogical practices, teachers are called upon to participate in the prophetic practices of denunciation and annunciation as

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<sup>80</sup> Gilligan, *Joining the Resistance*, 135.

they draw students into the dialogue between the world of girls' lived experiences and the word of the biblical and theological tradition. This type of problem-posing education functions to problematize the embeddedness of the patriarchal social imaginary, empowering adolescent girls to think critically about their own silencing and marginalization. This need not supplant the content of the curriculum; rather, it can influence the ways that teachers ask students to engage that content. For example, research projects can move from asking students to describe injustice to inviting students to propose solutions to issues of injustice, particularly as they are related to the experiences of girls and women.

This type of teaching calls on educators to draw on the three imaginative perspectives outlined by post-colonial theologian Kwok Pui-Lan: the historical imagination, the dialogical imagination, and the diasporic imagination. First, the historical imagination involves the telling of stories that have been suppressed by colonizers and the history of people's oppression. Nurturing an historical imagination provides a sense of history, rootedness, and continuity, but also helps people understand how the world came to be as it is.<sup>81</sup> Teaching with the historical imagination in mind allows teachers to bring the biblical and theological tradition – the stories of the faith – forward for girls to examine and put into conversation with their own experiences. It also brings forward the history of oppression and marginalization of women and girls, both in the biblical and theological tradition and in the history and stories that form the patriarchal social imaginary and contrasts those stories with stories of resistance. Second, Kwok suggests the need for a dialogical imagination, one that is open to the collective

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<sup>81</sup> Kwok Pui-Lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 37. According to Kwok, "the historical imagination aims not to reconstitute the past but also to release the past so that the present is livable."



wisdom of the community. The dialogical imagination is what enables people to make connections among a wide variety of perspectives.<sup>82</sup> Teaching with the dialogical imagination prompts teachers to ensure that adolescent girls are exposed to the wider conversations and varied voices that make up both the biblical and theological tradition and contemporary responses to oppression and marginalization. As girls become more aware of the kinds of stories, experiences, and perspectives that are a part of the wider conversation, they are able to imagine themselves as a voice in the dialogue. By bringing in as many voices as possible into a dialogue, teachers are engaging in the kind of problem posing education that can lead to conscientization. Third, the diasporic imagination is proposed by Kwok; this is the part of the imagination that “recognizes the diversity of diasporas and honors the different histories and memories.”<sup>83</sup> The diasporic imagination undergirds an ability to recognize and respect difference in the stories and experiences that people bring with them. Teaching with Kwok’s diasporic imagination in mind encourages teachers to resist the impulse, in their teaching and in their interactions with students, to universalize any one set of experiences. As students are encouraged to consider their own experiences in dialogue with the stories of the biblical and theological tradition and the varied stories of other members of the community, the diasporic imagination insists that there is no one way to practice resistance to injustice, to form communities of God’s *hesed*, or to live as a woman or girl in contemporary society.

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<sup>82</sup> Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 38. “Dialogical imagination attempts to bridge the gaps of time and space, to create new horizons, and to connect the disparate elements of our lives into a meaningful whole.”

<sup>83</sup> Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 49. For Kwok, this refers primarily to the experiences of colonized peoples who live away from their countries of origin, often in very different circumstances: “The diasporic experiences of being a Chinese in the United States are different from those of a Chinese in Indonesia or in Peru.”

Teaching that is inspired by a feminist prophetic imagination is also liberative in the sense that it does not only focus on the dialogical processes that happen inside the classrooms and the school, it also actively orients students towards practices and actions that resist injustice, work for the establishment of a more just society, and for the creation of communities beyond the school that are informed by God's *hesed*. Praxis, action that is informed by and informs critical thinking, becomes a part of the process of education. Adolescent girls come to understand what it means to be people who resist injustice and form communities of *hesed* by participating in these practices, as modeled by the adults in the community, even as adolescents. In a banking approach to education, skills are taught so that students can put them into practice in some proposed future; in a liberative approach to education, students make these skills a part of their everyday lives. These skills then become part of each girls' life that she can bring into the conversation between world and word. For example, a breast cancer awareness club can intentionally make connections with agencies working to advance scientific research by and for women. In this, girls move from raising awareness and providing service to naming an injustice and acting in ways that help counteract that injustice, all supported and inspired by a community of care.

Third, an education that is inspired by a feminist prophetic imagination is one that is grounded in an ethic of care. Creating communities of God's *hesed*, where loving-kindness, mercy, forgiveness, and love form the basis of the community, requires that teachers embrace the obligation to care for their students. Teachers are genuinely interested in and engrossed by the students in their classrooms; they are committed to determining what kind of care students need and to providing that to them. More than

just knowing the names and backgrounds of their students, teachers are called, in a community of care, to cultivate a genuine interest in their students' lives, to tailoring academic work to the strengths and weaknesses of their students, and to providing ongoing support for all students.

In addition, a pedagogy grounded in an ethic of care means that teachers include all four of Noddings' components: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. In modeling care, teachers are actively working to create the kind of caring community that is characterized by God's *hesed*; they demonstrate *hesed* towards their students and, in this, show students how to demonstrate *hesed* themselves. A teacher reaches out to the sad girl, celebrates with the girl who is happy, invites students to pray for a girl who is sick, publically offers opportunities for help and follows up on this offer. In dialogue, teachers are concern not only with providing the opportunity for conscientization that happens in the process of reading the world and word. They are also committed to a dialogue that aids in the formation and maintenance of relationships among students and teachers. Dialogue becomes both a practice of learning information and skills (such as practices of resistance to injustice), but also a practice of learning about the people with whom students are in relationships. This may mean finding out about students' backgrounds and incorporating this into the problems posed in classroom instruction and learning from students – through their research, questions, and concerns – and allowing these to influence the work of the classroom. The practice of care and caring relationships provides students with the opportunity to try out different ways of receiving care from others and of providing care to others. In this way, students can try out various ways of being caring and forming caring relationships within the context of a school

community that is committed to God's *hesed* – experiences like service work, teacher and peer mentoring programs, and peer ministry programs can all provide these opportunities to learn about forming relationships. And, as teachers and fellow-students provide confirmation in the practice of care, students are affirmed in their attempts to provide care and are encouraged to continue to put an ethic of care into practice, creating a community where student efforts are publically and privately recognized.

A pedagogy of care grounds a feminist prophetic imagination by taking seriously the experiences of women and girls, by taking an aspect of human experience that has traditionally been associated with women and therefore regarded as less valuable, and putting it at the center of attention. This nurturing of relationships, seen as the responsibility of women and girls, can become a source of powerful critique of a dominant and patriarchal social imaginary. The triple bind, for example, tells girls that they are expected to bear primary responsibility for the formation and maintenance of caring relationships. A feminist critique of the triple bind does not reject the responsibility of all people – including women and girls – to practice caring; rather, it denounces the insistence that this is the work of women and not the work of men. A feminist prophetic imagination announces a re-appropriated understanding of care, understood as a living out of God's *hesed*, which refuses to sacrifice the pursuit of justice for the maintenance of relationships. An ethic of care reminds schools, teachers, and girls that caring for others is a living out of the *imago Dei* and a foundation for resisting injustice.

Fourth, a pedagogy grounded in a feminist prophetic imagination is necessary because it equips adolescent girls to resist the triple bind. Beyond simply being a

liberative education, teaching that is rooted in a feminist prophetic imagination specifically equips adolescent girls to recognize that the pressures they experience are a result of the patriarchal social imaginary as described by Stephen Hinshaw as the triple bind. A feminist prophetic imagination is one that sees that the kinds of pressures that the triple bind puts on girls is not a widening of options for girls – that girls can now participate in all the activities that had traditionally been the domain of boys and men. Rather, it is a narrowing of their options. Because girls are held to three sets of impossible to meet standards, their choices become narrowly prescribed; there is only one way, under the triple bind, to be a girl or woman in contemporary society – by being focused on relationships AND by being focused on a competitive career AND by meeting exacting and narrow standards of beauty.

Because adolescent girls are not yet developmentally mature enough to see for themselves how a patriarchal social imaginary such as the triple bind is constraining and influencing their choices and behaviors, they need the adults in their lives to draw their attention to it and help them to see it for themselves. By operating out of a feminist prophetic imagination, educators are able to read their world and the word provided by the biblical and theological tradition and the work of social scientists. In particular, they are able to take the work of psychologists like Stephen Hinshaw, of theologians and biblical scholars like Michelle Saracino, John Kilner, and Walter Brueggemann, and of the biblical and theological tradition as a whole and to put this great body of reflection into conversation with what they see of the patriarchal social imaginary as it is experienced by women and girls in contemporary society. Because educators have access to this ongoing dialogue, they are able to use it as a tool of analysis in constructing

educational experiences for girls that are liberative and honor their status as human beings created in the image of God. For example, teachers can help girls to see that the exacting standards of physical beauty are most often communicated through advertising and engaging this in dialogue with the theological affirmation that embodiment is good. Because they have access to this ongoing dialogue between the world and the word, educators can identify and name the triple bind and the ways that it is impacting their students as a preliminary step to helping their students to see it for themselves. In this way, teaching with a feminist prophetic imagination becomes a practice of initiating adolescent girls into a community of resistance to injustice and of the practice of God's *hesed*.

#### **5.4.2 Teaching FOR a Feminist Prophetic Imagination**

A pedagogy that is founded on a feminist prophetic imagination also can inspire the formation of a feminist prophetic imagination in adolescent girls; when teachers are teaching with a feminist prophetic imagination, they can also help their students cultivate their own feminist prophetic imaginations. Grounded in the theological and pedagogical approaches of Freire and Noddings, cultivating a feminist prophetic imagination in adolescent girls becomes not just an educational choice, but a theological imperative. Teaching for a feminist prophetic imagination participates in the conscientization of adolescent girls about their status as created in the *imago Dei*, it is an exercise of caring for adolescent girls, it apprentices them in the practices of God's *hesed* and resistance to injustice, and it equips girls to engage in prophetic denunciation and annunciation even after they leave the school community.

First, the theological claim that all human beings are created in the image of God is one of the most powerful assertions of the biblical and theological tradition. To take it seriously means more than simply acknowledging it as a one-time claim from the Genesis creation stories. As discussed in chapter three, the *imago Dei* symbol serves as the impetus for the call to create a more just future for all those who have historically been marginalized in the biblical and theological tradition. As Mary Catherine Hilkert suggests, the *imago Dei* is both a characteristic of humanity and a vocation we are called to live into more and more fully. She calls for “human communities and individuals [to] rise up in indignation, protest, solidarity, and action on behalf of those whose basic human dignity has been violated.”<sup>84</sup> However, this rising up is how teachers would teach *with* a feminist prophetic imagination – acting on behalf of adolescent girls to affirm their creation in the *imago Dei*. To teach so that adolescent girls can know for themselves, critically reflect on, and act out of this theological truth involves forming girls in their own feminist prophetic imagination. To fail to do this falls into the trap described by Karen Teel<sup>85</sup> – unless teachers are cultivating a feminist prophetic imagination in adolescent girls, they are suggesting that girls possess the *imago Dei* in a passive way and are unable to exercise this status for themselves.

However, as Paulo Freire and his liberation theologian interlocutors have insisted, simply knowing about a concept is insufficient in the process of conscientization and liberation. If the *imago Dei* is to drive in adolescent girls their own feminist prophetic imagination, schools and educators are called to see education for conscientization as a

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<sup>84</sup> Mary Catherine Hilkert, “Cry Beloved Image: Rethinking the Image of God,” in *In the Embrace of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Ann O’Hara Graff (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 200.

<sup>85</sup> Karen Teel, *Racism and the Image of God* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 45-46.

theological imperative. In the process of conscientization, adolescent girls not only become aware of their status as human beings created in the image of God and as being called to the corporate exercise of a prophetic imagination, they are given the opportunity to critically reflect on this in light of their own lived experiences. In other words, they are invited to move beyond simply studying about the *imago Dei* in their theology classes and are welcomed into the ongoing liberative dialogue that brings the *imago Dei* as a theological claim into conversation with the toxicity of the patriarchal social imaginary. This means that girls are provided with opportunities to read the world and read the word: to reflect on their own experiences of marginalization and to consider the ways that this marginalization violates their already fully realized status as created in the image of God. For example, critical reflection on dating relationships provides girls with an opportunity to think about the roles that these relationships play in their lives and how this can be brought into conversation with the *imago Dei* symbol. Nel Noddings reminds us that this dialogue, as a part of the sequence of modeling, dialoguing, practicing, and confirming, takes place in a community of care – a community grounded in God’s *hesed*. Engaging in real dialogue – dialogue that is open-ended and honest – provides adolescent girls with a context within which to think critically about the ways that they can live into their status as human beings created in the image of God and as persons who can exercise a feminist prophetic imagination.

And, again taking Freire and the work of feminist and liberation theologians seriously, there is a theological imperative to helping adolescent girls move from understanding and critically reflecting on the *imago Dei* to an active response – perhaps through public protest, but also in more localized praxis aimed at the immediate school



community. The movement to praxis involves helping adolescent girls realize that they are already a part of the community of God's *hesed* and, as members of the community, they have a right and a responsibility to participate in making that community more just through concrete practices of resistance to injustice. Noddings' reminder of the importance of providing opportunities to practice care and caring relationships holds true for practices of resistance. Adolescent girls need opportunities, in a community committed to their care and growth, to practice and reflect upon their attempts to exercise a feminist prophetic imagination, perhaps in service and extra-curricular programs (such as an Amnesty International club or a diversity program). The practices of denunciation of injustice and annunciation of a better world can become a more ingrained part of how adolescent girls read the world and the word with practice, support, and confirmation from the adults in a caring school community.

Second, educating adolescent girls with an eye towards helping them develop their own feminist prophetic imagination is an act of caring. As Noddings suggests, schools can be communities of care for students, teaching them how to form and maintain relationships with others and to make decisions based on an ethic of care. Similarly, schools can be communities of God's *hesed* where students are inducted into practices of a feminist prophetic imagination. And, more importantly, they can be places where learning the practices of a feminist prophetic imagination – practices of denunciation and annunciation – are incorporated into what it means to form a community of care.

Prophetic denunciation and annunciation is an exercise of care because the desire to change that which is unjust comes from a sense of concern for others. As adolescent girls engage in the critical reflection involved in reading the world and reading the word, they

need adults around them who are in caring relationships with them. They need these carers because they need the support, modeling, and confirmation that teachers can provide as they practice these skills of denunciation and annunciation. For example, inviting students into the school's own ongoing process of critical self-reflection – as it explores its mission to provide an education that responds to both the contemporary milieu and the theological commitments of the Church – helps girls see the school's practices of care in the processes of dialogue and reading the world and word.

In addition, educating adolescent girls with an eye towards helping them develop their own feminist prophetic imagination is an exercise of caring in that it is an example of teachers wanting what is best for students. If exercising a feminist prophetic imagination is a part of what it means to live out the *imago Dei*, then helping students develop their own feminist prophetic imaginations is helping them to live out the *imago Dei* more fully. In other words, if teachers want the best for the adolescent girls in their charge, then helping them create communities of *hesed*, engage in practices of resistance, and develop a feminist prophetic imagination is a way of providing care for them.

Third, teaching for the development of a feminist prophetic imagination in adolescent girls is an act of apprenticing them in this as a practice of communities of care. Researchers Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave suggest that apprenticeship is an important way of understanding how learning happens in communities. Apprenticeship has long been a recognized way for adults to share their knowledge and practices with young people and it is a valuable model for understanding how adults can help form young people in the practices of a particular group.<sup>86</sup> Noddings suggests this as well

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<sup>86</sup> Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 61-87. Lave and Wenger caution against conflating apprenticeship as

when she insists on the need for adults to model caring relationships, for students to practice these kinds of caring relationships, and for adults to provide confirmation to students as they learn these skills. As students move from unskilled novice to competency, they get to practice skills in an environment where mistakes are expected and have fewer consequences.<sup>87</sup>

When teachers view the development of a feminist prophetic imagination in adolescent girls as taking place in a kind of apprenticeship, they are providing their students with a way of learning the skills of prophetic denunciation and annunciation in a community of God's *hesed*. This community, because it is a school, is oriented towards helping girls learn these practices, has the adults with enough proficiency in their own feminist prophetic imaginations to pass along these skills, and understands them as a part of living out the *imago Dei*. Schools oriented towards helping adolescent girls develop their own feminist prophetic imaginations are communities where girls can explore what this means and practice the skills involved. And they can do this in an environment where their progress is affirmed by adults and where mistakes are expected, have fewer

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it was practiced in feudal medieval Europe and the ways it is practiced today in a variety of cultural situations (62-63). Despite these cultural differences, Lave and Wenger suggest that apprenticeship functions as a way of understanding how learning can happen in communities. They offer the example of a newcomer to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting who observes the formal and informal practices of the community, participates in those practices in incremental ways, and eventually becomes an "old-timer" in the community. Lave and Wenger also note that learning in apprenticeship is not less rigorous than formal schooling; rather, it is often highly organized and regulated, even when this is not the same as what happens in traditional schooling. "There are strong goals for learning because learners, as peripheral participants, can develop a view of what the whole enterprise is about, and what there is to be learned. Learning itself is an improvised practice: A learning curriculum unfolds in opportunities for engagement in practice. It is not specified as a set of dictates for proper practice" (93).

<sup>87</sup> The idea of the educational setting as a potentially safe place to make mistakes is widely explored in the literature. See, for example, Andrew Tawfik, Hui Rong, and Ikseon Choi, "Failing to Learn: Towards a Unified Design Approach for Failure-Based Learning," *Educational Technology Research and Development* 63, no. 6 (December 2015): 975-994. Robert Kegan's approach to holding environments suggests something similar – that, when students are provided with an environment that both supports and challenges them, they are able to take risks and learn from their mistakes. See Robert Kegan, *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 42-45.

consequences, and can be more easily corrected. For example, first year students are inducted into the practices of care – some as simple as holding a door or thanking a teacher at the end of class; by their fourth year, students are ready to offer care through more formal programs – by being student government leaders, peer mentors, or Big Sisters.

Fourth, teaching for the development of a feminist prophetic imagination in adolescent girls equips them with the tools that they will need to exercise this feminist prophetic imagination in whatever they take up after high school. Most secondary schools claim, as a part of their missions, to be educating students for success in college and career; if schools and teachers are committed to educating girls for and with a feminist prophetic imagination, they are also called to take seriously how these skills and commitments will serve girls beyond their time at the school. The school community, as a community of God's *hesed*, is committed to providing girls with the adult modeling of practices of denunciation and annunciation, opportunities to engage in the dialogical process of reading the world and the word, encouragement to practice their own prophetic denunciation and annunciation, and confirmation that they are fully living into their status as created in the image of God as they do all of this. But, because the school is only a short-term community for adolescent girls and because they will go on to join many other communities, the school can nurture girls in a feminist prophetic imagination so that they will take that imagination into those future communities. Girls who have learned how to engage the world and the word in the relatively safe space of the secondary school will be better equipped to continue to do so as adults. They become, as suggested by Etienne

Wenger, the masters and the brokers<sup>88</sup> – taking their knowledge and skills into new communities.<sup>89</sup> Not only are they aware of the toxicity of a patriarchal social imaginary that seeks to force girls and women to conform to unrealistic expectations, they are also practiced in the kind of critical reflection and informed practices of resistance that can help them resist the triple bind and shape a new social imaginary. Educating for a feminist prophetic imagination in adolescent girls sets them up to become prophets – denouncing the triple bind and other injustices and announcing more just ways of living in the world – living more fully into the *imago Dei*.

For a girl like Katie, this formation in a feminist prophetic imagination is something that is entwined in all of the other things that she is doing at school. In her classes, she learns about the *imago Dei*, the Christian call to prophetic denunciation and annunciation, the experiences of those who have been oppressed and marginalized, the exploitation and harassment of women and girls in contemporary society, and the skills of critical engagement with the world around her. In her clubs and sports teams, she has seen caring modeled for her in the ways that teachers spend time with her, express interest in her life, and challenge her to form deeper relationships with her peers and teachers. When she breaks a school rule, she is both affirmed as a person created in the

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<sup>88</sup> Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 108-110. According to Wenger, brokers are people who are able to make connections across communities, enabling communication across those communities. Masters are those who have gained competence in the community and then share this competence with others. Wenger names this as an “outbound trajectory” – when a member of a community is able to “[develop] new relationships, [find] a different position with respect to a community, and [see] the world and oneself in new ways” (155). See also Lave and Wenger, *Situated Learning*, 56-57.

<sup>89</sup> There is considerable literature that investigates how leadership practices learned in the all-girls’ high school translate to confidence and participation at the college level. See, for example, Nicole Archard, “Developing Future Women Leaders: The Importance of Mentoring and Role Modeling in the Girls’ School Context,” *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning* 20, no. 4 (2012): 451-472; Valerie E. Lee and Helen M. Marks, “Sustained Effects of the Single-Sex Secondary School Experience on Attitudes, Behaviors, and Values in College,” *Journal of Educational Psychology* 82, no. 3 (September 1990): 578-92.

image of God and challenged to live more fully into what that means for how she honors her relationships with God, her peers, and herself. By the time she enters college, Katie may be confident that she can resist the societal pressure to conform to the conflicting expectations of the triple bind and can work to make the world a better place by advocating for herself and others marginalized by a patriarchal social imaginary.

## **5.5 FEMINIST PROPEHTIC IMAGINATION AND SCHOOL MISSION**

Schools have the opportunity to consider the ways that they can prepare adolescent girls to live out more fully their status and calling as human beings created in the image of God and to resist the toxic effects of a patriarchal social imaginary that is reflected in the triple bind. If an important part of accomplishing this task is the formation of communities that live out God's commitment to *hesed* and resistance to injustice, then educational practices that both reflect a feminist prophetic imagination and help girls develop their own feminist prophetic imaginations are needed. This vision for a pedagogy inspired by a feminist prophetic imagination is not simply something that happens in individual classrooms with individual groups of teachers and students, although it does need to be implemented here. Nor can it be an optional approach, merely one pedagogical technique among the many that educators can choose from. Rather, educating with and for a feminist prophetic imagination needs to be incorporated into the day-to-day life of the school and into the mission of the school. Ultimately, it needs to become part of the social imaginary of the community.

First, incorporating pedagogical approaches that are oriented towards a feminist prophetic imagination into the day-to-day life of the school means considering the three

curricula that Eisner describes. The practice of reading the world and the word with adolescent girls with the goal of conscientization and the formation of a feminist prophetic imagination does involve the explicit curriculum of a school. The explicit curriculum refers to the stated curriculum and formal programs of a school, what the school has consciously chosen to teach. From this perspective, reading the world and word takes place in classrooms with teachers who are committed to a liberative education. It involves having access to the texts, including written texts and communal practices, that will serve as the word to be in conversation with the world and teachers have the best opportunity to provide students with access to these texts as they design course curricula that engage students in critical reflection on their own experiences. The challenge for teachers in this is to not allow those texts, especially the resources of the biblical and theological tradition, to become merely a record of past experiences, a record that can easily be dismissed as irrelevant.<sup>90</sup> Rather, the explicit curriculum of the school can be oriented towards the intentional reading of these texts in conversation with the lived experiences of the members of the community.

Pedagogical commitments to a feminist prophetic imagination also serve to undergird the implicit curriculum of a school. The implicit curriculum is what the school teaches through the culture of the school and the broader life of the community beyond what happens in the classroom and formal programs. A school that operates out of this

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<sup>90</sup> Freire would describe this view of a text as static and separated from the people who read it as a magical understanding of the text. “For someone understanding it as magical, content in itself has such power, such importance, that one need only ‘deposit’ it in educands in order for its power to effect the desired change... Any discussion about social, political, economic, or cultural reality... is regarded as not only unnecessary, but simply irrelevant” (Freire, “Pedagogy of Hope,” 243). In her critique of how biblical studies is approached at the graduate level, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza argues that, by treating the text only as an object of scientific study through the use of the various critical methods, we are suspending our own historical situation and we are not interacting with the text. We do not allow it to serve as our teacher (Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Democratizing Biblical Studies: Toward an Emancipatory Educational Space* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 16).

commitment to nurturing a feminist prophetic imagination seeks to create the kind of community where God's *hesed* and the cultivation of practices of resistance become a part of the shared goal and repertoire of the school. As girls are welcomed into the community and exposed to these practices, they begin to participate in peripheral ways. But, because the whole community is oriented towards these practices and values, they become a part of "the way things are done here." By becoming a part of the culture of the school, then, a feminist prophetic imagination that seeks to affirm the *imago Dei* in adolescent girls and to enable them to resist the toxicity of the triple bind is one that becomes operative in the background of the life of the school – not always reflected upon, but always influencing the way that the school lives out its commitments and values.

A pedagogy inspired by a feminist prophetic imagination is also one that functions to expose and critique the null curriculum of a school. The null curriculum is what the school teaches students as a result of what it chooses not to address. When a school chooses to ignore the presence of a patriarchal social imaginary and its effects on students, particularly its manifestation as a toxic milieu experienced by adolescent girls, it is tacitly and unintentionally condoning that social imaginary. In other words, by not helping adolescent girls see and resist the effects of the cultural and behavioral expectations of the triple bind, the school is sending a message to girls that these expectations are legitimate and that the pressure they feel to meet these expectations is appropriate. A pedagogy that is guided by a feminist prophetic imagination and that seeks to develop such an imagination in adolescent girls will not ignore the effects of this



kind of null curriculum. Instead, the school can take the opportunity to make it an explicit and implicit part of what students learn.

Second, beyond the day-to-day curricular decision that a school can make to incorporate a pedagogy inspired by a feminist prophetic imagination, these commitments can be institutionalized by making them a part of the formal mission statements of the school. In these statements, schools name their core educational commitments and approach to the educational process. A school that is informed by a feminist prophetic imagination is one that explicitly commits itself to honoring the *imago Dei* in all of its students, particularly in adolescent girls. It is a school that is committed to the flourishing and thriving of adolescent girls and recognizes their multi-storied identities. It sees that the *imago Dei* is both a description of each individual girl and of the community as a whole, as each member of the community expresses the *imago Dei* in her own way. A mission that is informed by a feminist prophetic imagination sees that the community of the school can be a community of care, mercy, and kindness – a community of God’s *hesed*. And it is a community that apprentices adolescent girls in practices of resistance to injustice, particularly the injustices that women and girls experience as a result of a patriarchal social imaginary. A mission informed by a feminist prophetic imagination is a school that embraces a liberative pedagogy that brings the world of students’ experiences into dialogue with the word of the biblical and theological tradition. And it is one that forms students as critical thinkers, helping them to engage in critical reflection on their experiences and to act for a more just world.

Third, as a mission that embraces a feminist prophetic imagination that honors the *imago Dei* in adolescent girls and cultivates communities of *hesed* and resistance to

injustice, the operative social imaginary of the local community is transformed. The school can reject the patriarchal social imaginary of the larger society and its toxic effects experienced by girls and women and it can embrace a more egalitarian and just social imaginary. This moves the feminist prophetic imagination from something that guides the implicit curriculum and the mission statements of a school to something that fundamentally shapes how people think of the community and the way it works. It becomes the way members of the school community “imagine their social existence.”<sup>91</sup>

Furthermore, while no one school, even a school committed to a feminist prophetic imagination in its mission and living it out in its curricula, can change the whole of a social imaginary, schools do have the opportunity to participate in the slow and steady process of shaping that social imaginary. Through seemingly small actions, words, commitments, and attitudes, schools can form and transform its students. Students enter a school community as peripheral participants in the life and mission of the school, but they leave that school community as potential brokers who can carry the culture and ideals of the community to new groupings, people, and communities of practice. In this way, the effect of the school is larger than the immediate community that it forms. Not only does a school community have an effect on its wider constituents (parents, alumnae, neighbors, donors), as students leave the community to form new communities, the effect is multiplied. A school that educates adolescent girls with and for a feminist prophetic imagination, therefore, has the opportunity to shape more than just the girls that attend that school; they have the opportunity to shape all the communities those girls will eventually join. And this can have an effect on the social

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<sup>91</sup> Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 23.

imaginary – calling out its patriarchy and toxicity and arguing for a more just way for women and girls to be in the world.

For schools like the one that Katie attends, schools like Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School and Mount Saint Joseph Academy, the challenge is one of explicitly acknowledging the implications of the fact that their students are created in the image of God. By working towards implementing a feminist prophetic imagination, adolescent girls will be able to read the world of their experience in dialogue with the texts handed down to them by the biblical and theological tradition, reflect critically on their world and its patriarchal social imaginary, and propose new ways of being in the world. They will be able to be prophets in their own world and towards their own flourishing. These theological statements have important educational implications. If adolescent girls are created in the image of God, what kind of communities do schools need to be? What are their shared values and practices? How do they ensure the thriving of a diverse community of girls? How can they prepare girls to resist the forces in society that are not seeking their thriving? For schools like Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School and Mount Saint Joseph Academy, this involves a commitment to educating with and for a feminist prophetic imagination. As we return, in chapter six, to the stories of these two schools, we can see how the commitment to a feminist prophetic imagination can be already present and what schools can do to further implement it.

## 6.0 CHAPTER SIX EMPOWERING THE PROPHETIC: EDUCATING FOR A FEMINIST PROPHETIC IMAGINATION IN THE ALL-GIRLS' CATHOLIC SCHOOL

In chapter one of this dissertation, we encountered the stories of two all-girls' Catholic schools: Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School in Washington, DC and Mount Saint Joseph Academy in Boston, MA. Their students, girls like Katie whose story was interwoven through the body of this dissertation, care about their families, their friends, their schoolwork, and their wider world. Because they spend so much of their daily lives at school, these institutions play important roles in the ways that girls like Katie are socialized and prepared to meet the challenges of the contemporary world.

Georgetown Visitation, for example,<sup>1</sup> has built its reputation on the good work begun by the Sisters of the Visitation, the founding religious community, reflecting an ongoing concern for the well-being and empowerment of girls, often in times when the education of girls was devalued.<sup>2</sup> Today, Georgetown Visitation is proud to offer a rigorous education that prepares students to attend and succeed at competitive colleges.<sup>3</sup> Given the weight of its history and its reputation for preparing young women who can be successful in college and career, it would be tempting for the school to rest on its laurels and to continue doing what has seemed to work for so long. However, the very history

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<sup>1</sup> Here Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School is used as an example of an all-girls' Catholic school. It was chosen, in part, because the author worked there for fifteen years, as a teacher and administrator. While Georgetown Visitation is unlike other all-girls' Catholic schools in some important ways (in particular, its finances and enrollment picture are more secure than many other all-girls' schools), it does offer enough similarities with other all-girls' Catholic schools to permit its use in telling this story. The lessons to be learned from Mount Saint Joseph Academy – a school that closed in 2012, merged with another high school, and reopened as a coeducational school – will be considered later in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter one for a more thorough introduction to the history of Georgetown Visitation. See also Eleanore C. Sullivan and Susan Hannan, *Georgetown Visitation: Since 1799*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Washington, DC: Georgetown Visitation Monastery, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> For example, see the Georgetown Visitation portrait of a graduate: Georgetown Visitation, "Mission Statement," <http://www.visi.org/about-us/mission-statement/index.aspx> (accessed March 26, 2017).

that has grounded the school also impels it to continue to confront the challenges that adolescent girls face in the contemporary world.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the toxicity of a patriarchal social imaginary necessitates renewed attention to the girls it teaches and the curricula it offers. By engaging in the self-reflective work of studying the contemporary situation of adolescent girls and the ways that their curricula meet and fail to meet the needs of girls, Georgetown Visitation and schools like it can not only transform what they do for their students, but can also provide an example to other schools, both all-girls' Catholic schools and coeducational Catholic schools. The biggest challenge for schools like Georgetown Visitation is that they often do not name or resist the triple bind.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, by failing to name this, all-girls' Catholic schools can end up reinforcing the triple bind by insisting that their students can "do it all."<sup>6</sup> Despite this challenge, schools like Georgetown Visitation do have several assets to draw from to counter the triple bind. They have a long tradition of honoring the dignity and uniqueness of each

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<sup>4</sup> For example, the Georgetown Visitation mission statement names the challenges of a "rapidly changing and morally complex world" as the context within which the school's educational efforts are situated. See, Georgetown Visitation, "Mission Statement."

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Hinshaw with Rachel Kranz, *The Triple Bind: Saving Our Teenage Girls from Today's Pressures and Conflicting Expectations* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2009), 6-14. As described by Hinshaw, this is the demand that girls conform to a set of three contradictory and impossible to meet expectations: to excel at the relationships and nurturing skills traditionally associated with girls and women, to excel at the competition and success-oriented skills traditionally associated with boys and men, and to do all of this while meeting the highest standards of physical beauty.

<sup>6</sup> For example, on the admissions page of the Georgetown Visitation website, girls are invited to participate in the wide variety of activities that are available. The concern is that these serve not as a menu of options, but as a list of requirements: "Our students learn outside the classroom as they participate in Christian service projects, athletic competitions, performing arts programs, retreats, and traditional celebrations such as Marshmallow Roast and Gold-White. Participation in all of these activities offers our girls opportunities to broaden their life experiences as they grow spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally" (Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School, "Welcome to Georgetown Visitation," <http://www.visi.org/admissions/index.aspx> (accessed March 26, 2017)). In its accreditation self-study document, Georgetown Visitation identified this as an issue warranting further attention: "While 'personal decision making' is discussed frequently, there is a sense... that students do not really learn to set priorities or make choices. The question arises about whether we are encouraging the students to practice the moderation that is an integral part of [the spiritual charism of the sisters]. They are encouraged to do it all with apparent emphasis on all activities as of equal value. They recognize the need to enroll in honors and AP courses to strengthen their transcripts, but then they also participate in very time consuming co-curricular activities and wonder... why they feel stressed" (Georgetown Visitation, "Middle States Accreditation State of the School Report," 37.)

girl<sup>7</sup> as well as a foundation for the formation of a feminist prophetic imagination in a rigorous curriculum that invites critical thinking.<sup>8</sup>

As schools like Georgetown Visitation look to build on their key commitments in order to help adolescent girls better name and resist the toxicity of the triple bind's expectations, turning to a pedagogy that intentionally forms girls in a feminist prophetic imagination is warranted. This chapter argues that all-girls' Catholic secondary schools are already places of empowerment for young women. They take seriously the challenges of being a young woman in the twenty-first century, they can appropriate the biblical and theological tradition in a way that can empower young women, and they can cultivate a prophetic imagination. This chapter considers the ways that all-girls' Catholic schools already manifest this mission and the ways that they fall short of it. It suggests that a commitment to a feminist prophetic imagination can be incorporated into the mission of the all-girls' Catholic school. Finally, it draws implications for adolescent girls attending coeducational schools, for boys in both all-boys' and coeducational schools, and for Catholic schools in general.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, Georgetown Visitation's Board of Directors publishes a "Philosophy of Community Culture which states that "In keeping with our mission of "Living Jesus," Georgetown Visitation is committed to fostering an institutional culture which honors the dignity and sacredness of every individual. As a Salesian community, we derive strength from the belief that all people, as children of God, merit respect and equality" (Georgetown Visitation, "Diversity and Inclusion," <http://www.visi.org/about-us/board-of-trustees/diversity-inclusion/index.aspx> (accessed March 26, 2017). See also: Georgetown Visitation, "Middle States," 56.

<sup>8</sup> For example, Georgetown Visitation describes its academic program as striving "to create an engaging learning environment that encourages critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, and academic excellence" (Georgetown Visitation, "Our Program," <http://www.visi.org/academics/index.aspx> (accessed March 26, 2017)).

## 6.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR ALL-GIRLS' CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Throughout this dissertation, a number of key themes have emerged. In helping adolescent girls to recognize, name, and resist the effects of a toxic patriarchal social imaginary (named here as the triple bind), schools can draw on two key theological commitments: the *imago Dei* symbol and participation in a prophetic imagination. First, the *imago Dei* symbol affirms the foundational theological truth that all human beings are created in the image of God and that, because of this, all are fully human. For adolescent girls, this status of being created in the image of God means that their fully human status is not dependant on their chronological age or developmental stage. Second, the call to exercise a prophetic imagination is an expression of the call to live out the *imago Dei* and suggests that the whole Church is called to denounce injustice and announce justice and care. Adolescent girls, as full members of the human community, are called to image God in this process and the Church and its schools have a responsibility to help girls exercise this prophetic imagination.

In order to honor the theological commitments to the *imago Dei* and the formation of a prophetic imagination for adolescent girls, this dissertation proposes that schools form themselves around two commitments: creating communities of God's *hesed* and practicing resistance to injustice. Communities of God's *hesed* are intergenerational communities that honor the relationality of adolescent girls while providing them with the kinds of support systems they need to grow into healthy adulthood. Practices of resistance empower adolescent girls to name the toxic effects of the triple bind and to imagine ways of resisting its influence over them. Both of these commitments are rooted in the prophetic tradition and express the *imago Dei*. And both of these commitments are

oriented towards the thriving of adolescent girls, honor their multi-storied nature, and focus on the corporate nature of living out human creation in the image of God.

Cultivating such a feminist prophetic imagination is a task for which all-girls' Catholic schools are well-suited. Drawing upon the insights of the liberative pedagogy of Paulo Freire<sup>9</sup> and the caring pedagogy of Nel Noddings,<sup>10</sup> presented in chapter five, this chapter explores the conditions that make possible the creation of communities of God's *hesed* and resistance to injustice in the life of the school. As a way to explore these possibilities, this section revisits Eliot Eisner's three curricula – the explicit curriculum, the implicit curriculum, and the null curriculum<sup>11</sup> – in order to discover how schools that already have a commitment to educate for a feminist prophetic imagination may seem to fall short of this commitment. Next, for schools who want to formalize their commitment to a feminist prophetic imagination, it further suggests how to incorporate the liberative and caring pedagogical approaches that were discussed in chapter five.

### 6.1.1 Meeting the Goal

All-girls' Catholic secondary schools already do much as part of their explicit and implicit curricula that are expressions of a feminist prophetic imagination and that enable the formation of a feminist prophetic imagination in adolescent girls. These schools provide an education that intentionally focuses on girls' education and empowerment, that reveals a theological commitment to honoring the *imago Dei* in students, that is

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<sup>9</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1989).

<sup>10</sup> Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Elliot W. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall, 2002), 87-88.



committed to establishing community and doing justice, and that shapes a culture of care for girls.

In their explicit curricula – in what schools choose to teach through their public statements, curricular choices, and formal programs – many all-girls’ Catholic schools already have the basic commitments that could ground an education that focuses on a feminist prophetic imagination. First, by choosing to focus exclusively on the education of adolescent girls, these schools are explicitly committed to the thriving and empowerment of girls. A focus on developing leadership skills and providing girls with leadership opportunities are also explicit ways that schools demonstrate this commitment. And, by taking on the mission of empowering girls, these schools are explicitly claiming that their students need to be prepared to meet the challenges of a world that marginalizes women, silences their voices, and imposes contradictory expectations on them.

Second, as institutions in the Catholic Church, all-girls’ Catholic schools participate in an educational program that regards children and adolescents as possessing human dignity and goodness rooted in their creation as *imago Dei*. In choosing a single-sex mission, these schools are also explicitly claiming that adolescent girls in particular participate in this inherent identity as persons created in the image of God. Through theology curricula and campus ministry programs, all-girls’ Catholic schools intentionally communicate to their students that all humans are created in the image of God. This theology curriculum also teaches students about the biblical prophets and the prophetic task. By introducing adolescent girls to these biblical figures and the ways that they exercised their imaginations, schools are laying a foundation in their explicit curriculum for talking about what a prophetic imagination looks like for adolescent girls.

Third, like most Catholic institutions, all-girls' Catholic schools engage the Church's commitment to the work of justice for those who are marginalized and oppressed. Choosing to serve adolescent girls is, in itself, an act of standing up for women and girls, a group marginalized in both society and the Church. In addition, all-girls' Catholic schools cultivate an appreciation for the Church's social justice teachings and the implications of these teachings for how we are called to respond to those who are poor, oppressed, or marginalized. This commitment is most often explicitly communicated through theology classes; social justice and service programs provide girls with opportunities to identify situations of injustice and to participate in practices that resist and work to ameliorate those injustices. In particular, modern-day prophets – people like Martin Luther King, Jr., Oscar Romero, and Dorothy Day – are presented as models of what the quest for social justice can look like and provide students with examples of the prophetic imagination active in the contemporary world.

In their implicit curricula – in what schools teach through their culture and community – all-girls' Catholic schools reinforce the basic commitments that undergird a feminist prophetic imagination. First, because they have chosen to educate only girls, these schools have chosen a feminist mission. Even though many (or most) schools choose not to explicitly identify their mission as a feminist one, the particular focus on the education and empowerment of girls so that they will be prepared to confront the challenges presented to them beyond the school aligns with feminist pedagogical objectives. In all-girls' Catholic schools, students are taught, through the culture of the school and through the unwritten expectations of the community, that they can fully participate in the life of the school, that they are able to take up leadership roles, that they

can study any subject they want, that they should make their own choices about their lives. This implicit feminist curriculum cultivates practices of resistance as schools, through the culture and day-to-day life of the school, help girls to see the ways that women are marginalized in the world and how they can resist this marginalization.

Second, all-girls' Catholic schools have an implicit curriculum that is oriented around the cultivation of communities of care. All-girls' Catholic schools create communities that encourage a spirit of cooperation and an ethic of care among students and teachers. If, as Carol Gilligan suggests,<sup>12</sup> girls are more often oriented towards the establishing and maintaining of relationships, all-girls' schools provide an environment where these caring relationships are encouraged and cultivated. Girls in all-girls' schools often describe the school as a sisterhood, where girls watch out for each other and help each other. While not free of stress and anxiety around relationships, all-girls' Catholic schools provide an atmosphere that is oriented around a sense of a caring community. This implicit caring curriculum is a cultivation of a community of God's *hesed* as the values of God's loving-kindness, mercy, forgiveness, and justice complement the ethic of care that is often present in all-girls' schools.

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<sup>12</sup> Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); Carol Gilligan, *Joining the Resistance* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011).

### 6.1.2 Room for Improvement

While there are a number of places in the explicit and implicit curricula of all-girls' Catholic secondary schools that can serve as a foundation for a pedagogical approach to fostering a feminist prophetic imagination for adolescent girls, there are also ways that these schools fail to do this. Particularly in their implicit and null curricula, schools are falling short and these shortcomings make it more difficult to nurture a feminist prophetic imagination.

In their implicit curricula, all-girls' Catholic schools face a number of barriers to educating for this feminist prophetic imagination. First, as institutions that exist within the Catholic Church, all-girls' schools are participating in a system that excludes women from positions of authority and leadership on the basis of their gender. Without explicit critique of this exclusion, all-girls' schools send the message to their students that barring women from these positions is unproblematic and unequivocally accepted by all within the Church. In other words, when schools do not at least name the unequal status of women in the Church, they are tacitly condoning that status. This is a difficult task for all-girls' Catholic schools; however, girls are already aware of their marginalization in the Church – and of the exclusion of women from ordination. To fail to acknowledge this or to avoid conversation about it tells girls that their concerns are not legitimate. This can also make it more difficult for adolescent girls to identify and resist the ways that they are marginalized and oppressed, not just in the Church, but in society as well. And, since the formation of a feminist prophetic imagination rests on a vision of the *imago Dei* that insists on the full equality of women and girls in this symbol, this implicit curriculum is complicit in the marginalization of girls.

Second, all-girls' Catholic schools, like other all-girls' schools, can, through their implicit curriculum, reinforce the triple bind. In particular, all-girls' schools often have a message for girls that they can do whatever they want to do. However, this message is often received by girls as a message that they can and, therefore, must do it all. This means that a girl is not simply choosing the one or two areas of school life (for example, being a good student, being on a sports team, participating in the theater program, or joining a club) that will be her focus of attention and energy. Rather she thinks that, in order to be a successful student, she must excel at all of these things.<sup>13</sup> This pressure to "do it all" is rarely part of the explicit program at an all-girls' Catholic school, but it easily becomes an un-reflected-upon part of the implicit curriculum. And, when this is a part of the culture of the school, the school is reproducing the patriarchal social imaginary of the dominant culture – a culture that is often toxic for adolescent girls.

Third, the implicit curriculum of an all-girls' Catholic school can function to make it harder for girls to form healthy communities of care. Part of this is due to the un-reflected-upon ubiquity of the triple bind. Part of the triple bind is the expectation that adolescent girls are to be good at cultivating relationships (traditionally feminine tasks) and at competing and succeeding in sports, college, and career (traditionally masculine tasks). However, in holding adolescent girls to these often contradictory expectations, it is often the competition and success-oriented expectations that win out. In other words,

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<sup>13</sup> Stephen Hinshaw describes this sense of needing to do all things perfectly as at the base of the triple bind's insidiousness. He also argues that this pressure to do it all is a relatively new development. "Overscheduling used to be seen as a primarily upper-middle-class problem, suggesting the cliché of the privileged child being chauffeured from prep school to piano lessons to the stables to the fencing salon, mastering an endless round of after-school activities and then returning home to several hours of homework. That cliché, alas, has its roots in truth... [S]ports, after-school activities, and other extracurriculars are no longer extras but requirements, as even 'second-choice' and state schools are becoming more competitive" (49). Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, 47-67; David Elkind, *The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2001).

even though girls are expected to meet both aspects of the triple bind, the implicit curriculum of an all-girls' Catholic school can force girls to choose to emphasize competition and success and to deemphasize the nurturing of relationships. In addition to the influence of the triple bind on the implicit curriculum of an all-girls' Catholic school, the formation of communities of care can be inhibited by the traditional structure of the school. A traditional school day is structured around discrete class periods with limited free time between classes. After school, girls are involved in a variety of sports, arts, and extra-curricular programs. In addition, the expectation that girls will be good students and gain admission to a selective college means that most girls spend a great deal of time doing homework – often working until midnight or later.<sup>14</sup> This tight scheduling of the day means that girls have very little time to socialize with each other, to nurture relationships with peers and adults, and to provide the kind of care for each other that they might want. If all of their free time is taken up by homework and activities, there is little time left to nurture the kinds of communities of God's *hesed* that would provide adolescent girls with the support to resist the triple bind and other forms of injustice.

Finally, the null curriculum of an all-girls' Catholic school can contradict efforts to form adolescent girls in a feminist prophetic imagination. In particular, the failure to teach about the triple bind becomes a fulfillment of the triple bind in the lives of the students. In other words, by not naming for girls and not helping them recognize the effects of the triple bind, the school is educating girls to accept that the patriarchal social imaginary is the way things must be. If the cultivation of an imagination is built on the ability to see the way the world is and to posit ways that it can be different, the failure to

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<sup>14</sup> Recall Martha Straus' contention that girls spend very little time with peers and a great deal of time alone. Martha B. Straus, *Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Hope and Intervention* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 6-9.

educate girls about a toxic and patriarchal social imaginary ends up reproducing that social imaginary. It then becomes that much harder for girls to recognize their status as created in the image of God, to form the communities of God's *hesed*, and to resist the injustices of their marginalization in the Church and society.

### **6.1.3 Moving Forward**

Since all-girls' Catholic schools already have many of the foundational aspects that are needed for nurturing a feminist prophetic imagination in adolescent girls, it is possible to build on these assets. Schools can do this by intentionally focusing on the ways that they can affirm each girl's status as a human being created in the image of God and on how they can form communities of God's *hesed* and resistance to injustice. By paying attention to their explicit, implicit, and null curricula, by engaging in intentional community-building efforts, and by situating the need for a feminist prophetic imagination in the wider life of the Church, all-girls' Catholic schools can formalize their commitment to nurturing this feminist prophetic imagination.

The first task in formalizing this commitment is for all-girls' Catholic schools to become conscious of the effects of their explicit, implicit, and null curricula. The explicit curriculum can support the nurturing of a feminist prophetic imagination in a number of ways. Of course, the theology curriculum needs to emphasize the ways that this is grounded in the biblical and theological tradition of the Church: the *imago Dei*, the biblical prophets and their work, the biblical story of God's commitment to *hesed* towards the people, the theological tradition of social justice. This is reinforced by the formal service and campus ministry programs as girls put these theological commitments

into practice in prayer, communal Eucharistic celebrations, retreats, and social justice work (such as volunteering at a soup kitchen or building a Habitat for Humanity house). Alongside the content-related aspects of the theology curriculum and the skills formed in service and ministry programs, the explicit curriculum of the entire school's academic program can take up the practice of prophetic imagination. If the prophetic imagination is the practice of denouncing patriarchal social imaginary and announcing new and more just ways of being in the world, then providing students with opportunities to engage in these kinds of activities is something that can happen across the curriculum in research and writing assignments in the humanities, in social science investigations, and in scientific inquiry. This requires that teachers exercise their own feminist prophetic imaginations as they design curricular units or individual assessments. For example, a unit in a history class on the civil rights movement can include guest speakers so that students are able to connect historical events with the real people who were affected by these events; an economics class can investigate the value of women's unpaid labor in the economy; a student research project on water quality for an environmental science class can move from simply describing a problem to an analysis of it that includes how water issues disproportionately affect women and children.

Moreover, the task of explicitly educating for a feminist prophetic imagination involves a professional development program that enables teachers across the disciplines, as well as non-instructional staff and administrators, to learn about liberative and caring pedagogies. These two pedagogical approaches emphasize the building of communities of care with students, the process of reading the world and reading the word, and engaging in a dialogical process leading to conscientization. Like other schools, many



all-girls' Catholic schools devote time to pedagogical approaches that emphasize, for example, multiple intelligences or scaffolding of learning; devoting time and attention to liberative and caring pedagogical approaches – such as the practice of dialogue that engages critical consciousness or the cooperative learning projects that encourage the formation of relationships in learning – can form part of the schools formal efforts to nurture a feminist prophetic imagination. These professional development efforts help teachers form their own feminist prophetic imaginations and provide them with the concrete skills (such as how to ask problem-posing questions or strategies for structuring collaborative work) that they need.

In addition to the explicit curricular programs that focus on the biblical and theological resources that undergird a feminist prophetic imagination and the professional development of teachers so that they can educate with and for such an imagination, there is also a need for the explicit curriculum to counter the triple bind. Since the triple bind describes a patriarchal social imaginary that marginalizes and oppresses women and girls and since this social imaginary is largely un-reflected-upon, all-girls' Catholic schools are in a position to provide access to information about the triple bind and to engage in a formal critique of it. Adolescent girls cannot name and resist what they cannot see and, because they are adolescents, they will need help seeing the influences of societal forces. This can happen as particular units in coursework, such as a lesson on how women are portrayed in advertising in an English class, a unit on body image in a health class, the history of women's access to college and the labor force in a history class.

The implicit curriculum requires at least as much attention as does the explicit curriculum in the task of forming adolescent girls in a feminist prophetic imagination.

The formation of communities of God's *hesed* and practices of resistance to the triple bind happens most in the day-to-day life of the school. This means that the ways that students are socialized into relating to each other and to the adults of the community, the ways that students care for themselves and others, and the extension beyond the classroom of the dialogical process of reading the world and the word all have an impact on the formation of a feminist prophetic imagination. When creating communities of God's *hesed* and practices of resistance to injustice are inculturated into the implicit curriculum of a school, adolescent girls learn how to name and resist the triple bind from their peers as well as from adults.

As Nel Noddings argues, forming communities of care involves modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation<sup>15</sup> and only some of this can happen in an explicit curricular approach. While teachers can model caring behavior towards students in the classroom, it is often their modeling of this behavior outside of the classroom that makes the biggest impact on students. Students who see that their teachers are interested in their lives, concerned for them, and willing to engage them in conversations about a wide variety of topics can also see that caring for one another can take many forms. A culture of dialogue about issues that matter – like forming a community of care and resisting injustice – also involves the implicit curriculum of the school. All-girls' schools that invite student participation in decision-making processes and ongoing discussion of topics that impact the day-to-day lives of adolescent girls provide their students with opportunities to make the process of reading the world and the word a more habitual part of how they engage the world. Practice in learning the skills of forming and maintaining communities of care happen best outside of the explicit curriculum. When the culture of

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<sup>15</sup> Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, 22-26.

the school is organized around an ethic of care, girls have the opportunity to practice these relationship skills in their interactions with others in the community. And confirmation – affirmation of attempts to care offered by adults and other respected members of the community – shapes a community culture that is oriented towards nurturing students in the skills of caring for themselves and others.

All of this means that the formation of a feminist prophetic imagination in adolescent girls takes place, in large part, in the culture of the school. This school culture is a feminist one, prioritizing the flourishing and thriving of adolescent girls. It is a school culture that is imaginative, enabling girls to see their world and to imagine new ways of being the world. And it is a school culture that embraces the prophetic, hearing the critiques offered by girls of the ways that they experience the triple bind and the ways that they wish the world could be for themselves and their peers.

All girls' Catholic schools that are committed to educating adolescent girls in a feminist prophetic imagination must also be attentive to the ways that the null curriculum at their schools can shape and counteract the efforts made in the explicit and implicit curricula. This is particularly true when considering the ways that a patriarchal social imaginary such as the triple bind shape the day-to-day experiences of adolescent girls and women. Allowing these to pass without feminist critique and prophetic denunciation means that the school is allowing the wider social imaginary to educate girls and to form them in the expectations of the triple bind. While schools do not have a great deal of formal control over the null curriculum, an awareness of the impact of what a school teaches when it chooses not to teach something can help to bring these problematic issues to more intentional reflection.

The second task for formalizing a commitment to nurturing a feminist prophetic imagination in adolescent girls in an all-girls' Catholic school is the intentional decision to understand the school as a community of God's *hesed* and resistance to injustice. While relationships among students and between students and teachers will form without the explicit attention of the school as an institution, the formation of a community organized around principles and practices of *hesed* and resistance needs intentional community-building practices. This moves beyond Noddings' prescription of modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation, although these are necessary. Attention to building a community of *hesed* and resistance to injustice requires efforts at breaking down generational barriers in the school, attention to the core values of the school community, and allowing time for community-building and dialogue that engages the world and word.

Because the majority of people in the contemporary high school are adolescents, schools often focus much of their attention to existence of relationships among the adolescents themselves. On the one hand, schools arrange for clubs, dances, social activities, and peer mentoring groups, all with the intention of fostering positive relationships among students. On the other hand, adolescents are also fully capable of creating their own peer relationships, often in ways unseen by adults. Chap Clark, for example, describes the relational world of adolescents in a typical coeducational high school as a "world beneath" – a world that is largely devoid of adult influence or participation.<sup>16</sup> Interaction with adults happens in spaces where the adults are required to attend to the education of students: in classrooms, in club meetings, in sports practices.

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<sup>16</sup> Chap Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 44-45.

All-girls' Catholic schools, however, have the opportunity to think more creatively about the formation of relationships, providing girls with the opportunity to not be confined to a "world beneath" and to create social environments that nurture intergenerational relationships. Because all-girls' Catholic schools tend to be relatively small institutions, it is possible for all the adults in the community to know, at least by name, most of the students in the school. When girls feel that they are known, as individuals, by the adults in the school, they are more likely to seek out relationships with those adults.

Furthermore, all-girls' Catholic schools can use formal relationship-building structures – such as mentoring and advising programs, retreat programs, service programs, field trips – to provide ways for adults and students to get to know each other outside of the classroom. Retreats and service programs are particularly helpful for providing a way for adults and adolescent girls to form relationships because these programs invite personal reflection, shared tasks, and commitment to something beyond the individual and the school. Finding ways for adolescent girls to form relationships with both younger and older faculty members is also important. While girls might be more instinctively drawn to younger members of the faculty, the veteran staff can provide them with a different kind of relationship, wisdom, and advice. This is particularly true as all-girls' Catholic schools seek to cultivate relationships between students and the sisters of the sponsoring religious community, especially as these sisters retire and are not replaced by younger sisters; these relationships can be profoundly rewarding for both the girls and the sisters. The formation and maintenance of these intergenerational relationships can become habitual in the life of the all-girls' Catholic school, forming a key structure in the school as a community of God's *hesed*.

Alongside these efforts to form and maintain intergenerational relationships, all-girls' Catholic schools can look to the ways that the creation of a community of *hesed* and resistance is grounded in the core values of the school. Many schools explicitly name a set of core values that, along with the mission statement, philosophy of education, or portrait of a graduate, describes the orienting principles of the school. Schools that are committed to the formation of a community of care and resistance to injustice and that seek to form a feminist prophetic imagination in students can ensure that these commitments are reflected in their core value statements. This would include commitments to the formation of community, to adolescent girls, to justice, to the dignity of each person (as created in the image of God), to dialogue, to relationship building, and to critical thinking and engagement with the world. In addition to the explicitly stated core values of the community, schools can pay attention to the values that are taught through their implicit curriculum and how these values help or hinder the work of forming communities of *hesed*. Values like collaboration and teamwork, trust in student decision making and leadership, and support of relationships among the students are all taught through an implicit curriculum.

An important part of supporting the formation and maintenance of a community of care is the provision of the time for this to happen. The kind of supportive, nurturing, and challenging community that would help girls to exercise a feminist prophetic imagination does not just happen because the adults are intellectually committed to the idea and have provided formal words and structures. Rather, just as relationship-building needs time that is often hard to find in the busy-ness of the school day, the formation of a community of care requires time. All-girls' Catholic schools need to dedicate time in the

academic curriculum to reflect on what it means to be a community of care, to dedicate time in the less formal programs of the school to provide for the intergenerational relationships that are needed, and to provide the unstructured time that allows relationships and communities to grow. Moreover, this is not a project that is accomplished within a finite amount of time; it is a long-term project as the school gradually grows into a community of care. Each new group of students that enters the school is apprenticed into the practices of a community of care and, over time, learns the “way things happen here” – the practices and skills of relationship-building of a particular community.

In addition, creating a caring and liberative approach to the pedagogical practices of the all-girls’ Catholic school also involves the investment of a good deal of time and attention. Not only is time required for professional development and explicit curricular focus on the skills of critical reflection and dialogical encounters, but time is also needed for girls to first learn about, and then engage in, the practice of reading the world and reading the word. Critical reflection leading to conscientization happens slowly with repeated exposure to information about the patriarchal social imaginary, its effects on adolescent girls in the triple bind, and the resources of the tradition that can ground practices of resistance to these injustices. The ongoing process of reading the world and reading the word is thus a long-term investment of time and effort. This is not something that can happen at a school assembly or in a single class meeting. Rather, the process begins in theology classes that introduce the concepts of the *imago Dei*, God’s *hesed*, and the prophetic task. The process then continues and is built upon in classes across the academic curriculum and throughout the co-curricular program. In small increments, a

larger dialogical process can be created that invites adolescent girls to consider the ways their lived experiences can be understood as part of the patriarchal social imaginary that marginalizes and oppresses women and girls. The process continues by having girls imagine the ways that a world informed by their theological commitments can become a more just place.

The third task for all-girls' Catholic schools in formalizing a commitment to educating for a feminist prophetic imagination in adolescent girls is to situate this effort in the wider life of the Church. Schools are not engaged in the process of educating for a feminist prophetic imagination only because it will benefit the life of the school or even simply the individual students in the school. Rather, because all-girls' Catholic schools form part of the educational ministry of the Roman Catholic Church, the school's efforts to form adolescent girls has to make sense within the wider mission of the Church. The formation of girls in a feminist prophetic imagination participates in the life of the Church by inserting them into the ongoing process of reformation and renewal in the Church, by equipping them to participate in the prophetic task of denunciation and annunciation.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) invited the Church as a whole to engage in the process of reflecting on its structures and practices and bringing them into conversation with "the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties" of the contemporary world.<sup>17</sup> In this process, the Church is called to be an institution that is

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<sup>17</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*, 1965, §1, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html) (accessed April 8, 2017).



always reforming itself.<sup>18</sup> As schools with an implicit feminist mission of empowering adolescent girls to name and critique the patriarchal structures and social imaginary that shape the Church and society, all-girls' Catholic schools have a part to play in the ongoing feminist critique of the Church and the exclusion of women from roles of leadership and authority in the institution.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, by forming girls in practices of community and resistance to injustice, all-girls' Catholic schools are laying the groundwork for these girls to bring these practices to their engagement with other Church institutions such as universities, parishes, and social service agencies. As girls with experience in the practice of reading the world and the word in dialogue with others go out into the world, they will bring the expectation of these kinds of practices of engagement and conscientization to all their endeavors. For example, girls who have engaged in dialogue around issues of women's participation in formal leadership in the Church move from their high schools into other Catholic institutions equipped both to

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<sup>18</sup> St. Augustine is credited with the saying "Ecclesia semper reformanda est" (the Church is always reforming) and Pope Francis remarked: "In her ongoing discernment, the Church can also come to see that certain customs not directly connected to the heart of the Gospel, even some which have deep historical roots, are no longer properly understood and appreciated. Some of these customs may be beautiful, but they no longer serve as means of communicating the Gospel. We should not be afraid to re-examine them. At the same time, the Church has rules or precepts which may have been quite effective in their time, but no longer have the same usefulness for directing and shaping people's lives." (Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2013), §43).

<sup>19</sup> The task of critiquing the Church's exclusion of women from ordination, in particular, is a tricky one for Catholic schools given that the Church has officially closed of this topic for discussion. See John Paul II, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, 1994, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paulii/en/apost\\_letters/1994/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_19940522\\_ordinatio-sacerdotalis.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paulii/en/apost_letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19940522_ordinatio-sacerdotalis.html) (accessed April 9, 2017); Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Responsum ad Propositum Dubium Concerning the Teaching Contained in "Ordinatio Sacerdotalis,"* 1995, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19951028\\_dubium-ordinatio-sac\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19951028_dubium-ordinatio-sac_en.html) (accessed April 9, 2017). Nevertheless, adolescent girls are aware of this exclusion from ordination and are generally eager to discuss it. The question of women's role in the life of the Church is also fruitfully addressed as girls take up various liturgical ministries – as altar-servers, readers, and Eucharistic ministers. But, beyond the issue of ordination, schools can engage in the larger practice of reserving some offices and ministries in the Church for clergy (for example, as the heads of dicasteries in the Roman Curia) as well as explore the stories of leadership by women in the hierarchy of the Church (such as in women's religious communities or the stories of Teresa of Avila or Hildegard of Bingen). Throughout these conversations, Schillebeeckx's understanding of the negative contrast experience can be most helpful – enabling girls to talk about what ought to be by talking about their experiences of what ought not to be. See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Seabury, 1980), 817-819.

bring their convictions about their own suitability for participation in various ministries of the Church and to initiate dialogue with other women and men they meet in these institutional settings.

Furthermore, forming girls in a feminist prophetic imagination through the practices of prophetic denunciation and annunciation equips girls with the skills that they need to more effectively engage in the evangelizing mission of the Church. Announcing the Gospel to new generations is no longer simply a matter of telling people about the teachings of the Church. Rather, evangelization is better thought of as a process of inviting people into the mission and work of the Church. Much of this invitation comes through the good work that the Church already does in the prophetic task of denouncing injustice and announcing justice and care for others. Formed in a feminist prophetic imagination, adolescent girls will be prepared to participate in the practices of communities of care, resistance to injustice, and prophetic reimagining that drives the Church's larger mission. As they do this by, for example, participating in parish justice ministries or college service trips, they are showing others what it means to be a person of faith informed by a prophetic imagination in the twenty-first century.

#### **6.1.4 Barriers Along the Way**

While teaching adolescent girls with an eye toward forming a feminist prophetic imagination may be a worthy goal for an all-girls' Catholic school, there are a number of practical barriers. It would take a significant investment of time and it would need an explicit commitment from a number of constituencies of the school, such as the sponsoring religious order, the Board of Trustees, and the wider community.

First, as noted above, establishing a program that educates adolescent girls for a feminist prophetic imagination takes time – for building communities of *hesed*, for establishing the dialogical process of reading the world and the word, for putting resistance to injustice into practice. There is also a need for time for the more practical implementation of a program like this. Teachers need professional development, programs need to be launched and evaluated, academic curricula need to be reviewed and updated, and both teachers and students need to learn how to engage in liberative and caring pedagogies. Given the limited amount of time in a school day and taking seriously the concern that adolescent girls are already over-busy,<sup>20</sup> schools need to be careful about how they allocate time for this kind of effort. This ought not be an addition to the other curricular and co-curricular efforts of the school; rather, it permeates all of the disciplines, activities, and programs of the school. In other words, this is not just “another task” for already busy teachers and students; it is a way of rethinking how teachers and students can better do what they already are doing.

Second, a commitment to educating adolescent girls for a feminist prophetic imagination in all-girls’ Catholic schools will require the approval and participation of the wider school community, including the sisters of the founding and sponsoring religious order, the Board of Trustees, and parents. As discussed in chapter one, the sponsoring religious communities already have a historical commitment to the education of girls and to providing them with opportunities that they might not otherwise have access to. They already are committed to the flourishing and thriving of girls, to their multi-storied identities, to the ways they live into the *imago Dei*. And the charisms of these religious communities often explicitly cite the education and empowerment of girls

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<sup>20</sup> Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, 51-54.

as an excluded or marginalized population. Building upon these commitments, the sisters can endorse an approach that emphasizes the creation of communities of *hesed*, resistance to injustice, and the use of liberative and caring pedagogical approaches. These can be seen as extending the orders' historical commitment to adolescent girls, as building on the biblical and theological tradition, and as a way of best preparing students to resist the effects of the triple bind and find ways to make their world a better place.

Despite the overlap with the historical values of the women's religious congregations who founded and sponsor all-girls' Catholic schools and the potential benefits of educating for a feminist prophetic imagination, it is possible that some resistance from the congregation might exist. Some might fear that labeling a program or the mission of a school as "feminist" might turn some more traditionally-minded Catholic families away from the school or might invite scrutiny from the local bishop. Feminism is often misunderstood by those who assume that it calls for a rejection or hatred of men. And given that the charge of "radical feminism" was recently leveled against women religious in the United States, a certain hesitation to jeopardize the future of a school is understandable.<sup>21</sup> However, framed in terms of the empowerment of their students as created in the image of God so that they can resist the ways that the contemporary social

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<sup>21</sup> See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Assessment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious*, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20120418\\_assessment-lcwr\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20120418_assessment-lcwr_en.html) (accessed March 15, 2017). For example, the Congregation "noted a prevalence of certain radical feminist themes incompatible with the Catholic faith in some of the programs and presentations sponsored by the LCWR, including theological interpretations that risk distorting faith in Jesus and his loving Father who sent his Son for the salvation of the world. Moreover, some commentaries on 'patriarchy' distort the way in which Jesus has structured sacramental life in the Church; others even undermine the revealed doctrines of the Holy Trinity, the divinity of Christ, and the inspiration of Sacred Scripture."

imaginary marginalizes them, feminism can be understood as consonant with the ongoing tradition of the order's historical commitments.<sup>22</sup>

Boards of Trustees, who often have oversight over the mission of a school, may have similar concerns about naming a pedagogical approach as explicitly feminist, fearing that it may discourage families from considering the school or that it may compromise its Catholic identity. However, by grounding the rationale for this pedagogical approach in the classic theological anthropological concept of the *imago Dei* and the prophetic task of denunciation and annunciation, a feminist prophetic imagination can be presented as being in conformity with the biblical and theological traditions of the Church.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the use of liberative and caring pedagogies situates a feminist prophetic imagination well within the Church's educational philosophy of valuing the inherent dignity of each student.

The wider community of the school, including parents and families of potential students, are also a constituency that could express significant resistance to the notion of a feminist prophetic imagination. In addition to questions about feminism, parents might be concerned with the college preparatory task of all-girls' Catholic schools. Many families choose to send their daughters to all-girls' Catholic schools because they believe

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<sup>22</sup> This understanding of feminist commitments as aligning with traditional or historical commitments of the theological tradition underlies the work of many feminist theologians. See, for example, Anne E. Carr, *Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women's Experience* (New York: Continuum, 1988); Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, 10<sup>th</sup> anniv. ed. (New York: Herder and Herder, 2002); Miriam Therese Winter, "Feminist Women's Spirituality: Breaking New Ground in the Church," in *The Church Women Want: Catholic Women in Dialogue*, ed. Elizabeth A. Johnson (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2002). For example, in a discussion of women's spirituality, Winter makes the larger point that "to be radical means to be rooted, deeply rooted, in the spirit of the living God, in the spirit of Jesus, and in the spirit of the biblical traditions that are recorded in the Scriptures" (23).

<sup>23</sup> Pope Francis' words support this; he rejects the idea that "feminine emancipation" is the cause of problems in the world. Rather, he sees "in the women's movement, the working of the Spirit for a clearer recognition of the dignity and rights of women" (Francis, *The Joy of Love: On Love in the Family (Amoris Laetitia)* (New York: Paulist Press, 2016), §54).

it will better prepare them for success in college and career. In this concern, parents are often unaware of dynamics like the triple bind and they often expect schools to assist girls in meeting these conflicting expectations. They want their daughters to be good at relationships, to be competitive in sports, activities, and aspirations, and to be seen as physically attractive. Anything that would seem to jeopardize their daughters' success in the ways that the triple bind demands could deter parents from choosing that school. To counter this, schools can talk more explicitly with parents and families about the triple bind and its potential for harming adolescent girls. Armed with this information, parents could be brought to see how a feminist prophetic imagination actually enables girls to critique the patriarchal social imaginary, to resist it, and to define for themselves what it means to be successful in college and career.

## **6.2 NAMING THE MISSION OF ALL-GIRLS' CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

When an all-girls' Catholic school makes a commitment to educate adolescent girls with and for a feminist prophetic imagination, they are making a commitment to a particular mission for that school. This mission involves a commitment to valuing the *imago Dei* in adolescent girls, to ensuring the flourishing of girls in the face of a patriarchal social imaginary, to cultivating communities of God's *hesed*, to enacting practices of resistance to the marginalization of girls, and to employing the approaches of liberative and caring pedagogies. While it is of vital importance that individual teachers and departments be committed to these goals, unless it is formalized in the mission statements and other foundation documents of all-girls' Catholic schools, efforts will be less effective. By naming their commitment in their mission statements, all-girls'

Catholic schools lay the groundwork for making the formation of a feminist prophetic imagination a long-term project of the school and establish the criteria by which the explicit and implicit curricula of the school can be judged.

Incorporating education for a feminist prophetic imagination into its mission statement is a significant commitment for the future of an all-girls' Catholic school. It is a commitment to naming and resisting the effects of a toxic patriarchal social imaginary in general and to the ways it is manifested in the lives of adolescent girls as the triple bind in particular. It is a commitment to take seriously and fully explore the biblical and theological affirmations that adolescent girls are created in the image of God and called to exercise the prophetic tasks of denunciation of injustice and annunciation of a more just world. Finally, it is a commitment to the pedagogical approaches suggested by liberative and caring pedagogies. These commitments to the idea of a feminist prophetic imagination, when formalized in a mission statement, become a concrete pledge to the students and teachers in the school – a pledge of time, effort, attention, and funding. Such commitments are long-term; they shape the identity of the school as it is named in the mission statement. And, ultimately, the mission of the school shapes the day-to-day life of the school such that a commitment in a mission statement to educating for a feminist prophetic imagination is expressed in the explicit and implicit curricula of the school.

Furthermore, an all-girls' Catholic school that names the formation of adolescent girls in a feminist prophetic imagination, dedicated to inculcating a girl's consciousness of being created in the *imago Dei* and the development of communities of God's *hesed* and resistance to injustice, presents a set of criteria by which the school can be assessed.

Mission statements often function as assessment tools; they are attempts by schools to name their core values, orientations, and activities. The actual day-to-day functioning of the school can then be assessed according to these statements. By incorporating the pedagogical approaches of a feminist prophetic imagination into missions statements, schools have the opportunity to announce that they wish to be judged by how they value the *imago Dei* in adolescent girls, educate for prophetic denunciation and annunciation, and employ liberative and caring pedagogies.

To illustrate the ways that a feminist prophetic imagination can be integrated into the mission statement of an all-girls' Catholic school, it is helpful to consider an example. Marymount School of New York was founded in 1926 by the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary. Mother Butler, the founder of the school, named its original vision this way: "The aims of a Marymount education are manifold: to educate the heart and mind, and to provide for each student's total growth, intellectually, spiritually, socially, and physically."<sup>24</sup> Over the years, the school has grown into a well-regarded school for girls from nursery school through a college preparatory secondary school. Its mission statement reads:

Marymount School is an independent, Catholic day school that seeks to educate young women who continue to question, risk, and grow—young women who care, serve, and lead—young women prepared to challenge, shape, and change the world. Marymount is a college preparatory school for girls, committed to the development of the lifelong skills of critical thinking and problem solving. A wide range of extracurricular activities complements the academic program and provides opportunities for creativity, self-expression, leadership, and collaboration. These experiences foster social skills, sportsmanship, a sense of responsibility, independence, and self-confidence. The School promotes in each student a respect for her own unique abilities and a commitment to responsible living in a changing world. Marymount welcomes diversity and draws upon it to

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<sup>24</sup> Marymount School, "A Living Heritage of Advocacy, Empowerment, and Social Justice," <https://www.marymountnyc.org/page/about/heritage> (accessed March 15, 2017).



foster cultural sensitivity, religious understanding, and a global perspective.<sup>25</sup> While this school does not explicitly use the phrase "a feminist prophetic imagination," there are many hints that it is making the kinds of commitments that would be entailed in the pedagogical approaches described in this dissertation. For example, a liberative pedagogy is suggested in the focus on "critical thinking and problem solving" and a caring pedagogy is described with words like "collaboration," "respect for her own unique abilities," and "foster social skills, sportsmanship... and self-confidence." A prophetic engagement with the world is indicated by the commitment to "educate young women who continue to question, risk, and grow – young women who care, serve, and lead – young women prepared to challenge, shape, and change the world." So, without even using the phrase "feminist prophetic imagination," this school suggests in its mission statement that it is committed to the same values and approaches called for in a feminist prophetic imagination.

### **6.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

The Catholic all-girls' secondary school is a unique place where the feminist prophetic imagination that has been described in this dissertation can be cultivated. All-girls' Catholic schools already have a focus on and commitment to the social, intellectual, and spiritual development of young women. They also already claim a school mission of empowering young women to flourish fully in a world that does not always value their contributions and of educating young women who will make a difference in that world. However, not all adolescent girls attend all-girls' Catholic schools, nor are all-girls'

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<sup>25</sup> Marymount School, "Mission," <http://www.marymountnyc.org/Page/About/Mission> (accessed February 7, 2016).

Catholic school the best option for all girls. Furthermore, adolescence also can be a difficult time for boys, and many of the same cultural pressures that prove so toxic for adolescent girls have a negative impact on adolescent boys. Therefore, while the all-girls' Catholic school is one place where a feminist prophetic imagination, rooted in a valuing of girls as created in the image of God, can provide for an educational experience that equips girls to name and resist a toxic patriarchal social imaginary and to imagine a better way of being in the world, it cannot be the *only* place where this kind of pedagogical approach takes place. In fact, the lessons learned about the need for a pedagogy oriented towards forming a feminist prophetic imagination have implications for girls who attend coeducational Catholic schools as well as for boys, whether they attend all-boys' or coeducational schools.

Recall, for example, the story of Mount Saint Joseph Academy in Boston. Founded more than a century ago by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston, the school provided a high-quality academic program combined with a solid grounding in the Catholic faith to daughters of middle-class families. The school was committed to the education of girls and, despite the changing demographics of the neighborhood, the school maintained its core mission of educating girls so that they could be prepared to lead with compassion and justice. However, when it became impossible to continue as an all-girls' school, Sisters of St. Joseph and the administration of Mount Saint Joseph Academy made the difficult decision to close the school, to merge with another struggling school, and to reopen as a new coeducational high school.<sup>26</sup> In making this decision, the leadership of Mount Saint Joseph Academy came to the realization that, in

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<sup>26</sup> See chapter one for the full story of Mount Saint Joseph Academy. See also, Mount Saint Joseph Academy, *Mount Saint Joseph Academy, Brighton, Massachusetts: 1885-1985* (Brighton, MA: MSJA, 1985).

order to continue its mission of educating young women, the school needed to move away from the all-girls' model of education. In other words, only by becoming a coeducational school could the legacy of providing a liberative and caring education for the girls in this Boston neighborhood continue. In fact, it was the lessons they had learned by being an all-girls' school that enabled the newly formed St. Joseph's Preparatory School to provide an education rooted in the Church's tradition of creating a community oriented toward God's *hesed* and justice.<sup>27</sup>

In light of the story of Mount Saint Joseph Academy and the fact that most adolescent girls do not attend an all-girls' Catholic school, the next section discusses how insights derived from cultivating a feminist prophetic imagination at all-girls' Catholic schools can inform other Catholic schools. It first considers the needs of adolescent girls who attend coeducational schools, followed by the needs of boys who attend either single-sex or coeducational Catholic schools. It concludes by drawing some broad recommendations for all Catholic secondary schools.

### **6.3.1 Girls in Coeducational Schools**

Attending an all-girls' school is not always an option for adolescent girls who seek a Catholic secondary education. There may not be a school nearby, it may be beyond the financial resources of a girl's family, or it may not be the right fit for a

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<sup>27</sup> St. Joseph Preparatory School, "Mission and Vision," <http://www.saintjosephprep.org/page.cfm?p=503> (accessed March 18, 2017). The mission statement of the new school reads: "Saint Joseph Prep is an independent, co-ed, college prep school, serving students in grades 9-12, sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston. Founded upon academic excellence, personal integrity, and Catholic tradition, the School educates the whole person—mind, body, and soul—with a commitment to scholarship at the highest level. In our richly diverse, powerfully affirming community of mutual respect and reconciliation, students are welcomed, supported, challenged, stretched, known, and loved. Prepared with the skills they need to excel in college and career, our young women and men will be global citizens who think critically, lead courageously, and work collegially to raise the standard of living and learning for all persons."

particular girl. Nevertheless, coeducational Catholic schools can and do provide outstanding educational opportunities to students and they take seriously their mission as a part of the Church's educational efforts. However, coeducational schools have a responsibility to consider carefully how they accommodate the needs of adolescent girls in their pedagogical approaches. A focus on educating for a feminist prophetic imagination may be even more necessary and appropriate for girls who attend coeducational schools.

David Sadker and Karen Zittleman, in their critique of public coeducation, contend that girls in coeducational settings can experience school as a place of invisibility and harassment. They contend that, despite the fact that girls often earn higher grades and attend college at higher rates, boys receive the majority of a teacher's attention and that girls are rewarded for being quiet and compliant.<sup>28</sup> In addition to persistent gender bias in textbooks and the presentation of role models (a problem confronted by all-girls' schools as well), girls in coeducational schools are more likely to deny their intelligence. Popularity is highly valued and, to be popular, a girl will often become passive, noncompetitive, and focused on being thin and pretty. Furthermore, sexual harassment of adolescent girls at school by peers is increasingly common.<sup>29</sup> Such gender bias is not the exclusive domain of public education; girls at coeducational Catholic schools are subject to the same gender bias as their public school peers.

The particular challenge for coeducational Catholic schools in educating for a feminist prophetic imagination is in their approach to the toxicity of the patriarchal social

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<sup>28</sup> David Sadker, Myra Sadker, and Karen Zittleman, *Still Failing at Fairness: How Gender Bias Cheats Girls and Boys in School and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Scribner, 2009), 69-70.

<sup>29</sup> Sadker, Sadker, and Zittleman, *Still Failing at Fairness*, 159-161. These findings are echoed in Hinshaw, *The Triple Bind*, 84-85.

imaginary – the triple bind. In coeducational schools, girls can feel strongly the pressure to conform to all three sets of expectations. However, the expectations put on girls to form and maintain romantic relationships and to fit a narrowly defined vision of physical beauty can be stronger at a coeducational school than at an all-girls' school. Too often, however, these expectations and the stress adolescent girls feel because of them are unexamined in the coeducational setting. And, when forces like the triple bind are unexamined, they are easily reproduced, making the triple bind an un-reflected-upon driver of how girls experience their day-to-day lives in the coeducational Catholic school.

Despite these concerns about coeducation, coeducational Catholic schools have resources to build a healthier environment for their female students. Like all-girls' Catholic schools, coeducational schools are founded on a Catholic biblical and theological tradition of honoring the *imago Dei* in adolescents and of viewing education as a work of social justice. These values, therefore, provide the foundation for an explicit orientation to educating for a feminist prophetic imagination. Educating for a prophetic imagination – enabling students to participate in the Christian calling to denounce that which is unjust and to announce a more just way of being – can be a common approach shared by coeducational and all-girls' Catholic schools. The use of a particular feminist lens means that coeducational schools are called to ensure the flourishing of all students but, in particular, of girls and any others who are marginalized. And liberative and caring pedagogies also can be built into the explicit curriculum of a coeducational school. Because of the historic marginalization of girls in coeducational settings, schools have even more of a responsibility to counteract it. A focus on a feminist prophetic imagination, rooted in the status of girls as created in the image of God and expressed

through liberative and caring pedagogies, provides adolescent girls in the coeducational school with the tools to more effectively identify, name, and then resist the effects of the triple bind.

### **6.3.2 Boys in All-Boys' and Coeducational Schools**

Boys who attend Catholic schools, whether an all-boys' school or a coeducational school, would also benefit from an explicit focus on a feminist prophetic imagination. The same patriarchal social imaginary that expects particular expressions of femininity from girls puts significant pressure on adolescent boys to express masculinity in stereotypical ways. Schools, therefore, have a responsibility to help boys engage in the prophetic task of denouncing this social imaginary and announcing more just ways of being in the world.

Boys in coeducational Catholic schools experience the effects of the gender bias described by Sadker and Zittleman. While girls are often rewarded for being quiet and obedient, boys are more often referred for disciplinary action and this is even more true for boys who are Black and Hispanic. Boys are cast as trouble-makers more often than girls; boys are pushed to be more aggressive and less emotional; boys who do not fit masculine stereotypes are harassed; boys who enjoy art, literature, and music are belittled. Boys who are Black, Hispanic, or poor are more likely to repeat grades and they are more likely to drop out and to be suspended and expelled. In particular, boys who do not fit the expectations of masculinity that the culture sets for them can find

themselves harassed and excluded.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, when girls are expected to bear responsibility for maintaining relationships, boys may not learn these skills. And, more troubling, when girls are expected to bear responsibility for the sexual behavior of boys, girls can end up being blamed for sexual harassment, abusive relationships, pregnancy, and rape.

Boys in all-boys' schools face these pressures as well as additional expectations around issues of heterosexuality and masculinity. In an interesting study, Kevin Burke suggests that the ways that masculinity is constructed at all-boys' Catholic schools is of concern in two ways. First, boys who do not fit traditional norms for male heterosexual behavior often find that, in all-boys' Catholic schools, they are cast into a quasi-feminine role. Homosexual epithets are often used to reinforce a heterosexual vision of masculinity and as a synonym for undesirability or otherness.<sup>31</sup> Second, discourses about women and girls at all-boys' schools often fall into a Madonna/whore duality – boys are taught to respect women as saints, mothers, and wives while, at the same time, adolescent girls are seen as polluting, highly sexualized, and other.<sup>32</sup>

In both cases, for boys in coeducational schools and for boys in all-boys' schools, the issue seems to be the ways that a patriarchal social imaginary is played out in the day-to-day lives of adolescent boys. Boys are not expected to and, therefore, not allowed to take an interest in being caring and nurturing; they are expected to be competitive in seeking success in school and other activities; and they are expected to be attracted to

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<sup>30</sup> Sadker, Sadker, and Zittleman, *Still Failing at Fairness*, 208. For more information about cultures of masculinity, see Michael Kimmel, *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008).

<sup>31</sup> Kevin J. Burke, *Masculinities and Other Hopeless Causes at an All-Boys Catholic School* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 65-67.

<sup>32</sup> Burke, *Masculinities*, 94-96.

girls who fit the narrow definition of beauty promulgated by contemporary society. To counteract these expectations, the theological and biblical commitments that can help girls develop a feminist prophetic imagination can help adolescent boys name and resist the effects of this toxic social imaginary. This calls for an emphasis that maintains that both adolescent boys and adolescent girls are created in the image of God and called to the prophetic task of denunciation of injustice and annunciation of the formation of caring communities. Developing a prophetic imagination that takes seriously the experiences of women, girls, and others who are marginalized and oppressed needs to take place in the context of an educational program that emphasizes the critical thinking, conscientization, and reading of both word and world offered by a liberative pedagogy and the focus on an ethic of care that is advanced by Nel Noddings' caring pedagogy. Teaching for the development of a feminist prophetic imagination means equipping boys to recognize their own male privilege, to see the ways that they are influenced by a patriarchal social imaginary (particularly in the ways they treat girls and boys who seem less masculine), to see the ways that this patriarchal social imaginary marginalizes others, and to see that they can both denounce this and announce a more just world where adolescent boys and girls are both honored as expressions of the *imago Dei*.

### **6.3.3 Conclusions: Recommendations for All Catholic Schools**

Girls are not the only ones negatively impacted by the toxicity of a patriarchal social imaginary; therefore, all Catholic schools, regardless of their gender makeup, are called to engage in the liberative exercise of critically reflecting on the lived experiences of all members of the community – especially those most marginalized – and the



imaginative exercise of proposing ways to create communities that reflect God's *hesed* and justice. Taking the first steps toward educating for a feminist prophetic imagination in Catholic secondary schools will ask that schools make a number of key commitments.

First, Catholic schools have already shown that the educational opportunities they offer are at least as good as and sometimes better than public education. They educate students for success in college and career and provide them with a moral formation that can guide them as adults. They have demonstrated that providing students with a caring community that has high expectations of its students can produce positive educational outcomes.<sup>33</sup> For this reason, Catholic schools now have the opportunity to provide leadership around the nurturing of a prophetic imagination in students. The Christian call to prophetic denunciation and annunciation grounded in the *imago Dei* means that schools can play a unique role in forming adolescents who can participate in this prophetic task. By taking the lead in educating for a feminist prophetic imagination, Catholic schools have the opportunity to show how education moves away from traditional "banking" approaches and to approaches that are truly liberative for all students.

Second, Catholic schools that are committed to nurturing a feminist prophetic imagination in students will need to take seriously the work of sociologists and psychologists who describe the ways that the current social imaginary is potentially harmful for adolescents. If researchers like Robert Putnam, David Elkind, Chap Clark,

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<sup>33</sup> For an account of the efficacy of Catholic high schools, see Anthony S. Bryk, Valerie E. Lee, and Peter B. Holland, *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). For an exploration of the ways that Catholic schools contribute to the common good, see David Hollenbach, "The Common Good, Pluralism and Catholic Education," in *The Contemporary Catholic School: Context, Identity and Diversity* ed. Terence McLaughlin, Joseph O'Keefe, & Bernadette O'Keefe (New York: Routledge, 1996).

Carol Gilligan, Martha Straus, and Stephen Hinshaw are correct, then the day-to-day lives of many adolescents are full of anxiety and pain and the structures that are designed to help them are not nurturing them towards a healthy adulthood. Given that schools are a primary institution in the lives of adolescents, they have to take these concerns seriously. Catholic schools have a particular responsibility to do this because Catholic education is based on the conviction that all students are created in the image of God and, therefore, are already good and worthy of our care and attention. Catholic schools are called to provide the kind of community assets and supports that can help adolescents grow to healthy adulthood. Catholic schools have traditionally seen themselves as places apart from the world, places where Catholic identity overrides societal influences; however, in the contemporary world, Catholic schools run the risk of failing to notice the ways that the social imaginary of the contemporary world shapes the Catholic school itself and the way that students experience their education there.

Finally, Catholic schools that are committed to educating for a feminist prophetic imagination are called to an intentional focus on the professional development of their teachers. This means providing formation for all teachers – not just theology teachers and campus ministers – in the theological and biblical foundations of Catholic education. This would include particular attention to the foundational symbol of the *imago Dei* as well as to concepts like *hesed*, justice, and prophetic action. While these concepts are formally taught in theology classes and through campus ministry programs, it is through the wider explicit and implicit curricula of the school that they are reinforced; and the cooperation and participation of all teachers is needed in order to provide for this broad of an educational goal. Furthermore, asking teachers to teach with an eye towards

cultivating a feminist prophetic imagination in students would require ongoing dialogue among teachers. Teachers can be helped to see how their work in their classrooms is enhanced by attention to questions of cultivating imagination. And, as teachers in a Catholic school, they can take an active role in cultivating the prophetic practices of denunciation and annunciation. In addition, teachers who want to take on liberative and caring pedagogical approaches will also need ongoing professional development. Like any approach to teaching and learning in classroom settings, these pedagogies require more than good intentions from teachers. Moving from, for example, a “banking” approach to a more dialogical approach can seem like a loss of authority and control; therefore, support from administration and the founding religious order can help teachers put these pedagogical approaches into practice.

In taking up the challenge of teaching for a feminist prophetic imagination, all-girls’ Catholic schools can take the lead. No longer will they be seen as anachronistic reproductions of a prior vision of female behavior; rather, they can be at the forefront of the implementation of a feminist mission in Catholic education. Coeducational schools and all-boys’ schools, then, can learn from these all-girls’ schools, finding more just ways to educate all students for a Christian prophetic engagement with the world.

## APPENDIX A THE EFFICACY OF SINGLE SEX SCHOOLS

### **Book-Length Studies:**

American Association of University Women. *How Schools Shortchange Girls*. Washington, DC: American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1992.

The American Association of University Women study, *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, investigated the experiences of girls in coeducational schools. They found that, in adolescence, girls become lost in their coeducational settings. They also found that while differences in the achievement levels of boys and girls are narrowing, the gap still exists.

American Association of University Women. *Separated by Sex: A Critical Look at Single-Sex Education for Girls*. Washington, DC: American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1998.

In this 1998 follow-up study, the AAUW reported the results of a round-table forum in which sixteen researchers were asked to clarify the question of single-sex education for girls. There emerged several points of consensus from the round-table forum: that there is no evidence that single-sex schools are inherently better for girls than coeducational schools; that there are not yet sufficient longitudinal studies on the question of the benefits of single-sex schooling; and that no educational setting, whether single-sex or coeducational, can eliminate sexism entirely.

Bryk, Anthony S., Valerie E. Lee, and Peter B. Holland. *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Using data from the *High School and Beyond* survey, Bryk, Lee, and Holland selected for Catholic schools in general. The authors found that the survey data also provided information for assessing the effectiveness of single-sex education. They found that girls at all-girls' schools were more likely to express positive interest in school, in math and English classes, to show higher gains in academic achievement in reading and science, and to express positive educational aspirations. They conclude that single-sex schools show some significant advantages, especially for girls.

Riordan, Cornelius. *Girls and Boys in School: Together or Separate?* New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1990.

Like Bryk, Lee, and Holland, Riordan used data from the *High School and Beyond* study and selected for Catholic single-sex and coeducational schools. In analyzing the data, he adjusted for ability, home background, race, class, and school policies. Comparing data from students' sophomore and senior years, he found that white girls and African-American and Hispanic students of both sexes have more positive experiences in single-sex schools than in coeducational schools.

Sadker, David, Myra Sadker, and Karen Zittleman. *Still Failing at Fairness: How Gender Bias Cheats Girls and Boys in School and What We Can Do About It*. New York: Scribner, 2009.

In this update to their earlier research, David Sadker and Karen Zittleman revisit the question of gender biased teaching and to see what, if any, progress has been made in eliminating it. In addition to updating the research that lies behind their argument, they also investigated the role that race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background play in the experiences of girls and boys in the classroom. They found that gender bias remains a problem in coeducational classrooms, particularly in rewarding girls for being quiet and non-participatory in class.

Sax, Linda J., Emily Arms, Maria Woodruff, Tiffani Riggers, and Kevin Eagan. *Women Graduates of Single-Sex and Coeducational High Schools: Differences in Their Characteristics and the Transition to college*. Los Angeles: Sudikoff Family Institute & UCLA Graduate School of Education, 2009.

This report was commissioned by the National Coalition of Girls' Schools (NCGS) and is based on UCLA's survey of incoming freshmen women. The study looked at over 6,000 women from private single-sex schools and over 14,000 women from private coeducational schools. The researchers found that women who had graduated from single-sex schools demonstrated greater academic achievement, higher SAT scores, greater interest in graduate school, higher academic self-confidence, higher confidence in their math and computer skills, greater interest in engineering careers, higher levels of co-curricular involvement, and greater political engagement.

Shmurak, Carole B. *Voices of Hope: Adolescent Girls at Single-Sex and Coeducational Schools*. New York: Peter Lang, 1998.

In a longitudinal qualitative study, Shmurak surveyed and interviewed female students from four schools, two single-sex and two coeducational, over their four years of high school. She found that the girls from the single-sex schools take more Advanced Placement tests and score significantly better on them than do the girls at the coeducational schools. In addition, the girls in the single-sex schools report fewer incidents of sexism, and the single-sex schools are more likely to have female teachers and administrators than the coeducational schools.

Stabiner, Karen. *All Girls: Single-Sex Education and Why It Matters*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2002.

Stabiner studied the Marlborough School, an elite and well-established private school in Los Angeles, and the very new, public Young Women's Leadership School in East Harlem, New York. These schools were very different in their purposes and histories, but Stabiner found that the girls had very positive experiences at them. Stabiner believes that single-sex schools are good for girls because they are small and intimate and because they provide a safe haven from the pervasive sexism and gender stereotyping of high schools and colleges.

Streitmatter, Janice. *For Girls Only: Making a Case for Single-Sex Schooling*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999.

Steitmatter also conducted a four-year study of girls-only math classes in middle schools. She interviewed teachers, students, administrators, and parents and she observed classes at an all-girls private school. She concluded that single-sex schools and single-sex classes in coeducational schools are a valuable educational option that benefited girls. She found that single-sex education increases the self-esteem of middle school girls, provides for safe environments, and decreases their exposure to sexual harassment.

### **Meta-Analyses:**

Mael, Fred, Alex Alonso, Doug Gibson, Kelly Rogers, and Mark Smith. *Single-Sex Versus Coeducational Schooling: A Systematic Review*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2005. Accessed March 24, 2017.

<https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/other/single-sex/single-sex.pdf>

In a review commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education, the authors gathered and analyzed studies on single-sex education. The authors attempted to ask the following research questions: Are single-sex schools more or less effective than coeducational schools in terms of academic accomplishments, student adaptation and socio-emotional development, gender inequity, and performance due to school culture? According to the authors, while there is a modest benefit to single-sex schooling, the majority of studies of single-sex schools are of girls' schools and that there are very few studies with randomized experiments or correlational studies with adequate statistical control across all studied outcomes. This lack of quantitative research makes it difficult to make research-guided policy recommendations.

Erin Pahlke, Janet Shibley Hyde, and Carlie M. Allison. "The Effects of Single-Sex Compared with Coeducational Schooling on Students' Performance and Attitudes: A Meta-Analysis." *Psychological Bulletin* 140, no. 2 (July 2014): 1-31.

This meta-analysis seeks to synthesize the results of the many studies that compare single-sex schooling with coeducational schooling across a number of student outcomes, including academic performance in general, science and math achievement in particular, as well as motivation, interest, and attitudes towards school. The authors concluded that the studies did not support the claim that single-sex schooling is more beneficial or advantageous than coeducational schooling. Single-sex schooling had no advantage for either boys or girls at the high school level, a moderate advantage for girls at the middle school level, and a small advantage for boys at the elementary level. They did not find enough quality studies to show what effect, if any, single-sex schooling had for minority and low SES students.

### Peer-Reviewed Articles:

Archard, Nicole. "Developing Future Women Leaders: The Importance of Mentoring and Role Modeling in the Girls' School Context." *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning* 20, no. 4 (2012): 451-472.

One of the often-claimed benefits of all-girls' schooling is that it allows girls the opportunity to develop leadership skills in a context where girls take up all the leadership positions and in order to prepare them to become leaders in the world after school. Working in an Australian school for girls, Archard found that there were a wide variety of mentoring and role modeling relationships at the school and that the existence of these relationships positively influenced girls to seek out leadership opportunities in the school and in adulthood.

Bhana, Deevla and Nalini Pillay. "Beyond Passivity: Constructions of Femininities in a Single-Sex South African School." *Educational Review* 63, no. 1 (February 2011): 65-78.

Investigating the relationship between single-sex schools for girls and violence against girls, Bhana and Pillay argue that the issue is not as simple as removing girls from the violent expressions of masculinity found in coeducation. In fact, they argue that all-girls' schools are not necessarily free from violence, that violence often stems from the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and class, and that all-girls' schools may simply reproduce the passive femininities that are constructed by the dominant society.

Cherney, Isabelle D. and Kaitlin L. Campbell. "A League of Their Own: Do Single-Sex Schools Increase Girls' Participation in the Physical Sciences?" *Sex Roles* 65, no. 9-10 (June 2011): 712-724.

Cherney and Campbell explore the intersections of single-sex education, stereotype threat, math achievement, and choice of a STEM career. The researchers found that the students from single-sex schools outperformed students from coeducational schools on a math test, that the girls who took the test under a stereotype threat outperformed those who did not, and that girls in all-girls' schools had a higher motivation and self-esteem level than girls in coeducation. They found that choice of a STEM career had more to do with math achievement than with gender or school type.

Darmanin, Mary. "Empowering Women: The Contribution of Contemporary Catholic Schools." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 1, no. 1 (March 2009): 85-101.

Situating her discussion within the context of Catholic social teaching, Darmanin argues that Catholic all-girls' schools in Malta educate girls to be professionally prepared, empowered, and oriented towards service. She points in particular to the role of school culture and organizational policies, a rigorous academic program, and the synthesis of faith and culture as setting the stage for girls' success regardless of socioeconomic status.

Feniger, Yariv. "The Gender Gap in Advanced Math and Science Course Taking: Does Same-Sex Education Make a Difference?" *Sex Roles* 65, no. 9-10 (June 2011): 670-679.

Feniger looked at the levels of enrollments of girls in advanced math and science classes in three different kinds of state-funded schools in Israel: secular coeducational schools, religious coeducational schools with same-sex classes, and single-sex schools. Feniger found that the only subject where being in a single-sex environment seemed to influence curricular choice was computer science – girls in all-girls' schools took this course at much higher rates than girls at coeducational schools.

Harker, Richard. "Achievement, Gender and the Single-Sex/Coed Debate." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 21, no. 2 (June 2000): 203-18.

Harker studied the issue of girls' achievement in single-sex and coeducational schools in New Zealand. He found that the differences in achievement between girls who attended all-girls schools and girls who attended coeducational schools were insignificant. However, Harker noted that his study did not deal with outcomes that are not academic or achievement oriented nor did it consider the issue of the primarily male model of learning that is present in New Zealand's coeducational schools.

Hoyt, Michael A. and Cara L. Kennedy. "Leadership and Adolescent Girls: A Qualitative Study of Leadership Development." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 42 (December 2008): 203-219.

In this study of a girls' summer leadership program, Hoyt and Kennedy found that the girls started the program with fairly traditional notions of leadership. But through a program, which explore leadership styles and invited personal reflection, the authors found that girls' understanding of leadership was expanded, helping them feel empowered, confident, and efficacious.

Jackson, Carolyn. "Can Single-Sex Classes in Co-Educational Schools Enhance the Learning Experiences of Girls and/or Boys? An Exploration of Pupils' Perceptions." *British Educational Research Journal* 28, no. 1 (February 2002): 37-48.

A study in England of seventh grades students investigated the implementation of single-sex math classes. Jackson found that the girls had very favorable perceptions of the single-sex classrooms while the results for the boys were much more mixed. Jackson concluded that the curriculum-as-usual single-sex classes offered girls a safe haven and increased their confidence, but that they did little to address the behavior issues of the boys.

Jackson, Janna. "'Dangerous Presumptions': How Single-Sex Schooling Reifies False Notions of Sex, Gender, and Sexuality." *Gender and Education* 22, no. 2 (March 2010): 227-238.

Jackson draws attention to the important distinction between biological sex and socially constructed gender. She calls us to notice that single-sex schooling can serve to reify the binaries of sex and gender in ways that end up reinforcing gender stereotypes and can exclude those students who don't fit neatly into our socially constructed gendered categories.



Lee, Valerie E. and Anthony S. Bryk. "Effects of Single-Sex Secondary Schools on Student Achievement and Attitudes." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 78, no. 5 (October 1986): 381-95.

In one of the earliest studies into the benefits of single-sex education for girls, Lee and Bryk used data collected from the *High School and Beyond* study of 1980. They found that the girls at the all-girls schools performed better than girls at coeducational schools. They achieve higher grades, do more homework, spend less time watching television, and have a more positive attitude towards their studies. The effect is less pronounced for boys at all-boys schools; they do not show the same achievement gains, but they are more likely to enroll in math and science classes and less likely to enroll in vocational classes than are boys at coeducational schools. In addition, Lee and Bryk examined self-esteem and found that, again, the benefit is seen at the all-girls schools.

Lee, Valerie E. and Helen M. Marks. "Sustained Effects of the Single-Sex Secondary School Experience on Attitudes, Behaviors, and Values in College." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 82, no. 3 (September 1990): 578-92.

Lee and Marks found that the benefit of attending a single-sex school carried over to college. Both men and women from single-sex schools are more likely to attend college and to consider graduate work. Women who graduate from single-sex schools are less likely to hold sex-stereotyped attitudes about women in the workplace and show a higher sense of social responsibility than female graduates of coeducational schools. They decided that the single-sex high school experience is empowering and, therefore, beneficial, to women.

Lee, Valerie E. and Helen M. Marks. "Who Goes Where? Choice of Single-Sex and Coeducational Independent Secondary Schools." *Sociology of Education* 65, no. 3 (July 1992): 226-53.

Lee and Marks investigated the reasons why students and parents choose single-sex schools. Parents choose single-sex schools because the school is single-sex, its religious orientation, its size, and its college placement record. The experiences of family members was also a factor: students at single-sex school often had a parent or sibling who attended a single-sex school.

Lee, Valerie E., Helen M. Marks, and Tina Byrd. "Sexism in Single-Sex and Coeducational Independent Secondary School Classrooms." *Sociology of Education* 67, no. 2 (April 1994): 92-116.

Lee, Marks and Byrd found that the type of school a child attended did have an impact on their exposure to sexism. In a study that analyzed data collected as a part of the National Study of Gender Grouping in Independent Secondary Schools, the authors found that sexism exists at all schools regardless of their gender grouping, but that overt sexism was least present in the all-girls' schools and that these schools also had more gender equity programs.

LePore, Paul C. and John R. Warren. "A Comparison of Single-Sex and Coeducational Catholic Secondary Schooling: Evidence from the National Educational Longitudinal

Study of 1988.” *American Educational Research Journal* 34, no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 485-511.

Using data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988, the researchers found that boys at single-sex schools achieved higher test scores than did boys at coeducational schools, but that both groups improved their scores by the same amount, implying that they learned the same amount regardless of school type. They found no positive effect for the girls so it cannot be said that the girls at all-girls’ schools are benefited.

McCrea, Dorothy J. “Single Gender Education: A Gift to our Church and Society.” In *Justice, Care and Diversity: Addressing the Needs of All Students in Catholic Secondary Schools*, edited by Edmundo F. Linton and Shane P. Martin, 57-74. Washington, DC: National Catholic Education Association, 2009.

McCrea focuses on several areas in which Catholic all-girls’ schools are examples of educational best practices: concern for women and global values; high academic and social expectations; a school culture that educates for shared values; the use of common readings to build community and teach values; an organizational culture that values collaboration and collegiality; an explicit focus on developing student voices and leadership skills; a well-articulated mission statement; and a recognition of the importance of role models for girls.

Mehran, Golnar. “The Paradox of Tradition and Modernity in Female Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran.” *Comparative Education Review* 47, no. 3 (August 2003): 269-86.

Mehran notes that all schooling for girls in Iran is single-sex, but she refutes the assumption that all Islamic countries devalue women’s education. Mehran believes that education will continue to be a tool of empowerment for women in Iran. In schools, women will be able to explore gender issues, especially in their relation to Islamic teachings, as well as power and political issues. Schools for girls have the opportunity to become safe havens in which girls’ aspirations and talents can be nurtured.

Morrell, Robert. “Considering the Case for Single-Sex Schools for Girls in South Africa.” *McGill Journal of Education* 35, no. 3 (2000): 221-44.

According to Morrell, South African girls who attend single-sex schools show increased achievement, low dropout and absentee rates, and appreciation of the good female role models that they are exposed to in the girls’ schools. Morrell concludes that, while single-sex schools are not the answer to the problems of South Africa’s young women, they may help end the gender inequality and violence that plague the coeducational schools.

Owens, Sherry Lynn, Bobbie C. Smothers, and Fannye E. Love. “Are Girls Victims of Gender Bias in Our Nation’s Schools?” *Journal of Instructional Psychology* 30, no. 2 (June 2003): 131-6.

Owens, Smothers and Love confirm that girls have experienced both a biased curriculum and sexist classrooms. However, the authors also suggest solutions,

such as recognizing gender bias, exposing girls to more mechanical toys and tools very early in their education and to options for science and math careers in elementary school, and not allowing girls to opt out of math and science courses in high school.

Parker, Lesley H. and Leonie J. Rennie. "Teachers' Implementation of Gender-Inclusive Instructional Strategies in Single-Sex and Mixed-Sex Science Classrooms."

*International Journal of Science Education* 24, no. 9 (2002): 881-97.

Parker and Rennie studied gender-inclusive teaching strategies in single-sex and mixed-sex classrooms in Australia. The researchers discovered that single-sex girls' classrooms were viewed as more pleasant environments and that these girls seemed more outgoing and supportive and less harassed than girls from the mixed-sex classrooms. In addition, the boys from the single-sex classrooms experienced improvements in behavior and organizational skills.

Patterson, Meagan M. and Erin Pahlke. "Student Characteristics Associated with Girls' Success in a Single-Sex School." *Sex Roles* 65, no. 9-10 (June 2011): 737-750.

Patterson and Pahlke investigated the impact that factors other than the single-sex environment had on students' achievement. In this study they isolated demographic factors, prior academic achievement, and gender issues in order to see what effect these had on connection to school, academic performance, and persistence. The researchers found that demographic factors did have an effect on outcomes for girls; generally, poor and minority girls felt less connected to the school and did not perform as well.

Robinson, Pamela and Alan Smithers. "Should the Sexes Be Separated for Secondary Education – Comparisons of Single-Sex and Co-Education Schools?" *Research Papers in Education* 14, no. 1 (March 1999): 23-49.

In an extensive study of schools in England, Robinson and Smithers found that there was no significant difference in achievement when girls were compared to boys, when girls from single-sex schools were compared to girls from coeducational schools, or when girls from selective schools were compared to girls from non-selective schools. They also found that there is no clear trend in social benefits attributable to either single-sex or coeducational schools.

Salisbury, Jane, Gareth Rees, and Stephen Gorard. "Accounting for the Differential Attainment of Boys and Girls at School." *School Leadership and Management* 19, no. 4 (1999): 403-26.

Assessment of data from test scores in Wales shows that the gap in achievement levels between boys and girls in that country is narrowing. Unlike in the United States where the concern is over the academic achievement of girls, in Great Britain, there is concern among educators and the public that boys are underperforming in school. The authors argue that coeducational schools do not disadvantage girls' academic achievement.

Shah, Saeeda and Catherine Conchar. "Why Single-Sex Schools? Discourses of Culture/Faith and Achievement." *Cambridge Journal of Education* 39, no. 2 (June 2009): 191-204.

Shah and Conchar look at how culture and faith traditions shape the choice of a single-sex school in a multi-cultural context, finding that the faith background of students had a significant impact on the desire for single-sex schooling (particularly among Muslim families, but also among Catholics and other Christian groups). In fact, many of the families in the study chose the single-sex school because of its faith orientation, not simply because of its single-sex environment.

Sharpa, Jennifer D. and Daniel P. Keating. "Effects of a Girls-Only Curriculum During Adolescence: Performance, Persistence, and Engagement in Mathematics and Science." *American Educational Research Journal* 40, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 929-60.

Sharpa and Keating studied the effect of girls-only education on math and science achievement and attitudes. The girls in the all-girls classes show increased achievement and an increased interest in advanced coursework. They found no difference in the attitudes towards math and science.

Streitmatter, Janice. "Single-Sex Classes: Female Physics Students State Their Case." *School Science and Mathematics* 98, no. 7 (November 1998): 369-75.

Streitmatter found that, in mixed-sex physics classes, boys dominate the time and attention of the teacher by asking questions and presenting behavior problems. The girls in these mixed classes are quiet and wait their turn to use equipment and talk to the teacher. The girls in the all-girls' physics class report that the course seemed more manageable, less scary, friendlier, and less competitive and they appreciate the fact that they do not have to compete for the teacher's attention and time.

Thomson, Jennifer. "The Effect of Single-Sex Secondary Schooling on Women's Choice of College Major." *Sociological Perspectives* 46, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 257-78.

Drawing data from the *High School and Beyond* study, Thomson wanted to find out whether women who attended single-sex high schools were more likely to choose "male" or integrated majors. Thompson found that girls from all-girls schools are more likely to choose integrated majors. Because most of the single-sex schools in the *High School and Beyond* study are Catholic schools, this suggests that all-girls' Catholic schools are not conservative on issues of gender and feminism.

Warrington, Molly and Michael Younger. "'We Decided to Give It a Twirl': Single-Sex Teaching in English Comprehensive Schools." *Gender and Education* 15, no. 4 (December 2003): 339-50.

Warrington and Younger evaluated the single-sex classroom experiences in England, concluding that single-sex classrooms by themselves are not an automatic solution to achievement issues, poor behavior, or attitude problems.

But when a school is committed to and supportive of single-sex education, it can provide some benefit.

Watson, Cary M., Teri Quatman, and Erik Edler. "Career Aspirations of Adolescent Girls: Effects of Achievement Level, Grade, and Single-Sex school Environment." *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research* 46, no. 9-10 (May 2002): 323-35.

Watson, Quatman, and Edler investigated the effect of coeducational and single-sex school type on the career aspirations of young women. The researchers found that high-achieving girls have higher career aspirations especially to professional and scientific careers. Average achieving girls have more gender-stereotyped aspirations. The girls from the single-sex schools have higher career aspirations.

Wilson, Hope E., Jeanie Gresham, Michelle Williams, Claudia Whitley, and Jimmy Partin. "Female-Only Classes in a Rural Context: Self-Concept, Achievement, and Discourse." *Journal of Research in Rural Education* 28, no. 9 (September 2013): 1-14.

The authors look at single-sex classrooms in a coeducational public middle school in a rural environment. They also found that there was no measurable difference in academic achievement between the boys and girls. However, they did find that, in the all-girls' classrooms, girls spoke more and used higher levels of thinking (using Bloom's Taxonomy) than did the girls in the coeducational rooms.

#### **Studies of All-Boys' Schools:**

Gordon, Derrick M., Derek K. Iwamoto, Nadia Ward, Randolph Potts, and Elizabeth Boyd. "Mentoring Urban Black Middle School Male Students: Implications for Academic Achievement." *The Journal of Negro Education* 78, no. 3 (July 2009): 277-289.

While this study is not about single-sex education in particular, it does point to the importance of adult male mentors for young African American boys. The authors also suggest that single-sex instruction for these middle school Black boys would enhance academic achievement in a similar way.

Martino, Wayne and Bob Meyenn. "'War, Guns and Cool, Tough Things': Interrogating Single-Sex Classes as a Strategy for Engaging Boys in English." *Cambridge Journal of Education* 32, no. 3 (November 2002): 303-324.

This is a qualitative study of a coeducational Catholic school in Australia that instituted single-sex classes for teaching English due to a concern that boys were not performing as well as girls in English and a desire to counteract a "reading is feminine" attitude among the boys. They conclude that single-sex classrooms did not, in and of themselves, provide for higher achievement or greater engagement in the subject.

Mitchell, Anthony B. and James B. Steward. "The Efficacy of All-Male Academies: Insights from Critical Race Theory (CRT)." *Sex Roles* 69, no. 7 (October 2013): 382-392.

The authors use Critical Race Theory to investigate whether all-boys' schools can close the achievement gap between African American boys and their White peers. The issue of sex segregation in African American communities has not been researched thoroughly, but some scholars suggest that single-sex education for African American boys can serve to reinforce the assumptions of white masculinity. CRT suggests that poor, African American boys in a single-sex school will have the opportunity to critically examine race and gender in ways that will disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline and the high drop-out rates.

Yates, Shirley M. "Single-Sex School Boys' Perceptions of Coeducational Classroom Learning Environments." *Learning Environment Resources* 14, no. 1 (April 2011): 1-10. Yates researched the affect that the transition from all-boys' education to coeducation had on a group of boys. Most interestingly, she found that they boys reported that they found their classrooms to be more personalized after the transition to coeducation; Yates interprets this to affirm the finding that boys receive more attention and support from teachers in coeducational classrooms.

## APPENDIX B MISSION STATEMENTS OF ALL-GIRLS' CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

### Academy at Penguin Hall, Wenham, MA

(Independent Catholic, grades 9-12, founded in 2016)

The Academy at Penguin Hall's Mission is to educate, enlighten and empower young women to live and to lead exemplary lives. The Academy at Penguin Hall is an independent, college preparatory secondary school for young women, rooted in the Catholic tradition of education which is committed to developing the whole person; intellectually, spiritually, socially, physically and creatively.<sup>1</sup>

### Academy of the Holy Cross, Kensington, MD

(Sisters of the Holy Cross, grades 9-12, founded in 1869)

The Academy of the Holy Cross, a Catholic college preparatory school sponsored by the Sisters of the Holy Cross since 1868, is dedicated to educating young women in a Christ-centered community which values diversity. The Academy is committed to developing women of courage, compassion and scholarship who responsibly embrace the social, spiritual and intellectual challenges of the world.<sup>2</sup>

### Academy of Notre Dame, Tyngsborough, MA

(Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, K-12, founded in 1926)

The Academy of Notre Dame, Tyngsboro -- a private, Catholic school, sponsored by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur -- is based on the educational philosophy of their foundress, St. Julie Billiart. The Academy offers co-educational programming from pre-K through 8th grade in the lower school, and a college-preparatory upper school for young women. Our mission focuses on educating the whole person for life through a curriculum rooted in spiritual formation and academic excellence. We nurture a belief in the goodness of God and the dignity of each person. We are committed to community-building, diversity, global justice and service to those in need.<sup>3</sup>

### Academy of Notre Dame de Namur, Villanova, PA

(Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, grades 6-12, founded in 1867, 1944)

The Academy of Notre Dame de Namur, a Catholic, independent, college preparatory school, commits itself to the education of young women of grades 6 through 12 for responsible living in a global society. The Academy, rooted in the faith tradition of the Catholic Church, and the charism of Saint Julie Billiart, provides its students with a challenging academic curriculum within a rich spiritual community in order to:

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<sup>1</sup> Academy at Penguin Hall, "Mission," <http://penguinhall.org/about/mission/> (accessed March 8, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Academy of the Holy Cross, "Mission, Heritage, and Beliefs," <http://www.academyoftheholycross.org/page.cfm?p=357> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Academy of Notre Dame, "Mission and History," <http://www.ndatyngsboro.org/page.cfm?p=1558> (accessed February 18, 2016).

inspire them to live the prophetic nature of the gospel, with a passion for justice and love for the poor, enable them to develop the skills and desire necessary for life-long learning, empower them to be honorable, compassionate leaders.<sup>4</sup>

Academy of Our Lady of Mercy, Luralton Hall, Milford, CT  
(Sisters of Mercy, grades 9-12, founded in 1905)

Inspired by the Mercy Tradition, Luralton Hall empowers young women to pursue their highest potential through lifelong learning, compassionate service, and responsible leadership in a global society.<sup>5</sup>

Academy of Our Lady of Peace, San Diego, CA  
(Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, grades 9-12, founded in 1882)

The Academy of Our Lady of Peace is a Catholic, liberal arts oriented, college preparatory secondary school dedicated to the education of young women. As a Catholic school, it is committed to helping its students become active participants in building Christ's kingdom of justice, love and peace. As a school rooted in the values of the Sisters of St. Joseph, it promotes the cultivation of "gentleness, peace and joy" as we respond to the needs of the "dear neighbor" both in our midst and in our human community. Through its college preparatory program, its mission is to empower its students to become knowledgeable in those skills needed to achieve success in post-secondary studies, and to make informed and values-driven decisions in the context of today's world. As a result of these endeavors, and working with parents as our educational partners providing a family context of faith-in-action, the Academy of Our Lady of Peace strives to graduate responsible women educated to the needs of society.<sup>6</sup>

Academy of the Holy Family, Batlic, CT  
(Sisters of Charity of Our Lady, Mother of the Church, grades 9-12, founded in 1874)

The Academy of the Holy Family is a Catholic day and boarding high school for American and international young women. Through a challenging curriculum built on a supportive spiritual foundation, we empower our students to achieve their full God-given potential to impact their world.<sup>7</sup>

Assumption High School, Louisville, KY  
(Sisters of Mercy, grades 9-12, founded in 1955)

Rooted in the values of Jesus Christ and the spirit of the Sisters of Mercy, Assumption High School, dedicated to the development of the whole person, educates young women in a Catholic community where faith guides, compassion

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<sup>4</sup> Academy of Notre Dame de Namur, "Our Mission," <https://www.ndapa.org/page.cfm?p=780&LockSSL=true> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Luralton Hall, "Our Heritage," <http://www.luraltonhall.org/Our-Heritage> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Academy of Our Lady of Peace, "Our Mission," <http://www.aolp.org/about-us/our-mission/> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Academy of the Holy Family, "Who We Are," <http://www.ahfbaltic.org/pages/ahf> (accessed February 7, 2016).



inspires, integrity matters, and excellence empowers.<sup>8</sup>

Beaumont School, Cleveland Heights, OH  
(Ursuline Sisters, grades 9-12, founded in 1850)

Beaumont School is a Catholic school in the Ursuline tradition that educates women for life, leadership and service. Beaumont is dedicated to a college preparatory and International Baccalaureate liberal arts education that is rooted in Jesus Christ and inspired by the spirit of Saint Angela. The single sex, culturally diverse learning environment encourages every student to develop the qualities she needs to thrive personally, spiritually, and professionally in an evolving global society. Beaumont is sponsored by the Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland in collaboration with its lay educators. Beaumont is dedicated to Catholic, college preparatory liberal arts education for young women in a multi-cultural setting.<sup>9</sup>

Bishop Conaty – Our Lady of Loretto High School, Los Angeles, CA  
(Archdiocese of Los Angeles, grades 9-12, founded in 1923/1949 [merged in 1989])

It is the mission of Bishop Conaty - Our Lady of Loretto High School to provide a quality, affordable, comprehensive, college preparatory Catholic education to young women in central Los Angeles. Reflecting its dynamic life and history, Bishop Conaty-Loretto aims to empower women to be tomorrow's leaders. The school strives to instill in students a lifelong commitment to learning, Christian values, responsible citizenship, and community service.<sup>10</sup>

Catherine McAuley High School, Portland, ME  
(Sisters of Mercy, grades 9-12, founded in 1873, 1969)

Catherine McAuley High School is Maine's only college-preparatory private high school for young women. McAuley girls come from all over the world and from many different religious and cultural backgrounds, but they are all carrying on the rich tradition of Mercian education - and of girls with dreams becoming women of vision.<sup>11</sup>

Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart, Coconut Grove, FL  
(Religious of the Society of the Sacred Heart, grades PK-12, founded in 1961)

Since 1800, when St. Madeleine Sophie Barat founded the Society of the Sacred Heart in France, Religious of the Society of the Sacred Heart and lay Sacred Heart educators have carried out her imperative of educational excellence. Today, the Network of Sacred Heart schools is an association of 22 Catholic schools across the United States and nearly 150 schools internationally. Independent yet united in spirit and purpose, the international community of Schools of the Sacred Heart

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<sup>8</sup> Assumption High School, "Mission and Vision," [http://www.ahsrockets.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?type=d&uREC\\_ID=347029&pREC\\_ID=755543](http://www.ahsrockets.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?type=d&uREC_ID=347029&pREC_ID=755543) (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Beaumont School, "Mission and History," <http://www.beaumontschool.org/mission-history> (accessed February 7, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Bishop Conaty – Our Lady of Loretto High School, "Mission," [http://www.bishopconatyloretto.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?type=d&uREC\\_ID=216227&pREC\\_ID=476835](http://www.bishopconatyloretto.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?type=d&uREC_ID=216227&pREC_ID=476835) (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> Catherine McAuley High School, "History and Values," <http://www.mcauleyhs.org/about-mcauley/history-and-values> (accessed February 18, 2016).

believes in educating the whole child, and preparing her to live fully and wisely. At the core of the Sacred Heart education the Goals and Criteria are the principles that express the intentions and hopes of our 200-year tradition. Carrollton's culture and identity are bound inextricably to the vision set forth in the Goals of Sacred Heart Schools. These values form the moral compass that influence the choices made within our community. Learning to draw upon these values during their school days, Carrollton graduates become women of conviction, courage and confidence.<sup>12</sup>

Connolly School of the Holy Child, Potomac, MD

(Society of the Holy Child Jesus, grades 6-12, founded in 1964)

Connelly School of the Holy Child is a Catholic, college preparatory school, committed to the intellectual, spiritual, artistic, physical and social development of young women in grades 6 through 12. The School emphasizes academic challenge, joy of learning and education of well-rounded women of faith and action. The Holy Child community welcomes students and families of different faiths and diverse backgrounds. In keeping with the philosophy of our founder Cornelia Connelly, Holy Child values the uniqueness of each individual and fosters a life of service to others.<sup>13</sup>

Convent of the Sacred Heart, Greenwich, CT

(Religious of the Sacred Heart, grades K-12, founded in 1848)

Convent of the Sacred Heart, Greenwich, founded in 1848, is an independent Catholic, college preparatory school for young women from kindergarten through grade 12, with a coed preschool and prekindergarten. Sacred Heart, steeped in a solid academic tradition, educates women to have independence of judgment, personal freedom, and strength of character so that they can become leaders with broad intellectual and spiritual horizons. The school welcomes students of all races, socioeconomic backgrounds, and religious beliefs. True to its international heritage, the school provides students with experiences of diversity. Cultivating prophetic leaders is a compelling commitment of our education, and the entire school community, as a member of the Sacred Heart Network of Schools, is dedicated to the Goals and Criteria:

A personal and active faith in God

A deep respect for intellectual values

A social awareness which impels to action

The building of community as a Christian value

Personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom.<sup>14</sup>

Convent of the Sacred Heart, New York, NY

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<sup>12</sup> Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart, "Our Mission," <http://www.carrollton.org/page.cfm?p=357> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>13</sup> Connelly School of the Holy Child, "Quick Facts," <http://www.holychild.org/about/quick-facts/> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>14</sup> Convent of the Sacred Heart, "Mission & Goals and Criteria," <http://www.cshgreenwich.org/Page/About-Us/Mission--Goals-and-Criteria> (accessed February 7, 2016).

(Religious of the Sacred Heart, grades PK-12, founded in 1881)

Convent of the Sacred Heart is New York City's oldest independent school for girls, educating students in grades Pre-K through 12. As part of an international network, we are committed to a set of principles shared by all Sacred Heart schools. Known as the "Goals and Criteria," these principles articulate the core components of a Sacred Heart education, and charge our community with a unified educational mission. At the heart of our philosophy is the belief that each child possesses unique gifts. Our job is to unearth those gifts, nurture them, and empower each child of the Sacred Heart to share those gifts with the global community.<sup>15</sup>

Cor Jesu Academy, St. Louis, MO

(Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, grades 9-12, founded in 1956)

Cor Jesu Academy, a Catholic, college-preparatory school founded by the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, offers an academically challenging program, committed to the total education of young women. Inspired by the charism "SHARING THE LOVE OF THE HEART OF CHRIST," students embrace personal dignity, faith, integrity and compassion. Empowered intellectually, spiritually, and morally, graduates serve as responsible members of the global community.<sup>16</sup>

Cornelia Connelly School, Anaheim, CA

(Society of the Holy Child Jesus, grades 9-12, 1961)

Cornelia Connelly School inspires young women to achieve academic excellence and develop into confident, articulate leaders who are guided by Catholic principles to serve our global society.<sup>17</sup>

Elizabeth Seton Academy, Dorchester, MA

(Sisters of Charity, Halifax, grades 9-12, founded in 2003)

Elizabeth Seton Academy, established in the spirit and values of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, is a private, Catholic all girls' college preparatory high school that provides a nurturing community for learners.

ESA---strives to prepare each student to become a young woman of faith by fostering a deeper understanding of the Catholic tradition, its truths and values.

ESA---educates young women by developing their potential as scholars, instilling in them a sense of social responsibility, and empowering them to become leaders and professionals of tomorrow.

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<sup>15</sup> Convent of the Sacred Heart, "Mission: Goals and Criteria," <http://www.cshnyc.org/about/goals-and-criteria> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>16</sup> Cor Jesu Academy, "Sharing the Love of the Heart of Christ," <https://www.corjesu.org/mission> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> Cornelia Connelly School, "Mission/Philosophy," [http://www.connellyhs.org/page/about\\_us/mission\\_philosophy](http://www.connellyhs.org/page/about_us/mission_philosophy) (accessed February 7, 2016).

ESA---challenges each young woman to develop her unique abilities through a strong sense of self in a community that embraces religious, cultural and ethnic diversity.<sup>18</sup>

Elizabeth Seton High School, Bladensburg, MD  
(Daughters of Charity, grades 9-12, founded in 1957)

Elizabeth Seton High School educates young women by engaging them in a challenging, college preparatory curriculum and in the teachings of the Catholic Church. We promote a community that values diversity and is rooted in service to others.<sup>19</sup>

Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy, La Canada Flintridge, CA  
(Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose, grades 9-12, founded in 1931)

Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy, a Catholic, Dominican, college-preparatory school, educates young women for a life of faith, integrity and truth.<sup>20</sup>

Fontbonne Academy, Milton, MA  
(Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston, grades 9-12, founded in 1954)

Fontbonne Academy, sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston, is a Catholic, college preparatory high school for young women. Fontbonne Academy fosters Gospel values and educational excellence. This inclusive community embraces diversity in many forms. Through the values of respect, responsibility, reconciliation and reverence, Fontbonne Academy promotes growth in spirituality, scholarship, and leadership of young women in the changing world.<sup>21</sup>

Fontbonne Hall Academy, Brooklyn, NY  
(Sisters of St. Joseph, grades 9-12, founded in 1937)

Fontbonne Hall Academy, a college preparatory school for young women, founded on the gospel of Jesus Christ and inspired by the philosophy and charism of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, offers a superior educational program to form and empower women of confidence and compassion.<sup>22</sup>

Forest Ridge School of the Sacred Heart, Bellevue, WA  
(Religious of the Sacred Heart, grades 5-12, founded in 1907)

Forest Ridge School of the Sacred Heart educates young women to think critically, embrace challenges, model resilience, confront injustice, seek equality and lead globally in the pioneering spirit of our foundress. Our graduates change

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<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Seton Academy, "Mission," <http://esaboston.com/about-us/mission/> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Seton High School, "About Us," <http://www.setonhs.org/page.cfm?p=2> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>20</sup> Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy, "Who We Are," <http://www.fsha.org/Page/About/Who-We-Are/Mission--Philosophy> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>21</sup> Fontbonne Academy, "Mission and History," <http://www.fontbonneacademy.org/Page/About/Mission--History> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>22</sup> Fontbonne Hall Academy, "Our Mission," [http://www.fontbonne.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?type=d&uREC\\_ID=240795&pREC\\_ID=572424](http://www.fontbonne.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?type=d&uREC_ID=240795&pREC_ID=572424) (accessed February 7, 2016).

the world.<sup>23</sup>

Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School, Washington, DC

(Sisters of the Visitation, 9-12, founded in 1799)

Georgetown Visitation, founded in 1799, is a college preparatory school rooted in the Roman Catholic faith and Salesian tradition, committed to educating young women from diverse backgrounds. We are a faith-centered community dedicated to educational excellence, enriched by co-curricular and service programs. Our mission is to empower our students to meet the demands and challenges of today's rapidly changing and morally complex world. We guide our students to become self-reliant, intellectually mature, and morally responsible women of faith, vision, and purpose.<sup>24</sup>

Gwynedd Mercy Academy High School, Gwynedd Valley, PA

(Sisters of Mercy, grades 9-12, founded in 1861)

Gwynedd Mercy Academy High School, a Catholic college-preparatory school encourages young women to live and act justly in the spirit of Jesus Christ and to follow in the tradition of mercy and serve handed down from Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Sisters of Mercy. Gwynedd Mercy Academy High School respects individual differences and challenges each student to achieve academic excellence. Gwynedd Mercy Academy High School empowers each student to develop her unique talents and abilities and to become a competent and compassionate Christian woman.<sup>25</sup>

Immaculate Heart High School, Los Angeles, CA

(Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, grades 6-12, founded in 1906)

Immaculate Heart is a private, Catholic, college preparatory school dedicated to the intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social development of young women. The mission of the school is to foster academic excellence in an environment that encourages students to become women of great heart and right conscience through leadership, service, and a life-long commitment to Christian values.<sup>26</sup>

Incarnate Word Academy, St. Louis, MO

(Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, grades 9-12, founded in 1932)

The mission of Incarnate Word Academy is to challenge young women of faith to achieve their God-given potential as academically successful Women of the Word, following the example of Jesus, the Incarnate Word, by promoting human

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<sup>23</sup> Forest Ridge School of the Sacred Heart, "Mission, Vision, Core Values," <http://www.forestridge.org/Page/About/Mission-Vision-Core-Values> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>24</sup> Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School, "Mission Statement," <http://www.visi.org/about-us/mission-statement/index.aspx> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> Gwynedd Mercy Academy High School, "Mission and Belief Statements," <http://www.gmahs.org/about-gmahs/mission-and-belief-statements/index.aspx> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>26</sup> Immaculate Heart High School, "Mission Statement," <http://www.immaculateheart.org/page.aspx?pid=413> (accessed February 7, 2016).

dignity, thereby empowering themselves and others to make a positive impact on our world.<sup>27</sup>

Josephinum Academy, Chicago, IL

(Sisters of Christian Charity, grades 9-12, founded in 1890)

Josephinum Academy educates each young woman to reach her highest academic potential, empowers her to discover her unique place in the world, and inspires her to become a confident, faith-filled leader.<sup>28</sup>

Louisville High School, Woodland Hills, CA

(Sisters of St. Louis, grades 9-12, founded in 1960)

Louisville High School is a Catholic school for young women. Guided by the Sisters of St. Louis “to work toward a world, healed, unified and transformed,” Louisville encourages young women to strive for academic excellence and to grow in confidence, integrity and faith, bringing “Christ to all and all to Christ.”<sup>29</sup>

Magnificat High School, Rocky River, OH

(Sisters of the Humility of Mary, grades 9-12, founded in 1955)

We educate young women holistically to learn, lead and serve in the spirit of Mary’s Magnificat.<sup>30</sup>

Marymount High School, Los Angeles, CA

(Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, grades 9-12, founded in 1923)

Marymount High School is an independent, Catholic, all-girls school with the core purpose of educating and empowering young women to live lives of consequence as ethical leaders with a global perspective and an unshakable commitment to the common good.<sup>31</sup>

Marymount School of New York, New York, NY

(Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, grades N-12, founded in 1926)

Marymount School is an independent, Catholic day school that seeks to educate young women who continue to question, risk, and grow—young women who care, serve, and lead—young women prepared to challenge, shape, and change the world. Marymount is a college preparatory school for girls, committed to the development of the lifelong skills of critical thinking and problem solving. A wide range of extracurricular activities complements the academic program and provides opportunities for creativity, self-expression, leadership, and

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<sup>27</sup> Incarnate Word Academy, “Philosophy and Mission,” <http://www.iwacademy.org/?page=MissionStatement> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>28</sup> Josephinum Academy, “Mission and History,” <http://www.josephinum.org/page.cfm?p=507> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>29</sup> Louisville High School, “Mission and Facts,” <http://www.louisvillehs.org/Page/About/Mission--Facts> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>30</sup> Magnificat High School, “Mission Statement,” <https://www.magnificaths.org/mission/mission-statement> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>31</sup> Marymount High School, “Mission and History,” <http://www.mhs-la.org/Page/About/Living-Our-Mission/Mission--History> (accessed February 7, 2016).

collaboration. These experiences foster social skills, sportsmanship, a sense of responsibility, independence, and self-confidence. The School promotes in each student a respect for her own unique abilities and a commitment to responsible living in a changing world. Marymount welcomes diversity and draws upon it to foster cultural sensitivity, religious understanding, and a global perspective.<sup>32</sup>

Mayfield Senior School of the Holy Child Jesus, Pasadena, CA  
(Society of the Holy Child Jesus, grades 9-12, founded in 1931)

As a member of the Holy Child Network of Schools, Mayfield Senior School shares in the mission of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus: “to help others to believe that God lives and acts in them and in our world, and to rejoice in the divine presence.” Mayfield offers an education with a distinctive spirit, grounded in the philosophy and spirituality of Cornelia Connelly, foundress of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.<sup>33</sup>

McAuley High School, Cincinnati, OH  
(Sisters of Mercy, grades 9-12, founded in 1958)

To empower young women to Learn, Lead and Love through the Core Values of Catherine McAuley: faith, compassion, service, leadership, excellence.<sup>34</sup>

Mercy Academy, Louisville, KY  
(Sisters of Mercy, grades 9-12, founded in 1872)

The Academy of Our Lady of Mercy, sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, South Central Community, exists to serve young women by:

- Providing a quality Catholic education within a caring faith community;
- Offering an academic curriculum which provides opportunities for all learners to excel;
- Empowering them to be responsible leaders in service to others;
- Offering the opportunity to build a sense of community with students of diverse abilities and backgrounds;
- Providing academic and real-life experiences that prepare them for life and work in an age of rapid change.<sup>35</sup>

Mercy High School, Farmington Hills, MI  
(Sisters of Mercy, grades 9-12, founded in 1945)

Mercy High School, a Catholic college preparatory school immersed in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy, educates and inspires young women of diverse backgrounds to lead and serve with compassion.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Marymount School, “Mission,” <http://www.marymountnyc.org/Page/About/Mission> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>33</sup> Mayfield Senior School of the Holy Child Jesus, “Mission Statement,” <http://www.mayfieldsenior.org/about/mission-statement> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>34</sup> McAuley High School, “Mission and Core Values,” <http://www.mcauleyhs.net/page.cfm?p=505> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>35</sup> Mercy Academy, “Mission and Philosophy,” <http://www.mercyacademy.com/page.cfm?p=505> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>36</sup> Mercy High School, “Mercy High School,” <http://www.mhsmi.org> (accessed February 8, 2016).

Mercy High School, San Francisco, CA

(Sisters of Mercy, grades 9-12, founded in 1952)

The mission of Mercy High School, San Francisco, a Catholic high school, is to educate young women for their expanding roles in society. This education must be formative, not only imparting fundamental skills and knowledge, but also encouraging the development of values that will guide them in all their lives. Mercy High School strives to provide a Christian environment where the following values can be nurtured: love of God, self-esteem, intellectual integrity, independent thought, respect for human rights, compassion for others, dedication to teach, courage to act, and respect for the goods of the earth.<sup>37</sup>

Mercy High School, Baltimore, MD

(Sisters of Mercy, grades 9-12, founded in 1960)

We, the community of Mercy High School Baltimore, are a private Catholic preparatory school for young women of diverse backgrounds from across central Maryland. Sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, we provide a rigorous education marked by academic excellence and personal attention. Here, students learn to communicate ideas and express themselves confidently, both individually and in collaboration with others. Mercy creates an environment where young women form habits of lifelong inquiry, critical thinking and courageous action in a global society. In the tradition of Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy, our work reflects a commitment to hospitality, service, justice and compassion.<sup>38</sup>

Montrose School, Medfield, MA

(Opus Dei, grades 6-12, founded in 1979)

Montrose educates young women to pursue the truth in all they do. Built upon the foundation of a rich liberal arts curriculum, personal character formation and collaboration with parents, a Montrose education challenges each student to cultivate intellect and character, leadership and service, faith and reason.<sup>39</sup>

Mother McAuley Liberal Arts High School, Chicago, IL

(Sisters of Mercy, grades 9-12, founded in 1846)

MOTHER McAULEY LIBERAL ARTS HIGH SCHOOL is a Catholic educational community committed to providing a quality secondary education for young women. In the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy and their foundress, Catherine McAuley, we prepare students to live in a complex, dynamic society by teaching them to think critically, communicate effectively, respond compassionately to the needs of their community and assume roles of Christian

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<sup>37</sup> Mercy High School, "Mission Statement," <http://www.mercyhs.org/about/mission> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>38</sup> Mercy High School, "Mission," <http://www.mercyhighschool.com/about-mercy/mission/index.aspx> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>39</sup> Montrose School, "Mission and Philosophy," <http://www.montroseschool.org/about> (accessed February 7, 2016).



leadership. In partnership with parents, we empower young women to acknowledge their giftedness and to make decisions with a well-developed moral conscience. We foster an appreciation of the diversity of the global community and a quest for knowledge and excellence as life long goals.<sup>40</sup>

Mount Alvernia High School, Newton, MA

(Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, grades 7-12, founded in 1927)

To provide for the spiritual, intellectual and technological needs of the students. To instill in the students an awareness of their relationship with the Creator, the world and its inhabitants. To offer a strong core curriculum based on traditional disciplines which fosters an interdisciplinary approach to learning. To encourage courageous, compassionate, articulate women who believe that life has a purpose, who are able to discern the “good” and who will be an effective force for it in the world.<sup>41</sup>

Nerinx Hall, Webster Groves, MO

(Sisters of Loretto, grades 9-12, founded in 1924)

As a Catholic college-preparatory high school for young women, founded by the Sisters of Loretto, Nerinx Hall High School is grounded in the belief that educated, caring, empowered young women are essential to our world. Thus, we have three primary goals. We strive to help each young woman know herself and her world. We offer her a loving community of faith that nurtures her individual gifts, enlivens her spirit, and reveals a diverse world where hope prevails. And we call each young woman to deliberate Christian action in her world.<sup>42</sup>

Newton Country Day School, Newton, MA

(Religious of the Sacred Heart, grades 5-12, founded in 1880)

Newton Country Day educates young women to assume leadership and to take initiative in the school and in the world. Founded in 1880, Newton Country Day, a member of the international Network of Sacred Heart Schools, is an independent, college preparatory school for highly motivated girls who wish to pursue a serious course of study.<sup>43</sup>

Notre Dame Academy, Hingham, MA

(Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, grades 7-12, founded in 1965)

Notre Dame Academy is a vibrant, Catholic, college-preparatory learning community, sponsored by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. The Academy

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<sup>40</sup> Mother McAuley Liberal Arts High School, “Mission,”

<http://www.motherscauley.org/page.cfm?p=506> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>41</sup> Mount Alvernia High School, “I Am MAHS,” <http://www.mountalverniahhs.org/about/> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>42</sup> Nerinx Hall, “Philosophy,” <https://www.nerinxhs.org/about/philosophy.php> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>43</sup> Newton Country Day School, “Mission Statement,”

[http://www.newtoncountryday.org/RelId/606743/ISvars/default/Mission\\_Statement.htm](http://www.newtoncountryday.org/RelId/606743/ISvars/default/Mission_Statement.htm) (accessed February 7, 2016).

guides young women in their personal faith formation, challenges students to pursue academic excellence, and encourages social responsibility on behalf of global justice.<sup>44</sup>

Notre Dame High School, St. Louis, MO

(School Sisters of Notre Dame, grades 9-12, founded in 1934)

Notre Dame High School educates young women to become confident, compassionate Christian leaders. Each student is guided to reach the fullness of her potential and to use her gifts to make a difference in the world around her. Notre Dame High School provides a college preparatory program to girls from diverse backgrounds through an environment of differentiated instruction. In the spirit of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and in response to the mission of Jesus in the Catholic tradition, students are educated to integrate lifelong learning, faith, and service into their lives.<sup>45</sup>

Notre Dame High School for Girls, Chicago, IL

(Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, grades 9-12, founded in 1937, 2009)

Following in the footsteps of St. Julie Billiart, Notre Dames college preparatory and co-curricular activities provide a well-rounded moral, academic, physical, and social education that ensures our students success in college, career and life. Notre Dame High School for Girls mission is to provide a faith-based, technology rich, college preparatory program in a culturally diverse, safe and secure learning environment.<sup>46</sup>

Oak Knoll School of the Holy Child, Summit, NJ

(Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus, grades K-12, founded in 1924)

Oak Knoll School of the Holy Child in Summit, NJ, Judeo-Christian in heritage, Roman Catholic in teaching and worship, is a coed, private, Catholic elementary school for grades kindergarten through 6, and an all-girls middle and high school for grades 7 through 12. The Oak Knoll community commits to the education and growth of the whole child, as articulated by the founder of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, Cornelia Connelly. The school fosters a faith commitment that engenders a joyous personal relationship with God in addressing the challenges of the world. In a learning climate that is based on trust and reverence for the dignity and uniqueness of each person, Oak Knoll provides an intellectually challenging and creative program of study that fosters excellence in every aspect of school life and prepares our graduates to meet "the wants of the age."

Welcoming a diverse student body, our learning community develops mature students who think critically, embrace knowledge, respond with moral and ethical integrity, and make responsible choices that enrich their own lives and contribute

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<sup>44</sup> Notre Dame Academy, "At a Glance," <http://www.ndahingham.com/page.cfm?p=3440> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>45</sup> Notre Dame High School, "Mission Statement," <http://www.ndhs.net/s/999/index.aspx?sid=999&gid=1&pgid=292> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>46</sup> Notre Dame High School for Girls, "ND Mission and Goals," [http://ndhs4girls.org/about/mission\\_vision\\_philosophy/](http://ndhs4girls.org/about/mission_vision_philosophy/) (accessed February 18, 2016).

to the lives of others.<sup>47</sup>

Oakcrest School, McLean, VA

(Opus Dei, grades 6-12, founded in 1976)

Oakcrest School in partnership with parents challenges girls in grades 6-12 to develop their intellect, character, faith and leadership potential to succeed in college and throughout their lives. Oakcrest, an independent school, educates the whole person. Inspired by the teachings of the Catholic Church and the spirituality of Opus Dei, we weave together a rich liberal arts curriculum, character development, one-on-one advising and service to create a vibrant environment that graduates confident young women—young women who will make a difference in all they choose to do.<sup>48</sup>

Oakland Catholic High School, Pittsburgh, PA

(Diocese of Pittsburgh, grades 9-12, founded in 1989)

Oakland Catholic High School is a Christ-centered, college preparatory school for young women of diverse backgrounds. The Oakland Catholic community is committed to an environment that promotes spiritual formation, excellence in education, a wide range of activities and athletics, and service to others. Formed under the patronage of St. Joan of Arc, Oakland Catholic is dedicated to teaching young women to lead lives of faith, courage and commitment as they lay the foundation for their future as responsible and respected global leaders.<sup>49</sup>

Our Lady Academy, Bay St. Louis, MS

(Sisters of Mercy, grades 7-12, founded in 1971)

Our Lady Academy is an all-girls college preparatory junior/senior high school which teaches Catholic Christian doctrine, morals, and values; promotes academic excellence; encourages the students to give service to others; and challenges them to achieve their God-given potential as young ladies in their local and world communities.<sup>50</sup>

Our Lady of Mercy School for Young Women, Rochester, NY

(Sisters of Mercy, grades 6-12, founded in 1928)

Animated by our Motto - Via, Veritas et Vita, we educate young women in the Way - rooted in Gospel values, the Truth - unleashing creative energy for the pursuit of knowledge and the Life - nurturing a hope-filled vision for leadership and responsible service.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Oak Knoll School of the Holy Child, "History and Mission," <http://www.oakknoll.org/Page/About/History--Mission> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>48</sup> Oakcrest School, "Mission and Philosophy," <http://www.oakcrest.org/about-us/mission-philosophy/> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>49</sup> Oakland Catholic High School, "Mission and Philosophy," <http://www.oaklandcatholic.org/about-oc/mission-philosophy/> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>50</sup> Our Lady Academy, "Our Lady Academy," <http://www.ourladyacademy.com> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>51</sup> Our Lady of Mercy School for Young Women, "Mission and Vision," <http://www.mercyhs.com/about-mercy/mission-and-vision> (accessed February 18, 2016).

Our Lady of Tepeyac High School, Chicago, IL

(Sisters of the Resurrection, grades 9-12, founded in 1904)

Our Lady of Tepeyac High School is a Roman Catholic girls' secondary school deeply rooted in the Little Village neighborhood that, without regard to ability to pay or immediate preparedness for high school study, provides a multicultural educational experience developing each young woman to her full intellectual and spiritual potential in an environment that values learning linked to faith, family, and community.<sup>52</sup>

Queen of Peace High School, Burbank, IL

(Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters, grades 9-12, founded in 1962)

Queen of Peace, a Catholic Dominicans of Sinsinawa college preparatory high school, educates and empowers diverse young women in an environment that inspires academic excellence. The Queen of Peace community promotes collaboration, moral and ethical leadership, service, and a passion for peace and justice.<sup>53</sup>

Ramona Convent Secondary School, Alhambra, CA

(Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, grades 7-12, founded in 1889)

Ramona's mission, as a welcoming and inclusive Catholic school sponsored by the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, is to provide an educational program that graduates young women who are characterized by academic excellence, spiritual depth, moral strength, and personal grace, open to the wisdom of other cultures and traditions, and prepared to lead and serve in an evolving interdependent global community.<sup>54</sup>

Regina Dominican High School, Wilmette, IL

(Adrian Dominican Sisters, grades 9-12, founded in 1958)

Regina Dominican, a college preparatory Catholic school for women, sponsored by the Adrian Dominican Sisters, fosters academic excellence, truth, peace and justice while challenging each student to develop leadership for life and respect for all races, cultures and faiths.<sup>55</sup>

Resurrection College Preparatory High School, Chicago, IL

(Sisters of the Resurrection, grades 9-12, founded in 1922)

Resurrection College Prep High School is a Catholic Christian community dedicated to the education of young women, and to the development of their God–

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<sup>52</sup> Our Lady of Tepeyac High School, "About Us," <http://www.ourladyoftepeyac.org/aboutus.php> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>53</sup> Queen of Peace High School, "Mission, Vision and Values," <http://www.queenofpeacehs.org/about/mission-vision-values/overview> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>54</sup> Ramona Convent Secondary School, "Mission and Philosophy," <http://www.ramonaconvent.org/MissionPhilosophy.aspx> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>55</sup> Regina Dominican High School, "About Regina," <http://rdhs.org/about-regina/why-regina-dominican/> (accessed February 18, 2016).

given talents. Convinced of God's unconditional love and nourished by the Risen Lord Jesus Christ, we are committed to the spiritual, ethical, intellectual, physical and social growth of our students.<sup>56</sup>

Rosati-Kain High School, St. Louis, MO

(School Sisters of Notre Dame and Sisters of St. Joseph Carondelet, grades 9-12, founded in 1911)

Through a vibrant Catholic education, we cultivate the individuality, faith, talent, and aspirations of young women who will lead and serve the world.<sup>57</sup>

Sacred Heart High School, Los Angeles, CA

(Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose, grades 9-12, founded in 1907)

Sacred Heart High School, a Catholic, college preparatory school, in the Dominican Tradition, embraces, empowers, and inspires young women to live in faith, truth and service.<sup>58</sup>

Sacred Hearts Academy, Honolulu, HI

(Sisters of the Sacred Hearts, grades JK-12, founded in 1909)

Sacred Hearts Academy is rooted in the Eucharistic spirituality which presents the ideal of living and loving the world as Jesus and Mary did. With this emphasis, the school is committed to:

- Fostering a learning experience that provides a spiritual foundation for the development of compassion, moral values and respect for all individuals.
- Promoting a Christian environment in which the student's growth in all areas is central as she grows in understanding of herself and the world around her.
- Providing a well-rounded academic curriculum that employs a variety of learning experiences to stimulate and develop each individual's intellect, creativity, spirituality and morality.
- Maintaining a diverse student body from various cultural, ethnic, religious and economic backgrounds which enriches the learning process and helps students embrace the full spectrum of the world community.
- Balancing academic and personal growth by emphasizing respect of and service to others and the community in an effort to develop moral, responsible citizens.<sup>59</sup>

Santa Catalina School, Monterey, CA

(Dominican Sisters of San Rafael, grades 9-12, founded in 1850)

Santa Catalina exists to develop in each student a striving for excellence, a maturing awareness of moral and spiritual values, a sense of responsible purpose,

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<sup>56</sup> Resurrection College Preparatory High School, "Who We Are," <http://www.reshs.org/who-we-are-pages-525.php> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>57</sup> Rosati-Kain High School, "Our Mission," <http://rosati-kain.org/our-mission/> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>58</sup> Sacred Heart High School, "Mission and Philosophy," [http://www.shhsla.org/about/mission\\_and\\_philosophy/](http://www.shhsla.org/about/mission_and_philosophy/) (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>59</sup> Sacred Hearts Academy, "Philosophy," <http://www.sacredhearts.org/philosophy> (accessed February 7, 2016).

and a determination to serve the world with courage, graciousness, and compassion.<sup>60</sup>

St. Agnes Academy, Memphis, TN

(Dominican Sisters, grades 9-12, founded in 1851)

St. Agnes Academy-St. Dominic School is a Catholic independent school, ecumenical by charter. The school was founded to educate young people in a principle-based program designed to prepare them for advanced formal and personal studies while deepening their faith and relationship with God. In the Dominican tradition, the School actively encourages academic excellence and promotes spiritual and moral growth, social and ecological responsibility, leadership skills, multicultural awareness, emotional maturity, artistic expression, and physical fitness.<sup>61</sup>

St. Gertrude High School, Richmond, VA

(Benedictine Sisters, grades 9-12, founded in 1922)

Saint Gertrude High School, an independent Catholic, college-preparatory school, prepares and inspires young women to answer the challenges of their changing world.<sup>62</sup>

St. Joseph Academy, Cleveland, OH

(Sisters of the Congregation of St. Joseph, grades 9-12, founded in 1890)

Saint Joseph Academy, rooted in the spirituality of the Congregation of St. Joseph, fosters unifying relationships with God and all creation, empowers each young woman to achieve academic excellence, and inspires a life of compassionate leadership and service in a global society.<sup>63</sup>

St. Joseph's Academy, Baton Rouge, LA

(Sisters of St. Joseph of Bourg, grades 9-12, founded in 1868)

The mission of St. Joseph's Academy is to educate young women as responsible and unifying members of the world community. In the spirit and charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph, St. Joseph's Academy offers opportunities for faith development in the Catholic tradition, academic excellence and personal growth.<sup>64</sup>

St. Joseph's Academy, St. Louis, MO

(Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, grades 9-12, founded in 1840)

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<sup>60</sup> Santa Catalina School, "Our Motto, Mission, and Values," <http://www.santacatalina.org/about-us/our-mission-and-vision/index.aspx> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>61</sup> St. Agnes Academy, "Mission Statement," <http://www.saa-sds.org/page.cfm?p=696> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>62</sup> St. Gertrude High School, "Mission, Vision and Core Values," <http://www.saintgertrude.org/Page/About/Overview/Mission-Vision--Core-Values> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>63</sup> St. Joseph Academy, "About Us," <http://www.sja1890.org/Page> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>64</sup> St. Joseph's Academy, "Our Mission and Philosophy," <https://sjabr.org/about-stjoseph/our-mission-a-philosophy.html> (accessed February 7, 2016).

St. Joseph's Academy is a private, Catholic high school for girls in St. Louis, Missouri, sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. Our mission is to provide quality Catholic education for young women in an environment that challenges them to grow in faith, knowledge, and respect for self and others. Our community expects these young women to make a profound impact in the world.<sup>65</sup>

St. Mary-Bayview Academy, Riverside, RI  
(Sisters of Mercy, grades PK-12, founded in 1874)

St. Mary Academy - Bay View is an independent, Catholic school serving a diverse population of girls from pre-school through grade twelve. In the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy, we foster academic excellence in an innovative and creative learning environment. We are committed to empowering each student to be a confident, independent, compassionate and socially conscious young woman who fully lives her faith.<sup>66</sup>

Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart, Bethesda, MD  
(Religious of the Sacred Heart, grades PK-12, founded in 1923)

Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart inspires young women to lead and serve, through lives of purpose that integrate faith, intellect, community, social action, and personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom.<sup>67</sup>

Stuart Country Day School of the Sacred Heart, Princeton, NJ  
(Religious of the Sacred Heart, grades PS-12, founded in 1963)

Stuart's mission is to prepare young women for lives of exceptional leadership and service, through a challenging and innovative curriculum, superb teaching, and close attention to each girl's personal development. Part of an international community of Sacred Heart schools, Stuart is an independent Catholic school that welcomes and embraces students of all faiths and backgrounds, helping them to become accomplished, committed women whose confidence, global perspective and passion for justice will transform the world in which they live.<sup>68</sup>

Trinity Hall, Leonardo, NJ  
(Independent Catholic, grades 9-12, founded in 2012)

Trinity Hall is an innovative, independent all-girls college preparatory high school educating and empowering young women in the Catholic tradition. Trinity Hall's core values of leadership, respect, perseverance, and faith are foundational to our

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<sup>65</sup> St. Joseph's Academy, "Core Values," <http://www.sja1840.org/Page/About-SJA/SJA-Core-Values> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>66</sup> Bayview Academy, "Mission Statement," <http://www.bayviewacademy.org/MissionStatement> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>67</sup> Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart, "Mission and Five Goals," <http://www.stoneridgeschool.org/page.cfm?p=8860> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>68</sup> Stuart Country Day School of the Sacred Heart, "Mission and Sacred Heart Philosophy," [http://www.stuartschool.org/about\\_stuart/missionandphilosophy/index.aspx](http://www.stuartschool.org/about_stuart/missionandphilosophy/index.aspx) (accessed February 7, 2016).

mission and work as educators. In a technology-rich learning environment, a superior faculty and a challenging interdisciplinary curricular program fosters leadership, respect, perseverance, and faith. Unique and exciting co-curricular learning opportunities accommodate a diverse, yet a collectively passionate, creative, and caring student body. These young women will be empowered to take risks, pursue personal passions, network globally, and grow as learners – and as valued individuals.<sup>69</sup>

Trinity High School, River Forest, IL

(Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters, grades 9-12, founded in 1917)

Trinity High School, in the Sinsinawa Dominican tradition, challenges young women to seek faith, knowledge and truth. The school community guides young women in developing skills for lifelong learning, an ethic of care and the desire for excellence. Each student is recognized as unique. In a nurturing, Catholic, college preparatory environment, she is encouraged to become self-directed toward responsible participation in the global community in order to impact society, Church and family in the twenty-first century.<sup>70</sup>

Ursuline Academy, Dedham, MA

(Ursuline Sisters, grades 7-12, founded in 1946)

St. Angela Merici, foundress of the Order of St. Ursula, sought to educate the whole person. Her goal was to inspire young women to grow in faith, explore their academic potential, lead with confidence and help those in need. Today, this holistic approach to academics is thriving at Ursuline Academy, where each young woman is appreciated for her existing talents, and encouraged to bring her hidden talents to the forefront.<sup>71</sup>

Ursuline Academy of Dallas, Dallas, TX

(Ursuline Sisters, grades 9-12, founded in 1874)

Founded in 1874, Ursuline Academy of Dallas is an independent Catholic college preparatory school for young women sponsored by the Ursuline Sisters. The Mission of Ursuline Academy is the total development of the individual student through spiritual formation, intellectual growth, service to others, and building of community. Ursuline Academy educates young women for leadership in a global society.<sup>72</sup>

Ursuline Academy of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA

(Ursuline Sisters, grades PS-12, founded in 1727)

Ursuline Academy of New Orleans, founded in 1727 and sponsored by the

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<sup>69</sup> Trinity Hall, “Mission and Vision,” <http://www.trinityhallnj.org/missionandvision> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>70</sup> Trinity High School, “Mission and History,” <http://www.trinityhs.org/about-trinity/mission-and-history/> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>71</sup> Ursuline Academy, “Mission,” <http://www.ursulineacademy.net/page.cfm?p=489> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>72</sup> Ursuline Academy of Dallas, “Mission and Core Values,” <http://www.ursulinedallas.org/podium/default.aspx?t=134335> (accessed February 7, 2016).



Ursuline Sisters, is a Catholic school for girls offering a strong educational environment from early childhood through a college preparatory secondary program. In a diverse community with an inspiring heritage, Ursuline Academy fosters spiritual formation, academic excellence and a life-long commitment to Serviam: I will serve. The Academy values the uniqueness of each student, nurtures the whole person, develops leaders of confidence and compassion, and prepares them for life in a global society.<sup>73</sup>

Ursuline School, New Rochelle, NY

(Ursuline Sisters, grades 6-12, founded in 1897)

Founded in 1897 by the Order of St. Ursula, The Ursuline School is a Catholic, college preparatory school dedicated to the intellectual, spiritual, and moral development of young women. Rooted in the counsels of St. Angela Merici, founder of the Ursuline Sisters, the mission of the school community is to educate, inspire, and empower young women to learn, to lead and to serve. Committed to academic excellence and the value of every individual, the school challenges each student to develop and share her unique gifts within the school and within the wider community. In a student-centered atmosphere devoted to caring and concern, our young women are encouraged to celebrate the richness of their diverse ethnic, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds uniting them as students and as Ursuline alumnae. Seeking to model the teachings of St. Angela, the dedicated, talented, and caring faculty, administration, and staff inspire our students not only to learn, but also to question, to reflect, and to challenge. An Ursuline education prepares young women to be women of faith and integrity, lifelong learners and wise, responsible, global leaders committed to the Ursuline tradition of Serviam – I will serve.<sup>74</sup>

Ursuline Academy, St. Louis, MO

(Ursuline Sisters, grades 9-12, founded in 1848)

Ursuline Academy of St. Louis, founded in 1848, and under the sponsorship of the Ursuline Sisters, is a private Catholic college preparatory high school for young women. In a community environment, built on standards of academic excellence and respect for the uniqueness of each person, Ursuline Academy educates students for Christian living and leadership in a global society, nurtures the development of the whole person and her potential, and cultivates within its students a spirit of lifelong service through its motto of SERVIAM, “I will serve.”<sup>75</sup>

Villa Duchesne, St. Louis, MO

(Religious of the Sacred Heart, grades 7-12, founded in 1929)

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<sup>73</sup> Ursuline Academy of New Orleans, “Mission and Values,” <http://www.uanola.org/Page/About/Mission--Values> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>74</sup> Ursuline School, “Our Mission,” <http://www.ursulinenewrochelle.org/page.cfm?p=505> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>75</sup> Ursuline Academy, “Mission Statement,” <http://www.ursulinestl.org/asset.php?did=602&id=4&lid=30> (accessed February 18, 2016).

Inspired by the vision of Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat, foundress of the Society of the Sacred Heart, Villa Duchesne and Oak Hill School strives to educate the heart and mind of each child in a nurturing and challenging environment. We are dedicated to educating the whole child and preparing our students for lives of faith in God, integrity, leadership and service to others. Our mission is to transform the world, one child at a time.<sup>76</sup>

Villa Maria Academy High School, Malvern, PA

(Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, grades 9-12, founded in 1872)

Villa Maria Academy High School, a Catholic college preparatory school rooted in the charism of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, empowers young women to lead lives of spiritual growth, intellectual inquiry and Christian service.<sup>77</sup>

Visitation Academy, St. Louis, MO

(Sisters of the Visitation, grades PK-12, founded in 1833)

Visitation Academy is a community that exists to educate children and young women and to receive and share Jesus as Mary did in her visitation to Elizabeth.

In an environment which values excellence in scholarship, spirituality, leadership and service, this Visitation Community encourages students to develop their unique gifts. As students learn to live Jesus with gentleness, humility, joy and freedom, they are prepared to continue to grow and to respond to others, the Church, and the global community.<sup>78</sup>

Visitation School, Mendota Heights, MN

(Sisters of the Visitation, grades PK-12, founded in 1873)

Convent of the Visitation School provides an excellent education within a Catholic environment permeated by Salesian Spirituality.

The Visitation sisters, faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees, with the support of parents and students, are committed to:

- The spiritual, academic, emotional, physical, social, and cultural development of each student from infancy to adulthood.
- Co-education through sixth grade. Single-sex education for young women in grades seven through twelve.
- The formation of students in faith, worship, and moral and social responsibility.
- A supportive learning environment, a challenging academic program, and a college preparatory curriculum.
- Student development through the arts, athletics, and co-curricular activities.

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<sup>76</sup> Villa Duchesne, "Our Mission," <http://www.vdoh.org/page.cfm?p=363> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>77</sup> Villa Maria Academy High School, "Mission Statement," <https://www.vmahs.org/about-villa-maria/mission-statement/> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>78</sup> Visitation Academy, "Mission Statement," <https://www.visitationacademy.org/about-viz/mission-statement/> (accessed February 18, 2016).

- Holistic growth through the promotion of leadership, self-confidence, social interaction, and personal fulfillment.
- Respect for one another and appreciation of human diversity.  
With God’s help and the wisdom born of a long history, Visitation moves into the future realizing its motto, “Non Scholae, Sed Vitae,” “Not for School, but for Life.”<sup>79</sup>

Woodlands Academy of the Sacred Heart, Lake Forest, IL

(Religious of the Sacred Heart, grades 9-12, founded in 1858)

Woodlands Academy is an independent, Catholic, college preparatory day and boarding school for young women. Woodlands Academy is a member of the international Network of Sacred Heart Schools. As a Network school, Woodlands Academy is committed to the Goals and Criteria of Sacred Heart Schools as it shares in the mission of the Society of the Sacred Heart. A Woodlands Academy education is serious in its studies, strong in its principles, and rich in the spirit of love and life. As a Sacred Heart school with a long tradition of excellence, Woodlands prepares motivated young women for lives of courage and confidence, educating them to discover their purpose, cultivate their talents and passions, and commit themselves to service as citizens of the world.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Visitation School, “About Viz,” <http://www.visitation.net/about-vis> (accessed February 7, 2016).

<sup>80</sup> Woodlands Academy, “Who We Are,” [http://www.woodlandsacademy.org/about\\_woodlands/index.aspx](http://www.woodlandsacademy.org/about_woodlands/index.aspx) (accessed February 7, 2016).

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