Institutional Commitment to the Catholic Social Tradition: Implicit or Explicit?

Kathleen Maas Weigert, Ph.D., Kurt Schlichting, Ph.D., and Jay Brandenberger, Ph.D.

Abstract

All Catholic colleges and universities share in the Catholic Church's rich history of Catholic Social Teaching (CST). This article explores two key research questions that focus on that grounding in today's world: First, how strongly is CST woven into the institutional fabric of those institutions; second, is that done implicitly or explicitly? We offer an analysis of mission statements, curricular offerings, and established centers at eleven Catholic colleges and universities as a pilot study for examining current efforts to embed CST into the structures of Catholic institutions of higher learning.

All Catholic colleges and universities share a grounding in the Catholic Church's rich history of CST (inclusively, Catholic Social Teaching, Catholic Social Thought, and Catholic Social Tradition[1]), in addition to the specific charism of the founding religious community, diocese or papal charter. This article, which is part of a larger project called the CST Learning and Research Initiative,[2] explores two key research

Kathleen Maas Weigert is Professor in the Department of Sociology at Loyola University Chicago. Kurt Schlichting is E. Gerald Corrigan '63 Chair of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Professor of Sociology in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Fairfield University. Jay Brandenberger is Director of Research and Graduate Initiatives at the Center for Social Concerns at the University of Notre Dame.

[1] Throughout this article, we will use *CST* to stand for all three.

[2] The Catholic Social Teaching Learning and Research Initiative is a national collaboration of faculty and administrators at eleven Catholic colleges and universities. We seek to understand how the rich and complex elements of the CST may be learned by individuals and communities. Through annual national meetings (since 2012), we have (a) facilitated campus focus groups and collected oral histories of student understanding of CST, (b) examined relevant theory and collected resonant measures, and (c) developed a rubric for curricular and research purposes. For more information, see: http://sites.nd.edu/cstresearch.

questions that focus on that grounding in today's world: First, how strongly is CST woven into the institutional fabric of those institutions; second, is that done implicitly or explicitly? We offer an analysis of mission statements, curricular offerings, and established centers at the eleven Catholic colleges and universities from which the research team members come, as a pilot study for examining current efforts to embed CST in the structures of Catholic institutions of higher learning.[3] Students, faculty, and staff will learn about CST — at and from these colleges and universities — only if there are institutional opportunities provided to them.

Contexts

Societal changes in the last decade or two provide important contexts for this study because of the challenges they pose for our colleges and universities themselves as well as for the individuals who work and study at them. For example, exponential growth of technological innovation that is affecting the world of work, the world of finance, and that of global networks has wrought dramatic changes for individuals, communities, and institutions of higher education.[4] We are witnessing the increasing gap between those who are thriving and those who are barely surviving, with a concomitant decrease in the size of the middle class, local to global,[5] along with climate change and the pervasive evidence of environmental degradation.[6] It is no wonder that national polling data indicate great numbers of people who are worried about their (and their children's) present situations and future prospects, from education and

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[3] Because our sample is one of convenience, we cannot generalize from this sample to other Catholic colleges and universities. Given that, we decided as well that it was not appropriate to separate out the religious community affiliation (e.g., Augustinian, Congregation of Holy Cross, Jesuit, etc.) of the schools for data analysis.

[4] See Thomas Friedman, *Thank You for Being Late* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016).

[5] See, for example, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's report, http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/in-it-together-why-less-inequality-benefits-all_9789264235120-en (accessed July 5, 2017), and Vincent Del Giudice and Wei Lu, "America's Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Replaced by Robots," https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-04-26/america-s-rich-poor-divide-keeps-ballooning-as-robots-take-jobs (accessed July 6, 2017).

[6] See Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), and Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html (accessed January 6, 2018).

upward mobility, to hunger and homelessness, job possibilities, health care options, and local as well as national security.[7]

Higher education has not escaped these changes. And for various politicians and some in the general public, higher education is part of the problem, not part of the solution. Costs have risen and with that, an increase in the number of students taking loans.[8] For-profit institutions have offered alternatives, although bankruptcy and charges of not delivering what they promised have brought unfavorable attention to this sector.[9] Pressures have been building to urge (or demand) that institutions of higher learning reorient the curriculum and focus less on traditional liberal education (especially the humanities) and more on preparation for the workforce.[10] Given the decreasing support for higher education with increasing insecurity for faculty, especially with the decline in tenured positions, it is clear that the concerns of contingent faculty and the calls for unionization are not going away.[11]

When it comes to the Catholic world, perhaps the most catalytic changes have come in the last several years with the resignation of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in 2013 and the election of Argentinian Jesuit, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, as pope. Whether meeting with world leaders, appointing new bishops, speaking out for the rights of immigrants, washing the feet of atypical participants in the Holy Thursday liturgy, or writing apostolic exhortations, constitutions, and encyclicals,

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[7] See, for example, Jeffrey M. Jones, "Worry about Hunger and Homelessness Up for Lower-income in US," http://www.gallup.com/poll/207521/worry-hunger-homelessness-lower-income.aspx (accessed June 30, 2017); Andrew Dugan, "Americans' Confidence in Economy Remains Barely Positive," http://www.gallup.com/poll/212831/americans-confidence-economy-remains-barely-positive.aspx (accessed July 6, 2017); and Frank Newport, "Americans' Confidence in Institutions Edges Up," http://www.gallup.com/poll/212840/americans-confidence-institutions-edges.aspx (accessed July 6, 2017).

[8] See, for example, Sean Seymour, "Gallup-Purdue Index 2015 Report Now Available," http://www.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/185942/gallup-purdue-index-2015-report-available.aspx (accessed July 6, 2017).

[9] See Goldie Blumenstyk and Casey Fabris, "Abrupt Closing of Corinthian Campuses Leaves 16,000 Students Scrambling," http://www.chronicle.com/article/Abrupt-Closing-of-Corinthian/229717, and Goldie Blumenstyk, "After ITT's Demise, More Trouble is Likely for For-Profit Colleges," http://www.chronicle.com/article/After-ITT-s-Demise-More/237765 (accessed July 5, 2017).

[10] See, for example, Gordon Lafer, "The Corporate Assault on Higher Education," *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* http://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Corporate-Assault-on/239902.

[11] See, for example, James F. Keenan, SJ, *University Ethics: How Colleges Can Build and Benefit from a Culture of Ethics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 37-56.

Pope Francis challenges Catholics and all people to widen their lenses, increase their care and concern for others, and help create the processes and structures for a more just and humane world that is built on mutuality among peoples and between peoples and the planet. And in the process, he has chosen to incorporate social media to speak to new audiences. He not only has a Twitter account (@Pontifex[12]) with more than 27 million followers, as of early 2016;[13] he has also provided a TED Talk[14] which he Skyped into the TED2017 conference in Vancouver. Pope Francis appears to have further strengthened the commitment of all Catholic higher education to the principles of CST. For example, leaders in Catholic higher education around the world signed on to a statement affirming the focus of *Laudato Si'* as important for their institutions: "Higher educational institutions globally must seek to provide influential leadership in discovering new and life-giving paths to address the pressing emergencies of climate change, social exclusion, and extreme poverty and in uncovering new paths to achieving peace, justice and environmental sustainability for the whole human family and the entire family of creation."[15]

How important are these contexts in helping us understand what Catholic colleges and universities are doing to incorporate CST into their institutional structures? First, acknowledging these contexts fits within the larger framework of the longstanding call to all Catholics to discern and respond to the signs of the times. As articulated in the Synod of Bishops' 1971 document, *Justitia in Mundo,* this is the frame: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation."[16] Second, our college and university personnel — students, staff, faculty, administrators, board members, donors, and alumni/ae — come to us and interact with us from experiences in those contexts. What do we know about their experiences and how they color individuals'

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[12] See https://twitter.com/pontifex (accessed June 29, 2017).

[13] See http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2016/02/18/pope_francis_followers_on_twitter_now_exceed_27_million/1209700 (accessed June 29, 2017).

[14] Filmed in April 2017 for the TED2017 conference, "The Future You," https://www.ted.com/talks/pope_francis_why_the_only_future_worth_building_includes_everyone (accessed June 29, 2017).

[15] See https://ignatiansolidarity.net/catholic-higher-ed-encyclical-sign-on.

[16] See paragraph 6, https://www.cctwincities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Justicia-in-Mundo.pdf.

participation in the institutions of higher learning? Third, the contexts have both immediate and long-term implications for our colleges and universities. How are those factored into the life of our institutions of higher learning? For our project, research on college students provides an important foundation, describing what may prime or limit their learning and application of CST.

Today's College and University Students

A developmental understanding of student readiness to engage the rich but challenging CST will help ground educational efforts. The college years, especially for students of traditional ages, represent a salient opportunity for ethical and identity development.[17] What do we know about current students that may inform our work?

First, as noted above, given the increasing costs of attendance, students may prioritize career security over college mission or personal vocation in discerning their college path. Data from the Higher Education Research Institute show that among first-year students at Catholic colleges, 89 percent rated "To be able to get a better job" as a very important reason for attending college (a slightly higher percentage than the 85 percent of students at public colleges and universities who so indicated).[18] Concurrently, growing partisan divisions in the United States have given rise to challenges with respect to the social and moral tenets germane to higher education. Conservatives have critiqued faculty (especially in the social sciences) as liberal and curricula as "politically correct."[19] Increasingly, doubts spread about the validity or worth of science contrast to those within the academy, where science is esteemed. Thus some families may affirm the economic benefit of a college degree, but find suspect the institution's mission or values (as expressed, for example, in vision statements grounded in CST).

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[17] Jay W. Brandenberger, "College, Character, and Social Responsibility: Moral Learning through Experience." In *Character Psychology and Character Education*, ed. Daniel Lapsley and F. Clark Power, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 305-334.

[18] Kevin Eagan et al., *The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2016* (Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA, 2017), https://www.heri.ucla.edu/monographs/TheAmericanFreshman2016.pdf (accessed September 21, 2017).

[19] See, for example, Russel Jacoby, "Academe is Overrun by Liberals. So What?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* https://www.chronicle.com/article/Academe-Is-Overrun-by/235898 (accessed January 10, 2018).

Further, while students have always had interests outside the walls of the academy, a record percentage of first-year students reported in 2016 spending at least six hours per week using social media (females showed higher social media use than males, and left-leaning students, 44.9 percent, were more likely than students right of center, 36.2 percent, to report six hours weekly).[20] Students also seem to be less religious than in previous generations, often describing themselves as spiritual rather than claiming a faith orientation. The Pew Research Center notes that the "nones," many of whom were raised without religious affiliation, represent the largest category (35 percent) among Millennials, while 16 percent of Millennials described themselves as Catholic in the national sample.[21] Such students may be less likely to seek out religiously framed learning experiences. Note as well that only about half of students at Catholic colleges and universities consider themselves Catholic,[22] so CST may have limited initial resonance.

Yet students enter college with a developmental predisposition to seek meaning, to find purpose, and to ascertain what types of callings match their gifts.[23] Here, exposure to CST, addressed to "all of good will," can be catalytic. Focus groups and interviews facilitated by the CST Learning and Research Initiative support the claim that students of other faiths or no faith find CST principles, such as solidarity, care for creation, option for the poor, and the common good, to be relevant and accessible.[24] Students' general spiritual orientation may prompt interest in such principles and associated forms of engagement. Reciprocally, service-learning and community-based learning, hallmarks of many CST learning initiatives, have been shown to foster spiritual outcomes.[25] Indeed, national research suggests that college experiences are more predictive of prosocial outcomes associated with CST (e.g., an ethic of caring and charitable involvement) than students' level of religiosity at

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[20] Eagan.

[21] Michael Lipka, *Millennials Increasingly Are Driving Growth of "Nones"* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2015), http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/12/millennials-increasingly-are-driving-growth-of-nones/.

[22] Eagan. See also the *National Catholic Reporter*, https://www.ncronline.org/news/mixed-picture-catholic-higher-education (accessed September 21, 2017).

[23] Sharon D. Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose and Faith* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 2000).

[24] Focus groups facilitated by the Catholic Social Teaching Learning and Research Initiative were held at two universities in 2012 and 2013. See http://sites.nd.edu/cstresearch/.

[25] Janet S. Eyler and Dwight E. Giles, *Where's the Learning in Service Learning?* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999).

college entry.[26] And graduating from college with a sense of prosocial purpose is a robust predictor of continued prosocial development and positive adult outcomes such as generativity and integrity.[27] Overall, while there are challenges that may impede student engagement in efforts to understand CST, Catholic colleges and universities have developmentally resonant opportunities consistent with institutional mission to build on students' general spirituality and explorations of purpose to animate their learning and application of CST.

Mission Statements

We begin with the topic of what colleges and universities provide in their institutional frameworks to support students in their search for meaning and to affirm and advance their prosocial behavior. One of the first ways to discover what any institution claims to be about is to examine its mission statement. Attention to mission statements among Catholic colleges and universities is not a new issue. In his seminal book on Catholic higher education, David O'Brien used the College of Holy Cross, the Jesuit school where he was a professor of history from 1969 until his retirement in 2007, to discuss several topics, one of which is the writing of a mission statement, which he was tasked to do in 1988 by the college president.[28] While he believed that college and university presidents should "examine more seriously their identity and mission," he argued that "writing mission statements was probably not a good idea."[29] Even though reluctant to undertake such a task, he nevertheless acquiesced. In providing his detailed and nuanced account of the work of the committee he chaired, O'Brien illuminates the ongoing challenges to put into a mission statement what it means to be a Catholic college or university. He pays explicit attention to such topics as the professionalization of the faculty with "two clusters of problems" that came with that: one dealing with governance and the other with institutional mission and identity (as well as a discussion about the

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[26] Jay W. Brandenberger and Nicholas A. Bowman, "Prosocial Growth during College: Results of a National Study," *Journal of Moral Education* 44, no. 3 (2015), 328-345, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2015.1048792.

[27] Nicholas A. Bowman et al., "Serving in College, Flourishing in Adulthood: Does Community Engagement During the College Years Predict Adult Well-Being?" *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being 2* (2010): 14-34.

[28] David J. O'Brien, *From the Heart of the American Church: Catholic Higher Education and American Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 122-140.

[29] Ibid., 122.

meaning and relevance of the identities "Jesuit" and "Catholic" to the realities of the college).[30] Such issues continue today.

The work of that committee predated and in some ways portended what might come with the release of Pope John Paul II's 1990 document, *Ex corde Ecclesiae, the Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities*.[31] Many welcomed Part I, which focused on "Identity and Mission." Given our focus on CST, one particularly compelling statement comes in that section:

> The Christian spirit of service to others for the promotion of social justice is of particular importance for each Catholic university, to be shared by its teachers and developed in its students. The church is firmly committed to the integral growth of all men and women. The Gospel, interpreted in the social teachings of the church, is an urgent call to promote 'the development of those peoples who are striving to escape from hunger, misery, endemic diseases and ignorance; of those who are looking for a wider share in the benefits of civilization and a more active improvement of their human qualities; of those who are aiming purposefully at their complete fulfillment.'[32]

Since the release of the document (though not necessarily caused by it), a number of scholars have explored how the mission is understood by various groups within the institution, while others have examined the mission statements themselves. Regarding the former, as part of its strategic planning in the mid-1990s, the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU) commissioned a research project focused on "Service to Church and Society." That research explored a sample of ACCU colleges and universities and their students in the Class of 1994. Although fifty institutions participated, the researchers chose to examine only those institutions for which the response rate was 50 percent or higher, resulting in a sample of almost 7,000 students from twenty-four colleges and universities.[33] One finding that has particular relevance for our research: There was a statistically moderate relationship between higher levels of religious practice (e.g., attendance at

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[30] Ibid., 126-133.

[31] *Ex corde Ecc*lesiae, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_15081990_ex-corde-ecclesiae.html (accessed August 21, 2017).

[32] Ibid., Part 1, para. 34; citation is to Pope Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio*, 1, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html (accessed August 21, 2017).

[33] Kathleen Maas Weigert and Sharon L. Miller, "Identity and Mission at a Sample of Catholic Colleges and Universities: Students and Service to Society," *Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education* 16 (Winter 1996): 33-62.

religious services, praying) and support for making abortion illegal and a belief that peacemaking is a requirement of faith.[34]

Ferrari and Velcoff studied staff perceptions of and support for institutional mission at DePaul University, utilizing a then newly created instrument, the Mission and Values Inventory (MVI).[35] A collaborative research project recently initiated by ACCU, along with CHERC (the Catholic Higher Education Research Cooperative) and a group of expert researchers, will explore the support for mission and identity through four student and alumni surveys.[36] The CIMA project includes Institutional Principles of Assessment, with nine "assessment domains." The last one listed is "Institutional Practices in Management & Finance," and the principle states: "A Catholic institution directs its resources as a just and prudent steward who seeks to advance mission, serve the common good, and advance the principles and values of Catholic social teaching."[37]

Some research has focused on the content of the mission statements themselves. Building in part on earlier work that explored diversity and the religious character of ACCU institutions,[38] Young examined mission statements of seventy-three Catholic colleges and universities to ascertain the 'values' of these institutions as expressed in mission statements.[39] He discovered nine values, with the top three being service, spirituality, and truth; the others were community, human dignity, equality, tradition, justice and freedom, in that ranking order.[40] Estanek et al. continued in that tradition and explored a representative sample of Catholic colleges and universities to "identify and categorize dominant institutional values from mission statements that may inform a

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[34] Ibid., 41.

[35] Joseph R. Ferrari and Jessica Velcoff, "Measuring Staff Perceptions of University Identity and Activities: The Mission and Values Inventory," *Christian Higher Education* 5 (2006): 243-261.

[36] See http://www.accunet.org/CIMA.

[37] CIMA stands for Catholic Identity Mission Assessment; see http://www.accunet.org/CIMA-Principles.

[38] ACCU with Barry University, "Diversity within America's Catholic Colleges and Universities: Efforts and Linkages to Catholic Identity, Institutional Mission, and Leadership," *Occasional Papers on Catholic Higher Education* 1 (June 1996), Washington, DC: Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities.

[39] Robert B. Young, "Colleges on the Cross Roads: A Study of the Mission Statements of Catholic Colleges and Universities," *Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education* 21 (Spring 2001): 68-76.

[40] Ibid.

Catholic identity assessment process."[41] Through content analysis, the authors discovered what they label as twelve "student outcomes" that could serve as a basis for assessment; these range from intellectual development and social justice/social responsibility (most frequently stated) to responsible citizenship, international perspective or awareness, professional competence, and lifelong learning (all four were found in 10 percent of the institution statements).

None of these studies had focused exclusively on CST, our area of interest, so we developed our own research. We started by creating a word cloud of the eleven mission statements of the colleges and universities from which our research team comes. The **Figure** below gives a first brush of what the colleges and universities deem important. The key elements stand out (in alphabetical order): "catholic," "community," "educational," 'humanity," "students," and "university." Readers can see the relative importance of other words as well, providing an occasion to reflect on the mission statements of their own institutions.

It was imperative to delve more deeply, however, into the content of the mission statements, searching for CST indicators. We devised a method to do that using as our lens the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' "Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching" document.[42] The themes emerged from their earlier statement, "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions,"[43] which had been developed by the USCCB's committees on Education, on Domestic Policy, and on International Policy. The statement was approved by the U.S. bishops June 19, 1998.

The "Seven Themes" document was developed in response to a report from the Task Force on Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic Education, created in 1995 by those same three committees. As is stated in the introduction to the summary report of the Task Force, "This initiative reflects the bishops' conviction that the social mission of the Church is central to the overall mission of the Church and integral to the faith of every Catholic. A key to deepening the Catholic community's understanding of this social mission is integrating it fully and effectively in

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[41] Sandra M. Estanek et al., "Assessing Catholic Identity: A Study of Mission Statements of Catholic Colleges and Universities," *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* 10 (December 2006): 205.

[42] http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching.cfm (accessed August 21, 2017).

[43] http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/sharing-catholic-social-teaching-challenges-and-directions.cfm (accessed August 21, 2017).

academic all appropriate areas arts catholic christ college committed common community concern critical cross cultural dedicated development differences disciplines diverse educational encourages engage environment every excellence experience faculty faith fosters founded freedom from global god good graduate higher holy humanity individual inquiry inspires institution integrity intellectual jesuit jesus john justice king knowledge leadership learning liberal life live love members mission moral needs only others persons professional programs promote provides pursuit religious research respect responsible scholarly scholarship sciences seek sense service share skills social society spirit spiritual staff students teaching through tradition truth undergraduate university values vision way welcoming wisdom world

Figure. Mission Statements Word Cloud (n=11)

Catholic educational and catechetical programs."[44] Hence, it seemed appropriate for us to rely on those themes as we undertook this research.

Our next step was to have two of the authors independently "score" each mission statement for indicators of issues and ideas as spelled out in the narratives describing the seven themes, and then compare the results. Where there were differences, the researchers discussed them, determining which interpretation seemed to capture the idea more clearly.[45]

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[44] U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Summary Report of the Task Force on Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic Education" (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1998), 11.

[45] Although the length of the mission statement matters, we did not devise a way of taking that into account for our study.

As seen in **Table 1** below, all eleven institutions have more than one reference in their mission statements to the second theme, "Call to family, community, and participation." Ten of the eleven also have more than one idea related to the sixth theme, "Solidarity." There is evidence of theme one, "Life and dignity of the human person" in six statements, while theme three, "Rights and responsibilities," can be found in five statements. "Option for the poor and vulnerable," theme four, is present in three institutional statements. Only one institution has any reference to theme seven, "Care for God's creation," and no school has any reference to theme five, "The dignity of work and the rights of workers." Because we did not have access to the process used at those institutions for creating the mission statements, we do not know if in fact the seven themes were "explicitly" attended to in that process, so at best we can say our findings indicate an "implicit" affirmation of one or more of the themes.

We turn next to the topic of curricular offerings and the inclusion of CST.

Table 1. Mission Statements and CST Themes

	CST Themes*						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
College of Saint Mary	X	X	X			X	X
Creighton University	X	X	X			X	
Fairfield University	X	X	X			X	
John Carroll University	X	X	X	X		X	
King's College	X	X		X		X	
Loyola University Chicago	X	X				X	
St. Thomas University		X				X	
University of Notre Dame		X	X	X		X	
University of San Francisco		X				X	
University of Scranton		X					
Villanova University		X				X	

* The numbers in the chart refer to the CST themes:

  1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person
  2. Call to Family, Community, and Participation
  3. Rights and Responsibilities
  4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
  5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
  6. Solidarity
  7. Care for God's Creation

CST Themes Source: http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching.cfm.

Curricular Commitments

There are three curricular manifestations of an institution's commitment to CST that we explore: the core curriculum, majors or minors in Theology and/or Religious Studies (along with minors in Catholic Studies), and Peace and Justice majors or minors (see **Table 2**). This research draws on a detailed examination of the websites of the eleven universities. Online text material was downloaded and then analyzed with a qualitative content analysis. To measure reliability, the research team asked the participating faculty at each university to verify the data collected and to review the analysis. We begin with the research on the core curriculum.

Core Curriculum

One of the key components of a university's institutional fabric is the core curriculum. All of the eleven universities in this study have a "core," a number of courses that all students complete for their undergraduate degrees. In today's world of higher education, the core typically offers students a choice of courses, organized under broad categories such as natural science, philosophy, and foreign language. Among some of the schools in this study, the common core includes a small number of specific courses all students are required to complete ("Western Civilization" or "Introduction to Christian Theology," for example). In general, however, each student completes her or his own core and one student's collection of core courses usually differs from another's.

This type of a core represents a dramatic change from the past when the core consisted of specific courses all students completed over the four years of their undergraduate education. "One of the most important changes in American higher education over the last 30 years [the reference is to the 1970s] has been the gradual shrinking of the old arts and sciences core of undergraduate education and the expansion of occupational and professional programs."[46] In the study of Catholic education in the twenty-first century, Appleyard traced the decline of the common core back to 1885 when President Charles Eliot of Harvard

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[46] S. Brint et al., "From the Liberal to the Practical Arts in American Colleges and Universities: Organizational Analysis and Curricular Change," *The Journal of Higher Education* 76, no. 2 (2005): 151.

Table 2. Curricular Commitments and Dedicated Centers

Department	Core Requirements: Religion/Theology	Catholic Studies Major/Minor	Peace and Justice Major/Minor	CST-Focused Centers
College of Saint Mary — Theology and Religious Studies	Christian Foundations –1, Theological Explorations –1	Major 36 credits		
Creighton University — Theology	The Biblical Tradition – 1, **The Christian Tradition** –1		Major – Justice and Society, Minor – Justice and Peace	Center for Catholic Thought
Fairfield University — Religious Studies	*Intro to Religious Studies* 1 – elective	Minor 15 credits	Minor – Peace and Justice Studies	Center for Faith and Public Life
John Carroll University — Theology and Religious Studies	Theology lower division –1, Theology upper division –1	Minor 18 credits	Major and Minor – Peace, Justice and Human Rights	Center for Service and Social Action
King's College — Theology	Systematic Theology –1, Moral Theology –1			McGowan Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility
Loyola University Chicago — Theology	*Intro to Christian Theology or Intro to Religious Studies*, Theology 1 – elective	Minor 18 credits	Minor – Peace Studies	Hank Center for Catholic Intellectual Heritage
St. Thomas University — Religious Studies	Religious Studies 2 – elective			
University of Notre Dame — Theology	*Foundations of Theology*, Theology 1 – elective	Minor Catholic Social Tradition	Major and Minor – Peace Studies	Center for Social Concerns

Table 2. Continued

	Department	Core Requirements: Religion/Theology	Catholic Studies Major/Minor	Peace and Justice Major/Minor	CST-Focused Centers
University of San Francisco	Theology and Religious Studies	Theology 1 – elective Religious Studies 1 – elective	Minor 20 units	Minor – Peace and Justice Studies	Lane Center for Catholic Studies and Social Thought
University of Scranton	Theology and Religious Studies	*Intro to the Bible, Intro to Christian Theology*	Concentration 18 credits	Concentration – Peace and Justice Studies	Center for Service and Social Justice
Villanova University	Theology and Religious Studies	*Faith Reason and Culture* – Theology 1 – elective		Major and Minor Peace and Justice	Center for Peace and Justice Studies

NOTE: *Italicized* titles refer to specific required courses; non-italicized titles refer to broad curricular areas; **The Christian Tradition** refers to a set of courses from which students are required to select at least one.

"endorsed the idea that students should be allowed to take any courses the college offered in any order they pleased."[47]

Many Catholic universities maintained a traditional core until the 1960s and a central component of the core was Catholic theology. At Fairfield University, for example, the first academic catalogue for 1947 shows that the four-year core included eight specific Catholic theology courses, two each year: Divinity of Christ, The Church; God and Creation, Man and the Fall; The Redemption, Nature of Grace; and The Sacraments, The Liturgy.[48] All students completed these eight courses to graduate. In 1969 the Fairfield University common core required just three theology courses: two specific courses — *Old & New Testaments* and *The Church* — and one elective theology course that each student would choose.[49]

The revolution of the 1960s both within the America Catholic Church and the larger society led to dramatic change in Catholic higher education. Philip Gleason, in his seminal book, *Contending with Modernity,* labeled the change "The End of an Era."[50] He described the impact on the Church and universities as catastrophic:

> The coming together of the racial crisis, bitter internal divisions over the Vietnam War, campus upheavals, political radicalism… [and] the growth of the counterculture made the 1960s an epoch of revolutionary change for all Americans… For Catholics the profound religious reorientation associated with the Second Vatican Council multiplied the disruptive effect of all other forces of change… and produced nothing less than a spiritual earthquake in the American church… [and] the old ideological structure of Catholic higher education… has been swept entirely away.[51]

Changes were multifaceted and included a demand from the faculty for "academic freedom." With support from the American Association of University Professors, faculty organized to assert control over hiring and the curriculum. In addition, the famous Land O'Lakes statement,

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[47] J. Appleyard, "The History of American Catholic Education," in *American Catholic Higher Education in the 21st Century: Critical Challenges*, ed. Robert Newton (Chestnut Hill, MA: Linden Lane Press at Boston College, 2015), 35.

[48] See http://digital.fairfield.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/coursecat/id/14656/rec/1 (accessed August 2017).

[49] http://digital.fairfield.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/coursecat/id/2611/rec/28 (accessed September 10, 2017).

[50] Philip Gleason, *Contending with Modernity: Catholic Higher Education in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 305.

[51] Ibid., 305.

adopted in 1967, asserted that Catholic universities must have "true autonomy and academic freedom," and called for the boards of trustees to include a sizable numbers of lay members.[52]

Gleason described these changes as "Accepting Modernity" and as a "denunciation of the past" but also recognized the ensuing challenge. If the past was irrelevant, "What would distinguish Catholic colleges from all others? What would comprise their distinctive religious identity, and how would it express itself…?"[53] Such questions are as relevant today as when raised by Gleason in 1995.

As a direct consequence of the turmoil Gleason documented and the adoption of the principles of the Land O' Lakes statement, all eleven of the universities in this study today have a core curriculum that is distinctly different from the earlier core with its many specific course requirements. The core curriculums are much smaller in size and offer students the freedom to choose.

It is the case, nevertheless, that all eleven institutions include a requirement for two courses under the category of Theology or Religious Studies. Five require students to complete at least one of these specific courses: Foundations of Theology, Introduction to the Bible, Faith Reason and Culture, Christian Theology or Introduction to Religious Studies. The other six offer students choices, courses organized thematically that satisfy the core. Only one university's Theology core explicitly includes a CST course, which is from a list of courses students may choose. It may be the case that core Theology or Religious Studies courses at some or all eleven colleges and universities include CST as a component of the courses, but it is beyond the scope of this early research to determine the extent of how explicitly CST is interwoven.

Major and Minors in Theology and / or Religious Studies, and Catholic Studies Minors

A major or minor represents a significant commitment of university resources. The eleven universities in this study offer undergraduate majors in Theology (n=4), Theology or Religious Studies (n=5), or Religious Studies (n=2). The three categories reflect the name of the academic

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[52] See "Land O' Lakes Statement: The Nature of the Contemporary Catholic University" in Neil G. McCluskey, SJ, *The Catholic University* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970).

[53] Gleason, 318.

department at each institution. The addition of "Religious Studies" is more than a simple name change: It represents dramatic changes over the last several decades. The change from Theology to Religious Studies was often traumatic; many faculty viewed the change as an abandonment of the Catholic identity of their university. Rodden views the change as a consequence of Vatican II and asks: "Are we really a Catholic college at all? Or have we become secular with a dollop of visible religion in the form of a course or two of theology requirements?"[54] At a number of the universities in this study, the requirement is two courses in Religious Studies.

The continuing commitment of these institutions to offer a Theology and or a Religious Studies major reflects the historical grounding of each institution, even in the context of the forces that are driving a shift toward a practical, career-oriented education. We should note that Theology and Religious Studies majors differ in focus from the more traditional liturgy and biblical studies approach:

> The program introduces and explores Doctrinal, Historical, and Liturgical Theology, Biblical Studies, and Christian Life Studies. It intends to prepare students for the many and varied goals which Theology majors might pursue after graduation, whether in graduate study, as preparation for professional school, in teaching theology, or in pastoral work.[55]

A social science perspective examines the role of religion as a universal social process in all societies with an emphasis on a comparative analysis across different cultures.

> Students majoring in Religious Study… are devoted to the study of religion as a human phenomenon. They explore the philosophy and reasoning behind religion and the beliefs of culture across the globe. The study is wide ranging, and includes all actions of religious experience, belief and practice through a multitude of perspectives.[56]

The "multitude of perspectives" offered by Religious Studies majors reflect an interfaith and interreligious approach to the study of multiple religious traditions and differs dramatically from the time when Catholic theology was the sole focus. Vatican II encouraged the study of all

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[54] John Rodden, "Less 'Catholic,' More 'catholic'? American Catholic Universities Since Vatican II," *Society* 50, no. 1 (2013): 24-25.

[55] https://www.creighton.edu/ccas/theology/majorprograms (accessed September 2, 2017).

[56] https://www.fairfield.edu/undergraduate/academics/schools-and-colleges/college-of-arts-and-sciences/programs/religious-studies (accessed September 2, 2017).

religions including non-Christian religions: "The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men."[57]

Six of the institutions, both those with Religious Studies and Theology departments, also have Catholic Studies minors, majors, or concentrations, which represent a more explicit focus on Catholicism. Only one, the University of Notre Dame, has an explicit program on CST. It is the university's Catholic Social Tradition minor, grounded in CST, as clearly articulated in its mission statement:

> It does so through a constellation of concepts that, taken as a whole, give articulation to a coherent yet variegated vision of the good society, a vision that serves as a guide for human and institutional behavior. Such concepts include the Common Good, Rights and Responsibilities, Option for the Poor, Subsidiarity, and Peace.[58]

The University of San Francisco's Catholic Studies minor, "Catholic Studies and Social Thought," has student learning outcomes that include:

- present an accounting of major trends in Catholic social thought since Pope Leo XIII's encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (1891)
- contextualize challenges to the fulfillment of Catholic social teaching through research on the manifold ways Catholic social action interfaces with modern and postmodern secular cultures.[59]

Peace and Justice Majors and Minors

Another area in which to explore an institutional commitment to CST is found in peace and justice majors and minors. Eight of the universities have such programs: (1) Creighton: Justice and Society major; Justice and Peace Studies minor; (2) Fairfield University: Peace and Justice Studies minor; (3) John Carroll University: Peace, Justice, and

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[57] Declaration of the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate,* http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html (accessed September 12, 2017).

[58] http://cstminor.nd.edu/about (accessed August 29, 2017).

[59] https://www.usfca.edu/catalog/undergraduate/arts-sciences/interdisciplinary-minors/catholic-studies-social-thought (accessed September 6, 2017).

Human Rights major and minor; (4) Loyola University Chicago: Peace Studies minor; (5) University of Notre Dame: Peace Studies major and minor; (6) University of San Francisco: Peace and Justice Studies minor; (7) University of Scranton: Peace and Justice Studies concentration; and (8) Villanova University: Peace and Justice Studies major and minor.

Villanova's minor includes Catholic Social Thought as one option for its foundation course. At John Carroll University, minors in Peace, Justice, & Human Rights can elect to enroll in Introduction to Social Justice as a foundation course, which includes an "overview of the theories of social justice, including discussion and analyses of social inequalities both domestic and global."[60] The focus of this course explicitly draws on the CST principle of solidarity and Pope Paul VI's call, "If you want peace, work for justice."[61]

Dedicated Centers

Nine of the institutions in this study have at least one center (see Table 2) dedicated to some facet of Catholic thought in general or CST in particular, which represent a significant allocation of resources. The centers have a variety of names: Center for Catholic Thought (Creighton University),[62] Center for Faith and Public Life (Fairfield University),[63] Center for Service and Social Action (John Carroll University),[64] The McGowan Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility (King's College),[65] The Hank Center for the Catholic Intellectual Tradition (Loyola University Chicago),[66] The Joan and Ralph Lane Center for Catholic Studies and Social Thought (University of San Francisco),[67] and Center for Social Concerns (University of Notre Dame).[68] (The centers at

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[60] http://sites.jcu.edu/pjhr/pages/programs-of-study/minor (accessed August 26, 2017).

[61] http://www.catholicjournal.us/2011/08/04/if-you-want-peace-work-for-justice (accessed August 29, 2017).

[62] http://cucatholicctr.org (accessed August 26, 2017).

[63] https://www.fairfield.edu/undergraduate/academics/centers/center-for-faith-and-public-life (accessed August 26, 2017).

[64] http://sites.jcu.edu/service (accessed August 27, 2017).

[65] https://www.kings.edu/academics/special_programs/mcgowan-ethics-center (accessed August 27, 2017).

[66] http://www.luc.edu/ccih (accessed August 27, 2017).

[67] https://www.usfca.edu/lane-center (accessed August 27, 2017).

[68] https://socialconcerns.nd.edu (accessed August 27, 2017).

University of Scranton and Villanova University have the same name, Center for Service and Social Justice.[69])

These centers are designed to reflect some aspect(s) of the Catholic mission. How tied are they to CST in particular? As with the colleges' and universities' overall mission statements, so too with the mission statements of the centers: While there is clear evidence in the statements for support of CST in six of the centers, there is minimal evidence in one and basically no evidence in two. The centers certainly engage in a variety of activities on campus and in the larger community including academic programs, immersion programs, public events, and service learning, among other opportunities, which may give additional evidence of CST.

Many of the centers are the beneficiaries of substantial institutional support as well as support from alumni, grants, and benefactors. No matter what the size of the endowment or the willingness of benefactors to contribute or the success in grant writing, however, resources are finite. All universities have to make difficult decisions to support one program or activity over others. There appears to be a link between the mission statements and the concrete activities and opportunities these centers provide to students, faculty, administrators, and the public, to engage with the principles of CST. And to the extent that the link is strong, these centers can be seen as one instantiation of the importance of CST at Catholic colleges and universities.

Results and Discussion

In the contexts of contemporary society with the many challenges facing institutions of higher learning, this article explores various ways Catholic colleges and universities might embed a commitment to Catholic social teaching, Catholic social thought, and Catholic social tradition into the fabric of their institutions. Examining mission statements provides a salient way to demonstrate evidence for such a commitment. Using the frame of the seven themes of CST provided by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, we found that the evidence suggests a more "implicit" rather than "explicit" commitment. While mission statements of all eleven institutions in our sample

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[69] http://www.scranton.edu/ministries/center-service-social-justice (accessed August 27, 2017); and http://www1.villanova.edu/villanova/mission/campusministry/service.html (accessed August 27, 2017).

include some references to one or more of those themes, not all seven themes are clearly present in any one mission statement, as shown in Table 1.

Turning to the area of curricular manifestations of CST, it is clear that up to fairly late in the twentieth century, the curriculum was much more delineated, with all students completing a core that consisted of specific courses, including Catholic theology. Today the core curricula are far less restrictive; students are offered a variety of course choices that are typically arranged in broad categories. Some of the Catholic colleges and universities in this study offer specific CST courses while others do not, as Table 2 illustrates. Certainly, CST may be addressed in other courses; however, those courses are not required of all students.

There are offerings in the curriculum in which CST is potentially more available: the first category is in Theology and/or Religious Studies majors or minors, along with minors in Catholic Studies; the second category is in Peace and Justice Studies programs. Yet, as seen in Table 2, in the former, not all of those programs include courses in CST, and only one university has an actual minor in "Catholic Social Tradition." In the latter, while eight of the eleven have such programs, not all have explicit incorporation of courses in CST that are required of all those taking the major or minor.

Nine of the institutions in this study have centers dedicated to some facet of the Catholic mission. A review of the mission statements points to at least some specific support of CST in six of the centers' missions while for the other three, evidence is minimal or non-existent. However, the centers promote a range of activities that might in fact provide other evidence that explicitly reflects CST principles.

Future Research

As the CST Learning and Research Initiative continues, we are exploring further research projects, resources permitting. In the area of mission statements, further research would have to examine the processes involved in the creation of those statements: Was CST deliberately considered? If so, how was that advanced? If not, why not? In the curricular area, as we noted earlier, our research did not include information about all the course options in Theology/Religious Studies, Catholic Studies minors, and Peace and Justice Studies programs offered by the colleges and universities to determine which of them actually contain CST elements. And the question of "requirements" needs to

be explored: What do Catholic colleges and universities "require" of all students and why? What would make it possible to "require" a course in CST? Future research calls for conversations with faculty and administrators of Catholic Studies and Peace and Justice Studies programs to learn whether and to what extent incorporation of CST is present in those programs. Regarding dedicated centers, we would need to do more research on the particular programs and activities of the centers to determine to what extent they deliberately relate those to the institution's mission statement in general and to CST in particular. In the long term, we want to conduct research with alumni/ae to compare their curricular choices and their involvement with CST-driven activities with students who did not choose such curricula or activities. And finally, as we discussed, obviously each institution has finite resources. We would need to explore to what extent resource decisions are made in light of their missions and commitment to CST.

Conclusion

In short, this preliminary research suggests that there is evidence — from mission statements to curricular offerings and dedicated centers — of a commitment to CST in the colleges and universities in this study. But with rare exception, the indicators are not robust and, when present, are more implicit than explicit. With the exploration of more institutions along with greater depth of analyses, we will be in a better position to document just how embedded the commitment to Catholic Social Teaching, Catholic Social Thought, and Catholic Social Tradition is in the institutional fabrics of our colleges and universities, and how that impacts the opportunities and obstacles for their students in particular, and others as well, to learn about and appropriate this vital part of the intellectual traditions of the Catholic Church.

This article has its origins in the authors' participation in the CST Learning and Research Initiative, a collaboration of faculty and administrators at eleven Catholic colleges and universities across the United States. Through national meetings over the last five years, the Initiative has facilitated campus focus groups and collected oral histories of student understanding of CST, developed a rubric for curricular and research purposes, and conducted conversations leading to the peer-reviewed articles in this issue of the Journal of Catholic Higher Education. *For more information, see both the introduction to this issue and http://sites.nd.edu/cstresearch.*