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Catholic Elementary Schools in Chicago's Black Inner City: Mission and Organizational Effectiveness

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

IN CHICAGO'S BLACK INNER CITY:

MISSION AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

VOLUME I

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

BY

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores strategies by which Catholic schools in Chicago's black inner city are adapting to changes in their populations and environments. Building on the work of resource dependency theorists, population ecologists, and organizational persistence theorists, I evaluate how inner-city Catholic schools have secured resources and maintained legitimacy despite the shifts to a predominantly non-Catholic black student body and to a more academic, less specifically religious mission. After situating the black inner-city schools in their appropriate historical context and studying archdiocesan enrollment trends from 1960 to 1985, I interviewed principals and pastors of a sample of thirty-three schools. Using the interview findings I grouped the schools into four categories based on the basic strategies used by the schools to secure resources, balance dependencies, and re-establish legitimacy: parish-centered schools, isolated schools, cooperatively-linked schools, and externally-linked schools. I then conducted case studies in schools representative of the four categories in order to determine the organizational strengths and limitations of each.

I found that the parish-centered and cooperatively-

linked schools retained a specialist orientation with strong
ties to the Catholic community which increased their
legitimacy with that population. The isolated and
externally-linked schools had a more generalist orientation;
this orientation demanded a change in the schools'
legitimating myths while increasing their relevance to a
broader population. The parish-centered and isolated
schools focussed internally, giving them a structural
advantage but making them more susceptible to local crises
and demographic changes. The cooperatively and externally-
linked schools experienced the structural disadvantages of
newness and a decrease in local autonomy while gaining a
more diversified resource base and more freedom from
parochial crises. While historical and demographic
constraints significantly influence the direction of
adaptation in individual schools, my research indicates that
in general, cooperative linkage provides the most
organizational advantage by expanding the resource base
without threatening the school's legitimacy by radical
changes in the school's mission or Catholic identity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

this community inspired and provided the impetus for this research.

And finally, I wish to thank my family, friends, and my religious community for all their support, encouragement, and faith in me. They have been there for me through the good times and the difficult times. They, too, are a part of this dissertation, since they are so much a part of me.

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CHAPTER 1

INNER-CITY PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS:
A QUESTION OF ORGANIZATIONAL SURVIVAL

Chicago's Catholic school system is the largest
Catholic school system in the world, and the seventh largest
of all school systems in the United States. In 1986 there
were 358 elementary schools, 58 high schools, and 174,099
students in the Chicago Catholic system. Two hundred five
Catholic parochial elementary schools were located within
the city limits of Chicago. Despite its size, the system
was clearly in crisis. In the twenty year period between
1965 and 1985, 117 schools had closed and Chicago's Catholic
school enrollment had dropped by 50 percent. The decline
has continued since then, and when the archdiocesan
newspaper in January of 1990 announced the closing of six
Catholic elementary schools, it also reported that twenty
elementary schools had closed in the previous five years
(The New World. 26 January 1990:13).

Organizational Decline
in the Chicago Catholic School System

The current crisis facing Chicago's Catholic school
system began almost three decades ago. Until the 1960s

these schools, on the whole,[1] had grown and flourished.
Participants generally agreed that these schools were
successful; their performance matched the expectations of
participants. They were meeting the needs of those who
depended on them.

Enrollment peaked in Chicago archdiocesan elementary
schools in the mid-sixties, but the end of the baby boom
meant enrollment declines across the board and a series of
school closings in both the public and parochial sectors.
For Catholic schools, however, this enrollment decline was
coupled by a crisis in legitimacy due to radical changes in
the church and in church teaching since the Second Vatican
Council. Catholic demand for parochial schools decreased as
the schools became less convenient, more expensive, less
able to compete with suburban public schools in terms of
programs and materials. While many Catholic families
continued to value and utilize the local parish school, the
Catholic population as a whole no longer agreed on the
necessity of providing parochial education for their
children.[2] Low enrollment, escalating costs[3] and

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[1]As will be seen in the following chapter, individual
Catholic schools in Chicago had faced crises of legitimacy
much earlier; first ethnic, then later racial transition
threatened the survival of many parish schools. The
legitimacy of Catholic parochial schools in general,
however, remained strong.

[2]Mary Perkins Ryan, in her book Are Parochial Schools
the Answer? Catholic Education in the Light of the Council,
puts forth a striking argument against the continuation of
parochial Catholic education. Her work represents the

diminishing financial resources caused many schools to close, others to consolidate with neighboring schools.

These factors continue to threaten the survival of parochial schools throughout the archdiocese. Especially vulnerable at the time of my research, however, were the 124 Catholic elementary schools in Chicago classified by the archdiocese as inner-city[4] schools. In these inner-city neighborhoods the exodus of Catholics to the suburbs had left behind numerous ethnic parishes in close proximity to each other. In addition to declining parish populations, these parishes were plagued by deteriorating structures coupled with a severely diminished resource base. As I did

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beliefs of those Catholics who disagreed with channeling such a large percentage of parish resources into schools that served only a small segment of the parish. They argued instead that parish resources should be concentrated on adult religious education and Christian formation. Her book evoked reaction and debate from both opponents and proponents of Catholic schools, e.g., Deferrari (1964), Greeley and Rossi (1966), Lee (1968), Shaw and Hurley (1969), Buetow (1970). Dolan (1985) also attributes the decline of Catholic schools in part to the debate over the value of a parochial-school education.

[3]The rapidly escalating cost of educating children in Catholic schools was due in large part to the decline in the numbers of men and women religious available and willing to teach in such schools. In 1964, lay teachers accounted for only 36 percent of the faculty of Catholic schools; by 1986, they made up 80 percent. While lay teachers worked for minimal salaries in comparison to their public school counterparts, the increased cost in salaries to parishes over what had been paid to the sisters was phenomenal.

[4]The term inner-city is used in an economic sense. According to information from the archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education, schools in neighborhoods which meet federal government poverty criteria were categorized as inner-city.

my research, this most recent financial crisis reached its peak; parish savings, the contributions of generations of parishioners, have been depleted, and more and more parishes are turning to the broader church community for subsidy.[5]

The Research Focus:
Catholic Elementary Schools in the Black Inner City
Breaking Parochial Boundaries

This study focuses on what might well be the most vulnerable population of Catholic elementary schools-- parochial schools in the inner city whose students are predominantly black. Because of their inner-city location they are faced with radical shifts in population, declining numbers, deteriorating neighborhoods and parish buildings, and loss of parish income. The added dimension of race poses problems because the Catholic church in the United States has traditionally been a white church. In areas where a black population, predominantly Protestant or unchurched, replaced a white ethnic Catholic population, black students began enrolling in parochial schools. These schools frequently found that very quickly their student body became entirely or almost entirely black and heavily

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[5]In Chicago, for example, the archdiocese has always assumed responsibility for subsidizing some of the poorer parishes. In recent years, however, the demand for such subsidy has grown dramatically because of dwindling income and depletion of past savings. In 1982, 29 parishes in the Chicago archdiocese relied on subsidy from the central office; in 1989, however, 109 parishes required financial assistance from the archdiocese in order to meet their expenses (The New World. 26 January 1990:10).

(80 to 90 percent) non-Catholic.

In parishes with rapidly diminishing resources, especially at a time when archdiocesan subsidy is being cut because of huge deficits throughout the archdiocese,[6] the survival of the parish school is threatened if the school is seen as a serious financial liability. A strong tradition of Catholic education (as will be discussed in the next chapter) helps to offset this threat to the parish school in many areas of the archdiocese, but in the black inner city when the school no longer serves primarily children of the parish, its necessity may become highly questionable and its future uncertain.

Is it possible for a black inner-city Catholic parochial school to adapt to its changed environment in such a way that it secures its future and increases its likelihood of survival? Can it truly break through its parochial boundaries, adapting its identity without losing it? If so, how does it accomplish this? I used an organizational perspective in my research to come to a better understanding of this problem.

The Organizational Challenge: Securing Resources and Legitimacy

As in any organization, the survival of Chicago's black inner-city Catholic parochial schools is dependent on their

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[6]Archdiocesan financial statements showed a $28 million deficit in 1989 (The New World. 5 January 1990:1).

ability to secure the vital resources that will enable them
to continue functioning. Just as importantly, because these
are institutional organizations, the schools must establish
their legitimacy. By legitimacy I mean the recognition by
key participants and resource providers that the school is
operating as it should be operating, that its mission is
valid and significant, that the school is doing what it
should be doing in a way that is acknowledged as being right
and appropriate. These two themes--resource dependency and
legitimacy--form the core theoretical concepts directing my
research.

The school's ability to secure resources is closely
intertwined with its ability to establish its legitimacy. A
variety of resource providers are present in the school's
environment, and I would suggest that the focus and shape of
the school's legitimacy is to a significant degree
determined by which resource providers are most readily
available or most important to the school. As changes occur
in the population from which the school can draw enrollment,
the way the school legitimizes itself also tends to
change.[7] In general, by promoting myths or interpretations

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[7]For example, when a school serves an exclusively
Catholic population in a stable neighborhood where public
schools are academically strong, the Catholic school focuses
on its spiritual mission. However, when the student
population becomes 90 percent non-Catholic and the school
wishes to attract families disillusioned by the public
school system, it builds its legitimacy in terms of its
educational mission, its superiority to what its public
counterpart is able to offer.

which legitimize the school to those specific resource
providers most essential to the school, the school is able
to demonstrate its importance and its effectiveness in
meeting the needs of the resource providers; in this way,
it increases its likelihood of organizational survival.

Three areas of the organizational literature were most
helpful to me in framing my theoretical understanding of the
schools included in this study: resource dependency,
population ecology, and the organizational persistence
theory or theory of permanent failure. The first two
perspectives focus directly on the interaction of
organizations with their environments. The third, while
recognizing that the external environment significantly
impacts the organization, focuses attention on the power
within the organization that also constrains organizational
futures.

A resource dependency perspective clarifies what the
black inner-city Catholic parochial school needs to do, how

Similarly, in terms of securing financial resources,
schools which depend heavily on the support of an ethnic
parish may find it most beneficial to establish their
legitimacy as a cultural institution, while those heavily
subsidized by the archdiocese will focus their efforts on
meeting archdiocesan criteria and demonstrating the schools'
legitimacy in terms of what the archdiocese expects a
Catholic school to be. If the school becomes increasingly
dependent on the broader civic community for financial
support, the school may demonstrate its legitimacy in terms
of the educational and social services it provides which
benefit the total community.

it must adapt, in order to survive. The insights of population ecology highlight the factors which enable certain schools in the population to "fit the external constraints of their environment," thus making successful adaptation more likely. Finally, the theory of organizational persistence stresses the important political impact of dependent groups within the organization which resist organizational change. By successfully maintaining the status quo these groups may increase the likelihood of organizational survival, but in doing so, they may also trap the school in a pattern of "permanent failure."

I will discuss these three theoretical perspectives and their contributions to this study. Then I will close this chapter by presenting an overview of the chapters to follow.

Resource Dependency: Adaptation, Autonomy, Legitimacy

As stated above, applying the resource dependency perspective to the schools in this study helps to clarify what these schools need to do in order to survive. Three things stand out as most necessary: 1) the schools must adapt in order to secure needed resources; 2) leadership within the school must successfully balance dependencies in order to gain autonomy for the school; and 3) the institutional legitimacy of the school must be securely established.

Adaptation as Necessity

The resource dependency theorists, best represented by
the work of Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), suggest that
adaptation is the key to organizational effectiveness.
Survival is dependent on the organization's ability to adapt
to a changing environment in order to secure an adequate and
stable flow of resources into the organization.

While educational costs soared and student enrollment
dropped dramatically in Catholic schools throughout the
country during the past twenty-five years, the schools
included in this study have faced additional environmental
changes that clearly threaten their ability to secure the
resources needed for survival. Demographic changes in the
inner city have deprived parochial schools of their
traditional means of obtaining resources. The parish no
longer has enough children to fill the school; schools must
adapt by recruiting students from beyond parish borders,
and/or by recruiting a non-Catholic population.

Similarly, these schools have traditionally been
heavily subsidized by their sponsoring parishes, but for
many inner-city parochial schools the parish is no longer a
reliable source of financial support. Like their schools,
these parishes have undergone dramatic transitions that have
left them with greatly depleted numbers and diminished
financial resources; many of them are in financial crisis
themselves. Clearly, if these schools are to survive they

must secure new means of financial support.

In adapting to new student bodies and new sources of financial support, the schools have had to make changes in what they are doing and how they are doing it. The effectiveness, the strengths and limitations, of four varied forms of adaptation found in the schools I studied, will be a major topic of this dissertation.

Dependencies and the Struggle for Autonomy

The resource dependency perspective states that an organization's ability to adapt will be shaped by the impact of external political factors. Because organizations depend on each other for important resources, they find themselves involved in an ongoing struggle for autonomy. The successful organization is able to maximize its control over resources while minimizing its dependence on outside organizations. The more dependent an organization is on an outside resource supplier, the greater that supplier's power to influence organizational outcomes--growth, survival, or death. The organization which is able to increase the dependency of other organizations on it, however, strengthens its own autonomy and relative position within the environment.

Thus, for Pfeffer and Salancik, organizational leaders play a vital role in manipulating the environment to the organization's advantage. Effective leaders manage interorganizational demands so as to reduce environmental

uncertainty and ensure their resource flow without sacrificing their autonomy. This kind of organizational effectiveness directly influences an organization's chances of surviving.

Dependencies and autonomy in the schools studied

The increasingly complex environment of Catholic parochial schools in the black inner city has resulted in intensified dependency relationships along with a heightened awareness of the necessity for the school to maintain some degree of autonomy. The parochial nature of the traditional Catholic elementary school had served as a buffer against other environmental forces. The traditional parish was a self-contained and, especially in Chicago's ethnic parishes, a homogeneous community. Parish and school were interdependent and they shared common interests and goals which made for a stable relationship and a secure flow of resources into the school.

That has now changed for many inner-city parochial schools. Their goals and best interests frequently diverge from those of the local parish; the parish may see the school as a financial drain and a threat to its own survival. The school, in turn, may find the parish restricting its options and interfering with its autonomy in implementing changes the school deems necessary.

As traditional links with the parish weaken, the inner-city school has been forging new linkages with the

archdiocese, with new populations of parents, with
neighboring Catholic schools, with community groups and
corporate sponsors. The success with which these new
dependencies are negotiated, and the degree of autonomy the
school gains or loses in the process, greatly affect the
survival potential and the effectiveness of the school in
its new environment.

It follows, then, that one of the greatest challenges
facing the administrator of an inner-city parochial school
is the managing of these interorganizational demands in an
atmosphere of environmental uncertainty. The administrator
frequently is faced with diverse expectations coming from
external groups upon which the school depends: pastor,
school board, parish, archdiocesan school office, parents,
other potential funders. She/he must decide which resource
providers are most critical to the school's survival in each
given situation. The way in which the administrator
negotiates the demands and requirements of these varied and
sometimes competing groups will have a significant impact on
the school's organizational success.[8]

Institutional Legitimacy

Meyer et al. (1983) extend the resource dependency

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[8]A number of educational studies demonstrate the
importance of leadership while at the same time emphasizing
the impact of organizational constraints on the
effectiveness of school administrators. See, for example,
Sussmann 1977, Rogers 1968, Rogers and Chung 1983.

perspective to institutional organizations and emphasize the importance of legitimacy in such organizations. Unlike technical organizations which are judged by what they produce, i.e., the quality and efficiency of their output, institutional organizations are judged by their structural conformity to society's prevailing notions of what they should be like (Meyer and Rowan 1983). This conformity to institutional rules and norms provides organizations with legitimacy. Legitimacy becomes the institutional organization's most essential resource, for the organization's success depends on its ability to win and hold public confidence; only when the organization is seen as legitimate can it achieve stability.

While legitimacy demands that the organization sustain "the appearance of reasonableness and rationality (Meyer and Zucker 1989)," it is the prevailing institutionalized beliefs about how organizational activities ought to be conducted that determine rational behavior. Managers and administrators in institutional organizations, therefore, according to Meyer, Scott, and Deal (1983), focus attention less on the technical workings of the organization and more on the environment, on the beliefs and attitudes that the public has of their organization. Legitimacy is based more on how well formal structures conform to those institutionalized beliefs than on actual operations of which the public has little or no direct knowledge.

A variation of this perspective is presented by DiMaggio and Powell (1983). They suggest that organizations use "mimetic processes" to gain legitimacy and strengthen the probability of organizational survival. Institutional organizations imitate already successful organizations whose legitimacy is firmly established and who provide the same kinds of services. In this way the mimicking organizations establish their own credibility.

Change in institutional organizations comes as a result of changes in the institutional myths of a society (Meyer and Rowan 1983). As the society and the institutional environment change, so must the organization. Research indicates, however, that most often these changes occur in the external structures of organizations rather than in the central core.[9] Most often adaptation to changed institutional myths involves adding or modifying programs or positions within the organization to meet the new requirements, rather than actual changes in the mission of the organization.

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[9]See, for example, Gronbjerg 1986; Meyer and Scott 1983; Zald 1970. This same position is taken by the population ecologists whose perspective will be presented in the next section of this chapter. Their studies indicate that changes in the organizational core (as changes in mission would be) are more threatening to organizational survival than changes in the periphery (such as adding programs).

The legitimacy challenge for black inner-city Catholic parochial schools

Several interesting issues arise when viewing the schools involved in this research from the institutional organization perspective. Legitimacy is clearly a key issue for these schools because it has become increasingly difficult to establish the quality and efficiency of the schools' output. What should a Catholic school be like? A second equally pressing question is to whom must the school prove its legitimacy? In a world of rapidly changing institutional myths, what person/s' or group/s' myths (beliefs about what the school should be like) will direct the changing school's attempts to establish its legitimacy? The third question, then, is closely related to the second: how does the school align itself with the legitimating myth? The process varies depending on which groups are judged as most essential to the school's survival.

The institutional myth: what should a Catholic school be like? In the past a whole assortment of symbolic external indicators--from sister-teachers dressed in long habits, to Catholic editions of all textbooks,[10] to daily

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[10]To prove their orthodoxy, these texts contained Imprimaturs and Nihil Obstats--Latin for "Let it be printed" and "Nothing hinders." These phrases were printed on the title page of "Catholic" books after a bishop had examined the content of the book and had approved it for usage, verifying that nothing in the book would endanger the faith or morals of those who read it. The use of the imprimatur and nihil obstat was a clear indication of the siege mentality of the pre-Vatican II Catholic church.

Mass attendance and uniforms--assured people that this was a
Catholic school. But as these trappings disappeared, and
even more significantly, as the student population shifted
to include fewer and fewer parishioners and more and more
non-Catholics, the question of what makes a school a
Catholic school, and a successful Catholic school, came to
the forefront. What should be the mission of the Catholic
school in the inner city? What should it offer its non-
Catholic students? How should it be of service to its local
parish? Does the parish have a responsibility to the
school? How should the interdependence of parish and school
play itself out in the black inner city?

Legitimate--to whom? As mentioned above, in the past
the Catholic parish was a self-contained unit, providing (at
least in most cases[11]) all the resources needed by its
school. Because the school depended almost exclusively on
the local parish, legitimacy questions were relatively
uncomplicated. The school had to establish its legitimacy
with the parish; it was the needs and expectations of the
parish that had to be met.

The present reality in the inner city is far different.

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[11]Historically, the Catholic diocese of Chicago had
always subsidized a number of parish schools. Poor
parishes, especially the Italian ethnic parishes, were
sometimes reluctant to build schools; the Bishop demanded
that schools be opened in these parishes, and the diocese
itself assumed financial responsibility for them if the
parish was unable or, in some cases, unwilling to support
its school.

The school is faced with a variety of perspectives on what it should be and what it should do. It no longer has the influence it once had in shaping those perspectives. The parish and parish leadership have become much more diverse, so that even within the parish the possibility of disagreement is great. In addition, the expectations and concerns of the new resource providers must be understood and dealt with. Each group may have its own set of beliefs about what the school should be doing. When the expectations of all cannot be simultaneously met, to whom does the school strive to establish itself as legitimate? Whose legitimizing myths take precedence? A resource dependency perspective suggests that most often it will be the group which the school identifies as being the most able to provide a secure flow of resources to the school.

Establishing legitimacy: how? Some of the more stable inner-city schools, schools that were organizationally strong before the racial transition, may have managed to retain their original legitimacy. For these schools the task would be to adapt, reinforce, and promote the myths that legitimated them in the past. They may use mimetic processes to do this, imitating the traditional parochial school in order to establish their legitimacy with the Catholic population that remains.

More often, however, the myths that once won legitimacy for these schools are no longer relevant or appropriate.

Schools must adapt, and in the process find ways to re-establish their legitimacy, appealing to new myths or adapting the old myths to fit new realities. The mission of the school, as expressed in formal mission statements, as verbalized by school personnel, as operationalized in school policies and procedures, may be one of the most significant means of myth making or myth promoting. Is it possible for the inner-city parochial school to modify its programs to meet the requirements of a new population without threatening its original mission? If so, it may be able to establish its legitimacy with new resource providers while remaining legitimate to the more traditional resource providers. What happens when the school goes through radical reorganization--how does that affect the school's mission and its legitimacy?

If legitimacy is necessary to ensure an ongoing flow of vital resources into the schools, then the ability of Chicago's black inner-city parochial schools to maintain, restore, or forge a new legitimacy would appear to be one of the most important challenges facing these schools.

Population Ecology

Population ecology differs from resource dependency in that it stresses the relative importance of environmental selection over organizational adaptation. This theoretical perspective (as represented in the work of Hannan and Freeman 1977, 1984, 1988; Aldrich 1979; Carroll 1985; and

Astley 1985) proposes an evolutionary view of organizational change; it argues that change more often takes place by the growth of new forms of organizations than by management controlled reform of existing organizations. Forms that no longer fit the environment decline or die, while forms better adapted to the new reality survive and thrive.

Because of the retrospective posture of this theory, this perspective is helpful in explaining why certain schools or types of schools in the parochial population closed during the past three decades while others managed to survive. More to the point of this research, however, the work of the population ecologists makes it possible to determine which schools or school forms will be most likely to successfully secure the resources and legitimacy necessary for survival.

The factors proposed by this perspective as influencing the likelihood of organizational survival are: 1) the school's vulnerability to political interference and external pressures for transformation; 2) the density of the niche in which the school exists--and the effects of that density on legitimacy and competition; and 3) factors such as the size and age of the school, whether it is generalist or specialist in orientation, and whether attempted changes are taking place in the organizational core or the periphery--and how quickly adaptation occurs.

The School's Vulnerability to Political Interference

Aldrich (1979) asserts that external political forces often cause organizational leaders to react to their environment rather than manipulating it through well-considered decision-making. Because organizations are resource dependent, influential parties may close off access to necessary resources unless the organization meets certain requirements. Aldrich suggests that the organizations most vulnerable to external pressures for transformation are those with diffuse goals, uncertain support, precarious or illegitimate values, or those facing a declining demand for their products or services.

Such political pressures have shaped the direction of individual schools at various times in the history of Chicago's Catholic schools. Aldrich's insights, however, would lead us to expect that these environmental constraints exert an even greater influence on black inner-city Catholic schools. Most striking is the declining demand for Catholic parochial education. When the school reaches out to a new population to try to stabilize enrollment, already diffuse educational goals become even more clouded as racially and religiously distinct groups enter the school. Parish support necessarily declines as parish membership diminishes, and new sources of future support remain uncertain. Because it is unclear what the school should be doing and what it is doing, legitimacy also wanes. This

combination of factors leaves these schools prime candidates
for externally induced change and especially vulnerable to
political interference. How much autonomy a school leader
has, or how much difference an administrator or pastor is
able to make, is at least to some degree determined by the
school's vulnerability to such external political pressures.

Population Density and the Niche Theory

Hannan and Freeman's study of populations of
organizations (1988) found that as people get used to seeing
a particular type of organization, it gains greater
legitimacy; thus, the more organizations there are, the
more new ones we can expect to see springing up until the
niche is saturated and can support no more. At that point
competition begins to squeeze some of the new organizations
out; failing organizations discourage the founding of new
ones, and founding rates drop again. According to Hannan
and Freeman (1988), density increases legitimacy at a
decreasing rate while it increases competition at an
increasing rate.

Organizational mortality operates in the opposite way.
Until the density of a given organizational form is
sufficient to establish organizational legitimacy, fewer
organizations survive. As legitimacy grows, survival
becomes easier and mortality declines. The density however
will eventually reach a level where the niche can support no
more organizations, and then the mortality rate begins to

rise again.

In the following chapter of this dissertation I will apply Hannan and Freeman's niche theory to the development and more recent decline of Chicago's Catholic parochial elementary school system. I will look at the beginnings of the system, its growing legitimacy and the resulting proliferation of parish schools in Chicago. Because of continued Catholic population growth, first due to heavy Catholic immigration into Chicago and then due to the baby boom, the niche was not saturated until the mid-sixties. At that point, the declining population of potential students coupled with demographic shifts of the Catholic population out of the city and to the suburbs started an enrollment decline that proved fatal for many schools and challenged the legitimacy of many others.

Other Factors Influencing Organizational Survival:
Age, Size, Generalist/Specialist Fit, Core/Periphery Changes

Hannan and Freeman make several other important points about organizational survival and organizational mortality. First, age tends to produce stability, and stability increases organizational survival. Therefore older organizations are less likely to close or to merge than are younger ones. Second, larger organizations are more likely to survive because they have the resources to withstand environmental change. Small organizations will more often attempt change in order to adapt than will larger

organizations, but they are more likely to die in the process.

Applying this to the schools in this study, older, larger schools should have a better survival rate than newer, smaller schools. Future chapters will demonstrate that both size and age definitely influence the survival chances of black inner-city elementary Catholic schools. However, other factors intervene to modify the impact-- whether for survival or decline--of age and size.

Hannan and Freeman also speak of the relative advantages of generalist and specialist organizations. They propose that specialist organizations are best adapted to stable environments where there can be the greatest exploitation of the resources of a specific environment. Generalist organizations, on the other hand, are the most suitable form in an unstable environment because they are able to draw resources from a much broader base.

Through most of their history, Chicago's parochial schools have been specialist organizations. This orientation made them highly responsive to the wants and needs of the parish, enabling them to best utilize the resources of that niche. When the parish is rocked by instability and environmental turbulence, however, as has been the case over the past several decades in the inner city, the school can ill afford to rely solely on the parish for resources. From the perspective of the population

ecologists, the survival chances of inner-city Catholic schools will increase as they become more generalist. As generalist organizations they will attract a much broader population of students while also broadening their base of resource providers.

Finally, Hannan and Freeman point out that changes in the core rather than the periphery of the organization increase the likelihood of organizational death because they tend to disrupt the organization for longer periods of time and they impact a broader range of organizational activities. Such changes also pose more of a threat to the legitimacy of the organization. Adaptation, they believe, is more possible when it takes place in the periphery and is accomplished quickly. From this perspective, therefore, an inner-city Catholic school would be more likely to successfully adapt to the changes in its environment if it makes the transition from a specialist to a generalist organization quickly and without radical changes in mission or organizational structure. These issues have direct bearing on the fate of Chicago's inner-city Catholic schools, and will be discussed in much greater detail in the following chapters.

Theory of Organizational Persistence

Like population ecology, the organizational persistence theory (Meyer and Zucker 1989) contributes to an understanding of which Catholic parochial schools in the

black inner city are most likely to survive and why. Like
both the resource dependency theorists and the population
ecologists, Meyer and Zucker raise questions of dependence
and power. The perspectives differ, however, in that the
first two focus on power and dependence relationships with
external groups; the emphasis is on organizational
vulnerability to political interference from outside.

Organizational persistence, on the other hand, concerns
itself with the organization's vulnerability to political
interference from inside the organization. It confronts the
power of dependent constituencies within the organization
which attempt to block change in order to protect their own
interests. When successful, these dependent constituencies
can enable the organization to persist even through long
periods of low efficiency or productivity.

Organizational persistence, then, contributes to this
research by pointing out the organizational constraints
which will enable dependent actors to actualize their power
to keep the school open. Similarly, it reveals
organizational characteristics which free policy makers to
make the deliberate choice to close a school and move
resources elsewhere.

When is Resistance Effective?

Organizational persistence developed as a synthesis of
population ecology, resource dependency, and transaction-
cost economics. Meyer and Zucker assert that efficient

performance is only one, and often not the most important, determinant of organizational survival. Very often organizations survive that, at least according to official goals and criteria, are not successful; for-profit organizations may persist even if they are losing money, and nonprofit organizations may persist even though they fail to meet official objectives or their performance is questionable or they have accomplished their original purpose and appear to have outgrown their usefulness.

Meyer and Zucker explain this by pointing to the significance of multiple operative goals that are pursued by employees and outside constituencies, goals that diverge from the organization's official mission (as articulated by owners or the sponsoring group) especially when organizational performance deteriorates. Unlike Aldrich who identified this as the type of organization most vulnerable to external pressures for transformation, Meyer and Zucker suggest that change in these organizations is survival threatening. Constituencies within the organizations, therefore, will tend to resist changes because their own interests are dependent on the maintenance and survival of the organization. The more dependent these various constituencies are, the fewer alternatives they have, the stronger this tendency will be. Because preservation of the organization is their most important consideration, constituencies will attempt to block change if it threatens

organizational survival. When these attempts succeed, the organization will continue despite poor performance, and permanent failure will result.

Meyer and Zucker speak of three circumstances out of which permanent failure tends to arise--all of which are evident in Catholic schools in the black inner city: 1) low performance occurs, 2) owners or sponsors attempt to implement changes aimed at restoring performance, or they attempt to move their capital to other more profitable arenas, and 3) changes are effectively resisted by others less concerned about financial performance but dependent on the organization for other benefits. The archdiocese, as the "owner" of the parochial schools, measures performance by a combination of factors: academic achievement, Catholic identity, student enrollment, and the school's ability to generate funds and operate within certain budget limits.

While most inner-city Catholic schools have remained successful in terms of academic performance, severely declining enrollment coupled with rapidly rising costs and a failure to continue to generate sufficient operational funds qualify many inner-city schools as low-performers. As a result, the sponsoring parishes or the archdiocese may attempt organizational changes designed to increase enrollment and decrease the subsidy required for the school. A second option would be to try to close the school and use the resources elsewhere in a way that will more directly

benefit the Catholic population that subsidized the school. In the event of permanent failure, groups dependent on the school for other benefits and less concerned about its financial performance (e.g., the local parish, the pastor, the school administration and staff, the local community, or the families that are utilizing the school) effectively resist the changes that threaten the school's existence.

Dependence and resistance to change

Dependency of these various constituencies grows as more and more inner-city parochial schools close; people's alternatives in terms of education become much more limited, resulting in increased resistance to proposed changes. Resistance is intensified because the same conditions that caused the decline in the school have often caused decline in the parish; in some cases the survival of the parish is dependent on the survival of its school--for the school is its greatest evangelization tool[12] and its most effective means for winning the support of the surrounding neighborhood. Closing the school might threaten the future of the parish; therefore such action is actively resisted.

In some inner-city parishes, therefore, double resistance to change exists. Both school and parish are

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[12]The interviews with pastors showed that the school was often the single most important contact the parish had with people of the neighborhood. A positive experience in the school often led to inquiries about parish membership, and many of these schools have mandatory programs introducing parents to the basics of Catholicism.

caught in a situation of permanent failure with dependent
populations interested in organizational maintenance.
Because school and parish are interdependent, and the
survival of the one hinges on the survival of the other, two
otherwise diverse populations--the school and the parish
populations--may put forth a unified effort to resist any
organizational change.

Multiple constituencies and ambiguous commitments

Because, as Meyer and Zucker point out, nonprofit and
public organizations frequently must recognize the interests
of multiple constituencies, institutional organizations must
define their performance in broad terms.[13] A broad
definition of performance coupled with the ill-defined or
ambiguous values and commitments that usually characterize
the higher levels of public and nonprofit organizations
(Meyer and Zucker 1989), make effective resistance from

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[13]Wagner (1977) speaks of the benefits of vague and
ambiguous goals in his case study of an inner-city
alternative school sponsored by an ecumenical group of
churches. This school, like the ones in my study, had
multiple constituencies with differing values and
expectations for the school: the teachers, the students,
the Mission administrators and sponsors, the larger academic
system, the local community and social service agencies.
Wagner points out that because of the lack of clear and
precise frameworks of meaning and rules and procedures, the
organization was able in times of crisis to switch to
whatever model or framework offered the most legitimacy in
the given situation. Wagner used the term serial advocacy
to refer to this policy of switching among models in order
to preserve the school's legitimacy. Serial advocacy makes
it more likely for a school to survive by ensuring that
whichever constituency is most significant at the time, will
perceive the school as legitimate.

dependent constituencies more likely.

This problem is especially relevant in the inner-city Catholic school where we frequently find multiple constituencies with competing interests. Especially in periods of transition when the grounds for a school's legitimacy are shifting and unclear, it becomes almost impossible to evaluate the success of a school; there is no one set of criteria acceptable to all constituencies for determining whether or not a school will remain open.[14] When a strong enough constituency disagrees about a decision, e.g., a pastor attempts to close the parish school because it serves only a handful of parish children and it is financially draining the parish, this constituency could appeal to the archdiocese, citing competing goals and commitments. In this example, they might appeal to the archdiocesan commitments to serve the poor, to evangelize the black community, and/or to provide quality education in the inner city...all of which are recognized as legitimate goals for an inner-city parochial school.

It would seem, then, that except in times of severe financial crisis parochial schools would tend to persist. In cases of long-term failure and financial crisis, however,

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[14]As will be seen in following chapters, the archdiocese has made significant progress in developing more specific criteria for evaluating schools and doing future planning for them. The official guidelines and directives have been established and promoted, but it remains to be seen how true to these criteria the planning processes will be.

if dependent actors have extremely limited access to financial resources, the survival threat remains very real, and dependent actors remain relatively powerless to maintain the organization.[15]

Reducing the Likelihood of Effective Resistance

Meyer and Zucker suggest that organizations frequently make strategic choices aimed at curbing the power of dependent actors, thus reducing the likelihood of permanent failure. Organizations are then more free either to make the changes deemed necessary to upgrade performance or to close the organization and transfer resources elsewhere.

They propose four essentially political strategies which limit the influence of dependent constituencies: 1) organizational growth, which brings in new actors who are less committed to the status quo and less likely to question the decisions of management--thus diluting the impetus toward resistance; 2) organizational innovation, which attempts to isolate or remove dependent actors from effective influence; 3) privatization, which eliminates the informal constraints and ambiguities which are a part of public-sector enterprises but often not of private ones; 4) and externalization of employment, which utilizes short-term

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[15]This appears to be the reality as I write this dissertation. More and more schools are being closed, and constituencies committed to their parochial school seem powerless to influence the direction the archdiocese is moving in terms of school and parish closings.

contract workers whose lack of permanent status in the organization makes effective resistance impossible. Only one of these strategies, organizational innovation, is commonly utilized in the Catholic parochial schools in Chicago's black inner city to reduce the power of dependent actors who might otherwise interfere with attempts at organizational change.

The most common form of organizational innovation is the adoption of multiunit and conglomerate forms of organization. While organizations can expect some efficiency gains due to this kind of change, Meyer and Zucker suggest that often these new forms of organization are adopted more for the advantages that come from separating daily operations from long-term planning and decision-making. This separation significantly reduces the power of the organization's dependent actors and increases the owners' or sponsors' freedom to pursue their own best interests.

One of the main directions recommended by the archdiocese at the present time, is the development of regional schools--multi-campus consolidations and clusters. While there are many advantages for the school administrator, and apparently for the school itself and its viability, it will become obvious in the case studies that this strategy does indeed tend to isolate dependent actors. Operational decisions continue to be made in the individual

schools or campuses but strategic decisions are removed to a central office. This frees the principal "to do her job" but it also greatly decreases her influence--and that of her staff and parents and other school dependents--on decisions which determine the future of the school. Policy makers-- located at a safe distance from dependents who might otherwise provoke resistance--are more free to initiate changes or to close campuses and move resources to other schools or programs.

In this chapter I have developed the theoretical framework to be used in this dissertation. I have shown that from a resource dependency perspective, Catholic parochial elementary schools in the black inner city--if they are to survive--must adapt in order to secure students, financial support, autonomy, and a new legitimacy.

The schools' ability to adapt, however, is limited by the constraints both of their environment and of political forces within the schools themselves. I have attempted to show how population ecology and organizational persistence explain these constraints. Using the insights of population ecology, I have discussed the importance of external political pressures for change and the relationship of the density of an organizational niche to a school's ability to survive; I have noted the characteristics necessary for Catholic parochial schools to "fit" more successfully in the

turbulent environment they face in the black inner city. By applying the theory of organizational persistence to the schools included in this study, I have indicated the situations in which dependent actors within the school are most likely to prevent its closing, though often with permanent failure resulting; likewise, I have shown how certain organizational structures can limit the power and influence of those who depend on the continued existence of the school.

Overview of the Dissertation

In the remainder of this dissertation I will develop these concepts as they apply to the sixty-two inner-city parochial schools included in this study. I will present my research design in Chapter 3. Then, using basically a population ecology approach in Chapter 4, I will look at the population of black inner-city schools--those which closed during the twenty-five year period prior to my research, and those which have survived. Chapter 5 will present the categorization of schools that I found most useful in my analysis, a categorization based on the basic strategies used by the schools in their attempts to secure resources, balance their dependencies, and re-establish their legitimacy. The case studies in Chapters 6 through 9 will examine the strengths and limitations of these strategies using schools representative of the four categories. Conclusions, policy implications of this research, and

directions for the future will be discussed in the final
chapter.

Before moving into the body of this research, however,
Chapter 2 will trace the history of Chicago's Catholic
school system in order to provide a clear understanding of
the realities that have shaped these schools. The chapter
will focus on the resources and legitimacy that have
sustained these schools until recently, the causes and
effects of the current crisis of legitimacy, and the
dependencies and interdependencies that continue to make
adaptation to a changed environment both possible and
extremely difficult.

CHAPTER 2

NEGOTIATING RESOURCES AND LEGITIMACY IN THE CHICAGO PAROCHIAL SCHOOL SYSTEM: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In the last chapter I applied an organizational framework to the current challenges confronting Catholic elementary schools in the black inner city. In this chapter I will use that same organizational framework while searching the history of these schools for remnants of their past which either support or inhibit their efforts to adapt to their present organizational environment.

The resources that are key to the survival of the parochial school in 1990 are the same resources that were needed at the time of the school's founding; the success of the school has always been dependent on its ability to secure students, financial resources, and legitimacy and on its ability to negotiate its environment with some degree of autonomy. By examining their histories, I show how Chicago's Catholic schools had done this in the past.

In this chapter I look first at the factors which made Chicago's parochial schools organizationally strong and provided impetus throughout the long period of expansion: how legitimacy was originally established, what resource streams were most significant for these schools, and once

established how these were maintained. Then I will look at
the period of decline and examine the factors that changed
to make these same schools organizationally weak: a loss of
legitimacy and diminished resources. Finally, I will
examine more recent attempts to rebuild the surviving
schools and once again make them organizationally strong:
attempts to re-establish their legitimacy and to secure new
resources.

An Organizationally Strong System: Periods of Founding and Expansion

From an organizational perspective, the early growth of
Chicago's Catholic school system[1] can be attributed to its
tremendous success at doing what the resource dependency
theorists insist a successful institutional organization
must: secure the necessary resources--i.e. an adequate
enrollment and firm financial backing, establish its
legitimacy to the population it hopes to serve, and
capitalize on interdependencies in order to maintain its
autonomy.

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[1]Catholic schools in the United States have always been
more of a federation or loose network of schools than an
actual system. The term system, however, is commonly
applied to Catholic schools operating within a single
diocese. For ease of discussion, and because there are
visible patterns of growth, development, and decline within
the Catholic schools in the Chicago diocese, I will refer to
Chicago's network of Catholic schools as a system. Since
individual parish schools grew rapidly in size and in number
between 1880 and 1930, it is appropriate to refer to these
years as the founding period of Chicago's Catholic school
system.

Securing Legitimacy:
Mission and Legitimacy Myths in the Early Years

The Catholic parochial school system developed and flourished in Chicago, as elsewhere in the United States, in response to the needs of the enormous numbers of Catholic immigrants arriving during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth.[2] There is widespread agreement that this system originally served a dual purpose: first, the religious purpose of socializing parish children into the beliefs, values, practices and traditions of the Catholic faith, and second, a public purpose of acculturation and the assimilation of a poor immigrant population into the mainstream of American society (Burns 1912, Buetow 1970, Lannie 1968, Vitullo-Martin 1979, Lee 1968, Sanders 1977).

Catholic schools were primarily a defensive response to the common school movement. Common school advocates were hostile to the new waves of immigrants because of the immigrants' religion[3] and social class: these immigrant

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[2]According to Lieberson (1980:21), in 1850 Catholics comprised only 7 percent of the population of the United States. By 1900, immigration from South, Central, and Eastern European countries which were heavily Catholic resulted in the growth of the Catholic population to 16 percent of the population. In Chicago in 1920, foreign-born and second generation immigrants from these parts of Europe comprised 32 percent of the population --875,640 people (Lieberson 1980:24).

[3]Koob and Shaw (1969) speak of the attempt of the common schools "to grind Catholicity out of Catholics." Lannie (1968) likewise reports that public school textbooks were often blatantly Protestant in sympathy, and some were

masses were both Catholic and poor. Gannon (1969) states that the Catholic school developed to meet the problems of a minority church composed of underprivileged and often persecuted people whose religious differences were accentuated by social disadvantages. The legitimating myths about educating Catholic children in separate parochial schools grew out of this defensive posture.[4] The mission of Catholic schools--and their very existence--was a response to the legitimating myths.

Religious Legitimacy: Myths of a Siege Mentality

The official institutionalized myth of parish schools as the right and only proper way to educate Catholic children developed slowly over a period of about fifty-five years. It was a myth that grew out of the fear that the public schools would rob young Catholics of their faith and religious traditions.

In 1829, when Chicago was a village of fewer than fifty people, the first Provincial Council of Baltimore (a

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openly disrespectful of Catholicism. Lieberson, while not referring specifically to the common school movement, documents the antagonism and prejudice encountered by the heavily Catholic immigrant groups of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

[4]Gavignan describes this development in Philadelphia. She asserts that because of the Nativist riots of 1844, riots directed against the immigrant poor who were mostly Irish and mostly Catholic, "the Catholic community increasingly separated itself from the rest of the city, and built up parallel social, educational, and even financial institutions which almost always centered in the parish (1988:113)."

gathering of U.S. Catholic hierarchy) began warning that the young, and especially the poor, were exposed "to great danger of the loss of faith or the corruption of morals..." The council therefore judged it "absolutely necessary that schools should be established, in which the young may be taught the principles of faith and morality, while being instructed in letters (Burns 1912:182)." Later councils made similar statements, always emphasizing the grave threat to salvation that the public school posed because of its Protestant character. When attempts failed to free public education from its strong Protestant character, the bishops began to insist on the need for a separate Catholic system (Dolan 1985; Gavigan 1988).

In 1875, the pope confirmed the Roman Propaganda's "Instruction to the Bishops of the United States concerning the Public Schools". After enumerating the dangers of the public schools, this instruction forbade "the frequentation of such schools, unless these dangers could be rendered remote." While this last phrase gave some hope for the possibility of reforming the public system so that Catholics might utilize it, the instruction ostracized Catholic parents who persisted in sending their children to the public school when a parish school was available or when the parents had money to send them to a Catholic school elsewhere.

Finally, the 1884 Plenary Council of Baltimore mandated

the erection of a parochial school for each Catholic church in the United States; the school was to be built within two years of the decree and was to be maintained in perpetuum. At the same time the parochial system gained some academic legitimacy because the Council upgraded teacher qualifications and created some semblance of diocesan organization to provide general supervision for these schools.

In Chicago this myth grew in power not just because of hierarchical rulings but because of the lived experience of the Catholic population. Sanders (1977:39) contends:

> It was the backdrop of rabid anti-Catholicism in Chicago generally and the alleged Protestant bias of the public schools in particular that prompted a total effort to build within the City a Catholic educational island. First in the nativist and the Know-Nothing movements, later in the machinations of the American Protective Association, and always in the city's suspicious and often hostile Protestant establishment, the advocates of Catholic education found a compelling incentive for the parochial school.

Funchion (1988:122-123) concurs and describes the Protestant character of Chicago's public schools in those early decades: almost all Board of Education members were Protestant; Protestants monopolized teaching positions; the King James Bible was read; and the Catholic newspaper reported that Catholic children were being taught to be ashamed of their religion.

Just as important as the Catholic identity of these

schools as a legitimating force, was their ethnic identity.
I turn now to that ethnic dimension and the important role
it served in establishing the Chicago Catholic system as an
organizationally strong one.

Ethnic Legitimacy: Schools Where Students Could Belong

The common schools attacked and ridiculed not only the
Catholic religion, but also the ethnic culture and values,
and the poverty of the immigrants. In some areas, poor
immigrant children were treated so badly that they refused
to attend school, and both civil and religious authorities
became concerned.[5]

This was the case in Chicago, where Herrick (1971)
reports that although almost half of the city's population
was foreign-born, in 1871 only 16 percent of the children
enrolled in Chicago's public schools had foreign-born
parents. Clark's 1897 dissertation on Chicago's public
schools (quoted in Herrick 1971) speaks of the irrelevance
of these schools because they neither confronted the poverty
in which immigrant children had to live, nor did they adapt
the school curriculum in any way to the special needs of
foreign-born families.

The reality was very different in Chicago's Catholic

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[5]This was true in New York, for example, where Governor
Seward worked with Bishop Hughes to try to win state aid for
religious schools since he saw parochial schools as the only
way New York City's immigrant children would be educated
(Lannie 1968).

schools because of their parochial nature. The first bishop of Chicago had made provisions for separate ethnic parishes which would meet the cultural, educational, and spiritual needs of specific communities of Catholic immigrants. These parishes were almost always served by priests of the same ethnic origin.[6] Parishes designated by the archdiocese as territorial were in actuality Irish parishes, which because of the use of the English language in the parish, were open to other Americanized groups.[7]

By 1887 Chicago had thirty-five Irish-dominated territorial parishes and a total of thirty-one ethnic or national parishes: eighteen German, six Polish, five Bohemian, and two French. Archbishop Quigley, serving Chicago from 1903 until 1915, continued the trend of ethnic parishes as he dedicated over one-hundred new parishes. While his ideal was one Catholic parish per square mile in the city, the desire of ethnic groups for their own parishes resulted in up to seven churches in some mile squares--and three and four churches per square was common (Kantowicz

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[6]The written histories of these parishes include numerous anecdotes that demonstrate how nationalistic Chicago's early parishes actually were. For example, a Polish parish founded in the late 1860s reacted with violence to a pastor appointed several years later because he was Lithuanian, not Polish.

[7]Funchion states, "Although in theory territorial parishes were not necessarily Irish, in practice they were, since virtually all English-speaking Catholics in Chicago were Irish...by and large the only people he [the parishioner of a territorial parish] saw were fellow Irishmen (1988:120)."

1988:349). From 1900 to 1930, 55 percent of all Catholic
school children in Chicago attended ethnic schools, while
the remainder attended territorial schools that were
dominated by Irish Catholics (Sanders 1977:45).[8]

In and through the ethnic parish people bonded
culturally as well as religiously (Dolan 1985). Tight-knit
parishes sponsored a wide variety of organizations:
literary, social, financial, benevolent, and educational.
Language, customs, traditional values, and a sense of
national identity were reinforced and passed on to the
children in the parish context--and most parishes considered
their Catholic school an essential agent of this cultural
transmission. At the same time, these schools managed to
successfully acculturate the immigrants to life in the
United States (Greeley and Rossi 1966; Dolan 1985; Gavigan
1988).[9]

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[8]The remnants of this ethnic approach to parish
formation can still be seen in Chicago. The Official
Catholic Directory (Kenedy & Sons 1987) as recently as 1987
still specifically designated twenty-seven out of the 261
parishes in the city of Chicago as ethnic or national
parishes. The ethnic identity had endured even though many
of these parishes were now, at least in their schools,
serving populations of a very different ethnic background.
For example, an Italian parish had a school that was 86
percent Hispanic. Similarly, enrollment in a Polish
parish's school was 91 percent Hispanic.

[9]Dolan points out that already by 1900, "the American
Catholic community had a large middle class made up of
American-born sons and daughters of Irish and German
immigrants (1985:147). An estimated 20 percent of Irish and
Germans were in middle-class occupations. Blue-collar Irish
and German Catholics were by that time also moving into
skilled occupations and achieving a significant amount of

The Catholic schools effectively bridged the old ways and the new. Instead of the hostility that was so common in the public school, the parochial school was strongly ethnic in character. Teachers from European religious communities taught classes in the immigrants' mother tongue. The school commemorated traditional celebrations and festivals. These factors made the school legitimate to the ethnic parishioners and at the same time Americanized the students in a nonthreatening way (Greeley and Rossi 1966; Greeley, McCready and McCourt 1976; Sanders 1977; Gleason and Salvaterra 1988; Kuzniewski 1988; Obidinski 1988).[10] Tomasi (1988) states:

> In Catholic schools immigrant children found in many instances a cultural continuity of values and traditions that made adaptation to America less traumatic and less disruptive than in public schools (1988:88).

A second important characteristic of Chicago's Catholic schools is that in most cases the parishioners themselves, despite their poverty, built the schools in order to provide

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social mobility. They were exerting leadership in ethnic and religious groups, buying property, and sending their children to college. Dolan further notes that it was the New Catholic immigrants and the Mexican-Americans that made up the bulk of Catholic lower-class poor (148).

[10]This function of "Americanizing" Catholic immigrant children, proved to be extremely important; parochial schools insisted that being a good Catholic meant being a good citizen. In this way the schools hoped to relax some of society's fears of Catholics, thus enabling them to move into the mainstream of life in the United States.

for the education of their children.[11] In addition to
their common ethnic heritage, parishioners experienced a
strong solidarity based on their common economic struggle
and their pride in what they were able to accomplish
(Sanders 1977:86). A sometimes problematic side effect of
this sense of ownership was the lay-trustee system of parish
government. When parishioners had purchased the land and
built the parish plant with their own funds, they often
demanded a voice in parish management. According to Dolan,
a strong tradition of lay involvement in the organization
and government of parish life was the prevalent tradition
(1988:168), especially in non-English-speaking immigrant

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[11]Sanders (1977) contends that Chicago's Catholic
parochial school system has traditionally served the poor:

> Differences of wealth separated Chicago's
> Catholics from the City's mainstream almost as
> much as did religion and national origin. For
> over a hundred years after Chicago's founding in
> 1833, Catholics populated the City's poverty zones
> in far greater proportions than the citizenry in
> general (Sanders 1977:72).

He points out that in 1890, 77 percent of Catholic
school pupils resided in poor working-class areas compared
to only 45 percent of the public school children. Catholic
schools were disproportionately represented in the
industrial and commercial wards of Chicago, and in some of
the poverty areas 40 percent of the children attended
Catholic schools. Thus from its origins, the Catholic
parochial schools have been the schools of the working class
rather than of the elite. Not until 1930 did Catholic
Chicago have less than half of its pupils in poverty area
schools (Sanders 1977:99).

communities (172).[12] For the sake of unifying a fragmented

church, however, leadership needed to be more centralized.

By the 1920s, therefore, the concept of church had shifted

from a congregational understanding to a more hierarchical

and clerical understanding of Catholicism (Dolan 1985:194).

Parochial Schools in Chicago's Early Black Catholic Community

The experience of black Catholics in those early years

paralleled the experience of white ethnic Catholics with two

significant differences, a religious difference and a class

difference. In the black community the religious thrust was

on evangelization rather than on preserving the faith.[13]

Catholic schools brought blacks into the Catholic church

(Davis 1990; Ochs 1990). St. Elizabeth School, the school

of Chicago's original black Catholic community, was a prime

example of this. While 60 percent of the school's students

were non-Catholic when they first entered the school, by the

time they graduated 95 percent of them were Catholic

(Sanders 1977:213).

Secondly, while it was poor immigrants who found the

public schools most offensive, the strength of racism in

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[12]Dolan quotes a Lithuanian immigrant to demonstrate
this point: "The people have built the churches. Therefore
the people are the owners of the churches and not the will
of the bishop or of the Pope, but that of the people must be
the rule in the parishes (1985:185)."

[13]Since Chicago's black population in these early years
was over ninety percent Protestant, the black community was
considered mission territory (Sanders 1977:207).

Chicago's public schools cut across all class lines.[14]
Black Catholic schools therefore attracted not only working
class people but the professionals and leaders of the black
community.

While Chicago's black newspaper denounced the first
black Catholic school (St. Monica, founded in 1912) as a Jim
Crow school since there was an all-white Catholic school
only four blocks away, the opening of this school was in
keeping with the ethnic orientation that so dominated parish
life at that point in history. Since ethnic Catholics
demanded their own parishes and ethnic priests, archdiocesan
leadership felt that blacks should also have their own
parishes and schools. After the death of Father Augustine
Tolton, this country's first recognized black priest,[15] no

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[14]The public school system showed its hostility toward
blacks when the city council in 1863 adopted an ordinance
which mandated racially segregated schools. Pressure from
the black community managed to bring about the repeal of the
law two years later, but hostility remained strong (Herrick
1971).

[15]Actually, prior to Tolton, the three Healy brothers
had been ordained in Europe. They were sons of an Irish-
born plantation owner and a mulatto slave woman. They were
light-skinned and identified with white society and white
ministries, and they steered clear of race issues. They,
therefore, experienced episcopal support and whites regarded
them as "near white" rather than as "genuine Negroes." They
were extremely successful in the white church--James
Augustine Healy became bishop of Portland, Maine, and
Patrick Francis Healy, a Jesuit, became the rector of
Georgetown University (Ochs 1990).

other black priests were available to serve these

parishes.[16] Therefore missionaries, whose whole purpose

was working in cross-cultural settings, were assigned to the

black parishes. These priests were expected to be more

readily able than diocesan priests to bridge the racial gap

and be sensitive to the wants and needs of the black

community.

Despite discriminatory and sometimes blatantly racist

policies of Chicago's Catholic hierarchy,[17] black Catholic

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[16]Tolton had been ordained in Rome because no seminary
in the United States would accept a black man as a candidate
for priesthood.

[17]It is important to recognize that job competition
resulted in a long-standing antagonism between the Irish and
the Afro-Americans. This antagonism manifested itself in
bloody riots in which Irish mobs assaulted blacks in
Cincinnati (1829), Philadelphia (1834), and in New York
(1863). Ochs reports the resulting distrust in the black
community toward the church: "For many blacks, Catholic
meant Irish, and Irish meant enemy (1990:17)."
    The Irish-dominated Catholic hierarchy was not immune
to this hostility. Archbishop John Hughes, for example,
refused to open New York's Catholic schools to black
Catholic children (Ochs 1990:17). In Chicago, Plantevigne,
a recently ordained black priest, wrote to Archbishop
Quigley offering to take over St. Monica's which had not had
a black pastor since Tolton's death in 1897. Quigley
refused the offer, stating that he "preferred to continue
the mission under the direction of one of his own priests
(Ochs 1990:171-172)." Quigley's successor, Cardinal
Mundelein, also displayed conventional racial views, both in
his opposition to ordaining black priests and in his
attitudes toward Chicago's black population:

    'sassy nigger,' who is constantly agitating for
    social equality with the whites. Mundelein
    expressed his hope and prayer "that the Catholic
    Church will never commit itself on this question
    of social equality," which he regarded as "loaded
    with dynamite" (Ochs 1990:326).

parishes thrived during these early years. Chicago's first black parish grew from 300 parishioners in 1895 to 4,000 black Catholics, an elementary school of 800 students, and a high school in 1925.

It is evident, therefore, that the Catholic parochial school in Chicago, whether black or white, was recognized as serving a valid religious purpose--protecting the faith of the Catholic immigrant population and evangelizing the black population. Just as significantly, it served a valid cultural purpose--through education, bridging with respect and sensitivity the ethnic and racial gaps so that a disadvantaged or marginalized population could move into the mainstream of U.S. society.[18] The legitimacy of the Catholic parochial school system was born out of the failure of the public system to meet the needs of these specific

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Mundelein even refused to allow black Divine Word priests to serve as assistants (even for a one year training experience under the supervision of white pastors) in the Divine Word parishes in Chicago's black belt. It was Cardinal Stritch who succeeded Mundelein in 1939, who began to fight racism. In 1940, Vincent Smith was appointed assistant pastor at St. Elizabeth's--the first black priest working in Chicago since Tolton. In 1942 the first black student was admitted to Chicago's archdiocesan seminary.

[18]Note that I am referring here to the local parish schools and not to the attitudes and policies of the central hierarchy of the Catholic church in Chicago. The religious orders working in the local black parishes had much more exposure to black culture and values. The Sisters who taught in Chicago's first black Catholic school, for example, were members of a community founded for the explicit purpose of working with Blacks and Native Americans.

populations, a failure that was both experienced and taught

as institutionalized myth. The legitimacy of the Catholic

system grew because it worked; it accomplished what people

expected it to accomplish.[19]

Continued Legitimacy

The legitimacy of the Catholic parochial school

remained strong even after it outgrew its original

mission.[20] Gradual goal succession seems a logical

explanation. Perko (1987) explains that even as ethnicism

waned, twentieth century Catholic ideology continued to

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[19]Greeley and Rossi (1966) report that while 45 percent
of Catholic children at the elementary level were in
Catholic schools in 1961, two-thirds of the Catholic
population, no matter where its origin, used Catholic
schools when they were available. According to these
authors, a strong Catholic concern for overt religious
behavior contributed to the expansion of the Catholic
schools; they found that Catholic education was positively
related to religiosity although it was also a matter of
family tradition. They found statistically significant
differences between those Catholics with Catholic education
and those without, but the religious impact of Catholic
education is limited to those who come from highly religious
families. They also demonstrate, however, the academic and
educational achievement of Catholic school students: the
group that received all their education in Catholic schools
attained about the same achievement levels as American
Protestants. They found that Catholic school Catholics and
public school Protestants resemble each other in academic
and occupational achievement more than either group
resembles public school Catholics. This positive
relationship persisted even when controlling for parental
SES, joint parental SES, and a standard battery of
potentially intervening variables.

[20]Sanders (1977) calls this continued growth of the
Catholic system an anomaly since the religious, ethnic, and
socioeconomic alienation that had provided so much of the
original impetus for the system had dissipated as Catholics
moved progressively into the mainstream after 1920.

support a separate educational system. Public schools were thought to provide too secular an education; in addition, fear of communist influence on public education further reinforced the need for separate Catholic schools.

O'Neill (1969), on the other hand, asserts that parochial schools survived not so much because of their academic function but because of their important sociological function: they served as the center of parish life. Adult education, parish organizations, celebrations, and social functions all revolved around the parish school. The school was what brought people together, held people in the church, gave them a sense of belonging, and made them a community.

From an organizational perspective, the parish schools had much in common with family-owned firms. Parishioners, like owners, in most cases had a strong sense of ownership and commitment to the school that kept it going even after its original mission was accomplished. The parishioners had built the school, had invested their money and their labor in it, had entrusted their children to it. The emotional ties were strong. In addition, the school--because it was the primary channel of Catholic socialization for the parish--had a tremendous control over the myth-making that kept the school strong and its legitimacy firm.

While legitimacy was key to the development and growth of the system, it was not the only resource needed. I turn

now to the question of how Chicago's Catholic parochial schools secured their enrollment.

Securing Students
Population Ecology and Chicago's Parochial Schools

From a population ecology perspective, the Catholic parochial school system in Chicago thrived for three main reasons: 1) Chicago's rapid population growth; 2) the lack of competition from public schools; and 3) the specialized niche on which these schools were able to capitalize. These three factors, once the schools' legitimacy was established, meant a seemingly endless demand for Catholic schools.

Rapid Population Growth

The extremely rapid growth of the city of Chicago in general, and of its immigrant Catholic population in particular, gave birth to hundreds of parochial schools. From a prairie village of approximately fifty people in 1830, Chicago grew to a city of 30,000 by 1850. The population more than tripled during the next decade (from 30,000 to 109,000), then reached 300,000 by 1870, and surpassed one million by 1890. Rapid growth continued until 1930, when the population reached 3.4 million.

Catholic schools were desperately needed to meet the educational needs of such a rapidly growing population. A whole new organizational niche had opened up and was ripe for educational institutions. As would be expected, the legitimacy of parochial schools grew as they grew in number,

and new parishes became increasingly likely to open schools
of their own. As the Catholic system reached its peak in
the early 1960s, the city of Chicago had 269 Catholic
parochial elementary schools.

The population of schools included in my study
(surviving schools and those closing between 1960 and 1986
in inner-city areas that were black or becoming increasingly
black) reflects Chicago's growth in population and the
corresponding growth of demand for parochial schools. As
Hannan and Freeman would predict, the number of new school
openings was small until the schools' legitimacy was
established. Then the rate of new school openings
accelerated rapidly. When the city population stabilized
with new growth taking place in the suburbs, new Catholic
school openings dropped radically--demonstrating that the
niche was full and could support no more (See Figure 2-1.).

Through the nineteenth century, about half the Catholic
children of Chicago attended parochial schools. By the time
the parochial school system reached its high point in the
early 1960s, close to two-thirds of all Catholic students in
the city and the suburbs of Chicago were attending parochial
schools. In terms of total school enrollment, in 1865,
about 16 percent of all children enrolled in Chicago schools
attended Catholic schools. One hundred years later, almost
one-third of Chicago's students were enrolled in Catholic
schools (Sanders 1977:5). While individual schools faced

crises of enrollment, usually caused by ethnic or racial succession, the Catholic parochial school system maintained a strong share of Chicago's student population.
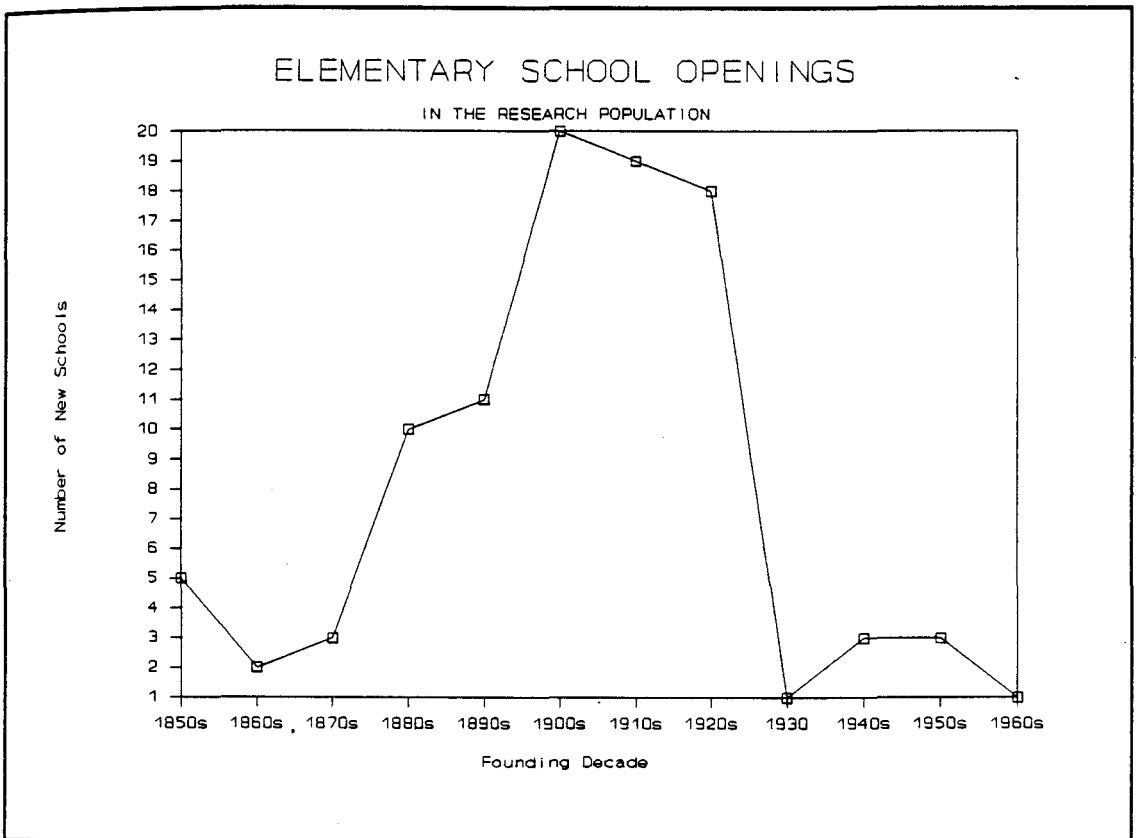
Figure 2-1

Lack of Competition for Students

One of the important reasons that Chicago's Catholic parochial system had no major enrollment problems until the 1960s was that the system never had to face any serious competition. As long as there were Catholic children in the parish, the parish school would be filled. Even aside from

the mandatory attendance imposed by the Catholic hierarchy, until mid-century for many Catholics the public school was not a real alternative.

The city of Chicago, because of its tremendously rapid growth, had to rely more heavily on Catholic schools to meet the educational needs of its citizens than did many eastern cities (Walch 1975). The city was simply unable to provide either the physical infrastructure or the qualified teachers necessary to educate such large numbers of children. Herrick (1971) reports that in 1850 there were 13,500 school aged children in Chicago but only slightly over 1,900 were enrolled in public schools. More of them attended private or parochial schools, but thousands were in no school at all. In 1856 alone, three thousand students were turned away from public schools because there was no room for them. In January of 1963 for the first time in Chicago public school history a seat was available for every child in Chicago's public elementary schools (Herrick 1971:309).

Catholic parochial elementary schools existed in an extremely stable environment. The public sector offered no competition because the public schools were full. In addition, while anti-Catholic sentiment gradually dissipated during the twentieth century and public schools became less offensive by religious standards, the quality of the public schools in the city of Chicago remained an important factor in choosing parochial schools. Only as Catholics moved to

the suburbs where smaller public systems with greater economic resources offered a safe environment and a quality education, did parochial schools meet significant competition from their public counterparts.

Neither did Catholic schools face much competition from neighboring parochial schools. Each Catholic child had a right to attend his/her own parish school; tuition was minimal and no parishioner could be denied the right to a Catholic education because of inability to pay. The 1884 Council of Baltimore (discussed above) had urged that parish schools be "free schools" with endowments and parish subsidy replacing tuition so that the schools would be open to all Catholic youth regardless of family status or income.

Specialist Organizations in a Stable Environment

In addition to rapid population growth and a lack of competition, a final reason that Catholic parochial schools maintained their enrollments for so many decades was that they were what Hannan and Freeman referred to as specialist organizations; they were intended to serve the particular needs of a very specific group of people. The parochial nature and identity of the Catholic elementary school made them uniquely sensitive and responsive to the needs of the ethnic and racial minorities who claimed them as their own. The parish school provided children with a good education in an environment similar in culture and values to their homes. Thus, in a stable environment where the ethnic identity of

the parish persisted for generations, parishes continued to feed their children directly into their schools.[21]

I have demonstrated how the Catholic parochial system firmly established its legitimacy, and how it secured student enrollment. The final factor to be considered in this analysis of the organizational strength of the system is the reliable financial backing available for the operation of these schools.

Securing Financial Resources

The ability of the Catholic parochial system to secure adequate financial support is very closely tied to the legitimacy question, especially its religious legitimacy. Also important here, however, is the issue of a strong interdependence growing out of the legitimating myths discussed earlier in this chapter. Interdependencies existed on three levels, all of which significantly impacted the financial grounding of these schools and their ability to survive and flourish: interdependencies with the sponsoring parish, with the archdiocese, and with the religious congregations which provided teachers and

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[21]Sanders explored the question of why Catholic schools survived and he concluded that Catholic education was "a way of life" for Catholics. Because of a strong positive tradition of Catholic schooling, parents regarded their parish school as a familiar and safe harbor "where children might delay their encounter with life's harsher realities while fabled discipline, coupled with the sisters' loving care, worked its wonders in the formation of strong and resolute character (1977:228)."

administrators for the school.

Schools as Vital to the Life of the Parish

The parochial school did not exist as a separate organizational entity--it was a part of the parish; the pastor of the parish was chief administrator, ultimately responsible for the school. The parish not only built and maintained the school building, but heavily subsidized its day to day operations. The belief that the parish would lose its children if they were sent to the public schools made Catholic education a priority in most parishes in Chicago. The Catholic school represented the hope of the parish that its values and beliefs would be passed on to future generations and that its own future as a parish would be assured.

As noted above, even after the hostility between Catholic and public schools disappeared, the parish school remained the hub of parish life and activities, the center around which community was built. Because the parish was so dependent on the school, it was also--at least in times of stability--a reliable resource provider.

Schools as Vital to the Life of the Church

It was not just individual parishes who viewed the public schools as dangerous to the faith life of the young. As noted above, the official mandates of the Catholic hierarchy required that each Catholic church build a

parochial school and make Catholic education available to all Catholic youth. If these mandates were to be taken seriously, the archdiocese would have to make their implementation possible. In Chicago, Archbishop Mundelein did this by intervening and providing subsidy to poor parishes unable to support their own school. He also insisted that Italian parishes, many of which were unwilling to build schools, do so--and to these, too, he provided subsidy when necessary.[22] Thus in times of financial crisis when parish support became shaky, because of the institutional legitimacy myths regarding Catholic schools, the parochial school could turn to the archdiocese for assistance.

Religious Congregations Committed to Education

A final factor to be considered when looking at the financial resources upon which Catholic schools could draw were the numerous religious congregations which provided them with teachers and principals. Dolan states, "The major reason why parochial schools made it at all financially was because the sisters subsidized them through their low salaries (1985:289)."[23] The religious sisters worked for

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[22]Sanders (1977) reports that for years the archdiocese paid the salaries of the sister-teachers, the janitors' wages, utility and repair bills for certain parishes.

[23]See also Cross (1965) who calls the availability of religious sisters and brothers a necessary condition for the development of a Catholic parochial system.

whatever the parish could afford to pay them--usually little more than a place to live and enough money for food.[24] The religious congregations, therefore, subsidized the largest part of the cost of education--the salaries of teachers, principal, and staff. In parishes where poverty was more extreme, the religious congregations often subsidized the school itself, contributing not just personnel but direct financial support (Dolan 1985; Davis 1990; Ochs 1990). As a result, parishes were able to provide quality education at minimal costs to themselves.

This relationship between religious congregations and parochial schools was also one of interdependence. The schools needed the sisters and brothers to staff them, to provide the professional expertise needed to educate their children; but at the same time, for these religious, teaching gave meaning and relevance to their life. Ministry is a core component of religious life, and for many religious, teaching was their ministry and their life. Congregations became as invested in the parochial schools, took as much pride and ownership in them as the parish did.

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[24]In the early twentieth century, the annual sister's salary was a third less than that of female public school teachers and only half that received by religious brothers who were teaching. Minimal as it was, pastors often failed to pay the full salary. One congregation of sisters received no salaries in twenty-four of the fifty-nine schools in which they taught one year. Most parishes in Buffalo, NY did not pay the Sisters of Mercy any salaries at all during their first thirty years of teaching in that diocese. This lack of remuneration for sisters was not uncommon (Dolan 1985:289).

In addition, because most of their new members came from among the children they taught, congregations depended on the parochial schools for recruitment and their own survival. This interdependence and bonding between religious congregations and parochial schools made them a strong source of support.

Catholic parochial schools were organizationally strong in terms of legitimacy, enrollment, and finances well into the 1960s. I turn now to the changes that have left them organizationally vulnerable and struggling for survival in recent decades.

Organizational Decline

Catholic parochial schools remained organizationally strong until the 1960s when suddenly their foundations were shaken. Their purpose was no longer clear and indisputable. The resources that had maintained them throughout their first century of existence could no longer be taken for granted, and their survival became tenuous. Schools suffered from a loss of legitimacy, radical declines in enrollment, and sometimes insurmountable financial difficulties. In this section, I again look to organizational theories for a deeper understanding of the factors that left these schools so vulnerable to their changing environments.

Enrollment: A Sharp Decline in Demand
for Parochial School Education

The crisis confronting the Catholic parochial system
was most strikingly signaled by sharply declining
enrollments. In the period between 1960 and 1986,
enrollment in the Catholic parochial schools of the Chicago
archdiocese dropped by 154,756 students, a loss of 55
percent of its student population.[25] The end of the baby
boom,[26] which had a significant impact on both public and
parochial school enrollment across the country, contributed
to but cannot fully explain the decline. Other factors,
such as racial succession and population shifts, also
influenced school enrollment.

Racial Succession: Catholic Movement away from the Parish

The full effect of Chicago's demographic shifts began

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[25]A similar loss was experienced nationally, where
Catholic school enrollment declined from 5.6 million
students in 1964 when enrollment reached its peak, to 2.6
million students in 1988, a loss of 54 percent (The Chicago
Catholic, June 24, 1988). As would be expected, decreased
enrollment necessitated school closings. While in the
1950s, Catholic schools opened at a rate of three a week,
during the seventies they closed at that same rate (Dolan,
Appleby, Byrne and Campbell 1989:298).

[26]Part of the enrollment decline can be attributed to
the increased use of birth control by Catholic women. Dolan
states: "Whereas in 1955 only about 30 percent of Catholic
women used some artificial means of birth control, by 1965
the rate had increased to 51 percent; it would continue to
rise, so that by 1970 it reached a level of 68 percent
(1985:435)." In the 1940s and '50s, the Catholic population
increased at a rate of 5 percent per year; in the '60s,
'70s, and '80s, Catholic population growth had slowed to
only 1 percent per year (Dolan, Appleby, Byrne, and Campbell
1989:298).

to be felt in the sixties and early seventies. The Catholic population had been moving outward to the fringes of the city and into the suburbs. This movement was often hastened by ethnic or racial succession which meant that inner-city parish churches and schools were left empty while the Catholic population in newer areas was growing.

Ethnic succession was not new to the archdiocese.[27] The descriptions of ethnic transitions in parishes and schools during the early part of the century sound very much like stories of racial transition occurring in parishes in the '50s, '60s, and '70s. Because parochial schools were specialist organizations, a radical drop in school enrollment always accompanied such transitions. Change had never been easy or readily welcomed within parishes or parish schools; Meyer and Zucker's (1989) perspective on dependents resisting change in order to protect their interests in the organization holds true in examining the history of Chicago's ethnic parishes. It was often only after a long struggle against decline, when the only remaining alternative was complete collapse, that parishes abandoned their original ethnic affiliation and opened up to

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[27]Dolan notes that most people did not live in the immigrant neighborhoods for long periods of time: "The image of the stable ethnic neighborhood from which nobody moved is, like the ethnically homogeneous neighborhood, a myth. It never existed (1985:203)." Movement to different neighborhoods within the city was an expected occurrence.

other groups.[28]

While large numbers of the ethnic immigrants coming to Chicago were Catholic, the black population was heavily Protestant and this made racial transition even more threatening to parochial school survival than ethnic transition. In addition to changing its racial focus, the parochial school also had to adapt its religious focus.

Black migration into Chicago began accelerating as European immigration was beginning to slow. Between 1840 and 1910, blacks comprised approximately one to two percent of the population. Then during the next decade black population increased 148 percent from 44,103 to 109,458. Black population more than doubled between 1920 and 1930, and then more than doubled during each of the next two twenty year periods. By 1980, blacks in Chicago numbered almost 1.2 million--just under 40 percent of the city's population (Cutler 1982:121). Difficult as it was, continuing racial succession in Chicago's inner city during the late sixties and throughout the seventies made it increasingly essential for parish schools to welcome black Protestant students.

It is obvious that enrollment declined in Chicago's Catholic elementary schools after 1965. The reasons for

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[28]Sanders (1977) speaks of a German parish in which it was only when school enrollment dropped enough to threaten the school's survival that the pastor reached out to the only potential parishioners in the neighborhood, the unchurched Italians.

that decline, however, are less clear. Can the loss be
explained solely in terms of demographic shifts in the
Catholic population?

Demographic Changes and Declining Enrollment: Looking at the Evidence

In order to place Catholic elementary parochial school
enrollment losses in the inner city in the context of
similar losses elsewhere in the Chicago area, I traced in
ten year intervals the enrollment of the 432 Catholic
elementary parochial schools in the Chicago Archdiocese from
1960 to the present.[29] Data were organized for analysis in
several ways. Schools were first grouped into regions
corresponding with the archdiocesan Catholic population
studies,[30] then into four large sectors representing the
central city, the outer city, the inner suburbs and the
outer suburbs. For this analysis, sectors were designated
on a purely geographic basis. The central city is defined
as that geographic ring at the heart of the city, extending
out from the Loop. The outer city is the geographic ring on
the north, west, and south edges of the city. Similarly,
the inner ring of suburbs are those bordering Chicago, while

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[29]This enrollment data was obtained from _The Official Catholic Directory_ (Kenedy and Sons, Publishers).

[30]All Catholic population figures used in this section of the chapter were arrived at using data from _Catholics in the Archdiocese of Chicago: The Catholic Population by Area, 1960 & 1970_ prepared by the Office of Research and Planning of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

those suburbs at the outer edge of the diocese are classified as outer suburbs. Finally, the city schools were grouped into five areas representing the central core, the northeast, the southeast, the northwest, and the far south and southwest. For comparability I used boundaries established by the Archdiocese in its study of the Catholic Population.[31] See Maps 1 and 2 in Appendix A.

Population shifts and enrollment losses

In looking at enrollment and population data, I found that regardless of the growth or decline of the Catholic population, three of the four sectors in the archdiocese experienced serious drops in school enrollment between 1960 and 1970 (See Table 2-1.). Only in the outer suburbs where the Catholic population growth was phenomenal during this ten year period was there a minimal enrollment increase.

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[31]While the Archdiocesan studies include some of the fringe suburbs in the city areas, e.g., Cicero, I separated them and included only schools within Chicago proper in the Outer City sector and areas. Only when directly comparing Catholic population with school enrollment did I retain the suburban schools whose parishes were included within city areas. For a detailed explanation of these designations see Catholics in the Archdiocese of Chicago, Volume II: 1960 Population by Zones, by Michael E. Schiltz with Peter Beltemacchi, published by The Office of Urban Affairs of the Catholic Bishop of Chicago, June 1964; and Catholics in the Archdiocese of Chicago: The Catholic Population by Area, 1960 &1970, by David F. Schwartz, The Office of Research and Planning, Archdiocese of Chicago, November 1978.

Table 2-1. Changes in Chicago's Catholic Population
    and Catholic Elementary School Enrollment, 1960-1970

Sector	Change in Cath Pop*	Change in Cath Schl Enrollmt
Central city	-7.6%	-39.4%
Outer city	9.4%	-20.7%
Inner suburbs	31.3%	-20.4%
Outer suburbs	64.1%	6.7%
Total change:	273,224	-67,750

Sources: David F. Schwartz, <u>Catholics in the Archdiocese of Chicago: The Catholic Population by Area, 1960 & 1970</u> (Chicago: The Office of Research and Planning, Archdiocese of Chicago, 1978) 20-21.; <u>The Official Catholic Directory</u> (Wilmette, IL: Macmillan Directory Division of P.J. Kenedy & Sons).

*Chicago's Catholic population in 1960 was 1,573,467 while the suburban Catholic population was 604,518. A relatively small loss of city Catholics contributes, therefore, to a substantial suburban gain.

Catholic movement to the suburbs was part of the general population trend in the Chicago area. Between 1960 and 1970, the city lost almost 546,000 people, while the suburbs gained over 1,427,000 people (Cutler 1982:240-241).

What becomes obvious when looking at the data, is that shifts in the population, while contributing to enrollment decline, were not primarily responsible for it. As would be expected, enrollment losses between 1960 and 1986 were heaviest in the central city, but they were significant everywhere. Despite the tremendous growth in the Catholic population in the outer suburbs, Catholic elementary schools in those suburbs lost almost one-third of their enrollment (See Table 2-2.). Within the city of Chicago, enrollment

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losses were relatively well distributed, ranging from a low
of 52 percent in the northwest to a high of almost 63
percent in the central core.

Table 2-2. Catholic Parochial Elementary Schools
            Changes in Enrollment, 1960-1986

Sector	1960 Base Enrollment	Enrollment Decline	Percent Decline
Central city	92,656	57,964	62.6
Outer city	90,996	48,920	53.8
Inner suburbs	68,483	38,717	56.5
Outer suburbs	28,372	9,120	32.1
Total Chicago	183,652	106,884	58.2
Total archdiocese	280,507	154,721	55.2

Source: The Official Catholic Directory (Wilmette, IL:
Macmillan Directory Division of P.J. Kenedy & Sons).

Despite population shifts, the proportion of elementary
Catholic school students in the various sectors and areas of
the city has remained amazingly stable. Comparing 1960 data
to that from 1986, the central city lost a surprisingly
small share of its students to the outer suburbs. The
proportion of total archdiocesan parochial elementary
students in the central city dropped just over 5 percent,
from 33 percent in 1960 to almost 28 percent in 1986. The
suburban share of students grew from 35 percent to 39
percent (See Figure 2-2.).

CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

BY SECTORS, 1960–1986
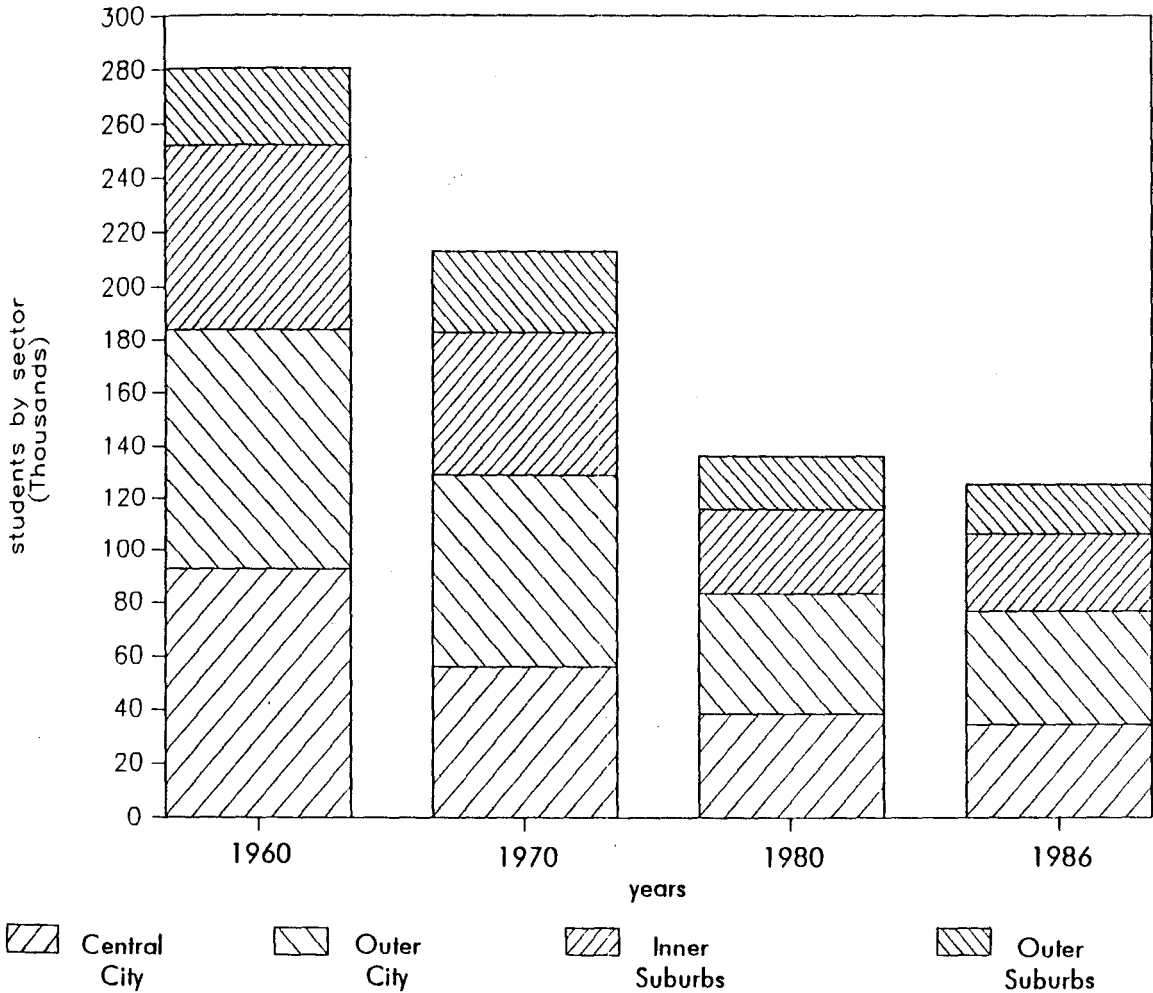
Figure 2-2

Within the city of Chicago itself, the relative proportion of Catholic school students found in each major area of the city remained even more stable. Between 1960 and 1986, the southeast and the northwest showed minimal increases in their share of students (12.7 to 13.6 percent and 14.6 to 16.8 percent respectively), the northeast and

central core showed similar minimal decreases (See Figure 2-3.).

CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT
BY CITY AREA
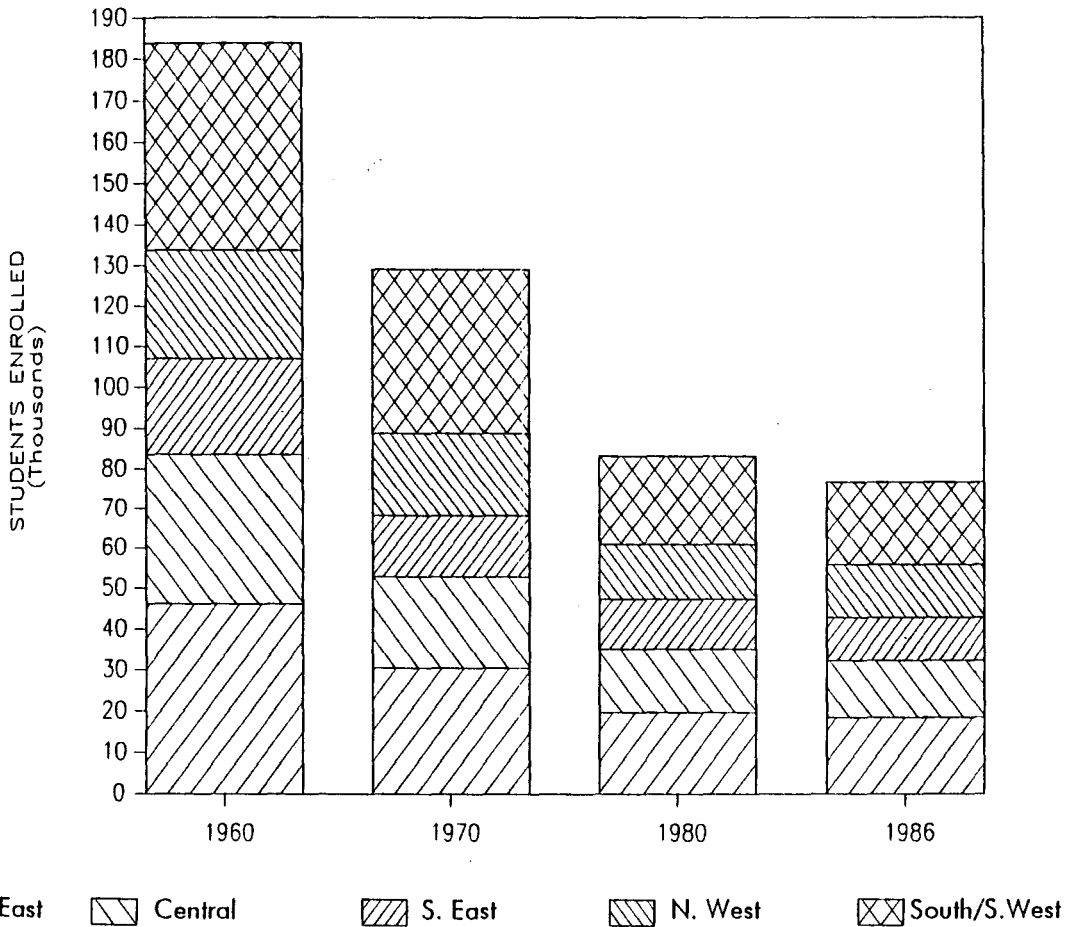
Figure 2-3

While the bulk of the Catholic population, especially families with school-aged children now lives on the fringes of the city and in the suburbs, elementary parochial school enrollment figures do not reflect a similar switch. By opening itself up to significant numbers of non-Catholic

students, the central city Catholic schools have been able to maintain their share of the total Catholic school population.

School closings--more than just lost enrollment

Despite their success in recruiting a new population of students, over one-fourth of the central city Catholic elementary schools closed between 1960 and 1986. Schools have closed throughout the archdiocese during the past twenty-five years, but the central city has proven to be more vulnerable than other areas of the archdiocese.[32] While enrollment declines in the central city accounted for approximately 38 percent of total archdiocesan elementary school decline, over 57 percent of archdiocesan school closings took place in the central city. The central core was the most vulnerable area of the city, accounting for 22 percent of the decline within the city of Chicago but for 40 percent of its school closings (See Table 2-3.).

How would an organizational perspective explain the disproportionate number of school closings in the central city, especially the central core? The population ecologists would point out that in the turbulent environment of the central city, the specialist orientation (both in

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[32]The other sector with more than its share of school closings is the outer suburbs. The reasons for suburban school closings, while interesting, is beyond the scope of my present research. The data do, however, seem to confirm the importance of the legitimacy question and the decreased commitment of suburban Catholics to parochial education.

terms of ethnic and religious identity) of parochial schools has left them much more vulnerable than their counterparts in a more stable environment. In addition, the educational niche in the central city is much more densely saturated with a multitude of ethnic parochial schools in close proximity to each other. As enrollment decreases, fewer schools are needed and competition between them tends to increase. It is much more feasible to close a school if there is another parish school in the immediate vicinity to which remaining students can be transferred. Where there are fewer schools, the survival rate tends to be higher, even if the enrollment decline is similar to that in other areas.[33]

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[33]Interviews with principals confirmed this. A number of them spoke of archdiocesan intervention to save a school in crisis in order to maintain a Catholic school presence in the area. The archdiocese has repeatedly committed itself to making Catholic education available throughout the city.

Table 2-3. Enrollment Losses and School Closings, 1960-1986

	% of total decline	% total schl closings	# closed /# in area
Sector			
Central city	37.5%	57.3%	43/156
Outer city	31.6%	18.7%	14/112
Inner suburbs	25.0%	10.7%	8/100
Outer suburbs	5.9%	13.3%	10/63
TOTAL	100%	100%	75/431
N=	154,721	75	
Area of Chicago			
Northeast	25.9%	22.8%	13/65
Central Core	22.0%	40.4%	23/74
Southeast	12.1%	12.3%	7/37
Northwest	13.0%	1.8%	1/27
Far South and SW	27.0%	22.8%	13/65
TOTAL	100%	100.1%	57/268
N=	106,884	57	

Source: The Official Catholic Directory (Wilmette, IL:
Macmillan Directory Division of P.J. Kenedy & Sons).

Likewise it seems that permanent failure or
organizational persistence would be more feasible in the
outer city and suburbs. Because there are fewer Catholic
schools in those areas, the Catholic population is more
dependent on those that do exist and families choosing
Catholic education for their children, though fewer in
number than in the past, are likely to work to keep their
school open. These parishes also have more resources to
continue investing in their school despite decline; if
their sense of ownership and commitment to the school is
strong, they may be both willing and able to keep the school
alive. Similar resources are simply not available to
central city parishes, so permanent failure is less likely

to occur; when enrollment declines significantly, parishes are more likely to close their schools.

A declining birth rate and demographic shifts in the Catholic population thus certainly contribute to the radical decline in enrollment experienced in Chicago's Catholic elementary school system since the mid-sixties. But from the data presented above, it is evident that enrollment problems were symptomatic of a crisis that was much broader, one that touched every school in every part of the archdiocese. Catholics were increasingly choosing other educational options for their children--options that were more convenient and/or less expensive. They were able to make this choice because the myths that had once given the parochial schools legitimacy and bound the Catholic population to the parish school were no longer able to do so.

A Loss of Legitimacy: Shattered Myths

Probably the greatest single factor influencing the decline of the parochial system was its loss of legitimacy-- both religious and ethnic. The old legitimating myths were no longer perceived as valid and new myths had not yet emerged with a clarity that would allow for their promotion. In this section I will examine the factors contributing to the loss of organizational legitimacy for Catholic schools among the very people who had previously relied heavily on them. During the sixties, two clear messages--one from the

Church and the second from society--caused Catholic families to re-examine their position on Catholic schools.

Revised Religious Myths

From the Church, the Vatican Council gave birth to a very different official attitude of the Church toward the world, society, and other religions. Official teaching now discouraged fear and separatism and Catholics were admonished to take their rightful place and responsibly contribute to the full development of society. At the same time, the election of John F. Kennedy as president of the United States, signalled a new societal attitude towards Catholics. Being both American and Catholic was no longer seen as subversive. Almost overnight U.S. Catholics lost their minority status (Schiltz 1987; Sanders 1977). In addition, the former Protestant, anti-Catholic bias of the public school system had disappeared and was no longer an issue (Sanders 1977). Similarly, the ethnic and class differences between Catholics and Protestants, between the Catholic and public schools, had gradually eroded as Catholics became more assimilated into the mainstream of U.S. life after 1920 (Greeley and Rossi 1966; Lieberson 1980; Dolan, Appleby, Byrne, and Campbell 1989).

Abandoning the Siege Mentality

The siege mentality that had characterized the Catholic parish and school was clearly no longer appropriate, but

what effect did the abandonment of that mentality have on the parochial school system which had developed in response to it? For many Catholics, Catholic schooling had lost its meaning; it was no longer needed as a protection for one's children, nor as the expression of a counter-culture, nor as a symbol of protest against the broader society (Sanders 1977; Perko 1987; Gavigan 1988). The new social reality, both in the church and in society, weakened the normative controls which had bound actively participating Catholics to their parish schools;[34] a serious legitimacy crisis resulted (Ryan 1964; Buetow 1970; Lee 1968; Shaw and Hurley 1969). Sanders succinctly describes this crisis: "The more conventional began to find the Catholic school too liberal, while the more liberal found it unnecessary (1977:230)."

Official Response to the Legitimacy Crisis

Normative controls were further weakened by the response of church leadership to the controversy over the importance of Catholic schools. Just as the Councils of Baltimore had institutionalized the myths which made Catholic education both a right and a requirement for all

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[34]Gavigan, in her study of Catholic parishes in Philadelphia, states: "The need to separate from the non-Catholic community is now less strong than the need to assimilate into it (1988:130)." As a result, enrollment in the suburban public schools of the Philadelphia area increased 18 percent between 1963 and 1973, while suburban Catholic school enrollment decreased by 41 percent.

Catholic children, hierarchical decisions deactivated those myths. The bishops declared a moratorium on the building of new parochial schools; although the Catholic population continued its outward movement to the suburbs, bishops were unwilling to invest in building new suburban schools while remaining responsible for large, under-utilized parish plants in the central cities.

In Chicago, Cardinal Cody, having been advised by his inner circle, told McManus, then superintendent of archdiocesan schools: "No more schools for awhile; they're too expensive. Put everything on hold (Greeley and McManus 1987:96-97)." McManus further reports that some bishops and pastors felt that "Vatican II signaled the time "to get out from under" the financial burden of parish schools and other expensive activities (1987:97)." Thus, the last new elementary Catholic school in the archdiocese of Chicago was St. Thaddeus, a black school which opened in 1967.[35] In addition, as we have seen above, the archdiocese closed many of its parochial schools during this time. Whether intended or not, the moratorium gave a clear and official message to the Catholic population--by denying new parishes the right

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[35]This excludes "new" schools which were actually formed by closing one or more schools and merging their populations into a new area school. In the April 7, 1989 edition of The New World, plans were announced for a new Catholic preschool in the West Loop which would develop over a period of several years into a full parish elementary school. This would be the first new school opened in twenty-two years.

to build schools, the bishops were acknowledging the legitimacy of a public school education for Catholics.

Decreased Distinctiveness and Increased Competition

The dissolution of the distinctions between public and Catholic schools also weakened Catholic school legitimacy. As the Catholic population moved up in socio-economic status, the Catholic schools had attempted to move with them. Parochial schools had begun placing more emphasis on academics, striving to be more like their public counterparts in terms of courses taught and programs offered. In the process, they opened themselves up to increased competition from the public schools.

When the differences were no longer so pronounced, nor the public schools so denounced, Catholic families had more options open to them. They were now much more likely to make choices based on a kind of cost/benefit perspective--which school could provide the most for their child at a reasonable cost.

Increased competition from the public schools was especially problematic for Catholic schools in middle and upper-class suburbs, where the bulk of the Catholic population now resided. Suburban public schools had monetary advantages that afforded them the opportunity to provide the best in educational technology without the disadvantages of the public system in the city. In addition, suburban public schools were not struggling with

the tensions of integration. Catholic schools in the
suburbs found it difficult to compete, and many parents felt
the advantages of parochial education were insufficient to
make the added cost worthwhile. Thus, during the late 1960s
and throughout the 1970s, Catholic school enrollment dropped
dramatically.

Legitimacy shifts usually occur slowly. The Catholic
school system had clearly outgrown its original purpose;
religious and ethnic culture and values had been preserved
and passed on, and Catholics had successfully moved into the
mainstream of U.S. life. Still, if the organizational
environment had been other than what it was, parochial
schools may have been able to evolve rather smoothly to a
new purpose, standing firmly on a new legitimacy. As I have
shown, however, radical demographic changes impeded an
evolutionary process. Related to this, and also extremely
significant, was the changing financial picture of the
parochial school system.

Financial Resources

Problems were compounded for Catholic schools because
the legitimacy crisis coincided with a financial crisis, as
the cost of Catholic education rose dramatically.[36] Some

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[36]The escalating cost of Catholic education is a
popular explanation for the enrollment decline according to
Sanders (1977), but he points out that the financial
sacrifices required of today's parents are nowhere near the
sacrifices that earlier generations made to provide a

of the financial problems facing parochial schools affected all archdiocesan schools regardless of their location. Others were more specific to the inner-city schools which are the focus of this dissertation.

Financial Problems Weakening All Parochial Schools

Throughout the archdiocese, the cost of parochial education skyrocketed during the late sixties and throughout the seventies. The mean budget of the schools included in the interview phase of my research rose from $96,237 in 1970 to $356,847 in 1986.[37] Rising energy costs greatly increased the size of the school's operational budget. Even more significant for some schools was the sudden shortage of religious sisters, brothers, and priests available to the parochial schools.[38] This shortage meant a radical change

Catholic education for their children. Therefore he contends that the economic burden may have provided parents with an occasion to place their children in the public schools, but it was not the cause of the enrollment decline. It probably speeded up a process that was inevitable due to other social factors.

[37]Adjusting the 1970 figure upward to account for inflation, the mean 1970 budget was $271,744. In constant dollars, budgets increased by over 31 percent from 1970 to 1986.

[38]The same kinds of legitimacy issues affecting Catholic education affected religious life. Changes in the church, especially those prompted by the Second Vatican Council, shook the foundations of religious congregations. In the twenty year period after 1968, approximately 50,000 sisters left their communities (Dolan et al. 1989:90). Of those remaining, many were choosing to minister in ways other than the traditional fields of teaching and nursing. In 1966, 64 percent of all professed sisters in the U.S. were involved in teaching or teaching administration; by

in the ratio of religious to lay teachers. In 1964 at a
national level, out of a total of 191,107 full-time faculty
members, 104,441 (55 percent) were sisters, as compared to
68,135 lay teachers (36 percent); the remaining 18,531 (10
percent) were priests, scholastics (men studying for
priesthood or religious life), and brothers. By 1986, there
were only 27,638 religious sisters out of 170,683 faculty
members (16 percent), while lay teachers numbered 136,157
(80 percent). See Table 2-4.

Table 2-4. Faculty in Catholic Schools, 1964 & 1986

Full-time Faculty Members:	1964	1986
Religious sisters	54.7%	16.2%
Priests	6.1%	2.5%
Scholastics	0.6%	0.1%
Religious brothers	3.0%	1.5%
Laity	35.7%	79.8%
TOTAL	100.1%	100.1%
N=	191,107	170,683

Source: The Official Catholic Directory.

My data show that in 1965 the number of religious
working in Chicago's elementary parochial schools exceeded
lay persons by 60 percent--there were more than one and a

1982, that involvement had dropped to 29 percent (Dolan et
al. 1989:113). This, too, left fewer people available to
staff parish schools. Finally, lack of clarity about the
meaning and relevance of religious life in the modern world
lead to a vocation crisis, a serious decline in the number
of new members entering religious life. The total number of
U.S. sisters which had peaked at 181,421 in 1965 had dropped
to 122,653 by 1980 (Dolan et al. 1989:113).

half times as many religious as lay teachers. By 1986, however, there were over four lay persons for every religious working in the schools. The contributed services of the religious who had operated these schools for generations, often since the school's founding, had frequently been taken for granted; when they were withdrawn, parishes staggered beneath the burden of increased personnel costs for their schools.

One sees clearly the dramatic cost increase of Catholic education when looking at the research population of inner-city schools. In 1970 the average cost per pupil was just over $224;[39] by 1986, the per pupil cost in the schools in which I interviewed had risen to an average of $1,262. This kind of increased financial burden may have been acceptable if parishes were convinced of the need for Catholic schools, but coupled with the legitimacy crisis discussed above, many advocated either finding other ways of funding the parochial schools, or closing them.[40]

Additional Financial Problems in the Inner City

Once again, schools in the inner city were even more

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[39]Adjusting for inflation, the 1970 per pupil cost was $632.50.

[40]Bishop McManus admits that in his position as a school leader in the archdiocese of Chicago, he was influenced by the belief that "while ideal, Catholic schools in the 1970s were out of the Church's financial reach and alternative methods of Catholic education should be initiated (Greeley and McManus 1987:96)."

vulnerable financially than schools elsewhere in the archdiocese. While other parochial schools could turn to their parishes for increased subsidy to meet the rising cost of Catholic education, inner-city parishes were much more limited in terms of their own financial resources and much less able to respond to the increased needs of their schools.

Environmental changes had thrown these inner-city parishes into financial crisis. Racial transition and economic decline reduced parish membership and the ability of members to contribute to the parish. For a time parishes relied on the financial reserves left behind by the white ethnic population that had moved on to better neighborhoods, but these reserves were usually quickly depleted.

Deteriorating and over-sized parish plants caused an additional financial burden for inner-city parishes and schools. Many of the parish buildings were old and in need of repair when the new population inherited them. So in addition to the increased operational costs facing parochial schools, capital expenses in the inner city were much higher and more pressing than in the newer outer city and suburban parishes.

Budget data reflect the parishes' growing inability to support their schools. In 1970 the sixty-two schools in my sample of inner-city Catholic schools received an average of slightly over a third of their budget from parish subsidy.

By 1986, parish subsidy in the schools in which I interviewed[41] had dropped to an amazingly small average of just over 6 percent.[42] Adjusting dollar amounts for inflation, the mean parish subsidy in the interviewed schools dropped from $99,044 in 1970 to $22,807 in 1986 (See Table 2-5.).

Table 2-5. Shifts in Resource Providers in 1986 Constant Dollars (1970 Adjusted up for Inflation)

| | MEAN CONTRIBUTIONS | | |
Resource Provider	1970 IC Pop.	1970 Inter- view Schls	1986 Inter- view Schls
Parish	$120,465.	$99,044.	$22,935.
Tuition	146,923.	131,759.	223,576.
Archdiocese	21,296.	10,442.	74,000.
Mean Total Budget	318,225.	271,744.	356,847.
N=	62	22	22

Sources: 1970 data from Office of Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Chicago; 1986 data obtained through interviews with principals.

Effects of Financial Crisis

The most universal response of parochial schools to increased financial pressures and instability was to

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[41]I interviewed in thirty-three of the sixty-two inner city schools in my research sample. Note, however, that only twenty-two of those schools made accurate financial data available to me. The budget data for 1986-'87 is based on responses from those twenty-two.

[42]Eleven of the twenty-two interviewed schools which provided me with data received no parish subsidy for the 1986 school year. In 1970, only four of these same twenty-two schools failed to receive any parish subsidy.

decrease the school's dependence on the parish by raising tuition. Looking, for example, at the sixty-two inner-city schools in my research population, the average school in 1970 obtained a bit less than half of its budget from tuition. By the 1986-87 school year, that percentage had risen to an average of 61 percent in the interview phase schools. Adjusting for inflation and looking only at the twenty-two schools for which I have accurate data for both years, this was an increase from a mean of $131,759 in tuition dollars in 1970 to $223,576 in 1986 (See Table 2-5.). Unfortunately, however, increased tuition further accelerated enrollment decline which in turn further increased per pupil costs. Survival became increasingly tenuous. Increased cost of parochial education coupled with decreased ability of the parish to subsidize the school made the legitimacy issues even more salient. It became increasingly difficult for the parish to justify committing so much money to the school--in some cases, as much as 60 percent of the parish budget (The New World, 17 March 1989)--when so few parishioners were utilizing it. In addition, while the school remained dependent on the parish, in many cases the parish no longer depended on the school. Thus, sometimes because of legitimacy questions, sometimes because of the parish's financial instability, the parish was no longer a reliable source of economic resources. While in 1970, only ten (16 percent) of the sixty-two inner-

city schools in my study did not receive any parish subsidy, in 1986 half of the twenty-two schools which provided me with accurate financial data received no parish subsidy.

To try to secure the needed funding, schools raised tuition, had fund-raisers, turned to the archdiocese for funding, and/or looked for other benefactors. Figures 2-4 and 2-5 show the shift in resource dependency that took place in the twenty-two inner-city interview schools for which I had accurate data.

BUDGET SOURCES 1970

other (11.2%)

archdiocese (3.8%)

tuition (48.5%)

parish (36.4%)
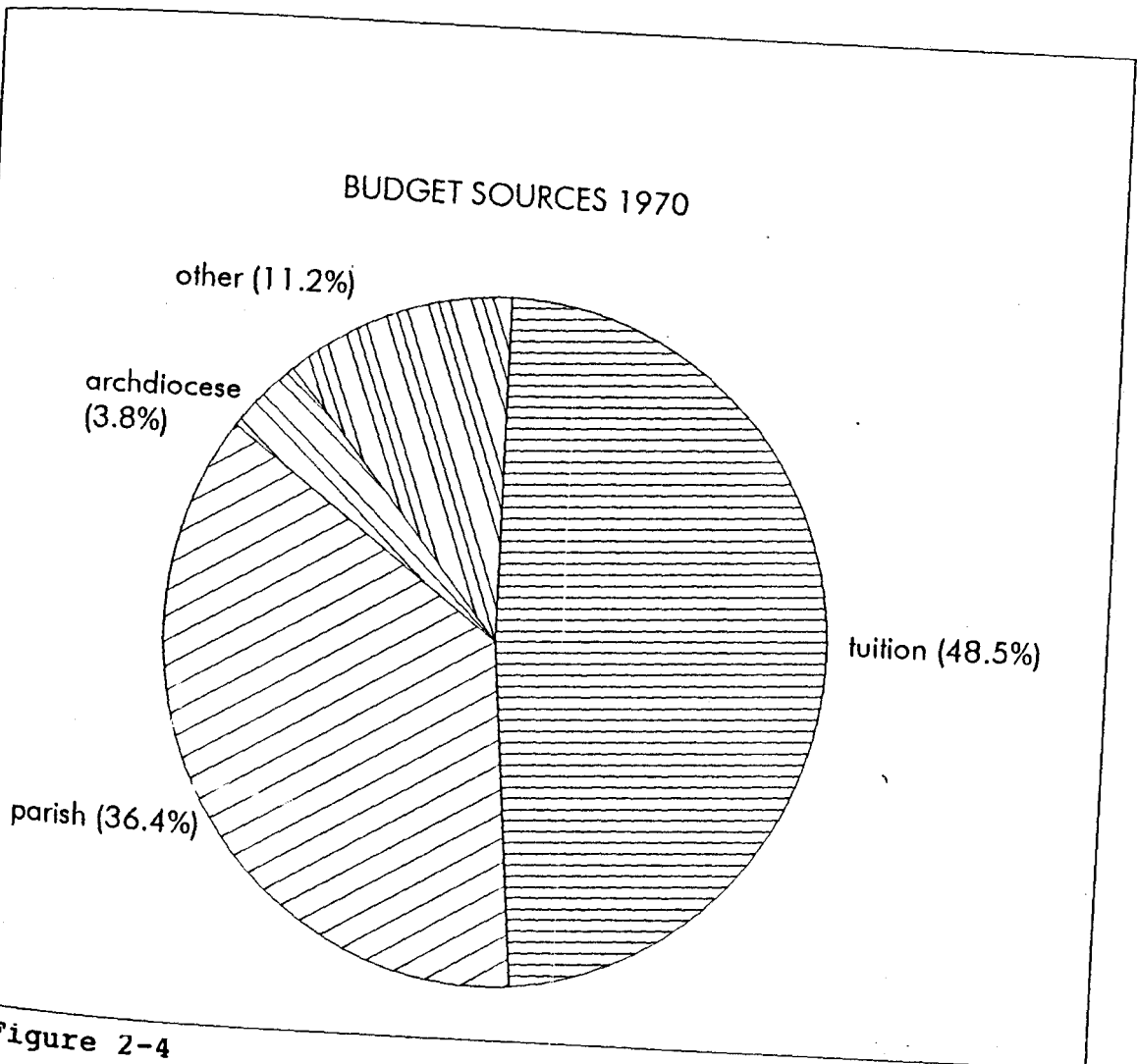
Figure 2-4

BUDGET SOURCES 1986

other (10.2%)

archdiocese
(20.7%)

parish (6.4%)

tuition (62.7%)
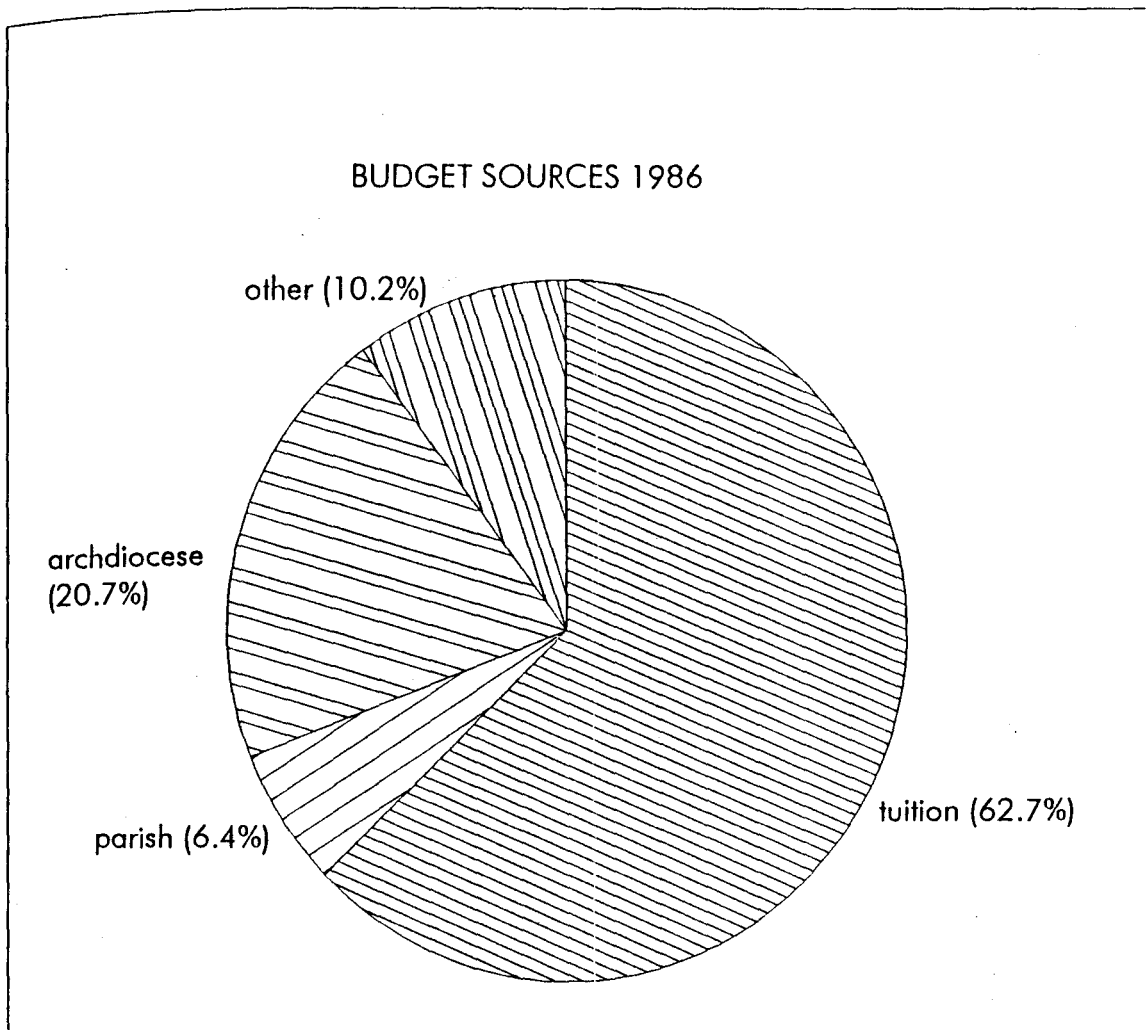
Figure 2-5

    There is a marked decline in parish subsidy and a

radically increasing dependence on archdiocesan subsidy. As

resource dependency theorists have suggested, this meant a

loss of autonomy for the school, and organizational survival

became more tenuous because schools became increasingly

vulnerable to pressures to close or to transfer resources.

elsewhere.

Declining enrollment, lost or at least questionable legitimacy, and economic crisis... this was the reality of the Catholic school system in the seventies and into the eighties. Many schools have closed--but others have survived and many of those survivors are actively engaged in attempts to adapt to their new environment. In this final section of the chapter I narrow my focus to the schools in the inner city where the problems are most severe. I will look to the survivors to discover their current attempts to rebuild organizationally strong and stable Catholic schools.

<u>The Inner City Survivors:</u>
<u>Attempts to Rebuild Organizational Strength</u>

As organizations in a declining environment attempt to stabilize and secure their future, issues of legitimacy, enrollment, and funding are once again crucial. While the remainder of this dissertation will examine these attempts in much greater detail, I will highlight here some of the most significant responses of Catholic elementary schools in Chicago's black inner city.

Responses to Declining Enrollment

Declining enrollment is perhaps the most serious challenge facing inner-city Catholic schools; low numbers call into question the need for the school and the validity of the investment the school requires. Catholic schools in the inner city have tried to stabilize and then increase enrollment by becoming more generalist in their approach--by

opening up to sizeable numbers of minority and non-Catholic students. As noted above, these groups have moved in to fill the gaps left by the exodus of white Catholics from parishes and schools. The students served by Catholic schools in the inner city in 1987 were 80 percent minority students and 40 percent non-Catholic (Office of the Archbishop, Archdiocese of Chicago, 1987). In the black inner city, the proportion of non-Catholic students is even higher. The sixty-two Catholic elementary schools included in this research had a mean non-Catholic enrollment of 24 percent in 1970, but in 1985 it was 67 percent. In that same time period, the proportion of students who were black grew from an average of almost 64 percent to over 90 percent. In becoming more generalist, parochial schools became more competitive with the local public schools.

In addition to expanding the population from which to draw enrollment, some schools have attempted to secure enrollment by restructuring. If a school's enrollment is too low to make quality education academically and financially feasible,[43] the school may consolidate with another school; by combining their enrollments, two schools may be able to survive where neither could have on its own. Twenty-six schools relative to this study were involved in

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[43]The archdiocesan criteria set this figure at 200 students for elementary schools. Any fewer than that and schools are asked to seriously consider either closing or consolidating with another school.

formal consolidations by the time of my research in 1987-1988.

Attempts to Recapture Legitimacy

Reestablishing the legitimacy of the Catholic inner-city school is challenging because the school in reality is no longer a parochial school--the school cannot survive simply by proving itself to the local parish. It faces a three-fold task: to establish its legitimacy with the population from which it hopes to draw its students, to establish (or maintain) its legitimacy with the parish and/or other Catholic sponsors that still provide resources to it, and to establish its legitimacy with new outside funders now important to the school.

Legitimacy within the Black Community

Actually, as mentioned in the first section of this chapter, Chicago's black community has a strong tradition of Catholic education. Like the early white ethnic groups, blacks found public schools hostile and unresponsive to their needs. Their experience was much longer-lived than that of the white ethnics, however. While white Catholics were moving into the mainstream of U.S. society, and prejudice was diminishing, thus weakening the need for a separate school system, black dependence on the Catholic system remained strong. Slaughter and Johnson state that Black Americans

have long had a "crisis of confidence" relative to
the benefits of public education for their
children. ...many express continuing concern
about the contributions of public schools to their
children's learning and development (1988:2).[44]

Thus, while Catholic schools were diminishing in

importance for white Catholics, black reliance on them was

actually growing. Slaughter and Johnson (1988) explain that

until the early 1950s, most black communities were protected

by their small-town culture, rich religious subcultures,

strong and supportive family life,[45] and social networks.

Despite the massive undereducation of the black community

through World War II,[46] blacks were able to secure

employment and experience a sense of purpose, adequacy, and

belonging. But after the war, especially with massive

migration of rural blacks to urban centers during the 1940s

and declining employment opportunities in the cities,

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[44]This "crisis of confidence" relative to the black
experience in public schools has been well documented. See,
for example, Perlmann 1988, Lightfoot 1978, Ogbu 1983 and
1986.

[45]Slaughter and Johnson (1988) report that in the 1950s
only 22 percent of black families were single-parent
families; by the late 1980s, that figure had grown to 50
percent.

[46]Slaughter and Johnson show just how severely the
denial of political, economic, and social power to blacks
influenced the quality of their education:
    As late as the 1940s, four to eight times as much
    money was spent on the education of a White child
    as that of a Black in the eight states that held
    80 percent of the Black population. The disparity
    was as great as twenty-five times in areas that
    were disproportionately Black (Slaughter and
    Johnson 1988:xiv).

sociocultural protective factors weakened. An adequate income became more of a necessity if the family was to continue functioning well. Unfortunately, in this new world, education was the prerequisite for an adequately paying job, and blacks were severely undereducated. Since many blacks had lost confidence in the public schools, parochial schools--when they were open to the black population--provided black families with an extremely important option.

Recent studies of inner-city blacks choosing Catholic schools provide important insights into what makes the parochial school legitimate to the black community. Vitullo-Martin (1979) and Cibulka, O'Brien, and Zewe (1982) found that black inner-city parents choose private schools because they see them as providing a superior education to the public schools. More importantly, however, they found that inner-city parents judge quality in terms of the school's responsiveness to the preferences of parents. Parochial schools experience much more autonomy than their public counterparts. Each parish school has, at least ideally, the organizational freedom to respond to the particular needs of its neighborhood and student population. Thus, the neighborhood parochial school is more likely to share parental aspirations and respond to parental demands than is the local public school. This responsiveness, coupled with a reputation for strict discipline and high

standards--plus the belief that Catholic schools work[47]--

form the basic legitimacy myths that draw poor blacks into

the parochial school system.

A changed religious focus

Probably the biggest change in the legitimizing myths

for these schools was the movement from an emphasis on

evangelization to that of pre-evangelization.[48] Changes

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[47]Wilton Gregory, auxiliary bishop of Chicago and himself a black, addressed the significance and success of Catholic education in the black community:

> If you were to look at the statistical evidence, a
> disproportionate number of professional, upper and
> middle class black Americans have some history
> with the Catholic schools. These schools have
> allowed many black Americans to move more easily
> into the marketplace of America... The presence
> of Catholic schools in poor areas of the black
> community is frequently seen as perhaps the only
> viable alternative to clearly unacceptable
> educational opportunities in many of our public
> schools. Black parents who firmly believe that
> their children's only possible escape from an
> endless cycle of poverty is through a quality
> education often make heroic sacrifices to meet the
> tuition payments at the local Catholic school (The
> Chicago Catholic, 15 May 1987:5).

[48]Evangelization refers to the process of initiating a person into the beliefs and practices of the Catholic church. It is now seen as requiring a readiness and an expressed desire from the newcomer to become part of the Catholic faith community. Today's Catholic schools do not require nor even expect such a desire from most of the Protestant or unchurched families that bring their children to the school. Instead, their role is a preliminary one, that of pre-evangelization. The intent is that while providing an important service to these families, they will also introduce them to a Catholic faith community whose values and commitments they can respect and appreciate. In time, these families may wish to learn more and express a desire to enter into a formal introduction to the Catholic faith...thus moving from pre-evangelization to

brought about by both the Vatican Council and the Civil
Rights movement abolished the expectation that black parents
who enroll their children in today's parochial schools will
in fact join the Catholic church. While such conversions
were never forced, the parish traditionally saw
evangelization as the primary role of the Catholic school in
the black community, and black parents reportedly often
joined the Catholic Church in exchange for the opportunity
for a Catholic school education for their children. The
Council's teachings on religious freedom and the impact of
the Civil Rights Movement on black self-determination and
power, invalidated the ties between the provision of a
Catholic education and church membership in the black inner
city.

Legitimacy to Public Funders

A de-emphasis on evangelization and a renewed emphasis
on providing a strong academic program in a religious,
values-oriented context, enables the Catholic school to
attract support from public and corporate sectors. Cardinal
Bernardin has been an outspoken proponent of Catholic inner-
city schools, stressing the important service they provide
for the city:

> [These are] schools that confront ignorance,
> poverty and racism on a daily basis. They provide
> disadvantaged children with the opportunity to
> become competent, well-educated and productive

evangelization.

citizens. They are places where children are respected and where they find the security and safety they need to develop into caring, trusting people (The New World, 9 June 1989).

Each day, hundreds of dedicated people use their talents to help the children in these schools develop the skills they need to become ethically responsible, competent and committed citizens (The Chicago Catholic, 6 May 1988).

[Catholic schools in the inner city] enable us to give inner-city children an extra boost and a real chance in life. Education will make the difference between becoming successful, contributing adults or falling victim to ignorance, racism and the numbing effects of poverty (The Chicago Catholic, 27 Jan. 1989).

The legitimating myth about the effectiveness of inner-city parochial schools has received added credibility through recent research findings. Coleman and Hoffer (1987) found that Catholic schools were especially significant for students from disadvantaged families (i.e. low-income, low education, and/or minority status families) and for students from deficient families.[49] Other researchers specifically addressed the question of inner-city Catholic schools and found them providing a vital educational service for those families choosing to utilize them.[50] The actual

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[49]Coleman and Hoffer speak of two types of deficient families. Structurally deficient families are single-parent families. Functionally deficient families are those characterized by "the increased self-interest of parents, the decreased personal investment in activities of the family as a unit, and the decreased parental involvement with the children (1987:119)."

[50]See, for example, Gannon 1969, Cibulka, O'Brien, and Zewe 1982, Vitullo-Martin 1979, Franklin and McDonald 1988, Barnds 1988, Bauch 1988, and Cibulka 1988.

effectiveness of these schools is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but the wealth of research supporting the belief that they are effective greatly strengthens their legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

Legitimacy to Catholic Sponsors

While increased commitment to social justice and the Church's preferential option for the poor have been a significant legitimating force for inner-city Catholic schools, organizational theorists indicate that to totally shift the grounds of legitimacy for an organization usually results in organizational death. Inner-city Catholic schools will have a much stronger foundation upon which to build if they can expand their mission while maintaining a uniquely Catholic identity. This is extremely important if the schools are to retain their legitimacy with the Catholic community which, at this point, still provides most of the non-tuition support for inner-city Catholic schools.

It is essential, therefore, to continue to promote myths which legitimize the effort, personnel, and money that go into maintaining the Catholic parochial school system in inner-city Chicago. Inner-city Catholic schools, despite their large non-Catholic enrollments, are attempting to do this by participating in several programs recently developed by the archdiocese. By presenting themselves as demonstrably Catholic they make their claim for legitimacy in the eyes of the Catholic community.

The archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education initiated the first of these programs in 1986--the Catholic Identity Process for Elementary Schools. Within two years, seventy parochial schools had gone through the voluntary process.[51] This program was being extensively used in inner-city schools while I was doing my research.

A second tool of evaluation was issued by Cardinal Bernardin in January of 1987: the "Criteria for Parish Planning and Evaluation within the Archdiocese of Chicago" which includes a nine-point plan regarding Catholic school programs.[52] Since many inner-city Catholic schools depend

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[51]Sister Mary Alice Zander, who directs the Catholic Identity Process, explained that the process is initiated by the principal of the school desiring to utilize the process. Archdiocesan consultants involve parents, faculty, and pastoral staff in a process of self-evaluation which is designed to clarify and deepen their sense of what it means to be a Catholic school. Zander stated that an excellent Catholic school respects the culture of the students, but also has a Catholic identity that needs to be incorporated into both the culture and the human aspects of the school.

[52]According to this document, parish schools are to be evaluated in terms of 1) their Catholic character (faculty is to be at least 75 percent Catholic, the religious education program is to be fully developed with quality religion teaching, the atmosphere of the school must be Catholic, and there is to be an organized effective evangelization program if the school serves a predominantly non-Catholic community); 2) the strength of their academic program as measured through the school visitation process; 3) a fall enrollment of at least 200 students; 4) demographic evidence that the school can continue to draw an adequate student population--i.e., a loss of no more than 10 percent of the student population over the past five years; 5) a student/homeroom ratio of not less than 25 to 1; 6) subsidy from the parish and archdiocese not exceeding 45 percent of the school's operational budget; 7) tuition and school revenues covering a minimum of 62 percent of the school's operational budget; 8) per pupil costs not

on archdiocesan subsidy, it is imperative that they

demonstrate their legitimacy by conforming to archdiocesan

criteria.

Then in fall of 1988 the Chicago Catholic School

Superintendent introduced a comprehensive evaluation process

to school administrators.[53] Each archdiocesan Catholic

elementary school is required to participate in this

evaluation before 1994 (The Chicago Catholic, 27 January

1989).

The effort and resources going into these evaluative

processes make visible the archdiocesan commitment to the

provision of quality Catholic education. These processes

also seem to be designed, however, to assure the Catholic

population that parochial schools--even those in the inner

city--are legitimate and worthy of their support. Involving

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normally exceeding 20-25 percent more than the Archdiocesan
average cost per pupil. In addition, those parishes without
a Catholic school where the population in the religious
education program exceeds 800 students should consider the
feasibility and advisability of opening a parish or regional
school ("Criteria for Parish Planning and Evaluation Within
the Archdiocese of Chicago," January 15, 1987).

    [53]In this evaluation, the Office of Catholic Education
facilitates a self-study process aimed at promoting
continued excellence and utilizing the Criteria for
Excellent Catholic Schools which the Office developed. A
committee of representatives from the faculty, the pastoral
staff, the home/school association, the school board, and
parent volunteers is asked to identify strengths and
weaknesses of current school practices, materials, physical
plant and outreach efforts. A visiting team then spends
three days at the school, responding to the self-study,
making recommendations, and recommending archdiocesan
certification for the school.

parents and parishioners in these processes is an important
means of strengthening the school's legitimacy and renewing
commitment to the mission of the archdiocesan schools.

As the schools establish their legitimacy to their
potential constituencies--students, external funders, and
Catholic sponsors--it becomes more feasible for them to
secure the financial backing that they need. As the entire
archdiocese faces a financial crisis, however, it is
increasingly clear that, at least in the inner city, the
traditional Catholic forms of subsidy are no longer reliable
sources of support for parochial schools. To ensure their
survival, these schools must look further.

Developing New Means of Financial Support
The Big Shoulders Fund: New Funding for New Directions

The overlap between legitimacy and financial backing is
seen most clearly in the Big Shoulders Program. This is a
funding initiative which Bernardin began to recruit the
assistance of the corporate sector in creating a strong
financial base for Chicago's inner-city Catholic schools.
When the program began, 123 elementary and 16 secondary
Catholic inner-city schools qualified for assistance from
this program.[54]

Begun in March of 1987, Big Shoulders sought to raise

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[54]As mentioned earlier, these schools taught 45,000
students, eighty percent of whom were minorities and forty
percent of whom were non-Catholic (Archdiocese of Chicago:
Office of the Archbishop, March 1987).

$10 million from foundations, corporations, and major
private donors. A sizeable portion of the funds collected
was to be invested in an archdiocesan educational endowment
fund, while the remainder was to be used for a variety of
operational and capital expenditures, including tuition
scholarships, building repairs, teacher training, other
special projects, and general subsidies. A committee of
fifty Chicago business and professional leaders directs the
Big Shoulders Fund. The June 9, 1989 issue of the Catholic
paper The New World announced that 19 million dollars had
been raised to date by the campaign,[55] and a new goal of
$25 million was set to be reached by the end of 1989. The
response to the Big Shoulders Fund appeal, both in terms of
donations and in statements made by donors, affirm the new
(or at least more visible) legitimacy[56] with which

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[55]Contributors to the Big Shoulders Fund include: the
Coleman/Fannie May Candies Foundation which gave $200,000
for scholarship grants both in 1988 and 1989, the first two
installments on a $1 million pledge (New World, Feb. 24,
1989); the Robert R. McCormick Charitable Trust which
pledged a million dollars and Illinois Bell which pledged
$150,000 (The Chicago Catholic, Jan. 27, 1989), Chicago
attorney Philip Corboy who pledged $1 million, and Bob and
Dolores Hope who were recognized for being among the very
first contributors to the fund (The Chicago Catholic, April
22, 1988); the Amoco Foundation which is contributing a
$300,000 grant in five annual installments (The Chicago
Catholic, May 6, 1988); the Chicago Bears and the NFL Trust
which donated $12,000 (New World, Sept. 1, 1989).

[56]Business leaders speak of Big Shoulders and inner
city Catholic schools:

John Hughes, President of Coleman/Fanny May Candies,
Foundation:
    [Fanny May] wants "to reach out to these children

corporate Chicago views Catholic inner-city schools.

Thus, despite numerous obstacles and tremendous challenges, new sources of support for the inner-city Catholic elementary school are becoming visible. Such schools, having been forced to outgrow their traditional parochial identity, are finding new ways to secure the resources they need and to forge a new legitimacy for themselves.

In this chapter I have traced the historical development and the decline of Chicago's Catholic parochial schools. Their organizational strength and stability was a result of their specialist orientation--they responded to the specific needs of a poor, ethnic, Catholic immigrant population. The schools' parochial nature ensured their

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and assure the future of other children by helping to provide them with the educational opportunities they need to become contributing members of our community (The Chicago Catholic, 26 Feb. 1988)."

"The Coleman/Fannie May Candies Foundation has been a major funder of both public and private education at all levels. It is my hope these scholarships will give their recipients an idea of how important their education is to the future of our city. I want this gift tc inspire them to work towards their goals, no matter how difficult those goals may be (The New World, 24 Feb. 1989)."

James J. O'Connor, CEO of Commonwealth Edison:
    the fund "helps perpetuate schools as anchors in
    the communities in which they serve."
    The schools are "beams of hope in an oasis of
    despair that cry out for attention (The Chicago
    Catholic, 4 Nov. 1988)."

legitimacy as well as a reliable stream of resources.

Organizational decline came as a result of a combination of closely interrelated factors. Demographic changes stimulated serious enrollment declines. The Catholic church abandoned its siege mentality which meant that parochialism declined and a legitimacy crisis ensued. Finally, the rapidly escalating cost of education and the greatly diminished ability of parishes to support their schools, especially in the inner city, resulted in financial crisis for these schools.

Survival of the remaining inner-city Catholic schools hinges on the success of their attempts to stabilize enrollment and forge a new legitimacy for themselves, promoting myths acceptable to both the Catholic community and the broader community. By becoming more generalist, they may also succeed in establishing new sources of financial support.

Having presented this organizational history of Chicago's Catholic schools, I turn now to the research design used in analyzing the varied responses of inner-city Catholic parochial schools to the organizational constraints currently threatening their survival.

CHAPTER 3

THE CHALLENGE OF INNER-CITY PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS:
PARAMETERS AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

In the preceding chapter I demonstrated that changes in
the Catholic church and in society have plunged Catholic
schools in general, and inner-city Catholic schools in
particular, into a crisis that threatens their survival. In
the last three decades these schools have lost enrollment,
legitimacy, and to a great extent the financial support once
provided by the local parish. The surviving schools are
presently undergoing tremendous organizational adaptation:
shifting from a specialist to a generalist orientation,
shifting from a white Catholic population to a black non-
Catholic population, shifting from a legitimacy born out of
a siege mentality to a legitimacy based on service, shifting
from a parochial school to a school with multiple external
links and dependencies.

The purpose of this research is to look at how these
many shifts have actually affected Catholic parochial
elementary schools in the black inner city. Changes in
student population and resource providers may lead to
changes in legitimacy and the school's autonomy. These
changes will affect the future of the school and possibly

threaten the school's survival. These were the issues that provided the framework for this research.

Because organizational adaptation is a complex process with multiple, interrelated effects, I chose a multi-step research approach to provide me with the greatest analytical power. In the first phase of the research I used a population ecology approach, looking at the entire population of inner-city elementary Catholic parochial schools serving Chicago's black community. I used available organizational statistics to examine the extent of changes in student enrollment and population, the timing of those changes, and the impact of those changes on the schools' survival, i.e., which schools survived and which schools closed.

In the second and third phases of my research, I sought to get beneath the concrete statistical data and arrive at an understanding of what those changes really meant to the schools. I hoped to identify the key legitimacy and autonomy issues that surfaced during adaptation. I also hoped to discover the circumstances in which adaptation meant a radically changed relationship with the sponsoring parish, and the impact of that extremely significant change. In phase two of this research I interviewed key leaders in the population of surviving schools; they talked about their experiences, their perceptions and concerns, their legitimating myths, their struggles to obtain resources

while balancing dependencies and maintaining a degree of
autonomy.

In the third phase of my research I conducted
systematic case studies of schools representative of four
key strategic response patterns. As mentioned previously,
schools focussed their energies on strengthening ties with
one particular resource provider, and then establishing
their legitimacy with that provider. The case studies
allowed me to see these schools in operation, to observe how
legitimacy myths were promoted and how they affected the
school. The case study approach also enabled me to explore
which internal and external political forces in each
strategy are most influential in shaping the future of the
school. In this chapter I will detail each of the phases of
my research.

Phase 1: A Population Ecology of Black Inner-City Catholic Parochial Schools

Population ecology insists that organizations suited to
their unique environment survive, while those that are not
must evolve to newer, more appropriate forms or they will
eventually die. Therefore, to come to an understanding of
the transitions taking place in the research population of
schools, I needed historical data which would clarify the
environmental changes necessitating organizational
adaptation, and statistical data on the population which
would document the extent of change. To obtain this data I

turned to the archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education.

An initial interview with the archdiocesan Superintendent of Catholic Education and the data/research specialist for the Office of Catholic Education secured archdiocesan cooperation with my research and provided me with access to the school data kept by that office. Later, when introducing myself and my research to the principals and pastors included in my sample, the approval of this office was sometimes helpful in gaining entrance to the school.[1] For additional historical background, and to gain a sense of the major forces shaping the fate of these schools over the past fifteen to twenty years, I used a snowball sample of informants, interviewing people who had been involved with these schools and/or with the black Catholic community over an extended period of time.

The Population of Schools

I limited my study to elementary, Catholic parochial, inner-city, black schools in the city of Chicago. I chose this particular population of schools because it is a significant group of schools which provides an excellent opportunity for examining how dependency and legitimacy issues affect organizational adaptation and survival.

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[1]I made it clear, however, that while the office and the superintendent had given me permission to do this research, they had not commissioned it. I assured participants of confidentiality, explaining that while my findings would be shared with the archdiocese, individual persons and schools would not be identified.

The Catholic system was appropriate for this research because it is by far the largest and most organized non-public school system.[2] I chose to focus on Catholic elementary schools because they have traditionally been parochial schools, whereas Catholic secondary schools have frequently been regional schools much less tied to an ethnic parish for support. I would expect, therefore, that Catholic elementary schools would be more vulnerable to demographic changes affecting the local parish; dependency shifts and the resulting organizational turbulence would be more striking at the elementary level.

Parish ownership of elementary schools makes the legitimacy issues more salient than in Catholic high schools. In addition, the provision of Catholic secondary education, while encouraged, did not hold the moral imperative that Catholic elementary education held. Therefore I expected the shifts in legitimacy coming out of the changed ideology of Vatican II to have a greater impact on Catholic elementary schools than on secondary ones.

As mentioned previously, I chose Catholic inner-city schools in the black community because these schools face the greatest challenges to adaptation and survival. Their environment is the most turbulent in terms of obtaining resources and of maintaining legitimacy while undergoing

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[2]As mentioned in the previous chapter, almost one-third of Chicago's students were enrolled in Catholic schools in the mid-sixties.

both racial and religious shifts in their student

population.

I defined elementary schools as those with students

ranging from pre-kindergarten to Grade 8 or any subset of

that range. To meet my criteria of a Catholic parochial

identity I stipulated that they be affiliated with a

Catholic parish or a group of Catholic parishes. There were

204 such schools in the city of Chicago in 1987.

Of these, 120 had been designated by the archdiocese as

inner-city schools qualifying for the Big Shoulders Fund.[3]

The archdiocese used economic criteria to determine these

inner-city schools; they included all schools in

neighborhoods that met federal government poverty

guidelines. These schools met the requirements for Chapter

I funding of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

(ESEA).[4] I used this archdiocesan designation to determine

the inner-city schools for my research.

For the purpose of this study, schools were considered

black if over 70 percent of the student body was black;

fifty-five of the schools identified as inner-city by the

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[3]The Big Shoulders Fund, as explained in the previous chapter, was initiated by Joseph Cardinal Bernardin in the Spring of 1987 as a major development drive to benefit inner-city Catholic elementary and secondary schools.

[4]While the archdiocesan list of inner-city schools includes schools located in poverty areas of the suburbs surrounding Chicago, I limited my population to schools within the city limits.

archdiocese met this criteria.[5] In addition, seven other

parochial inner-city schools were included in the population

of schools to be studied because they showed a marked

increase in black enrollment between 1975 and 1986, thus

indicating that they were at that time undergoing racial

transition. I expected these schools to illustrate the

process of adaptation to a new student population and to

make my research more relevant and generalizable to other

schools undergoing racial transition. Several of the fifty-

five heavily black schools also served this function, since

the transition had been very fast and the schools were still

grappling with what the change had meant.

Given the population of sixty-two schools meeting the

criteria of my study, I examined the histories of these

schools and parishes[6], and used the files of the Chicago

archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education to trace

enrollment, staffing, financial, and tuition data from 1970-

'71 to 1985-'86.[7] These sources gave me some clear

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[5]Forty-eight of these schools were actually more than
98 percent black. Very few of Chicago's Catholic inner-city
schools could be considered truly integrated. Most of the
schools I studied were either entirely black, or black with
a few token whites or Hispanics.

[6]The Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago published a two-
volume history of the Chicago parishes in 1981, edited by
Monsignor Harry C. Koenig, S.T.D.

[7]Archdiocesan school files begin with the 1969-'70
school year. The earliest reports provided more extensive
budget data, as well as estimated class and income data on
school families. Comparable data were not available for
more recent years.

indications of the strength of each school's ethnic
identity, its size, the extent of change and the rapidity
with which it occurred... all of which, according to the
population ecologists, would be expected to impact the
school's ability to survive.

Inner-City Schools Closed Prior to 1986

In addition to looking at the sixty-two surviving
schools, I also located a group of comparable inner-city
Catholic schools that had closed before I began my research.
I identified this second group of schools by looking at
enrollment figures and selecting schools which were in
existence in 1960 but which had closed before 1986. Then,
using archdiocesan maps and information from the 1980
History of the Parishes of the Archdiocese of Chicago
(Koenig 1980), I reconstructed a set of schools which are
now closed but which had been black inner-city schools
similar to those in my population, or which had closed in
the midst of racial changes in their surrounding
neighborhoods. This procedure yielded a list of thirty-two
parochial elementary schools operating in 1960 that were no
longer operating as parish schools twenty-six years later.

As with the surviving schools, I used historical data
and whatever school data was available from the Office of

Catholic Education[8] in order to compare these closed

schools with those organizationally strong enough to have

survived. Twenty-three of the thirty-two schools had closed

completely.[9] The other nine school buildings had closed,

but the schools had consolidated[10] with neighboring

Catholic schools. All thirty-two of these schools, had they

survived, could be expected to have fit the criteria for

inclusion in my study of black inner-city Catholic

schools.[11] The intent here was to look for trends in

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[8]Of course records were only available until the final
year of the school's operation, and the office had no school
records for those that closed during the sixties.

[9]This number includes a consolidation, formed from four
parish schools in the early 1970s, which closed completely
in the mid-eighties.

[10]The term consolidated describes a variety of
realities in Chicago archdiocesan literature. For my
research I define a consolidation (whether of parishes or of
schools) as the reorganization of two or more entities into
one for the mutual benefit of all involved parties. The
consolidation is not an absorption of one by the other (as
occurs when one parish closes and its members are sent to
join the neighboring parish), but an attempted partnership
where the various parts work together to forge a common
identity. This new identity grows out of and respects each
one's history, identity, and traditions.

[11]Other schools in neighboring areas closed or
consolidated, but if no reference to racial transition was
made in the parish history and if school enrollment did not
reflect a black or integrated student population, they were
not included as "applicable but closed" schools. It is
likely that some of these others may have closed as the
traditional white ethnic population moved out and it became
clear that this loss of parishioners was irreversible.
Parishes may have chosen to close their schools rather than
try to adapt to a new population. This, however, cannot be
assumed from the data I had available to me; further
research on those schools is warranted but beyond the scope
of this dissertation.

school closings, to see whether certain factors suggested by population ecologists did in reality leave certain parochial schools more vulnerable to organizational death.

These data provided me with valuable information on the population of Catholic schools which I had identified as facing the greatest organizational challenges. This first phase of research confirmed the significance of maintaining enrollment levels, and demonstrated the turbulence, i.e., radical fluctuations in enrollment and in leadership, that occur during periods of racial transition. It put me in touch with the extent of parochialism traditionally present in these schools, and the tremendous advantages of a strong parish identity. Thus, it became clear that the loss of that parish base, in addition to requiring funding and enrollment shifts, also posed a significant threat to the school's reputation and legitimacy. These insights provided the direction needed for the second phase of research, and they enabled me to select a more representative sample of schools.

Initial Categories

At this point in the research, I grouped schools into three categories that seemed to make the most sense historically and theoretically. I expected to find that schools that had traditionally served the black Catholic community would be the most stable and the most securely

linked to their local parish, and therefore the most
traditional in terms of their perceived mission and
legitimacy. In schools that had more recently undergone
racial transition, however, I expected to see greater
changes in resource dependency; diminished dependence on
the parish was expected to result in greater instability and
weakened ties to the parish which in turn necessitated
significant changes in mission and legitimacy as schools
attempted to adapt to their new population. In schools
currently undergoing racial transition I expected to find
the greatest instability as schools struggled to meet the
competing demands of various constituencies and resource
providers that now were essential for the schools' survival;
I expected these schools to be the most vulnerable to
political interference, to have the most problems with
maintaining autonomy, and to be most ambiguous about their
mission.

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Phase 2: The Viewpoint of Leadership:
Resource Dependency in Inner-City Catholic Schools

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In the second phase of research, I sought to examine
issues identified as most significant from a resource
dependency perspective: issues of dependency, inter-
organizational relationships, autonomy, and legitimacy. In
order to accomplish this, I conducted in-depth interviews
with a sample of those persons most directly involved in
negotiating those realities--the principals of the schools

and the pastors of the sponsoring parishes. After explaining my sampling techniques and the interview process, I will present the major theoretical concepts explored during these interviews.

The Sample of Schools

From the sixty-two schools meeting the criteria for this study, I chose a sample of thirty-five schools to be included in the interview phase of my research. I used a combination of purposive and random sampling to arrive at my interview sample.

I selected approximately one-third of the sample because of certain important characteristics I wanted included in the study. I chose schools because of their parishes' unique historical contributions to the black Catholic community of Chicago, or because they represented schools currently undergoing racial transition, or because their parishes were founded as black parishes, or because they were all-black schools in integrated parishes. I expected each of these factors to significantly influence the necessity for adaptation and a school's ability to do so successfully.

Next, I randomly chose eleven schools (the second third of the sample) from the remaining schools in the population. Then, I completed the sample by again purposively choosing schools to balance the sample in terms of geographic location of the schools, time of racial transition, social

class of the parish, and pastoral leadership's philosophy of the mission of the parish school. This brought the total to thirty-three schools.

At this point I consulted with a pastor who had long worked in the black community of Chicago to see if there were any significant viewpoints or experiences not represented in the sample. As a result of this consultation I added two more schools to the sample, bringing the total to thirty-five schools in which I hoped to interview. I gave principals and pastors the right to refuse the interview, and this happened in two cases;[12] I therefore conducted interviews in a total of thirty-three different schools.

The Interview Process

Before attempting to schedule interviews with the principals and pastors of schools included in my sample, I sent them each a letter of introduction which briefly explained the purpose of my research and how I hoped that

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[12]In one case it was the principal who refused to participate in the study, stating that it is his policy never to allow the school to participate in research. His stated belief was that the children are treated by researchers as "guinea pigs with no benefit to them." In the second school that refused to participate in the interview phase, the principal originally scheduled an appointment with me. When I talked to the pastor a bit later, he was hesitant but consented, telling me to come to see him after I finished with the principal. Several days later, however, the principal called to cancel both appointments, stating that the pastor felt that any information I needed could be obtained from the Office of Catholic Education.

they might help me. Several days after they should have
received the letter, I followed up with a phone call to
answer their questions and schedule an interview. I sent
letters to the principals confirming our appointment and
thanking them for their willingness to participate in my
study. I also included in this letter a form requesting
enrollment, staffing, and budget data which they were to
complete prior to the interview.[13]

Principals

I conducted interviews with principals in their
schools, usually during the school day, although a few
principals preferred seeing me after school or on an in-

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[13]The information requested was straight-forward and
normally the school secretary should have been able to
complete most sections. However, I soon found that most
principals would not have the forms completed when I came
for the interview. I therefore brought along a self-
addressed stamped envelope and asked the principals to
complete the form and return it by mail. The budget section
posed a problem for some principals because I asked for
budget information from 1980-'81 and from 1985-'86 as well
as from the previous year (1986-'87); many principals were
relatively new to the school and had no access to previous
financial records. I asked them, therefore, to complete
whatever was readily accessible to them, and then return the
papers. While most principals were extremely generous with
their time in speaking to me, and openly and
enthusiastically shared their insights and perspectives,
some were hesitant to provide the facts and figures I
requested. Even after a second data sheet and self-
addressed stamped envelope were sent with a reminder to
complete as much as possible of this information and return
it to me, the response rate was only 73 percent. Several
other schools provided comparable data they had prepared in
their own format. The response rate was lowest among
schools involved in clusters and consolidations where school
statistics ordinarily include all campuses, while I was
requesting information for their building only.

service day when students were not there. Most of these interviews took about an hour and a half, though some principals provided more extensive information and as a result their interviews took significantly longer.

Whenever possible, I toured the school after interviewing the principal. This gave me a feel for the school environment and climate, and an opportunity to see students interacting with teachers, the principal, and each other as they moved about the school. Time spent in the school office also enabled me to observe interactions between various school constituencies. When the principal extended the invitation, I visited classrooms for a few minutes, again to get a better feel for the personality of the school. After each of these visits, I took extensive field notes on what I had seen and heard.

Pastors

Most often I interviewed the pastors in their rectories, usually on a different day from the interview with the principal. While I found it more difficult to schedule interviews with the pastors,[14] once we began the

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[14]One pastor refused me an interview because he claimed he was too new to the parish to be helpful (this was probably true since he had only arrived about a month before); he assured me that the principal would be much better able to respond to my questions. One other excused himself, explaining that he was presently working two jobs, pastor of this parish and an administrator in the diocesan offices. Two others, although I had delightful and informative interviews with their principals, evaded my calls and each failed to respond to at least six separate

interview I found pastors eager to talk about their
experience of the inner city, and the special challenges and
opportunities their Catholic schools present. Several
commented that they spend so much of their time responding
to material needs and the operational demands of the parish,
that they rarely have the opportunity to clarify their
vision, or to think about where they are going as a parish
and why, or to share their hopes, dreams, and frustrations.
They found this interview an opportunity to do just that,
and as a result, I often received much more information than
I had asked for.

While visiting each parish, I took note of the
surrounding neighborhood--the type of neighborhood (business
or residential), the quality of building stock, the type of
residences (apartment, multi-family flats, single family
houses), whether property appeared to be owner occupied or
rental units, the amount of broken glass and litter, the
condition of yards and vacant lots, the number and kinds of
people on the streets...anything that would help me situate
the school in its cultural and socio-economic surroundings.
I expected these factors to significantly influence attempts
at adaptation.

The Goal of the Interviews

These interviews attempted to discover the major

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messages to return my call at their own convenience.

factors that influence successful organizational change. I
went into the interviews aware of the significant
demographic changes each parish had faced; in the
interviews leadership talked about their perspectives on
what those changes meant and how they had affected the
parish school. Using resource dependency as a basic
theoretical framework, my interviews explored in detail how
the particular school had dealt with and adapted to changes
in funding and in student enrollment. Administrators
discussed changing relationships with resource providers and
how those changes affected their autonomy. In addition, by
sharing their beliefs about what makes a Catholic school
successful, they clarified the legitimacy myths out of which
they were currently operating. In particular, these
interviews with principals and pastors sought to discover
parallels between what the organizational change theorists
would lead us to expect in such schools and the actual
experience of those working there.

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Theoretical Perspective:
The Successful Inner-City Catholic School

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According to the resource dependency theorists, a
successful organization is one which is able to ensure a
stable flow of necessary resources without sacrificing its
own autonomy, and to establish and retain its legitimacy
with the various constituencies vital to its survival.
Population ecologists assert that generalist organizations

are better suited for turbulent environments. The second
phase of this research utilized these theoretical
perspectives to attempt to explain the likelihood of
organizational success in the schools in my population. I
will briefly explain here my expectations as I began the
interviews.

Enrollment

It was clear that in their attempts to enroll new
students, inner-city Catholic schools were breaking down
traditional parochial boundaries and accepting/recruiting
non-Catholic students and/or Catholic non-parishioners. The
school's ability to successfully do this would be dependent
on the strength of its own reputation and on the competition
it faces from other schools in the area--both Catholic and
public.

Generalist/Specialist Orientation

Closely related to enrollment concerns, is the school's
movement from a specialist to a more generalist orientation.
Increasing numbers of non-Catholic students, increasing
competition, and increasing dependence on external
supporters all necessitate a more generalist orientation;
religious requirements will become increasingly hard to
legitimate and to enforce. New legitimacy myths must be
generated to justify the new generalist orientation.

Several situations would make it more beneficial or

more essential for inner-city schools to maintain their specialist orientation. When dependency ties are strong between the school and the parish, the school will be more likely to retain its specialist orientation than it would if its relationship with the parish were characterized either by interdependence or separateness. So too, a strong reputation as a Catholic school (usually in situations where the school has not had to face an actual survival crisis), discourages change in the religious orientation of the school. A third factor encouraging the maintenance of a religious specialist orientation in a school is a recent shift from parish subsidy to a direct dependence on the archdiocese; this new dependence would tend to tie the school to archdiocesan expectations which are still specifically religious in orientation.

Legitimacy

As was noted above, as schools become more generalist, I would expect their grounds of legitimacy to shift. The challenge confronting these schools is to promote new legitimacy myths which maintain their legitimacy to a Catholic population while establishing their legitimacy to new outside resource providers. The interviews were intended to highlight ways in which successful schools negotiated such legitimacy shifts. During the interviews I was also able to discuss the school's mission and policies and to examine documents such as the mission statement,

handbook, and parent contract. I expected these documents
to be indicative of the school's prevailing legitimacy
myths.

Schools that retain their specialist orientation, while
less likely to undergo a radical shift in their legitimacy
myths, were expected to have the challenge of redefining
"Catholic identity" to make it appropriate to a
predominantly non-Catholic student population. Religious
requirements may make the school legitimate to the parish,
but they may also make the school less competitive and less
credible to the black community.

Autonomy Issues

All of this influences the school's ability to remain
autonomous. Following the resource dependency theorists, I
expected to find that schools which depend on a single
primary resource provider had little autonomy in making
decisions or in choosing the legitimating myths out of which
administration might prefer to work. When interests
conflict and administrators face competing demands regarding
the school, most often energy will focus around meeting the
demands of those groups most essential to the survival of
the school; where the resources are, there too will be the
control.

I went into the interviews aware that in most of these
schools parish support had greatly diminished. What I hoped
to discover was under what circumstances this enhanced the

school's autonomy and under what circumstances new
dependencies actually decreased its autonomy and left it
more susceptible to political pressures.

Also influencing the autonomy of the individual school,
as was suggested by the theory of organizational
persistence, were the structural changes affecting the
schools--i.e., consolidations. While consolidations
decreased competition, and therefore helped to secure
enrollment and stabilize parochial and archdiocesan support,
theorists suggested that they would also limit the power of
people within the organization; administrators would be
expected to maintain control over daily operations, but they
would lose control over long-range decision-making for their
schools.

The Emergence of New Categories

While exploring with principals and pastors these
expectations about enrollment, generalist and specialist
orientations, legitimacy, and autonomy, four basic
categories of schools began to emerge. I categorized
schools based essentially on their primary resource
providers. But the categories also reflected different
strategies for dealing with enrollment and legitimacy
problems, different orientations, and differing abilities to
maintain organizational autonomy. I categorized schools as
being either parish-centered, isolated, cooperatively-linked
with other schools, or externally-linked. I will explain

these categories in depth in Chapter 5.

These categories replaced the historical ones discussed earlier that had developed during the initial data gathering in phase one of my research. What I discovered in the interviews was that the length of time since the school had experienced racial transition, while influential in shaping the school's dependency relationships and its legitimacy, was only one of many factors--and often not the most significant one. More recent economic decline, changes in the sponsoring parish, leadership's response to racial transition...all complicated the picture. The variation within the "time of transition" categories and the striking similarities among certain schools in differing categories gradually lead me to conclude that when the transition took place was not nearly as important as how the school adapted to whatever specific changes it was now facing. Therefore I chose categories based on the school's primary strategy for securing resources as more appropriate and meaningful for this research.

I further examined these four categories in the third phase of this research. During this phase I undertook case studies which provided me with an opportunity to clarify the impact of each of these forms of adaptation on organizational survival and success.

Phase 3: The Case Studies

The final phase of my research involved much more in-

depth research in four schools selected to be representative of the categories that had emerged during the interview phase of my research. In these case studies I tested out the perceptions of administration and I extended my analysis to include the views and understandings of a much broader cross-section of the four school communities. This provided me with a more realistic understanding of the strengths and limitations of the various approaches to adaptation these schools were following. The case study approach enabled me to discover the multiple constituencies that were part of each school's reality. Interactions with a variety of organizational participants revealed the multiple and often ambiguous commitments of the school and clarified the internal and external political forces at work there. Thus, this stage, more than the previous two, provided me with the opportunity to examine the relevance of the organizational persistence theory.

After explaining this final phase of my research to the respective principals and obtaining access to their schools for the purpose of doing my case studies, I scheduled some initial dates for in-school observation. I also asked the principal to inform me of other school activities and extra-curricular events that I might attend.

Teacher Interviews

I did two full days of observation in the classrooms of each of the four schools. In three of them I observed each

classroom teacher, informally interviewing most of the teachers before or after school, during their lunch or free period, or while the students were occupied with written assignments that required supervision but not teacher interaction. In the fourth school, which was much larger, I observed and interviewed at least one classroom teacher at each level, participated in a few multi-classroom activities, and talked to several additional teachers outside of the regular school hours.

These teacher interviews were much less formal than those with administration. I usually observed the teacher at work first, and then engaged her/him in a casual conversation. I had an interview guide identifying major areas of interest which I used to direct the conversation, but whenever possible I encouraged the teacher to take the lead and talk about what she/he considered most important or significant. My own experience in elementary education was invaluable in helping me convey to teachers my genuine interest in their students, their programs, their successes and their frustrations. As a result, most teachers seemed to readily accept me as an ally, and once again I was amazed at how candidly they responded to my questions.

The topics covered in these interviews were somewhat dependent on the amount of time the teacher had available, but they included the teacher's perceptions of the school, its relationship to parents and to the local parish, their

own goals and objectives and how those goals were reinforced or constrained by local and archdiocesan administrators, the historical and organizational changes they had seen the school go through, their feelings about those changes-- whether the changes had been stimulating and life-giving, or frustrating and burdensome. Through these informal interviews with teachers I was able to re-examine dependency, autonomy, and legitimacy issues and to re-evaluate the school's success in coping with its present reality.

Support Staff

I tried to talk either formally or informally with support staff in the school. One secretary, for example, was able to provide me with detailed information since her children had attended the school and she had been closely involved with the school for years since then. Religion coordinators were extremely helpful in clarifying for me the school's religious mission and how that mission is actualized within the school as a whole and within the individual classrooms.

School Functions

The special school functions I attended at these schools included all-school liturgies and Sunday Family Masses, school programs and talent shows, graduation ceremonies and awards celebrations, an athletic banquet...

all of which brought me into the school community and opened up the school culture to me. At these events I could observe the school's life without being obtrusive; they afforded me wonderful opportunities to watch students, teachers, and parents interacting among themselves and with each other.

Often these situations gave me a chance to speak informally with parents about the school and the experience of their children in the school. They provided an opportunity to test the school's legitimacy to parents and to explore the presence or absence of political influence among them. These observations also enabled me to validate my own impressions and the views expressed by interviewees.

School Board Meetings

The school boards of each school proved an important source of information. In addition to setting policies and directions for the school, one of the major purposes of the traditional parochial school board is to serve as an authoritative link between the school and the rest of the parish. I found the school board meetings to vary significantly among these schools, highlighting the varied lines of authority and the actual involvement level of parish in school. Whatever the level of involvement, the meetings gave me a clearer understanding of which groups were most influential in the school.

Other Observations

My period of direct involvement with the case schools was restricted to the final five weeks of the school year. This time constraint necessarily limited the opportunities for observation, especially since I was working with four schools in different parts of the city; schedule conflicts meant I needed to choose what I would attend and where. This partially depended on the number of activities planned by the school, and whether the principal chose to inform me of the upcoming events.

I also made judgments, however, on which activities seemed to be most relevant to each case. For example, in a school where reorganization efforts were a major concern for the administration, and a major source of frustration for teachers, I chose to attend an afternoon cluster-wide teacher in-service. Where the school's energy was seemingly directed toward forging a common culture with which all families, even non-Catholic ones, could identify, I chose to attend a parent organization meeting and to be present throughout a Saturday morning registration period. These events enabled me to speak to parents and board members about their choice of this school for their children and about their attitudes regarding the school's expectations of them as parents. Similarly, where the school apparently exists more independently from the parish, I chose to attend functions and meetings where I could observe and talk to the

groups which were presently being asked to take on responsibility for the school or which had already made a commitment to do that.

One of the limitations of this phase of the study is the lack of comparable data for each of the four schools. To some extent this was unavoidable, since the schools were not comparable; school events varied from school to school, and groups which were extremely important in one of the schools were non-existent or non-functioning in others. Even when similar events or groups did exist, however, the time limitations admittedly posed a problem. My choices necessarily reflected my biases and my intuitions about which observations would be most relevant and helpful in getting inside the school's unique reality.

This third phase of research, therefore, took me inside four schools which were representative of four unique responses to their black inner-city environment. The issues explored in the interview phase were re-examined here in much greater detail, allowing me to test out key assumptions of the three theoretical perspectives on successful organizational adaptation.

This multi-stage approach to researching Chicago's Catholic elementary parochial schools in the black inner city provided the most explanatory power when dealing with a reality as complex as this. It allowed me to integrate

three separate though related theoretical frameworks in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of the forces at work in shaping the organizational futures of these schools.

In Chapter 4, I will present the findings of the first stage of my research. Looking at the entire population of schools included in this study--those open at the time of my research and those which for a variety of reasons had already closed, I will examine the effectiveness of population ecology in explaining the fate of these schools.

CHAPTER 4

ORGANIZATIONAL SURVIVAL IN THE INNER CITY:
POPULATION ECOLOGY AND SCHOOL SURVIVAL

In the last chapter I outlined the three phases of my
research on Catholic elementary schools in Chicago's black
inner city and I showed how the various phases attempted to
test out theoretical perspectives on organizational change.
In this chapter I will focus primarily on findings of the
first stage of my research, the analysis of available
historical and statistical data for all the schools in my
population. Using a population ecology perspective, I will
discuss the ability of inner-city Catholic schools to
survive.

If one accepts the premise of the population ecologists
that organizations most suited to an environment will
survive while those forms not suited will die out, then,
looking at the number of Catholic school closings in the
inner city, one might conclude that such schools simply do
not "fit" their environment. They appear to be a vanishing
breed soon to be extinct. Yet some schools are surviving
and apparently adapting or evolving into newer, more
appropriate forms. Population ecology contributes to an
understanding of the process of organizational adaptation

that makes survival possible.

The theoretical framework proposed by the population ecologists (and discussed in Chapter 1) led me to expect the following: 1) the schools most vulnerable to political interference will be those with diffuse goals, uncertain support, precarious or illegitimate values, and a declining demand for their services; 2) the density of the population of inner-city Catholic schools will affect their survival and death rates; 3) the school's age, size, and generalist or specialist orientation will significantly affect its ability to survive; and 4) whether organizational change takes place in the school's core or in its periphery will influence the likelihood of successful adaptation. In this chapter I will examine the data on the population to see whether they support these expectations.

Closed Schools in the Population

As was noted in the last chapter, in addition to the sixty-two schools[1] open at the time of my research, I also looked at data from thirty-two comparable Catholic parochial elementary schools that had closed. Since population

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[1]While sixty-two surviving schools were included in my research, in some of the tables that follow, they are counted as sixty-four schools. That is because Our Lady of the Westside which was counted as a single school in my research, consists of three separate campuses which were individual parish schools until the late 1970s. Because this consolidation did not result in the closing of any of the three schools involved, the analysis of enrollment data continued to treat the individual campuses as schools.

ecologists would explain their closing by stating that they were less well-suited to their environment than the schools which survived, it is important to look at the closed schools to come to a clearer understanding of why they were vulnerable. Identifying factors that contributed to the closing of these thirty-two schools will also help identify factors which facilitated adaptation and enabled the sixty-two to survive.

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A Turbulent Environment:
Diffuse Goals, Uncertain Support, Precarious Values,
Declining Demand for Service

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While it is difficult to explain individual school closings, looking at the thirty-two closed schools as a group clarifies the impact of environmental turbulence. Radical changes in the population--whether that be a loss of Catholic population, or a loss of total population, or a racial shift in the population of the area--threaten the schools' ability to survive. This makes sense from an organizational perspective because population changes demand a readjustment of goals and values; they mean a loss of traditional support and a loss of the traditional student group.

Loss of Total Population

Half of the thirty-two closed schools relevant to my study had been located in areas of the city where population losses were heavy. Seven of the schools that closed were in

an area that lost almost half (48 percent) of its population
between 1960 and 1980. An eighth school was in an area that
lost well over a third (38 percent) of its population.
Another eight were located in areas of the city reflecting a
20 to 34 percent decline in total population (See Map 3 in
Appendix 1.). Even becoming more generalist in orientation,
moving from a religious to a more academic mission, could
not ensure the survival of these schools; there were just
too many schools to serve the diminished number of children
in these areas.

The histories of these schools and parishes speak of
gang activity driving families from the neighborhoods, and
of urban renewal destroying housing stock and forcing
families to move. In some areas the continuation of white
flight reduced the population. Those who remained lacked
financial resources to support the schools. In these areas
of population loss, the fate of the school was usually tied
to the parish. Seven of these schools closed completely, as
did their sponsoring parishes. Five of them became involved
with their parishes in consolidations. Only in four cases
did the parishes survive the years immediately following the
closing of their schools.

Declining Catholic Population

The two areas with the heaviest loss of total
population also suffered the greatest loss of Catholic
population between 1960 and 1970...59 percent and 49

percent. Given these high population losses, a loss of ten schools (eight of them relevant to my study) out of thirty-two schools is not surprising. The combination of a severe decline in the total pool of possible students and the loss of Catholic population meant a radically reduced demand for Catholic education. Survival necessitated making the school more attractive to the remaining population, but that in turn tended to threaten both the school's legitimacy and its basis of financial support. The earliest school closings of my study took place in these two areas of the city.

The Impact of Racial Transition

The remaining 50 percent of Catholic school closings relevant to my study occurred in areas of the city that were undergoing racial transition from 1960 and into the '80s. These areas showed relatively stable or even growing populations; several areas, for example, showed a growth in total population of around 10 percent. But the growth was in numbers of blacks, while the white population left the area (See Map 3.).

In an area whose population changed from 35 percent black in 1970 to 73 percent black in 1980, nine schools (seven of them relevant to my study) closed during the seventies and early eighties. Four schools relevant to my study closed in an area whose black population increased from 62 percent of the population to 98 percent. Four more relevant schools closed during the eighties in an area whose

black population grew from just over 50 to over 80 percent
of the total population. The final closed school in this
group of thirty-two was located in an area whose population
grew by almost 10 percent as the proportion of blacks grew
from just under one-third to almost three-fourths.

All four of these areas had been heavily Catholic in
1970 (41 to 51 percent with some local community areas as
high as 95 percent Catholic), so racial transition also
meant a heavy loss of Catholics as whites left these
neighborhoods. All sixteen of these schools in racially
changing areas closed in the 1970s and '80s. In this group,
the fate of the school and parish were not so closely tied.
Both parishes and schools had more time to adapt than those
that closed in the '60s, and, as a result, they were more
able to develop options.

Choosing organizational death

One option was to choose organizational death for the
parish school rather than to remain viable by making the
school relevant to a new population. Parish histories
reveal several cases of inability or unwillingness to adapt;
schools made no attempt at outreach to the new population.[2]
Pastors simply recommended the closing of the school--or of
both the school and the parish. They were satisfied that

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[2]In one case, only after the school had closed, did the
parish initiate a program of ministry to the blacks and
Hispanics who had moved into the neighborhood.

the school had fulfilled its original mission and was no longer necessary. In three cases, both school and parish closed. In five, the schools closed but the parishes remained open.

Consolidation as a form of adaptation

A second option for parishes was to consolidate with neighboring parishes and/or schools. Reorganization into consolidations and clusters, as they were called in several areas of the city, was an attempt to coordinate parish services and avoid duplication in an area where the Catholic population had dramatically decreased. In four cases, both parish and school consolidated. In two, the schools consolidated and the parishes closed. In the final two cases, the schools consolidated with neighboring schools but the parishes remained separate entities.

Often consolidation was an early response, taking place while school enrollment was still good--sometimes even growing. In the consolidations of the sixties and seventies, the school remained closely linked to the sponsoring parish/es, maintaining a strong parochial identity. In the eighties, a new pattern of consolidation began to emerge, one which gave evidence of a growing detachment of the school from the parish. Schools were renamed, given a new identity distinct from the parish. The school became less parochial in nature and identity, and the parish began relinquishing its responsibility for the

school.

Population Density and School Closings

Catholic schools located in areas with a greater density of Catholic schools face more competition, and therefore, a greater likelihood of organizational death. This tendency described by the population ecologists is further strengthened by an archdiocesan commitment to make Catholic education available in every part of the city. Where numerous parish schools remain in close proximity, a reflection of the ethnic histories of the area, some will inevitably close or consolidate. In areas where schools are fewer in number and at a greater distance from each other, the likelihood of survival is much greater, despite population loss and racial transition.

The two areas with the greatest number of school closings each had a base of over twenty schools. Each lost nine schools, though other factors were quite different. One had lost almost half its population while the other had grown by 12 percent. One had long been a black area while the other was undergoing racial transition during the seventies and eighties. Areas with eleven or fewer schools, however, never lost more than one school; this was true even in the area experiencing the second highest loss of population--38 percent of its total population and 49 percent of its Catholic population (See Map 4.).

It is clear that environmental turbulence and
population density have a profound impact on Catholic
schools in the inner city. Certain areas are clearly more
vulnerable than others. But within those areas, some
schools are more likely to survive than others. To
understand why certain schools appear more vulnerable than
others, I turn now to the impact of school size on survival.

School Size and Survival

The most obvious fact that surfaces when looking at the
total population of schools is that the larger the school's
enrollment in 1960, the greater its chance for survival.
This is precisely what population ecologists have found in
studies of other organizations. The smallest schools were
most vulnerable and found it difficult to endure long enough
to make the necessary adaptations. Larger schools were
cushioned against enrollment declines and had some time to
adjust to their new reality, to try to stabilize enrollment
and re-establish their legitimacy (See Table 4-1.).

Table 4-1. Size of Enrollment and School Survival

Status of School	# of Schls	Mean '60 Enrollmt	Mean '70 Enrollmt	Mean '80 Enrollmt
closed during '60s	6	303	N.A.	N.A.
closed during '70s	12	371	295	N.A.
closed '80 to '86	14	613	348	242
open 1987-1988	64	737	494	347

Archdiocesan policy in 1987 set 200 as the critical
number of students needed for a school to continue to
operate, but my data suggest that in the sixties and
seventies the critical number in inner-city parochial
schools was 300 students. Once enrollment fell below that
number, the school's closing appeared to be almost
inevitable.

Most schools suffered significant declines during the
period from 1960 to 1986.[3] But absolute numbers are far
more significant than relative decline in enrollment in
attempting to explain school closings. For example, two
school buildings that closed in the early seventies had
actually increased enrollment between 1960 and 1970.[4]
Others had experienced only minimal declines (as low as .4
percent)--while some suffered substantial declines, losing

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[3]Even the schools that remained open in 1988 as I
completed my fieldwork, had suffered an average enrollment
decline of 50 percent between 1960 and 1987.

[4]One of these schools had experienced a significant
increase in enrollment--36 percent. The other had increased
enrollment by a still healthy 11 percent. Both schools
showing increases were involved in parish as well as school
consolidations, which possibly indicates that the parishes
themselves, rather than the schools, were in crisis. Also
interesting, in both cases the parish church located at this
site became the worship center for the newly organized
parish, while the school building on this site closed and
the partner parish's school became the site of the newly
organized parish school. Apparently this arrangement
assists in pulling together the people from both parishes,
giving them some sense of continuity--each parish suffers
some loss but each also retains an important piece of parish
life. Parishioners are less likely to feel that they have
surrendered their entire identity and are being swallowed up
by the other.

up to 48 percent of their students. These losses in
enrollment, however, were actually smaller than losses
incurred during this same time period in many of the schools
that survived this decade (See Table 4-2.). Larger schools
simply had more students to lose.

Table 4-2. Enrollment Changes in the Population

	STATUS OF THE SCHOOL		
Enrollment Change	Closed during '70s	Closed during '80-'86	Open '87-'88
Maximum Enrollmt Growth, '60-'70	36.3%	10.3%	25.8%
Maximum Enrollmt Loss, '60-'70	47.6%	65.9%	73.0%
Mean Enrollment Change, '60-'70	-15.5%	-36.8%	-29.9%
Maximum Enrollmt Growth, '70-'80	N.A.	No schl grew	37.1%
Maximum Enrollmt Loss, '70-'80	N.A.	67.9%	75.0%
Mean Enrollmt Change, '70-'80	N.A.	-26.0%	-22.9%
n=	12	14	64

*St. Thaddeus is not included in these decline figures,
because it did not open until 1968. Enrollment in that
school increased by 27.8 percent between 1970 and 1986.

Enrollment decline took place gradually over decades in
some schools, while others experienced sudden and severe
enrollment losses. In several cases the black Catholic
enrollment dropped while the non-Catholic numbers remained

fairly stable, raising legitimacy questions--some parishes and the archdiocese were reportedly less willing to support these schools than they had been when the schools enrolled a higher proportion of black Catholics.

The fourteen schools that closed between 1980 and 1986 had a mean loss of 26 percent of their enrollment[5] during the seventies, a loss very similar to the 23 percent experienced in the sixty-four school buildings still open at the time of my research. Several schools closing during this period experienced much greater declines, losing over 60 percent of their student population. Of the five schools with smaller enrollment losses (under 20 percent), three chose to enter into consolidations; like many of the consolidations of the seventies, these appear to have been preventive measures, an attempt to secure the school's future when further decline appeared inevitable. The other two schools with small declines during the seventies had experienced significant enrollment declines earlier; by 1980 they were small schools and much more vulnerable.

The mean 1980 enrollment for schools closing from 1980 to 1986 was 242 students; this compares with a mean of 347

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[5]One school showed an enrollment loss of 17 percent but it is significant to note that this school had merged with three other schools during the '70s. That meant that the 1980 enrollment figure reflected enrollment from four parishes. Those four parishes had a total of 1054 students enrolled in their schools in 1970; by 1980 the combined school had a total of only 236 students. Thus the actual loss of students was closer to 78 percent. This would bring the mean enrollment loss for these schools to 30 percent.

for schools that survived this time period. Only one school in this group had a 1980 enrollment of over 280 students; that school had 524 students but by the time the school closed six years later, its enrollment had dropped to 201.[6]

The enrollment records of the Office of Catholic Education show that several of these schools that had maintained stability during the preceding decade, suffered unusual enrollment drops during the early '80s. One school with an enrollment of 245 in 1980, dropped to 186 students by 1985; another with 211 students in 1980 had only 108 in 1985; another dropped from 170 in 1980 to 95 in 1984.

Total enrollment decline between 1960 and the last recorded enrollment for the fourteen schools that closed during this period ranged from a low of 35 percent to a high of almost 90 percent with a mean decline of 63 percent. Again, however, it is important to note that the mean enrollment decline for the surviving schools was over 50 percent; their maximum enrollment loss was 89 percent. Clearly, if declining demand for service were the major threat to organizational survival, many of these surviving schools would also have closed.

Organizational Persistence

Organizational persistence is the final factor to be

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[6]If I exclude this larger school from the 1980 enrollment figures, the mean enrollment for these schools drops to 216.

considered in examining the total population of Catholic schools in the black inner city. For several reasons, the tendency toward organizational persistence was almost non-existent in this part of the city during the sixties and early seventies. The population dependent on the school was relatively new to the school and therefore did not have enough invested there to fight for its survival; second, dependence was reduced because there were other Catholic schools in the immediate vicinity; and third, those who may have wanted to keep the school open were without financial resources or political power.

In most of the schools that closed during the seventies, the decline of the parish community made it impossible to support the school and many of these schools showed a radical shift to heavy archdiocesan subsidy. This shift left schools more vulnerable to Cardinal Cody's authority and to the school closings he ordered in the early seventies.

It is important to note, however, that the manner in which Cody closed Catholic schools in the black inner city during the early seventies probably provided the stimulus needed for organized resistance to further closings, thus making organizational persistence a factor in Catholic inner-city school survival during the last half of the decade and into the eighties. There were no school closings in the relevant population between 1976 and 1981. As Cody

imposed wave upon wave of school closings during the first half of the decade, protests and resistance from parishes and individuals had escalated. Then in 1975 the Association of Chicago Priests and the archdiocesan school board strongly criticized Cody's decision to close four more inner-city schools, and they publicly called for a change in policy (Dahm 1981). Formal statements by these groups as well as by the priests' senate, and editorials in the Chicago papers succeeded not only in exerting enough political pressure to prevent future closings, but also probably helped forge a new legitimacy for these schools.

In the eighties, the tendency toward organizational persistence was again weakened by the new consolidations which separated schools from their parent parishes. Whether intentional or not, this separation has made resistance to school closings less likely and reduced the political power of dependent constituencies who might otherwise organize to keep the schools open. By cutting the school's ties to the parish, the most effective voices of resistance--the parishioners--are to a great extent lost, or at least significantly weakened. The sense of ownership is diminished and I would expect that many parishioners may be more indifferent to the fate of the school. For at least half of the parishioners,[7] the school is physically

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[7]I'm speaking here of the parishioners in the parish/es whose school building/s closed when two or more buildings consolidated.

distanced by having been removed from the parish plant, and for all of them, psychological distance is created by the loss of the parish name. While this trend is too recent to be reflected in the closings included in my research, it warrants careful observation of future closings.

Despite continued decline, however, sixty-two Catholic elementary schools in my population (located in sixty-four buildings) were open at the time of my fieldwork--and many of them were doing well and beginning to reverse their downward trends. I now turn my attention to these schools.

Surviving Schools in the Population

The surviving schools managed to endure many of the same challenges that the now closed schools had faced. In an attempt to understand the factors that enabled these sixty-two schools to adapt, I will look briefly at their histories, recent enrollment trends, and their current efforts to increase enrollment and stabilize their situation.

History of the Schools

Like their counterparts that had closed during the eighties before I began my fieldwork, the surviving schools included in my research population had a diverse history. The sample of schools in which I conducted interviews was representative of these various groups (See Table 4-3.).

Table 4-3. Histories of the Surviving Schools

FOUNDING DATE	Schools in the Population #	%	Schools in the Interview Sample #	%
1850-1875	6	9.4%	5	15.2%
1876-1900	13	20.3	5	15.2
1901-1925	35	54.7	20	60.6
1926-1950	8	12.5	1	3.0
Post-1950 *	2	3.1	2	6.1
TOTAL N=	64	100%	33	100%

DECADE OF RACIAL TRANSITION	Population #	%	Interview Schls #	%
1920s & '30s	6	9.4%	5	15.2%
1940s & '50s	15	23.4	6	18.2
1960s	22	34.4	10	30.3
1970s	11	17.2	4	12.1
1980s	6	9.4	4	12.1
Not Applicable **	4	6.2	4	12.1
TOTAL N=	64	100%	33	100%

* Founding dates for the final two schools were 1952 and 1968.
** Three schools were founded as black schools by parishes originally established to serve the black Catholic community. The final school is located in a commercial rather than residential area of the city which makes it difficult to speak of racial transition. Black enrollment in this school increased somewhat in the '80s, after having climbed gradually throughout the seventies, but school administration reported that it limits black enrollment in order to keep a racial balance.

In addition to the historical diversity, there was a great deal of geographic diversity among the schools included in this research. The schools which had most recently become black schools and those which were still

somewhat integrated at the time of my research tended to be schools on the far western edge of the city, the more northern schools included in my study, and some of the central area schools that had recently attracted back a more metropolitan population mix.

Neither age, nor period of racial transition seem to have significantly affected survival rates. It is likely that as more Catholic inner-city schools closed, competition for students decreased and schools that managed to hold on longest became less vulnerable; I would expect the organizational death rate to begin decreasing as the niche becomes less over-populated with such schools.

Another factor that may have influenced the schools' ability to survive is their willingness or ability to adapt, to become more generalist in orientation; or perhaps they had a stronger hold on support and legitimacy which enabled them to survive where others failed. The interviews and case studies of the next two phases of research, however, were necessary to test out these assumptions.

Enrollment Trends

Enrollment losses were heavy in most of the schools in the research population. Some of the schools I looked at, however, had actually begun to reverse the downward trend in enrollment and to show recent gains.

Growth Since 1960

Of the sixty-four schools, three were larger in 1986 than they had been in 1960; these were exceptional cases, to be sure. One, mentioned in a footnote above, had only opened in 1968 and was showing normal growth (it had gained fifty-seven students since 1970); it appears unusual now only because of the major downward trend throughout the rest of the archdiocesan school system. The second school, showing a growth of almost 18 percent over its 1960 enrollment, had learned to take advantage of its ecological niche. This parish had lost housing units during the '50s due to the development of the West Side Medical Center; as a result, enrollment was very low in 1960 (163 students). It is probable that over time, the school came to provide an attractive and convenient educational alternative for the children of Medical Center employees. The third school, showing only minimal growth (7 percent between 1960 and 1986), is building on a long, strong, and vibrant reputation within the black Catholic community in Chicago. This reputation, along with the charisma of the black pastor of this parish, attracts black students from across Chicago's entire south side.

Stabilizing Enrollment

The other sixty-one schools have shown enrollment losses since 1960. Looking at the more recent time periods, however, more schools seem to be turning around and

successfully winning back some of the numbers they had lost.
During the decade of the seventies, eleven of these schools
showed enrollment gains (ranging from a modest 2 percent to
more substantial gains of 29 to 37 percent). During the
early eighties, the years immediately preceding my research,
nineteen of the sixty-four schools showed some increase,
with one school increasing by as much as 86 percent. In
addition, enrollment losses in the eighties tended to be
significantly lower than in the seventies, although it is
important to remember that both losses and gains have
probably been moderated because changes were based on a six-
year period rather than a ten-year period as they were in
the seventies.

While only one of the eleven schools showing growth
during the seventies was able to sustain that growth through
the first part of the eighties, eight schools had more
students in 1986 than they did in 1970. At the other end of
the spectrum, enrollment declined by over three hundred
students in each of eleven schools during that period.[8]

Some of the most dramatic recoveries (enrollment
increases in the first half of the eighties) came as a
response to some of the most serious enrollment losses of
the preceding decade. The four schools showing increases
between 32 and 87 percent in the '86 data, had shown

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[8]Two extreme cases saw enrollment drop by almost eleven
hundred students during this period.

enrollment losses of between 23 and 46 percent in the 1980 data.[9] All four of them had undergone racial transitions beginning in the seventies and, for two of them, continuing into the eighties. It is likely that school leadership realized that continued decline would endanger the school's ability to survive, and that they therefore worked diligently to attract a new population into the school and to reverse the downward trend in enrollment.

Of the twenty-five schools that lost more than 30 percent of their enrollment during the seventies, nine had reversed that pattern and shown some increase in enrollment during the following six years. Five others significantly slowed their losses and enrollment seemed to stabilize near the 1980 level.[10] Only four of these schools suffered continued declines in enrollment of close to 30 percent or more; two of the four had gone through racial transition in the seventies and the other two in the sixties. A fifth school, which had lost 23 percent of its 1980 enrollment after having lost 40 percent of its 1970 enrollment during that decade, had undergone racial transition already in the 1920s. In this case, economic decline had as devastating an effect on the Catholic school as racial transition had in

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[9]Based on enrollment differences from 1980 to 1986 and from 1970 to 1980; enrollment figures obtained from The Official Catholic Directory (Kenedy).

[10]These lost less than ten percent of their 1980 enrollment.

other neighborhoods.

These data are both interesting and significant because they indicate that it is possible to curb enrollment decline and exert some control over this vital aspect of a school's reality. It is unclear, however, what caused the fluctuating patterns of enrollment that are seen in some of these schools--where a dramatic loss of students at the time of transition was followed by a rather rapid recovery as black students were brought into the school, then another decline as the school lost its black population...and sometimes a period where enrollment stabilizes. While interviews conducted with the principals and pastors of the thirty-three sample schools helped bring some clarity to this phenomenon, the enrollment and historical data I had collected provided some clues.

Factors Influencing Enrollment

As I analyzed the enrollment data on the remaining Catholic elementary schools in the black inner city, several factors seemed to influence a school's ability to stabilize its enrollment. Consolidating with neighboring parish schools secured enrollment for some of the schools. Racial instability in schools just becoming black caused serious enrollment problems. And in some cases, the school's efforts to recruit new students from outside the immediate neighborhood apparently resulted in enrollment gains.

Consolidations

Consolidations positively affected the enrollment in a few schools in the population. One school showed a slight increase in 1980 over its 1970 enrollment due to a consolidation which took place in 1971. Between 1980 and 1986 enrollment increased significantly in two schools, growths of 86 percent in a school which consolidated in 1984, and of 73 percent in another which was part of a cluster consolidation taking place in 1983. These cases of rapidly increasing enrollment can probably be attributed to students transferring into these schools from the buildings that closed as a result of the reorganization. By combining with a neighboring school, the surviving school decreases competition, thus strengthening its own resource base.

In the face of declining enrollment, consolidating schools can apparently stabilize enrollment or initiate growth by consolidating the students in one school building, while actually continuing to lose students.[11] While enrollment declines are often significantly reduced in the building which remains open, large numbers of students from the school buildings which closed apparently choose to

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[11]Jesus, Our Brother, for example, is housed in the former St. Mary Magdalene School building. When comparing St. Mary Magdalene's 1970 enrollment to the enrollment in the same building in 1986, we find enrollment increased by four students or approximately 1 percent. When looking, however, at the 1970 enrollment of the three schools that consolidated to form this new one, the school actually lost 633 students, or almost 59 percent of its enrollment.

transfer to the public school rather than to the newly consolidated Catholic school. When comparing the 1986 enrollment in a consolidated school to the 1970 enrollments of all the parish schools which participated in that consolidation, I found that enrollment declines continued to be high--ranging from 37 to 67 percent in the consolidations in my population. This suggests that the consolidation increases the legitimacy of the building which remains open, but the newly organized school has, at best, questionable legitimacy to those whose buildings were closed. In the language of the population ecologists, this kind of reorganization is a radical change which threatens the school's survival by weakening its legitimacy.

Consolidating does not always ensure survival for the building chosen to house the new school; sometimes it simply postpones the death.[12] What is important is that by consolidating, a school often gains the time and resources it needs to adapt to its rapidly changing environment. By combining enrollment and concentrating resources, the newly structured school may increase its viability and its

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[12]A powerful example of this is the All Saints Consolidation. All Saints was a consolidation of four ethnic parishes and their schools. Holy Rosary School and parish closed and consolidated with All Saints School and parish in 1972; that same year St. Nicholas School closed and consolidated with St. Louis School. The following year the three remaining parishes and two remaining schools consolidated to form the All Saints Consolidation which utilized the All Saints Church but the St. Louis school building. The parish continues to the present time, but the consolidated school closed in 1986.

potential for attracting and meeting the needs of a new
population.

Degree of Racial Stability

Analysis of enrollment data revealed a relationship
between large increases of black students and heavy
enrollment losses. Of the sixty-two schools,[13] thirty-nine
showed relatively little change--less than 25 percentage
points--from 1970 until 1985 in the proportion of students
who were black. Thirty-eight of these schools were already
very heavily black in 1970, and they remained racially
stable throughout the time of my research. A thirty-ninth
school also had a relatively small increase of black
students, but that school had been almost entirely white in
1970.[14] These schools that were relatively stable had a
mean enrollment loss during this time period of 25 percent
of their student body (See Table 4-4.).

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[13]The three campuses of Our Lady of the Westside are
now being counted as one school.

[14]This school's black population grew from five black
students in 1970 to ninety-two black students in 1985, an
increase in proportion of black students of approximately 21
percentage points.

Table 4-4. Racial Instability and Enrollment Loss

	Racially Stable Schools	Moderate Increase in Blacks	Large Increase in Blacks
Mean Black Enrollmt, 1970	93.5%	21.6%	5.8%
Mean Black Enrollmt, 1985	96.1%	64.9%	94.5%
Mean Enrollment Loss, 1970-1985	25.0%	30.5%	52.6%
n=	39	11	12

* There was a moderate positive correlation (r=.56) between the increase in the proportion of black students and the loss of total enrollment.

The eleven schools increasing their proportion of black students by between 25 and 66 percentage points showed a mean enrollment decline of approximately 30 percent. These schools fell into two basic groups: 1) those which were presently in the midst of racial transition--schools with minimal or no black students in 1970 but which were integrated at the time of my research, and 2) those which had begun the transition earlier, usually during the sixties, and had had a racially mixed student body in 1970 which at the time of my research had become resegregated as black schools.

The proportion of black students enrolled in twelve schools increased by more than 67 percentage points. As a group these schools showed the greatest decline in enrollment--a mean loss of over 52 percent of their 1970 enrollment. These were schools which had begun the process of racial transition during the late 1960s or the 1970s.

Five of these schools had no black students in 1970; the others had a few, but were still heavily white schools. By 1985 their enrollment was heavily black--100 percent in five schools, in the 90 percent range for five others, with the final two falling in the 70 percent range. It is not surprising that such a drastic change in the student population would cause a heavy loss of student numbers. Rapid racial change with the corresponding change in religious background[15] leaves the school struggling; goals become more diffuse, support wavers, traditional values come into question...all of which--according to the population ecologists--leave the school more vulnerable to political interference and organizational death.

Extending the Borders of the School

Another way these parochial schools adapted to the loss of their traditional population was by moving beyond the parish boundaries to attract students from outside the immediate neighborhood. Schools which showed enrollment gains from 1970 to 1985 tended to have a larger proportion of their students living more than a mile and a half from the school than did schools incurring the heaviest losses in enrollment (enrollment loss of over 65 percent). But the data indicate that there are no absolutes in this regard.

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[15]Increase in the proportion of black students was strongly correlated with an increase in the proportion of non-Catholic students (r=.72).

Some schools whose students had come almost exclusively from the neighborhood suffered only minimal enrollment losses while others with a majority of students coming from outside the neighborhood had lost a significant portion of their 1970 enrollment--up to 62 percent.

Thus, the enrollment and historical data confirm that as population declined in the inner city, the ecological niche could no longer support the multitude of Catholic elementary schools left behind by the ethnic parishes which had saturated the niche. Schools began to close--first those which were smallest and therefore most vulnerable, and then those which had been larger but for some reason did not make the changes necessary to stabilize enrollment and to survive. In the sixties and seventies a strong interdependence between school and parish tied their fates together; when the survival of one was threatened, so was the survival of the other. In the eighties, however, for better or for worse, parish and school became increasingly organizationally distinct.

In terms of the viability of surviving schools, it is clear that as neighboring Catholic schools close, the remaining schools face decreased competition--which would be expected to help stabilize enrollment and make organizational persistence more possible. At the same time, however, the enrollment data shows continued declines for most schools. This suggests that the closings and/or

consolidations may also decrease the legitimacy of the entire system, further threatening the survival of the remaining schools.

This phase of the research clarified what has been happening in this population of schools since 1960. The findings demonstrate the validity of the key arguments of the population ecologists. But they also make it apparent that while population ecology provides some explanatory power, it clearly does not explain the whole reality. Much more is going on in these schools than we can ascertain from studying the schools as single units. While some general patterns or tendencies are evident, there are always exceptions--schools that do not meet my expectations. Resource dependency provides some necessary balance to the perspective presented in this chapter. To examine the issues of dependency, interorganizational relationships, autonomy, and legitimacy in inner-city Catholic schools I turn in the next chapter to the interview findings.

CHAPTER 5

RESOURCE DEPENDENCY IN INNER-CITY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS:
INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The interviews with the principals and pastors of the thirty-three schools included in the second phase of my research enabled me to explore the importance of resource dependency in understanding the reality of Catholic elementary schools in Chicago's black inner city. The sample of schools chosen for the interview phase of my research was carefully drawn to be representative of the population, reflecting all the variation present there. It included the three schools which had been founded as black Catholic schools plus twenty that had been stable black schools since 1970 or before. Eight had shown a moderate increase in their black population between 1970 and 1986 (three of these had been integrated schools in 1970 but by 1986 they were resegregated as black schools; the other five ranged from 39 to 63 percent black in 1986). The proportion of black students had increased dramatically in the final five schools in the sample; the enrollment in these schools was between 72 and 100 percent black in 1986.

Schools in the sample showed a wide variety of experiences in terms of enrollment gains and losses between

1970 and 1986, and included both neighborhood schools and those which drew significant numbers of students from outside the immediate vicinity. Nine schools had more than 90 percent of their population coming from within a mile and a half radius of the school while six had more than 50 percent of their population coming from more than a mile and a half away.

This chapter will present the findings of the interviews I conducted with the principals and pastors of these thirty-three schools. I will begin by explaining the expectations with which I began my interviews, and the reason I readjusted my perceptions and my expectations. Then after introducing the new groupings of schools that emerged in the course of the interviews, I will describe each category, its special characteristics, and how issues of resource dependency have affected the sample schools that belong to that category.

<u>Original Expectations</u>

The preliminary background work and the data gathered in phase one of my research had reinforced my belief that racial transition in the inner city had resulted in dramatic shifts and demanded radical adaptation if these schools were to survive. Because of this I had divided the schools in my population into three groups: those that had traditionally served the black Catholic community, those that had recently

undergone racial transition but which were now black
schools, and those that were currently undergoing racial
transition. I expected these groupings to explain the
differences in resources available to the schools in my
population, and also differences in autonomy and legitimacy-
-and the different directions I expected to find schools
moving in their attempts to stabilize their situation and
secure their survival. These expectations, as noted in
Chapter 3, developed out of the insights of the resource
dependency perspective.

In brief, I expected to find that schools that had
traditionally served Chicago's black Catholic community
(since the early 1950s or before) were operating in a fairly
stable environment, securely linked to their parishes which
continued to provide these schools with legitimacy and
direction. I expected the mission of these schools to be
traditional--with an emphasis on evangelization as well as
the transmission of a distinctively black but clearly
religious culture. Radical changes in policy or in the
legitimacy myths of these schools would be unnecessary and
possibly threatening to their relatively stable environment.

I expected schools which had more recently experienced
racial transition (during the sixties and seventies) to be
stabilizing now. Since they had survived the transition, it
seemed reasonable to assume that they had adapted, or were
well on their way to adapting to a form more suited to their

new environment. I expected that new form to be more
detached from the parish; because of the radical changes
that took place both in the church and in society during the
sixties, I thought it improbable that these schools would
retain the kind of strong links with their parishes that had
been present in the past. While I expected the parish to
remain a source of support and legitimacy, it would not be
the sole source, or probably even the primary source. As
schools reached out to new resource providers, I expected to
see their mission becoming more focussed on education and
less on religion, and their legitimacy myths to center on
what the Catholic church could provide to the school's new
population, how it could serve that population rather than
how it could incorporate it into the parish community. At
the same time, I expected the broader base of support, the
multiple resource providers, to leave the school with more
autonomy, more freedom to define itself, its mission, and
its future.

I thought that schools presently undergoing racial
transition would be operating in an extremely turbulent
environment. Because both parish and school would be in
crisis, and because of the lack of clarity I expected to
find about what the school should be doing, who it should be
serving and how best to do that, I expected the parish's
relationship to the school to be an ambivalent one. At
times the school will seem the only vital part of the

parish, its one hope for survival; at other times, however, it will seem like a horrible financial drain on the parish, one that possibly threatens the parish's existence. The parish might tend to resist changes in the mission and direction of the school, wanting to cling to what was known rather than risk losing all by moving to something new.

Because the parish is no longer a reliable source of support, I expected the school to be in the process of negotiating new dependency relationships, and thus be extremely vulnerable to political interference. Multiple constituencies with competing interests force the school in transition into a position where its mission and goals are necessarily ambiguous; it must be able to appeal to whichever group is most vital to the school's survival in a given situation or crisis...to meet the demands of that group and prove its legitimacy--at least for the time being. This is a process that Wagner (1977) calls serial advocacy, a policy of switching, as the situation demanded, to whatever organizational model and legitimacy myth had the most credibility in a given situation. Table 5-1 presents an overview of the characteristics I expected to find in the schools in which I did interviews.

Table 5-1. Expected Pattern of School Characteristics

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTIC:	TYPE OF SCHOOL		
	TRADITIONAL BLACK CATH.	RECENT BLACK	NOW IN TRANSITION
ENVIRONMENT	stable	stabilizing	turbulent
LINKAGE TO PARISH	secure	detached, weakened	ambivalent
AUTONOMY	parish-controlled	autonomy growing/free	politically vulnerable
LEGITIMACY BASE	parish	extra-parochial	serial advocacy
MISSION	religious	educational	ambiguous

Changing Perceptions: the Extent of Turbulence

What I had failed to appreciate, however, until I began the interviews, was the full extent of turbulence in the organizational environment. Racial instability posed a serious threat to many of these schools; but all of them faced an extremely challenging environment that demanded adaptation.

School leaders often spoke extensively of the impact of racial changes on the school, but I found great diversity within my original three groups and sometimes surprising similarities across groups. Even in the schools that I had expected to be the most "stable," schools that had been the bulwark of the black Catholic community in Chicago for generations, critical changes had been occurring over the past twenty years, changes that challenged my original assumptions.

Though racially stable, parishes in the traditional black neighborhoods of Chicago had experienced economic decline and the loss of middle-class blacks. As a result they often experienced a turbulence and loss of resources as seriously life-threatening to their parishes and schools as those caused by racial transition. Similarly, the ideological shifts of the sixties called traditional legitimacy myths into question in racially stable neighborhoods as well as those presently in transition. In fact, changes were sometimes even more dramatic in the traditional black communities because racial stability encouraged the development of black awareness and autonomy to a degree not possible in communities where the black presence was relatively new. In addition, priests opting to work in the black inner city tended to be more liberal; their pastoral philosophy, in keeping with Vatican II's Pastoral on the Church in the Modern World, demanded respect for and sensitivity to the religious background and beliefs of those to whom they ministered.

Upward Mobility and Economic Decline

Upward mobility in the black community meant that a middle-class black Catholic population had abandoned some of these parishes and moved to better neighborhoods, just as middle-class white ethnics had done. The new population was lower-income, less stable, and less Catholic. Economic decline in the neighborhood, loss of jobs, loss of

businesses, deterioration of housing stock and the urban
infrastructure also seriously affected these schools...and
limited their ability to attract a student population that
could afford the tuition needed to keep the school open.
While the causes were different, the need for adaptation to
a radically changed environment was the same across my
original three categories.

Legitimacy Shifts, Religious and Civil

Changes in thinking and in values brought about by the
Second Vatican Council and the Civil Rights Movement
affected Catholic schools in the traditional black community
as well as, and based on the evidence of my interviews,
often even more than they did schools only recently
undergoing racial transition. Contrary to my original
expectations, schools with a strong and stable relationship
with their parishes were often freer to be innovative in
their philosophy and outreach. They had earned the trust of
the parish, were a valued part of the parish, and did not
have to prove their legitimacy in the way that many of those
less experienced in the black community had to. They were
less concerned with religious requirements and "blatant
Catholicism" than those still dependent on Catholic support
as they desperately tried to prove that they could be both
black and Catholic despite the religious backgrounds of
their students.

Throughout the entire population of schools, adaptation

to a new reality was absolutely necessary. In almost all of the schools in which I conducted interviews there had been some serious change in the school's environment. This resulted in a loss of enrollment, forcing a decision to either close the school or try to adapt to its changed reality. Adaptation, while necessary for survival, often threatened the school's legitimacy, which in turn negatively affected enrollment. Thus, in many schools enrollment increased after the initial transition, but soon declined again. Often this pattern results from the shifting base of legitimacy as the school's mission is renegotiated.

The Emergence of New Categories

Through the interviews I learned that the school's ability to achieve organizational stability, to ensure continued access to the resources it needed, to balance its dependencies and preserve its autonomy depended less on the exact nature of the environmental demands which necessitated adaptation, and more on the resources a school had available at the time. The strategies that the school chose in order to accomplish the necessary shifts to secure its future were also extremely important. What was most significant was how each school adapted, the direction in which it chose to move in response to the unique turbulence it faced. For some schools, these decisions were deliberate and leadership was acting out of deep convictions. In other cases, the decisions were apparently made by default--or out of a

series of responses to practical demands that eventually
pushed the school in a certain direction.

Out of this increased understanding, four new groupings
or categories of schools emerged, based on the school's most
significant link to resource providers. The parish-centered
school had retained a parochial identity and dependence;
resources still flowed almost entirely through the
sponsoring parish. Studying this category of schools
clarified how the traditional dependence on the parish could
be revitalized within the context of the changed reality of
the school, how the new population could be integrated into
the parish and a common culture and parochial identity could
be forged.

The isolated school had lost the parish as a reliable
resource provider but had not yet found an outside group to
replace the parish. Because it had no solid external
support base, the successful isolated school had to focus
its energies on building a strong SCHOOL community from
within--establishing a strong legitimacy with parents,
students, faculty and staff and then depending on their
support to ensure the future of the school. Studying the
isolated school clarified the impact on the school of the
parish in crisis and struggling for survival. As previously
shown, during the sixties and seventies the futures of
parishes and their schools were closely intertwined. A
parish in crisis usually meant a school in crisis and vice

versa. The school was often the first to close but parishes
frequently followed suit. Yet interviews revealed that some
isolated schools were finding ways to stabilize their own
situation despite the instability and questionable future of
their parishes.

The cooperatively-linked schools were schools involved
in creative restructuring, reaching across parish boundaries
to affiliate with neighboring Catholic elementary schools.
Especially through administrative cooperation and
initiative, these schools were able to combine resources and
coordinate efforts. Interviews in the cooperatively-linked
schools clarified the advantages and limitations of this
form of reorganization as an adaptive strategy for securing
necessary resources.

Externally-linked schools had moved even beyond the
regional parochialism of the cooperatively-linked schools.
They had attempted to forge new ties with resource providers
outside the traditional parish and school communities,
looking either to a broader Catholic base or to the broader
civic and corporate community for support. The externally-
linked schools, though fewer in number than schools in the
other three groups, were clearly the most unique adaptive
strategy. They represented the clearest break with
parochialism and were therefore most susceptible to a loss
of legitimacy within the traditional Catholic community. At
the same time, however, they showed great potential for

generating new clientele and new sources of resources--
financial backing, and legitimacy.

Changing Dependencies

It is important to note that while I categorized
schools based on their primary resource stream, many of
these schools also had a significant secondary source of
support. Similarly the schools' relationships to outside
groups varies over time due to changes in their external
environment which result in changing dependencies. These
categories were not static; the interviews indicated that
for a variety of reasons, schools occasionally moved from
one category to another. Serious economic decline might
mean that a parish-centered school finds itself isolated by
the crisis its sponsoring parish faces; then in an attempt
to secure resources for the school, a good administrator
might move the isolated school toward consolidation or some
other form of multi-school cooperative linkage. This
movement between categories will become clearer as I discuss
the interview findings.

All four of these adaptive forms encourage us to
envision new forms of Catholic elementary education. The
traditional forms will no longer secure for the schools the
resources they need. These adaptations open up new
resources for the schools and promote a new legitimacy.
Change remains threatening, and the greater the change, the

greater the threat to organizational survival. Still,
crisis stimulates a great potential for creativity and the
freedom to ask new questions and to move in new directions.
This was obvious in the schools in which I interviewed.

In the rest of this chapter, I will discuss in greater
detail these groups of schools as I came to know them
through the interviews with principals and pastors. For
each category I will describe the schools included there,
noting their similarities and differences to schools in
other categories. I will highlight any special conditions
that either encouraged or prohibited the development of this
particular strategy for adaptation. I will examine how the
traditional relationship with the parish has changed; when
the parish is no longer a reliable resource provider, I will
look at where the school is turning for support and how
secure its new dependencies are. Finally, I will explore
how changing dependencies are affecting the legitimating
myths of the school, the kinds of shifts that are occurring
in the way the school presents itself and its mission to its
constituencies.

The Parish-Centered School

As described in the second chapter, the Catholic
elementary school in Chicago has traditionally been parish-
centered. The parish-centered schools in my sample were
those which chose to remain parochial, continuing, despite
changes in their environments, to rely on the parish to

secure enrollment, financial support, and legitimacy. An
interdependent relationship between school and church
characterizes the parish-centered school, with strong and
constant interaction between the two. While the principal
oversees daily operations in the school, the pastor, by
virtue of his position as administrator of the parish,
retains final decision-making authority in the school.

The primary struggle of this first category of schools
is to build the community that was previously taken for
granted. A parish-centered school must somehow forge a
common school/parish culture--welcoming school families into
the flow of parish life. To both non-Catholic families
utilizing the parish school and parishioners not utilizing
it, the school must be accepted as an integral part of the
parish in order for this strategy to be effective. In one
parish-centered school, for example, pastor and principal in
separate interviews each described the parish as consisting
of three overlapping communities: the worship community,
the school community, and the social service community.
Anyone involved in any of the three was considered "a
parishioner," regardless of their religion or their
involvement in the worship community. The three communities
were seen as separate but equal, with the school being
recognized as a valid and vital ministry in and of itself.

Parish-Centered Schools in the Sample

Since this is the traditional form of Catholic school,

schools tend to maintain this organizational structure whenever possible. Consistent with the arguments of organizational persistence, I found that though resources available through the parish may be diminishing, schools tend to hold on to that which is familiar rather than attempting to develop other extra-parochial linkages. Those who depend on the school--parishioners, faculty and staff, pastor, and school families--will tend to resist organizational changes which may make the school more cost-efficient but which at the same time would threaten the school's existence by significantly modifying its identity and mission. People know what they have; they fear the unknown that organizational change might elicit. Only when the situation forces the school to move beyond the parish, will most move (usually reluctantly) away from the parish-centered model. Because of this, the parish-centered schools were the most common form in my sample; thirteen of the thirty-three were categorized as such.

Nine of the thirteen were clearly parish-centered; a tenth had apparently succeeded in establishing itself as a parish-centered school despite the fact that it was a black school in what had remained an elderly Polish parish. The final three, according to interviews with pastor and principal, after a period of apparent isolation, had chosen to move in this direction and were working on renewing ties with the parish.

There was a great deal of variety within the category. One school had been racially and ethnically integrated and stable for many years. Three had served Chicago's black community for forty years or more. A few were clearly neighborhood schools, while three drew the great majority (for one school, this was 94 percent) of their students from outside the immediate area (i.e., more than a mile and a half away from school). The percentage of students who were non-Catholic ranged from 37 percent to a high of 82 percent, with a mean non-Catholic enrollment of 63 percent which was close to the sample mean of 67 percent non-Catholic. The mean 1987 enrollment for these schools was 326 compared to a sample mean of 291. As would be expected, most of the large schools in my interview sample fell into this category; usually only when enrollment gets low enough to threaten survival do schools seriously consider changing their organizational form.

Resource Dependency in the Parish-Centered School

Using the interview data, I will examine the ability of the parish-centered school in the black inner city to successfully adapt according to the criteria of the resource dependency theorists. I will consider 1) whether and how the adaptation of the parish-centered school makes it capable of securing a steady flow of necessary resources; 2) the difficulties and the likelihood of uniting two diverse populations (school and parish) in order to prevent

the school's getting caught between competing demands and expectations about what it should be doing as a school; and 3) whether and how the parish-centered school established its legitimacy.

Securing Resources

Because the parish remained the sole resource stream for the parish-centered school it was absolutely necessary that the parish be stable and that the relationship between school and parish be strong.[1] The more vigorous the parish, the more likely it was for a parish-centered school to thrive. Interviews suggest, however, that stability was the result of different factors in different parishes.

While many of the parishes in this category were on relatively sound financial footing, others were not. Three of the parishes had long histories of subsidization by the archdiocese and/or a religious congregation. While leadership in these parishes foresaw the need to adjust to some reduction in archdiocesan subsidy, they considered the archdiocese a reliable source of support and expressed little or no fear that this would change in the foreseeable future.

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[1]I use the term resource stream because in actuality the parish is seldom the sole source of parish support. Many of these schools received archdiocesan subsidy and support from sharing parishes—usually suburban parishes who sent regular support to supplement the parish's own collections. But these other forms of subsidy, while benefitting the school, flowed through the parish. The parish received the money and passed it on to the school.

Several of the parish-centered schools were able to
capitalize on the past reputation of either their parish or
of the school itself. In these cases, the school could
cling to its past legitimacy as a means of support through
the period of transition. Those parishes, for example, that
were recognized as especially important to the black
community had a stability not available to those with less
visibility in the broader community. Three of the schools
in this category, while located in badly deteriorated
neighborhoods, were still regarded as "mother churches" to
great numbers of black Catholics who had moved on to more
stable neighborhoods and joined other parishes. The
commitment of Chicago's black Catholic community to these
parishes ensured their future despite dwindling parish
membership, transient populations, and extremely limited
financial resources.

Similarly, schools that had had strong reputations as
quality educational institutions before the demographic
changes occurred,[2] were more likely to retain their
legitimacy and to make the transition smoothly. This was
particularly true if leadership was welcoming of the new

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[2]Sometimes Koenig's 1980 <u>A History of the Parishes of
the Archdiocese of Chicago</u> noted the favorable reputation of
a particular school. Other times the interviews with
pastors and principals referred to it. I heard repeatedly
from them that schools that were strong, vibrant white
schools much more easily became strong, vibrant black
schools. Schools with good reputations were more likely to
attract the new black middle-class.

population. On the other hand, one of the schools in my study had flourished as a white school, but had lost credibility because the pastor resisted racial change. A change of pastor--and philosophy--was attempting to bring grassroots leadership back to the parish at the time of my research, but the pastor reported that it was much easier to restore the parish buildings than to restore people's confidence and pride in the parish.

Bringing Together Parishioners and School Families: Becoming a Parish-Centered School

Adaptation to a parish-centered school almost always demanded that two separate populations--a church population and a school population--come together as one, that they forge a common culture inclusive of both groups while continuing to respect their diversity. The pastor and principal of one of the schools striving to become parish-centered reported that demographic changes were resulting in what seemed increasingly to be two separate communities. Having fewer Catholic students in the school had weakened the links between the school and the parish, and administrators expressed their frustration in searching for ways to again strengthen those bonds.

Interviews revealed that the most successful parish-centered schools had two things in common that significantly influenced the probability of a healthy interdependence between parish and school, and a common culture and

identity: there had been a deliberate and concerted effort at rebirth as a black parish,[3] and there was significant overlap between the parish community and the school community.

Religious diversity in these schools had necessitated a stress on cultural similarity. Therefore, in thriving parish-centered schools and churches black heritage, values, and symbols had become the context in which the Catholic faith was celebrated, taught, and ritualized. This stress enabled each community to feel at home with and a part of the other.

Also significant was the reported overlap between parish membership and formal ministerial leadership within the parish. Parishioners were getting involved in the school and its work, and school parents were becoming increasingly involved in retreat groups and other activities and forms of sharing within the parish. Principals spoke of being involved in and committed to the broader parish. Similarly, they reported that young parishioners were returning to work in their home parishes after obtaining

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[3]To mark and celebrate the change from a white ethnic parish to a black parish is extremely important if the parish is to adapt to its new population. Morgan insists: "effective change also depends on changes in the images and values that are to guide action... Since organization ultimately resides in the heads of the people involved, effective organizational change implies cultural change (1986:138)." To continue operating as if the parish were still a white parish serving blacks makes a vibrant parish life impossible.

their education. The involvement of people in both the parish church and its school intensified the linkage between the two and helped forge the common identity that characterized the successful parish-centered school.

Establishing Legitimacy: Adapting the School's Mission

As would be expected, because this was the most traditional form of Catholic school organization, the legitimacy myths promoted by these schools were also the most traditional. Just as the ethnic Catholic schools of years past established their legitimacy in terms of an education which respected both the religious and the ethnic/cultural backgrounds of the students, religious heritage and black culture were stressed by the parish-centered schools in the inner city. These schools, more than any other group I studied, emphasized the religious purposes of the school and this was reflected in their documents.

Parent contract

In order to retain legitimacy with Catholic sponsors while opening the school to a non-Catholic student population, inner-city Catholic schools had developed contracts whereby school parents agreed to fulfill certain religious obligations. All but one of the thirteen schools included in this category included a section on religious requirements in the contract parents signed when enrolling

their children in the school. These contracts all required weekly Mass attendance in the parish for Catholic families. Six of them also required "regular family worship" for Protestants in their own churches; families were obliged to bring a letter from their minister stating that they were active members regularly attending that particular church. Those families not presently active in another church were required to attend the parish church.

Six schools had a mandatory monthly family Mass while a seventh had a monthly family Mass that parents were encouraged but not required to attend. Two others had less frequent mandatory family Masses throughout the school year. All but three of the schools also required a series of religious instructions for the parents of families new to the school.

Ten parish-centered schools included sanctions in the parent contract for failure to meet the religious requirements. Eight of these made continued enrollment in the school dependent on fulfillment of the contractual agreement. One's sanctions were vague and one threatened suspension. Despite these sanctions, most administrators admitted that these requirements were not actually enforced, although in some schools, board members and the pastor reportedly contacted families that had been remiss. A number of principals spoke of the difficulty of enforcing religious requirements while trying to maintain enrollment.

One pastor asserted that despite his belief about the
importance of school families participating in the church,
mandatory participation was no longer a realistic policy.
In order for a school to remain competitive, the parish
could not demand too much of the parents; there were too
many other Catholic schools eager to accept those families
he would be turning away. He suggested that new policies
must be designed to lure people into the parish worshipping
community rather than to force them to participate.

It is likely that the contractual religious
requirements have persisted because they increase the
school's legitimacy to the Catholic parishioners who cling
to more traditional understandings of the role of the
school. The formal structures of religious requirements
conform to institutionalized beliefs about the need for
school families to participate in the religious activities
of the parish; this gives the school the kind of legitimacy
of which Meyer, Scott, and Deal (1983) spoke. Yet the
reality is that such policies often cannot be enforced due
to competition for students. As I demonstrated in Chapter
4, maintaining an adequate enrollment is of primary
importance to the school's survival.

Mission statements

All but one of the parish-centered schools had written
mission statements that presented the core myths (Meyer and
Rowan 1983) which formed the basis for legitimacy for these

schools. The mission statements highlighted what a parish-centered school should be. Ten of these mission statements defined the school as CATHOLIC. Six further identified the school as BLACK or MULTI-CULTURAL or expressed a special sensitivity to the cultures and "rich racial and ethnic heritage" their students bring. Five stated explicitly the school's PARISH identity.

All twelve schools included in their purpose or goal statements the faith development of the child through Christian education; building faith community was a priority for them. Eleven stressed the provision of a quality academic education, though many refused to separate quality education from the provision of a Christian atmosphere and spiritual growth. Seven presented the mission of the school in a more global context of educating students to take responsibility for building a more just and peaceful world.

All the major elements of the parish-centered school were found in the statement of one of the few parishes in Chicago that had been founded as a black parish. This statement serves well as a summary of what the parish-centered school as an ideal type would be like:

> In response to the Holy Spirit, our parish
> community, which includes people affected both
> directly and indirectly by _____ school,
> calls upon our school to live the message of Jesus
> through a ministry that promotes quality education
> and spiritual growth.

> This call encourages an understanding and appreciation of the individual's historical and religious heritage; sharing in the development of the world today, and preparing for the challenges of the future.

> Consistent with this call, it is necessary to acknowledge the uniqueness of each individual and to foster creativity, self worth, self discipline, and a sense of accomplishment.

> At the same time, it is important that each person develop a sense of belonging and of responding as a participating member of family, church, school, neighborhood, and society.
> ...
> Finally, the _____ parish community is called upon to acknowledge its responsibility to the school community through active participation and support, thus strengthening our unity in carrying out the mandate of Jesus.

This mission statement makes obvious the parish's responsibility for the quality and success of the school as well as for its support. The school is part of the parish, and draws its legitimacy as well as its identity from the parish. The parish expects the school to promote quality education and spiritual growth, respectful of the historical and religious heritage of the individual.

The success of the parish-centered school to a great extent depended on the quality of the relationship with its sponsoring parish. When the two shared a common vision, culture, and identity, when the relationship was characterized by a healthy interdependence, then a strong and effective parish-centered school in the inner city could be a reality. The defining characteristics of the parish-

centered school and those of the other three categories are
summarized in Table 5-2.

Table 5-2. Summary Characteristics of Categories

SCHOOL CHARACTER-ISTIC:	CATEGORIES OF SCHOOLS			
	PARISH-CENTERED	ISOLATED	COOPERATIVELY-LINKED	EXTERNALLY-LINKED
PRIMARY RESOURCE PROVIDER	parish	uncertain	archdiocese	broader community
RELATIONSHIP TO PARISH	inter-dependent; shared identity	detached, weak links, possible threat	multi-parish; parish depends on school	supportive detachment; ritually tied to parish
AUTONOMY	parish-controlled	principal-based	local-daily; center-lrp*	external supporters
LEGITIMACY BASE	school community as part of parish	school community	archdiocese	broader community: religious/civic/corp
MISSION	cultural: rel., black	academic alternative	evangelize & educate	academic alternative
SPECIAL ADAPTATIONS	specialist; mimetic processes	generalist; tends to permanent failure	specialist; regional parochialism	generalist; capitalizes on unique niche
PRIMARY STRUGGLE	build common culture	survival	breaking down parochialism	stabilize new network of supporters

* lrp = long range planning

The Isolated School

In clear contrast to the parish-centered school, the
pastor of an isolated school explained that while the school
was important to the parish, it had been consuming almost
the entire parish budget. "There was no money left to be
church; other parish staff had all been discontinued. The
parish had to get the school off our back so that the church
could be church." After racial change followed by a decade
of uncertainty, the parish had gone through a process of
discovering what it meant to be church in their present
reality. Part of that process, according to the pastor had

been "getting rid of their Sacred Cows, one of which was the school." The pastor explained that divorcing the school budget from the parish had given the parish the money to do other things that it considered more important. The first year they had used what would have been the school funds to paint the church. The pastor asserted that since the church had not been painted for thirty years, the visible improvement gave parishioners a new vitality, and they began to invite others into the church.

This was the only school of my sample where the "abandonment" of the school was so intentional and so abrupt, but it captures the plight of the isolated school. Having lost the support of the parish that had been its lifeline, the goal of the isolated school had become primarily one of maintenance and survival. Finances posed a major problem because schools had no firm source of support; the parish could no longer meet the school's needs because in most of these cases, the parishes, too, were isolated and at risk.

The Isolated Schools in the Sample

Seven of the thirty-three schools in my sample were isolated schools. One of the seven was a consolidated school working out of one building. At the time of consolidation, the school had been given a name different from either of the two sponsoring parishes; this was highly symbolic of the complete break that took place between this

school and its parishes.

An eighth school actually overlapped two categories and therefore was included both in this category and with the cooperatively-linked schools; while exemplifying many of the characteristics of the isolated school, at the time of my research it was in the process of developing a formal linkage with neighboring parochial schools. The principal of this eighth school appeared to be successfully moving it beyond the struggle for survival to actual growth strategies. Because there were other Catholic schools in the area also looking for new ways to ensure their future, the principal had been able to begin negotiating a structured form of inter-school cooperation that would break down her school's isolation. Her efforts demonstrate that organizational isolation can be a temporary condition for many schools, a transitional phase that forces the school to let go of the traditional parish ties and seek out other sources of support and new strategies for growth.

The isolated schools had diverse histories. Two of them had seen significant numbers of black students enrolling as recently as the mid-'70s to early '80s. At the time of the interviews, their parishes were integrated with a still powerful number of white ethnic parishioners.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, four isolated schools had served the black Catholic community for over forty years; they were among the earliest churches in

Chicago to accept black parishioners. One parish became a black parish in the 1960s. The final one was founded as a black parish in the early 1950s. Yet despite their diversity, the common problems growing out of their shared isolation significantly shaped these schools, making them more alike than different in terms of the possible adaptation strategies available to them.

Their isolation had left these schools more vulnerable than those in any other category. Their dangerous situation was reflected in their low enrollment; as a category they had a mean enrollment of 212 students[4] with the smallest isolated school having only 125 students (See Table 5-3.). The low enrollment meant less tuition coming in; tuition accounted for less than half the school budget in the isolated schools while the mean for the sample was 62 percent.

Probably because of their isolation, these schools were more dependent on archdiocesan subsidy than any other group; the archdiocese provided an average of 41 percent of the isolated school's budget which was almost double the mean for the sample (See Table 5-3.). Three of these schools had been heavily subsidized since at least 1970; one received 65 percent of its budget from the archdiocese in 1975. The other five were still subsidized by their parishes in the

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[4]This was lower than any other category; the mean enrollment of all sample schools was 291.

seventies but had switched to archdiocesan subsidy by 1980.
While archdiocesan subsidy was significant, many of these
principals and pastors were concerned about its reliability.
Because of the low enrollment in these schools and the
growing concern about the financial stability of the
archdiocese itself, subsidy to these schools seemed
relatively shaky.

Table 5-3. Variation by Category--Enrollment and Subsidy

Category	Mean Enrollmt	Mean NC* Enrollmt	Parish Subsidy	Archd Subsidy
Parish-Centered	326	63%	9%	10%
Isolated	212	79%	.2%	41%
Inter-Schl Coop	385	72%	0%	24%
External	269	58%	15%	19%
Total Sample	291	67%	7%	21%
n=	26	24	22	23

*NC = Non-Catholic

Non-Catholic enrollment was higher in the isolated
schools than in any other category; non-Catholics averaged
79 percent of their student bodies. These were neighborhood
schools, with a mean of 76 percent of their students coming
from the immediate neighborhood.

Resource Dependency in Isolated Schools
These were the schools which had lost the most, or the
most dramatically--they were adapting but with very little

to work with. Changes in the parish's environment had

resulted in serious economic decline and a shortage of

resources;[5] therefore the relationship of school to parish

changed drastically and the school could no longer look to

the parish as a reliable source of financial support or even

legitimacy.

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[5]The four of the eight isolated parishes which had been
black parishes for many years were in neighborhoods that had
recently gone through a period of serious economic decline.
The neighborhoods surrounding them had once been fashionable
black residential communities. As black Catholics had
become more upwardly mobile, they had moved farther south,
west, and into the suburbs, leaving behind, as one pastor
described it, "those who were least competent, least
motivated, least able to exercise leadership in the
community." Neighborhoods declined, property deteriorated,
and parishes found themselves without the financial
resources to continue supporting the church much less their
schools. Wilson (1987) confirms the accuracy of this
background provided by the pastors with whom I spoke. He
speaks of the rapid deterioration of the social conditions
of the urban underclass since 1970. Comparing 1970 and 1980
data for Chicago community areas, he demonstrates "that the
significant increase in the poverty concentration in these
overwhelmingly black communities is related to the large
out-migration of nonpoor blacks (50)." He reports that
nearly 151,000 blacks--middle- and working-class families--
left these communities between 1970 and 1980. He concludes
that "the social transformation of the inner city has
resulted in a disproportionate concentration of the most
disadvantaged segments of the urban black population,
creating a social milieu significantly different from the
environment that existed in these communities several
decades ago (58)." The loss of middle- and working-class
families at a time when unemployment was growing as blue-
collar jobs were lost to the central city removed what
Wilson calls "an important social buffer"... the problems of
joblessness become much more severe if the basic
institutions of an area loose their viability because their
support came primarily from the more economically stable
families who have moved out of the area (56). Massey and
Eggers (1990) likewise demonstrated the increases in black
income inequality and in the isolation of the black poor--
both of which were most dramatic in Chicago, thus confirming
Wilson's argument.

In some cases, the inability of the parish to support
the school was compounded by its geographic isolation from
other parishes and their schools. In two of the isolated
schools studied, pastors were extremely supportive of the
work of their schools and they would have been willing to
explore other organizational forms to ensure the future of
the school; but geographic distance made the development of
a resource network with other similar parishes/schools
extremely difficult if not impossible. For low-income
parishes this problem becomes almost insurmountable because
of limited access to transportation. If the school was
geographically isolated, it was much harder to move beyond
the isolated stage.

The special vulnerability of the isolated schools
became more striking as I learned that three of the eight
schools in this category had narrowly escaped being closed;
the archdiocese intervened to save one and dynamic
principals came in and by increasing enrollment and
restoring the schools' credibility, they managed to keep the
other two open. More than any other category, the isolated
schools were dependent on quality leadership to keep them
alive while numerous schools in similar situations had
chosen or been forced to close.

While geographic isolation reduced a school's options,
it also made organizational persistence more likely. The
archdiocesan commitment to provide Catholic education in

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in turn might help them secure financial backing. First, the church and school populations were too diverse, unable to find the common ground that the successful parish-centered schools were managing to find. Second, in most of these schools, the pastors themselves expressed ambivalent feelings toward their schools.

Diverse church and school populations

The two schools which had recently undergone racial transition were isolated by the radical diversity between the parish population and the school population; the two groups were separated by race, by religion, and by class. One pastor, whose parishioners were primarily white elderly working class people, commented that his parishioners resented subsidizing the education of black Protestants who, in their perception, were wealthier than they.

One traditionally black school had recently seen the parish change from a black to an Hispanic congregation. In several cases, even though the racial composition of the school and parish were the same, the school population was composed of young Protestant or unchurched families while the parish was elderly Catholic.

Pastoral ambivalence toward the isolated school

While acknowledging that their school was a valuable means of outreach into the neighborhood, pastors were often ambivalent about the school's purpose. They expressed hope

that the school could be an effective means of evangelization, but admittedly often were disappointed with results. Pastors reported that parents were more interested in quality education than in Catholic church membership. While the pastors with whom I spoke were uncomfortable with "forced conversions," they were also frustrated that so few school families accepted their "invitation" to join the parish. They were left with questions: was the school worth its cost? was there a more effective way to evangelize? This ambivalence meant that often the school was viewed as a threat to the life and work of the parish. Several of these pastors reported that they refused to "build the parish around the school;" if it began interfering with the work of the parish, they would not sacrifice their parish to sustain the school.[6] Committed as they might have been to the school, the instability of the parish prevented them from translating that commitment into action on the school's behalf.

The crisis confronting the parish required that the parish distance itself from the school; but at the same time isolation became a kind of safeguard for the school. By acknowledging that school and parish were two separate organizations, each was freed to pursue strategies that

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[6]According to one of the principals, her pastor had tried to close the school several years previous to my research for just such reasons. She reported that the archdiocese and her own religious congregation had stepped in, offering subsidy in order to keep the school open.

would best ensure its separate future. The parish was freed from the weight of full responsibility for the school, and the school was free to adapt and seek out new sources of support as it saw fit. Principals in these schools faced enormous challenges because they were responsible for tasks that in other types of schools were accomplished by a parish team. Finding money, balancing a budget, overseeing building maintenance and capital improvements, recruiting students, collecting tuition and providing financial aid, developing a school board, strengthening ties with school families...all these concerns fell to the principal. But being detached from parish and pastor or other sponsoring groups, these principals also had more freedom than most to respond to those challenges in new and creative ways.

The isolated school was uniquely dependent on its principal who was to a far greater extent than in other categories capable of defining the identity of her/his school. Because links with the parish had been seriously weakened, and because they had not yet been replaced by other links, the principal had a great deal of autonomy. To a large extent the future of the school depended on her ability to use that autonomy to increase enrollment and establish the school's legitimacy from within in order to maintain archdiocesan support and to attract new resource providers.

Shifting Legitimacy Myths

This distancing of the school from the parish necessitated a change in the beliefs of constituents and in the legitimacy myths by which the school defined itself. The principals of all but one of these schools described the school as important to the local neighborhood rather than to the parish. School leadership in almost all of the isolated schools expressed confusion when asked whether the school was more Catholic or more non-denominational Christian in its thrust. Five principals replied that their school was non-denominational Christian, wanting to be Catholic but not at all sure how to do that. Another principal, while stating that her school was Catholic, questioned the traditional linkage between parish and school--she felt that relationship was unnecessary, and perhaps even inappropriate today in the black inner city.[7]

In this category, more than in any other, principals were questioning what they were doing, what they should be doing, what alternative forms of Catholic education could be. In a very real way, their isolation had freed them and in some cases forced them to question and examine alternatives.

While the long-range direction of most of these schools

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[7]She suggested that perhaps academies sponsored by religious congregations could more appropriately provide the education black families are looking for in the Catholic schools.

was not yet clear, their current needs required that educational purposes take precedence over religious purposes; establishing academic credibility became the necessary condition of survival, the basis of the school's new legitimacy, and its first concern. This was reflected, too, in the schools' documents.

Parent contract

Of the eight schools in this category, five had parent contracts and five had current mission statements. The four schools where isolation seemed most extreme had fewest religious requirements (three with none while one required a monthly family Mass).

Three schools retained contracts very much like those found in the parish-centered schools: contracts gave a rationale for church requirements, stipulated mandatory family Masses and religious instructions, encouraged regular attendance at the church of one's choice, stated that eligibility for enrollment would be dependent on the meeting of these requirements. The principal of the final school in this category, when she became administrator, initiated a similar contract requiring four family Masses and religious instructions for parents new to the school.

What became apparent in the course of the interviews, however, was that these contracts reflected either where the schools had come from or where they were going. As one principal explained, "The relationship between the school

and parish has changed; the school has a long tradition here... It previously was truly a parish school; now that's no longer true." For others, the contract was a symbol of the principal's hopes to reclaim and strengthen that relationship in the future. The contract posed an ideal, set some expectations, but in the midst of the present struggle for survival, administrators could not afford to take the religious requirements seriously.

Mission statements

Five isolated schools had mission statements; of these all but one were significantly different from those of the parish-centered schools. Only one identified the school as Catholic. Three of these schools had no current mission statement; principals remarked that they were more concerned with doing than with words, or that there were other things that took priority over the development of mission statements.

Similarly, only three of the isolated schools had included a statement of mission or philosophy in their communications to parents. These schools, not surprisingly, described themselves as "a Christian educational community" or "a Christian academic community" rather than as a faith community as the parish-centered schools tended to do. One principal, in speaking of the school's mission, said quite simply, "I see education as the key, but I want to do it in a Christian atmosphere."

These schools were by necessity more concerned with
survival than with establishing their legitimacy to outside
groups, including the parish. Where principals had been
able to formalize the school's mission, education--not
evangelization--was the ministry the school attempted to
provide. Several principals expressed the hope that at some
point evangelization would become more central to the work
of the school, but for now they felt caught in a difficult
reality. With the extreme shortage of resources, these
schools had to devote all their energies to proving
themselves academically. One principal expressed it very
graphically, "Assuming elementary achievement, a successful
Catholic school ought to be a forum for advancing kerygma[8]
to adults. This is the ideal. But you can't market a
broken toy. We need a sound curriculum, and a decent, clean
building. We're still caught working on the basics."
Without academic credibility, the school was incapable of
doing evangelization effectively.

The characteristics of the isolated school are
summarized along with those of the other categories in Table
5-2. Isolation leaves the school with an uncertain resource
flow, and survival becomes its greatest challenge. To the
extent that a dynamic principal can utilize her/his autonomy
to build a strong school community, the isolated school will

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[8]Kerygma is a term meaning catechesis or preaching the
gospel.

be capable of providing a good generalist academic alternative to the public school system. Despite weak links to the parish, the successful isolated school builds a strong legitimacy within the school community itself. From that base, then, it is sometimes possible to move the school through the period of isolation to a more proactive strategy of adaptation.

Cooperatively-Linked Catholic Schools

Catholic schools around the country have been moving to various forms of regional reorganization and cooperation with neighboring Catholic schools as a means of meeting the challenges of decreasing enrollment and the rising cost of education. This adaptive strategy has been more acceptable than most for parochial schools because it allows schools to retain much that characterized the parish-centered school while promoting organizational changes that make schools more responsive to their new environments. Mission, values, and goals can remain much the same, while the structures change. This is no small feat, however, and such structural changes often meet with active resistance, especially from long-term parishioners.

The biggest challenge facing these schools is the breaking down of parochialism and the broadening of the school's sense of identity and belonging. The school is faced with the reality that the parish alone can no longer adequately meet its needs, and its survival depends on its

ability to work together with other schools to build a strong system of Catholic education in order to meet the needs of the people of a specific area.

Cooperatively-Linked Schools in the Sample

I categorized seven schools in my sample as cooperatively-linked schools; they were linked to ten other parish school sites working together in a variety of cooperative structures. The one school in the category that went through racial transition before 1960 was currently part of a three-campus school that has been consolidated for almost ten years.

Two of the schools changed racially in the late '60s and into the '70s. Two others in the same general area of the city changed even more recently--one in the mid to late '70s and one in the mid '80s. These four are involved along with several other schools in a rather loosely structured form of administrative cooperation. School planning, recruitment, and to a more limited extent budgeting is done collaboratively.

The sixth school underwent racial change in the late '70s and was one of a six campus school. The consolidation of administrative functions for these campuses had begun approximately four years earlier. The final school in the category was experiencing racial transition at the time of my research, and as I was doing my fieldwork leadership was working toward consolidation with a neighboring school.

Loss of Parish Support

Three characteristics were common to all of these schools: heavy dependence on archdiocesan subsidy, a strong orientation to the local neighborhood, and difficulty in maintaining adequate links with the parish. The school which had gone through racial transition the earliest had been heavily subsidized by the archdiocese for decades, but most of these parishes had been self-sufficient until recently. Upon depleting their financial reserves they became dependent on archdiocesan subsidy. Whereas in parish-centered schools archdiocesan subsidy was channeled through the parish, the archdiocese worked more directly with these schools and their personnel. By removing financial responsibility from the parish, both parish and school were provided with a certain degree of freedom from each other, freedom which--as I explained when discussing the isolated schools--can be adaptive in the turbulent environment of the inner city.

Unlike the isolated schools, however, in many of these new organizational forms of cooperation, budgeting was centralized and both principal and pastor were freed from the burden of financial worries. One of the principals commented on being able to focus on running the school rather than financing it. Several pastors also expressed relief at the separation of the school budget from the parish budget.

At the same time, however, about half of these schools expressed concern over the reliability of archdiocesan support. One pastor stated that while he knew the archdiocese wanted to continue financing these schools, it was entering a "reality time" stage where it would have to recognize its financial limitations and decide its priorities. The principal of another school spoke of not knowing how long archdiocesan subsidy would be available to them, but seeing the current subsidy as buying time for the school until they could reorganize and find alternate ways to support themselves.

All seven of these schools were neighborhood schools. Recruitment efforts were directed to the neighborhood; and both pastors and principals saw schools as being of great importance to the neighborhood. While a relatively small percent of the school families belonged to the parish, almost all of them came from within a mile and a half radius of the school (up to 99 percent).

As in the isolated schools, administrators spoke about the gaps that existed between the school and the parish populations. One principal admitted that "people attending church have almost nothing to do with the school." One pastor blamed the new organizational structure for the separation of the school from the local church. He was attempting to use the parent contract to force contact among parents, school, and parish, but found enforcement

impossible since neighboring campuses did not have similar religious requirements.

Only one of the seven schools in this category claimed to have a strong relationship with its parish. Not surprisingly, this was the school which was part of the almost ten year old consolidation. The principal asserted that a strong relationship with the parish takes lots of effort and the leadership of good pastors with a high level of sensitivity. It is something the campuses of her school had worked hard on and developed over the years. The pastor of this same site spoke of his growing awareness that leadership must emphasize the school's relationship to the church in order to avoid becoming a community school instead of a Catholic school. Such a move would possibly threaten the school's legitimacy to the parish and the broader Catholic population upon which it still depended heavily for support.

Resource Dependency and the Cooperatively-Linked School: Cooperation as Adaptation

The school's dependence on resources and the loss of secure access to those resources through the sponsoring parish had prompted the schools in this category to turn to restructuring in an attempt to stabilize their own situation. Interviews with the pastors and principals of these schools revealed, as theorists would lead us to expect, that cooperative ventures among schools

significantly reduced uncertainty in terms of resource acquisition, helped stabilize enrollment by reducing competition among the schools, and provided the school with increased autonomy...all necessary components of organizational success (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; Aldrich 1979; Hannan and Freeman 1988).

Schools in this category were moving out of three different inner-city realities. Three were schools in declining or endangered parishes. Two were located in parishes still in the early stages of transition; parish membership remained large but leadership struggled to adapt to the diverse populations now served by the parish. The two final schools had chosen to enter into cooperative relationships with other schools while their parishes were still relatively stable.

Cooperation in Declining Parishes

In declining parishes schools that chose to enter into formal inter-school linkages with neighboring parochial schools did so as a matter of necessity. The situation was similar to that confronting the isolated school except that these schools had had and were taking advantage of an alternative to isolation.

In these schools the parish tended to need the school more than the school needed the parish, which put the school in a better position politically. Archdiocesan subsidy reduced the school's dependence on the parish. The parish,

however, because of small membership and a high percentage
of non-Catholics in the neighborhood, needed the school to
bridge the gap between the people of the neighborhood and
the institutional church. Pastors spoke repeatedly of the
critical importance of the school to the parish; often it
was the school that gave the parish credibility. One
principal even commented that the parish would never have
survived if it were not for the school.

Cooperating Schools in Transitional Parishes

Principals and pastors in schools undergoing racial
transition at the time of my research and those where the
transition had occurred in the school but was not yet
complete in the parish spoke of the challenges of adapting
to a new school clientele: "How does a school remain
"Catholic" when 80 percent of its students and half of its
faculty are Baptist?" "What does it mean to be black
Catholic?" "We refuse to compromise on the teaching of
Catholic doctrine but wonder should we perhaps?"
"Evangelization is important, but how do we do it?" "How
does one maintain high standards of academic excellence
while being sensitive to the class and socio-economic
differences of students entering school?" Such questions
were widespread, and school administrators were finding that
it was easier to search for answers together.

In developing common policies for all the schools of a
community area, principals built a framework for themselves

that reduced both competition and uncertainty. By connecting themselves with other schools, they were able to forge a direction for themselves independent of the parish. Freedom for the school to define itself was important to maintaining its legitimacy, because the pace of transition in the parish meant it might have taken years before the parish population would stabilize enough to begin to solidify a new parish identity. By then, it might be too late for the school.

Hannan and Freeman (1984) found not only that attempts at reorganization increase organizational death rates, but that the longer the reorganization takes, the higher will be the death rate. Reorganization threatens legitimacy, and prolonged attempts at reorganization can so thoroughly disrupt an organization that it is unable to recover. It is essential, therefore, that inner-city schools have the freedom to proceed with the changes necessary to stabilize their future without being held back by parishes whose process of racial transition is often much more prolonged than that of their schools.

Cooperating Schools in Stable Parishes

Finally, a couple of schools in this category reportedly had strong reputations and a long history of educational excellence. The parishes, too, were stable. Entering into cooperative relationships with neighboring schools appears to have been more a matter of choice here

than in the other schools. The presence of other schools in the area that were willing to work together created the opening needed to develop these new cooperative organizational forms. These cooperative endeavors, in addition to stabilizing enrollment, were expected to enhance the quality of the educational program offered by the participating schools and also to help ensure continued support from the archdiocese which has been promoting the concept of regional Catholic schools. Another benefit of reorganization for these schools was that it reduced pastoral control during a time when these schools were in the midst of a legitimacy switch, emphasizing quality education rather than strictly religious ends. As educational leadership grows in importance, it would seem that new organizational forms that increase the autonomy of those with educational expertise would be more appropriate and better adapted than traditional forms.

Shifting Legitimacy in Cooperatively-linked Schools:
Movement away from and then back to Religious Purposes

Interviews with administrators about the nature and purpose of their schools and the documents of cooperatively-linked schools showed evidence of a developing process. When first affected by racial transition or serious demographic change, schools tended to swing away from religious purposes in order to become more generalist and attract a religiously diverse population. However, as the

resource flow stabilized and the school regained some security, the trend seemed to be to attempt to revive the religious mission of the school. Throughout this process, quality education remained the one constant, as in the isolated school, a pre-requisite which laid the foundation for the school's legitimacy to all groups.

Parent contract: regional parochialism

Unlike the isolated schools, most of the cooperatively-linked schools still attempted to involve parents in the church, even though interviews indicated that these attempts had not been successful. At least in the ideal, these new structures appear to be maintaining the religious ideals and values of the parish-centered school while moving to a kind of regional-parochialism.

Six of the seven parishes in this category required school parents to sign a contract involving religious requirements. These contracts tended to be less detailed than those in the parish-centered schools. Five stipulated some kind of religious information classes for parents and three of the five also required regular attendance at a church of the parents' choice. Four contracts required attendance at special Masses. One parish offered occasional "Unity Masses" that school parents were encouraged but not required to attend. A sixth had three or four family Masses per year, but while these were mandatory, they were not mentioned in the contract. Leadership in the only school

without any religious requirements expressed dissatisfaction with that situation, but the principal explained that a contract was useless if you were not able to enforce it.

The contracts in this category placed more emphasis on parent involvement in _school_ than in church. Only one parish, the one that has been consolidated the longest, gives the religious portion of the contract the kind of priority and significance it received in parish-centered schools.

Mission: balancing religious and academic goals

Formal mission statements were available to me in six of the seven schools in this category. Half of the schools identified themselves as Catholic while, as would be expected in this category, only two (both of which were in the early stages of reorganization) identified themselves as parish schools. Three of the cooperatively-linked schools included some mention of black or cultural awareness in their statements, but this dimension appeared less significant to the schools' identity than it had been in the parish-centered schools.

In the mission statements of this category, the phrase "offer quality Catholic education" was heard repeatedly in descriptions of the major purpose of the school. When looking at these schools in terms of how new they were to the cooperative organizational structures, a pattern of development began to emerge. Schools still close to the

parish-centered stage seemed to cling more tightly to

religious purposes. The mission statement of the school

just beginning formal cooperation with a neighboring school

began:

> _____ School, an integral part of _____
> Parish, exists to proclaim the Good News of Jesus
> as it provides opportunities for individuals to
> learn and live as their faith is nourished and
> developed through religious instruction, prayer,
> communal worship and the sacraments.

Schools moved away from that religious focus as the

distance between school and parish increased, and the thrust

became more education-centered. One such school explained

its mission to parents in this way:

> The aim of _____ School is to offer quality
> and excellence to each and every child.
> Our philosophy of education speaks to the fact
> that each person is special and unique, and should
> be treated with dignity.
> Using the talents of a highly qualified staff and
> combining the strengths of the family unit, we
> strive together to form a Christian educational
> community.
> An atmosphere of kindness and cooperation prevails
> in which children are urged to learn to think, to
> communicate, to solve problems, to make choices,
> to assume responsibility and to pray.

As inter-school links became stronger, and the new

identity became more clearly established, these schools

again focussed on their religious purpose, but now from a

total Catholic community perspective rather than from a

parochial one. The mission statement of a multi-campus

school described the school's purpose:

_____ Catholic School has as one of its
aims the continuation and improvement of Catholic
Education to families in the _____ area
through the sharing of resources and a cooperative
effort of all administrators, faculties and
families to ensure a quality Catholic Education.

Catholic Education is an expression of the mission
entrusted to the Church by Jesus Christ. As a
Catholic School, we hope to "realize the threefold
purpose of Christian Education--to teach doctrine,
to build community, and to serve." (Declaration
on Christian Education #2).
We believe that all those involved in our school--
parents, students, teachers, pastors, and
administrators, are called to form a COMMUNITY OF
FAITH, a CHRISTIAN EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY. This is
a community that SERVES, PRAYS, LEARNS, and
RELATES WITH ONE ANOTHER.
...

As these various forms of inter-school cooperation
develop, the ideal of education as inseparable from
evangelization comes once again into focus. What the
isolated schools saw as impossible is again viewed as
possible, though challenging. Listening to the hopes and
expectations of leadership in these schools, their goal was
to build strong schools with all the richness of the parish-
centered school but without the parochialism. At the time
of my research this was still far from reality.

Like the isolated schools, the most pressing task of
the cooperatively-linked school was to establish its
educational credibility. In addition, however, because
these schools were uniquely dependent on the archdiocese
(separation from the parish freed them but it also left them
without parish protection), they struggled to meet the

criteria established by the archdiocese.[9] They were
uniquely vulnerable to the influence of archdiocesan experts
and appointed personnel and had to clearly demonstrate their
legitimacy to them.

Table 5-2 on page 186 presents a summary of the
characteristics of the cooperatively-linked schools. These
schools retain the religious thrust of the parish-centered
school without the dependence on the local parish. They
turn instead to the archdiocese and the broader church
community for both financial backing and legitimacy. The
successful cooperatively-linked school must effectively
break through parochialism to build a strong regional
school. If it can balance its own regional autonomy while
finding new and positive ways to interact with the local
parish, the cooperatively-linked school can make progress in
actualizing a joint mission of education and evangelization.

Externally-Linked Schools

The smallest category of schools found in my sample was
comprised of the externally-linked schools. As in the
isolated and the cooperating schools, the traditional links
with the parish had been seriously weakened in this
category. The externally-linked school had responded by
moving beyond the parish and beyond the local community of

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[9]This became much more obvious to me as I did the
fieldwork for the case study of this category.

Catholic schools in its search for potential resource providers. The primary organizational goal of these schools was to establish their external credibility, building a network of supporters who believed in the importance of what the school was doing.

The externally-linked schools tended to function independently of their parishes; they often continued to depend on the parish for financial sponsorship, but their relationship to the parish was one of supportive detachment. While church membership and participation were admittedly important, the school's focus (by mutual agreement of both school and church leadership) was academic.

This supportive detachment was possible because these parishes tended to be more stable and less dependent on the school than was the case with the parishes of the cooperatively-linked schools. Even when there was a significant amount of overlap in the membership of school and church (as was the case in one school where almost 66 percent of the school families belonged to the parish), the two populations remained relatively distinct.

Interaction between school and church, when it did occur, tended to be formal and superficial--a matter of fulfilling requirements and maintaining religious legitimacy rather than an attempt at forging a united community that would enrich the participants.

Externally-linked Schools in the Sample

Six of the schools studied fell into this category.
They were a diverse group, but alike in their ability to
capitalize on distinct ecological niches. Each was located
in a geographic area that provided the school with a unique
potential for attracting support from those who would have
been considered outsiders in a traditional parochial
setting.

Two of the schools were located in integrated, more
cosmopolitan neighborhoods. Two others were readily
accessible from major expressways or by public
transportation which made them attractive to working parents
looking for quality education without the inconvenience of
transportation problems. The final two were located in
badly deteriorated neighborhoods.

Enrollment in these schools in 1987 ranged from 141 to
452, with a mean enrollment of 269 students. Interestingly
enough, the lowest enrollment was reported by the school
which insisted on maintaining a racial balance through the
use of ratios.[10] Only one of these was really a

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[10]It was the principal's contention that all the
parents--black as well as white--wanted that balance and
therefore the school was willing to work with a smaller
student body in order to preserve it. She conveyed the
belief that the school's legitimacy was strengthened by its
racial balance, that parents believed that a truly
integrated school provided the best educational environment
for their children. As a result the school struggled with
141 students while the principal claimed that the school
could be immediately filled with blacks if administration
would accept all those who wanted to enroll.

neighborhood school; the others had between 35 and 75 percent of their students coming from more than a mile and a half away from the school, with a mean of 46 percent of the students coming from outside the neighborhood.

Catholic enrollment in these schools was surprisingly high (a mean of 42 percent) for inner-city schools, especially when one considers that these schools were among the least parochial. This was primarily the result of the two integrated schools in the category where the nonblack students tended to be Catholic. A third school with predominantly black students had a reputation for academic excellence that attracted black Catholics from other areas of the city; this school, too, had a relatively low percentage of non-Catholic students (slightly under half of its students, compared to between 68 and 90 percent in the remaining externally-linked schools).

Resource Dependency in Externally-Linked Schools: Capitalizing on Location, Reputation, and Disadvantage

These schools were the most entrepreneurial of those in which I interviewed. School leadership was interested in marketing the school and developing a network of reliable supporters. For some of these schools, adaptation was more intentional than it was in most other categories. The externally-linked schools faced environments and demographic changes similar to those that schools in the other categories faced. Yet the choices these schools made had

resulted in significantly different realities in terms of
the resources available to them and the direction in which
they were moving.

Winning Support:
Locational Advantage and Educational Excellence

The locational advantage of four of the schools in this
category made them more attractive to economically stable
and better educated parents than most inner-city Catholic
schools. In addition to serving professionals who worked in
the area, these schools also served a group of low-income
parents who placed an unusually high priority on their
children's education. One principal spoke, for example, of
recently-arrived immigrants with college degrees who were
working menial jobs--like the cab-driving father with a
Ph.D.

These schools had also developed an academic advantage.
They had a reputation for being academically superior to
other Catholic schools in the area--and at least one was
considered competitive with nearby non-denominational
private schools.

The combined locational and academic advantages enabled
two of these schools to demand a higher tuition without
endangering enrollment. Tuition and fees alone covered 84
percent of the school budget of one, and 94 percent of the

budget of the other.[11] The other two schools served more low-income families but reaped the benefits of wealthier benefactors who were eager to support needy school students. One of these parishes was extremely attractive to liberal, social justice oriented Catholics, while the other appealed to the more conservative wealthy Catholics of the archdiocese. As a result, despite the distance between parish and school, these two parishes provided more subsidy for their schools than any other parish in the sample, with one contributing 43 percent of the school's budget. Even in the parish-centered schools, the highest reported subsidy by a parish provided for less than 20 percent of the school's budget.

Turning Disadvantage into Advantage

The final two schools in this category were located in badly deteriorated areas of the city. While lacking the academic advantage of the schools discussed above, they had a reputation for providing an important ministry for a seriously disadvantaged population. The local pastors used the school's reputation to rally support from the larger Catholic community. While the parishes themselves were extremely poor, subsidy channeled through the parish and/or archdiocese took care of slightly over 55 percent of each of these school budgets. As a result, tuition in these schools

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[11]Tuition in the sample of interview schools averaged 62 percent of the school's budget.

was lower than in any others in my sample. In addition, both of these schools had extensive scholarship programs funded by outside donors. Thus, these schools managed to convert a disadvantage into a strange sort of advantage.

The role of the pastor was extremely important in such schools. While the environment of these schools was much like that of the isolated schools, an extremely significant difference was the commitment of the pastors to these schools. While pastors of isolated schools were ambivalent about their schools, in these two externally-linked schools, it was the pastors' belief in their importance that generated financial backing from other areas of the archdiocese. Motivated pastoral leadership had succeeded in building an exceptionally strong network of school supporters. These schools were different from the parish-centered schools, however, in that pastors viewed the school as valid and important in and of itself, without trying to integrate the school into the parish community.

One of these "disadvantaged schools" was moving toward greater dependence on the corporate and business community. While this will be examined in much greater detail in the case study of this category, it is significant to note here that this direction will likely be followed more frequently in the future. The archdiocese through the Big Shoulders Campaign is also moving in this direction, but what was being done by the externally-linked school differed

significantly in terms of autonomy. Unlike Big Shoulders'
contributions, the support of corporate and business
communities being enlisted by the externally-linked school
went directly to the school. I would expect this
arrangement to give the school more control over contributed
funds. On the other hand, archdiocesan intervention could
at times help limit or prevent undue political interference
from outside funders.

Quality Education: the Key to Legitimacy in Externally-linked Schools

The externally-linked schools all stressed the primary
importance of providing quality Catholic education. This
would be expected as the schools become more generalist and
attempt to draw enrollment from a broader area and win the
support of a broader base of funders. The primacy of
educational goals over religious was evident in interviews
and in the schools' mission statements. Parent contracts,
however, appeared to attempt to maintain the schools'
legitimacy to the Catholic population.

Religious requirements

Two of the six schools had no parent contract; one
never had such a document and does not intend to develop
one. According to that principal, her school had a yearly
prayer service followed by a dinner during Catholic Schools
Week, but this was the only "religious" activity the school
sponsored. The second school had discontinued the contract

because the principal felt it was not necessary; the
school's handbook, however, spoke of a monthly mandatory
family Mass where attendance was taken and students were
charged a ten dollar non-participation fee if they were
absent. The Catholic children were expected to attend a
Sunday School class on alternating Sundays.

Two other schools had parent contracts but religious
requirements were non-existent in one, and minimal in the
second where church attendance was encouraged by a reduction
in tuition for families attending regularly and contributing
to the church.

The two schools in deteriorated neighborhoods had a
larger Protestant student population and as a result seemed
more concerned about maintaining legitimacy as a Catholic
school by mandatory participation in the parish church. One
of these, in its most recent contract, had begun requiring
families to attend a monthly family Mass, although most of
the contract was academic and concerned with parent
involvement in the school. The final school required weekly
Mass for Roman Catholics and a monthly Mass on a designated
Sunday for the non-Catholics. In addition all parents were
required to attend two parent religion classes. The year I
did my fieldwork this particular contract added the sanction
of suspension and/or expulsion for failure to meet the
religious requirements.

The principal expressed strong reservations about this;

she was concerned that too many families were being driven
away from the school by the way these requirements were
enforced. She commented that even many of those who
complied were becoming increasingly hostile about what they
experienced as burdensome demands. That hostility showed
itself in actions like standing in the back of the church
and talking and smoking cigarettes during the services...a
kind of "you can make me come but you can't force me to
pray" attitude which made worship difficult for those who
wanted to be there. Her description of people's reactions
to the newly initiated enforcement procedures strongly
suggested the aim of such policies was legitimacy to an
outside group of supporters rather than a sincere attempt to
welcome school families into a community of which they would
be a valued part. Suburban Catholics who helped fund the
school might be impressed with the policy without seeing the
kind of dissension it was apparently causing.

The school's mission: quality education in the inner city
         According to the mission statements of these
externally-linked schools, an academic education takes
precedence over the religious dimensions of the school.
Although half (three) of these schools have no formal
statement of mission or philosophy, when asked what they
understood the mission of their school to be, all three
principals spoke of providing quality education. One spoke
of how, when she began her work in this school, she had been

concerned about evangelization; though she still considered evangelization the ideal mission for the school, she had not accomplished that and she said that evangelization did not seem to be meeting the people's needs.

Two of those with mission statements claimed a parish identity and one stressed the school's Catholicity. All three also spoke of being a Christian educational community. Two of these statements reflected a special multi-cultural sensitivity.

The academic thrust of the school was evident in phrases such as: "...exists to nurture and educate its pupils to the highest level of their intellectual, moral and religious potential," "main purpose and responsibility of_____School is to provide excellence in Christian education...," "school's goal is to enable all students to perform at his/her highest possible level of achievement." The parental role in the educational process was stressed, recognizing the parents as "the primary educators of their children."

One of the schools had used a "Profile" of the school and its operations in recruiting a new principal. It again stressed the academic and social justice mission of the school, stating:

> The primary purpose of _____ School is to
> provide excellent educational opportunities for
> its students as the first step in helping them
> break the bonds of poverty and gently pushing them
> towards higher educational ventures.

By stressing the provision of quality education for an underserved or disadvantaged population, these schools had established or were in the process of establishing their legitimacy with new groups of supporters. One enthusiastic principal with a long list of grants and numerous groups willing to provide assistance to her school (she asserts proudly, "I'm really into agencies!") expressed well the sentiment that characterized these externally-linked schools: "It pays to have an open door--even if it's inconvenient." Whether it was parents, or suburban Catholics interested in the inner city, or a task force of business people interested in helping, the school's responsiveness to their expectations and wishes had significantly influenced the development of these new dependency relationships.

For this reason, however, autonomy may easily become an issue in these schools. Because these relationships are new and tentative, not yet reliable, the schools become particularly vulnerable to political interference from outside. While evolving to this new form, the school lacks a strong sense of identity and a clear vision of its mission and goals. It looks to multiple constituents for resources, and these constituent groups may place multiple and sometimes competing demands on the school. School leaders can find themselves shaping the school to meet the expectations of these external funders; they lack the

autonomy to move the school in directions they themselves might feel are most desirable. There was much still in flux in these schools--and until support networks would be able to solidify into more permanent patterns, the most honest response to any question of mission may be what one principal said candidly to me: "Ask me that at different times and I'll come up with something different." This category of schools, more than any other, showed evidence of the serial advocacy spoken of by Wagner (1977). A school will present itself at any given period in the way it detects will be most beneficial to it. If key resource providers demand one approach, the school will--at least on a superficial level--try to meet that demand. If several months later a different sponsor demands something else, the school has a broad enough mission to allow it to shift direction enough to meet the new demands.

As with the other categories, the main characteristics of the externally-linked school are summarized on Table 5-2 (page 186). This is one of the most challenging forms of adaptation in that it demands the most clear break from the traditional pattern of parochial education. Like the isolated school, the externally-linked takes a generalist approach to education, providing an academic alternative to the public school. In order to carry out this educational mission it must develop new external supporters and prove its legitimacy to the broader religious, civic, and/or

corporate community.

Review of the Categories

In previous chapters I have shown how dependent the
traditional parochial Catholic school was on the local
parish for support. In this chapter I have examined each of
the categories of schools included in my research to see how
reliable that support is in the present reality. I have
looked at the changing quality of the relationship between
church and school. Parish-centered schools try to bond
culturally with their parishes to re-create in a slightly
different way the traditional parochial identity of the
school. Isolated schools confront tremendous challenges;
creative and committed leadership, however, and sometimes
the tendency to organizational persistence give them a
chance to survive and perhaps even to move into other forms
of adaptation. Cooperative links with other Catholic
schools enable schools to move beyond the limitations of
parochialism to the greater flexibility and freedom of a
regional parochialism. And finally, externally-linked
schools are breaking new ground as they use their academic
credibility to establish new resource links with a variety
of outside supporters.

CHAPTER 6

SAINT SOJOURNER:
A HIGHLY DEVELOPED PARISH-CENTERED SCHOOL

In the previous chapter I used information obtained
from interviews with pastors and principals to describe the
parish-centered schools that were operating in Chicago's
black inner city at the time of my research. Despite all
the changes in their environments, changes that had greatly
diminished the ability of inner-city parishes to provide
resources to their schools, the thirteen schools in this
category were striving to maintain or to restore and then
strengthen interdependent relationships with their parishes.
As distinct as the school population was from the church
population, these schools were struggling to find their
identity within the context of the parish. They were
attempting to adapt the traditional parochial school form to
the situations of Chicago's black inner city.

In this chapter I analyze the findings of the case
study of a particular parish-centered school, St. Sojourner.
After introducing St. Sojourner School and demonstrating why
I chose it to represent the parish-centered schools in my
sample, I use the experience of that school to explore how a
common culture can be developed and shared by both church

and school communities to the benefit of each. I explain how that common culture can help the school win the legitimacy it needs in order to secure both financial and human resources (students and school personnel).

I also examine the problem of organizational autonomy that became evident in course of my fieldwork at St. Sojourner. When a school chooses to continue to belong to a Catholic parish to which the majority of school participants do not belong, some conflicts of interest are inevitable. Because parish and school are interdependent, each is responsible to and for the other; as a result, despite the effort put into building a sense of unity and shared identity, various constituents will occasionally dispute which group is being taken advantage of and who is giving more than they are getting.

In the final section of this chapter, I examine the success of this form of adaptation, its special strengths, and the limitations or special problems generated by this approach. The information presented in this chapter will clarify the factors which influence the inner-city school's ability to evolve into a strong and effective parish-centered school.

<u>St. Sojourner:</u>
<u>Meeting the Criteria for a Parish-Centered School</u>

I chose St. Sojourner for the case study of the parish-centered black inner-city school because it was a forceful

example of the successful development of a shared parish
culture. Both worship community and school were strong and
flourishing at the time of my research, and the parish had a
highly developed sense of community identity. School
families and church-goers respected each other, and as was
the case in several other well-developed parish-centered
schools, the school was considered as integral a part of
parish life as was the church. The pastor described the
school as being "one of the arms of the parish, one of the
definitions of the community...as important as any other
definition, no more important, no less important." Several
of the teachers also spoke of the close affiliation of the
parish with the school. One teacher described the church
and school as being "interdependent, like a family" ... "a
kind of kinship relationship."

Whether their primary involvement was in the parish
church or in the school, people preferred to call themselves
a "community" rather than a "parish;" they referred to St.
Sojourner as "a Black Catholic Community of Faith, Education
and Service."

Demographic and Historical Background on St. Sojourner:
Achieving Stability

St. Sojourner was the second largest of the parish-
centered schools I visited.[1] Its enrollment in 1987-1988

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[1]The mean enrollment of the parish-centered schools in
my study was 326; median enrollment was 283.

was 485 students in 18 classrooms. While black Catholic
enrollment varied from 13 percent to 49 percent in the
schools in this category, in St. Sojourner's it was 26
percent. This was not a neighborhood school; 87 percent of
its students lived more than a mile and a half away from
school.[2]

The school had opened in 1917 under the leadership of a
community of Dominican sisters who continued to work in the
school through the time of my research. Both parish and
school were able to remain relatively stable throughout the
racial transition that took place during the 1960s. The
pastor at the time of transition had been very active in a
neighborhood organization which attempted to prepare
residents for the peaceful integration of black families.
Transition occurred at a relatively slow pace and, while the
majority of incoming blacks were manual laborers, their
ranks also included professionals and clerical workers. In
1966 the school was integrated with a healthy enrollment of
over 1,000 students (Koenig 1980),[3] but by 1970 it had been
resegregated as a black school and enrollment had dropped by

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[2]The data collected by the National Catholic Education
Association through the Archdiocesan Office of Catholic
Education used a radius of 1.5 miles from school to arrive
at an understanding of whether students came from the
immediate vicinity or from outside the neighborhood.

[3] In 1966 St. Sojourner School actually had twelve more
students than it did in 1960. Its strong reputation as a
white Catholic school helped it make the transition to a
black Catholic school without too great an enrollment loss.

over 200 students. This decline was typical for that decade
of demographic change and shifting legitimacy. Enrollment
continued to decline in the early '70s; the school lost
over 150 students in one year. Its large enrollment base,
however, enabled the school to weather the transition until
enrollment stabilized around 1980 at about 500 students.

The parish church found the initial adjustment to a
black population more challenging than did the school.
Parish membership dwindled as non-Catholic blacks replaced
the neighborhood's Catholic whites. The parish reportedly
attempted to welcome the black population into the church,
but the pastor's focus on monetary concerns[4] interfered
with the development of a sizeable black church community.[5]

When parish leadership changed hands, the new priest
worked to bring people into the parish "without dumping

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[4]This preoccupation with finances is probably to be
expected in large parish plants as pastors watch their
regular contributors move away. St. Sojourner had not only
a large church and school but also a large parish community
center. At its peak in the 1940s, parish membership
consisted of 2,300 families. The parish was evidently the
center of community life--sponsoring a multitude of sports
and social events as well as religious and educational ones.
The weekly Sunday night dances, for example, reportedly drew
youth from over ninety parishes. Thus when literally
thousands of families moved out of the parish, the pastor
was left with the burden of finding money to maintain the
then drastically oversized plant.

[5]One of the elderly Sisters who, at the time of my
research, had been ministering at St. Sojourner's for almost
twenty years recalled a time when parish membership had
gotten so small that it was impossible to find enough black
Catholic men to serve as sponsors for the boys being
confirmed.

financial expectations on them." His philosophy, according
to one of the Sisters who had worked in the parish during
those years, was that once people felt a part of the
community and began to take ownership of the church, they
would begin contributing monetarily. Thirteen years later,
the parish was thriving with a membership of about 600
family units.

Economic conditions in the area had deteriorated since
the transition; the pastor described most parishioners as
poor to lower-middle class with many of them unemployed. He
estimated the median income at about $15,000.[6] He also
reported that many street people were dependent on the
parish for its food pantry and other social services.

Despite the great reduction in the number of families
belonging to the parish, and despite the economic decline
faced by the parish in the years prior to my research, St.
Sojourner had been able to remain self-sufficient as a
parish,[7] a factor indicative of its relative financial
stability. Freedom from reliance on archdiocesan subsidy

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[6]Wilson (1987) puts unemployment in this particular
community area at between 10 and 14 percent in 1980. The
1980 census data gave the median income for blacks in the
area as $9,367; over 17 percent of black households
received public assistance and 19 percent of all black
children under eighteen were living below the poverty level
(United Way Crusade of Mercy).

[7]Here again there is quite a bit of variation within
the category. While seven of the parish-centered schools
reported receiving no archdiocesan subsidy, several rely
heavily on such help--one received subsidy amounting to 40
percent of its budget during 1986-1987.

preserved the autonomy of the parish and protected both church and school from archdiocesan interference.

Stable leadership also helped to stabilize the parish and school situation. At the time of my research the pastor had worked in the parish for thirteen years, having served as pastor for the last seven years. The principal had worked in the school for the past twelve years in the capacities of teacher, assistant principal, and principal. Her two years as assistant principal facilitated a smooth transition from religious to lay leadership and ensured consistency of educational philosophy and school policies. The long tenure of the pastor, of the religious community in the school, of the principal and other faculty members resulted in a strong commitment to the school similar to that often found in a family firm (Meyer and Zucker 1989). In addition, because the pastor stepped in at the crucial point of racial transition, he became the "founder" of St. Sojourner as a black parish. Given his charisma and the success of his methods, he was able to pass on his values and assumptions to the staff,[8] thus establishing a culture

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[8]From the perspective of organizational culture, this is extremely important. In the environmental turbulence of the inner city, old myths of Catholic education have lost their legitimacy. The participants, especially the administrative leaders, must develop a new image of what the school is and what it does. Morgan (1986) states: "The beliefs and ideas that organizations hold about who they are, what they are trying to do, and what their environment is like, have a much greater tendency to realize themselves than is usually believed (137)." The staff must believe in what it is about.

to which they could commit themselves (Schein 1985). In the process, uncertainty was reduced and the relationship between school and parish solidified.

Both parish and school had the kind of stability necessary for a black inner-city school to operate successfully as a parish-centered school. Financial stability, a reputation as a strong and vibrant school and parish community, and stable leadership made the parish a reliable resource provider. The school could feel secure linking its future to the future of the parish.

Resources Secured through Linkage with the Parish

In St. Sojourner's, as in all parish-centered schools, the parish was the center of the school's life and functioning. The school remained financially dependent on the parish. In addition and even more importantly, however, the school built its reputation on the reputation of the parish and established its legitimacy on the basis of its cultural bonding with the parish; the vibrancy of the parish community in which it participated greatly contributed to the vitality of the school. This in turn was to a great extent responsible for maintaining enrollment and securing the tuition base on which the school so heavily relied.

Financial Resources

In the 1986-1987 school year, approximately 86 percent

of St. Sojourner's school budget came from tuition and fees, while the parish picked up the remaining 14 percent. Parish subsidy had covered a significantly higher proportion of the budget in 1970 (over 36 percent) when tuition was much lower --$230 for the first pupil from a family[9] as compared with $1,080 plus a $75 registration fee for the first pupil in 1986. Since 1975, parish subsidy had provided a stable 12 to 16 percent of the school budget. In terms of actual dollar amounts, in 1986 the parish contributed $75,431 toward the school's total expenditures of $548,786. When adjusting the 1970 budget figures upward to account for inflation, the parish had provided $129,068 toward a total school budget of approximately $429,773.[10]

Thus while the parish's financial support was significant to the school, a steady flow of tuition into the school had become even more significant.[11] With this increased dependence on tuition, the school had to be concerned with generating parental satisfaction. Only if the consumer was satisfied would enrollment and tuition be secure.

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[9]Tuition in inflation adjusted figures would have been $649.50 in 1970.

[10]1970 figures given in 1986 constant dollars.

[11]Tuition which had covered 64 percent of the school's expenditures in 1970, by 1975 accounted for 88 percent of the budget. That proportion had fluctuated only minimally since then.

The Challenge of Maintaining Enrollment

As mentioned above, St. Sojourner lost enrollment during the time of racial transition, and then went through a more radical period of loss in the years following. Enrollment losses in the seventies were associated with tuition increases. Falling enrollment increased per pupil costs and required tuition hikes; tuition increases in turn had a negative effect on enrollment. From 1970 to 1975 the school lost 200 students, about a quarter of its enrollment. During that same five year period, tuition had more than doubled, jumping from $230 to $520.

St. Sojourner's greatest enrollment losses were among the Catholic students. In 1970 the school reported a total of 409 black non-Catholic students and 352 black Catholics. In 1986 there were still 359 non-Catholic students enrolled (a decline of only 50 students), while the black Catholic student population had dropped by 226, from 352 to 126. The school changed from 53 percent non-Catholic in 1970 to 74 percent non-Catholic in 1986.

This change may have resulted in part from the over-reporting of the black Catholic population in order to maintain the school's legitimacy to the archdiocese during the Cody years when Chicago's black inner-city schools were especially vulnerable. Or the change may have simply reflected the outward movement of the black Catholic population. What is significant, however, is that

regardless of the reason for the decline in Catholic enrollment in the school, unless the school was closely linked to the parish and its legitimacy firmly entrenched there, the parish might begin to question the validity and importance of keeping the school open for fewer and fewer of its own children.

In the years immediately before I did my research, the school had experienced another slight enrollment decline. Because of St. Sojourner's heavy reliance on tuition, this recent decline had stimulated a concern with filling classrooms. When the number of students in a classroom provide insufficient tuition to pay the teacher's salary and the parish is unable to make up the deficit, the school faces a serious financial problem.

Reputation and Legitimacy:
Important Means to Guaranteeing Enrollment

A parish-centered school must maintain its legitimacy with both the sponsoring parish and the school population if it is to obtain the resources it needs to function successfully (Meyer and Scott 1983). This legitimacy at St. Sojourner's was based on academic effectiveness and a strong sense of community. In order to claim ownership and accept responsibility for the school, the parish had to feel that the school was a vital part of the parish. In the same way, school administrators and teachers expressed a belief that the school's legitimacy was dependent on its participation

in the life, the culture, the black Catholic community
centered in and celebrated by the parish.

For most of the non-Catholic parents with whom I spoke
this dimension of community was much less significant than
the academic credibility of the school. What also appeared
to be true at St. Sojourner's, however, and what would be
appropriate if we accept the Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore
thesis on the importance of community in educational
achievement,[12] was that the presence of community greatly
facilitates the attainment of educational goals. A strong
community promotes academic excellence, and the experience
of educational success confirms and strengthens the school's
sense of a common mission and purpose, thus validating and
intensifying the experience of community.

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[12]Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore assert that the presence
of a functional community such as that afforded by Catholic
schools is especially important to educational success in
situations where students are coming from families and
neighborhoods lacking cohesion. These authors found when
studying public and private high schools (1987) that the
achievement benefits of Catholic schools are greater for
students from disadvantaged families (those that are low-
income, low education, minority status). They also found
that Catholic schools produced more equal outcomes
independent of other family deficiencies (single-parent
families, two parents working, decreased interaction of
parents with child) than even other private schools. The
authors attribute this success to the common values, clear
and consistent norms and goals, closed networks of
relations, the intergenerational community, and the social
resources made available through the Catholic school. If,
indeed, these authors are correct, I would expect the
building up of community at St. Sojourner's where school
families tend to be both disadvantaged and structurally and
functionally deficient, to be extremely significant to the
school's ability to succeed academically.

My research in the school suggested that at St. Sojourner this sense of community sprang from the African-American culture which school parents and parishioners shared. A strong African-American identity with its corresponding cultural heritage permeated both school and church and tied the total community together. It was in this dimension that the interdependence which characterizes the parish-centered school became most visible at St. Sojourner. The parish provided the context within which the school community could emerge and develop, while the school provided the parish with the means of transmitting the cherished culture.

Because much of African-American culture--including history, values, and traditions--had been lost to the black community, the school became an even more important vehicle of cultural transmission in this community than it had been in the white ethnic school. African-Americans are looking to their young to recapture what had been lost to parents and grandparents. Schools and churches sensitive to such cultural gaps are providing a much needed service, and the process of claiming that common heritage bonds the school community and worshipping community together.

In the next section of this chapter I will examine more closely the key factors which encouraged the development of this interdependence and the strong church/school linkage that was so evident at St. Sojourner. Through ritual and

symbol the school and church communities came to experience a common identity that strengthened each.

Special Issues of Concern for Parish-Centered Schools

The case studies focussed primarily on the special issues unique to each category that surfaced during the interview phase. In the parish-centered school, I focussed on three major areas: 1) the process by which St. Sojourner successfully forged a common culture that firmly established the school as a vital part of the parish; 2) various constituents' perceptions of this shared culture and the effect their perceptions had on the school's legitimacy; and 3) the effects that such a strong integration of school into the parish had on the school's organizational autonomy.

Forging a Common Culture

The development of a shared cultural identity is the greatest challenge of the parish-centered school in the black inner city. In the previous chapter, I suggested that in order to achieve such a cultural identity, a parish must have gone through a conscious change of identity-- surrendering its previous ethnic identity and deliberately becoming a black parish. In addition, there must be a core of people with dual membership who actively participate in both church and school communities. Both of these factors-- change to a black identity and key people who spanned both communities--were evident at St. Sojourner's. But there was

something more uniting school with parish: through ritual and symbol the parish had successfully transferred its cultural identity to the school.

Becoming a Black Parish

St. Sojourner's had succeeded in changing its identity and becoming a black Catholic community uniquely acculturated to its African-American heritage. The pastor had reported that one of the parish's themes was "Celebrate history as well as make history" and I saw this theme being lived out in both the church and school communities.

Celebrating and making history

The entire parish environment of St. Sojourner celebrated black history and culture. Personnel proudly pointed out and explained the black art work and cultural expressions that filled the parish. In the church a mural over the altar portrayed a black Jesus with hands outstretched and sheltering the world. This same Jesus was seen in the entrance area to the parish offices. Banners hung from the ceiling echoing the words of the black national anthem "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing." The dominant colors in the church were black, red, and green--the colors of the black liberation movement.[13] Off to one side of the

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[13]One of the principals I interviewed explained that the Kwanza celebration uses these three colors: the red represents the ancients and their wisdom, the green represents the youth and the hope they bring their people, and the black represents the coming together of the black

church a shrine proclaimed the parish's solidarity with

Blacks in South Africa.[14]

African heritage gave added meaning and relevance to

the liturgical symbols, too. A new altar had been modeled

in the shape of an African drum. The presider's chair took

the form of the traditional Ghanian chief's stool. A woven

basket replaced the gold or ceramic ciborium used for the

Eucharistic bread. The processional cross, the vestments,

the candlesticks all reflected a strong African or African-

American culture.[15]

Both in the rectory and in the school, rooms used for

meetings were named after important black leaders--e.g.

Frederick Douglas Room, Mary McLeod Bethune Hall. Pictures

of these great historical figures hung in the rooms, thus

providing an opportunity to educate both children and adults

about their own history and heritage in much the way that

earlier groups of Catholics had been taught about various

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youth and the black ancients. She also explained that an
older interpretation, one which they teach the children in
school, is a commemoration of the black people spilling
their blood (the red) on the earth (the green).

[14]This shrine included a bust of Nelson Mandela, a
photo of Bishop Tutu, the flag of the African National
Congress, a banner portraying a map of Africa with the words
from Genesis, "The Lord then said: "What have you done!
LISTEN! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the
soil!""

[15]I saw an example of African-American acculturation
during a liturgical celebration for the school children when
a group of students acted out a Gospel passage. The
children playing Jesus and the apostles wore dashikis rather
than the traditional long robes.

patronal saints significant to their ethnic group.

On the walls in the school murals depicted the seven principles of blackness commemorated in the Kwanza celebration.[16] The school principal explained that each year the school chose one of the principles as a theme for the year. Because the focus that year was on Kuumba, creativity, at the time of my observations in the school a special art show displayed some of the creative work the students had done during the year.

Another form of celebrating and making history was visible in the church plaque that recognized the many black religious and political leaders who had worshipped with the community and addressed them in the church. Some were local Chicago leaders, others were national or even international figures--e.g. many members of the King Family, the daughter of Winnie and Nelson Mandela.

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[16]Kwanza is a family celebration of black Afro-American culture. Based on African harvest celebrations, it was rejuvenated in the United States during the sixties. The hope of the Kwanza celebration is that in remembering and living the values of their African ancestors, American blacks will nurture and help bring about a new people and the creation of a new world. It is celebrated in the home around Christmas time, though it is not a religious celebration. Candles are lit in much the same way that the Hanukkah candles are lit, as families focus on one of the seven principles of blackness each day. The seven principles are: Umoja (unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination), Ujima (collective work and responsibility), Ujamaa (cooperative economics), Nia (purpose), Kuumba (creativity), and Imani (Faith). Many of the schools I studied celebrate Kwanza during Black History Month (February), and several incorporate the study of Kwanza principles into their religion curriculum.

All of these artistic representations and material symbols served as springboards for sharing the important stories that define the black experience. They also reveal and transmit the parish community's collective reality, its values, attitudes, and beliefs, thereby promoting the "myth-making" which gave the school its legitimacy (Tommerup 1988).

The church community was extremely welcoming and warm, and I felt a part of them as we celebrated Sunday Mass together, yet this was unmistakably a black church. The pastor, although white, used a black preaching style and prayer form; the language, diction, inflection, and style were black. Prayer was much more emotional, more personal, less formal than in traditional white Catholic worship. The tone invited a dialogue, evoked a response, called people to enter into prayer and the preaching in a way with which most white Catholics would be unfamiliar. Worship at St. Sojourner's provided a forum in which the community celebrated itself, as well as God, and in that celebration its strength and vitality as a community were renewed.

Black leadership for a black parish

In very practical ways, St. Sojourner was developing black leadership and the pastor was encouraging parishioners to get involved in the school or in other aspects of parish ministry. The pastor reported that one of his most important ministerial commitments--second only to prayer and

preaching--was the task of "calling forth gifts and talents within the parish into service." The principal, the youth minister, and the director of parish social services had all been called from within the parish and educated with the help of the parish with the intention that they would return to serve St. Sojourner. This transference of leadership to black parishioners was an important part of bringing the black identity of the parish to maturity.[17]

A Core Community: Bridging the Gaps

The movement of parishioners into leadership positions in ministry helped to unite the school and church communities. Other members also actively participated in both communities. The principal, the pastor, and one of the parents on the school board all spoke of the increasing numbers of young parishioners who were expressing the desire "to come back home" to work. They spoke of high school students returning to coach the grade school sports teams

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[17]The principal spoke of how difficult her transition to principal had been for the school, even with all the careful preparation that had taken place. Not only was she a lay woman, but she was black. The pastor strongly believed that parishioners themselves could be in leadership and do well; he had recognized this woman's talents and encouraged her to get her graduate degree and accept the principalship.

The school population, however, was less sure. The principal commented that her first year was really a challenge because "folks aren't used to having black leadership--they tend not to trust that one of their own can do it." New families especially tended to challenge her, demanded that she prove herself; she claims she only succeeded because the majority of the school families knew her and she was able to talk to them.

and cheer leaders, and adult parishioners choosing to teach in the school.

School personnel were reportedly active in the church community and were visible in liturgical ministry, e.g. as lectors, communion distributors, choir members, etc., and I witnessed this involvement at the parish services I attended. They also frequently served as sponsors for the youth being initiated into the sacramental life of the church. The sisters, too, clearly belonged to both school and church.[18] A highly visible group of people, therefore, did span both church and school communities, helping to bridge the gap, increase the credibility of each community to the other, and strengthen the sense of shared culture. Because some of the school personnel were actively involved and respected members of the parish, parishioners were more likely to trust what the school was doing and to feel a part of it.

Transferring the Black Cultural Identity to the School: the Role of Ritual and Symbol

In many other parishes in my sample, church and school were seen as two distinct and self-interested communities. At St. Sojourner, however, the use of ritual and symbolism enabled the parish to develop and nurture the shared culture

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[18]One of the older sisters had been named an Elder of the Church and she took her place among the other senior parishioners, creating a valuable link between the school and the elderly parishioners.

discussed above. Ritual and symbol also appeared to be the
bridge that made it possible for members of one group to be
comfortable with the other and to feel a part of and
involved in the total community. Writers on organizations
confirm the importance of rituals. Dandridge (1988), for
example, discusses the benefits to the organization and to
individuals that come from celebrations, rituals, and/or
ceremonies. Among them he includes a sense of
cooperativeness or community:

> the unity of the organization can be seen, or the
> place of a department within that organization [in
> this case, the school within the parish] better
> understood.

He goes on to say:

> Certain kinds of ceremonies may direct attention
> to values, roles, or goals of the organization...
> An inspirational ceremony may lead the
> participants to experience new vitality or renewed
> energy... New lines of communication may be
> created...leading to better integration of work
> units (1988:258).

The community of St. Sojourner had learned to effectively
use rituals in order to convey and reinforce a system of
meaning broad enough to unite the school community and the
worship community.

Celebrating the church: the church in the school

    The church identity was visibly present within the
school. For example, a print of the large mural above the
altar of the church hung in the entrance of the school. The
parish motto and logo were the content of a banner hanging

in that same entrance. This motto was also seen on a note
on the faculty bulletin board, again signalling the unity of
parish and school.

The religious themes used in church during the various
liturgical seasons were carried over into the school with a
special lesson each month taught by the director of
religious education. Classroom teachers, each of whom had a
bulletin board making that theme relevant to the particular
grade level of her/his students, then reinforced that
lesson. In this way, too, the church found its way into
every classroom.

In addition to the usual Catholic symbols (crucifixes,
pictures of the pope and bishop, statues of Mary, Scripture
verses, etc.), I saw black religious art, the wall murals of
the seven principles of blackness, pictures and stories of
black achievers, and flags of the African National Congress
displayed in the classrooms. These symbols also helped
forge a common culture with the church and gave the school
added credibility with the total parish.

Even more powerful, however, were the rituals that
united the two communities. These rituals provided the
parish with the sense of ownership and commitment to the
school about which many of my informants spoke. The pastor
used the phrase "the parish celebrates the school." The
rituals I observed and those described to me indicated that
this statement was true.

Celebrating the school: the school in the church

Rituals that took place in the context of parish liturgy provided an opportunity for the parishioners to take pride in the school and to experience a sense of ownership. At the beginning of every school year, the church community blessed the faculty and administrators of the school; they commissioned the leaders of the school to carry out the work which they the parish entrusted to them.[19] Then throughout the year there were many special services and activities in church to which the school families were invited. St. Sojourner's had a monthly family Mass, but attendance was not mandatory as it was in many of the other inner-city parishes.[20] The staff took pride in the fact that people came because they wanted to rather than because they had to. The parish for its part, tried to make Catholicism relevant to the school families by its political activism and social justice emphasis, by inviting outside speakers, and by involving the school children in liturgies.

Just as the church was visible in the school, at every special liturgy the school was visibly present and involved

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[19]Dandridge also speaks of this function of ritual: "power or importance may be invested in specific individuals or roles. New members can be incorporated into the organization or roles changed, with the ceremony serving as the rite of passage (1988:258)."

[20]Attendance at specific family Masses was mandatory for all school families in nine of the thirteen parish-centered schools, five of the eight isolated, three of the six externally linked schools, and five of the seven cooperatively-linked schools.

in the church service. On Mothers' Day, for example, the students ushered in mothers and presented them with carnations. The children's choir from school sang at the parish confirmation. Student representatives presented gifts at the farewell Mass of a deacon who had served the parish. In each of these situations, the church became a setting in which parishioners could get a taste of who the students were and what the school was about; they were able to see and hear some of the good things that were happening in the school.

In addition to the school's presence at important parish celebrations, important school events were celebrated in the context of a parish liturgy so that the parish might witness those events too. The baccalaureate ceremony, for example, took place during a weekend parish Mass.

During the school day, too, many school activities were ritualized in a church context, thereby strengthening the importance of the church to the school community. A striking example of this was the special school liturgy by which the entire student body celebrated the 8th grade graduates. This Mass preceded the baccalaureate and actual graduation ceremonies, but it provided an opportunity for the entire student body to recognize the achievement of the graduates and to acknowledge their departure. The Mass was planned by the second grade class who did the readings, acting out the Gospel and commissioning each teacher and

classroom to spread the Good News of Jesus. Students helped provide the music and did the singing.

The liturgy also included a special candle ceremony during which the 8th graders, wearing caps and gowns, ritualized what St. Sojourner School had meant to them, and the special gifts they had received there (faith, understanding, friendship, respect, love, etc.). Through the passing of lit candles they symbolically passed those gifts on to the seventh graders, entrusting them with the leadership of the school and challenging them to treasure those gifts, and to be good models and leaders for the rest of the school.

Meetings of the Catholic Club, run by the director of religious education and one of the parish priests, were also important rituals in this school. All the Catholic students regularly attended meetings of this group which were held during school hours. The meetings were intended to help Catholic students appreciate the uniqueness of being Catholic in a setting where, despite its Catholic identity, these students were a minority. This club also reinforced the linkage between church and school and confirmed the significance of dual membership, providing added incentive for students to be involved in parish as well as school.

The Effects of Shared Culture on the School's Legitimacy
as Perceived by Various Constituencies

In this section of the chapter I will explore the way

various constituencies within the school evaluated its quality and whether or not the culture affected St. Sojourner School's legitimacy. As I spoke with parish leadership and with school personnel, it was obvious that the presence of a strong culturally based African-American parish community was extremely significant to them. But my sense was that it was less significant to parent groups who were looking for an academically strong school; if community helped St. Sojourner's to achieve that goal, then community was to be valued. But for parents, community appeared to be a means to an end rather than a value worth pursuing in itself.

The Importance of Community to Administration and Faculty

The principal and pastor shared a common belief about what a Catholic parochial school should be like. First it must have high standards of educational excellence.[21] It must treasure its Catholicity, and it must reflect the makeup and the cultural heritage of whatever group occupies the school. In other words, education must provide students with a sense of who they are, and parents and staff must exercise leadership and truly feel that the school is theirs, that it belongs to them.

St. Sojourner was considered legitimate and successful,

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[21]The pastor warned that too many Catholic schools are mediocre, and that mediocrity will destroy Catholic schools. He insisted that if the Catholic Church is going to educate she must do it well, or not at all.

therefore, only if students recognized themselves as an "African-American Community of faith." The principal stated that the school attempted to accomplish this by providing role models, speakers, and artwork depicting the culture and portraying to students who they were. This would have been a tremendous task for any school, and identifying with a culturally vibrant church community would greatly enhance the ability of the school to accomplish this mission.

Interviews with teachers served to confirm the importance of a strong school community. Teacher after teacher spoke about the good rapport among faculty, how close-knit they were; several teachers described that as one of the greatest strengths of the school. Numerous teachers spoke of the emphasis the school places on affirmation and community-building, the importance of showing lots of love, of faculty modeling to children a caring, supportive community. Teachers identified the leadership of the principal as the key ingredient for a successful school; they saw her as setting the direction and the atmosphere--she fostered the values in the faculty which they in turn passed on to the students.

Teacher satisfaction was evidenced by the stability of the faculty in this school. Only four out of twenty-five classroom teachers had left the school during the five year administration of the current principal. I spoke with two teachers who had been teaching in the school for fourteen

years, and there were others who had been there even

longer.[22]

While most of the teachers spoke specifically of the

school community, several also spoke of the close

affiliation of the parish with the school. Staff members

described a concerted effort to link the school and church

through communication; the church bulletin kept

parishioners informed about school happenings and it also

provided a forum for students to write about significant

topics. Teachers also reported that students were involved

in the larger parish community through work in the parish

food program and writing cards to those on the parish sick

list. Possibly because these teachers were themselves

involved in the parish, they were eager to see their

students involved. But the quality of community reported by

all the teachers apparently was due in large part to that

strong sense of identity and mission that came from being

part of the parish.

Community and Academic Credibility: the Views of Parents

I spoke with approximately twenty parents in a variety

of settings. These parents were much more concerned about

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[22]Interestingly, this faculty stability was causing a
financial problem for the school; because teachers had
worked in the school for so many years, their salaries were
much higher than would normally be the case in inner-city
parochial schools. What was good academically for a school,
what aided tremendously in providing quality education,
threatened to become a financial burden, inflating the
school's budget beyond the school's means to provide.

their children's academic success and the achievements of
the school's graduates than they were about community. Only
parishioner parents commented on the quality of the school
community. None of the non-Catholic parents with whom I
spoke considered themselves involved in the larger parish
community.

I spoke with a variety of parents as they registered
their child/ren for the following school year; some of
these parents were new to the school, either enrolling
children for the first time or transferring them from
another school; others had had children in this school
before. All of them wished to ensure a quality education
for their children.

Several themes emerged as significant to parents in
their choice of St. Sojourner School. The school's
reputation--what it had done in the past and how it was
perceived to be doing now--seemed to be the most significant
concern of the parents. Some parents transferring into St.
Sojourner expressed dissatisfaction with the public school
system;[23] others commented on their satisfaction with
Catholic schools in general or spoke of choosing this school
because of the strong discipline and the stress on teaching

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[23]On the other hand, one father spoke of the excellent
quality of the public system in his suburban neighborhood,
but he feels St. Sojourner is even better. He repeatedly
emphasized that education is the way for children to make it
in life...and he wants the best basic education for his
daughter. He has known St. Sojourner School since his
childhood, and has seen its graduates succeed.

the basics.[24] Several parents spoke of wanting to pass on to their children the advantages and success that friends or relatives who had gone to St. Sojourner's had experienced.

Once enrolled the parents based their evaluation of the school on their personal satisfaction with the school's effect on their children. It was also important to parents to know that their children were happy in school or were comfortable there.[25] They spoke too of academic progress and their child's scores on standardized achievement tests. One parent spoke of her son being two years ahead of his friends in the public school. I asked parents for their suggestions for improving the quality of the school and they suggested only a few things: several parents expressed a desire for a foreign language program[26] and a few wanted to

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[24]This finding confirms earlier research (Vitullo-Martin 1979; Cibulka, O'Brien, and Zewe 1982). Catholic schools have a strong reputation for stressing the basic academic skill areas and for strict discipline that is attractive to inner-city black families just as it has traditionally been to white ethnic blue-collar Catholics. Religious and moral values are important, but distinct from and secondary to a quality education in the choice of Catholic schools by black inner-city parents.

[25]This, too, was noted in the research findings of Cibulka, O'Brien, and Zewe. Seventy-seven percent of inner-city Catholic school parents said that their children spoke positively about school, and 73 percent strongly agreed that their children like to go to school (1982:152).

[26]This concern for a foreign language program surfaced in several other schools I visited as well, usually--although not always--in schools where parents were better educated or families a bit more economically secure. These parents seemed to place tremendous value on a more classical education. It was interesting to me that as colleges and universities were abolishing foreign language requirements,

see an increase in computer time and experiences for all students, and computer classes for parents so that they could help their children at home.

A final theme was the perception of parents that their input and concerns were taken seriously and responded to by teachers, and even more importantly, by the administrator. Cibulka, O'Brien, and Zewe (1982:74-75) similarly found that Catholic schools were attractive to inner-city parents because of the responsiveness of school authorities. They differentiated three types of responsiveness--anticipatory (parents chose the school because of shared preferences), demand responsiveness (parental suggestions and criticisms are acted upon), and structural responsiveness (the schools have decision-making structures which provide opportunities for parents to offer advice or share in the decision making).

St. Sojourner's demand responsiveness was evident in its attempts to keep lines of communication open to parents. Three mandatory Home School Meetings each year provided parents with information regarding school budget, tuition, scholarships, and new programs. In addition, speakers addressed topics relevant to parental concerns and/or their children's education. Also mandatory was the parent

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inner-city parents were urging their elementary schools to initiate foreign language programs. A few of the schools I visited had actually done this but the program was usually limited to one language and confined to the junior high level.

conference with the child's teacher at the time of the first report card. The principal sent a weekly communication to parents, keeping them updated on school events and concerns.

The local school board provided for structural responsiveness at St. Sojourner. At the meeting I attended several items on the agenda were responses to parental concerns and questions.[27] The Parent Organization, a voluntary organization, also served as a forum for parents to raise issues and concerns and to receive some kind of immediate feedback. During the meeting which I attended, for instance, the principal answered parental criticisms that had recently been brought to her attention regarding the adequacy of classroom materials in the science curriculum.[28]

The primary concern of parents at St. Sojourner was their children's education. They saw their own time and energies as extremely limited--involvement in the day to day life of the school and its organizations, to say nothing of involvement in the total parish, was considered impossible

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[27]For example, a decision regarding physical education uniforms was revised in light of parents' expressed concerns.

[28]The principal explained funding sources to the parents and accounted for moneys spent on learning materials during the past year. In addition, the science curriculum coordinator explained the present program, its goals and objectives, and teacher training in science. She also displayed some of the more interesting classroom science materials and computer software.

and unnecessary by a majority of the parents.[29] They were clearly committed, however, to ensuring that their children received the best education their money could buy. If the parish community enabled the school to do a better job of educating their children then they were willing to do what that community required.

<div align="center">Organizational Autonomy:
Are Parish Interests Really School Interests?</div>

The third issue raised by the case study of this parish-centered school was the issue of autonomy. Autonomy is a key issue from a resource dependence perspective; the more dependent an organization is on one resource provider, the more vulnerable it is to crises and problems that provider encounters, and the more subject it is to political interference from that provider. In the traditional parish, the autonomy issue is moderated because school parents are also parishioners, and in most cases the school and parish share a common good. Because the majority of the school parents at St. Sojourner were not parishioners and did not participate actively in the parish community, however, it seemed likely that at times the interests of the two groups might conflict. It is important, therefore, to consider the effect that local parish control has on the autonomy of the inner-city Catholic school. When interests conflict, if

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[29]This was confirmed by the principal who estimated that only about 10 percent of the parents were actively involved in school projects and functions.

decisions are based on what is best for the total parish community rather than for the school, the school may find itself increasingly at risk.

In the course of my case study of St. Sojourner, three questions arose that allowed me to explore this issue of organizational autonomy. The first was a question I raised; I was interested in discovering whether the religious culture--which was so central to the identity of this parish-centered school and an important legitimating aspect of the parish's support of the school--was problematic for the majority of parents who were non-parishioners. The other two were questions I stumbled upon that revealed another dimension of the autonomy problem that can arise in schools choosing this form of adaptation: pastoral control of administrative decisions.

Religious Requirements for Non-Catholics

In discussions about why they chose St. Sojourner school, parents only rarely spoke of its religious orientation. When I asked them specifically about the school's involvement with the parish church, parents expressed a respect for the church community, but also a sense of gratitude that their children were not being "indoctrinated." They felt the school respected their own religious beliefs and that their children were not being faced with conflicting values or beliefs. One mother reported that her children recognized differences between

their home-church and their school-church, but the differences were seen simply as differences, not as better and worse, right and wrong. Parents expressed a similar satisfaction with the religion taught in school.

The pastor confirmed as official policy what parents were describing: while proud of being Catholic, the school also celebrated other Christian religions. Religion, because of the school's sensitivity and respect for religious diversity, was not an issue with the parents. While I perceived that this ecumenical spirit was genuine at St. Sojourner's, my research also indicates that the stability of the parish made that spirit possible. In parishes struggling for survival, desperately in need of new members, the role of the school as a feeder into the parish is an essential one. At St. Sojourner, where membership was stable and the parish itself was flourishing, the parish could more easily afford to respect the religious freedom of the school families. The parish depended on the school for the transmission of the parish's cultural values, not for recruiting new members.[30] As a result, in the area of religious requirements for non-Catholics, the interests of

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[30]Schein states that during the birth and early growth stage of an organization, culture is the distinctive source of identity and the "glue" holding the organization together. During this phase organizations place a heavy emphasis on socialization (1985:271). Applying this to St. Sojourner, we have a parish still in its early growth stage after its rebirth as a black community. The school was the parish's key instrument of socialization and cultural celebration.

parish and school parents were complementary rather than competing.

Pastoral Control of Administrative Decisions

In the course of my fieldwork I discovered two areas where the pastor's beliefs conflicted with the beliefs of the school board and/or the principal: religious requirements for Catholic nonparishioners and class size. In both cases, the administrative autonomy of the school principal was compromised; the pastor asserted his authority and the school was expected to comply.

Religious requirements for Catholics

St. Sojourner policy required that all Catholic families wishing to enroll their children in St. Sojourner School join the parish; this was true even if their home parish no longer had a parish school. This was an unpopular policy among Catholic nonparishioner school families because they felt compelled to choose between a quality Catholic education for their children and their loyalty to their home parish. Often they had grown up in those parishes, and now held leadership positions within them. In addition, many of these home parishes were much smaller than St. Sojourner and they were struggling for survival. Various families had reportedly complained to the principal and board members that their home parish needed them much more than St. Sojourner.

Because this was a parish-centered school, it is likely that the pastor was operating out of a traditional view of the relationship between the parish and the school. Unlike the cooperatively-linked school, this was not a joint venture by several parishes for the provision of Catholic education in a particular region...it was a _parish_ school. Therefore, Catholics who wished to avail themselves of the benefits of the school should become responsible members of the parish community. While not needing to compete with neighboring Protestant churches, a sense of competition with neighboring parishes tends to endure. Unfortunately, the stronger the sense of parish community and identity, the harder it is to break through parochial boundaries.

At St. Sojourner, the school board and principal objected to requiring all Catholics to join the parish because it seemed to demand a painful and unnecessary choice of nonparishioner Catholic families. Several families were leaving the school because of it and new families were being turned away because of their commitment to their parishes. These enrollment losses were costly for the school, especially at a time when the future of the school depended on its ability to keep enrollment stable.

The board at their monthly meeting expressed anger and dissatisfaction that the Catholic parents had less freedom to worship where they wished than the non-Catholic parents. They clearly voiced a desire to change the policy, but the

principal reminded them that they had approached the pastor with this concern previously and he had refused to revise the policy. Neither principal nor school board could override his decision. While the principal encouraged the board to approach him again with proposals for revising the policy, in pastoral decisions like this, the pastor retained full authority. This was a clear example of school autonomy being limited by the parish, and specifically by pastoral leadership. Parish and school interests were conflicting... and parish interests, not surprisingly, won out.

Class size and reliance on tuition

The second example of the parish-centered school's autonomy being constrained or limited by pastoral authority had to do with classroom size. As mentioned above, St. Sojourner School had had a slight enrollment drop during the years immediately preceding my research. While enrollment was higher and more stable than in most elementary parochial schools in the archdiocese, the pastor had determined that a full classroom was thirty-five students and unless enrollment could be brought up to that level, he had warned that the school would have to close classrooms.

The principal did not concur with this decision, and she had voiced her opinion, but the final decision-making power resided in the pastor rather than the principal. His decision was based less on an educationally appropriate classroom size and more on the number of students needed in

order for their tuition to cover the teacher's salary.
Because the parish's financial assets were limited and
leadership insisted on remaining independent of the
archdiocese, tuition had to supply a larger portion of the
school's operational budget. Full classrooms were therefore
a necessity. While other inner-city schools appeared to be
unconcerned about classes of 17 to 20, St. Sojourner,
despite its relative strength and stability, was seriously
considering closing classrooms of 27 to 30 students.

Strong Dependence, Weak Autonomy

These examples illustrate the organizational dangers of
too heavy a reliance on a single resource provider (Pfeffer
and Salancik 1978). If the school were jointly sponsored by
several parishes, or if it were subsidized by the
archdiocese as well as by the parish, the principal would be
better able to balance the school's dependencies. The
school would also be less vulnerable to interference from
the pastor in decision-making. As it is, however, the
parish-centered school, because it is still so strongly
identified with the parish, is not free to act as an
independent entity. School leadership, while possessing
some autonomy in the school itself, is always responsible to
parish leadership; the principal's autonomy is limited by
the final and complete authority of the pastor, and the
school always operates in an environment where the total
parish good normally takes precedence over what might

otherwise be good for the school itself.

An additional factor to be considered when looking at pastoral control in parish-centered schools, is the leadership style of the pastor. St. Sojourner's pastor was a charismatic leader who, as I explained earlier, was considered responsible for the refounding of the parish as a black community. Founder domination is typical in the early stages of organizational life (Schein 1985), so to find the pastor exerting his authority over the school is not surprising. Schein states:

> They (founders) will typically have their own notion, based on their own cultural history and personality, of how to get the idea fulfilled. Founders not only have a high level of self-confidence and determination, but they typically have strong assumptions about the nature of the world, the role that organizations play in that world, the nature of human nature and relationships, how truth is arrived at, and how to manage time and space (1985:210).

He goes on to say that subordinates (in this case, the principal, board, faculty, etc.) tolerate and accommodate to the founder, "acting on the assumption that the leader is a "creative genius" who has idiosyncrasies (224)." This description seems to fit what I observed at St. Sojourner. School personnel showed deep respect and appreciation for the pastor, and if at times they had opposing ideas, they resigned themselves to his authority and worked to make the most of the situation.

<u>Organizational Effectiveness</u>
<u>of the Parish-Centered School</u>

In the final section of this chapter I will summarize
my findings at St. Sojourner, looking at the special
advantages and the limitations of the parish-centered
approach to Catholic school adaptation in the black inner
city. For schools like St. Sojourner where the parish
remains relatively stable and firmly committed to its
school, this approach can result in an organizationally
successful school...one whose enrollment remains fairly
constant, whose financial resources are secure, and whose
legitimacy is firmly established.

The changes facing the parish-centered school are
perhaps less threatening to its survival because they are
confined more to the periphery of the school organization;
the core of what the school is has not changed
significantly. It is still Catholic, still parochial, still
clearly a part of the parish from which it draws not only
support but its identity and its mission. Yet this approach
also has limitations and problems that are unique to the
parish-centered school.

Adaptive Strengths of the Parish-Centered School

The strong base of legitimacy made possible for the
school is the greatest advantage of this approach to
environmental change in the black inner city. This
legitimacy in turn stimulates enrollment and secures other

needed resources which the parish can help generate. Legitimacy is strongest and most durable when it is built on a strong community base, which in this type of school is provided by the parish.

The rich African-American culture which St. Sojourner School shared with the rest of the parish made the school credible both to the parish and the staff, and generated for the school a commitment of resources and dedicated personnel. In addition the interaction of school and church through ritual and symbol resulted in a vibrant school community which increased the likelihood of academic success and strengthened student, parent, and teacher satisfaction with the school.

My research at St. Sojourner indicated that while the sharing of a common culture was important to the parish and the staff, and possibly the students themselves, it was much less so for parents. Some foundation of common culture does help establish the school's legitimacy, but it is important to note that parents for the most part were not assimilated into the church community. What I found at St. Sojourner was not one cohesive community but two overlapping and inter-related communities. The overlap was highly significant, however, because the energy, dedication, and sense of mission which made the school the vital community that it was, was centered in and generated by that core group bridging the two communities.

Limitations and Special Problems of this Approach

My case study at St. Sojourner revealed two important limitations or problems that would appear to characterize this approach to adaptation. The first is one that I have already addressed: the school's limited autonomy in the face of parish demands or expectations. The second is the tension and competition that can arise between parents whose sole involvement and interest is in the school community, and those parishioner-parents who are also committed to the church community.

Limited Autonomy within the Parish

While legitimacy and the resources such legitimacy provides are strong and enduring in parish-centered schools, these schools have risked investing all their inter-organizational energies into the parish. Because the parish is their only link to resources, they are uniquely vulnerable--as parochial schools have always been--to environmental changes affecting the parish. Their autonomy and interests are always subject to and, in times of crisis, subordinate to, total parish autonomy and interests.

Because the pastor retains administrative power, the parish-centered school is also extremely vulnerable to changes in pastoral leadership. A new pastor may abandon or actively seek to close a parish-centered school as has happened repeatedly in the inner city. In this context, the school itself has less control over its own destiny than

either the cooperatively or externally-linked schools I studied.

Competition between Parent Groups

Another constant challenge for the parish-centered school is maintaining a healthy rapport and good balance between the school community and the church community. While the school emphasizes the shared culture and envisions one united community of which both parishioners and non-parishioner parents are a part, in reality the school must struggle with two different sets of interests and needs to which it must respond.

At St. Sojourner this competition was vividly played out in the tension and disputes which occurred between the school board and the parent organization. Morgan speaks of the subcultural divisions that exist within organizations:

> Typically these divisions usually result in a struggle for control, which in certain important respects can be understood as a struggle for the right to shape corporate culture. As in politics, such struggles are often closely linked to questions of ideology (1986:127-128).

The competition between school board and parent organization appeared to be this kind of a struggle between subcultures within the school--the school board representing primarily the parishioner families and the parent organization representing primarily the interests of the non-parishioner parents.

The school board was an elected policy-making body

composed primarily of parishioners (though there were two
non-parishioner parents serving on the board). The school
board was to serve as a mouthpiece for the broader school
community; its function was to discover parental concerns
and frustrations, bring them forward for discussion, and
attempt to balance them against administrative needs, goals,
and constraints, working toward the most amenable
resolution. Many parents, however, apparently perceived the
school board as the Catholic organization; the parent
organization president reported to the school board that
many parents see the school board "as up on a pedestal...a
group that sits on top and dictates."

The parent organization, on the other hand, was a
grassroots voluntary organization of primarily non-Catholic
parents; this group was very supportive of the school and
was active in fundraising. At the time of my research,
members in this group were concerned about school interests
being subordinated to parish interests and some of its
members apparently--at least at times--viewed the parish as
a competitor for scarce resources rather than a sponsor and
supporter of the school.[31]

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[31]The parent organization, by policy is supposed to
contribute half of its earnings to the parish but during the
parent organization report at the school board meeting the
parent organization representative stated that in actuality
it gives much more. Parents were objecting to this policy,
questioning why money should be given to the church when
things were needed so badly in the classroom (a statement to
which the principal objected). Another school board member,
a non-Catholic parent, responded that non-Catholic parents

Two striking examples of the conflict between these groups were discussed at the school board meeting I attended. First, some of the parent organization members had complained about meetings being "fixed" when financial decisions were to have been made: all kinds of parishioner-parents never seen before at meetings showed up apparently for the express purpose of voting on the amount of money to be given to the parish. Secondly, rather than co-sponsoring with the school board an appreciation dinner for the faculty as had been done previously, the parent organization that year had voted to host their own. The reason given to the school board was that "the school board was not congenial to work with." This statement disturbed both the principal and the parent organization representative to the board who asked for a school board member to regularly attend parent organization meetings as a delegate of the board in hopes of increasing communication between the two groups.

The numbers regularly involved in the parent organization were small, averaging about fifteen parents at the monthly meetings. It was impossible, therefore, to generalize the tension between parishioners and non-parishioners to the larger school population. Regardless of numbers, however, such tensions raise the question of the

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need to be educated on how much the parish contributes to the school; she explained that parents do not realize how expensive a good education is, or that their tuition does not cover the cost of educating their children. She felt this antagonism would be reduced if parents knew the facts.

difficulty of a school being closely tied into a parish community when a majority of the school families are not.

The case of St. Sojourner demonstrates that a successful parish-centered school can exist and thrive in Chicago's black inner city despite the diversity of school and church populations and the inevitable conflicts and tensions that arise. Through the use of ritual and through a core group of parishioners who were key participants in the school, St. Sojourner had succeeded in forging a strong culture capable of providing the school with identity and legitimacy. This strategy allowed the school to retain many of the benefits of the traditional parochial school. In turn, however, it remained vulnerable to parish instability and pastoral control.