INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATOR: SARGENT SHRIVER’S LIFE AS AN ENGAGED CATHOLIC AND AS AN ACTIVE LIBERAL

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INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATOR: SARGENT SHRIVER’S LIFE AS AN ENGAGED CATHOLIC AND AS AN ACTIVE LIBERAL

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ABSTRACT

INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATOR: SARGENT SHRIVER’S LIFE AS AN ENGAGED CATHOLIC AND AS AN ACTIVE LIBERAL

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This dissertation argues that Robert Sargent Shriver, Jr.’s Roman Catholicism is undervalued when understanding his role crafting late 1950s and 1960s public policies. Shriver played a role in desegregating Chicago’s Catholic and public school systems as well as Catholic hospitals. He helped to shape and lead the Peace Corps. He also designed many of the programs launched in President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty. Shriver’s ability to produce new policies and agencies within a broader structure of governance is well known. However, Shriver’s Catholicism is often neglected when examining his influence on key public policy initiatives and innovations. This dissertation argues that Shriver’s Roman Catholic upbringing formed him in such a way as to understand the nature of large bureaucracies and to see possibilities for innovation within an overarching structure. Shriver encountered both Catholic religious orders and lay sodalities at a young age and developed a posture of institutional imagination. This aspect of his Roman Catholic faith helped him to pursue social innovation within the
framework of government power rather than from the edges of US society. Therefore, Shriver’s Catholicism left him uniquely suited for generating new institutions within a broader context of the US government. Shriver’s penchant for innovation echoes the formation of various religious orders and lay sodalities within Roman Catholicism that found room within a much broader Roman Catholic Church for addressing emergent problems.
Dedicated to My Wife Michele
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INTRODUCTION

SARGENT SHRIVER’S CATHOLIC APPROACH TO INSTITUTIONAL IMAGINATION

For Shriver, the Peace Corps, the War on Poverty, and America were acts of the imagination. They were ways that we should see and therefore be in the world.
- Bill Moyers

The Contested Legacy of Sargent Shriver

Robert Sargent Shriver’s life as a shaper of public policy cannot be understood without honoring his Roman Catholic faith as the greatest influence on his life. Sargent Shriver was a man who attended daily Mass while also launching and shaping many key progressive programs of the 1960s such as the Peace Corps, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), Job Corps and Head Start. This fact is theologically and politically interesting enough to warrant further investigation. Shriver’s deeply held Roman Catholic beliefs and well formed Catholic identity encourage questions as to whether the man at the center of the most progressive programs of two US presidents in the 1960s left an underappreciated Catholic stamp on the policies of two presidential administrations.

This dissertation will argue that Shriver’s Roman Catholicism was at the heart of his administrative genius and creative efficacy within the US bureaucracy. Shriver’s experience of being educated by members of Catholic religious orders and his participation in lay organizations such as the Saint Vincent de Paul Society taught him through lived experience that organizations within a larger bureaucracy could emerge and effectively marshal human energy toward a common cause. This innate experience of

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Roman Catholic innovation was buttressed by Shriver’s adult experiences within Catholic organizations aimed at addressing racism as well as his deep reading of Jesuit paleontologist and theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s vision for harnessing a sense of global connectivity for the greater glory of God.

Sargent Shriver represents a unique manifestation of “Public Catholicism” during the late 1950s and tumultuous 1960s that allowed for Shriver to be deeply engaged in policy making while also living out his Roman Catholic ideals. Many other Catholics also entered into the mainstream of the US consciousness during this time period. Shriver’s role was unique because he did not emerge from an urban system built around immigrant Catholic communities and political bosses nor was he a clergyman. His life as a public Catholic offers both theological and political insights from the position of a Roman Catholic outlier in this pivotal juncture in US history. Shriver’s status outside of the system of political bosses allowed for him to enter into US public policy-making with a different style from many of his Catholic contemporaries.

A full-fledged battle has yet to arise regarding the legacy of Sargent Shriver. Given Shriver’s personal history as a peacemaker, the lack of a bitter dispute seems fitting. It would however be a mistake to think that disagreements about Shriver’s legacy do not exist. In the previous decade, Sargent Shriver has been claimed as an ally by various theological, social, and political movements. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver* by Scott Stossel’s was released in 2004 and gives an exhaustive yet lively account of Shriver’s thought and work that has been well received by both Bill Moyers
and Michael Novak. The public television documentary “American Idealist: The Story of Sargent Shriver” debuted in 2008 and presents Shriver as someone at the forefront of 1960s idealism by helping to design, promote, launch, and manage programs ranging from the Peace Corps and VISTA to Head Start and Legal Services for the Poor. Shriver was even eulogized in 2011 by U2’s lead singer and social activist Bono.

Reflections on Shriver’s legacy intensified in 2013 as notable figures of different ideological stripes invoked Shriver. Conservative pundit Ross Douthat compared Pope Francis’ posture toward world affairs to that of Sargent Shriver in a 2013 New York Times opinion piece. Michael Novak’s 2013 memoir Writing from Left to Right: My Journey from Liberal to Conservative fondly recalls his time working with Shriver. Novak claimed that Shriver understood and expressed Catholic ideals in a manner that the Kennedys could not. Novak lauded Shriver’s energy, and commented that much of Shriver’s life work dealt with the topic of civil society. Novak goes as far to say that aspects of the War on Poverty programs, Shriver’s understanding of the positive role of business and his focus on civil society prefigured the Compassionate Conservative movement.

Mark Shriver memorialized his father by exploring his father’s life through the theological lenses of faith, hope, and love in his 2012 book A Good Man:

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4 American Idealist written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
Rediscovering My Father, Sargent Shriver. Colleague Harris Wofford stated that Mark Shriver’s writing could be seen as hinting toward eventual sainthood for Sargent Shriver. 

Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori invoked Shriver when launching the 2013 USCCB Fortnight for Freedom by stating:

Sargent Shriver was a great American; he was also a great Catholic. A daily communicant and an advocate for the sanctity of human life at all its stages, Sargent Shriver understood how faith, worship and service are linked. They were certainly linked in his long life of service to our country, whether it was launching the Peace Corps during the Kennedy administration or Head Start, Vista and the Job Corps during the Johnson administration or, later in his life, serving as Chair of the Special Olympics. He was a living example of how faith enriches public life.

Lori’s use of Shriver is particularly interesting because Shriver was a central figure in President Lyndon Johnson’s social programs, and yet the Fortnight for Freedom was largely launched as a reaction to the 2010 Affordable Care Act’s mandate regarding contraceptive coverage. By using Shriver, Lori may be saying that the largest change to the nation’s health care system since President Johnson enacted Medicare and Medicaid is somehow other and different from the programs that President Johnson launched.

These different portraits of Shriver agree on a few central details. First, those interested in claiming Shriver’s legacy highlight his commitment to the Roman Catholic Church. Second, these same groups claim that Shriver was a devoted and dedicated public figure involved with crafting public policy. Third, these commentators all highlight Shriver’s role within Special Olympics. None of these three areas of agreement are particularly controversial. Shriver’s posture toward poverty, electoral politics, and

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8 Mark K. Shriver, A Good Man, 12.
9 Harris Wofford, interview by the author, telephone interview, August 9, 2012, interview notes.
issues such as the Vietnam War are more controversial. Those seeking to enlist his legacy have tended to highlight or downplay Shriver’s positions on controversial issues depending upon their own political stances.

What makes Shriver important from a theological perspective is that he is a committed Roman Catholic who was in the center of power first within the city of Chicago and then nationally. His attempt at translating Catholic ideals into policies makes Shriver unique. Shriver’s affluence prior to the Great Depression and social location in various centers of power differentiates him from Roman Catholic social critics such as Caesar Chavez and Dorothy Day known more for critiquing public policy and the social order from the edges of society. Shriver’s commitment to Catholicism makes him distinctive as compared to many secular approaches to political liberalism. Finally, Shriver’s liberalism makes him an exceptional case as compared to many politically active Catholics in the contemporary US public sphere such as Jeb Bush, Marco Rubio, and Rick Santorum.

The unique factors surrounding Shriver raise multiple questions regarding the future relationship between Roman Catholicism and the mechanisms of US public policy. Exploring Shriver forces one to consider the future interactions of politically liberal interests in the US and traditional political activism among Catholics concerned with social justice and peace issues. Shriver’s life also offers a counter-point to the current largely conservative political actions of public Catholics because Shriver’s engagement with public policy meshes quite well with the economic and social teachings of the Church.
If Shriver is judged to be an anomaly, many of the contemporary paradigms of how political liberalism and political conservatism interact with the Roman Catholic Church in the US will continue on their current trajectories. If a third way is not found to be viable, it is likely that Roman Catholics in the US who are interested in public policy and social engagement will continue to be asked to decide between focusing on reproductive and end of life issues or on issues of social justice. If Shriver represents a vibrant contemporary option for choosing institutional innovation as an approach for social engagement, his legacy for US Catholics can be seen as unnerving to both neo-conservative Catholics and to US Catholics with more sectarian impulses. Beyond being unnerving, Shriver’s approach may undergird a fruitful movement for pursuing Catholic ideals. This is so because Shriver models for other US Catholics a method of persistent action that seeks novel ways to engage existing structures while also daringly putting ideas into new social structures. The thesis of this dissertation is that Shriver does represent a viable and important, though overlooked, example for social and political expression of deeply held Catholic beliefs in the US context. Furthermore, this dissertation will argue that Shriver’s penchant for arriving at innovative and original methods for addressing emerging problems is a product of his Roman Catholic worldview and that his example offers an instructive expression of a socially engaged Roman Catholic in the US.

In order to argue that Shriver represents a unique manifestation of public Catholicism, it is imperative to filter Shriver’s life and work through multiple lenses. This dissertation will first establish Sargent Shriver as someone deeply embedded in Roman Catholic thought and practice by briefly exploring his biography and then
examining that biography through three theological perspectives: the charisms of religious orders and lay sodalities that impacted Shriver’s youth, David J. O’Brien’s types of Public Catholics, and Vatican II’s declaration on the apostolate of the laity. Next, this dissertation will explore and situate Shriver within the trends of twentieth century political liberalism keeping a keen eye on his Roman Catholic Faith. Third, this dissertation will explore Sargent Shriver’s work toward eradicating the “sin of racism” in the 1950s, 1960s, and beyond. Fourth, this dissertation will explore the Peace Corps in light of Roman Catholic ideals, domestic political realities, and Cold War dynamics. Finally, this dissertation will explore Shriver’s work as the architect of the War on Poverty in light of notions such as civil society, social justice, and domestic political realities. In each instance, Shriver’s own words will be explored in order to give a thick interpretation of Shriver’s posture and ability to speak public policies with a Catholic accent. By examining Shriver’s Catholic origins, his political background and his work on race, peace, and poverty, this dissertation will cast Shriver’s life into greater theological relief and argue that he represents for the 1960s much of what Reverend John A. Ryan represented for US Catholics from World War I through the New Deal Years. Each man offered a posture of institutional imagination that responded to the causes of their time in history while also not abandoning Catholic principles.

A great deal has been written regarding “the Catholic Imagination” since David Tracy published The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism in 1983.12 Richard A. Blake, S.J. used Tracy’s work to evaluate the impact of a Roman Catholic upbringing on six US filmmakers. Blake asserts that one thing Roman

Catholics tend to do is to see the world through the lens of hierarchies. In the case of Shriver, as well as the cases of Rev. John A. Ryan, Saint Anthony of the Desert, Saint Benedict of Nursia, Saint Francis of Assisi, and Saint Ignatius of Loyola, an argument can be made this Catholic familiarity with hierarchy leads to a comfort level when it comes to envisioning changes for the structure of a large bureaucracy.

Lawrence S. Cunningham’s 1995 work The Catholic Heritage argues that the architects of early monasticism, and the founders of later missionary orders among others were able to reinterpret concepts such as martyrdom and generate new and imaginative ways for instantiating those very concepts. For example, Cunningham notes that Saint Benedict reinterpreted both martyrdom and eremitic monasticism in writing a rule for contemplative coenobitic monastics. Cunningham further argues that the re-imagination of key Christian concepts continued well beyond Saint Benedict by paraphrasing G.K. Chesterton and stating “what Saint Benedict stored, Saint Francis scattered.”

Sargent Shriver’s ability to imagine new ways of being in the world and new ways for a large bureaucracy such as the US government to function in the world is deeply indebted to his Catholic experience of what this dissertation will call institutional imagination. The author of this dissertation did not coin the term “institutional imagination.” This term is found within the fields of legal scholarship, business ethics, and even geography, but it has not come into broad use in theological circles. Business

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15 Ibid. 33-37.
ethicists Deborah Vidaver-Cohen links institutional imagination to problem solving.16 While political theorist Jason Frank contends that the Federalist Papers represent an example of institutional imagination as the authors of the Federalist papers sought to appeal to the public to re-imagine the social order.17 Economic geographer Johanna Haas used the term “institutional imagination” to describe how the US Congress sees a given geographical region when enacting laws and that this imagination then impacts those laws.18 Sargent Shriver engaged in institutional imagination both as a problem solver and as a method for re-imaging society. This dissertation contends that institutional imagination is a way of both seeing the world and large structures within it as they are, but also of seeing unexpected and emergent possibilities within these structures for addressing the needs of the world. Saints Benedict, Francis, and Ignatius were all able to see the Church and see its needs and respond by producing something new. Shriver took this gift and applied it to the major issues of race, peace, and poverty that confronted twentieth century US culture. Unlike, the saints listed, the majority of Shriver’s institutional innovation took place within the large structure of the US government. However, this dissertation argues that Shriver’s comprehensive Roman Catholic upbringing and thorough participation in the life and work of the Roman Catholic Church imparted upon him an awareness of how to successfully maneuver and exercise agency within immense institutional bodies both ecclesial and secular. Shriver’s

inventive approaches for confronting racism, for promoting peace, and for combating poverty all buttress this contention.
CHAPTER 1
SARGENT SHRIVER AS A UNIQUELY WELL-FORMED PUBLIC CATHOLIC

Robert Sargent Shriver, Jr.’s life was most deeply fashioned by his Roman Catholicism. Shriver’s focus on issues of race, peace and poverty during the 1960s flowed forth from his Catholicism. This dissertation asserts that the breadth and depth of Shriver’s Catholic formation imbued him with a genius for working within and helping to generate new institutions. This dissertation further argues that Shriver’s deeply Catholic approach to institutional imagination represents an untested path forward for US Catholics who are committed to social engagement. While the case for this thesis will be made throughout the entirety of this dissertation, this chapter will focus on the unique nature of Shriver’s Roman Catholicism. This case will be made first by briefly exploring Shriver’s biography. Second, Shriver encountered multiple religious orders, lay organizations and an important member of the Roman Catholic hierarchy within the US during his formative years. The impact of the different charisms found in Shriver’s childhood Roman Catholic milieu will be surveyed. Then an exploration the models of “Public Catholicism” put forth by David J. O’Brien will help to situate Shriver as representing a unique model of engagement among his Catholic peers.

O’Brien’s typologies will be used to evaluate brief sketches of the public lives of selected Roman Catholic contemporaries of Sargent Shriver. Cesar Chavez, Dorothy
Day, Thomas P. “Tip” O’Neill, Robert F. Kennedy and John F. Kennedy represent different approaches to public Catholicism from Shriver’s. These sketches will be contrasted with a thick description of Sargent Shriver’s life highlighting his commitment to Roman Catholicism. This information will help cast Shriver’s life as representing a unique manifestation of public Catholicism. Shriver’s style of public Catholicism is unique precisely because he was far more engaged in statecraft and public policy than most of his prophetic contemporaries, but his Catholic identity was more perceptible than many post-World War II political liberals. Finally, selected public statements made to explicitly Roman Catholic audiences by Sargent Shriver in the 1950s and 1960s will be investigated to demonstrate the character of Shriver’s public Catholicism. Finally, the Second Vatican Council’s 1965 decree on the role of the laity *Apostolicam actuositatem* will give a sense of how Shriver lived out the vision of the role of laity put forth by the Roman Catholic Church in the 1960s.

**Sargent Shriver: The Product of a Deeply Catholic Milieu**

Robert Sargent Shriver’s allegiances to the Roman Catholic Church and to the Democratic Party were deeply entrenched. Robert Sargent Shriver, Jr. was born on November 9, 1915. Shriver’s childhood life was characterized by a unique confluence of political and religious leaders and intellectuals. Sarge was also educated in a thoroughly Catholic milieu. Shriver described his unique upbringing as being “an exceedingly pleasant childhood.” Robert Sargent Shriver, Jr. grew up in an environment in which both Roman Catholicism and Democratic politics were discussed and experienced as a matter of course. Furthermore, it is the contention of this chapter that this organic

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exposure to both the leaders and intellectuals of the Roman Catholic faith as well as to local and national political figures uniquely shaped Sargent Shriver’s latter life as a messenger of Catholic ideas within the public sphere of the US.

The Shriver family roots trace to the upper region of the Rhine River. The Shrivers began to immigrate to the colonies of Maryland and Pennsylvania in the 1720s. The Shrivers of Maryland were Episcopalians until 1826 when a wing of the family became Roman Catholic following the marriage of Sargent Shriver’s great-grandfather to a Roman Catholic. Sargent Shriver’s father and mother were distantly related and shared the same last name. Robert Sargent Shriver, Sr. came from the Episcopal wing of the Shriver family while Hilda Shriver came from the Roman Catholic wing of the family. After their marriage, Shriver, Sr. converted to Roman Catholicism. His devotion to his faith was strident, and he took his children into the tenements and slums of Baltimore to help him with his work as a member of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society. His father’s devotion to the Saint Vincent de Paul Society would later impact Sarge’s memorable farewell as the US ambassador to France in 1969.

Hilda did more than convert Robert Sargent Shriver, Sr. to Roman Catholicism. Shriver, Sr. was a member of the Republican Party while Hilda was a Democrat. Eventually, Robert became a Democrat as well as Roman Catholic. However, in 1920 Hilda and Robert split their votes. By 1924, Robert was a Democrat and the Shriver family was close friends with Maryland’s four-term Democratic governor Albert Cabal Ritchie. Sarge and his family would sometimes travel with Governor Ritchie when he gave campaign speeches. The Shrivers were Democrats whose brand of Democratic

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20 Ibid., 14.
21 Ibid., 16.
22 American Idealist written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
politics in the 1920s revolved around the themes of states rights, local government and religious freedom. These political foci were typical of southern Democratic politics prior to the New Deal. Sarge’s ideology and style of being a member of the Democratic Party would shift along with that of his party in the coming decades.

Sarge was raised on a large country estate called Union Mills, Maryland. His home hosted numerous distinguished guests from both the political and religious realms. Beyond Governor Ritchie, Sarge was raised in a home that also hosted visiting politicians such as Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft. Sarge’s boyhood home was also frequently visited by James Cardinal Gibbons. In fact, Cardinal Gibbons was Sarge’s godfather.

Shriver’s maternal grandfather, Thomas Herbert Shriver, had been a roommate of Gibbons at Saint Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore. Gibbons would spend large portions of his summers living at the Shriver’s country residence. Cardinal Gibbons would celebrate Mass at the Shriver chapel when visiting the Shriver family. Sarge and his brother Thomas Herbert, who went by Herbert, would be altar servers for these Masses. Shriver’s relationship to Gibbons manifested itself in two sacramental events marking different stages of life. Gibbons baptized Sargent Shriver. Sarge also proudly recounted to his children that he was one of the altar servers for Gibbons’ final Mass. These two events bookmark an early childhood imbued with Roman Catholicism.

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23 Stossel, Sarge, 15.
24 *American Idealist* written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
26 Stossel, Sarge, 12.
28 Stossel, Sarge, 11-13.
This Roman Catholic milieu extended beyond Sarge’s home life. While living in Union Mills, he attended Saint John’s Parochial School in Westminster, Maryland.\textsuperscript{29} Hilda Shriver decided to visit Saint John’s when Sarge was “about six or seven years old” and was told not to worry about her son by the Sister who taught him because Sarge was a “born leader.”\textsuperscript{30} Shriver’s grade school was operated by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Their foundress was Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger who almost presaged Shriver’s later work in stating, “United and content with little, we go out into the whole world, into the tiniest villages, into the poorest dwellings, wherever the Lord calls us….\textsuperscript{31} This charism of focusing on serving remote regions of the world with a spirit of material humility and goodness was reflected in Shriver’s life and work. His work in both the Experiment for International Living and the Peace Corps were in a manner a continuation of the missionary impulse and desire to help others exemplified by the School Sisters of Notre as well as countless other religious orders that uplifted the immigrant population of the United States through education and direct action.

In 1921, Robert Sargent Shriver, Sr. became president of the Baltimore Trust Company and moved his family to Baltimore, Maryland. Moving away from Union Mills did not end Sarge’s strong Roman Catholic influences. Sarge attended Cathedral grammar school in Baltimore. His fellow classmates remembered him as always being a leader regardless of how much younger he was than his companions.\textsuperscript{32} While living in Baltimore, Sarge would also walk four blocks before school to serve as an altar boy at the

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 18.  
\textsuperscript{32} Liston, \textit{Sargent Shriver: A Candid Portrait}, 21, 22.
Baltimore Cathedral.\textsuperscript{33} Later in life Shriver would recount with pride to his son Mark Shriver that he attended Cathedral school and that the Baltimore Cathedral was the oldest in the US. Shriver even noted that the first Roman Catholic cathedral in the US was designed by Benjamin Henry Latrobe, the same man who designed the US Capitol building.\textsuperscript{34} Sargent Shriver’s childhood being thoroughly Roman Catholic and thoroughly American are encapsulated in his deep identification with the history of the Baltimore cathedral and the US Capitol building.

In 1924, Sarge’s dual passions of Roman Catholicism and Democratic politics fused together during the Democratic National Convention. A combination of political excitement and pride in a Roman Catholic candidate occurred at an early stage of Sarge’s life and made a deep impression. Sarge’s brother Herbert assembled a radio and local Democrats gathered at the Shriver’s home to follow convention’s votes. The Democratic Party could not settle on a candidate and the convention lasted over two weeks. The Shrivers were interested because both Maryland Governor Ritchie and New York Governor Al Smith were in contention for the party’s presidential nomination. Smith was one of the first Catholic politicians to be a serious contender for the presidency. Herbert would listen to a broadcast from Pittsburgh via headphones and write down vote tallies. The room would then discuss these vote totals. The political process and conversations among family guests fascinated the nine-year-old Sarge during the summer of 1924.\textsuperscript{35}

Sarge’s upbringing offers yet another organic junction between Roman Catholicism and public life in the founding of the Catholic magazine \textit{Commonweal}. In New York, Robert and Hilda Shriver continued to give direct aid to the poor via acts of service.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{33} Stossel, \textit{Sarge}, 18, 19.}  
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{34} Mark K. Shriver, \textit{A Good Man}, 134.}  
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{35} Stossel, \textit{Sarge}, 16, 17.}
They also helped to found *Commonweal* a Catholic journal run by the laity that offered Catholic views on issues of public life and governmental policies. Roman Catholic historian James Fischer contends that *Commonweal* and other Catholic associations of the 1920s of the time represented “a theological Jeffersonian belief that all men and women are created equal and are equal in God’s eyes,” and that Sarge as a teenager was a witness to an emerging “Catholic social justice movement in the United States.”

Robert Shriver moved his family to New York in 1929 to found an investment firm. In 1930, Sarge would attend The Canterbury School a prestigious Catholic School in New Mitford, Connecticut for his secondary education. Sarge played sports and was a member of the newspaper staff. The Canterbury School was one of only two Roman Catholic boarding schools, along with the Portsmouth Abbey School, that specialized in sending students to prestigious universities and colleges. Still, Canterbury was not simply aiming students toward the Ivy League; it expected students to be well schooled in Roman Catholicism. Sarge found the daily religious observances at Canterbury to be reassuring and normal given that he had attended daily Mass for most of his life.

Robert Shriver’s investment firm failed due to the stock market crash of 1929. Sarge’s attachment to the Democratic Party shifted while he was attending the Canterbury School. Sargent Shriver’s biographer Scott Stossel notes that Sarge’s states rights version of Democratic politics made him “initially skeptical” of New Deal proposals and policies, “but the strain the Depression put on his parents became forever

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Ibid., 20.

American Idealist written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.


Stossel, *Sarge*, 23-25. Interestingly, John F. Kennedy attended The Canterbury School for one year during Sarge’s time as a student. Kennedy would transfer to Choate School after one year. In an interesting sense, the Canterbury School represents an imaginative institutional response by Roman Catholics to the Ivy League not readily accepting Roman Catholics.
linked … with the hopeless do-nothing approach of Herbert Hoover.” Furthermore, Shriver “… gained a deep appreciation for the power of the government to help its citizens, particularly the least fortunate.”

Shriver’s leadership and scholarship helped him to earn an opportunity to travel to Germany and participate in a program known as the Experiment in International Living during the summer of 1934 prior to his first year as an undergraduate at Yale University. The logic of the Experiment in International Living was simple. The organization believed that interaction among people of many cultures and nationalities helped to produce peace. Shriver and other participants would live among host families and experience the culture of the host country. Shriver’s 1934 summer in Germany helped him to internalize a belief in the importance of international cooperation.

Shriver returned to Germany through the Experiment in International Living in 1936 and in 1937 as a chaperone and leader. Shriver’s participation in Catholic worship helped him to observe changes in Germany between 1934 and 1936. Shriver noted in 1934 that few men under the age of fifty attended Mass. However, by 1936 almost no one was attending Mass in Germany. Shriver learned that some Catholics who were too devout in their Catholic faith were viewed with suspicion by the government and had been arrested.

Shriver participated in the Experiment in International Living again in 1938, but this time he led a group of students spending their summer in France. Shriver led his students back to Paris in August 1938 several weeks ahead of schedule. When he arrived, relieved leaders of the Experiment for International Living hastily helped their

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41 Ibid., 29-31.
42 Ibid., 38, 39.
students leave France and return to the United States due to increasingly military hostility in Europe.\textsuperscript{43}

Shriver enrolled at Yale University in 1934 upon the completion of his studies at the Canterbury School. While at Yale, Shriver read the collected works of Thomas Aquinas in addition to completing his schoolwork. He was secretary of Saint Thomas More Society and read issues of Commonweal sent to him by his parents.\textsuperscript{44} Shriver chose to major in journalism while at Yale. He eventually became editor-in-chief at the \textit{Yale Daily News}, the nation’s oldest daily college newspaper.\textsuperscript{45} Shriver wanted to let his readers know the direction that the \textit{Yale Daily News} would take under his leadership. He penned an editorial that defined his ideological posture as editor and that proved to be a prophetic description of his life’s future work. Shriver’s editorial laid out five ideological principles: a firm belief in Christianity, a commitment to democracy, loyalty to rigid Aristotelian standards of education, a steadfast support of the United States and a stance of optimism regarding the future.\textsuperscript{46} These five values offer a prism for viewing and understanding Shriver’s later public career.

Shriver’s involvement in the Saint Thomas More Society at Yale was an important Roman Catholic affiliation that deserves more attention. Shriver spent a great deal of time with an interesting figure, Reverend T. Lawrason Riggs, the Catholic chaplain at Yale. Riggs like Shriver hailed from a prominent Maryland family. Riggs’ physical stature as well as his talents as a singer and dramatist reflected the sacramental and incarnational aspects of Catholic life. Fr. Riggs and Shriver helped build the Saint

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 48, 49.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 32, 35.
\textsuperscript{46} Stossel, \textit{Sarge}, 36, 37.
Thomas More Society’s membership numbers unprecedented levels. Shriver fondly remembered the society being invited to a communion breakfast with Dorothy Day.  

Shriver’s knack for experiencing major events of history from a first-hand perspective continued during WWII. Shriver was in the Navy and engaged in the Pacific Theatre. He was part of the Battle of Guadalcanal, and was haunted by the violence of the battle in which he witnessed crewmates deaths and saw US sailors killed by the propellers of US boats. After the battle, Shriver wondered why he had not been among the dead during a grisly cleanup of his boat as he helped to gather body parts of fallen crewmembers for a sea burial.

**No Ordinary Marriage**

Sargent Shriver’s courtship of Eunice Kennedy stretched over many years. Eunice Kennedy and Sargent Shriver worked together on a Justice Department project aimed at curbing juvenile delinquency. Joseph Kennedy sent Shriver to Washington, DC to work with Eunice in an attempt to protect his daughter as a single woman living in Washington, DC. Shriver fell in love with Eunice and the two dated during their working relationship. In 1952, Shriver and Eunice once again worked together as John F. Kennedy was running for the US Senate. Eunice’s mother Rose Kennedy was impressed by Shriver’s character and his devotion to Roman Catholicism. In 1953, Eunice attended a morning Mass with Sargent Shriver. Eunice had a devotion to Mary, and asked Shriver to join her by a statue of Mary after Mass ended. She told Shriver she wanted to marry him. Sargent Shriver and Eunice Kennedy were married on 23 May 1953. “Francis

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47 Ibid., 43, 44.
48 *American Idealist* written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
50 Ibid., 108, 111, and 112.
Cardinal Spellman, the archbishop of New York, celebrated the Mass assisted by three bishops, four monsignors, and nine priests. The pope himself sent an apostolic blessing from Rome. In some senses, their courtship and marriage seem to fit the story of many Catholics given that Eunice had a devotion to Mary and Sargent Shriver had impressed his future mother-in-law during their courtship. However, this wedding also reflected the ecclesial ties to Church leaders held by the Kennedy and Shriver families. Later in the 1950s, as chapter three will more fully explore, Shriver would lead a program in Chicago known as the Catholic Interracial Council modeled after a program Spellman oversaw in New York.

**Shriver’s Style of Public Catholicism**

David J. O’Brien’s 1988 work *Public Catholicism* offers a theologically insightful set of historical typologies describing how Roman Catholics engaged and interpenetrated the social, political and economic realities found in different periods of US history. Sargent Shriver’s professional career in public service and in philanthropy makes him a highly important “Public Catholic.” O’Brien’s typology will be used as a tool to help differentiate the general posture toward social questions exhibited by Shriver and his Catholic peers in US culture. Brief sketches of O’Brien’s types will be offered first. Shriver will then be placed into a fairly unique mix of O’Brien’s categories of “Republican Catholicism” and “Evangelical Catholicism.” O’Brien’s types will then be used to examine other notable twentieth century US Catholics. Finally, O’Brien’s work along with the decree on the laity from the Second Vatican Council, *Apostolicam actuositatem* will be employed to place Shriver’s thought and actions into sharper relief in contrast to various claims made about his style of Catholicism.

51 Ibid., 114, 115.
O’Brien argues that a multiplicity of postures toward public questions exist among Roman Catholics in the US. O’Brien offers eight historical styles of public Catholicism in *Public Catholicism*: Republican Catholicism, Immigrant Catholicism, Evangelical Catholicism, Industrial Catholicism, Liberal Catholicism, Reform Catholicism, Social Catholicism, and American Catholicism. Each of O’Brien’s types represents an emerging form of public Catholicism that responded to a new set of circumstances found in the US Catholic milieu. However, much like the Society of Jesus emerging in a post-Reformation Christianity, older religious orders such as the Order of Saint Benedict or the Order of Preachers still had valid roles within Roman Catholicism. Therefore, the emergence of Industrial Catholicism did not spell an end the adherents to O’Brien’s models of Republican Catholicism or Immigrant Catholicism.

Out of these many models flow three main approaches, Republican Catholicism, Immigrant Catholicism and Evangelical Catholicism, used by different groups of Roman Catholics in US history for addressing social questions. A brief exposition of O’Brien’s models of Public Catholicism will be made before arguing that Shriver fits into both the Republican and Evangelical models explored by O’Brien.

Republican Catholicism represents the first approach to sociopolitical realities by English speaking Roman Catholics in the United States, and its roots reach into the colonial period. The political separation of the colonies from England represented the first time since the close of Mary I’s reign that English-speaking Roman Catholics could openly practice their faith. O’Brien described Republican Catholicism by saying:

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It was a style suited to a church composed of relatively prosperous, native-born men who remembered the price of bigotry and prejudice, who understood what it meant to be victims of official discrimination and marginalization, who knew from experience that to gain respect they had to give it, to win freedom they had to defend the freedom of others.\(^{53}\)

Republican Catholicism is characterized by participating in the social, political and economic life of the US outside of their ecclesial home while also remaining Roman Catholic in their prayer and worship. Republican Catholics were concerned with both securing Catholic advances within broader the US society while also expanding the notions that Catholics were citizens akin to other Christian groups found within the US. Republican Catholics emphasized the notion that Catholics could be both good US citizens and Roman Catholic.\(^{54}\)

O’Brien’s model of Immigrant Catholicism focused on internal Church matters to a greater degree than adherents to his Republican Catholic model. The immigrant model is less concerned with the Church’s standing within a pluralistic social, political or economic order. Immigrant Catholicism also concerned itself with uplifting the economic plight of immigrant communities often ignored by public policies within the US context. Immigrant Catholics pursued this course of action though machine politics and union membership.\(^{55}\) This helped immigrant Catholic communities to enter into the New Deal coalition and Roman Catholicism to have an active role in shaping political liberalism within the US context in the twentieth century.

Prior to examining O’Brien’s model of Evangelical Catholicism, it is important to note that O’Brien’s other models represent responses that resemble either Republican Catholicism or Immigrant Catholicism while responding to specific historical circumstances. Industrial Catholicism emerged during the mid 19\(^{th}\) century US and is a

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 31.
\(^{54}\) Ibid., 5, 6, 31-33.
\(^{55}\) Ibid., 6.
subset of the broader immigrant approach with a focus on economic questions and the 
organization of workers. O’Brien’s model of Liberal Catholicism is a subset of the 
broader Republican Catholicism. Isaac Hecker and Orestes Brownson were at the 
forefront of this approach. Hecker felt that intellectual leadership from the Church in the 
US was needed to help transition the Roman Catholic Church into the modern period 
while simultaneously growing the Church in the post-Civil War era through the end of 
the nineteenth century. O’Brien’s model of Reform Catholicism rose in influence in the 
late nineteenth Century through the conclusion on World War I. Reform Catholics set up 
administrative structures within the US Church that allowed for an active subculture of 
Catholics to emerge within the US context. Reform Catholics tended to have close 
relationships with organized labor while carving out a unique space for Catholic parishes 
and schools. Paternalism was also an aspect of the administrative reforms found within 
Catholic dioceses. Thematically there is a consonance between Immigrant Catholicism 
and Reform Catholicism. O’Brien’s model of Social Catholicism focused on the figure 
of Reverend John A. Ryan and emerged in the post World War I world and continued 
through the New Deal and the conclusion of World War II. In the early twentieth century 
the Church in the US looked to Rev. John A. Ryan, who was an economist, to translate 
the ideals of *Rerum Novarum* into the US context. Ryan’s approach maintained the 
Reform Catholic approach to labor, but went further in embracing social action as a 
precaution against the rise of socialism. Also, Social Catholics sought a broader point of 
dialogue than that of a subculture. Ryan and others cultivated deep and publicly 
celebrated ties with leaders of twentieth century political liberalism. This focus on 
dialogue and interaction gives Social Catholicism a parallel structure to Republican 

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Catholicism. O’Brien’s American Catholicism emerged in a post-World War II environment that included dual realities of rising prosperity in the US and the Cold War. O’Brien’s American Catholicism internally debated a posture toward foreign policy. However, a majority consensus of Catholic thought in the US crystalized into an anti-communist stance and a fierce loyalty to the US during the 1940s and 1950s.57

O’Brien described a third major approach to Roman Catholicism in the US that differs from the Immigrant and Republican models. Evangelical Catholicism emerged in tension with both Republican and Immigrant Catholicism. Evangelical Catholics are dissatisfied with the differing goals of Republican and Immigrant Catholicism because neither set of goals tended to be focused on the gospel of Jesus.58 Figures such as Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton, OCSA are exemplars of Evangelical Catholicism’s posture of making the gospel the standard of ethical discourse among Roman Catholics in the US. O’Brien explains that in the years following Vatican II, Evangelical Catholicism gained a new traction and served as a corrective to the weaknesses found in each of his other models by reminding the Church of its own mission. O’Brien also points out that the strength of Evangelical Catholicism’s willingness to frame answers to social questions in Christian terms also leads it to shrinking its audience and potentially becoming marginalized in debates about public matters.59

In this sense, Robert Sargent Shriver’s life and work is of immediate interest because his practice of attending daily mass while traveling the world as a high ranking official of

57 Ibid., 125-131. Also see Joseph M. McShane, S.J., “Sufficiently Radical”: Catholicism, Progressivism, and the Bishops’ Program of 1919 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986) 15, 16, 52, and 53 to understand how the fear of the growth of socialism impacted the 1919 document.
58 Ibid., 6, 7.
59 Ibid., 244-246.
the US government, his role in preparing John F. Kennedy’s funeral, having Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I bless the crucifix that stood over president Kennedy’s casket, his final act as US ambassador to France of having a liturgy in which the presiding priest wore Saint Vincent de Paul’s vestments, and his quoting Teilhard de Chardin when accepting the Democratic Party’s nomination for Vice President in 1972 all have a consonance with Evangelical Catholicism. Shriver was obviously and publicly Roman Catholic. Yet, his style of public Catholicism was also that of a Republican Catholic. He was not produced by a political machine. Shriver worked with people outside of his ecclesial home with figures such as Bill Moyers, Martin Luther King, Jr., and even Andre Malraux on common causes ranging from confronting racism to raising the status of people with disabilities to harnessing the energy and talents of young people by putting people to work in impoverished communities both foreign and domestic. Shriver did this by working tirelessly, lobbying congress and other key decision makers and appealing to common interests. This places him in O’Brien’s Republican approach to public Catholicism. However, things come full circle when one considers how programs such as the Peace Corps and VISTA mirror the methods of members of religious orders who left their homes to educate and serve people in impoverished communities across the world.

*Apostolicam actuositatem* was promulgated in 1965 by the Second Vatican Council. A theology of the role of the laity is an important tool for this dissertation, but it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explicate all of the nuances and competing schools of thought that existed in regards to potential roles for the laity during the 1960s. For this reason, *Apostolicam actuositatem* is of great utility because it represents a
crystallization of opinion on this issue and represents a body of thought on the laity that was accepted by the Second Vatican Council. What specifically crystallized was the notion that the Roman Catholic laity had a vocation in the secular affairs of the world. For example, in post-war Chicago where Shriver was located, lay Catholic Action cells launched programs such as Cana Conferences and conferences focusing on the laity as the mystical body of Christ. This milieu prefigured and informed the eventual document outlining the apostolate of the laity.  

_Apostolicam actuositatem_ begins with a call for action on the part of the laity by making an appeal to the corporate unity of society. The second paragraph states, “In the organism of a living body no member plays a purely passive part, sharing in the life of the body it shares at the same time in its activity.” The third and fourth paragraphs of _Apostolicam actuositatem_ place lay action in the context of Christ being sent by the father as well as scriptural calls for fortitude in the face of suffering found in Romans 8: 18 and Matthew 16:24 NAB. Importantly, paragraph four contends that the laity always have sufficient talents to influence not only family life but also their professional and social activity.

_Apostolicam actuositatem_ becomes even more explicit in its parameters for lay involvement in its second chapter as it defines the objectives of the lay vocation. Paragraph five is crucial importance as it asserts that the work of Christ includes both human salvation and “the renewal of the whole temporal order.” This call means that the

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62 Ibid., 769, 770.
laity must “exercise their apostolate therefore in the world as well as in the Church, in the
temporal order as well as in the spiritual.” Chapter seven envisions the renewal of the
temporal order including both smaller more local areas of human interaction to ever-
larger human communities. This renewal includes “family values” but also insists that
the laity engage “economic interests” and “international relations.” Paragraph eight links
works of charity to the Eucharistic supper to signify that the Church is one body “united
by the bond of charity.” This bond of charity is then stated to tie more “affluent nations”
to the needs of the broader world. It is clear that Apostolicam actuositatem calls upon
the laity to be involved in the renewal of the temporal order including engagement of
problems endured by humans across the globe.

The third chapter of Apostolicam actuositatem defines the different arenas of the lay
apostolate. Church communities, the family, young people, neighborhoods and small
communities and finally national and international levels of the lay apostolate are
explored. Paragraph fourteen states that “The laity should have an awareness also of the
international sector, of the doctrinal and practical problems and solutions that are brought
forward there, in particular those concerned with newly developed nations.”

The remainder of Apostolicam actuositatem concerns itself with practical concerns
such as the individual apostolate, the need for proper training, and questions surrounding
cooperation with other groups of Christians and non-Christians. The calls for training
insist that those working to renew the temporal order sufficiently focus on the aims of the
human person because such acts of mercy are powerful testimonies to the Christian way
of life. Apostolicam actuositatem ends as it began with an image of Christ sending the

63 Ibid., 772.
64 Ibid., 773-776.
65 Ibid., 776-782.
Church “into every town and every place where he himself is to come.” *Apostolicam actuositatem* concludes with the practical note that the apostolate of the laity must be aware of the present needs and be able to adjust to these shifting human necessities in order to properly cooperate with the call of Christ.66

Theologically speaking, Sargent Shriver’s life as a “public Catholic” was unique in that he was able to traverse boundaries that demarcated the territory of influence available to contemporary “public Catholics” of the 1960s. Shriver’s influence was different from other Roman Catholics of his time who entered into the related realms of electoral politics and shaping public policy in that he was able to maintain his Catholic ideals more easily than many others engaged in similar statecraft. Also, Shriver’s deeply held faith and practice did not steer him toward the role of prophetic outsider who critiqued and chastised governmental structures. Finally, Shriver’s Catholic accent to public policy was politically advantageous from 1960-1968. A public figure who earnestly “spoke Catholic” was a political asset for multiple election cycles. Catholic sodalities persisted in the post-War era and Shriver was fluent in his approach to Roman Catholic voters. Shriver’s genius for institutional innovation was easy for Roman Catholic voters to appropriate. A generation of Catholics educated by members of religious orders who often traveled far from home was apt to connect to the sending forth found within the Peace Corps. Similarly, War on Poverty programs advanced a notion of embedded community groups addressing social problems in a manner not unlike localized Saint Vincent de Paul societies and Catholic interracial councils. Chapters three, four, and five of this dissertation will further develop Shriver’s Catholic approach to institutional engagement.

66 Ibid., 783-798.
The Catholic 1960s

The 1960s represented the first decade in US history in which large numbers of Roman Catholics began to penetrate mainstream of national US political culture. This was especially true in terms of the political landscape of the United States. In order to give better relief to the context in which Robert Sargent Shriver worked, a brief survey of other public Catholics in the 1960s will be offered. This should bring Shriver’s Catholic milieu and the unique nature of his style of public Catholicism into greater relief. It will be made clear that Shriver’s emergence in the 1960s was like many other public Catholics of his era. Shriver’s experiences of both the Great Depression and a continuation of a Catholic rise in social standing associated with the post World War II boom were typical. Furthermore, Shriver’s ascendance is consistent with a larger trend of Catholics rising to national leadership and prominence. Still, Shriver’s location at the center of public policy first in Chicago and later for the US differentiates him from many Catholics concerned with issues of peace, poverty and race. At the same time, his commitment to Catholicism makes him remarkable among many of his political peers as well.

Dorothy Day’s large-scale impact clearly pre-dates the 1960s. Her dynamic Catholicism led to head on confrontations with poverty and violence. In 1933 Day helped launch *The Catholic Worker* newspaper. Day was also a Benedictine oblate and embodied Benedictine value of hospitality in a creative manner with the creation of houses of hospitality.67 Day passionately argued that the laity must be held to higher

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spiritual measure than the typical token level of piety she encountered. Day’s insistence on the vocation of the laity to ideals such as “poverty, chastity and obedience” was later validated by the Second Vatican Council's articulation of a universal call to holiness.\footnote{Marvin L. Krier Mich, \textit{Catholic Social Teaching and Movements} (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998), 67.} Day’s work in the 1960s included public support for Civil Rights as well as public protests against the Vietnam War. Day’s opposition to war and rebukes of racism were rooted in her understanding that membership in the Mystical Body of Christ precluded violence or enmity toward people regardless of what differences may exist.\footnote{Wolfteich, \textit{American Catholics in the Twentieth Century}, 35, 36.} Day’s influence on Roman Catholic struggles for peace in the 1960s was vast, but it is particularly important to note that Rev. Daniel Berrigan, S.J. praised Day for inspiring both him and other Catholic peace activists.\footnote{Krier Mich, \textit{Catholic Social Teaching and Movements}, 69.} Despite sharing a passion for peace, racial justice and an end to poverty, Day’s anarchism differentiates her from the politically connected Shriver.

Cesar Chavez’s entrance into the national spotlight parallels Shriver’s in that Chavez experienced poverty during the 1920s while Shriver saw his father’s business ruined by the Great Depression, and both gained experience and strength during the 1950s prior to becoming driving forces for their causes and organizations in the 1960s. Chavez joined and organized chapters of the Community Service Organization in the 1950s in an effort to increase the political voices of migrant workers. In 1962, Chavez left the Community Service Organization to help launch the United Farm Workers with Dolores Huerta.\footnote{Stossel, \textit{Sarge}, 20, 21 and Wolfteich, \textit{American Catholics in the Twentieth Century}, 66, 67.} Chavez left over concerns that CSO had ceased to connect with the people it was said to represent. In 1965, United Farm Workers joined other unions in a strike against the
wages paid by grape farmers. However, Chavez and United Farm Workers maintained a posture of non-violence during the protracted strike.\textsuperscript{72} One of the most publicly Catholic endeavors of Chavez’s time came in the form of his 1966 pilgrimage from Delano, CA to the state capital of California in Sacramento. The pilgrimage was a protest against violence and violations of human dignity including spraying union members with pesticides carried out by agribusiness. The pilgrimage included secular political symbols including US and Mexican flags as well as overtly Catholic symbols such as images of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The pilgrimage concluded on Easter Sunday.\textsuperscript{73} Concluding this sustained protest on Easter Sunday was no coincidence. The conclusion along with Chavez couching this quest for justice in the Roman Catholic notion of pilgrimage and including Catholic iconography is a strong example of a Catholic arrival in the social sphere during the 1960s. Chavez and Shriver both publicly embraced Catholicism in their public policy stances, but Chavez never occupied places of power within the government.

Thomas P. “Tip” O’Neill represents a different style of Public Catholicism from that of Day or Chavez, but O’Neill did share something quite important in common with Dorothy Day. O’Neill like Day interpreted Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount as the compass for his life.\textsuperscript{74} O’Neill was a serious Catholic who was an influential member of the House of Representatives who served Boston’s highly Irish North End from 1952-1987.\textsuperscript{75} O’Neill attended the Cathedral of Saint Matthew the Apostle when in Washington, DC

\textsuperscript{72} Krier Mich, \textit{Catholic Social Teaching and Movements}, 167-169.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 170, 171.
for holy days of obligation as well as for the funeral of his friend John F. Kennedy. O’Neill became Speaker of the House on January 4, 1977 and started his day by attending Mass at the cathedral.76

O’Neill along with his high achieving family exemplified many of the traits of urban Irish Catholics in the twentieth century. O’Neill had sympathy for underdogs in part because of the Irish experience of British domination as well as the Boston Irish experience of prejudice from the established “Yankees” or “Boston Brahmins.”77 O’Neill and his family all entered the public sector in large part because Boston’s elites had frozen Irish Catholics out of leadership positions in banks and businesses. O’Neill’s father was “the superintendent of sewers”, his brother Bill was “an assistant attorney general and judge”, and his sister Mary was “a teacher and principal.” The O’Neill family was involved in the patron client world of machine politics in Boston.78 The O’Neill family experienced success due to entering public service as a path toward acceptance within the United States. O’Neill would never be confused with the Brahmins as his success grew. He was very much a representative of the working class throughout his career. O’Neill even did commercials for Miller Beer and a budget hotel chain after leaving political life.79

O’Neill’s life as a public Catholic is important when studying Shriver for three major reasons. First, O’Neill like Shriver was closely linked to John F. Kennedy’s political operation. O’Neill succeeded Kennedy in the House of Representatives by winning Kennedy’s old seat when John F. Kennedy ran for the United States Senate in 1952.

76 Farrell, Tip O’Neill, 1.
77 Ibid., 49-53.
78 Ibid., 48, 49.
79 Ibid., 682.
O’Neill was part of Kennedy’s presidential campaign. Second, O’Neill like Shriver was unafraid to cross political allies. O’Neill battled both presidents Kennedy and Johnson to make sure that Roman Catholic parochial schools and colleges received shares of federal funding aimed at public schools and public institutions of higher learning. Particularly, he was unafraid that his old ally President Kennedy would look to be in the pocket of Roman Catholic leadership when pressing the Kennedy administration for funds for parochial schools. Third, O’Neill, in a similar manner to Lyndon Johnson, viewed his time in congress in large part as being a defender of the policies of the New Deal. O’Neill would go on to defend policies from the Great Society that were crafted at least in part by Shriver. O’Neill used words such as “justice” in his fight against President Ronald Reagan’s policies. As Reagan left office, O’Neill reflected with satisfaction upon the fact that New Deal policies were more or less unscathed and that many of the programs and regulations of the Great Society were still in place even if funding levels had been pushed lower. The importance of O’Neill’s battles during the 1980’s will come into greater relief with further investigation of Sargent Shriver and the policies of the 1960s. Shriver and O’Neill shared a great deal, but Shriver’s style of public Catholicism was not imbedded in an immigrant community.

A deeper look at O’Neill’s predecessor in the House of Representatives, John F. Kennedy is instrumental in evaluating “the Catholic moment” that emerged in US cultural and political life during the 1960s. John F. Kennedy’s political life included his being elected to the US House of Representatives, the US Senate and becoming the first Roman Catholic elected to the US presidency. The Kennedy family patriarch Joseph P.

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80 Ibid., 180.
81 Ibid., 185-189, 196, 197.
82 Ibid., 602-606.
Kennedy, Sr. was driven and dynamic. His father, Patrick J. Kennedy, was a local politician who helped to “rule all of Boston’s dominant Democratic Party.” Joseph Kennedy graduated from Boston Latin School and attended Harvard University. Joseph Kennedy encountered resentment both over his family’s new wealth and over his Irish Catholic heritage while attending Harvard. Joseph Kennedy went on to become the youngest bank president in America in 1913. By 1927, Joseph Kennedy had taken his family beyond Boston and established enclaves in New York, New York and Palm Beach, Florida. In 1938, Joseph Kennedy was named the United States ambassador to England.83

John F. Kennedy was an altar boy at Saint Aidan Parish in Brookline, Massachusetts. Health troubles and mischief dogged Kennedy during his childhood. He attended the Canterbury School with Sargent Shriver for one year before transferring due to Canterbury’s many strict regulations.84 Kennedy attempted to attend the London School of Economics, but his health forced a return to the US. In 1935, Kennedy enrolled at Princeton University but health problems undermined his studies. In 1936, Kennedy enrolled at Harvard University where he would complete his education. These false starts did not hinder his chances for a public life as the young Kennedy had a great deal of influence and ambition within his family. Due to his father’s ambassadorship, John F. Kennedy, became fascinated with English manners and attitudes. He made use of his father’s position as ambassador and wrote his senior thesis. This thesis would later be reworked by a New York Times columnist Arthur Krock. The reworked thesis was released as a book in 1940 entitled Why England Slept. Henry Luce wrote the

84 Stossel, Sarge, 25.
introduction, and *Why England Slept* became a best seller for the young John F. Kennedy. This turn of events was engineered by Joseph Kennedy for the dual purpose of winning prestige for his son while also insulating his children from his politically damaging isolationist positions.\(^85\)

Much has been made of John F. Kennedy being at best a lukewarm Catholic. In 1957, Kennedy did give aloof and non-specific answers when asked by noted psychologist B.F. Skinner about what role his religion plays in the decisions he makes.\(^86\) Kennedy as noted earlier was an altar boy. He was also a member of the Knights of Columbus.\(^87\) He also attended Mass regularly and participated in mandatory meditations before a crucifix at church with his mother. Kennedy’s level of commitment to Roman Catholicism is not easy to pin down. However, he is perhaps most important for becoming “a vehicle mainstreaming the aspirations of ghetto Catholics.”\(^88\)

Roman Catholicism may not have been the guiding foundation of John F. Kennedy’s intellectual and political pursuits. However, it did impact his political actions and postures on important issues that faced him in the US congress and as the US president. As a senator, John F. Kennedy did not publicly condemn Senator Joseph McCarthy’s attempt at uncovering communist influence within the US government. The Kennedy family relationship with McCarthy along with Henry Cabot Lodge’s alienation of the Republican establishment in Massachusetts helped John F. Kennedy to win a seat in the US Senate in 1952. McCarthy’s anti-communism was popular among the Irish Catholic

\(^{85}\) Pietrusza, *1960*, 3-5.
\(^{88}\) Winters, *Left at the Altar*, 75. Passim.
population of Boston. In fact, former Massachusetts’s governor Paul Dever claimed that the anti-communist McCarthy was “the only man I know who could beat Archbishop Cushing in a two-man race in South Boston.”

The political tightrope Kennedy walked in trying to appease his Catholic voters in Massachusetts as well as uphold national liberal ideals is illustrated by then Democratic matriarch Eleanor Roosevelt voicing reservations about Kennedy’s ideological fiber for failing to speak out against McCarthyism.

Roman Catholicism was a major issue facing John F. Kennedy during both the 1960 presidential primary and general election. At times, the Kennedy campaign used Roman Catholicism to their advantage during the primary season. Two instances during the 1960 Wisconsin primary illustrate the positive and negative ways in which the Kennedy campaign used Catholicism to their advantage. Wisconsin had a heavily Catholic population, and its laws allowed Republican voters to cross over and vote in the Democratic primary. After arriving nearly one hour late, Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy introduced her husband at a Polish Club near Milwaukee. Her shy speaking style won the favor of the crowd. She elicited frantic cheers and even tears as she concluded her remarks by saying, “Poland will live forever!” in Polish. The Kennedy campaign was adept at using ethnic and religious identity to their advantage, but some of these tactics were ethically questionable. Wisconsin was thirty-two percent Catholic, but it also bordered Senator Hubert Humphrey’s home state of Minnesota so victory was not guaranteed. In an example of the real politick of machine politics, the Kennedy

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90 Winters, *Left at the Altar*, 73.
91 Pietrusza, *1960*, 78.
92 Ibid., 88.
campaign actually mailed anti-Kennedy and anti-Catholic literature to heavily Catholic neighborhoods and even to Knights of Columbus Halls in Wisconsin. These Trojan horse pieces of campaign literature carried a Minnesota postmark making Wisconsin Catholics think they had been sent by Humphrey’s campaign. Kennedy won Wisconsin due in part to a large number of Catholic Republicans crossing over to vote in the Democratic primary. Jeane J. Kirkpatrick concluded that Kennedy won because of the friendly demographics found in heavily Catholic Wisconsin.

The West Virginia primary that followed was another matter. Humphrey proved to be adept at using religion as a wedge issue as well as he used the song “Give me that Old Time Religion” as his campaign theme song in West Virginia. Kennedy’s chances in West Virginia were not great as the state was ninety-six percent Protestant. Severe anti-Catholic rhetoric and actions were present in regions of the state including linking Romans with the death of Jesus and Sargent Shriver was even spit on while handing out campaign literature. Kennedy used oratory skill to assuage fears about his faith. Kennedy told West Virginia voters, “I refuse to believe that I was denied the right to be president on the day I was baptized. Nobody asked me if I was a Catholic when I joined the United States Navy.” Kennedy casting himself as an underdog fighting hard for the voters of West Virginia helped him with voters who also viewed themselves as receiving unfair judgments from the rest of the United States. Kennedy was moved by the presence of inescapable poverty in West Virginia, and the son of privilege managed to connect his

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93 Ibid., 89, 93.
94 Winters, Left at the Altar, 77.
95 Stossel, Sarge, 145-147.
quandary in West Virginia to the voters’ daily plights. Kennedy’s ability to identify with the voters was one factor in winning the West Virginia primary.

Sargent Shriver headed what was known as the “talent hunt” for John F. Kennedy’s transition team during his time as president elect. Shriver was in charge of recruiting cabinet level officials for his brother-in-law. Roman Catholicism had an impact on this process as Kennedy’s team tried to avoid appearing to be too favorable toward Catholics or experts associated with the president elect’s alma mater of Harvard. This upper level bias against selecting too many Roman Catholics was motivated by political needs facing the nation’s first Catholic president, but it does not tell the full story. Kennedy’s cabinet may have had a “WASP façade” but lower appointees from Myer Feldman, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Harris Wofford, and Lawrence O’Brien had a Jewish and Catholic flavor.

Sargent Shriver emerged as a major regional spokesperson within both the political and ecclesial spheres of Chicago during the 1950s prior to his work within the Kennedy Administration. Shriver’s work with Chicago’s Catholic Interracial Council and Chicago’s Board of Education foreshadowed future themes of his life in public service. Shriver’s November 18, 1957 address to Saints Faith, Hope and Charity Church centered on the topic of race relations. Shriver brought his Catholic knowledge to the forefront throughout this address. Shriver began by summarizing the work of Mother Grace Dammann’s work along with twelve students in constructing the “Manhattanville Resolutions” at Manhattanville, the College of the Sacred Heart in Purchase, NY in 1933.

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97 Ibid., 113, 117, 118.
98 Stossel, Sarge, 177.
His lauding of this group’s consultation of outside experts and rigorous internal investigation of the problem from all perspectives gives clues to Shriver’s ideal for lay and religious involvement in social issues. Shriver went on to note that after the internal work was completed and the resolutions were made public that America Magazine praised this approach to race as promoting a solution to racial problems rooted in the tradition of social justice. Shriver then sets out his program for addressing racial problems in terms imbued with scriptural and ecclesial thought. Shriver postulates that all people are prejudiced as a result of original sin, but that it is the duty of the individual to expunge this prejudice. Shriver cautioned against overly simplistic half measures for addressing racism by stating “fifty cent” solutions to racial problems were not helpful. Finally, he urges his audience to follow the advice of the Archbishop of Chicago at that time, Cardinal Samuel Stritch, who addressed race by insisting that Catholics remember that the mission and nature of the Church were tied up in its universality from the outset. Shriver paraphrased Stritch in arguing that Christ was sent into the world to remake the world and that so too are the members of his Church. For Shriver, isolation and ignoring racial problems are not acceptable options. Shriver then makes the case for addressing racial issues in Cold War terminology. He argued that communism is a symptom of a problem and not the problem in and of itself. He challenged his audience to understand that prejudice within the US only exacerbates the problems upon which Communism grows. Shriver then shifted back to more ecclesial imagery by offering up quotes from Pope Pius XII, Saint Paul, Archbishop Richard J. Cushing, Clare Boothe Luce, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, the National Conference of Catholic Women and Archbishop John Ireland on how the example of Christ calls for equality, brotherhood, suffering for justice
and a belief in the common destiny of humanity. Shriver then concluded his address with this quote, “Christ was sent, and He sent His Church. And his Church in turn sends us.” Shriver’s strong promotion of a pilgrim Church that is commissioned by God to go into the world and remake it in the image of the Kingdom of God prefigures many themes found in the Vatican II documents.

Shriver’s June 4, 1959 commencement address to Saint Procopius College exemplifies his theological depth. This speech gives a clear picture of Shriver’s ideal of a globally engaged lay population of Roman Catholics. Shriver argued that his work in education told him that recent college graduates in the US had learned a great deal about how to do things, but that they had not learned a great deal about “spiritual and intellectual leadership.” Shriver’s speech focused on four “graduate schools” in which recent graduates could learn leadership that goes beyond mere content knowledge. Shriver named marriage, work, public service and the Mass as the four schools in which young graduates could further their education and growth. Shriver clarified in rich theological language echoing toward a Catholic understanding of the common good that public service was an arena in which young graduates “work out your destiny as a social being, where you will develop your life as a member of a society composed of fellow human beings, all equal, all dependent upon one another for life, safety, progress, comfort, even survival.”


102 Ibid.
After his introductory remarks, Shriver walked his audience through the value of these four graduate schools. In his section on the school of marriage and family life, Shriver advocates that states be more aware of the “heroes on the home front” and offer assistance. He went on to praise “cana conferences” that help engaged couples prepare for marriage and lauded the Christian Family Movement for helping families build “themselves into strong units within society.” Shriver’s political and theological instincts call for a respect of the local community of the family by the society and that family communities in turn renew the larger societal comity. For the school of work, Shriver introduces his audience to the group Opus Dei. After discussing Opus Dei, Shriver used the Latin phrase “Laborare est orare – to work is to pray” and urged his audience to understand that in the school or work place one can put this Benedictine tenet into practice in contemporary society. Shriver explained to his audience that the school of public service is not limited to governmental service, but that any “cooperative work” in organizations outside of the self is a form of service. Shriver lauded the work of Serra Clubs and the work of his young brother-in-law Robert F. Kennedy as examples of public service. He also stated that understanding public service prevents individuals from passing the buck on societal issues. Finally, Shriver described the school of the Mass as the most important school for learning how to live. His theological understanding of the importance of the Mass echoes the ancient principle of instilling virtue. Shriver said that the Mass must be engaged in regularly and that “It must be studied. It must be worked at.” Shriver somewhat prophetically noted that there is much to be learned about earning the trust of strangers and foreigners through learning from the Mass and the lives of saints such as Paul of Tarsus and Augustine of Canterbury.\(^{103}\) Shriver’s was never a full
\(^{103}\) Ibid.
member of Opus Dei, but he did have an affiliation with Opus Dei dating to the early 1950s after meeting Spanish priest Joseph Muzquiz. Shriver shared a belief with both Opus Dei and the Order of Saint Benedict that human labor is a “spiritual calling.” It is safe to say from this commencement address that Shriver inventively intertwined his theological ideals with his positions on public policy and effective citizenship.

**Shriver’s Catholic Tone in the 1960s and Beyond**

Three specific events will be explored in an effort to give a sense of Shriver’s Catholic sensibilities when addressing matters of public policy during the 1960s. Shriver’s 1963 speech to a Knights of Columbus conference as well as his 1964 speech to the Catholic Press Association demonstrates Shriver’s ardent promotion of both the Peace Corps’ and the War on Poverty’s missions to Roman Catholic organizations. Shriver’s Roman Catholicism led to him framing his call for backing these public policies by highlighting Roman Catholic notions of Catholicity, the importance of the poor, and the significance of the family for society. Shriver made appeals to Roman Catholics on Roman Catholic ground to support the Peace Corps and War on Poverty, but he also brought a sense of Roman Catholic history and gravitas in an avant-garde conclusion of his work as the ambassador to France in 1969. Thus, Shriver in the 1960s, as was true throughout his life, urged Catholics to take concrete actions promoting the common good while also bringing Roman Catholicism into the visible shared experience of the larger human community.

On February 24, 1963 Shriver addressed the Knights of Columbus of Chicago, IL in what amounted to a prophetic call to action on issues facing predominantly Catholic

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Stossel, Sarge, 675 and Reverend Malcolm M. Kennedy, Opus Dei Information Office, email message to author, June 28, 2013.
Latin America. Shriver’s speech began by challenging his audience to be more open to Latin America, a place where one third of all of the Roman Catholics in the world lived in 1963. Pointed questions served the purpose of asking the Knights of Columbus for greater universality. Shriver asked his audience how many Spanish-speaking Catholics are members of the Knights of Columbus. He asked his audience if the full-blooded native-Americans living in Latin America would encounter any Native American members of the Knights of Columbus within the US. Shriver demonstrated a Cold War mentality by invoking the loss of free worship in Cuba, but then asking his audience if a Brazilian of African heritage would be welcome by this audience. Shriver raised racial prejudice as an issue of vital importance on both geopolitical and religious grounds by stating bluntly that the diverse peoples of Latin America do not trust that the US wants “them as friends and equals (emphasis added by Shriver).” Shriver explained to his audience that world leaders questioned him as he traveled to promote the Peace Corps as to whether US volunteers would truly treat people with dignity and respect equality. Shriver called racial bigotry within the US the “food upon which Castro feeds (emphasis added by Shriver).” Shriver challenged his audience to truly live out US ideals of equality or face the backlash of a world tired of empty slogans. Shriver touted the efforts of the Peace Corps saying they have a role to play in uplifting Latin America. However, Shriver saw more groups as needing to be involved. Shriver lauded the fact that “Catholics have been asked to join Papal Volunteers for service especially in Latin America.”

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Shriver’s address then took on a more theological and stark tone as he quoted at length from Pope John XXIII’s message to the National Catholic Conference of Cuba. Shriver invoked John XXIII urging the reign of charity in social domains and that all Christians must firmly believe that they have a social function to fulfill. Shriver used John XXIII’s words to insist that such a social disposition by Catholics would transform the face of the earth. Shriver then lauded various religious orders ranging from “Maryknoll priests” to “Sacred Heart nuns” engaged in active ministry in Latin America. Shriver’s speech then turned toward grim statistics and anecdotal data about the plight of Latin America. Shriver noted that in 1963 the average life expectancy in the US was twenty-four years greater than that found in Latin America on a whole. He noted that infant mortality rates were triple those found in the US. After enumerating these statistics, Shriver chastened his audience with these words “And these are our fellow Catholics!” His exhortation continued by noting, “statistics are cold.” He recounted a trip to Lima, Peru in which he encountered a mountain of garbage upon which twenty thousand people lived. Shriver recounted the wealth he has encountered in Latin America noting that the advertising signs written in English represented wealth whereas “the signs of poverty are written in Spanish and Portuguese.”

Shriver’s speech shifted to the Peace Corps by contrasting the US citizens who have found financial gain in Latin America despite not speaking the language or eating the food with the austere lives led by Peace Corps volunteers. Shriver did not eschew Catholic themes in this concluding portion of his speech as he noted that the Church in Latin America has not always been on the side of the people. He stated that it is not too late for the Church to aid in the remaking of the social order of Latin America. With

106 Ibid. Passim.
humor Shriver made a call to action while highlighting positive steps being taken within Latin America by lay and ordained Catholics. Shriver noted that many priests housed Peace Corps volunteers until they were able to take up more permanent residences within the community in which they were working. Shriver noted that J. J. Salcedo, a famous priest with a popular radio broadcast in Colombia, called peace corps volunteers heroes who were winning the hearts of Latin America by providing constant instances of friendship and love. Shriver then lamented the fact that the Knights of Columbus had rejected a proposal by Cardinal Cushing called FLAME, Inc. for helping Latin America through the extension of funds for providing low interest loans to “worthy groups in Latin America for the establishment of schools, or housing projects, or farms for the landless.”107 Shriver quoted Mater et magistra in arguing for the merits of Cardinal Cushing’s proposal. Shriver stated that Mater et magistra makes it clear that “We, Catholic citizens of the richest nation in the history of the world, are responsible – directly and personally responsible – for helping the millions in Latin America.” Shriver concluded by calling for the creation of a “Project Brotherhood” that draws upon the virtue of solidarity to establish ties between individual Catholic families in the US with individual families in Latin America. He concluded his speech by stating that such a project would help Catholics carry out “our obligations as individual men and women in a brotherhood of man” noting that such efforts “by bringing us close to other men, brings us closer to God.”108

Sargent Shriver gave a speech to the Catholic Press Association on May 28, 1964 after the launch of President Johnson’s War on Poverty. This speech gives insights into

107 Ibid.
108 Ibid. Passim.
Shriver’s position on key public policy issues of his day, on the proper role of the media as well as his thought process as a Roman Catholic. Shriver began his speech by noting that during the post-WWII era, the configuration of the family among poor US citizens has shifted away from a more stable two-parent situation. Shriver laid the blame for this post war reality at the feet of “blind economic forces” that had “nearly broken” the family structure among the economically disadvantaged. Shriver noted that disintegrating family structures tend to follow poor unemployment numbers as economic crisis leads to a psychological breakdown that eventually leads to a fracturing of the family unit.

Shriver then told his audience that a great deal of media attention had been spent on international poverty, but that domestic poverty was an issue equally in need of immediate action. Shriver touted his work with the Peace Corps and the War on Poverty as evidence of his serious concern with poverty on both fronts. Shriver concluded his introductory remarks by hammering the point that the successes experienced in the Peace Corps were a needed blueprint for addressing poverty within the US.¹⁰⁹

There was political utility in Shriver linking the War on Poverty to the Peace Corps as the Peace Corps was one of the most popular programs on both Capitol Hill and among US voters whereas Johnson’s anti-poverty program was to face far more entrenched opposition.¹¹⁰ Shriver’s speech displayed political acumen, but it also turned to theological language as he outlined what was needed to confront poverty within the US to his audience of Roman Catholic journalists. Shriver listed instilling a sense of hope rather than specific Keynesian economic policies as the first act of aid. Shriver went on


¹¹⁰ American Idealist written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
to explain that instilling hope was intimately tied to building self-respect among the poor. Shriver adamantly stated that any approach to poverty that fails to respect the poor would inspire “resentment, bitterness, mistrust – as so many foreign aid programs have learned.” He then used the Peace Corps as his model for how to avoid anti-poverty programs that belittle those to whom help is intended. Shriver also used theologically charged words to explain how self-respect and hope can be fostered in the face of poverty. He trumpeted the idea that the Peace Corps had succeeded where other programs had failed precisely because Peace Corps volunteers do their work with humility. This humility allowed for “acceptance and respect for the other man’s integrity and dignity.”

Shriver’s rhetoric possessed a Catholic tenor as it asserted that an effective anti-poverty program must center upon hope, recognition of the dignity of the other and humility. However, Shriver delved deeper into Catholic social mores in stating that hope, humility and respect for human dignity had to be rooted in participation of the entire community in order to foster trust. Generating a true community within the US in which the poor along with the affluent trusted the aims and means of the poverty program was at the heart of Shriver’s anti-poverty views. Shriver then in a skilled manner effortlessly moved back and forth between a nearly metaphysical proposal on defeating poverty to a pragmatic position with great political resonance. Shriver explained that his work in the Peace Corps had been frugal and that under his watch the Peace Corps had returned funds to the Department of the Treasury that were unspent. He then explained how the poverty program would be under his frugal scrutiny. He cited a statistic that high school graduates earned $60,000 more in their lifetimes than those who dropped out of school. Shriver noted that by working to keep people in school, his anti-poverty program would

increase the number of taxpayers in the system. Shriver concluded his speech by circling back to theologically lofty wording. He quoted cellist Pablo Casals to argue that the human person must be at the center of the anti-poverty program.¹¹²

Shriver’s focus on the human rather than economic statistics or technical jargon echoes Jesus’ words on the Sabbath found in Mark 2:27 NAB as well as Dorothy Day’s personalist approach to poverty. In his speech to the Catholic Press Association, Shriver displayed his particular genius as a public Catholic. He was able to artfully weave together terminology such as hope, respect, dignity, and humility with Roman Catholic communitarian ideals in a manner that built upon the political goodwill built by the Peace Corps. Shriver also bound his record of budgetary prudence to the idea of investing in society while concluding with the notion that all anti-poverty work must keep sight of the human person. In this manner, Sargent Shriver was able to promote Roman Catholic ideals in a manner that was beneficial in the political climate of the 1960s.

Shriver’s office while directing the Peace Corps was adorned with various inspiring quotes. Robert A. Liston wrote the first biography about Sargent Shriver in 1964. Liston was most impressed with quotes from British philosopher Edmund Burke and medieval English mystic Julian of Norwich found in Shriver’s office. The Norwich quote that Shriver found inspiring enough to place in his office was:

He said not: Thou shalt not be troubled, thou shalt not be tempted, thou shalt not be distressed; but He said: thou shalt not be overcome.”¹¹³

Shriver’s Catholic sensibility was also prominently on display during his work as the US Ambassador for France when he arranged to have a midnight Christmas Mass at Sainte Chappelle for the US Diplomatic Corps on December 25, 1969. This was the first

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¹¹² Ibid., Passim.
¹¹³ Liston, Sargent Shriver: A Candid Portrait, 162.
Midnight Mass held at this historic site since reign of Louis XIV. The celebrating priest would wear a stole owned by Saint Vincent de Paul. The crucifix used for the processional cross had been laid on John F. Kennedy’s casket as well as having been blessed by Pope Paul VI and Greek Orthodox Patriarch Athenagoras I.\footnote{Stossel, Sarge, 556, 557.}

**Shriver’s Life as an Exceptional Public Catholic**

Sargent Shriver’s biography touched upon many facets of the US Catholic experience in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Shriver was often surrounded by the hierarchy of US Catholicism due to his close ties to Cardinal Gibbons and Cardinal Stritch. His marriage brought him into deep relationship with the most powerful Roman Catholic political family in US history. Shriver’s education brought him into contact with the charisms of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, the Ivy League aspirations of young Roman Catholic men at the Canterbury School, and the work of the Thomas More Society at Yale University. Most importantly Shriver’s upbringing instilled in him a deep Roman Catholic faith that was partially expressed through embodied works of mercy in poor communities.

These formative experiences gave Shriver an appreciation of varying Catholic institutions contained within a larger ecclesial body. Shriver’s varied and intensive Catholic formation imbued him with a public Catholicity that sought both personal holiness and a fulfillment a global mission to the temporal order. Having established Shriver’s importance as a Roman Catholic figure in the US, chapter two will argue that Shriver’s public Catholicity helped to produce a unique form of US political liberalism characterized by an adeptness at creating new institutions within an existing
governmental framework that was palatable to both John F. Kennedy’s “New Frontier” and to Lyndon B. Johnson’s “Great Society.”
CHAPTER 2

SARGENT SHRIVER AND THE TRENDS OF TWENTIETH CENTURY

POLITICAL LIBERALISM

Dad had something few people, let alone politicians, can summon: constancy. As I look back at his life and our relationship, I believe the source of this constancy was his radical faith. He was ambitious, but it was more of a cosmic ambition than an egotistical one. His concession speech surprises me to this day: his talk of “spiritual confidence” and “terrors in the night” stray intentionally into the land of faith – a place where Democratic politicians are not supposed to go. And yet he was a Democrat, a liberal, a public servant, precisely because of his faith. Politics was the best professional venue for him to act out his faith; there he could exercise that cosmic ambition for justice and equality.

- Mark Shriver

This dissertation argues that Robert Sargent Shriver, Jr. was an institutional innovator due to his thoroughly Roman Catholic upbringing. Shriver both structured the Peace Corps and designed and launched the majority of the War on Poverty initiatives. The fact that these programs were at the forefront of both John F. Kennedy’s “New Frontier” and Lyndon Johnson’s “Great Society” makes it imperative to examine Shriver in light of the story of political liberalism in the twentieth century. If Shriver learned how to navigate bureaucracies and institutions due to his fluency in Roman Catholicism, then Roman Catholicism is likely being ignored or undervalued as being a factor in the inventive public policies of the 1960s. Recognizing how both Sargent Shriver in particular and Roman Catholicism in general fit into the story of political liberalism in the US allow for an argument that Shriver’s unique gift for adding institutional flesh to

115 Mark Shriver, A Good Man, 40.
progressive ideas needs to be recognized when liberalism in the twentieth century is assessed.\textsuperscript{116}

Sargent Shriver’s politics altered before and after the Great Depression. As noted in chapter one, Shriver was entrenched in the Democratic Party of Maryland from a young age, but his boyhood politics largely centered on a belief in states’ rights.\textsuperscript{117} However, the Great Depression’s impact on his father compelled Shriver to reassess his political outlook during his time in secondary school and his undergraduate studies. Shriver became a believer in the New Deal and established the sense of constancy his son Mark mentioned by steadfastly asserting that the government could and should positively impact people’s lives.\textsuperscript{118} Shriver’s insistence on an active role for the government in facing societal problems is also at the heart of twentieth century US political liberalism.

**Shriver’s Formative Shift in Outlook on Liberalism**

As noted, Shriver came from a family with deep roots in the Democratic Party. Shriver’s initial attachment to Democratic politics focused on state’s rights in pre-New Deal Maryland. Shriver like many people in Maryland in the early twentieth century found his political home in the Democratic Party, but his roots in the party were that of landed southern elites and not of urban immigrant communities where machine politics and political bosses reigned. Like many rural southerners of his time, Shriver’s attachment to the Democratic Party carried with it a belief in states’ rights. He was sixteen when Franklin Roosevelt became president. The young Shriver was unconvinced of the wisdom of President Franklin Roosevelt’s plans to increase the size and scope of the federal government. His views shifted after witnessing his parents lose their fortune

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 70.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 30, 31.
\textsuperscript{118} *American Idealist* written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
during the Great Depression; Shriver increased his attachment to the Democratic Party and its New Deal policies. His first-hand experience of his family’s economic losses during the depression convinced him that people like his parents, “the hardest working people he knew”, could not succeed in the US system as it stood at the outset of the Great Depression. Shriver became a supporter of Franklin Roosevelt’s policies as he was entering Yale University. While at Yale, he was able to pay his tuition with the help of family friends and by working himself. This experience shifted Shriver from a traditional Southern Democrat to a New Deal proponent.

Five steps will be taken in order to make the cases that Shriver’s political liberalism reflected a Catholic sensibility and was a political asset. First, the idea of political liberalism will be posited. Second, a brief exposition of the interplay between Roman Catholicism and political liberalism in the US will be sketched. Special emphasis will be paid to how many Roman Catholics entered into the New Deal coalition. This will help provide historical context for the favorable climate Roman Catholics experienced in 1960s US politics. Third, a brief historiography of twentieth century political liberalism from the progressive era to the election of President Kennedy will be offered. This historiography will highlight shared affinities for statist policies between various eras of political liberalism while also highlighting differences. Fourth, special attention will be paid to President Kennedy and President Johnson’s differing views on liberalism. Fifth and finally, Shriver’s own views of political liberalism will be examined with special emphasis given to public statements made by Shriver on the nature of public service. These five areas of analysis will make the case that Sargent Shriver’s brand of
political liberalism was able to be an effective fulcrum for action and policy innovation within the broader liberal postures of Kennedy and Johnson during the 1960s.

**Political Liberalism**

Political liberalism in the US has been an elastic movement characterized by periods of drastic change that resulted in periods of equilibrium only to be ended by a new cycle of change producing ideological stability. Political scientist James W. Ceaser’s theory of what constitutes a public philosophy will be used to place the idea of political liberalism into greater relief. First, a meta-theory must exist that unites a given public philosophy. Second, a public philosophy must have a set of goals to realize. Third, a public philosophy should represent a shared view on the government’s function in attaining these goals. Finally, a public philosophy should also produce a vision of the government’s role in the global system. The periods of volatile change in twentieth century political liberalism can be tied to a straining or breaking of one of these four traits of a public philosophy and the scramble toward a new equilibrium that would ensue.

All of the various forms of political liberalism that emerged in the twentieth century US shared the same belief that Sargent Shriver had following the onset of the Great Depression. Namely, each strand of liberalism affirmed the notion that the government of a given nation-state had a positive role to play in society. This belief was also found in the general thrust of Roman Catholic thought following the 1892 publication of *Rerum Novarum*. Rev. John A. Ryan, the figure most associated with translating *Rerum Novarum* into the US context, parlayed this mutual affinity for an active government into a productive partnership between political liberalism and the Roman Catholics in the US.

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Ryan and his New Deal partners could make common cause on issues surrounding “child-labor laws, and minimum wage legislation, public housing, public control over monopolies, social insurance for the aged and the sick, and unemployment assistance.”

Roman Catholicism in the Twentieth Century United States

Roman Catholics have not always been at the forefront of the political landscape in the US. To the detriment of Catholic political figures, Roman Catholicism has often been deemed as an exotic faith in the US. Subtle and direct anti-Catholic content has been injected into the atmosphere of US politics over many decades as evidenced by the work of figures such as Thomas Nast and Paul Blanshard. The 1960s represented a peak in Roman Catholic political influence in US history. During the 1960s, John F. Kennedy was elected to the presidency, and Catholics such as Robert F. Kennedy, Edward “Ted” Kennedy, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Eugene McCarthy, Richard J. Daley, and Thomas Phillip “Tip” O’Neill rose to positions of national prominence. The seeds of 1960s Roman Catholic successes within the Democratic Party were sewn during the era of the New Deal as most Roman Catholics entered the New Deal coalition.

Roman Catholics within the United States have had a complex and long standing relationship with the liberal and progressive political movements of the twentieth century. Regarding economic issues such as minimum wage laws, the existence of labor unions, and the creation of social welfare systems, Catholic figures were generally ideologically aligned with twentieth century US political liberalism. US Catholics have tended to clash with political liberals on conceptions of freedom and Church-State relations. JoAnn Wypijewski’s review of John McGreevy’s Catholicism and American Freedom in The Nation described the link between Roman Catholicism and US political liberalism as a

120 Winters, Left at the Altar, 4, 12, 14.
“dialectical relationship between Catholic communalism and liberal individualism in the development of standard-issue notions of freedom in America.” Wypijewski contended that the cooperation between Catholicism and liberalism on economic issues is typically underplayed due to clashes between Catholic stances and liberal attitudes on personal freedom. Many scholars have examined the partnership between Catholic thought and New Deal politics. This dissertation argues that deep cooperation between Catholics and political liberalism extended beyond the New Deal era into the Great Society of President Lyndon Baines Johnson. This deep cooperation is evidenced by the life and work of Sargent Shriver, a lay Catholic figure, who left an enduring imprint on 1960s liberalism.

This dialectical relationship between Catholic communalism and twentieth century US political liberalism manifested itself at times as a creative synergy on economic questions and at other times as a heated clash over questions surrounding the extent of individual freedoms in US society. When investigating the cooperative aspects of twentieth century US political liberalism and Catholic thought, two narratives typically emerge. First, the cross pollination of ideas between New Deal liberalism and Catholic Social Teaching is elucidated. This narrative compares New Deal policies and the official statements pertaining to economic and social matters made by the Papacy, US bishops, and US clergy especially centering on the work of Rev. John A. Ryan. Second, the mobilization of Catholic immigrants by urban political bosses such as John F. Kennedy’s grandfather John Francis Fitzgerald in favor of the Democratic Party is also

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These two strains of cooperation between liberals and Catholics are often seen as reaching their respective pinnacles in the economic philosophies of Father John Augustine Ryan and the political career of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. The clashes between liberal movements and Catholic thought within the US have centered on issues ranging from eugenics and abortion to questions about acceptable levels of civil disobedience during the protests against the Vietnam Conflict. This narrative is generally accurate, but it is also incomplete due to neglecting the serious contributions to US political liberalism made by lay Catholic public servants such as Sargent Shriver who did not emerge from a system of urban machine politics.

In order to locate Shriver’s liberalism, it is first important to give a brief overview of how Catholic Social Teaching elucidated by Catholic bishops, clergy, and religious orders related to liberalism. The story of Father John A. Ryan's relationship with New Deal politics and policies is well known. John A. Ryan, a priest and economist, helped adapt the messages of Pope Leo XIII 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* and Pope Pius XI’s encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* to the US context. Ryan’s work on the economic implications of *Rerum Novarum* was well received by his superiors, and he was selected to craft the 1919 US Bishops statement on rebuilding after World War I called the *Program of Social Reconstruction*. Ryan’s work also found a synergy with the policies and spirit of New Deal era politics. This work created a dynamic relationship between Catholic Social Teaching and progressive politics within the US. Ryan's work and the political energy behind the New Deal did not always coincide, but it is noteworthy that Franklin D. Roosevelt would refer to *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* when

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speaking to Catholic voters.\textsuperscript{124} Roosevelt placed as much trust in Ryan as the US Bishops had in 1919 as Father Ryan gave the benediction at Franklin Roosevelt's 1933 inauguration. Ryan also promoted and defended New Deal programs such as the National Recovery Act of 1933. It is also notable that the 1919 US Bishops' \textit{Program of Social Reconstruction} included calls for unemployment insurance, social insurance for the elderly, child labor laws, minimum wage laws, and regulation of monopolies. Roosevelt's presidency championed the enactment of policies that were of a similar nature to the proposals found in the \textit{Program for Social Reconstruction}.\textsuperscript{125} Shriver’s liberalism had many areas of consonance with that of John Ryan, but Shriver’s status as a layperson often working in government gave Shriver a different social location for pursuing liberal policies.

Machine politics in predominantly Catholic urban immigrant communities impacted US political liberalism in the twentieth century as well. Catholic political clout was present in immigrant communities where political bosses typically reigned. Chicago's Richard Daley and Boston’s John “Honey Fitz” Fitzgerald fit the model of Catholic political operators who could mobilize voters due to machine politics.\textsuperscript{126} If John A. Ryan is the zenith of Catholic clerical influence on US political liberalism, then John F. Kennedy is the crowning achievement of machine politics in urban areas made up primarily of Catholic immigrants. John F. Kennedy had a wildly successful political career that had its roots in machine politics. John F. Kennedy was first elected to the

\textsuperscript{125} Winters, \textit{Left at the Altar}, 12, 30-35.
House of Representatives in 1946, first elected to the US Senate in 1952, and was elected to the presidency in 1960.\textsuperscript{127}

The power of machine politics in Catholic immigrant communities along with a bias toward ecclesial and clerical power within Catholic communities has overshadowed an under appreciated aspect of Catholicism's cooperative relationship with twentieth century U.S. political liberalism. Sargent Shriver was at the forefront of the most liberal policies of two presidential administrations in the 1960s but was neither a member of the Roman Catholic hierarchy nor was he a product of machine politics.

\textbf{The Progressive Era}

Twentieth century U.S. political liberalism began with the presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. These progressive presidents pursued more active public policies that positioned the government as a sort of referee protecting citizens against any overreach from large corporations. This progressive type of liberalism played a key role in the development of later versions of political liberalism, as it was the first stage of a new attitude toward the activity level of government in society.

\begin{quote}
It is with emancipation that the real tasks begin, and liberty is a searching challenge, for it takes away the guardianship of the master and the comfort of the priest. The iconoclasts didn’t free us. They threw us into the water, and now we have to swim.\textsuperscript{128}
\end{quote}

Walter Lippmann’s 1914 book \textit{Drift and Mastery} is a good example of the confidence surrounding economic planning and social reform found in the progressive presidencies of both Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt. Lippmann was twenty-five when \textit{Drift and Mastery} was published. At this time, he was a muckraker writing for \textit{The New


\textsuperscript{128} Walter Lippmann, \textit{Drift and Mastery} (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 112.
Lippmann sought a scientific and reasonable “mastery” of the unique
circumstances of US society shifting from a rural to urban economy during a period of
both great technological advancement and newly emerging fields of labor. *Drift and
Mastery* illuminates the realities of pre-World War I America. These realities include the
rise of trusts, new views on property, a break down of rural traditions in urban areas, and
new roles for labor and women. Lippmann claimed that such a rush of new social and
economic realities have many humans feeling as though they had been set adrift from a
once predictable social stability. The challenges facing humanity were not older
problems but rather the disorder resulting from new humanity’s found self-
determination.¹²⁹ Lippmann saw a more active government in both social and economic
spheres as being the best path toward mastery. Lippmann’s confidence in humanity’s
ability to give direction to its new social situation was reflected in progressive policies
that sought to police unfair business practices while protecting consumers and workers.

**Important Strands and Currents of New Deal Liberalism**

The general posture of the New Deal was one of utilizing greater government
activism to address perceived problems in society. The New Deal, however, did not
represent one single outlook for determining how to achieve its goals. It is beyond the
scope of this dissertation to elucidate all of the differences of opinion found among the
architects of the New Deal. However, two fault lines within the New Deal coalition are
helpful to understanding the spectrum of political liberalism in the 1960s in which John
F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Sargent Shriver worked. The first fault line
pertained to the question of how to deal with monopolies. The second fissure surrounded
the question of whether or not government policies should only promote economic

benefits to citizens or if the government should intervene to deal with social problems as well.

Regarding monopolies, some liberals viewed regulating and restricting large corporations to be the great challenge facing society. Others within New Deal liberalism opposed breaking monopolies because they viewed economic competition as dangerous and thought economic planning was the right path for continued progress. These pro-monopoly liberals felt that planning was easier when dealing with a small group of dominant companies rather than dealing with a myriad of economic actors.\textsuperscript{130}

In one of the major developments of the later phases of the New Deal, Thurman Arnold, a former Yale Law School professor, was named head of the Antitrust Division of the Justice Department in 1938. Arnold being named to this post was a bit odd because one year earlier he had criticized antitrust laws of failing to address the concentration of wealth in society in his magnum opus \textit{The Folklore of Capitalism}. Arnold went further to claim that antitrust laws actually sheltered large stakeholders in the economy by removing further government legislation from the public debate on these economic powers. Rather, Arnold claimed public critiques of monopolies became symbolic because such criticisms lacked any realistic consequences.\textsuperscript{131}

Thurman Arnold represented an interesting transition within twentieth century political liberalism. He favored competition and enforced antitrust laws. He creatively applied antitrust laws in a manner that led to a great deal of revenue for the Roosevelt administration. Arnold generally forced corporations to pay fines in order to avoid trials. When corporations did try to resist antitrust laws in court they tended to lose to Arnold’s


\textsuperscript{131} Brinkley, \textit{The End of Reform}, 106, 107. Passim.
antitrust division.Arnold had made statements that he believed in breaking up monopolies, but his actions as head of the Antitrust Division were focused on managing monopolies and generating revenue for the federal government. Arnold did not pursue a specific social ideal that had been present in the early New Deal when it came to attacking monopolies. Rather, Arnold saw a value in large corporations as he thought they tended to shape society through the agency they could exercise due to their “bigness.”

The disagreements among political liberals on how to deal with monopolies paralleled the split between what can be called “Commercial” and “Social” Keynesians. “Social Keynesians” sought to use state intervention to recast society as a more egalitarian place especially for groups typically excluded from public life. “Commercial Keynesians” pursued statist policies that increased production, demand, and employment. Commercial Keynesians gained an upper hand as the US entered the 1940s. This victory by commercial Keynesians was aided by the increase in Cold War tensions leading to a distrust of statist solutions within the US.

**Truman: Transitions from International Statist to Cold War Liberalism**

During Harry Truman’s presidency, a short-lived form of liberalism emerged in the aftermath of World War II. An English speaking international liberal movement emerged from the 1930s to 1946. This movement existed in England, the United States, and New Zealand. It focused on reforming society by democratically harnessing the powers of the

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132 Brinkley, *The End of Reform*, 111.
133 Ibid., 111-114.
state to promote public works and a cradle to grave social safety net. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s 1944 speech proposing an economic bill of rights was a manifestation of this movement within the US.\textsuperscript{136}

This internationalist form of democratically won government action did not last particularly long. Hopes for a social democratic push within the US were derailed by both concerns about Soviet expansion and a concerted effort by conservatives within the US to conflate totalitarian and democratically enacted statist policies.\textsuperscript{137} These electoral pressures pushed the focus of political liberalism in the U.S. away from domestic policy toward a hard line on Cold War foreign policy. A new form of Cold War Liberalism emerged that focused on aggressive foreign policy and a scaled back domestic agenda. President Truman won re-election in 1948 by turning his attention to his Cold War credentials. John F. Kennedy won his first term in the U.S. Senate in 1952 by also pursuing this form of Cold War liberalism. Such Cold War liberalism would limit itself due to its inherent critique of statist policies in the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{138}

Harry Truman’s presidency did propose a wider array of governmental interventions in the economy in keeping with liberal movements unfolding in post World War II England and New Zealand. However, hopes of constructing a social democratic consensus in the US largely failed, and political liberalism in the US shifted toward a more robust anti-communist posture. John F. Kennedy embodied this shift, as he was a Cold War liberal who won his U.S. Senate seat in 1952 due in part to running to the right

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., \textit{The Liberal State on Trial}, xiii-xv, 11.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., xv, xvi.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 121-124.
of Republican Henry Cabot Lodge. Kennedy also raised the specter of a “missile gap” when running for President in 1960.\textsuperscript{139}

Politics in the 1950s revolved largely around the pragmatic conservatism of President Eisenhower and the Cold War liberalism Harry Truman pursued in his successful 1948 election. New Social Democratic policies did not emerge during the 1950s, but President Eisenhower did launch a major public works project in the form of the interstate highway system within the US.\textsuperscript{140} President Eisenhower also did not seek to undo New Deal policies thus helping these policies become entrenched within the US body politic. Sam Tanenhaus noted that some political liberals felt at least one Republican victory for the White House would be needed in order to cement the reality of New Deal institutions. Eisenhower leaving New Deal programs “untouched” accomplished just that.\textsuperscript{141}

\textbf{John F. Kennedy: New Dealer to Post War Triumphantalist to Cold Warrior to Possible Peace Advocate}

John F. Kennedy ran for his first elected office in 1946. He sought to represent the eleventh district of Massachusetts in the U.S. House of Representatives. Kennedy expressed basic New Dealer instincts in expressing his views on the ideology of the Democratic Party. This is not surprising given that the eleventh district was safe Democratic territory with a strong presence of union organization and membership. Kennedy expressed these New Deal convictions outside of Massachusetts’ eleventh district as well. In 1946, while speaking to a group of Young Democrats in

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\textsuperscript{141} Sam Tanenhaus, \textit{The Death of Conservatism} (New York: Random House, 2009), 38.
Pennsylvania, Kennedy described the Democratic Party as standing for traditional New Deal themes in saying:

It (The Democratic Party) stands for full employment and higher production. It stands for an extension of Social Security, to give full protection to the unemployed and aged. It stands for a minimum wage … for the enactment of progressive legislation that will be of aid to the people that will preserve our system of free enterprise and strengthen the fabric of our society.142

On 14 September 1960, Senator Kennedy defined his views of liberalism in a speech accepting his nomination to the presidency from New York’s Liberal Party. Candidate Kennedy’s views of liberalism rhetorically painted two different pictures of liberalism. The first image was one of liberalism representing an ideology characterized by free spending, isolationist foreign affairs and disrespect toward local government. The second depiction was one of liberalism representing receptivity toward new ideas, an optimism for being able to breakthrough entrenched foreign policy problems and a concern for the general welfare and civil liberties of the people. Kennedy embraced the latter illustration of liberalism while rejecting the former.143

Interestingly, Kennedy gave this speech two days after his famous Church-State speech in Houston. He went on to describe liberalism in terms that at least hint at ideas deeply rooted in western philosophy and the Judeo-Christian traditions. Kennedy wished to use this particular speech to clarify his views “on the proper relationship between the state and the citizen.” He described these views as his “political credo” and asserted “human dignity as the source of national purpose.” He went on to claim that liberalism was more of an orientation toward maximizing “justice and freedom and brotherhood” than it was a “platform of promises.”144

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142 Jonathan Bell, *The Liberal State on Trial*, 14, 15.
144 Ibid.
Late in Kennedy’s presidency he gave the commencement address for the graduating class of 1963 at American University. In this speech Kennedy broke new ground and suggested pulling back from the tensions of the Cold War via diplomacy and disarmament. It is unclear if this speech signaled President Kennedy jettisoning his long-held Cold War liberal positions or if it was a rhetorical anomaly. Kennedy’s assassination later in 1963 thrust Lyndon B. Johnson into the presidency.

**Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society Liberalism**

Lyndon Johnson’s commitment to completing the New Deal, his regional influences and his voracious work ethic must all be further considered to properly situate Sargent Shriver’s role within the Johnson administration. Lyndon Johnson’s political liberalism was forged both through the deep impact of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s presidency and through regional pressures that hindered an open embrace of activist government in the post War era. Neither of these factors shaped President Kennedy’s brand of post war liberalism. Both of these factors impacted Sargent Shriver’s ability to pursue robust liberal projects during Lyndon Johnson’s presidency. Shriver’s task was made easier due to Johnson’s fierce loyalty to Franklin Roosevelt. Johnson’s fascination with the idea of completing the New Deal made room for Shriver’s eventual pursuit of large-scale programs such as Head Start and Job Corps. Conversely, Shriver’s task suffered due to the fact that Johnson had developed a pragmatic willingness to mask or jettison certain liberal impulses in order to survive politically in Texas at an early stage in his career. Finally, Johnson’s immense work ethic and ability to negotiate with and even coerce congress contributed mightily to the dynamic Shriver found himself in as

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145 Ibid. 282-290.
Johnson’s “Mr. Poverty.” Shriver’s adaptation to the new dynamic of the Johnson administration shed light on how Shriver was able to transition from launching the most progressive program of Kennedy’s New Frontier to spearheading a large array of the most progressive programs of Johnson’s Great Society despite the different styles of political liberalism embodied by presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

Lyndon Johnson embraced a more liberal view of the state’s role in the economy than did John F. Kennedy. Johnson was more in sync New Deal liberalism than Kennedy’s brand of post-War and Cold War liberalism. Johnson was a New Dealer, and his legislative record as president and Senate Majority Leader quite easily fit into the social Keynesian model discussed earlier. A brief inspection of Lyndon Johnson’s political roots lays the groundwork needed to substantiate this claim. Lyndon Johnson’s father, Sam Ealy Johnson, Jr., was the earliest source of his political liberalism. Sam Johnson was a six term state legislator who “supported an eight hour work day for exploited railroad workers, boldly criticized the Ku Klux Klan, and voted to tax corporations, regulate utilities and ensure pure food.”147 Lyndon Johnson’s early inclinations toward state activism on behalf of the poor and voiceless were buttressed by his experiences as a twenty-year-old teacher and principal of a school in Cotulla, TX. The school was made up of impoverished Mexican American students and an apathetic staff. Johnson worked himself and his students hard in order to help them escape poverty. The suffering of his students personally impacted Johnson.148

Lyndon Johnson made his way to Washington, DC in 1931 as the congressional secretary of a first term congressman Richard Kleberg. Representative Kleberg was

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147 Ibid., 7.
largely an absentee congressman who allowed his secretary to run his congressional office. Johnson took advantage of this opportunity and forced himself and his staff to work extremely hard for their constituents in Texas’ fourteenth district. By January 1933 the Great Depression was in full swing, and Johnson embraced the New Deal. Johnson put his efforts to understanding the roles and functions of various New Deal agencies. Johnson then used his political talents and unbridled work ethic to create contacts within as many New Deal agencies as possible. He put these contacts to use and helped Representative Kleberg’s district become a recipient of New Deal aid. In this manner, Johnson began to wed his father’s liberal idealism with a keen ability to accomplish tangible goals by knowing bureaucratic systems, making connections, and persuading people.149

Johnson took a risk in choosing the term “Great Society” for his program to complete the New Deal. It was inspired by Walter Lippmann’s 1937 book The Good Society. To be sure, Lippmann had placed confidence in the ability of experts and legislation to solve societal ills in his 1914 book Drift and Mastery. However, he was not afraid to criticize Johnson. Lippmann was initially impressed with Johnson’s vision for a great society. However, he began to comment on Johnson’s war efforts in Vietnam being more representative of “a bastard empire which relies on superior force to achieve its purposes” than a Great Society. He also chastised the Johnson administration for being “pathologically secretive.”150 Johnson’s Great Society did not mesh with Lippmann’s sentiments when writing The Good Society, but this did not stop Johnson from borrowing Lippmann’s nomenclature in describing his platform for social reform.

Shriver 1950s and 1960s on Liberalism

I’m going to make it clear that you’re Mr. Poverty at home and abroad, if you want to be. And I don’t care who you have running the Peace Corps. You can run it? Wonderful. If you can’t, get Oshgosh from Chicago and I’ll name him… You can write your ticket on anything you want to do there. I want to get rid of poverty, … though The Sunday papers are going to say that you’re Mr. Poverty, unless you’ve got real compelling reasons, which I haven’t heard …\(^\text{151}\)

After serving in the Navy during World War II, Shriver eventually made his way into the business world of Chicago and managed the massive Merchandise Mart for Joseph P. Kennedy starting in late 1946.\(^\text{152}\) In 1955 Shriver became both the chairman of the Chicago Board of Education and president of the Catholic Interracial Council in Chicago. In each position, Shriver worked effectively to desegregate Chicago’s public and parochial school systems as well as desegregating Catholic hospitals in an effort to confront “the sin of racism.”

The lessons Shriver learned in Chicago helped John F. Kennedy win the presidency. Late in the 1960 campaign Martin Luther King was sentenced to hard labor in a rural Georgia prison due to a traffic violation. Shriver convinced John Kennedy to call Coretta Scott King on October 20, 1960 and offer her his support. This gesture improved Kennedy’s standing among African American voters throughout the U.S. and helped him win a closely contested presidential race. President Kennedy rewarded Shriver by placing him in charge of the “talent hunt” for finding strong cabinet members to carry out Kennedy’s New Frontier platform. Shriver immediately warmed up to Robert McNamara in part because McNamara was reading Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s *The Phenomenon of Man*.

\(^{152}\) Stossel, *Sarge*, 90.
Shriver was also charged by the president-elect with leading and shaping the Peace Corps, a program closely tied to the optimistic youthful image of Kennedy's New Frontier. Later Shriver designed, launched and directed President Johnson's War on Poverty. Shriver played a similar role in 1960s U.S. political liberalism to the role of John A. Ryan during the New Deal era. Shriver drew upon his Catholic beliefs to provide energy and intellectual heft for 1960s liberalism. Shriver's Catholicism influenced a key decision that helped JFK win the presidency in 1960, impacted his vision for the Peace Corps, and his architecture of the War on Poverty. Shriver was a serious Catholic figure who, like Father John A. Ryan a generation earlier, helped to initiate and to sustain creative interplay between Catholic thought and the policies of the Democratic Party.

Shriver being a layperson is quite important. He was able to influence and shape public policy as an insider. His career as an effective political operator placed him as the first head of the Peace Corps that along with the Space Race embodied the spirit of Kennedy's "New Frontier."\(^{153}\) Under President Johnson, Shriver continued to run the Peace Corps while also managing the Office of Economic Opportunity launched by the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act. When President Johnson offered Shriver the role of developing the War on Poverty he told Sarge, "So you just call up the pope and tell him you might not be in time every morning for church on time, but you’re going to be working for the good of humanity."\(^{154}\) The OEO was the birthplace of Volunteers in

\(^{153}\) *American Idealist* written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.

\(^{154}\) Stossel, *Sarge*, 352.
Service to America (VISTA), Head Start, Community Action, Job Corps, Work Study, and Legal Services for the Poor.\textsuperscript{155}

Sargent Shriver was able to work effectively within two administrations with different outlooks on liberalism. His own style of liberalism helps to explain how he managed to be effective in both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. His experiences in WWII made him a firm believer in the value of peace and the need to avoid war.\textsuperscript{156} Shriver was ultimately more at home within the Johnson administration’s vision of liberalism. Indeed, Harris Wofford felt some within the Kennedy team viewed Shriver as “a house liberal or worse.”\textsuperscript{157} While Shriver did not choose to be placed in charge of the Peace Corps, chapter four of this dissertation will explore why running the Peace Corps was an ideal assignment for him as he could pursue his own commitments to peace while also crafting a program that fit into his brother-in-law’s anti-communist liberalism.

In addition to Shriver’s commitment to peace, his career suggests a version of liberalism that was focused upon concrete embodied bold efforts. Chapter three of this dissertation will explore Shriver’s bold, face-to-face request for John F. Kennedy to call Coretta Scott King weeks before the 1960 election. Another example of Shriver’s embodied personal liberal actions came when Shriver successfully lobbied Barry Goldwater to support the Peace Corps’ initial congressional authorization.\textsuperscript{158} After the Kennedy Administration put forth lukewarm support for the Peace Corps, Shriver’s Peace Corps team generated its own congressional lobbying effort that met face to face with

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\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 357-367. Passim.
\textsuperscript{156} American Idealist written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
\textsuperscript{157} Stossel, Sarge, 185.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 237.
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every living member of congress prior to the Peace Corps authorization vote.\textsuperscript{159}

President Kennedy praised Shriver for being the most effective lobbyist on the Washington scene after the Peace Corps gained congressional authorization.\textsuperscript{160}

Shriver’s penchant for bold yet tangible proposals meshed more easily with President Johnson’s vision of political liberalism. Lyndon Johnson was an effective lobbyist as both President and Senate Majority Leader. As a US senator, Lyndon Johnson had shepherded many new laws and institutions including the first civil rights act of the twentieth century and a revamped space program into existence.\textsuperscript{161} Harris Wofford remembers Sargent Shriver as having the greatest talent for transforming an idea into a reality of any figure Wofford encountered during his long career in government.\textsuperscript{162}

While Lyndon Johnson’s communication style was more abrasive than Shriver’s, each man shared a tireless work ethic for producing tangible results. One example of their similar approaches to legislation occurred on February 1, 1964, the day Lyndon Johnson tapped Sargent Shriver to head the War on Poverty. That evening President Johnson complimented Shriver for being the only other person working at the White House at that hour.\textsuperscript{163}

\textsuperscript{159} American Idealist written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
\textsuperscript{160} Stossel, Sarge, 245.
\textsuperscript{161} Schulman, Lyndon B. Johnson and American Liberalism, 49-53.
\textsuperscript{162} Harris Wofford, interview by the author.
\textsuperscript{163} Beschloss, Taking Charge, 211.
Sargent Shriver summed up his optimistic yet applied liberalism in a 1967 address to Young Democrats:

When this convention is over, will you go to pieces? Or will you go to the only place a good politician can go – to the people. Every four years, Theodore White tells us about the making of a President. Why don’t the Young Democrats tell us about the making of a politician? All of you are here because that’s what you want to become – a good politician. That’s what this country needs most right now. We need good politicians who are more than bright young men with bright ideas on how to curb inflation, destroy poverty, stop the war, argue with de Gaulle or ban the bomb! I’m not against bright young men – 30 years ago, I used to think I was one myself. But, right now, we have enough smart young Democrats to reform a thousand worlds, but not enough involved young Democrats to reform one. What kind of involvement? The kind that makes you become a good politicians: involvement with people – volunteering your service so that their lot becomes better.\footnote{Robert Sargent Shriver, Jr. “Speech at the Young Democrats of America National Convention, Hollywood, FL, November 18, 1967,” Sargent Shriver Peace Institute, accessed October 14, 2015 http://www.sargentshriver.org/speech-article/speech-at-the-young-democrats-of-america-national-convention.}

Immediately after challenging his young audience Shriver noted the localized good work President Johnson did as a young teacher in rural Texas.\footnote{Ibid.} Shriver’s approach to liberalism included both the cosmic perspective described by Mark Shriver while also being keenly aware of every human interaction that instantiated a measure of progress toward his grand vision. Therefore, the Peace Corps, the War on Poverty, and Special Olympics represented grand ideas Sargent Shriver contributed to, but these grand ideas could be measured by human interaction, human effort, and tangible human achievement. Most importantly for Shriver was his genius for making ideas into realities. His ability to imagine and then generate new institutions served his practical vision of liberalism well because such institutions gave people the opportunity to participate in, promote, and live out the ideals Shriver espoused over both space and time.

\section*{Conclusion}

Sargent Shriver’s work on John F. Kennedy’s campaign for president, his time as head of the Peace Corps, and architect of the War on Poverty instilled his indelible Catholic sensibility on the progressive programs launched by Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. Shriver's story is one that enhances the understanding of the dialectical relationship between Catholic thought and twentieth century U.S. liberalism because his
life and work demonstrate that the creative synergy of these two movements extended beyond John A. Ryan's support of the New Deal and the rise of successful Roman Catholic Democratic politicians who emerged from within an immigrant paradigm.

Shriver found a way to make his grand vision fit within the Cold War dynamics of the Kennedy administration. His approach to legislation and institution building found a kindred spirit in Lyndon Johnson. Michael Novak who worked on Shriver’s 1976 presidential campaign noted that Shriver wanted to “reconstruct the social order” and “put the years of the gospel in the world.” Shriver’s institutional innovation and construction of social structures allowed for him to integrate his Roman Catholic faith and his political life. Shriver’s synergy of political action and Catholic vision played out in three distinct areas of foci: race, peace, and poverty.

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166 Michael Novak, *Writing from Left to Right*, 112.
Sargent Shriver’s position as both a serious Roman Catholic and a committed Democrat with an affinity for New Deal policies are clear. His role in the unfolding story of civil rights within the United States is a prime example of how Shriver’s brand of public Catholicism proved to be politically advantageous. Shriver affected change on racial issues not as a prophetic voice crying out from the edges of society but by holding and making use of key civic and ecclesial positions in the Chicago community. He eventually extended his work in Chicago to a national platform as the first president of a new Catholic structure created for addressing racism known as the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice.\(^\text{167}\) This organization emerged from a 1958 meeting held between “thirty-six Catholic Interracial Councils” and over “four hundred delegates” hosted at Loyola University in Chicago. Mathew Ahmann, who had worked under Shriver at the Chicago Catholic Interracial Council, chartered this new group.\(^\text{168}\)

Shriver would draw upon his work in civil rights, his familial ties, and his position within a presidential campaign to make a decision that changed the direction of that


\(^{168}\) Ibid., 86 and Stossel, *Sarge*, 128.
election and subsequently changed the US. Shriver also called upon his penchant for circumventing bureaucracy when it may hinder action and approached his brother-in-law in a casual manner to address a pressing issue of racial justice in regards to the treatment and fate of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Shriver’s decision greatly improved John F. Kennedy’s standing within the African-American community and helped propel his brother-in-law to the US presidency.

The questions and tensions surrounding race relations and civil rights shaped post-war American life in the 1950s and 1960s. These fault lines arose while Roman Catholicism was moving from the edges to the center of US culture. Cornel West asserts that the US failed to pursue “a multicultural democracy” prior to 1965.\(^{169}\) Peter Steinfels contends that Roman Catholicism found acceptance within the broader US culture at a time when external challenges such as the civil rights movement, protests over US involvement in Vietnam, and internal challenges from the Second Vatican Council would reshape Catholic life.\(^{170}\)

Sargent Shriver helped to structure the manner in which Roman Catholics in the Archdiocese of Chicago navigated issues surrounding race in the 1950s. Shriver helped to desegregate parochial schools and Catholic hospitals in Chicago. He also brought his Catholic moral convictions on questions of race to his job as superintendent of public schools in Chicago. This hands-on applied experience of connecting moral positions with policies helped Shriver become the head of the Civil Rights Division of his brother-in-law’s 1960 presidential general election team. It is at this juncture that Shriver’s years of work on racial issues within Chicago helped to restructure the racial politics and

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policies of the entire US. Shriver was able to accomplish this by both accepting and generating innovative and fruitful approaches to the issue of racism. Shriver’s willingness to jettison both existing approaches to racism and accepted channels of communication within the Kennedy election team demonstrated his lifelong creative approach to addressing large-scale problems with bold large-scale action.

**Race in 1950s Chicago: The Catholic Interracial Council of Chicago and Beyond**

Shriver became the head of the Catholic Interracial Council of Chicago in 1955. Remarkably, despite never attending a public school and being a Roman Catholic, Shriver was named as the president of the Chicago Board of Education in the same year. Shriver accomplished this feat by accident. Shriver became a member of the Chicago Board of Education in 1954. He noticed that the board was looking for a president and thought his wife Eunice Shriver would be an ideal candidate. Shriver sent an opaque letter to the search committee attempting to recommend Eunice for school board president without sounding as though he was seeking a political favor or promoting nepotism. His vague letter led to the board nominating him rather than Eunice due to his strong performance on the school board in 1954.\(^\text{171}\) Using these two positions, Shriver helped to desegregate both the Catholic and public school systems in Chicago. On the Interracial Council Shriver worked to advance the ideas of Samuel Cardinal Stritch.\(^\text{172}\) Cardinal Stritch was a “progressive on racial issues, allying himself with the left-wing organizer Saul Alinsky’s efforts to integrate neighborhoods” in Chicago.\(^\text{173}\) Mark Shriver recalled

\(^{171}\) Stossel, *Sarge*, 123, 124.
\(^{172}\) Mark Shriver, *A Good Man*, 67, 68.
\(^{173}\) Stossel, *Sarge*, 121.
that his father’s work was not always popular in Chicago as he had “bricks thrown through his office windows” during his work to end segregation in 1950s Chicago.\textsuperscript{174}

Shriver’s connection to the Catholic Interracial Council of Chicago reached deep into his family life. John LaFarge, S.J. along with William Markoe, S.J. helped to create the idea of Catholic Interracial Councils in the Archdiocese of New York. The Catholic Interracial Council was an outgrowth of the Federated Colored Catholics.\textsuperscript{175} LaFarge had deep ties to Catholicism in Maryland and was friends with Sargent Shriver’s parents Robert Sargent Shriver, Sr. and Hilda Shriver. LaFarge intended for Catholic Interracial Councils to spread beyond New York and become a nationwide network “… of black and white leaders who would meet, discuss and try to influence others through its publicizing Catholic Social Teaching on racial justice.”\textsuperscript{176} LaFarge’s foresight was affirmed in part in 1946 when Rev. Reynold Hillenbrand received permission from Cardinal Stritch to create a Chicago Catholic Interracial Council modeled after the original New York organization.\textsuperscript{177} This would prove to be an early example of Shriver’s penchant for launching or helping to shape new and emerging institutions within a broader bureaucracy.

Shriver faced a daunting task in attempting to address desegregation in a Roman Catholic context in Chicago. Patrick W. Carey explains that Cardinal Stritch’s predecessor Cardinal Mundelein had instituted “systematic discrimination” against blacks. Carey points to a 1950 complaint made by an African-American parishioner

\textsuperscript{174} Mark Shriver, \textit{A Good Man}. 113.
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., 227, 228. LaFarge shared a commonality with Robert Sargent Shriver, Sr. and Hilda Shriver in that he was involved with publishing a Catholic magazine. LaFarge’s time as Editor at \textit{America} included drawing attention to racial injustices within US society as well as the Church in the US.
\textsuperscript{177} Stossel, \textit{Sarge}, 115, 121.
regarding a egregiously ugly homily filled with racial invectives that vowed to keep people of Irish ancestry at the center of parish life while pushing those who favored integration out of the parish.\footnote{Patrick W. Carey. \textit{Catholics in America: A History Updated Edition} (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 106, 107.} John T. McGreevy argues that Catholic neighborhoods had tended to resist integration more violently nationwide than other neighborhoods. Violent Catholic resistance to integration was present in Chicago as well. McGreevy explains that Chicago realtors tended to shy away from largely Catholic neighborhoods when working with African-American clients. The rising number of African-Americans moving to Chicago during the 1950s meant the Archdiocese could not avoid racial questions. McGreevy painstakingly describes the altering of the racial make-up of neighborhoods in Chicago noting that white Catholic families would often either leave a neighborhood or not buy houses in a neighborhood if a racial incident was perceived to have taken place.\footnote{John T. McGreevy, \textit{Parish Boundaries}, 103-110 passim. It is interesting to note that Cardinal Stritch urged seminarians for Chicago to not leave the diocese to minister to African-Americans in the south because black migration to Chicago meant ministerial assignments to African-American populations would be present in the Archdiocese of Chicago on a large-scale.}

Shriver challenged his audience at a 1959 National Conference of Christians and Jews gathering focused on brotherhood to take the concept seriously. Shriver stated that integration is not a hypothetical problem facing schools and cities, but rather it is a real situation that requires sensible actions. He laid out basic arguments made against integration and then forcefully advocated integration. Shriver first noted that many people support the idea of brotherhood in theory, but that when it comes to their “state, town or school district” that integration is not the right decision. Shriver stated that this mentality extended especially to places of worship. Most US citizens accepted the idea
of people of various ethnic groups joining a given Church or denomination, but that worshiping in the same parish or congregation was not something people were typically willing to do. Shriver enumerated two typical arguments against integration that he had heard as President of the Chicago Board of Education. First, he noted the widely held belief that non-white peoples were inferior and would harm the quality of a given school for white students. Second, Shriver acknowledged that some felt integration would fail because of a belief that schools were “social as well as educational institutions” and that communal prohibitions against social interactions among races racial would make integration impossible “even if they could get along intellectually.” Regardless of the argument being made, the end result of any of these positions would be resisting integration of Chicago’s schools.

Shriver forcefully and eloquently pushed back against the typical objections he had encountered by noting that objections aside that the United States was going to experience greater degrees of integration in the coming years and that “nobody can stop it.” Shriver, perhaps naively, identified the mobility of people as a force that would preclude comprehensive segregation as a matter of public policy in the future. First, he noted that demographic statistics from the 1940 to 1950 depicted a double trend of increasing minority populations at the national level and decreasing minority populations in southern states. Beyond migration from one state to another, Shriver saw local

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relocations as constantly reshaping school districts. He confidently proclaimed, “Within a state, and within the cities, too, the population is on the move.”

Shriver then outlined the program he had put in place in Chicago explaining how it had promoted integration while demonstrating his knack for practical idealism. First, Shriver first refused to “gerrymander school districts,” and secondly he put an end to the practice of citizens with influence gaining exemptions for their children to attend a school of their family’s choosing. Shriver said these two changes had to be made because without a commitment to fairness no ethnic group would trust the process of integrating the schools. Third, Shriver saw to it that hiring and advancement within Chicago schools was based “… on merit alone.” Shriver’s fourth plank toward creating a fair integration process was a commitment to make policies produced by a school system exact and available to the families within the district because “In a democratic society people have a right to know what public officials are trying to do, why, and how they are doing it.”

This fourth point echoes a commitment to promoting full societal participation found in Catholic Social Teaching. Participation is a concept of paramount importance to Catholic Social Teaching, yet what precisely is meant by participation is not easy to express. The current *Catechism of the Catholic Church* links societal participation to the attainment of the common good by arguing that citizens failing to engage in community action or societies that limit the participation of various groups within a given society fail to fully promote the common good. The catechism further links increasing participation to “education and culture.” The Roman Catholic Church advocates for the participation

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181 Ibid. Passim.
182 Ibid. Passim.
of individuals in society and also advocates for the participation of voluntary associations emerging from local particularities as a safeguard against dominance from larger bodies that hold authority in a given region or area.\textsuperscript{184}

Shriver concluded his speech by outlining practical services found in all Chicago schools set up to confront issues plaguing Chicago’s students. These practical services were intended to ease non-academic problems so that learning and the development of the whole student could occur. Shriver’s list of services foreshadowed his work both in the Peace Corps and the War on Poverty during the 1960s. These services included: making showers available to students, lunch programs, free eyesight tests, a school nurse, clothing programs, and an after school study center. Shriver noted that many students had made great academic progress as a result of these advances. Shriver exhorted his audience by stating, “… an unmerciful, unjust, vicious world is not the only possible world. Much better worlds have existed. Ours can become what it should be, provided we understand and accept the challenge to remake it.” He concluded by stating that only through fruitfully producing cases of successes on questions surrounding integration “can we look forward to peace on earth. Only in this way can we hope to fulfill the great chance to become ‘a chosen people, a royal priesthood….”\textsuperscript{185}

Shriver’s high-minded words as well as his actions and words within the Catholic Interracial Council of Chicago can be contrasted with what could be viewed as the glacial progress on race in Chicago among average parishioners. Catholics feared parishes

\textsuperscript{184} R. Scott Appleby, “Global Civil Society and the Catholic Social Tradition” in \textit{Globalization and Catholic Social Thought: Present Crisis Future Hope}, eds. John A. Coleman and William F. Ryan (Toronto: Orbis Books, 2005), 140, 141. Catholic Social Teaching promotes the notion of full participation of members of society in community activities. Racism by precluding both individuals and local instances of intentional communities from participating in US society is viewed as a deep injustice from a Roman Catholic perspective. Shriver’s use of the term “sin of racism” fits well within the understanding of his Catholic conscience.

would collapse if they were integrated. Many Chicago whites distrusted the Catholic Interracial Council for being on the “other” side. The distrust of the Catholic Interracial Council within Chicago led some outsiders to view the institution as being ineffective. Shriver and Stritch pushed back against racism and pushed for causes such as affordable housing for African-Americans within Chicago only to see minimal movement. Rev. Ted Hesburgh summed up the frustration of racially sensitive Catholic leaders by comparing the social attitudes of many Catholics in the late 1950s to that of “dinosaurs.” Stagnation on racial attitudes among US Catholics extended into the 1960s, and Mathew Ahmann lamented that few efforts had been made to confront racism by Catholic individuals or by Catholic institutions.186 However, the slow pace of progress on racial issues in Chicago did not deter him from taking his message and point of view to a national Catholic audience.

**Shriver’s Views on the Roots of Racism**

By working with the Chicago Interracial Council, Shriver was part of an effort in the Archdiocese of Chicago to embody an idea that was first generated in the Archdiocese of New York. Both Interracial Councils were bold experiments in institutional innovation. As Shriver would do in launching the Peace Corps and in constructing and administering the War on Poverty, he demonstrated a remarkable sense of imagination when it came to the possibilities presented by launching new programs within large institutions. Shriver eventually took his experiences within the Catholic Interracial Council of Chicago to a national Catholic audience in August 1958. He was the chairman of the First Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice and delivered a notable speech entitled “The Roots of Racism.”

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This address warrants a close reading because this it explores racism through a Catholic theological lens. Shriver began his address by quoting from Galatians 3:28 invoking “Saint Paul” as a personal “hero.” Shriver used this passage as well as echoing Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 15:28 to emphasize that regardless of one’s origins that “Christ is all in all.” Shriver then echoed Thomas ‘A Kempis by arguing that Christ spoke the truth and that the arduous job of the Christian was to imitate Christ and “speak the truth as plainly as we can.” This was all in the first paragraph of Shriver’s speech. His use of scripture, invoking Saint Paul as a hero, and calling for the imitation of Christ all speak to the depth of Shriver’s Catholic formation being brought to bear on the pressing issue of racism. Shriver was not simply quoting scripture to call for equality in a generic manner, but rather he made his analysis and plea from a Catholic underpinning.

Shriver’s critique of racial attitudes in the US then casts doubts on the efficacy of only addressing “external effects” of racism. Shriver states his doubt that racism would be eradicated if the US addressed all economic inequality and extended educational opportunities and made hospitals more accessible to all people. Instead he refers to racism and prejudice as being similar to a “cancer” impacting society. This allusion to society as being akin to a body is quite at home with Catholic sensibilities. Shriver argued that housing, educational, employment, and health programs were necessary, but that to address racism the causes must be addressed as well.

Shriver identified the roots of racism with a human desire to stand out from an “undifferentiated mass of humanity.” However, Shriver saw all historical efforts of this

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188 Ibid.
sort as generating failure for societies and individuals. Shriver rejected the philosophies of Hitler’s master race, efforts within ancient Greece to set apart intellectuals, the Hindu Caste system, and Marxism’s elevation of the working class to superiority. Shriver states that all of these efforts break down the very idea of humanity. Shriver then returned to the words of Saint Paul by arguing, “without charity we ourselves become objects, sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. It is love that crowns man with his true dignity, and the giving of love even more than the receiving.”  

Shriver demonstrates his intense Catholic formation once again by invoking the theological virtue of charity as a way to uproot racism. His words about loving others doing more to crown humanity with dignity than receiving love from others echo the Peace Prayer inspired by Saint Francis written around 1912.

**“The Open Mind” Interviews Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1957**

Sargent Shriver and Martin Luther King, Jr. were fellow travelers for much of the 1950s and 1960s. While Shriver was a Roman Catholic layman and Dr. King was a Baptist pastor, each man applied Christianity as a critique of racism. Having seen Shriver’s analysis of the roots of racism in 1958, it is important to hear Dr. King’s feelings on the state of race relations in 1957. Dr. King’s first major television interview was aired on 10 February 1957 on the NBC television program “The Open Mind” hosted by historian Richard D. Heffner. Heffner interviewed both Dr. King and Judge J. Waties

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189 Ibid.
Waring, who helped pave the way for the integration of US public schools, on an episode entitled “The New Negro.”

Dr. King described the situation of African-Americans in the late 1950s using religious terms such as “dignity” and seeking justice. He argued that African-Americans in the 1950s have lost a sense of fear when entering the public sphere. He continued to say that a truth telling was taking place in multiple sectors of African-American society including “the schools” and “the pulpit.” Dr. Heffner pushed both of his guests about whether a greater assertiveness would lead to more racial progress or if it would threaten what progress had already been made. Dr. King retorted that those in power do not tend to voluntarily give up power so a more intense civil rights movement would likely create more positive results than mere waiting upon those in power to alter policies. King further stated that the initial response of the oppressor tends to be bitterness when the oppressed begins to challenge the “old order.” King foresaw a creative period of adjustment in which bitterness and violence would subside. Judge Waring agreed with Dr. King and asserted that the courts assure people certain rights, but that it is imperative that people and groups then exercise these rights. Waring continued that if people “keep a complete solid front” the society would have to recognize “full equality” on issues pertaining to race.

Dr. King affirmed his commitment to full equality and “first class citizenship in every area of life.” Dr. King described what he saw as a rising recognition of self-respect

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192 Ibid. Passim.
among African-Americans being the result of greater travel that took place in recent decades within the US as well as the process of decolonization taking place outside of the US. Dr. King finally urged all forces possible to work toward increasing racial justice. Therefore, he wanted the executive and legislative branches needed to join the judicial branch in addressing civil rights. Judge Waring and Dr. King contended that action by President Eisenhower might give political cover to southern white politicians sympathetic to advancing civil rights who were not in a position to be a leading voice on the issue. King offered an eschatological point of view in which he argued violence against advocates of civil rights would subside and that a willingness to work out problems surrounding changes in racial policies in a Christian spirit would emerge. Judge Waring noted that most shifts toward social progress are accompanied by periods of violence and noted that Gandhi was assassinated. Dr. King pushed a sense of realism on racial issues by noting both progress and the great work that remained to be done. King concluded by insisting he was against despair and said he had faith in the future.\textsuperscript{193} It should be noted that this first nationally televised interview with Martin Luther King, Jr. came after the start of the Montgomery Bus Boycott started in 1955. The USCCB made its first explicit statement on racial matters by condemning racism in 1958 pastoral letter entitled “Discrimination and the Christian Conscience.” The work of Mathew Ahmann and the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice helped to spur the USCCB to take this action.\textsuperscript{194}

Shriver and King’s approach to race relations and their analysis of where things stood in the 1950s shared a thematic consonance of hope for the future and a steadfast

\textsuperscript{193} Ibid. Passim.
\textsuperscript{194} Cyprian Davis, O.S.B., \textit{The History of Black Catholics}, 255 and Stossel, \textit{Sarge}, 128.
commitment to work through difficulties. King took on greater personal risk by confronting racism in the Deep South through civil disobedience. Shriver acted from the fulcrum of governmental power and ecclesial power in 1950s Chicago to enact changes in racial policies. King’s reach on racial matters during the 1950s was becoming national in nature as he challenged structures of power from the exterior. King was a Protestant who pressured structures of power to move toward racial justice across a region and ultimately a nation. During the 1950s, Shriver was a Roman Catholic who advanced racial justice within institutions he could influence due to his strong official positioning. Each man sought to combat racism due to a Christian conviction that racism was a human failure. Their similar tone yet differing work on race would converge in 1960 and shift a tightly contested presidential election.

Shriver’s Role in the 1960 Election

Sargent Shriver had multiple roles to play in John F. Kennedy’s 1960 presidential campaign including working delegates in order to secure Kennedy receiving the Democratic nomination on the first ballot and providing a channel of communication that eventually led to Lyndon B. Johnson joining the 1960 Democratic ticket.195196 His most important and historically significant work came as head of the Civil Rights Division of the Kennedy campaign. Shriver faced doubts within the Kennedy family as he was viewed as being too liberal and too idealistic to engage in the tough work required for winning an election. Shriver’s loyalty to the Kennedy family was also brought into question. Ted Sorensen among others initially viewed Shriver as being politically green due to his enthusiasm and lack of experience in Washington, DC. Bobby Kennedy’s

196 Stossel, Sarge, 152.
team saw Shriver as being a “non-player” and a “boy scout.” This dynamic of doubt makes the outcome of Shriver’s civil rights work for Kennedy campaign more interesting and remarkable.

Shriver’s work in civil rights was important to John F. Kennedy’s chances because Kennedy needed the support of civil rights activists who were not thrilled by the inclusion of Lyndon B. Johnson on the 1960 Democratic ticket. Shriver was faced with competing political currents on the issue of race. During and after the New Deal years, Democrats had made gains among African-American voters. Civil rights advocates understood that the leverage held in northern states could be used to push the Democratic Party to support policies beneficial to African-Americans living in the south. These policies were pursued by Democratic politicians while simultaneously trying to assuage southern white Democrats. Shriver and his team would eventually assist Kennedy in growing his base of support in northern states via actions on the campaign trail and through an intervention on behalf of Martin Luther King.

For many northern members of the Democratic Party, Lyndon Johnson’s geographic background and earlier record of consistent opposition to civil rights legislation of every form overshadowed his role in shepherding the modest 1957 Civil Rights Act into law. These leaders suspected Lyndon Johnson of being an obstacle to liberal policies. Even John F. Kennedy assessed Johnson as being “too close to Appomattox” to be elected president in 1960. John F. Kennedy’s Roman Catholicism also presented obstacles for

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197 Ibid., 157, 158.
198 Stossel, Sarge, 158, 159.
200 Stossel, Sarge, 158, 159.
winning African-American votes. Entering the 1960 Democratic Convention Kennedy
was the least popular of all possible nominees among black voters, but the work of the
Civil Rights Section helped to reverse this trend by working tirelessly and employing
inventive methods for sharing their message.202

Furthermore, Kennedy’s own legislative record and public statements during the
1950s cast doubt on his commitment to civil rights. In 1957, Kennedy told that American
Association of School Administrators that control over schools should be placed “in local
hands.” The editors of *The Chicago Defender*, a highly influential black newspaper,
blasted Kennedy’s words on education by stating that they “… did not mind a donkey as
a traditional emblem of the Democratic Party, but a jackass is out of the question.”
Shriver understood the negative impact this editorial would have on John F. Kennedy due
to being friends with Louis Martin, the editor of *The Chicago Defender*. Shriver warned
his brother-in-law’s team about alienating *The Chicago Defender*, and John F. Kennedy
quickly refined his remarks by insisting they were not racially motivated.203 Kennedy
had not taken any strong stand on civil rights because attentiveness to racial issues was
not overly important in Massachusetts’ politics. Kennedy had courted favor with
segregationist southern columnists such as John Temple Graves by asserting that gradual
policies on racial issues were in the best interest of the country. *Profiles in Courage*
criticized the Reconstruction as being unfair to southern states. Kennedy received
criticism from the NAACP after his candidacy was endorsed by then Alabama governor
John M. Patterson. This criticism prompted Kennedy to create a Civil Rights Section for

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his campaign and to hire Harris Wofford who would form a lifelong partnership with Shriver.\footnote{Pietrusza, \textit{1960}, 291, 292. Passim.}

Beyond the challenges that both John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson presented in terms of winning minority votes was the ambivalence toward civil rights among the top decision makers of the Kennedy campaign. Shriver recalled for his biographer Scott Stossel that “This was the part of the campaign nobody else gave a damn about....” Shriver stated that the Civil Rights Section was given the amorphous task of seeking minority votes nation-wide and that he got this post because he was the brother-in-law of John F. Kennedy and had knowledge of civil rights issues and connections with civil rights leaders. Shriver’s connections included Illinois congressman William Dawson and Martin Luther King, Jr. In fact, Shriver had the privilege of introducing King at a speech in Chicago that was his first speech north of the Mason-Dixon line.\footnote{Stossel, \textit{Sarge}. 149.} William Dawson offered name recognition to the civil rights division of the campaign, but he rejected Shriver’s open floor plan for the division’s office. Dawson had walls erected around his workspace and urged a caution for actions undertaken by the civil rights section. Shriver did not alienate Dawson, but caution was not something Shriver embraced either.\footnote{Bryant, \textit{The Bystander}, 163, 164.}

Shriver’s team also included Frank Reeves and Franklin Williams who had deep ties to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP hereafter) in part due to Kennedy sending Shriver’s team to the 1960 NAACP convention.\footnote{Ibid., 136.} Williams helped to create “officially non partisan” voter-registration drives in black churches that could be funded through “… tax exempt contributions from individuals and

\footnote{204 Pietrusza, \textit{1960}, 291, 292. Passim.}  
\footnote{205 Stossel, \textit{Sarge}. 149.}  
\footnote{206 Bryant, \textit{The Bystander}, 163, 164.}  
\footnote{207 Ibid., 136.}
foundations, rather than from scarce political funds.” Shriver encouraged Civil Rights Division member and publisher Louis Martin to procure New York congressman Adam Clayton Powell’s endorsement. Powell proved that the Civil Rights Division could engage in hardnosed politics as he “barnstormed the country, traveling with an enlarged copy of the deed to Richard Nixon’s house, which contained a covenant signed by Nixon prohibiting the sale or lease of the property to Negroes or Jews.”

Adam Clayton Powell’s barnstorming was just one example of Shriver and the Civil Rights Section’s administrative talent and strategic guile. The Civil Rights Section made and ran advertisements specifically designed for influential newspapers within the African-American community while Nixon’s campaign ran the same advertisements for all papers. The Civil Rights Section was aware of the place decolonization in Africa occupied among minority voters in 1960. When the Department of State failed to fund scholarships for students from Kenya seeking to study in the US, Shriver intervened and saw to it that the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation fund these scholarships. Nixon then intervened securing State Department funding that augmented the Kennedy donation.

The Civil Rights Division worked to cultivate a strong relationship with Martin Luther King, Jr. in the hopes of landing his endorsement. This was politically advisable for two reasons. First, King had the most influence over African-American voters of any national figure. His endorsement would mean votes for Kennedy. Second, many African-Americans distrusted Roman Catholicism and an endorsement by King would help prevent the New Deal Coalition from fracturing over John F. Kennedy’s religion.

During the 1960 Democratic Convention, the Civil Rights Commission suggested a

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209 Bryant, The Bystander, 166, 167.
210 Wofford, Of Kennedys and Kings, 12.
strong platform on racial issues expecting to have to bargain away various planks in order to win John F. Kennedy’s approval. Kennedy unexpectedly approved all of the recommendations as well as putting his confidence in Wofford to help educate him on civil rights issues.211 King was impressed with the Democratic Party’s platform in 1960 and suggested meeting with John F. Kennedy in a southern location to symbolically establish Kennedy’s dedication to civil rights. King would follow such a meeting with a statement indicating that he was impressed with Kennedy’s commitment and had faith in his ability to fulfill these promises as president. The Civil Rights Division knew this was not a formal endorsement, but they thought it would serve the same purpose.212

The plan for meeting Martin Luther King was accepted by John F. Kennedy, but he wanted the meeting to take place in Nashville. King favored a city deeper south than Nashville in order to make the symbolic point that Kennedy stood against entrenched racism. Kennedy did not want to meet in Georgia because he feared that such a meeting might cause elected white Democrats in Georgia to back off of their support of the Democratic ticket.213 Kennedy’s fears were founded in political reality even if they were not particularly courageous. Kennedy’s campaign was told by three southern governors that it would lose at least three southern states if the ticket supported “King, Khrushchev, or Castro.”214

Kennedy offered to meet in the geographically but not culturally southern city of Miami, and King agreed. More political calculations led to this meeting being cancelled. Richard Nixon was in Miami at the same time as the proposed meeting. King told the

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211 Pietrusza, 1960, 292.
212 Wofford, Of Kennedys and Kings, 12.
213 Ibid., 13.
214 American Idealist written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
Kennedy campaign that he would have to extend an invitation to speak with Nixon as well. John F. Kennedy saw this as undesirable because if Nixon did agree to meet with King it would appear as though King was neutral on the upcoming election. Also, Kennedy saw his risk as far greater than Nixon’s since southern states were expected to support the Democratic ticket. Kennedy felt that since he had more to lose than Nixon that King offering to meet with Nixon undercut him. Wofford had to cancel the meeting and soon King was arrested at a civil rights protest at Rich’s Department stores, and it looked unlikely that Martin Luther King would impact the 1960 race in the manner that Kennedy’s Civil Rights Division had hoped.\footnote{215}

The Call: 25 October 1960

Sargent Shriver’s role in John F. Kennedy’s October 1960 call to Coretta Scott King has received a great deal of attention from historians and civil rights leaders. For instance, Theodore H. White’s pivotal election history The Making of the President 1960 published in 1961 contrasted John F. Kennedy’s bold and impulsive decision in calling Coretta Scott King with Richard Nixon’s cautious approach to racial politics.\footnote{216} Sargent Shriver’s legacy is not confined to the role he played on racial issues during the 1960 presidential campaign, but he and his staff did help to shift the course of the Democratic Party’s relationship to African-American voters while impacting the outcome of a presidential election. As is to be expected, divergent accounts of the history this momentous phone call have been produced.

Harris Wofford and Theodore H. White each offer an invaluable insider’s version of events. Wofford notes that Coretta Scott King called him after Martin Luther King, Jr.

\footnote{215} Wofford, Of Kennedys and Kings, 13 and Pietrusza, 1960, 295.
\footnote{216} White, The Making of the President 1960, 315-323.
“was sentenced to four months of hard labor by a Georgia judge for driving with an out of state license.” Mrs. King, who was in her sixth month of pregnancy, was convinced that her husband would be killed while he was incarcerated. Mrs. King’s fears were not unjustified. Her husband was serving his four months at the rural Reidsville State Prison. Mrs. King called her friend Wofford looking for whatever help was possible.217

Prior to assessing the events surrounding John F. Kennedy’s response, it is important to note that the Republican President and Republican nominee for President had an opportunity to act as well. White noted that a Republican Deputy Attorney General in Georgia named Lawrence E. Walsh sent a draft of a statement supporting the release of Martin Luther King, Jr. to both the Nixon campaign and to President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Both Nixon and Eisenhower could have acted and changed the dynamics of the 1960 election; yet neither did. Nixon believed that he could win several southern states based on impressions he had received during campaign visits and struck a cautious tone on anything he felt might hurt his support among white southerners.218

While Eisenhower and Nixon remained silent, Harris Wofford arrived at a simple plan. He thought it would be wise for Kennedy to call Mrs. King and express his concern over her husband’s situation and extend an offer for help. Wofford sought to pass this idea along to the campaigning Kennedy and reached Sargent Shriver in Chicago on the morning of 25 October 1960. “Shriver enthusiastically agreed” with Wofford’s suggestion.219 Wofford later stated that he “never met anyone in my entire life who could take an idea and make it a reality better than Sarge.”220

220 Mark Shriver, A Good Man, 70.
Shriver also knew that real political risks existed. The Kennedy campaign had been warned by Democratic “southern governors” not to interfere with “southern affairs.” In late October of a close presidential election, a committee would likely kill this proposal by over analysis. Kennedy was at O’Hare Inn waiting to fly to his next campaign stop.\textsuperscript{221} In an action that exemplified Shriver’s leadership style and general approach to bureaucracy, Shriver waited until he was alone with his brother-in-law to make the suggestion that Kennedy call Coretta Scott King.\textsuperscript{222} Shriver implored Kennedy by saying, “Negroes don’t expect everything will change tomorrow no matter who’s elected, but they do want to know whether you care. If you telephone Mrs. King, they will know that you understand and will help. You will reach their hearts and give support to a pregnant woman who is afraid her husband will be killed.”\textsuperscript{223}

Kennedy reacted as Shriver had hoped and decided that he agreed with Wofford’s suggestion without consulting his campaign staff.\textsuperscript{224} Kennedy called Mrs. King from his hotel and sympathized with her plight. He also offered his concern and his help. Mrs. King told Kennedy that she was sure that he could be of help in making sure that Martin Luther King was released safely.\textsuperscript{225} Furthermore, Mrs. King told reporters that Kennedy was concerned and that had reassured her to some degree and told reporters that “Mr. Nixon has been very quiet.”\textsuperscript{226}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[221] White, The Making of the President 1960. 322.
\item[222] American Idealist written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
\item[223] Pietrusza, 1960, 296.
\item[224] White, The Making of the President 1960. 322.
\item[225] American Idealist written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
\item[226] Pietrusza, 1960, 296.
\end{footnotes}
Robert Kennedy’s Double Reactions

You bomb throwers (sic) probably lost the election. … You’ve probably lost three states and … the civil rights section isn’t going to do another damn thing this campaign. Do you know that three Southern governors told us that if Jack Kennedy supported Jimmy Hoffa, Nikita Khrushchev, or Martin Luther King, they would throw their states to Nixon? Do you know that this election may be razor close and you have probably lost it for us?227

Robert F. Kennedy was initially outraged at Wofford and Shriver’s actions. He berated the Civil Rights Section for potentially costing his brother the presidency. Robert Kennedy removed the Civil Rights Section’s ability to independently issue press releases as both a punitive response and over worries about future unexpected actions on the part of the Kennedy campaign.228 Robert Kennedy did eventually calm down and reconsider the situation. He called judge J. Oscar Mitchell and worked toward the reduction of Martin Luther King’s sentence.229 Robert Kennedy and Sargent Shriver’s efforts to ameliorate this situation were buttressed by John F. Kennedy reaching out to the governor of Georgia to use political back channels to reach judge Mitchell and free Martin Luther King, Jr. Harris Wofford and Louis Martin then generated a pamphlet to be distributed in African-American churches and neighborhoods contrasting Nixon’s silence to Kennedy the “candidate with a heart.”230

Coretta Scott King’s Reaction

Harris Wofford heard from Coretta Scott King before he heard back from Sargent Shriver about his attempt to speak to John F. Kennedy before he left Chicago. Mrs. King told Wofford that she was moved by Kennedy’s phone call and concern.231 The Atlanta

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227 Pietrusza, 296. The documentary American Idealist written and directed by Bruce Orenstein offers a list of “Castro, Khrushchev or King” as the trio that John F. Kennedy had been warned not to support.
228 Bryant, The Bystander, 184 and Pietrusza, 1960, 297.
229 Wofford, Of Kennedys and Kings, 26, 27.
230 Pietrusza, 1960, 297, 298.
231 Wofford, Of Kennedys and Kings, 17.
press corps quoted Mrs. King’s sentiments of appreciation toward John F. Kennedy as well as her observation that Richard Nixon had been silent in the matter.  At that time no one could have predicted the impact this phone call would make on the 1960 election, but with the benefit of hindsight it would become clear that the Civil Rights Section had fundamentally changed the 1960 election.

**Political Impact**

John F. Kennedy’s gesture of compassion toward Coretta Scott King and the subsequent release of Martin Luther King, Jr. from jail led to large-scale political repercussions. Ralph Abernathy promised to repay Nixon’s silence with “silence in the voting booth” and said, “I earnestly and sincerely feel that it is time for all of us to take off our Nixon buttons. Senator Kennedy did something great and wonderful…” Martin Luther King, Sr. nearly publicly endorsed John F. Kennedy by making this public statement:

> I had expected to vote against Senator Kennedy because of his religion. But now he can be my President, Catholic or whatever he is. It took courage to call my daughter-in-law at a time like this. He has the moral courage to stand up for what he knows is right. I’ve got all my votes and I’ve got a suitcase and I’m going to take them up there and dump them in his lap. (Sic)

It also took courage from Shriver to both accept Harris Wofford’s proposal and to find a private time to convey it to John F. Kennedy. Had Shriver gone through official lines of campaign decision making, this phone call would have almost certainly been struck down by committee. Kennedy’s call to Mrs. King was also greeted with approval by the black press. For instance, the *Washington Afro-American* ran a front-page piece entitled “King Freed After Senator Kennedy Intervenes.”

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232 Ibid., 20.
233 Ibid., 24.
234 Ibid., 23.
The Civil Rights Section’s ability to win over both the public support of African-American leaders as well as the action of their political infrastructure was key to John F. Kennedy’s 1960 victory. President Eisenhower identified Kennedy’s strong showing among black voters as the reason for Nixon’s defeat. Polling data backs up Eisenhower’s assertion. “IBM suggested Kennedy had achieved a 68 percent share of the black vote, while Gallup concluded it was 70 percent. Frontier magazine estimated the level of support to be an even higher 81.7 percent. In 1956, (Adlai) Stevenson had won a rather dismal 61 percent.”

Kennedy’s victory among African-Americans helped him to carry Texas, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, New Jersey, and Illinois. Kennedy certainly benefited from calling Coretta Scott King, but polling in states such as Pennsylvania suggest that the groundwork laid by his Civil Rights Division had Kennedy continually improving his numbers among African-American prior to his call to Mrs. King. The Civil Rights Section outworked and out maneuvered the Nixon campaign throughout the 1960 election and the strength of their operation crystalized in their persuading of John F. Kennedy’s to call Coretta Scott King. Shriver warning his brother-in-law about the political dangers of bad press from papers such as The Chicago Defender influenced John F. Kennedy launching a robust Civil Rights Section in his campaign. John F. Kennedy placed Shriver in charge of this division, and Kennedy was rewarded electorally by the Civil Rights Section’s cultivation of institutional ties as well as its courage to circumvent campaign structures when necessary.

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236 Ibid., 187.
237 Ibid., 187-190.
Shriver’s Difficulties Navigating the Politics of Race

Sargent Shriver negotiated the complicated politics surrounding racial issues better than most white politicians of his time. That does not mean he did not face difficulties. As stated, the Archdiocese of Chicago had greater success changing the tone and policies of Archdiocesan structures than it had with changing the attitudes found in the pews. Shriver’s political posture was one that was willing to push through tough times, but no one should conclude that Sargent Shriver and Cardinal Stritch “solved” racial issues within the Archdiocese of Chicago or within the Catholic Church in the US.

Shriver’s work in the War on Poverty will receive a full treatment in chapter five, but the difficulties Shriver encountered in trying to promote initiative within the anti-poverty programs while also maintaining congressional support for the War on Poverty were real. In Mississippi, a popular and dynamic group known as The Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM) participated in the fledgling Head Start program launched by Shriver. In 1966, CDGM became a target for powerful segregationist Mississippi Senator John Stennis. Senator Stennis blasted Shriver for allowing government funds to be used to organize protests against government policies. Shriver at that time headed the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). The OEO investigated CDGM and concluded it could not be funded unless it underwent a complete overhaul. This move by Shriver generated criticism of his leadership from civil rights leaders in Mississippi. Ministers such as Rev. James McRee challenged Shriver and enlisted the support of Martin Luther King, Jr. in their efforts. A full-page advertisement was taken out in the New York Times criticizing Shriver’s handling of the situation. Shriver was shouted down in public appearances as well. Shriver pushed back claiming he had not given in to pressures from segregationists.
and that his decision was based on investigations of CDGM’s financial records.\footnote{238} Edgar May recalled that a decision was made that helped ensure the survival of the entire poverty program including Head Start in Mississippi and that a judgment call had been made.\footnote{239} Marian Wright Edelman noted that Shriver was placed in a tough position, but that in politics she and others were going to fight for their interests.\footnote{240}

Shriver took criticism from both Senator Stennis and CDGM. His programs survived, and Shriver is not remembered by history as anything but an advocate of civil rights who fought against prejudice and racism. Still, the normally artful Shriver could not manage political pressures and the bureaucratic powers in the instance of the funding of CDGM without absorbing heavy political ire and a loss of clout. This instance may prove that even the most adept practitioners of institutional imagination are likely to struggle when it comes to addressing the issue of racism in US culture.

Shriver may have continued to work primarily on civil rights issue had John F. Kennedy not won the presidential election of 1960. Shriver’s work in the Peace Corps, the War on Poverty, and the Special Olympics certainly aimed at diminishing prejudice, but the focus of his work after the 1960 election shifted. Mathew Ahmann worked under Shriver at the Chicago Interracial Council and Ahmann’s career may offer clues as to how Shriver might have proceeded had his brother-in-law not become president. Yet, John F. Kennedy did win the 1960 presidential election and he did so in large part due to the Civil Rights Section’s adoption of Shriver’s own talent of rapidly turning ideas into substantive realities. This unique skill would be put to full use in the structuring and launching of the Peace Corps as well as in the creation of the War on Poverty.

\footnote{238} Stossel, \textit{Sarge}, 462-465.  
\footnote{239} \textit{American Idealist} written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.  
\footnote{240} Ibid.
CHAPTER 4
SARGENT SHRIVER AND THE PEACE CORPS

Sargent Shriver is best known for his contributions to the structure, launch, and character of the Peace Corps. Shriver’s work with the Peace Corps best displayed his genius at working within large bureaucracies while also creating new, emerging, and effective institutions. Shriver constructed the Peace Corps in a manner that threaded together many different interests while also imbuing his own moral outlook into the program. Shriver promoted the Peace Corps in such a way that Congress was favorably disposed toward its goals and its fiscal responsibility. Shriver drew upon his entire background including his experience running the Merchandise Mart to develop a Peace Corps that avoided any hint of wasteful spending. Shriver created a Peace Corps that advanced US ideals abroad while also being palatable to Cold War Hawks and Cold War Liberals. Shriver also infused a Catholic tenor into the Peace Corps by way of incorporating many of the Jesuit paleontologist, theologian, and futurist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s ideas into the ethos of the program. This chapter will argue that Shriver helped create a Catholic 1960s in part by giving institutional heft to Catholic ideas he found to be inspiring.

In order to make this case, this chapter will first explore the folklore surrounding the Peace Corps’ inception. This chapter will give a more complete picture of the founding
of John F. Kennedy’s most enduring legacy. Shriver’s management style of aiming for large-scale programs helped to give his brother-in-law this lasting and visible legacy. Shriver was able to rescue the notion of the Peace Corps from critics who were pushing President Kennedy toward the creation of a small pilot program housed within a larger and pre-existing agency of US foreign policy making.

Shriver’s tendency to offer expansive programs reflects a Roman Catholic commitment to participation. Shriver’s actions in Chicago and nationally to confront racism along with his advocacy of a robust independent Peace Corps prefigured a thematic consonance with the Vatican II Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World known as *Gaudium et spes* issued in 1965. Paragraph forty-three of *Gaudium et spes* asserts that the laity of the Roman Catholic Church are entrusted to shape “the earthly city” via secular activities informed by “divine law.” From 1961 forward, Shriver had helped create an institution that would put lay people into secular activities aimed at improving human flourishing in the developing world while also promoting relationships between citizens of many nations in the pursuit of greater peace. Shriver aimed at a deeper level of participation from which both Peace Corps volunteers and the people among whom these volunteers lived and worked. Again Shriver’s actions and words meshed with the sentiments of the forthcoming *Gaudium et spes* while also echoing President Kennedy’s clarion call to service in his inaugural address. Shriver argued he wanted volunteers for the Peace Corps who “did not need air piped in from Arizona” or “a hamburger” in order to function outside of the US. Shriver envisioned a partnership between Peace Corps volunteers and the community in which they lived. *Gaudium et spes* paragraph sixty-five argues that all citizens should contribute according
to their ability to the common good and that this duty was especially clear in areas with developing economies.\footnote{Second Vatican Council, \textit{Gaudium et spes [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World]}, December 7, 1965, sec. 43 and 65, in \textit{Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage}, eds. David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), 192, 210.}

In the case of the Peace Corps, Shriver’s propensity for bold large-scale approaches to public policy placed him in contrast with John F. Kennedy who favored a small experimental Peace Corps. In chapter five, Shriver repeats this trend by seeking large-scale programs to confront poverty while Robert F. Kennedy crafted a regional pilot program for confronting poverty. In addition to arguing that the Peace Corps furthers the case of Sargent Shriver as an innovator of institutions, this chapter will evaluate the Peace Corps in light of ideas found in the field of international relations. This chapter contends that the Peace Corps fits within the broader national strategy of the US in the 1960s to confront the spread of communism. This presentation of the US ideal of the equality of all people combined with an anti-communist edge helped the Peace Corps to become such a popular program with both the youth of the US and the US Congress.

Finally, this chapter will evaluate Shriver’s public appeals to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. while also looking at how Teilhard’s vision is consonant with the Peace Corps’ mission. Shriver’s own words as well as two interviews will be used to argue that Shriver’s inventiveness and construction of a Peace Corps reflected his Roman Catholic sensibilities while also appealing to Cold Warriors and fiscal conservatives. It will further be asserted that Shriver’s vision for the Peace Corps also fit the overall trajectory of US foreign policy. Shriver’s ability to balance all of these interests and ideological commitments demonstrates his ingenuity as a practitioner of institutional imagination.
The Foundation of the Peace Corps

The typical story told about the founding of the Peace Corps is both well known and incomplete. Popular understanding is correct in pointing to an October 14, 1960 speech made by Senator Kennedy at the University of Michigan that inspired students to collect signatures pressing the presidential candidate to endorse the formation of a Peace Corps if elected. However, this story neglects many complex political realities that drove the creation of the Peace Corps. Fellow Democrat, Henry Reuss of Wisconsin introduced legislation to the House of Representatives in 1960 create a “youth corps.” Kennedy’s presidential rival Hubert Humphrey actually used the term “peace corps” and introduced similar legislation to the United States Senate in 1960. Several others claim to have planted the idea for the Peace Corps in the Kennedy campaign via various surrogates. Kennedy campaign aide Harris Wofford enumerates six political events that may have contributed to the formation of the Peace Corps. Most notable among these six events were the reactions of the Michigan students and the legislative efforts of Reuss and Humphrey.

The origins of the Peace Corps extend far beyond naming rights. Any speech made by a presidential candidate during the month of October during the 1960 election was produced in a highly political context. Richard Nixon’s words and deeds impacted the timing of Kennedy’s Peace Corps proposal. Kennedy and Nixon engaged in a presidential debate on October 13, 1960. During the debate, Nixon attacked the

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242 Stanley Meisler, *When the World Calls: The Inside Story of the Peace Corps and Its First Fifty Years* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), 4. A good example of the traditional peace corps story can be found in *American Idealist* written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.

243 Ibid., 5.

244 Wofford, *Of Kennedys and Kings*, 249. Interestingly, John F. Kennedy listed the missionary work of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints as an influence to his promotion of a governmental overseas service.
Democratic Party as being a party prone to steering the United States into wars. Nixon explained that Democratic presidents had led the nation into World War I, World War II and the Korean War. Nixon’s critique fused with criticism Kennedy had received for suggesting an armed overthrow of Fidel Castro in Cuba. Kennedy flew from that debate to Ann Arbor, Michigan and made his famous early morning speech challenging students to spend their time and to use their talents in the developing world cultivating peace.\textsuperscript{245,246} Kennedy hoped to demonstrate a commitment to building peace while rebutting a hard-hitting allegation on the part of his opponent.\textsuperscript{247}

The political benefits of proposing a Peace Corps went beyond refuting the allegations raised by Richard Nixon. The Kennedy campaign worried about Nixon possibly endorsing an idea similar to the Peace Corps in order to appeal to younger voters. One of Nixon’s advisors, New York Senator Jacob Javits had supported the idea of sending one million citizens overseas as an “army of peace” during the 1950’s. Javits had advised Nixon to support a plan for Overseas Service. Kennedy saw the benefit of being first to back such a plan if both candidates were going to pursue a similar strategy. Kennedy’s campaign did not know that Nixon had already rejected the idea.\textsuperscript{248}

There were risks to supporting a proposal to send young people overseas. Criticism of Kennedy’s position on the Peace Corps came from Richard Nixon alleging that the new program would be a means of avoiding military service. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, various journalists and the Daughters of the American Revolution attacked the idea on the grounds that it was childishly idealistic and dangerous. In a close

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{245} Wofford, Of Kennedys and Kings, 247.  
\textsuperscript{246} Meisler, When the World Calls, 4, 5.  
\textsuperscript{247} Wofford, Of Kennedys and Kings, 247.  
\textsuperscript{248} Ibid., 249.}
election, Kennedy may have avoided this risk if he knew of Nixon’s refusal to endorse a similar plan.249

Kennedy’s reaction to the criticism culminated with a major address at the Cow Palace in San Francisco, California on November 2, 1960. Kennedy focused on promoting peace through both disarmament and improving the image of the US overseas.250 Kennedy pledged to the formation of a Peace Corps to improve the impression the US projected in the world. Over 20,000 supporters attended the speech. Kennedy made a point of attacking connections between high-level embassy positions and campaign contributions. He also assaulted the lack of international awareness found among those working for the US in foreign policy positions noting that seventy percent of new Foreign Service officers could only speak English.251

Candidate Kennedy’s commitment to the Peace Corps during the campaign’s final week remained strong. After his endorsement of the Peace Corps in San Francisco, Kennedy campaigned in Toledo, Ohio two days before the election and was met by a caravan of students from the University of Michigan to deliver a petition. His support went beyond these live events as Kennedy repeated his call for the formation of a Peace Corps in his election eve message. His support for the Peace Corps was grounded in political process. The Kennedy campaign saw the issue as politically valuable in terms of generating voter turnout among younger voters.252

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249 Ibid., 243, 249.
251 Meisler, *When the World Calls*, 8, 9.
Shriver Placed in Charge

Kennedy won the 1960 presidential election in a close contest. The Peace Corps proposal was by and large popular and generated a great deal of public interest during the interim between the presidential election and inauguration.\textsuperscript{253} Still, no one knew how to create or run a Peace Corps. Ted Sorenson noted that the Peace Corps was the only new policy plan generated by the Kennedy campaign.\textsuperscript{254} Concerns about how young US citizens would handle living overseas were real. President-elect Kennedy envisioned a “junior US government corps of foreign aid workers, smarter and better trained than their superiors but still taking orders from them.”\textsuperscript{255} A small scale Peace Corps made political sense in terms of reducing risks of embarrassment for the incoming president.\textsuperscript{256} The realities of governing rather than campaigning seemed to move Kennedy in a guarded and politically pragmatic direction. Kennedy trusted MIT professor of economics Max Millikan’s recommendation to create a provisional program of “International Youth Service” placed under the bureaucratic arm of the US foreign aid agency. Kennedy himself said that the program must begin “on a small scale.”\textsuperscript{257}

Kennedy’s selection of his brother-in-law Sargent Shriver to form and head the Peace Corps helped ensure that the Peace Corps would not be a pilot program dominated by an existing branch of the US foreign policy apparatus. Shriver joked that his selection to create and head the Peace Corps gave his brother-in-law the easier task of firing a relative than a political ally if the program failed.\textsuperscript{258} Shriver’s selection made good sense

\textsuperscript{253} Wofford, \textit{Of Kennedys and Kings}, 249, 250.
\textsuperscript{254} Meisler, \textit{When the World Calls}, 10.
\textsuperscript{255} Meisler, \textit{When the World Calls}, 10.
\textsuperscript{256} \textit{American Idealist} written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
\textsuperscript{257} Meisler, \textit{When the World Calls}, 17.
\textsuperscript{258} \textit{American Idealist} written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
even if it gave the impression of a Kennedy Dynasty in Washington, DC. Shriver had first-hand knowledge of creating worthwhile international experiences for young US citizens due to his experience with the Experiment in International Living as both a participant and chaperone. He also had a business background that afforded him administrative experience.\textsuperscript{259}

Shriver’s experience in business and political bravado rejected Millikan’s approach. Shriver saw that seventy percent of the US supported the idea of the Peace Corps and felt strongly that a pilot program would be unsatisfying to the public while squandering the vast interest and support that the proposed program had generated. Shriver did not even invite Millikan to the first Peace Corps task force meeting.\textsuperscript{260} Shriver was unimpressed with Millikan’s plan to place “several hundred young people in the first year or two.” Shriver saw this languid approach as a symptom of why various peoples viewed US foreign policy efforts negatively.\textsuperscript{261}

It is important to note Shriver’s rejection of a timid pilot program of a Peace Corps in the context of his roles revitalizing the Merchandise Mart, in helping to desegregate Chicago’s Catholic schools and hospitals, managing Chicago’s public school system and encouraging John F. Kennedy to call Coretta Scott King. Shriver’s style of management and decision making tended toward embracing big proposals and ideas rather than tentatively building a program. Shriver preferred bold proposals due to his belief that such actions contain enough momentum to overcome bureaucratic lethargy. Rather, Shriver felt timid action would never garner enough public support for a program to

\textsuperscript{259} Wofford, Of Kennedys and Kings, 251.
\textsuperscript{260} Meisler, When the World Calls, 17.
\textsuperscript{261} Wofford, Of Kennedys and Kings, 252.
function properly in the long-term. By selecting Sargent Shriver to lead the Peace Corps, President Kennedy invited his brother-in-law’s optimistic big picture view into the formation of the Peace Corps.

**Imagining the Peace Corps**

Shriver’s rejection of Millikan’s cautious approach led him to champion a proposal entitled “The Towering Task” by Warren Wiggins and William Josephson, two young officials in the International Cooperation Administration, which outlined a vision for the Peace Corps. This report was written with the hope of spurring reforms within US foreign policy bodies. Wiggins and Josephson lamented many of the problems that candidate Kennedy had railed against during his speech at the Cow Palace. Each man hoped to see US foreign policy officials make greater contact with the countries and cultures in which they operated via greater knowledge of languages and greater willingness to engage life outside of embassy walls. They viewed the Peace Corps as an opening for enhancing how foreign policy was done.

Sargent Shriver especially liked an idea of Josephson’s embedded in “The Towering Task” that the Peace Corps could be launched via an executive order. Shriver agreed with Josephson’s belief that getting volunteers into host countries as quickly as possible through an executive order would help the Peace Corps capitalize on public support that might be lost after being put through a slow legislative process of approval. Shriver also liked Wiggins association of the Peace Corps with the Marshall Plan. As an example of Shriver’s preference for large-scale approaches to new programs, it is important to note

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262 Meisler, *When the World Calls*, 17.
263 Ibid. The International Cooperation Administration would become the United States Agency for International Development.
that Shriver distributed copies of “The Towering Task” to his Peace Corps taskforce and endorsed the idea in front of his committee despite having just met Wiggins.\textsuperscript{265} Not surprisingly, Shriver agreed with Josephson and Wiggins’ assertion that the Peace Corps would not succeed unless it was from its outset large enough to both accommodate the enthusiasm for the idea within the US and robust enough to impact the developing world. A pilot program could do neither of these things in its first few years. Josephson and Wiggins’ sales pitch concluded with the idea that a small pilot Peace Corps would be worse than no Peace Corps because it would be likely to fail.\textsuperscript{266} This audacious approach met with Shriver’s enthusiasm because it reflected a tendency that Shriver had for scaling things up that Edgar May described as “vintage Sargent Shriver.”\textsuperscript{267}

Josephson explained that an executive order could allocate twelve million dollars to launch the program. Shriver and his committee hammered out a plan describing how the Peace Corps would work. Josephson found historical justification for launching the Peace Corps in this manner arguing that Franklin Roosevelt launched the Emergency Conservation Corps through an executive order in 1933. Shriver challenged President Kennedy to do something large pointing out that an executive order would allow volunteers to be put into the field in the next nine months. Amazingly, three weeks after Shriver read “The Towering Task” the Peace Corps was created by an executive order.\textsuperscript{268}

\textbf{The Fight for Institutional Independence}

President Kennedy’s more cautious approach to the Peace Corps was ultimately undone both by his brother-in-law and Vice President Lyndon Baines Johnson. Sargent

\textsuperscript{265} Stossel, \textit{Sarge}, 202, 203.
\textsuperscript{266} Meisler, \textit{When the World Calls}, 18, 19.
\textsuperscript{267} \textit{American Idealist} written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
\textsuperscript{268} Stossel, \textit{Sarge}, 203-208. Passim.
Shriver and Bill Moyers were concerned that the Peace Corps would be killed or rendered feeble under the weight of bureaucratic and political pressures. Ultimately, Shriver and Moyers sought to save the Peace Corps from the bureaucracy by seeking out Lyndon Johnson who understood the bureaucracy “better than anyone” in Washington, DC due in large part to his time as Senate Majority Leader prior to becoming Vice President. The Vice President liked both Shriver and the idea of a Peace Corps.

Johnson intervened on behalf of the Peace Corps to keep it independent from the State Department by making his case to President Kennedy. Johnson explained to Kennedy that the Peace Corps would never reach its potential or be a legacy for the President if he did not keep it independent from existing bureaucracies. Johnson told Kennedy that the bureaucracy would make the Peace Corps over “in its own image” unless it was an independent agency. Kennedy relented but also told the supporters of an independent Peace Corps that they would have to get the requisite legislation passed without assistance from the rest of his administration. Arthur M. Schlesinger lauded the successful efforts of keeping the Peace Corps independent of USAID.

Selling the Peace Corps to Congress

Sargent Shriver had to win congressional approval for the Peace Corps without a great deal of formal help from the Kennedy administration. Shriver proved himself to be a genius at working within bureaucracies as he helped to create his own lobbying team made up primarily of Shriver himself and Bill Moyers and a strategy for dealing with Congress that was separate from the president’s own legislative liaisons. Shriver turned idealism into a political asset in both mapping out a broad strategy of courting congress

269 American Idealist written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
as well as in tactical meetings with members of congress. Shriver set out to meet face-to-face with every member of Congress in order to sell his plan. His team worked tirelessly to make this happen. By the end of the lobbying process, Shriver had personally met with every member of congress except for one who had died. Bill Moyers noted that Shriver used idealism to win over votes. Shriver would challenge members of congress by asking if they believed in the youth’s ability to project US ideals abroad. Shriver would answer his own question by stating that the skeptical members of congress would themselves sign up for the Peace Corps if they were themselves younger.\footnote{271}{American Idealist written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.}

**Selling the Peace Corps to Young People**

Promoting the Peace Corps among young US citizens was one of the easier aspects of launching a new government agency. Shriver avoided the double trap of squandering the support of public opinion for the Peace Corps and creating impatience among young people eager to volunteer by adopting Josephson and Wiggins’ proposal for the use of an executive order for a swift launch. President Kennedy would even publicly note that the Peace Corps received more applicants than all other agencies combined when speaking about a project that had taken on a life of its own.\footnote{272}{Ibid.}

**Shriver’s Imaginative Management of the Peace Corps**

Sargent Shriver’s management style would leave an indelible imprint on the Peace Corps. He pushed the Peace Corps’ administrative staff to the limits of exhaustion. Shriver urged hard work and a minimal amount of waste within the Peace Corps. When traveling to visit volunteers, Shriver would sleep on the airplane and would travel as citizens of host countries would rather than insist on luxurious accommodations one
might expect for the brother-in-law of the president. Shriver proudly ran the Peace Corps under budget so that he could return unused funds to congress at the end of a given fiscal year. This frugality along with Shriver’s charisma helped to win supporters of the Peace Corps from once skeptical members of Congress. Shriver even instituted a rule known as the “five year flush” that allowed Peace Corps workers to remain with the program for a maximum of five years. His logic was that such a proposal would help to eliminate entrenched bureaucratic thinking within the Peace Corps while also constantly attracting eager new talent and ideas. By institutionalizing a reliable rate of turn over, Shriver managed to insert a bureaucratic safeguard against bureaucratic stagnation.

The Peace Corps in the Context of NSC 68

In the larger sense the United States and the Soviet Union want to be aligned with these smaller countries in these other areas of the world. So, its partly about winning hearts and minds in the Cold War, but it really was about unleashing this youthful idealism and believing that American know how could actually solve these problems.

– Laura McEnaney

While the Peace Corps was one of John F. Kennedy’s most progressive policy goals and reflected Shriver’s desire for large-scale programs with innovative management systems, the Peace Corps also fit within the broader strategies and structures of post WWII United States’ foreign policy. The fact that the Peace Corps became an independent government agency early in Kennedy’s one thousand days in office makes it even more important in evaluating it as a tool of both foreign policy and an expression of political liberalism. It will be important to demonstrate how the Peace Corps fit within the all-encompassing US strategy of containing communism. Care will be given to

273 Ibid.
274 Stossel, Sarge, 237.
275 Stossel, Sarge, 292, 293.
276 American Idealist written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
exploring the ways in which the Peace Corps also differed from pre-existing foreign policy mechanisms. These differences reflected Sargent Shriver’s sensibilities and made the Peace Corps a unique tool for sharing US idealism.

 Powerful nation-states and empires often pursue a set of overriding goals that scholars of foreign policy have dubbed to be “grand strategies” or “national strategies.” A grand strategy gives a “conceptual map” from which smaller tactical decisions flow. Such a strategy should help a nation-state hold “the international ends they pursue in balance with the means available to attain those ends.” George F. Kennan helped articulate an overarching theme of containment of Soviet expansion that helped to direct US diplomatic and military actions from 1946-1949. Kennan wrote both “the long telegram” and a shortened version of his argument entitled “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” under the pseudonym “X” published in 1947 by the journal Foreign Affairs. Kennan contended that the Soviet Union’s goals were “primarily political in nature” and that the US should pursue a strategy of revitalizing Western Europe and Japan to create a committed effort to stop Soviet desires for expansions over a long period of time. In addition, he thought this alliance should aid countries deemed to be “strategic strong points” in the global economic system in resisting Soviet advances but also not feed Soviet paranoia by surrounding the USSR with military threats. Kennan also sagely warned against the US military engaging in land wars in Asia. His strategy of containment shifted to a more aggressive US Grand Strategy after China became communist in 1949, the Soviet Union acquired nuclear weapons in 1949, and the start of the Korean War in 1950. At the request of President Truman, Paul Nitze crafted National

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Security Council Report 68 or NSC-68. Nitze’s “conceptual map” divided the world into “the free world and the communist world, and (had) only one fault line where the two met.” NSC-68 called for both an increase in “conventional forces while amassing an overkill nuclear arsenal …” and creating strategic alliances “along the perimeter of the Soviet Union.” The fact that the Peace Corps was created and pursued its goals within this grand strategy is quite remarkable.

NSC-68’s strident tone seemed apt as the Kennedy administration’s foreign policy team increased tension with the Soviet Union after the failed Bay of Pigs invasion. After a contentious meeting between Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev in Vienna, Austria failed to resolve questions surrounding Berlin and led to the erection of the Berlin Wall, John F. Kennedy rightly predicted that future conflicts with the US and the USSR would center on Asia, Latin America and Africa. A great deal of the Cold War was contested in the developing world with both the US and USSR seeking new allies among the new nation-states of the post World War II era.

The Cold War race for hegemony in what was known as the third world at times led to military conflict. However, in many cases this Cold War competition was carried out in a race to build relationships with countries in the developing world. Harris Wofford noted that many of these nation-states were annoyed at being pawns in a larger contest between the US and USSR. Shriver and Wofford saw the Peace Corps as an experiment in genuine partnership rather than a manipulative venture. The Peace Corps allowed for many points of contact between idealist US youth and the cultures of nation-states being courted by both the USSR and the US.

\[280\] Harris Wofford, *Of Kennedys and Kings*, 256-259.
Historian Elizabeth A. Cobbs points out that India gained independence in 1947, the same year that Kennan published his Mr. X article in *Foreign Affairs*. Cobbs contends that two concurrent foreign policy stories were unfolding during the Cold War. First, the contest between Eastern and Western countries over economic systems that is traditionally understood as the Cold War. The second story is one that played out between the Northern and Southern hemispheres revolving around decolonization and economic development. Cobbs explains that the US did understand decolonization to be important, but that this North-South dynamic was a foreign policy phenomenon that was constantly being interpreted through the East-West lens of the Cold War.  

The Peace Corps proved to be a particularly effective instrument of US foreign policy precisely because it could cut through a purely Cold War perspective on the world. The Peace Corps owed its existence to Cold War realities and the mentality implicit within NSC-68, but it also represented John F. Kennedy’s anti-colonial tendencies that he had displayed prior to becoming president. Kennedy spoke out against France’s war with Algeria on the floor of the US Senate in 1957. Kennedy sought to forge a better rapport with the newly freed cultures by meeting these “nations on their own terms.”

Shriver lived through the most intense periods of the Cold War. It should not be surprising that Shriver was an anti-communist, and that he saw the Peace Corps as playing a role in the broader conflict. During the 1960 presidential campaign, Shriver was quick to point out that John F. Kennedy, and not Richard Nixon, was the first to launch an investigation into Communists within the government.  

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282 Ibid., 79, 80.
the Peace Corps as both helping people and winning minds in the developing world as an aspect of the Cold War. Shriver did see a broader mission for the Peace Corps as well. By adding his own personality, ideology and experiences from the Experiment in International Living and World War II to the Peace Corps, Sargent Shriver helped to create a unique instrument of US foreign policy. As historian James T. Fisher explained, “The Peace Corps was really an extension of Shriver of his charisma and his worldview.”

The Peace Corps was a great act of US foreign policy precisely because the volunteers were not trained diplomats engaging in dialogue or espionage. US citizens were meeting people in the developing world face-to-face and working on tangible problems and creating visible reminders of this partnership. As early Peace Corps volunteer C. Payne Lucas, Sr. said, “It meant wells. It meant feeder roads. It meant libraries. It meant schools and what not…. Small increments of development, but real things that you could put your hands on.” In its first two years, the Peace Corps had sent over 10,000 volunteers to forty-three countries doing just this sort of visible and tangible work. Early Peace Corps volunteer Roger Landrum stated that Shriver “had an intuitive sense that ordinary young Americans could do great things…. We were for all practical purposes you know in like the diplomatic service.” Historian Laura McEnaney described Shriver as directing Peace Corps volunteers to be “engaged in winning alignments soul to soul, person to person, heart to heart.” Sargent Shriver did not see a

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284 *American Idealist* written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
285 Ibid.
286 Ibid.
287 Ibid.
necessary separation between what he thought of as good public policy and what he saw as a world structure that promoted Catholic ideals.

**Teilhard and Shriver**

Now we mount a wider stage, with new and greater responsibility in a harder world than we have ever known. "But some day," as the philosopher told us, "after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for the second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire."  

Sargent Shriver’s business knowledge and civil rights experience in Chicago during the 1950’s as well as his formative time with The Experiment in International Living impacted his inventive vision and style for the Peace Corps. The realities of the Cold War world helped John F. Kennedy to endorse the idea of the Peace Corps and obviously shaped the mission and role of the new agency. Still, the most enduring aspect of the New Frontier has some ties to the Jesuit paleontologist and mystic Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

Most famously Shriver quoted Teilhard to conclude his speech accepting his nomination for Vice President by the Democratic Party in 1972. This speech is remarkable and deserves a great deal of attention from Roman Catholic scholars as it invokes the Democratic Party as the “party of life” due to its tendency to breakdown social barriers as well as identifying the Democratic Party as the party of Cesar Chavez among others.  

For the purposes of this chapter, it is important to point out that Jesuit theologians are rarely quoted in major national speeches. Shriver making use of Teilhard’s words at such an important event demonstrates that Shriver was influenced by

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289 Ibid.
Teilhard’s ideas in 1972. But Teilhard’s influence on Shriver can also be seen in his promotion of the Peace Corp during the early 1960s.

Public figures who knew Sargent Shriver ranging from Bill Moyers to George Will to Mark Shields to Michael Novak all noted that Sargent Shriver intently read or spoke about Teilhard’s ideas.290 George Will perused Shriver’s books while waiting to interview him during the 1976 presidential primary and was impressed to see how intently Shriver had read both Teilhard and Jacques Maritain’s works as evidenced by heavy underlining and commentary in the margins.291 Novak wrote that Shriver always liked to have discussions by having at least one staff member well-versed in the thought of “Teilhard de Chardin (the Jesuit paleontologist), Dorothy Day, Mother Theresa, Thérèse of Lisieux, Peter Maurin, G. K. Chesterton, Danilo Dolci, the Worker-Priests of France, and Cardinal Suhard.”292

Shriver demonstrated his affinity for Teilhard prior to the launching of the Peace Corps due to being impressed with Robert McNamara reading The Phenomenon of Man by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin when Shriver was leading the talent hunt to put President-elect Kennedy’s cabinet together.293 Harris Wofford noted that in the early days of the Peace Corps that Shriver would have Teilhard’s works sent to various outposts for the reading pleasure of Peace Corps volunteers. Also, Wofford noted that Shriver always read a spiritual thinker as an end of the day routine and that Teilhard was often part of Shriver’s final reading of a given day.294

291 Stossel, Sarge, 628.
292 Michael Novak, Writing from Left to Right, 112.
293 Stossel, Sarge, 183.
294 Harris Wofford, interview by the author.
Shriver and Teilhard had some similarities that help explain Shriver’s affinity for the French Jesuit. Teilhard served as a stretcher-bearer for the French Army during World War I and lived through conflicts in China during his paleontological career while Shriver served in the US Navy in the Pacific during World War II. Shriver attended daily mass and went to great lengths to attend mass even when traveling to remote locations during his time with the Peace Corps. Teilhard composed two of his great essays “The Priest” during World War I and “The Mass on the World” during a Chinese archeological excavation during times in which he could not perform the liturgy. Both men suffered losses within their immediate family and both had professional ambitions thwarted by powers outside of themselves. Yet, those who knew them characterized each as being an extreme optimist. Both men had a faith in the future and a distaste for defeatism.

Teilhard optimistically asserted a developmental picture for humanity in stating, “After having for so long done no more than allow itself to live, Mankind (sic) will one day understand that the time has come to undertake its own development and to mark out its own road.” Teilhard felt humanity’s “own road” must be generated by “creatures of synthesis” that seek loving personal relationships rather than the “impersonal.” Shriver echoed this notion of human directed development by recalling a visit to a Peace Corps volunteer showing him a leper ward in Malaysia set up by the Peace Corps, “That girl worked there to bring peace to the earth. Not the abstract kind of peace that politicians

talk about, but the peace that men feel in their bones when they are loved, or fed, or clothed, or housed.”  

Sargent Shriver was to be a panelist for a conference entitled “Teilhard de Chardin and his Relevance for Today” on 11 April 2005 at the Woodstock Theological Library at Georgetown University. Harris Wofford substituted for Shriver on the panel when a scheduling conflict arose for the former Peace Corps director. Wofford spoke about how Shriver would frequently read Teilhard after putting in long hours during the developmental and early stages of the Peace Corps. Once Shriver had finished reading a given book, he would pass these works along to Wofford. Reading Teilhard helped Wofford’s own conversion to Roman Catholicism. Wofford explained that Teilhard’s message to political leaders was to make haste “to find ways and means to harness the energies of love, to do to the political world what scientists had done to the atom, to crack the atom of civic power…” Wofford also explained that Teilhard’s words about fire stuck with Shriver the most. He linked the Special Olympics’ torches to Teilhard’s images of fire. As noted in chapter one, Shriver quoted Teilhard about rediscovering fire when receiving the Democratic Party’s nomination for Vice President. Wofford recalled the fire with which Shriver delivered this line in 1972. Wofford concluded by reiterating how Teilhard challenged world leaders to be a fire who harnessed “the power of love for the unity of man.”

Teilhard’s interest in international development and government will be a filter used to focus his ideas as they relate to international programs such as the Peace Corps. As Claire E. Wolfteich points out, Teilhard’s approach offered an active spirituality for the

297 Mark K. Shriver, A Good Man, 61.
298 Harris Wofford, interview by the author.
laity who could view their own labor as meaningful due to it being part of the incarnational spirit of Christianity. Wolfteich highlights the value of Teilhard’s thought in being aimed at Christians living outside of cloisters and focusing the laity on the omnipresence of God even in their daily work. Teilhard’s “divinization of activity” resonated with a laity seeking meaning for their daily efforts. Thomas J. King, S.J.

expanded on this notion in explaining that Teilhard urged for the creation of a great secular infrastructure rather than a flight from the secular and political orders.

Given Shriver’s affinity for Teilhard, it is time to turn a closer look to the cosmic vision offered by the late Jesuit. Teilhard’s general theological vision is cosmic in scope and not easy to summarize with any brevity. However, Teilhard’s emphasis on complexification is a good lens for understanding both the Jesuit’s overall vision and how it relates to the international order. Teilhard’s notions of cosmic and biological complexification are similar to and in the background of his ideas on human and societal complexification. Therefore, such a filter will allow for an analysis of how Teilhard impacted Shriver without losing the flavor of Teilhard’s overall thought. Still, a brief explanation of his overall vision is useful.

Teilhard saw the entire cosmos as one grand gesture in which complexity generally increased over vast epochs of time. Teilhard described the movement from undifferentiated energy to the various forms of matter found in the periodic table as “cosmogenesis.” Similarly, he described the movement of the first single celled organisms toward the diversity of life forms found on earth today as “biogenesis.” Teilhard saw creative unification at the heart of this drive toward complexity. Teilhard

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299 Claire E. Wolfteich, *American Catholics Through the Twentieth Century*, 63, 64.
saw some forms of unity as promoting stagnation due to generating sameness. One could call unions of this sort a unity of sameness. Teilhard used the self-replicating of crystals to be an analog for a unity that promoted sameness.\footnote{301 Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, \textit{The Phenomenon of Man}, 68-71, 262, and 276.}

Teilhard saw a different sort of unifying progress and complexification at all levels of the cosmos. He described a community that benefits and unlocks the potential of each individual member, whether an atom, a cellular organelle, an organ or a member of a species, as being a unity that differentiates. This drive toward union that liberates its members fits both Teilhard’s read of incremental progress in the cosmos as well as his firm belief in the corporal picture of the Church as presented by Paul’s letters in the New Testament. For Teilhard, a cell in a multicellular organism behaves much like a single-celled organism, but it is part of community that exhibits traits not found in a single celled organism.\footnote{302 John F. Haught, \textit{God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution} (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 60, 61.} Similarly, Teilhard would assert that a member of a contemporary society of humans behaves biologically like its ancestors, but through increasingly intricate relationships humans now face a different set of opportunities (and challenges).\footnote{303 Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, \textit{The Heart of Matter}, 188, 189.}

The increasing pressure humans exert upon one another from across the globe was of particular interest to Teilhard who saw the emergence of a planetary system of human interconnections as having religious significance. Much like cosmogenesis and biogenesis, Teilhard saw improved modes of communication and transportation as allowing humans to store and exchange information with ever-greater ease. He called this stage of planetary development as “noogenesis” after the Greek word for knowledge.
Teilhard saw the rise of reflective thought and the exchange of information as being distinct from the period of non-reflective thought on earth just as the biosphere is distinct from the geosphere for modern ecologists. Teilhard called this emerging information network as “the noosphere.”

Contemporary Roman Catholic theologian and authority on Teilhard, John F. Haught notes that peace for Teilhard is a concept not solely focused on society, but that peace must be interpreted cosmologically. Haught contends that for Teilhard peace centers on forming and sustaining complexity at the level of human experience. Attaining and maintaining complexity in human relationships requires peace and “the amortization process requires peace between individuals and nations.” Haught also notes that Teilhard’s quote “The age of nations is past. It remains for us now, if we do not wish to perish, to set aside the ancient prejudices and build the earth,” is displayed prominently in the Georgetown University Intercultural Center and dovetails nicely with the enterprise of the Peace Corps.  

The fact that Teilhard’s system offered an ideological framework for interpreting trends in history and human development was a great appeal to Shriver and others in the early 1960s. During the 1950s, a great deal of religious and ideological expression revolved around vague notions of positive thinking, patriotism, and consumerism. Church membership in the US rose from forty-eight percent in 1940 to sixty-nine percent in 1960. A great deal of this increase was seen as reaction against atheistic

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305 Harris Wofford, interview by author.

306 Rorabaugh, Kennedy and the Promise of the Sixties, 165, 166.
communism. Dwight D. Eisenhower was considered to be “unchurched” but joined a Presbyterian Church after being elected president. The words “Under God” were added to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954 and in 1956 “In God We Trust” was placed on US money. Religious expression and consumption of goods were both methods for resisting communism, but neither was particularly inspiring.\footnote{Rorabaugh, \textit{Kennedy and the Promise of the Sixties}, 166.}

Conformity was a major concern for leaders as society moved into the 1960s. Bill Moyers pointed out that the Peace Corps was supposed to be at “the vanguard of the New Frontier.”\footnote{American Idealist written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.} For this to happen, young people would need to move beyond the perceived conformity and lack of mission characteristic of young people in the early 1960s. Despite exciting the US youth, the Peace Corps under Shriver did not escape criticism from Roman Catholic circles. Bishop Edward E. Swanstrom, who was part of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, expressed displeasure at the Peace Corps’ policies forbidding partnership with programs that were totally run by religious groups present within host countries.\footnote{Thomas J. Carty, “John Kennedy, Religion, and Foreign Policy,” \textit{The Review of Faith and International Affairs} 9: no. 4 (2011), 54.}

**Shriver Promoting the Peace Corps on Roman Catholic Campuses**

Shriver gave forty-four speeches between 1961-1963. In that time, he addressed five Catholic universities and made addresses to Chicago’s Knights of Columbus, the National Federation of Catholic College Students, and three speeches in highly Catholic Puerto Rico. Finally, in this time Shriver spoke to four non-Catholic religious organizations. It is significant that over twenty percent of Shriver’s public exhortations occurred in Catholic surroundings at a time when he was also addressing the National
Farmer’s Union, the American Association of Land Grant Colleges and the National Press Club. Shriver was not a product of urban machine politics or an immigrant Catholic experience, but he did give strong attention to Roman Catholic institutions and lay people when promoting the Peace Corps. An overview of these speeches Shriver gave to Roman Catholic audiences demonstrates a familiarity with Roman Catholic thought as well as the promotion of ideals that resonate with Catholic Social Teaching as well as Teilhard’s message.

Shriver’s 1961 commencement address at the University of Notre Dame is noteworthy for its location and timing. In the first year of the Peace Corps, Shriver promoting the fledgling program to the graduating class of an institution whose motto is “God, Country, Notre Dame” is an important comment on the tenor of the Peace Corps. This speech begins by lauding the work of the Peace Corps in Chile. Shriver continues by noting that an unprecedented cooperation between religious and secular US colleges and universities as well as an inter-faith cooperation of Peace Corps volunteers never before seen are making differences in places such as Chile. Shriver challenges his audience with words from Khrushchev claiming that the youth in the US are incapable of hard work. This section of the speech reflects Shriver’s vision of the Peace Corps playing a role in the Cold War. However, in the second half of the speech Shriver states:

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There is a worldwide struggle going on. A revolution. All men are trying to achieve human dignity and a common identity. You and I are part of that struggle, for no matter whether a man be Jew, Buddhist, Moslem, Hindu, Communist or Christian, he has been born of woman like every other man alive, he is living on this small spinning planet like every other man alive; he, needs food, shelter and spiritual comfort like every other man alive; and he will die the death like every other man alive. And if there is a destiny after death, the community of our experience here on this earth indicates that life hereafter will be common to all.  

Shriver’s invocation of human dignity has deep ties to Catholic Social Teaching. Shriver placing human struggles in terms of “living on this small spinning planet” reflects what John F. Haught mentioned about peace for Teilhard needing to be placed in a cosmic scale. Also, Shriver’s noting the cooperation found within the Peace Corps community as well as positing an afterlife “common to all” resonates with Teilhard’s focus on union that differentiates as well as his notion of an omega point. Shriver also mentions to the Notre Dame graduates that great work needs to be done in the developing world and that if the young people from the US do not do this work the Soviet Union will. Shriver cautions his audience that no matter how poorly the Soviet approximation of the work that lies ahead is, the Soviets would win the day if there is a vacuum in the developing world. Therefore, his speech to the University of Notre Dame a few months after John F. Kennedy was sworn in as the first Catholic president of the US contains a sense of mission that frames the work of the Peace Corps in Teilhardian terms and also fit with President Kennedy’s posture toward the Cold War.

On June 7, 1961, three days after his Notre Dame address Shriver delivered a similar commencement address to DePaul University graduates. Shriver hammered home an anti-communist theme by stating, “Communists are not supermen. They are...
average human beings who often perform below average. If we fail, it will be because we did not give the best that is in us.” Shriver continued by sounding the theme of justice found in Catholic Social Teaching by urging the graduates to work toward a world of justice and further the reality of the dream of “The Hebrew prophets …” who sought “… the day when nations would beat their swords into plough-shares.” Shriver invoked Saint Thomas More’s Utopia and also urged the DePaul graduates to “touch the idealism of America” when doing the practical work of promoting justice in the world.314

On 2 June 1962, almost exactly one year after his Notre Dame and DePaul addresses, Shriver delivered a commencement address to the graduates of the Jesuit school Saint Louis University. This address would contain the wisdom of greater experience with the Peace Corps. Shriver trumpeted successes of the early Peace Corps by noting that the program had placed young US citizens in Bangkok, Venezuela, Ethiopia, and Nigeria with future placements to soon be filled in Peru and the Philippines. Shriver echoed the Cold War themes from one year earlier in noting that the US was good at talking to the governments of nation-states in the southern hemisphere, but that communists talked to the people of the Southern Hemisphere. Shriver wanted college students to do more to help the US speak to people across the world rather than to the elites in a given society. Shriver even chastised Jesuit colleges for admitting Latin American students, but not reaching beyond the aristocrats of these highly Catholic nations in their admissions. Shriver lauded a program in Honduras that Saint Louis University was helping to spearhead for the Peace Corps and envisioned this program spreading also to British Honduras (now Belize). Shriver’s speech to Saint Louis graduates echoed Thomas

King’s contention that Teilhard advocated the creation of a vast secular infrastructure being built to promote an ever more interconnected world:

More than 300 Peace Corps men arrived recently in the Philippines. The impact of their arrival was greater than the impact of the 50-megaton bomb exploded by friend Khrushchev. And the fallout promises to be more effective still. This is the first time that a major power has crossed the ocean with books, not guns, brains not bombs, for peace in order to win a war.  

Shriver was educated as a child by the School Sisters of Notre Dame whose foundress Blessed Theresa of Jesus championed the idea of traveling to “go out into the whole world, into the tiniest dwellings…” This idea has a consonance with the Peace Corps’ mission and ethos. Shriver paid homage to another Roman Catholic religious order, the Society of Jesus, in his speech at Saint Louis University as well. He commended the Jesuit tradition of learning the language and culture of an area being evangelized. He noted that the Society of Jesus mandated that a Jesuit know the language of the area in which he was assigned was similar to the ideal to what the Peace Corps was promoting. This is a major statement from the Head of the Peace Corps about the ethos and direction of the Peace Corps regarding the influence of a specific Roman Catholic charism and focus and its relation to a concrete policy priority of the 1960s.

Shriver referenced Puerto Rico’s governor Luis Munoz-Marín in his speech to Saint Louis University, but Shriver spoke in Puerto Rico twice in 1962 as well. On 10 October 1962, Shriver delivered a speech entitled “Go Up-Country to Find the Hidden Heart” in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Shriver linked the Peace Corps to the US ideal of fighting against

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317 Robert Sargent Shriver, Jr., “Saint Louis University Commencement Speech.”
colonial rule at its foundation. Shriver argued that the US has not always upheld this ideal, but that the Peace Corps was a way for the US to reassert this founding ideal.\textsuperscript{318} This speech makes a great deal of strategic sense in terms of its location and its theme. Portions of the Cold War were largely contested in the developing world that had cast off colonial rule. Shriver envisioned the Peace Corps as making personal connections in nation-states with underdeveloped economies that the Soviet Union would seek to court. This Cold War rhetoric also included a hint of the cosmic as Shriver quoted John Glenn on the exploration of space and its requirement of deeper levels of international cooperation.\textsuperscript{319} This echoes Shriver’s Cold War and cosmic themes from his 1961 address to Notre Dame graduates.

Shriver intensified this cosmic theme the following day in his next speech in Puerto Rico. On 11 October 1962, Shriver began his speech by invoking John Glenn once again in stating that humans had an infinite amount to learn from both space and each other and that peaceful international cooperation offered these dual opportunities to humanity. Shriver sounded Teilhardian tones in stating:

\begin{quote}
As nations probe the infinite expanse of the universe, they must not neglect those expanses on earth which separate the strong from the weak and the rich from the poor. As this conference (Human Skills in the Decade of Development) has made clear, the process of developing nations is the process of developing men -- a process in which we "have an infinite amount to learn from nature and from each other."\textsuperscript{320}
\end{quote}

Shriver noted that the Peace Corps had a role to play in pursuing this vision. He stated that in less than two years the Peace Corps had placed nearly 4,000 volunteers in forty


\textsuperscript{319} Ibid.

nation-states. Shriver did not simply trumpet impressive numbers. He argued that the Peace Corps created a type of cooperation that complemented Teilhard’s notion of a unity that differentiates. Shriver argued that Peace Corps volunteers were part of a “two-way street” and not just exporting the ideals of the US. Peace Corps volunteers would serve the local people in pursuing locally generated goals. He saw the Peace Corps as a “mutual enterprise – a project capable of enlisting support all around the world.” He further asserted, “the world is coming alive.”\(^{321}\) These words echo Teilhard’s notions of a world mission to harness the “energies of love” and a world in which the “psychic temperature (the intensity of the noosphere) is rising.”\(^{322}\)

In 1963, Shriver made one more address to a Catholic University prior to John F. Kennedy’s assassination and Shriver’s involvement in the War on Poverty. By looking at this address in relation to his 1961 and 1962 addresses one can gain a longitudinal sense of his thought on the nature of the Peace Corps before his public policy mission widened to include domestic poverty. Shriver addressed Georgetown University, but unlike his speeches to Notre Dame, DePaul and Saint Louis University this was not a commencement address. Georgetown University’s role in training many members of the Foreign Service Corps makes this speech’s location particularly interesting. Shriver’s speech focused on the educational benefits of the Peace Corps. Shriver echoed his anti-colonial theme from Puerto Rico by stating that the Peace Corps provided more teachers to Sierra Leone than the British did when Sierra Leone was a British colony. Shriver added to his anti-colonial critique by noting that beyond the numeric differences Peace Corps volunteers had been invited to Sierra Leone rather than being there through

\(^{321}\) Ibid.  
“conquest.” Shriver also explained that many Peace Corps volunteers were teaching in a language they were simultaneously learning. He noted that over 40 US colleges had scholarship programs set up for returning Peace Corps volunteers. He concluded by noting that Peace Corp volunteers would return to the US and be resources for teaching languages and geography “in a much more interesting way than it has ever been taught in the American school system.”

This speech’s focus on education limits some of Shriver’s global vision for the Peace Corps from coming through, but his comments on the US school system benefitting from something entirely new as well as his notions that Peace Corps volunteers were doing more through invitation and cooperation than colonial powers had done through coercion meshed well with President Kennedy’s New Frontier and Teilhard’s idea of a world ever being born anew.

Conclusion

Shriver’s own words and the observations of others close to the forging of the Peace Corps speak to the reality that the Peace Corps from its inception, ambitious large-scale and ethos all reflected the personality and vision of Sargent Shriver. The launching, emerging structure and vision for the Peace Corps managed to walk a tightrope that balanced multiple seemingly contradictory trajectories and interests. The Peace Corps fit within the realism of US Cold War interests in a manner that reflected John F. Kennedy’s Cold War liberalism. It promoted a lively idealism that captured the interest of young people in the US. The Peace Corps’ structure and funding reflected a bold posture in making use of an executive order to allow for a quick launch that helped keep the nation’s goodwill while also employing a frugal pragmatic approach that made the

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program a winner with congress. The Peace Corps’ size and ethos of humble, frugal, and widespread service reflected Shriver’s own experiences with the Experiment in International Living. Shriver’s Peace Corps can be viewed as an embodiment of the ethos of the School Sisters of Notre Dame’s call for global humility and outreach. Shriver’s own experiences of the horrors of war led him to, like Teilhard, seek constructive personal approaches for promoting peace. Shriver was able to forge a program that meshed with his theological commitments and his personal desire to be a peacemaker. Shriver was also able to craft the Peace Corps in such a way that it was publicly embraced and fit within broader Cold War foreign policy postures. This accomplishment further demonstrated Shriver’s institutional imagination.
CHAPTER 5
SARGENT SHRIVER AND THE WAR ON POVERTY

Sargent Shriver’s work as the architect of President Johnson’s War on Poverty was in many ways more prolific in scope than the work he undertook in launching and administering the Peace Corps. However, unlike his time as the head of the Peace Corps or his later work with Special Olympics, Shriver’s time as the head of the War on Poverty was mired both by outside consternation and by difficulties within the Johnson administration. Shriver was also the target of criticism bordering at times on condemnation from both the right and the left of the US political spectrum.

These difficulties become quite important for evaluating Shriver because he projected such optimism and idealism as a public figure. Shriver attempted to craft a poverty policy that embodied his optimistic political sensibilities. Therefore, consistencies are identifiable between Shriver’s poverty efforts and his earlier work on racial issues and the Peace Corps. However, Shriver was forced also to fight and adapt in ways that were unnecessary during his earlier successes. This crucible helped produce an invention from Shriver that this dissertation argues is an untried third path for political liberalism. This third path of Shriver’s is comprised of a set of programs that demonstrated Shriver’s institutional imagination as contrasted with both what would become the economic policies of the 1980s and the new left’s radical critique of US from
a position outside the center of policy making. Shriver’s institutional imagination reflects a Roman Catholic perspective because the Church itself often generated new institutions when faced with shifts in historical circumstances.

As evidence of Shriver’s program representing an untried third way, one should consider that Shriver’s approach to poverty was attacked from the right and the left at a time that the New Deal coalition began to fracture. Shriver expected the War on Poverty to alienate political conservatives in the 1960s. He expressed as much to President Johnson when the position was offered to him.324 However, Shriver and the War on Poverty also absorbed attacks from the emerging New Left that had grown suspicious of bureaucratic programs perceived as being managed by political cronies. Finally, the bellicose nature of Lyndon Johnson’s foreign policy created a deepening rift between Great Society liberalism and the emerging new skeptical brand of liberalism. These attacks from the emerging New Left suggest that Shriver’s approach was not only different from the conservative politics of his time, but that Shriver’s approach to the social, political, and economic dimensions of poverty represented a commitment to institutions and public policies that often drew the ire of the New Left.325 Shriver’s policies also earned some paranoia from President Johnson so Shriver’s work cannot simply be seen as executing Johnson’s wishes. The existence of an untried third way raises questions about what could have potentially mended the growing fissures within his party and even possibly prevented some of the national polarization that took place after 1968. Much of this polarization saw working class Roman Catholics drift away from the Democratic Party based on cultural concerns. Therefore, Shriver’s political

325 Mackenzie, *The Liberal Hour and the Politics of Change in the 1960s*, 3.
efforts during the 1970s will also be evaluated in light of fault lines that pulled the Democratic Party apart by 1980. This dissertation argues that Shriver’s War on Poverty posture and proposals represented an embodiment of institutional imagination that was abandoned by an emerging New Left ideology that rejected what it perceived as compromises necessitated by working within the US bureaucracy.

Emerging factions within political liberalism in the late 1960s and 1970s staked out positions as prophetic voices at the edges of US society. Lyndon Johnson’s Secretary of State George Ball’s warnings about student protests of Vietnam were dismissed by President Johnson who felt such groups “would raise a lot of hell but can’t do real damage.” Johnson instead worried about the potential harm conservatives would do “if they ever get the idea that I am selling out Vietnam, they’ll do horrible things to the country.”326 From Minnesota Senator Eugene McCarthy’s insurgent campaign, to President Johnson’s decision to not seek reelection, to New York Senator Robert F. Kennedy’s movement, to the Chicago riots during the Democratic National Convention, the events of 1968 would consistently attest to how badly President Johnson underestimated the potential damage a rift with the left would cause.327

However, given that the Johnson Administration produced legislation that brought about the creation of Medicare, Medicaid, Voting Rights for minorities, increased Civil Rights, changes to the US immigration system, and a multitude of anti-poverty initiatives that made up the skeletal framework of a War on Poverty, it is right to ask what costs political liberalism incurred in increasing its cynicism toward statist domestic policies. President Johnson’s Vietnam escalation bears much of the blame for the loss of faith in

326 Ibid., 308.
327 Baer, Reinventing Democrats, 20, 21.
institutional innovation. The racist positions and bellicose posture toward Vietnam held by elected southern Democrats such as Mississippi Senator C. Stennis also deserve a great deal of blame for alienating an emerging set of voices concerned with realizing the dreams of civil rights and economic advancement within political liberalism.

This makes Shriver all the more important because he opposed notions of draining funds from anti-poverty programs to fund an ever more indefensible war in Vietnam. Shriver’s stances while heading the War on Poverty, during his time as Ambassador to France, and his plans to embrace the protestors in Chicago during the 1968 Democratic Convention if nominated for Vice President in 1968 all point toward Shriver being an institutionally savvy operator with the intent of forging a different path forward for the liberals of his day. Furthermore, as a committed Roman Catholic, Shriver represented a belief system that proclaimed a positive role for government. Shriver’s third way may have had more resonance with working class Democrats, many of whom were also Roman Catholic, than what the New Left’s shift toward a more secular posture that included cynicism about government programs. Also, the Roman Catholic penchant for generating new programs to attempt to handle new circumstances may have resonated within Roman Catholic voters of the late 1960s. Shriver’s ability to generate new programs would have met a more skeptical audience among political liberals, but perhaps his record of efficiency with the Peace Corps as well as his innovations such as the five-year flush could have mended a growing rift among political liberals in the late 1960s and 1970s.

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328 Stossel, Sarge, 528-533, 536.
329 Mackenzie, The Liberal Hour, 3, Baer, Reinventing Democrats, 20, 21, and Novak, Writing from Left to Right, 114 all make this point.
In order to evaluate this thesis it will be important to delve into Shriver’s work on poverty from multiple political and theological lenses. Shriver’s work in poverty will first be explored and accounted for in terms of the translation of the idea of a War on Poverty into concrete proposals and programs. Secondly, Shriver’s proposals and actions will be looked at through the lens of key tenets of Catholic Social Teaching such as solidarity, subsidiarity, and the preferential option for the poor. Shriver’s public statements on poverty will be evaluated in light of these Catholic principles to establish that, like with the Peace Corps, a Catholic sensibility was present in Shriver’s understanding of poverty. Shriver’s work will also be contrasted with the work of his brother-in-law Robert F. Kennedy’s work on poverty in New York City. Each man’s approach represented a crystalized posture toward poverty from serious Roman Catholic public figures, but their differences help elucidate both Shriver and Robert Kennedy’s commitment to fighting poverty with a Catholic accent. To further make the case that the War on Poverty had a Catholic accent, aspects of the War on Poverty program will be looked at through the ideas of civil society presented by French Catholic thinker Alexis de Tocqueville. War on Poverty programs and Shriver’s words will be compared to the themes presented by Pope John XXIII’s encyclical *Populorum progressio*. Finally, the War on Poverty will be looked at in light of the bureaucratic history of the Roman Catholic Church that has witnessed the creation of religious orders and lay sodalities in the wake of historical realities as varied as the fall of the Roman Empire to the large population of immigrants in the US requiring education.

Looking at Shriver’s work through all of these lenses will clarify Shriver’s position as a third path between Lyndon Johnson’s bellicose escalation of the Vietnam conflict
and the disaffected outsiders who protested the 1968 Democratic Convention. Shriver’s work also represented a third way between a more radical left and an emerging conservative coalition that would come to power by the 1980s. Shriver was able to stake out a third path by coherently advocating for peace, a central aspect of his faith, while also having a record of institutional innovation that could inspire confidence in the future efficacy of government agencies and governmental actions.

**Shriver’s Background in Poverty**

Sargent Shriver’s work at the Peace Corps gave him a great deal of familiarity with global poverty as well as a working knowledge of creating relationships in impoverished communities that promoted empowering economic development. Prior to his work with the Peace Corps, Shriver’s childhood experience working with the poor in Baltimore and New York City with his father made poverty an issue close to Shriver’s heart. His father’s financial and human losses during the Great Depression forged Shriver’s view that economic hardships could stifle a person.\(^{330}\) Sargent Shriver also had a formative experience working on issues related to poverty with his future wife Eunice Kennedy. Eunice Kennedy took on a project focusing on reducing crime among young people that attracted the attention of the Justice Department in 1946. Joseph Kennedy told Shriver to go to DC to work with his daughter in a move to assuage fears that the Kennedy patriarch had about his daughter working alone in Washington, DC. In an odd dynamic, Joseph Kennedy paid Shriver to work for Eunice Kennedy all while Shriver also pursued a romantic relationship with Eunice. Shriver and Eunice Kennedy formed a good partnership in their common work even if they did not fall in love at this time. Eunice Kennedy and Shriver put together a program for combating juvenile delinquency that

\(^{330}\) *American Idealist* written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
sought to increase cooperation among local agencies while avoiding bureaucratic stagnation. This experience in particular prefigured Shriver’s approach to Johnson’s War on Poverty.\textsuperscript{331} Shriver’s experiences doing community service with his father, watching his father and mother struggle through the Great Depression, his work with Eunice Kennedy on Juvenile delinquency, and his familiarity with global poverty through his work with the Peace Corps prepared Shriver for an opportunity he neither sought nor expected.

**Lyndon Johnson’s Domestic Agenda**

Upon taking office, President Johnson sought to implement much of President Kennedy’s largely stagnant legislative agenda for multiple reasons. First, Johnson felt that “continuity” was important for reassuring a stunned nation. Second, Johnson, saw many of Kennedy’s not yet authorized proposals as being centrally important for improving society.\textsuperscript{332} Third, Johnson could shape Kennedy’s legacy as his own. Johnson stated that Kennedy’s goals were not entirely clear, but that it was his job to recast Kennedy clearly and create “a martyr’s cause.”\textsuperscript{333} Johnson noted that in promoting and passing his own vision of Kennedy’s agenda that “Kennedy would live on forever and so would I.”\textsuperscript{334} In essence, by emphasizing continuity with President Kennedy’s administration, Lyndon Johnson was able to increase his already substantial abilities to drive legislation through Congress. Johnson’s poverty program fit the pattern of both invoking continuity with President Kennedy while also redefining President Kennedy’s proposals.

\textsuperscript{331} Stossel, Sarge, 98-102. Passim.
\textsuperscript{333} Schulman, Lyndon B. Johnson and American Liberalism, 70.
\textsuperscript{334} Dallek, Lyndon B. Johnson: Portrait of a President, 151.
President Kennedy had become more interested in confronting poverty after the 1960 Democratic primary in West Virginia. In 1962, Kennedy assigned his top economic advisor Walter Heller to write an anti-poverty bill. Heller initially devised a pilot program for confronting poverty. After Kennedy’s assassination, Heller explained the anti-poverty program to Johnson who supported the program and enthusiastically explained, “That’s my kind of program.” Johnson sought a sweeping anti-poverty measure that would go well further than a pilot program.\textsuperscript{335} President Johnson took some small measures to address poverty in December 1963. He helped the stagnating Vocational Education Act to pass and won changes to the Man-Power Development and Training Act.\textsuperscript{336} These legislative victories foreshadowed how highly Johnson had prioritized fighting poverty.

That combating poverty would become the domestic focus for Johnson’s presidency was not surprising. Johnson had spent time as a teacher in rural Texas. He struggled to pay for his own education as a teacher but would go onto encounter far deeper poverty face-to-face. In 1928, Johnson became a teacher in the largely Mexican-American town of Cotulla, Texas. Johnson was appalled at the treatment of the local citizens. As a teacher, Johnson pushed his students and tried to combat the sense of despair that engulfed many of their lives by promoting the idea that each student was important and that each student had a future.\textsuperscript{337} Johnson was a highly driven and active teacher despite being only twenty years old and not yet having completed his training as a teacher. Due to his voracious work ethic, Johnson became principal at Welhausen Ward Elementary School in Cotulla. He purchased playground equipment for the school and insisted that

\textsuperscript{335} Schulman, \textit{Lyndon B. Johnson and American Liberalism}, 71.
\textsuperscript{337} Dallek, \textit{Lyndon B. Johnson: Portrait of a President}, 10, 11, and 15-17. Passim.
his students learn and speak English as a tool for escaping poverty. Johnson was, however, haunted by the dismissiveness he found in the white community of Cotulla as well as “what poverty and hatred can do when you see its scars on the face of a young child.”

Johnson’s later experiences supporting the New Deal inspired him with the notion that his presidency could be characterized by completing the New Deal by extending the benefits of the general US lifestyle to all economic classes.

Johnson declared an “unconditional war on poverty” in his first State of the Union address on January 8, 1964. Johnson emphatically told congress, “Our aim is not only to relieve the symptoms of poverty, but to cure it and above all to prevent it.” This declaration of war on poverty did not arrive with a specific legislative program. Johnson and Heller had different visions on how to fight poverty. Heller favored a program of that gave economically disadvantaged communities control over federal funds and anti-poverty programs. Johnson sought to revive the spirit of New Deal programs that enlisted impoverished young people in rural and urban areas in public works. Johnson also felt that the war on poverty was a good investment for the US. He argued that spending money on the unemployed in the present would save taxpayers money by reducing future welfare expenditures. Johnson wanted to structure and support legislation in a manner that would help voters see the program as a “hand up” rather than a “hand out.” The final legislative program would reflect both Heller and Johnson’s trajectories of thought. However, the program would also bear the likeness of Sargent Shriver, the man Johnson selected to command his War on Poverty.

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338 Schulman, Lyndon B. Johnson and American Liberalism, 9.  
339 Ibid., 71.  
341 Ibid., 147.  
342 Ibid., 152, 153.
Drafting Sarge

Johnson decided to tap Sargent Shriver to lead his poverty program for multiple reasons. First and foremost, Johnson liked Shriver as reflected by his intervention on behalf of the Peace Corps early in Kennedy’s presidency. Once Johnson was president he felt that he could harness Shriver’s talents and wanted to keep Shriver’s services after the transition of power. Johnson also considered Shriver for the vice presidency as he contemplated the 1964 election. Pressure from the Kennedy family scuttled any thought of Shriver being on the 1964 Democratic ticket as many Kennedys did not particularly like Johnson and also sought to keep Robert Kennedy as next in line for the presidency. Still, Johnson saw a use for Shriver in creating the anti-poverty program. Bill Moyers recounted that Johnson saw “Sarge as a national comer” and as an “asset.” Moyers went on to say that Johnson saw Shriver as, “the perfect match between what Shriver had done on the Hill for the Peace Corps and what he could do for the War on Poverty.”

In addition to liking Shriver, Johnson knew that Shriver could push back against skeptical cabinet members and help to inspire public action against poverty. Shriver and Johnson also “shared an evangelical enthusiasm for conquering seemingly insoluble problems.” Johnson and Shriver also shared a disdain for bureaucratic paralysis. Johnson always wanted to put new ideas into new hands. Johnson felt a great lesson from the New Deal was to situate new programs within their own new bureaucratic organization in order to foster creativity rather than stagnation. Johnson had seen Shriver succeed in part by placing the Peace Corps in its own home.

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343 American Idealist written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
344 Dallek, Lyndon B. Johnson Portrait of a President, 153.
Shriver demonstrated his own brand of institutional imagination that blended well with Johnson’s views that new programs needed to be cut free from existing bureaucratic structures. Shriver avoided a small pilot Peace Corps program due to believing that unless a program was at a certain scale it would have negligible impacts. Shriver also invented the idea of the “five year flush” in an attempt to prevent the Peace Corps from becoming beholden to methods from the past while also always inviting new. He would carry this thinking into crafting War on Poverty programs. Shriver’s support for large-scale new programs differed from the approach of his brother-in-law Senator Robert F. Kennedy. Shriver’s approach to bureaucracy also included the inventive step assigning two teams to tackle the same problem in order to generate dynamic competition within a government setting.

Johnson aggressively enlisted Shriver in his amorphous anti-poverty program by telling a reluctant Shriver, “I am going to make it clear that you’re Mr. Poverty, at home and abroad, if you want to be. … The Sunday papers are going to say that you’re Mr. Poverty, unless you’ve got real compelling reasons, which I haven’t heard.” Johnson empowered Shriver by making him the administrator of all poverty programs contained within the forthcoming legislation. Johnson also made Shriver his representative to Congress on poverty issues and had Shriver attend all cabinet meetings. These broad powers lacked a specific bill or set of bills. Shriver was tasked with creating Johnson’s program.

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346 *American Idealist* written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
348 Beschloss, *Taking Charge*, 204.
A competing vision for the bill was offered to President Johnson from Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz who proposed a three to five billion dollar jobs bill funded by cigarette taxes. Johnson stuck with Shriver’s bill because he viewed Wirtz’ program as being simultaneously too expensive, alienating to senators from tobacco producing states, and unappealing to labor unions. Johnson was convinced of the need for the poverty bill to be something that would save taxpayer money, and Wirtz’ approach was a non-starter for Johnson. The president did not want his program to be bogged down by internal debates so Johnson threw his support fully behind Shriver’s taskforce.

Drafting the Bill

Shriver ordered research in order to get a handle on the width and depth of poverty within US society. In 1964, thirty million US citizens lived in poverty and half were children. While poverty was a priority for President Johnson, Shriver was tasked with crafting a plan to confront poverty in the US. Shriver also drew information from experts on poverty as well as from people who worked among the poor with hopes that any legislation would be crafted for maximum effect. Shriver and his team produced their anti-poverty bill sixteen weeks later.

The rapid pace of composing the poverty bill does not imply that crafting this bill was a smooth process. Shriver’s task force faced the problem of a paucity of resources dealing with the theoretical nature of poverty and the lived reality of poverty within the US. Shriver, in a move that reflected his personal style, made the decision to listen to anyone who dealt with poverty issues, but this added to the dizzying environment in which the anti-poverty bill was crafted. Michael Harrington, the author of The Other 350

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350 Dallek, Flawed Giant, 79. Passim.
351 Ibid., 74, 75.
352 American Idealist written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
America: Poverty in the United States, was considered a national voice on poverty, but he was skeptical of Johnson’s project. Shriver met with his task force, and Michael Harrington expressed doubts about the size and scope of funds this program would have access to. Harrington felt a much larger budgetary commitment was needed in order to confront poverty in a meaningful manner, as the scope of the problem seemed larger to Harrington than what President Johnson had considered. Shriver shot back, “I don’t know about you Mr. Harrington, but this will be my first experience spending a billion dollars, and I am quite excited about it.”

Elements of Shriver’s poverty task force urged the creation of a Community Action program in which local citizens in impoverished communities could help design and implement programs directed at their own specific needs. Shriver and Johnson both had doubts about the effectiveness of Community Action and its ability to be approved by Congress. Segregationist governors may have objected to programs that would organize minorities within their states, but Shriver figured that governors were typically slow to reject federal dollars and therefore found a way around some degree of racially motivated rejections of Community Action. Shriver at the advice of his team put a provision into the legislation that allowed for Governors to have the ability to reject funds from Office of Economic Opportunity. This move gave a nod to states’ rights proponents but also dared governors to reject funds coming into their state. Such a proposition creatively avoided a host of troubles. Community Action would provide funds directly

353 Stossel, Sarge, 360.
355 Ibid., 154, 155.
356 Stossel, Sarge, 382, 383.
to local agencies and programs with the hope of reimagining impoverished neighborhoods.357

The Structure of the Anti-Poverty Bill

The anti-poverty bill attempted to engage the war on poverty from a myriad of fronts. First, the bill confronted immediate poverty by promoting job programs and job training that would help citizens, especially young people, acquire wages. The skills learned through these jobs and job-training programs would also provide possible paths to future employment. Second, the bill sought to create social bridges that would allow impoverished communities and individuals to engage the broader society more frequently and more fruitfully. Shriver was convinced from his experience running the Peace Corps that involving recipients of aid in structuring aid programs was of a paramount importance for confronting poverty. The failure to do so would lead to resentment from any community that already felt marginalized.358 Hence, the Community Action program attempted to provide federal funds to help individual impoverished communities create, manage, and sustain programs to confront their community’s specific needs. Third, the poverty bill sought to ease access to loans for both farmers and entrepreneurs. Finally, the poverty bill built upon the success of the Peace Corps by proposing a domestic version of the program known as Volunteers in Service to America or VISTA.359 Therefore, the battle plan of the War on Poverty consisted of the immediate injection of jobs into impoverished areas, the creation of community-based programs for meeting community needs, increasing the availability of capital in urban and rural regions, and

357 Donovan, 35.
359 Dallek, Flawed Giant, 79.
sending volunteers into the poorest regions of the US to build community and ease local hardships. In theory, this program would engage immediate needs while constructing the relationships and structures necessary for breaking cyclical poverty.

Title I was aimed at stimulating the economy in impoverished areas. It called for the creation of Job Corps, Neighborhood Youth Corps and a work-study program. Job Corps included two different models for the program. A rural Job Corps was to be created modeled after Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Civilian Conservation Corps. The urban Job Corps was made up of inner-city boarding schools in which students would receive an education and have basic material and health needs met. Neighborhood Youth Corps and Work Study programs were designed to help economically disadvantaged students find work and have an income while developing job skills and furthering their education.360

Title I was largely a holdover from John F. Kennedy’s proposed “youth bill.”361

Title II of the anti-poverty bill created Community Action. This would be the most nebulous portion of the bill and become that most controversial aspect of the war on poverty. Community Action was set up to create avenues within which the poor could find greater participation within society. The bill included language calling for “maximum feasible participation” of the poor in the leadership and administration of Community Action programs. Section 202 (a) (3) contained the “maximum feasible participation” clause but lacked any guidelines for determining what that actual level of participation should be.362 Community Action was a large umbrella under which local programs could be created to address local needs ranging from “housing, health care,

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360 Stossel, Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver, 370. Passim.
362 Ibid., 40. Also see Daniel P. Moynihan, Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty (New York: The Free Press, 1970) for an understanding of how the vague nature of “maximum feasible participation” impacted the War on Poverty.
education, job training, child care, juvenile delinquency, and ‘other fields.’”

An aspect of Community Action that many members of Congress likely misunderstood was that federal funds from Community Action could be used to challenge existing local governmental structures deemed to be aspects of structural poverty.\(^{364}\)

The remaining four portions of the poverty bill were more straightforward. Title III provided loans and grants to farmers seeking to upgrade farming equipment. The original hope of Title III was to give grants to farmers, but senators from rural states modified the Economic Opportunity Act to offering loans rather than grants.\(^{365}\) Title IV made a set of loans available to small-businesses. Title V offered job training to unemployed people who had families. Title VI called for the formation of VISTA. The bill sought to establish a new government agency known as the Office of Economic Opportunity or OEO to administer these new programs. In a similar situation to the creation of the Peace Corps, Shriver sought to keep these programs independent from existing agencies. Shriver largely won the battle for who would administer the War on Poverty as OEO was granted control over VISTA, Job Corps and Community Action.\(^{366}\) These new bureaucratic homes for Economic Opportunity Act programs matched Shriver and Johnson’s style while emulating Franklin Roosevelt’s example.

**Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society**

On March 15, 1964, the day before Johnson sent the Economic Opportunity Act to Congress, he was asked if he had a slogan akin to the New Deal or Fair Deal. Johnson answered coyly by insisting he was too busy to be working on slogans, but he also

\(^{365}\) Ibid., 36.
described himself as a “prudent progressive” and said the US would want a “better deal.”

These two tags were terms Johnson was considering as descriptions of his presidency.  

Johnson hoped for a tag that would capture his ability to achieve public policy successes. He also wished to have a slogan that reached beyond New Deal liberalism as Johnson saw his presidency as an opportunity to transform society and for the government to start “ministering to the social, spiritual, and aesthetic needs of the nation, as well as to its diplomatic and spiritual needs.”

Johnson’s advisors thought about what could best capture the mood he sought. Princeton University historian Eric Goldman thought the slogan should capture the United States shifting its focus from being “generally affluent” to promoting a higher quality of life. Goldman proposed “The Good Society” based on the title of a 1937 book written by Walter Lippmann. Richard Goodwin preferred the term “Great Society” and Johnson eventually settled on the term.

Johnson laid out his vision for the Great Society on May 22, 1964 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Johnson called for the United States to not simply seek “… a rich society and a powerful society…” but “… the Great Society.” Johnson called for a renewal of both urban and rural communities. Johnson wished to extend the benefits of education to fifty-four million US citizens who had “not finished high school.” Johnson called for racial justice, called for education to increase not simply economic opportunities but to increase the human “capacity for creation.” Johnson wanted the Great Society to lift “the crushing weight of poverty.” Johnson even asked if his audience and the country had the capacity to build a society with “… a richer life of mind and spirit?”

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367 Dallek, *Flawed Giant*, 80.
368 Schulman, *Lyndon B. Johnson and American Liberalism*, 81, 84.
369 Dallek, *Flawed Giant*, 81.
The Difficulties of Community Action and “Maximum Feasible Participation”

Johnson launched the Great Society with high ideals and a hope for completing the agendas of his progressive predecessors. The War on Poverty was a major component of what Johnson envisioned for his Great Society. There were internal issues that impacted the translation of rhetoric into public policy. The Vietnam War had a major role to play in determining the Great Society’s fate. Domestically, Community Action and the push for “maximum feasible participation” for local leadership of Community Action programs were lightning rods for criticism and among the larger areas of difficulty for the War on Poverty. Shriver and Johnson had both expressed doubts about the logic of Community Action. Community Action had the goal of creating civil society within impoverished regions. Shriver saw problems with the program. He felt that Community Action would be too slow to impact poverty to be a political winner for Johnson. Shriver also thought Community Action could succeed in urban areas, but that it would be ineffective against rural poverty. Shriver sought a broader program that included programs promoting employment. Still, Shriver was committed to the idea of fuller participation.

This is noteworthy as participation is a key tenet of Catholic Social Teaching. The Catholic Social Teaching’s theme of participation was more fully developed than that of the poverty program. The current Catechism of the Catholic Church demonstrates how Roman Catholic notions of participation in social life draw from sources ranging from the Documents of Vatican II, papal statements from the twentieth century, as well as from

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371 Schulman, Lyndon B. Johnson and American Liberalism, 84.
372 Stossel, Sarge, 358 and Moynihan, Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding, 82.
older sources such as Paul’s letter to the Romans and the writings of Thomas Aquinas. Thomas Massaro, S.J. unpacks the Church’s teaching on participation by arguing that a recognition of both human dignity and the social nature of the human person necessarily entail both a right for individuals to participate in their society and a responsibility for persons to pursue the common good to the best of their ability when participating in society. Massaro further states that preventing full participation is a “grave injustice.”

Shriver’s own experience of building community between Peace Corps volunteers and the people of their host nations meant Shriver had developed an understanding of how to promote participation. Also, Eunice Kennedy Shriver’s creation of Camp Shriver and later the Special Olympics give a good sense that Sargent Shriver understood participation as an important ideal to aim for when crafting programs aimed at elevating groups marginalized by society. Sargent Shriver and Eunice Kennedy Shriver’s commitment to people with disabilities as well as their earlier work on juvenile delinquency reflect the Roman Catholic commitment to the ideal of participation on the social spheres of life being open to and extending to those on the margins of human society.

The advocates of maximum feasible participation in the Community Action program never offered a measure of what maximum feasible participation meant or how to reach it. This lack of clarity along with the realities of institutional racism within US society generated problems for Community Action, in particular, and the War on Poverty in general. Shriver hoped for a method to increase participation that would pay more

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immediate economic benefits for impoverished regions of the US by extending an aggressive jobs program in addition to creating Community Action Councils.\textsuperscript{375}

Community Action had powerful advocates. Walter Heller and Kermit Gordon were the legislative architects, but Shriver’s brother-in-law Robert Kennedy was also a proponent of the program. Heller and Gordon proposed that the entire War on Poverty be used to create a nationwide system of Community Action groups. Their logic was that such groups could work together to confront poverty at a local level by uplifting self-confidence and creating a network of support. Shriver and his team rejected the programmatic approach and proposed scope of Community Action, but not its ideals due to his prior experience at building communities requiring more flexibility for adjusting to unique contexts found in individual communities. Shriver simply felt that his experience with the Peace Corps gave him greater experience with generating the sort of relationships desired by Community Action. Shriver also had his experience of working with Eunice Kennedy in 1946 and 1947 at the Justice Department to call upon when it came to creatively generating cooperation at the local level for combating crime and poverty. Shriver felt that programs such as Job Corps that addressed unemployment in the near term had to be part of the War on Poverty. Shriver’s team did relent to the extent that the Heller and Gordon position of Community Action was part of the broader War on Poverty, but Shriver was insistent that the War on Poverty not be solely focused on Community Action.\textsuperscript{376}

President Johnson had concerns about Community Action as well. He made sure to insist that Shriver avoided any appearance of Community Action becoming or appearing

\textsuperscript{375} Stossel, \textit{Sarge}, 371. \\
\textsuperscript{376} Ibid., 357-359. Passim.
to be a handout program. Johnson gave Shriver a single piece of advice on Community Action. Johnson colorfully expressed to Shriver that he did not want scandals from Community Action by saying, “Keep out crooks, communists, and cocksuckers.” Despite Johnson’s raunchy directive, consternation surrounding Community Action eventually destabilized many of the alliances the president had cultivated with Democratic mayors and segregationist Democratic members of Congress.

In 1964, Shriver had to answer to Congress for the Economic Opportunity Act and specifically Community Action. The Economic Opportunity Act passed Congress due in large part to Johnson’s powers of persuasion. Democrats won big victories in 1964. This led to a heavily Democratic congress that was unlikely to challenge the poverty program in 1965. Community Action initially played out with local organizations using Federal funds to attack local and state governments. Members of Congress as well as local officials quickly reduced whatever support they had offered to Community Action. A war broke out between Democratic mayors and Community Action programs. City halls across the country felt that the war on poverty had unleashed a torrent of difficulties. This was not what President Johnson had aimed for with his anti-poverty program.

**Mississippi Difficulties**

1966 proved to be a year that tested and eventually undermined the original purpose of Community Action. Congress interrogated Shriver about Community Action spending that was deemed to be under regulated and controlled by local groups with little

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377 Ibid, 360.
380 Ibid., 38, 44, 45.
381 *American Idealist* written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
representation of the poor. Shriver moved to put audits in place and limits on local salaries.\textsuperscript{382} By 1967, Community Action morphed into something it was expressly not supposed to be: namely a set of funds controlled and supported by entrenched local officials who accepted Community Action as a form of government largesse.\textsuperscript{383} In addition to turning a great deal of control over poverty programs to local governments, Johnson cut OEO’s budget from $2.06 billion to $1.77 billion.\textsuperscript{384}

**Participation and the Common Good Via Legal Services to the Poor**

Shriver’s attitude toward Community Action was at times lukewarm, but he promoted participation and the common good through other programs as well. Shriver helped the War on Poverty promote participation within society by helping to launch Legal Services to the Poor and winning over the American Bar Association in 1966. Shriver offered an impassioned plea to gain support of the American Bar Association in part by quoting the Gospel of Luke and urging the cultivation of “… lay persons to serve as investigators and lawyers’ aides so that they can help make people aware of the availability and usefulness of legal services.” Shriver went on to argue that Legal Services to the poor represented the first time that legal protection would be available to the poor in US history.\textsuperscript{385} A speech drawing upon scripture, urging the empowering of poor citizens with legal knowledge while using a term such as “laypersons” reflected Shriver’s Catholicity while also winning support for Legal Services to the Poor helped increase participation by knocking down barriers that prevented poor people from


\textsuperscript{384} Dallek, *Flawed Giant*, 405.

protesting unfair housing and working conditions among other difficulties.\textsuperscript{386} This innovation by Shriver helped promote the common good because it increased the scope of public participation for the poor within the US.

**Beyond Participation: Catholic Social Teaching and the War on Poverty**

The Roman Catholic social doctrine of subsidiarity can be a useful lens for understanding how and why Sargent Shriver designed the anti-poverty program in the manner that he did. Pius XI’s 1931 encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* written on the fortieth anniversary of *Rerum novarum* put forth the notion of subsidiarity in the hopes of reviving a complex civil society in a world in which individuals and the state were seen to be the only units with social agency. Subsidiarity “calls for the establishment of intermediary groups” and to allow local groups to handle local difficulties if possible. Subsidiarity pushes back against the idea that a centralized government should handle every problem within a society. Rather, local intermediary groups and local government should exist and address the problems they can manage and solve. This protects the character of a local community against being absorbed or destroyed by a larger authority structure.\textsuperscript{387}

Shriver’s earliest political beliefs hovered around a strong dose of southern state federalism. His experiences with the Great Depression and the New Deal broadened Shriver’s political outlook beyond federalism. Still, he never rejected the principle in an outright manner. His son Mark Shriver recounts his father explaining his position thusly:

> Everyone thinks that I am such a strong supporter of big federal government, but that wasn’t the way I was raised. I was always states’ rights and local government, but when the states aren’t protecting all citizens and citizens aren’t given a fair opportunity in life, that’s when the federal government has to get involved.

\textsuperscript{386} *American Idealist* written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.

\textsuperscript{387} Krier Mich, 81, 82.

Preferential Option for the Poor and Government Action

The War on Poverty saw the single greatest drop on poverty in US history over a four-year period of time. Government research in 1966 told the Johnson administration that employment was their number one weapon against poverty. “An increase in employment of 8.4 million from 1960 to 1966 helped explain why the number of poor Americans had declined from 22 percent to 17 percent.” Beyond that, statistics pointed to US citizens living close to the poverty line having benefited from Great Society programs. “Federal outlays for health and education were up 59 percent; spending on cities had leaped 76 percent; and unemployment was sharply down, by 32 percent for whites and 34 percent for blacks.” Shriver’s insistence on government intervention in the economy reflected the positive role for the state in economic that Roman Catholics have posited since Archbishop Wilhelm Ketteler’s work with the Fribourg Union and Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical *Rerum novarum*. Shriver’s policies are well within the spirit of *Rerum novarum’s* declaration that “The richer population have many ways of protecting themselves, and stand less in need of help from the State; those who are badly off have no resources of their own to fall back upon, and must chiefly rely upon the assistance of the State.”

The Catholic tenor of Shriver’s War on Poverty programs is further buttressed by a 1967 *America* editorial claiming Pope Paul VI as an ally to the War on Poverty even if the Vatican was not an ally to President Johnson’s war in Vietnam. The editors of

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389 *American Idealist* written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
America highlighted the similarities between Paul VI’s 1967 encyclical Populorum progressio and the War on Poverty. The editors argued that Pope Paul VI’s insistence that there was an “‘intolerable scandal’ of the differences between the haves and the have nots of this world.” The editors also mentioned that President Johnson should be pleased with Paul VI’s affirmation of the duty of governments to intercede on behalf of the poor in economic affairs. \(^{393}\) Populorum progressio is notable not because it reaffirms themes found in other social encyclical, but because it aimed at international development and saw structural poverty as an obstacle to peace. Populorum progressio specifically described development as a synonym for peace. Paul VI’s notion of development included the respect for the whole person by promoting societal shifts away from dehumanizing living conditions toward conditions that promoted human dignity. \(^{394}\) The War on Poverty’s approach to poverty certainly fit within Paul VI’s affirmation of a secular authority pursuing the needs of the poor. Shriver sought to help uplift US citizens out of “grinding poverty” while the Great Society in general sought to uplift the entire person toward higher aspirations by focusing on public health and economic opportunity as well as promoting the arts. \(^{395}\) Similarly, Populorum progressio also advocated the development of the whole person by seeking development “physically, socially, and spiritually.” \(^{396}\)

**Contrasting RFK and Shriver’s Visions for Combating Poverty**

Having expressed a consonance between Sargent Shriver’s approach to poverty and Roman Catholic teaching, it is now helpful to see how another politically engaged


\(^{394}\) Krier Mich, Catholic Social Teaching and Movements, 155-159.

\(^{395}\) American Idealist written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.

\(^{396}\) Krier Mich, Catholic Social Teaching and Movements, 157, 158.
Catholic addressed these issues as a contemporary to the War on Poverty efforts. Robert F. Kennedy became increasingly interested in issues surrounding both poverty and race during his time as US Attorney General and as a US Senator representing New York. Robert Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson mutually despised one another. Beyond that, Robert Kennedy was suspicious of Johnson’s political courage and distrusted the notion that Johnson could carry on the legacy of John F. Kennedy regardless of how many policy successes Johnson achieved. Robert Kennedy partially motivated by preserving his own presidential prospects scuttled any plans Johnson had for Shriver as a potential running mate in 1964. This led to Shriver becoming the head of the War on Poverty, but Robert Kennedy also offered an alternative approach to poverty. The professional and familial entanglement between Shriver and Robert Kennedy is reminiscent of a Greek tragedy.

Robert Kennedy cast doubts on the scaled-up vision of Shriver’s anti-poverty approach by noting that programs and money were being spent on every problem that faced society, but that this approach is “Manifestly” not a solution to poverty. Rather, Robert Kennedy offered a small-scale local experiment on poverty in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant. Robert Kennedy’s goal for the Bedford-Stuyvesant project was to produce a successful pilot program for confronting poverty that would then be exported to and copied by other cities. Robert Kennedy and Shriver shared the problem of how to navigate any new program addressing poverty through a matrix of existing power structures and entrenched political leaders who may view such a new program as a threat to their authority. Kennedy picked this neighborhood because local political leaders were not entrenched in a manner that would allow them to

manipulate federal or private funds put into the project. Still, Kennedy received a mixed reception from the citizens and leaders of Bedford-Stuyvesant.\(^{398}\)

Although Robert Kennedy had promoted the ideals of Community Action when he was Attorney General, his Bedford-Stuyvesant project needed to avoid the pitfalls that had plagued Community Action. Robert Kennedy sought to create a Bedford-Stuyvesant Corporation that was to attract investment into the community so that it had both the ability to provide a forum for community building and unification as well as creating jobs that would further empower citizens of Bedford-Stuyvesant. If it succeeded, it would be a model for Robert Kennedy’s broader plan for confronting poverty. Robert Kennedy’s pitch to people in the business world including IBM chairman Thomas Watson was not one focused on lofty social responsibilities, but Kennedy saw such investments as a preventative measure. Kennedy encouraged capital to confront urban poverty because he argued that failure to alleviate urban poverty would lead to major societal problems.\(^{399}\)

Robert Kennedy set up two boards of directors for the Bedford-Stuyvesant Corporation. One was made up of local black leaders who were to recommend ideas for economic enhancement of the neighborhood. The second board was made up of primarily white business leaders who would provide business acumen and capital to the projects. This move by Robert Kennedy is not entirely unlike Shriver’s tendency to assign two teams to the same problem, but Kennedy’s two teams had an asymmetry of power and responsibilities with local leaders lacking full authority within the corporation.\(^{400}\) Also, the racial divide between the two boards of directors is suggestive

\(^{398}\) Ibid., 318, 319.  
\(^{399}\) Ibid., 324, 325.  
\(^{400}\) Ibid., 325, 326.
of Robert Kennedy’s more cautious approach to social problems than that of Sargent Shriver.

Even if one sets aside the family ties, the fact that Robert Kennedy was a US Senator and Roman Catholic makes his approach to poverty worthy of comparison to Shriver’s. Harris Wofford pointed out that within the Kennedy family Shriver and Robert Kennedy were rivals because each took Catholicism seriously and in some ways occupied the same niche. Each demonstrated institutional imagination. Robert Kennedy generating a synergy of public and private funds to support the Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation was no small task. Shriver’s insistence on efficiency at the Peace Corps, his positive view of the potential of business learned through running the Merchandise Mart in Chicago, and Shriver’s willingness to engage the American Bar Association were not alien to Robert Kennedy’s efforts to draw business leaders into his pilot anti-poverty program. Still, Shriver launched Job Corps, Head Start, and Legal Services to the Poor on a national basis where as Bedford Stuyvesant did not debut on a national scale. The difference in scale clearly offered different levels of participation to the poor within the US. In the case of Shriver, the Catholic ideal of participation was more fully realized than in the inventive anti-poverty efforts of his brother-in-law. Robert Kennedy and Sargent Shriver each sought to generate a nationwide response to poverty, but Shriver aimed for his programs to be multiregional from the outset and not dependent upon the success or failure of a single localized program. Also, Shriver did not seek community participation in such a way as to have a powerful board behind the scenes approving or disapproving of the decisions made by local leaders. Shriver seemed to possess a greater sense of institutional audacity as compared to that of Robert Kennedy on the issue of poverty.

401 Harris Wofford, interview by the author.
Tocqueville’s Catholic Civil Society

Former Shriver aide turned neo-conservative, Michael Novak claims that Sargent Shriver’s War on Poverty policies included both statist liberalism and elements of Alexis de Tocqueville’s awareness of the importance of civil society.\(^\text{402}\) While Shriver himself seemingly did not explicitly embrace Tocqueville’s ideas on civil society, it is important to briefly explore this assertion made by Michael Novak. Alexis de Tocqueville’s most famous work *Democracy in America* represented the crystallization of his tour of the antebellum United States and his thoughts on the nature of freedom and the human soul. Tocqueville used the term soul as what can be best described as a forerunner to a sociopolitical term rather than his work being a theological treatise.\(^\text{403}\) However, Tocqueville was himself a Roman Catholic living under a monarchy who toured a largely Protestant constitutional republic. He was fascinated with how a democratic culture would impact the habits of a people for good and for ill. Delving into Catholic Tocqueville’s insights will also shed light on Shriver’s sensibilities.

Tocqueville commented on the nature of democracy within the largely Protestant United States and its impact on the human soul, but he also spoke about a therapeutic not salvific role Roman Catholicism could have in insulating the “democratic soul” against the isolating tendencies of US democracy. Tocqueville felt the weakness of aristocratic societies was a lack of flexibility for individuals who were born into a station in society. He saw aristocracies as having the strength of explicitly connecting people to others in different stations of society. Tocqueville observed that democracies had the opposite set of weaknesses and strengths. People living in democracies could be self-made, but a

citizen could also isolate himself from the whole of society. Tocqueville saw the
democratic soul as tending toward isolation. The “self-enclosure” of the democratic soul
was its greatest weakness. Tocqueville argued that democracies eventually degrade
into a form of despotism if the populace is isolated from one another. Tocqueville
explained that an isolated populace would lack what an aristocracy innately possessed
namely a social tier occupying a space between the ruling monarch and the general
public. Tocqueville felt that democratic societies could generate voluntary associations
to occupy that space that aristocrats occupied in more vertically organized societies.
Such voluntary associations could protect the population of a democracy from abuses by
the ruling class in the same manner that a local aristocrat might filter the fiat of a king,
but that voluntary associations in a democracy required effort to create and sustain
whereas aristocrats or patrons were a built in fixture of older methods of social
organizations. Tocqueville also envisioned religious faith in general as helping to
safeguard the democratic soul from isolating itself. He argued that the focus on the
divine pushes a person beyond self-interest. Beyond that, a religious community also
functions as a form of voluntary association in which members are also brought outside
of their individual interests.

Tocqueville further argued that Roman Catholicism in the United States had all of
the abilities to inoculate the US population against the isolating influences of democracy.
He also contended that Roman Catholicism offered an additional layer of protection
against individualism. Namely, Tocqueville lauded the aristocratic and monarchical

404 Mitchell, The Fragility of Freedom, 81, 82.
406 Ibid., 419-424. Passim.
nature of Roman Catholic governance. This structure meant that Roman Catholics in the US had a defined position within their ecclesial home even if broader US society did not define the positions of its citizens. He felt that Roman Catholic citizens in the US possessed the benefits of both democratic and aristocratic culture so that a Roman Catholic in the US would be connected to a priest, a bishop, a parish, a seminary or convent beyond the individual self.407

In this manner, an anti-poverty program representing an appreciation of Alexis de Tocqueville would find ways to cultivate voluntary associations and help an impoverished community by drawing citizens of such a community beyond the self. Such a strengthened community would begin to police itself and would begin to place light on corrupt business owners and landlords. Community Action and the commitment to maximum feasible participation of the poor were the aspects of the War on Poverty most reflective of Tocqueville’s ideas of protecting and strengthening the democratic soul. Shriver’s connection to Tocqueville is murky at best, but his understanding of local action fit nicely within Pope Pius XI’s assertion of subsidiarity in *Quadragesimo anno*. Shriver and Tocqueville both promoted the functioning and flourishing of intermediary institutions for the betterment of US society despite being separated by history.

The irony is that Community Action and maximum feasible participation garnered the ire of Richard Nixon’s “silent majority” of white cultural conservatives that would form the basis of a conservative wave that brought an end to the New Deal coalition. Therefore, it may be true that Shriver’s approach to poverty did include elements consonant with Alexis de Tocqueville’s thoughts on civil society, but that draws into

question the degree to which Tocqueville can be drafted as an ideological ally by twentieth and twenty-first century conservatives.

**Shriver as a Third Path for Political Liberalism in the Late 1960s**

Lyndon Johnson began to distrust Sargent Shriver in the later stages of his administration. The New Left had emerged as a vocal critic of both the Vietnam conflict and of political compromises made with segregationists in order to protect the larger War on Poverty. Shriver was positioned firmly inside the US government, but he tried to carve out a position differing from that of President Johnson on Vietnam. Shriver battled against proposed budget cuts for the War on Poverty that were being offered as a supposed method for funding US efforts in Vietnam. Shriver’s widening differences with President Johnson led to him take an appointment as ambassador to France on May 7, 1968. Shriver supported the peace talks between the US and Vietnam as ambassador to France. He even planned to embrace the peace protestors in his acceptance speech at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago had he been named the Democratic ticket’s vice presidential nominee. Shriver’s willingness to use and not abandon the potential of public policy set him apart from many on the left who had become disenchanted with President Johnson. However, by the late 1960s, Shriver was attempting to maneuver within the US bureaucracy in ways that contradicted President Johnson’s approaches to domestic poverty and Vietnam. Shriver’s actions in the late 1960s represent the seeds of a third and untried way forward for political liberalism in the US.

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408 *American Idealist* written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.  
409 Ibid.  
410 Stossel, Sarge, 493-497.  
411 *American Idealist* written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
**The Institutional Imagination of the Catholic Church in Shriver’s Experience**

Shriver’s penchant for generating new programs is unsurprising given the Roman Catholic Church’s creation of monastic orders to provide stability after the fall of the Roman Empire or the creation of the Jesuits partially in response to the Protestant Reformation. However, Shriver’s own lifetime as a Roman Catholic offered a first hand glimpse of distinct institutions responding to social ills. Shriver’s work with his father and brother in the tenements of Baltimore and New York was shaped by his father’s involvement in the Saint Vincent de Paul Society. Shriver attended the Canterbury School that was created to help Roman Catholic students make their way to Ivy League colleges. As noted in chapter one, Shriver promoted the Peace Corps to a large chapter of the Knights of Columbus, an organization created in large part to make life insurance available to Roman Catholic immigrants to the US. Shriver helped to reimagine Chicago’s Catholic schools and hospitals through his work on Chicago’s Catholic Interracial Council.

Shriver’s willingness to challenge and reimagine existing structures without abandoning the idea of public structures themselves separated him from some strands of the New Left that eventually displaced Lyndon Johnson’s vision of liberalism. Shriver did not embrace counter-cultural movements that questioned the efficacy of government programs in favor of more spontaneous and less structured approaches to politics.\(^{412}\)

When Shriver ran for president in 1976, his brand of liberalism and institutional optimism was seemed “out of step with the times.\(^{413}\) Varying figures such as Rev. J. Bryan Hehir and Anthony Lake felt Shriver was not ambitious enough and too enamored with ideas to

\(^{412}\) Mackenzie, *The Liberal Hour*, 20.

\(^{413}\) *American Idealist* written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
be a viable candidate for president in 1976.\textsuperscript{414} Shriver’s general optimistic posture toward politics was not fully in-step with the more cynical spirit of 1970s political liberalism.

Shriver’s dedication to institutional imagination is a reflection of his Roman Catholicism. Shriver’s commitment to generating new and unexpected communities through Legal Services to the Poor, through his work at the Peace Corps, through sending young people forth, reflects what he saw in his own lifetime within multiple Catholic institutions. His work in the War on Poverty did offer a combination of statist solutions in keeping with the themes of \textit{Rerum novarum} and later social encyclicals. His promotion of programs such as Head Start, Community Action, Legal Services to the Poor, and Foster Grandparents also generated what Alexis de Tocqueville described as civil society. This openness to generating civil society is tied into the lived faith experience of Shriver.

\textbf{Post Script: Vietnam}

Robert Dallek argues that the US has never successfully invested in social programs when also fighting a war.\textsuperscript{415} If Dallek is correct, Shriver’s institutional imagination ran into an insurmountable obstacle in Vietnam. It must also be said that Vietnam gave segregationist southern Democrats a platform for opposing anti-poverty programs on the grounds that such expenditures would undermine national security. While Shriver’s poverty programs largely survived, they were never funded to their envisioned levels and have faced various austerity measures in the fifty years since their launch. This institutional preference for military expenditures ultimately undermined Shriver’s third

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\textsuperscript{414} Stossel, \textit{Sarge}, 616, 617.
\textsuperscript{415} Dallek, \textit{Lyndon B. Johnson: Portrait of a President}, 275-278.
\end{flushend}
way leaving it largely untried as the New Deal Coalition splintered. The trends of political liberalism in the twentieth century did survive the unraveling of the left in the US. Tip O’Neill’s biographer John A. Farrell succinctly described the state of US public policy after Ronald Reagan left office in saying, “The Great Society was bruised, yet breathing. And the New Deal? Franklin Roosevelt’s legacy was untouched.” The ability for Great Society and New Deal programs to survive the impact of decades of both infighting among political liberals and coordinated attacks by political conservatives demonstrate that the creation of institutions is not easily undone. Sargent Shriver’s innovative ability to imagine new programs such as Legal Services for the Poor and Job Corps offered lasting pathways for greater societal participation to impoverished communities in the US. This dissertation contends that Shriver’s savvy ability for constructing new and lasting structures within the broader US government is an outgrowth of his experience of lasting structures that emerged within the history of the Roman Catholic Church.

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CONCLUSION

SARGENT SHRIVER’S PATH OF HOPE WAS CONSTRUCTED THROUGH INSTITUTIONAL IMAGINATION

PCV’s (Peace Corps Volunteers) stay as you are...be servants of peace...work at home as you have worked abroad, humbly, persistently, intelligently. Weep with those who are sorrowful, rejoice with those who are joyful. Teach those who are ignorant. Care for those who are sick. Serve your wives...serve your husbands, serve your families...serve your neighbors...serve your cities...serve the poor. Join others who serve. Serve, Serve, Serve! That's the challenge. For in the end it will be the servants who save us all.

- Robert Sargent Shriver, Jr.

Sargent Shriver’s life as a public Catholic and a public servant has been widely celebrated. Shriver’s life touched upon key events in the twentieth century ranging from a personal experience of the Great Depression to playing a major role in the 1960 presidential election even to being involved in early peace talks between the US and Vietnam during his ambassadorship to France. Shriver’s life as a Roman Catholic led him into contact with the charisms of sodalities such as the Saint Vincent DePaul Society and religious orders such as the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Shriver had a formative relationship with James Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore and a working relationship with Samuel Cardinal Stritch of Chicago. He attended daily mass while traveling the world visiting Peace Corps outposts. He oversaw the planning for the funeral Mass of the only

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Roman Catholic US president and helped plan a 1969 Christmas Mass in Paris as he left his post as US Ambassador to France that involved the stole of Saint Vincent DePaul. He quoted Jesuit mystic and paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin when accepting the 1972 vice presidential nomination for the Democratic Party. His life followed the double currents of being a committed Roman Catholic and of being an active force in shaping public policy. The way in which Shriver brought about a co-mingling of his Roman Catholic faith and his public policy positions is the most interesting aspect of his life from both a theological and a political perspective. His son, Mark Shriver, invoked the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love as the best lens for viewing Sargent Shriver’s life and work. Sargent Shriver citing the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy at a speech honoring the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Peace Corps demonstrates that his work as a public servant was integrated with his Catholic beliefs and practices. Shriver can assuredly be seen as manifesting his Roman Catholic faith and practices while performing his official missions as an actor within the US government.

Pope Francis’ historic 2015 address to the US Congress made an utterly Roman Catholic appeal for governmental leaders to seek the common good. Pope Francis’ speech called upon the US Congress to pursue the common good six different times. Francis also used the phrases “common responsibility”, “common needs”, and “common home” in sketching out his vision for the role and responsibility of lawmakers. Sargent

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418 Mark Shriver, A Good Man, 12.
Shriver’s life offers a specific and embodied paragon of how the pursuit of the common good was accomplished by a Roman Catholic US public servant.

The most important facet of Shriver’s pursuit of the common good from within the heart of US politics and policy making is the fact that his example offers hope that success in pursuing the common good through public policy is possible. Since Sargent Shriver was a thoroughly Catholic government official who helped to shape public policies, it cannot be said that such artful work is impossible. Shriver’s life offers clues to how one might pursue the common good from the seat of political power. Shriver’s care for others, partially instilled through his father’s efforts to involve him in good works at a young age, was rooted in his faith. Shriver’s comfort level within large institutions and his ability to see the possibility for the emergence of productive substructures corresponds to observable trends within the history of the Catholic Church. This dissertation has termed this gift of Shriver’s “institutional imagination.” It is imperative for Roman Catholic public servants to possess this quality in order to be able to be responsive to new and unexpected societal troubles.

Shriver’s caring for others emerged from his faith in what his son Mark Shriver described as a “cosmic ambition for justice and equality.” His gift for institutional imagination helped to balance his grand vision of justice. His ability to imagine and establish novel institutions allowed him to translate grand ideas into tangible finite structures. These structures allowed Shriver to measure progress toward his cosmic vision in every localized, corporeal, and personal action produced in the cause of justice. Shriver could view the actions of the Peace Corps volunteers, the call John F. Kennedy made to Coretta Scott King, and the launching for Legal Services for the Poor among

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many others as all being finite manifestations of the much longer and grander process of establishing the common good.

It is essentially important to recognize that Shriver’s “cosmic ambition” for justice emboldened his institutional imagination. Shriver did want to create long-lasting structures that allowed people to engage in the struggle for justice. However, Shriver’s cosmic vision allowed for him to scale up programs and seek global impacts from the institutions he launched. Shriver was not simply concerned about the local as Shriver’s friend Edgar May stated, “When talking about outlandish dreams, unrealistic expectation, whether its Sarge Shriver saying, ‘Oh, no, no, no. We’re not going to have fifty thousand children in Head Start this summer; we’re going to have half a million!’ That’s vintage Sargent Shriver.” Shriver’s grand vision for justice and his genius for producing lasting novel structures within a larger bureaucracy both come from his Roman Catholicism. The universal nature of the Church and its mission in the world did not allow him to only focus his good works on one locale. To be sure, the common good is made up of many local goods, but for Shriver, the pursuit of the common good was universalized due to his local and particular upbringing forming him to “go out into the whole world.”

Sargent Shriver offers Roman Catholics in the US who are interested in public policy an exemplar “of how to see and therefore be in the world.” He presents a viable path for Catholics that circumvents a forced choice between Church teaching and political expediency. Institutional imagination gave Shriver the civic dexterity to produce

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422 *American Idealist* written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
424 *American Idealist* written and directed by Bruce Orenstein.
enduring social structures that corresponded to his cosmic ambition for justice and equality.
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