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War Lust and Unshaven, Unkempt Individuals Examining the CSB|SJU Campus, Catholicism, and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement from 1965-1968

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War Lust and Unshaven, Unkempt Individuals
Examining the CSB|SJU Campus, Catholicism, and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement from
1965-1968

AN ALL COLLEGE THESIS

College of St. Benedict/St. John's University

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by

Stephanie Haeg

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Project title: War Lust and Unshaven, Unkempt Individuals: Examining the CSB|SJU Campus,
Catholicism, and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement from 1965-1968

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Abstract:

Two important elements of the anti-Vietnam war movement were the student protests and religious pacifism, but the overlap of the two areas is rarely examined. What were college students nationwide doing during that time, and how did the College of St. Benedict and St. John's University differ from both secular and other Catholic colleges? How did Catholicism affect the CSB|SJU anti-war movement from 1965-1968? I examine student newspapers from this time to see how the language and rhetoric used in student's letters to the editor and opinion pieces reflected Catholic sentiments and theological arguments worldwide. I then reflect on how they compared to the secular movement. The anti-war movement at CSB and SJU found itself in a singular position, informed by a Benedictine Catholicism—quite different from other Catholic universities—that framed its unique response to the Vietnam War in this period.

Wouldn't it be a wonderful sight, though, to behold these generally unshaven, unkempt and unbathed individuals, wearing sandals, sweat shirts and shorts? Edward Wakin in a recent issue of Saturday Review alluded to St. John's student body as being unsophisticated, mediocre intellectuals and what would prove this more than a placard carrying group of "skuzies"?

-Jon Hunstock, April 29, 1966

Can Mr. Dirksen's mind, and ours, have become so warped that he cannot see before him a man pleading, in the name of the so-called Prince of Peace, pleading for help in comforting those whom our Air Force has accidentally wounded or maimed?

Has war lust and chauvinism—a debased form of nationalism—so poisoned our minds and hearts that we have become immune to the human cry of need because it is uttered by "the enemy"? If so, then we may retain the name of American, for what it will be worth, but we have surely forsaken the name Christian."

-James Gearity, April 23, 1968

Introduction

Like the rest of America, St. John's University and the College of St. Benedict found themselves caught up in the Vietnam War during the years from 1965 to 1968. The pages of *The Record* and *The Torch* (the student newspapers belonging to each campus) recorded the students' thoughts and actions on the subject, which were unsurprisingly contentious. Students all over the nation were rising up in protest against the war and shared the same fears and concerns that Johnnies (students from St. John's University) and Bennies (students from the College of St. Benedict) had about the destruction that was happening in Vietnam, the draft, and the presence of the ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps) on their campuses.

But SJU and CSB were not like many other colleges across the nation. They were also caught up in a secondary wave of controversy: that of the rapidly changing world of 20th Century Catholicism. Catholics of all age groups, but particularly Catholic college students, found themselves in the middle of a deep schism, one that raised theological questions about the nature of war, the nature of peace, and the nature of the role of Catholics in modern America.

Catholicism was an important part of the dialogue and activity that was occurring on Catholic campuses during this time. It informed the students' arguments about the war itself, their thoughts on the nature of peace, and their ideas about duty, service, and responsibility. Both hawks (those who were pro-war) and doves (those who were anti-war) could clearly find a religious argument and draw upon religious ideas as support for their beliefs. Their Catholicism shaped them and the language with which they debated and discussed the Vietnam War.

But even other Catholic colleges did not see the anti-war movement unfold in the exact same way as CSB and SJU. CSB and SJU had additional influences and unique elements, particularly the Benedictine nature of these two institutions, which allowed for the anti-war movement to unfold in a singularly non-violent manner while still engaging in public discussion about the war that in some ways reflected the national debate.

Against this background of rapid secular and religious change, the anti-war movement at CSB and SJU found itself in a singular position, informed by a Benedictine Catholicism—quite different from other Catholic universities—that framed their unique response to the Vietnam War in this period.

Background: The National Student Movement

For many historians the student anti-war movement is one of the most important facets of Vietnam War-era social history. Student protests were not warmly welcomed and did not always evoke sympathy in the general American public: many scholars even argue that they galvanized support *for* the war early on. Student protesters were often ahead of the rest of the nation in terms of their reaction against the war, which would not come to a head more generally until the Tet Offensive in 1968. The students were among the earliest voices of concern about the war, and in many ways, they ended up shaping the movement. To understand how the movement unfolded at CSB and SJU, it is important to understand the evolution of the national student movement.

There were many facets of the national anti-war movement. A great deal of it was exemplified at prestigious schools, such as Berkeley, Harvard, and Columbia. These often garnered the most attention, being composed of more elite and wealthy students who were radicalized and often able to get away with things that poorer students were afraid to try. But there was also a great deal of activism at state universities, and these institutions were the sites of some of the most memorable protests, such as the infamous protests at Kent State in 1970. These perhaps provided a more “typical” insight into how most college-aged Americans felt, as these students were often less privileged and radicalized than those at more prestigious schools.

Kenneth J. Heineman in his book *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era* provides insight into anti-war movements at public midwestern universities. As Heineman writes, these universities had an active presence of ROTC on campus and a large presence of liberal arts majors, along with students who were affiliated with religious groups which made them more likely to have socially liberal leanings.¹

¹ Kenneth J. Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1993). 5

Interestingly both the state universities examined by Heineman and the elite, radical campuses such as Berkley (as examined by Rorabaugh in his book *Berkeley at War*) saw their anti-war movements preceded by free-speech movements on their campuses. The anti-war movement on college campuses stemmed from a history of student activism and discontent, and numerous clashes with the university hierarchies over the rights of students to express their opinions. The leaders in these movements were frequently leaders in student communist organizations, and many of them had been involved in the Civil Rights movement.² These movements, born out of pre-existing student movements, were already organized, which, particularly at the elite institutions, often helped them become radicalized more quickly than the rest of the nation.

Heineman says that, nationally, “antiwar protest from 1965 to 1967 were nonviolent and the most common types of protest against the war were teach-ins, peace petitions addressed to [President] Johnson, and low-key picketing.”³ The students would radicalize in 1968, due to chaos at the Democratic National Convention and rising political divides in the wake of Richard Nixon’s election in November.⁴ Elite students, primarily “upper-middle class WASP and secularized Jewish radicals” wrested control of the movement from pacifists and other non-violent groups and occupied or vandalized university buildings.⁵ Tensions rose dramatically, with moderate and hawkish students condemning these actions, creating more hostile campus environments all over the nation. The students opposed military intervention in Vietnam for a variety of reasons: many cited racism, others colonialism, others pointed to the brutality of the intervention, or how Congress had never formally declared war.

² Ibid. W. J. Rorabaugh, *Berkeley at War: The 1960s* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

³ Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era*. 129.

⁴ Ibid. 182.

⁵ Ibid. 183.

One of the largest sources of opposition from students, however, had a far more personal source: the draft. Even after World War II and the Korean conflict ended, the draft remained in place. The “peacetime draft” was officially enacted in 1948, but it had a relatively low demand rate and there were many ways to be granted a deferment. Many jobs were deemed as “necessary” to the nation and holders of these jobs were exempt from the draft; enlisting for a year or joining the reserves (a safe practice during the early days of the Cold War) were also relatively simple ways for young men to avoid selective service. The student deferment was contested by many in Congress as a handout to the sons of the wealthy, but scholastic standards were put in place to make sure that the students receiving the deferments had academic merit, and the practice was continued.⁶ Post-graduate deferments were allowed starting in 1954, and the student deferment rate boomed.⁷ College became, in many ways, a safe space for young men. Fatherhood and marriage was also a way out, giving even students with no higher academic interests a way to avoid the draft.⁸

But when President Johnson escalated the war things changed rapidly. In July of 1965, the official shift was made from the peacetime draft to an active draft, meaning that draft inductions would increase to over 30,000 men per month, more than double than previously.⁹ The first step toward filling these new inductions was targeting occupational deferments, meaning that there were fewer safe jobs for graduating students to take. Deferments for fatherhood were explicitly no longer granted to people who had received student deferments, cutting off yet another path. As the war dragged on, the regulations on draft eligibility began to

⁶ Lawrence M. Baskir and William Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, the War, and the Vietnam Generation*, 1st ed. ed. (New York: Knopf, 1978). 20-21.

⁷ Ibid. 22.

⁸ Ibid. 22.

⁹ Ibid. 22.

change with some frequency, to the alarm of the students. Students with low class rankings could be forced to take a test and potentially lose their student deferments, a practice which led many schools to terminate their usage of class rankings.¹⁰ There were fewer deferments offered for marriages and graduate school, and rapidly, the students found their options dwindling.¹¹ Vietnam became more of a reality, and so the culture surrounding the draft began to change. Suddenly, there was a great deal of uncertainty. The war was no longer a distant but avoidable possibility. Students saw their legal options dwindling and Vietnam seemed closer than ever. This was not the war of their fathers who had served during World War II: there was no united sense in the country of pride in going off to war. Facing the overwhelming possibility that they might be sent off to die in a war that they did not care about, it is unsurprising that many young college students turned to the anti-war movement during this time.

Background: Catholicism

The role of Catholicism in American society was very different before the Cold War. Catholics were often seen as outsiders by Protestant Americans, often perceived as being immigrants who were loyal to the foreign pope, rather than loyal to American values. Catholics were perceived to be threats to the American way of life, falling short of the WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) ideal that was upheld by mainstream American culture, and as such Catholics were a target of groups that promoted homogeneity, including the Ku Klux Klan. In the aftermath of the Second World War, however, the role of Catholicism in America began to change.

Just War Theory is a Catholic concept which framed the shape of many Catholic discussions about war in general, and the Vietnam War in particular. The theory articulates the

¹⁰ Ibid. 23.

¹¹ Ibid. 22-23.

notion that a war must meet certain criteria before Catholics would be able to condone it as “Just.” The criteria include: proper authority and public declaration, just cause, probability of success, proportionality, and that the war must be a matter of last resort. Catholicism thus had a theological basis for approving of war, and there was another factor – the rise of Communism in Eastern Europe—that influenced Catholic attitudes on the war.

Pope Pius XII had failed on multiple occasion to challenge fascism in Europe before and during World War II, but he took a much more proactive position in the battle against Communism in the Cold War, going so far as to excommunicate all Communists in 1949.¹² Pius was terrified of Communism and this fear spread throughout the Church, spurred on by anti-Catholic violence in Communist Eastern Europe and China.¹³ Encouraged by Pius XII’s staunch anti-Communist stance and edicts, Catholics grew in influence and acceptance in mainstream American culture. Allying themselves with anti-Communist Protestant forces, Catholics became part of a moral argument against Communism that gave them conditional acceptance into the political and social mainstream. Even the former American fears about the pope were set aside, as according to James Carroll, a former Catholic priest and anti-war activist, Pius XII became:

a crucial ally in the greatest struggle of all, the one against what [Americans] knew as “atheistic Communism”. ... [Communism] explicitly [targeted] religion. ... Neutral no longer, the pope was a powerful ally, and as news broke of priests and nuns being murdered and bishops being imprisoned in China, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, Americans realized that Catholics were on the front lines *for them*.¹⁴

¹² James Carroll, *An American Requiem: God, My Father, and the War That Came between Us* (Boston: Mariner Books, 1966). 50.

¹³ John Cooney, *The American Pope: The Life and Times of Francis Cardinal Spellman* (New York, N.Y.: Times Books, 1984). 218-219. Carroll, *An American Requiem: God, My Father, and the War That Came between Us*. 50.

¹⁴ Carroll, *An American Requiem : God, My Father, and the War That Came between Us*. 50-51.

Even after Pius XII's death, his influence in America remained strong through the bishops he had appointed, who exerted enormous influence over their diocese and over American Catholic life. These bishops were highly influential not only in convincing Catholics to support the Vietnam War and anti-Communism in general, but in suppressing anti-war protests and opposition voices.

Cardinal Francis Spellman, Archbishop of New York, was one such influential leader in the American Catholic hierarchy. Beyond that role, he was an important figure in secular American politics. Spellman was a uniquely powerful figure in the American pro-war movement. In many ways, he came to embody pro-war Catholic thought, and gave the pro-war, anti-Communist movement a voice of American moral authority. He fully embraced his identity as an American and all that came with it: a sense of nationalism that bordered on jingoism, unquestioning support for the presidency, and a rallying cry against the evils of Communism. Spellman and the bishops under him were a formative and powerful voice, one that led many conservative Americans very effectively in their support of the war, even as national opinion began to change.¹⁵ Spellman was wealthy, powerful, and a nationalist at heart. Spellman believed that Americans were the reason that a Communist takeover of Western Europe had not happened and was fiercely proud of this. Like Pius XII, Spellman greatly feared Communism and the threat of its further spread, which helped explain his fervent pro-war attitudes.

Spellman's fear of Communism was perhaps most clearly shown through his support of American intervention in the Vietnam War, no matter the cost. He cited Vietnam as a failure of Communist containment as early as 1954 and began to pressure President Dwight D. Eisenhower to increase assistance to the French Troops there.¹⁶ Even after Pope John XXIII published his anti-war encyclical *Pacem in Terris* in 1963, which many people took as a refutation of

¹⁵ Cooney, *The American Pope : The Life and Times of Francis Cardinal Spellman..* 308-09.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 239.

American policy in Vietnam, Spellman remained firm in his hawkish stance, declaring that “less than victory is inconceivable.”¹⁷ In 1965, John XXIII’s successor Pope Paul VI addressed the United Nations, where he indirectly criticized Spellman’s stance on Vietnam.¹⁸ Spellman was infuriated by those remarks, but remained unmoved. With close ties to the military, he continued to support the war aggressively, long after the majority of Americans had turned away from it.¹⁹ He even supported an increase in bombing of North Vietnamese cities towards the end of the Johnson Administration, a stance which took Spellman away from Pope Pius XII’s teachings about the evils of civilian bombings.²⁰ But Spellman and his fellow bishops went beyond encouraging their diocese to support the war. They began an active campaign to silence Catholic voices who were opposed to it, despite that opposition coming from the Vatican itself.

The release of *Pacem in Terris*, in 1963 by John XXIII fundamentally changed the way that the Church considered war in the twentieth century. In this encyclical, John XXIII declared, “It is hardly possible to imagine that in the atomic era war could be used as an instrument of peace.”²¹ This was a substantial revision to Just War Theory, effectively arguing that there was no such thing as a proportional response, given the capacity for radioactive fallout. The Papacy’s softening stance on Communism and more dedicated opposition to warfare in the nuclear age after Vatican II emboldened anti-war Catholics. While Pope Pius XII had declared that it was

¹⁷ Ibid. 290.

¹⁸ Pope Paul VI continued his predecessor’s attempts to bring about peace in Vietnam. His statements against war would be used by a protester at SJU in 1966, as seen in Image A. Cooney, *The American Pope: The Life and Times of Francis Cardinal Spellman*. 289.

¹⁹ Spellman staunchly supported the war until his death in 1967.

²⁰ Carroll, *An American Requiem : God, My Father, and the War That Came between Us*. 50-51. Cooney, *The American Pope : The Life and Times of Francis Cardinal Spellman*. 299. Carroll, *An American Requiem : God, My Father, and the War That Came between Us*. 49.

²¹ An encyclical is a Papal decree. Carroll, *An American Requiem : God, My Father, and the War That Came between Us*. 49.

impossible for a Catholic to be a Conscientious Objector to a Just War, John XXIII had opened the option for Catholics to argue for Conscientious Objector status in the Vietnam Draft.²²

Even after his death, John XXIII had given anti-war Catholics a powerful weapon: he had shifted the Papal mandate from the camp of the hawks to the doves. As a result, the doves had a theological precedent and an encyclical to cite when debating fellow Catholics about the war. The Pope had given them a theological argument, saying that even fighting Communism did not justify bloodshed, particularly in a nuclear age. While under Pius XII, the dangers of Communism were considered a fight worth going to war for, now the fight had an overtone of potential nuclear weapons, meaning that the cost (potential nuclear deployment) was not worth what could be gained (the containment of Communism).

When John XXIII called the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), he began a process of modernizing the Church. He also moved away from the idea that it was impossible for the Pope to be wrong, being openly willing to criticize his predecessor for his actions and inactions during World War II.²³ These criticisms would cause confusion among Catholics about Catholic identity and their place in the modern world. The effect was keenly felt in America, where modernization would clash with the traditions and cultural identity.

But despite John XXIII's statements, much of the Catholic hierarchy in America would continue its anti-Communist, pro-war rhetoric. Many American Catholics had tied their identity to anti-Communism and found these changes to be troubling. A Catholic Church which was no longer fervently anti-Communist was a Church which might not be accepted, once again, into the mainstream of American culture.

²² Ibid. 73.

²³ Carroll, *An American Requiem : God, My Father, and the War That Came between Us*.

Yet the anti-war forces in the Vatican continued to rise. Although Pope John XXIII was anti-war in the general scope of his reforms and opened the doors for Americans to push back against the war in Vietnam, it was his successor, Pope Paul VI who really began the papal effort to end the war in Vietnam. The first Pope to visit America, Paul VI visited Cardinal Spellman in New York City, and while he was there, ended up directly and indirectly pushing back against Spellman's hawkishness. "No more war, never again war!" Paul declared while addressing the United Nations, a rallying cry which Catholic protesters would take up.²⁴ That same evening, he addressed ninety thousand people in Yankee Stadium, and continued his theme.

First of all you must love peace. Second thought: You must serve the cause of peace. Serve it and not make use of it for aims other than the true aims of peace. Third thought: Peace must be based on moral and religious principles, which must make it sincere and stable. Politics do not suffice to sustain a durable peace.²⁵

Paul VI did not stop at making statements against the war; instead he began his own campaign for peace. Taking advantage of the presence of Catholicism in Vietnam, he stepped up a significant missionary effort in the country, reaching out to Communists all over the globe.²⁶ At one point, the Pope was even in direct contact with Ho Chi Minh.²⁷ He actively sought to see the end of the fighting, and his efforts encouraged American Catholics who also opposed the war.

Spellman's influence in America meant that the anti-war movement amongst Catholics was sometimes difficult, even with papal support. Some of the earliest and most influential American Catholic anti-war voices were those of the brothers Phillip and Daniel Berrigan, both of whom were Catholic priests. They had started protesting during the Civil Rights movement

²⁴ Cooney, *The American Pope : The Life and Times of Francis Cardinal Spellman*. 292.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 292.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 293.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 293.

and were some of the earliest voices against the war. The Berrigans were radical voices; many Catholics shied away from them, finding their methods, such as demonstrating publicly and purposefully getting arrested, to be unpalatable. In an interview with Joan Morrison, co-author of the book *From Camelot to Kent State: The Sixties Experience in the Words of Those Who Lived It*, Phillip Berrigan condemned the Catholic hierarchy of the time for being complicit in the great evils of the day, particularly racism.²⁸ The Berrigans were not only criticizing American issues as Catholics, they were criticizing the Catholic Church's role in America society and its complicity in America's wars, creating a radical anti-war voice with a distinctly Catholic twist.

The Berrigans were not under the direct control of bishops such as Cardinal Spellman, belonging to religious orders instead of being diocesan priests. They belonged to the Jesuit (Daniel) and Josephite (Phillip) orders. This frustrated Spellman, but he had a great deal of influence even outside of his diocese and over the Jesuit order in particular. He was a major financier of the Jesuits, assisting them in getting reparations from Congress for war-damaged Jesuit properties in the Philippines after World War II and aiding the expansion of a Jesuit university, Fordham (Spellman's alma mater).²⁹ He used this influence to encourage them to send Daniel Berrigan to Latin America.³⁰ Daniel was considered to be the greater threat of the two brothers, being a prominent poet as well as an activist, whose poetry often discussed the war in Vietnam. He had become to Spellman "a symbol of all that was wrong with both America and the Church since John XXIII had become Pope."³¹ In the interview with Morrison, Phillip Berrigan laughed at the irony of this exile, claiming that his brother had become further

²⁸ Phillip Berrigan, interview by Joan Morrison, Archives Center, National Museum of American History. 89.

²⁹ Cooney, *The American Pope : The Life and Times of Francis Cardinal Spellman*.287.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 288.

³¹ *Ibid.* 288.

radicalized while he was in Latin America.³² But Spellman had less influence over the Josephite Order and although Phillip Berrigan would eventually be thrown out of the priesthood, it would be for his marriage to a nun rather than for his anti-war activities.³³

What was particularly notable about the Berrigans was not that they were protesting, but it was that they were protesting in a loud, public, and demonstrable manner while identifying themselves as members of the Catholic Church. Phillip claimed that the Catholic Church higher-ups were frequently furious with him and his brother, encouraging them to stop protesting, and particularly to stop getting arrested.³⁴ The brothers did not listen however, and were the perpetrators of several elaborate anti-war stunts such as using napalm to set fire to draft cards, and splattering other draft cards with blood in order to make statements with both religious and political implications.³⁵ But while the Berrigans were seen by many as being too radical, they were not alone in their criticisms of the war.

Another important influence on Catholic thought during the period was the magazine *Commonweal*, a seminal Catholic magazine, founded in 1924. It was written and edited by primarily lay Catholics and had an intellectual focus. *Commonweal* was very outspoken about the Communist threat in Asia and supported the initial military action in the 1950s and early 60s, despite acknowledging the risk of a World War III.³⁶ But when real military action began in the mid-1960s, their stance began to change. Rodger Van Allen wrote in his book on *Commonweal* that “by [August 1964], *The Commonweal* saw a negotiated settlement in Vietnam as the only way out, though it suspected that a “massive military build-up by the United States, and perhaps

³² Berrigan.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Rodger Van Allen, *The Commonweal and American Catholicism* (U.S.A.: Fortress Press, 1974). 154.

a token raid or two on North Vietnam” would be necessary to get the Communists to the negotiating table.”³⁷ Although writers disagreed with the escalation of the war, once the buildup began they also believed that a full withdrawal was the wrong way to go. They initially supported aggressive tactics such as bombings as a negotiation tool.³⁸ But as 1965 went on, they were “giving measured praise to those demonstrating against the war, though they regretted that the demonstrations seemed only to solidify support for the administration. The demonstrators, they said, had pointed out very real moral issues.”³⁹ By December, they called for an end to the bombings, and began full-throated criticism of Vietnam, encouraging outright civil disobedience by 1967.⁴⁰ The students of CSB and SJU were aware of *Commonweal*, and a few students referred to it in their own writings about the Vietnam War.

The dissonance between the anti-war Papacy, the pro-war Bishops, and lower-level priest and laity thoughts about the war created a great deal of confusion about Catholic identity during this time. Many American Catholics enjoyed the security and acceptance that Catholic anti-Communism had bought them during the Cold War and were reluctant to turn away from it by supporting the anti-war movement. Others found themselves horrified by the violence in Vietnam and turned to the reforms of Vatican II to try to come to grips with their roles in the modern world. Marc Gilbert, author of an essay discussing Catholicism during the Vietnam War, points to this era as the start of an American Catholic schism between conservative, pro-war and liberal, anti-war Catholics. This schism could not be personified better than through Spellman

³⁷ Ibid. 158.

³⁸ Ibid. 158-159.

³⁹ Ibid. 158-159.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 160.

and the Berrigans, who frequently antagonized Spellman and the other pro-war figures, and whom Spellman blamed for the spread of anti-war sentiments amongst Catholics.⁴¹

Background: Catholic Students and Universities

Amid the Catholic debate about the war in Vietnam were Catholic Universities, who found themselves caught between the two social waves of youth protest movements and Catholic reform. Religious background, Heineman's studies found, was equally important in determining political leanings of students as was socio-economic background. Catholics with a blue-collar, middle class background were more likely to be interested in social justice and be anti-war than their upper-class secular or Protestant counterparts.⁴² Catholic universities are relatively under-examined in terms of their anti-Vietnam activism, but Lauren De Angelis in "Catholic Activism: How Religious Identity Shaped College Peace and Anti-ROTC Movements in Philadelphia" examined two Catholic universities in Pennsylvania to see how their identity affected the policies there, while Helen Ciernick examined schools in San Francisco in "A Matter of Conscience: The Selective Conscientious Objector, Catholic College Students, and the Vietnam War." Ciernick wrote that:

Catholic college students, in contrast to their restrained response to the civil rights movement, joined the anti-Vietnam war movement early and remained active until the end of the war in 1973. Like their non-Catholic counterparts, Catholic student activists fostered debate on the war by sponsoring teach-ins on United States foreign policy, encouraging intercollegiate participation in mass demonstrations, and demanding on-campus draft-counseling services.⁴³

Ciernick argued that Catholic identity, which was undergoing massive shifts during the

⁴¹ Kenneth J Heineman, *Vietnam War on Campus: Other Voices, More Distant Drums* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2001). Cooney. *The American Pope: The Life and Times of Francis Cardinal Spellman*.

⁴² Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era*. 79.

⁴³ Helen Ciernick, "A Matter of Conscience: The Selective Conscientious Objector, Catholic College Students, and the Vietnam War," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 26, no. 3 (2008).

1960s, fundamentally informed the arguments of Catholic students during this time. This gave shape to both the method of their opposition, such as Peace Masses and the concept of Selective Conscientious Objection (an idea that if one opposed specific wars, such as Vietnam, one should be exempt from the draft), but also in grounding the discussions in moral and ethical terms that would be familiar to Catholic students.⁴⁴ De Angelis also found that shifts in Catholic identity played a role in the debate. In the post-Vatican II world, De Angelis argued, the intellectual foundation of Catholic colleges changed, allowing for more open debate and conversation, particularly as religious orders began conscientious efforts to liberalize and recruit more lay (non-clerical) faculty members.⁴⁵

This increase in lay faculty, De Angelis argued, allowed for the anti-war movement to prosper.

Students had the ability to ask the opinion of their lay professors, instead of turning solely to the clergy. More radical faculty members had greater accessibility to pupils, allowing them to easily influence student opinions on war, peace, and violence. No longer did religious orders have a monopoly on the formation of campus-wide opinions. Influential lay professors profoundly affected these communities by participating in debates and open discussions. Their voices often eclipsed more formal stances taken by religious educators and administrators.⁴⁶

Catholicism itself was undergoing massive changes during this time, and these changes were coincidentally creating an environment where a Catholic anti-war movement could potentially flourish. There was not only a rise in prominence of these lay faculty, but also a lessening of clerical power as a result of the Second Vatican Council. Pope John XXIII undercut a great deal of clerical power during his brief tenure, which would have great ramifications for

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Lauren Michele De Angelis, "Catholic Activism: How Religious Identity Shaped College Peace and Anti-Rotc Movements in Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania History* 84, no. 1 (2017).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

the Vietnam War debate in America.⁴⁷ He increased the power of lay Catholics, further diminishing the theological power of bishops and priests.⁴⁸ This made the voices of radical anti-war faculty members on Catholic campuses all the more powerful, and made it harder for religious administrators to silence them.

These changes to Catholicism allowed for the students Ciernick studied to try to argue for Selective Conscientious Objector status and were the root of the anti-ROTC movements that De Angelis studied. In general, the Catholic movement greatly mirrored that of their secular counterparts, but the religious identity affected how they protested and what their concerns were.

How Did CSB and SJU Compare to Other Universities?

The College of St. Benedict and St. John's University were different still from the areas of Catholic student movement studied by De Angelis and Ciernick. Unlike those colleges, CSB and SJU were run by Benedictine monks and sisters. Unlike Jesuit and Diocesan schools, there was no significant push towards increasing the presence of lay professors, although they were already present, and many of the priests, monks, and sisters who were already professors, as well as certain members of the administration, openly supported the anti-war movement. Possibly because of this support, CSB and SJU got earlier starts on their activism, with St. Joseph's and La Salle's activism as studied by De Angelis only gaining traction after 1968, while CSB and SJU were active as early as 1965.

Like the schools examined by De Angelis and Ciernick, CSB and SJU were private, Catholic, liberal arts colleges and single sex schools. As such, they straddled the line somewhere between prestigious selective universities and state schools. Socio-economically, the students

⁴⁷ Carroll, *An American Requiem : God, My Father, and the War That Came between Us*.

⁴⁸ Lay is defined as "non-ordained" members of the Catholic Church. Carroll, *An American Requiem: God, My Father, and the War That Came between Us*. 74.

would have had more in common with their midwestern public-school counterparts, as studied by Heineman. Although Heineman's examination disregards the shifts in Catholic culture from this time, his evidence lends credence to the concept that, in a large concentration of Catholics of middle economic status, many would be socially active and anti-war.

The nature of protests during this time at CSB and SJU were different from the national movement. While the protest actions at state universities were often regarded by their administrations as "communist" activity, the actions of CSB and SJU students were generally regarded more as a form of religious activism. Accusations of communist sympathies were not very common at CSB and SJU, likely because the root of the anti-war sentiments themselves were usually couched in religious terms rather than the language of Communism.⁴⁹ Civil disobedience on the CSB and SJU campuses was not even regulated until 1970, and it was in response to racial protests, not anti-war protests, that such regulations were implemented.⁵⁰ Instead of emerging out of a free-speech movement or a history of civil disobedience, the CSB|SJU anti-war movements were born out of a Catholic conversation about the nature of violence and war in a nuclear age. While most anti-war activists across the nation debated the *legality* of the war, CSB and SJU students were not as concerned with that. The articles from *The Record* did not discuss the Tonkin Resolution or the lack of a formal declaration of war. Instead, they focused on the ethical and religious implications of the war, no matter which side they found themselves on, differentiating the local conversation about the war from the national conversation. In this, they found themselves more in accord with their Catholic counterparts as

⁴⁹ Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era*. 177. Ruberto, Leo. "Love or Treason Questioned in Mass Offering." *The Record/The Torch*, March 28 1968, 2.

⁵⁰ Peggy L. Roske and Kenneth M. Jones, "A Proposition Concerning Survival: Black Students Occupy the SJU President's Office" (2017). Intercultural Directions Council Lectures. 13.
https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/idc_lectures/13

studied by Ciernick and De Angelis. The concerns of CSB, SJU, and other Catholic universities were radically different from the secular movement in the beginning, although as the war progressed they found themselves sharing concerns with the secular movement: concerns such as the draft, the presence of ROTC on campus, and the escalating violence in Vietnam.

Unlike many universities described by Heineman, there seems not to have been any official efforts by the faculty and administration at CSB and SJU to stop the anti-war movement, and indeed, there is evidence that many of the CSB and SJU professors supported it. Heineman noted that "Faculty supporting liberal politicians and civil liberties in the 1950s, and sympathetic to the antiwar movement in the 1960s, were concentrated in liberal arts and social science departments."⁵¹ This was particularly notable, given that CSB and SJU were campuses focused on the Liberal Arts, so that the faculty at the institutions might have been more sympathetic overall than other university faculties. Many voices in authority being sympathetic to student concerns might have helped temper the anti-war movement at CSB and SJU, preventing it from reaching the violent escalations present at Berkley and Kent State. De Angelis found that at Catholic Universities in Pennsylvania, clergy who were in administrative roles were often unsupportive of any anti-war movement, while the lay faculty members were more supportive.⁵² At CSB and SJU however, the clergy were in administrative roles *and* faculty roles, making CSB and SJU a unique campus environment, with their movements finding support from faculty, both lay and clerical.

While De Angelis found that the administration at the two Pennsylvania schools did not show direct support for the anti-war effort, professors and members of the faculty at CSB and

⁵¹ Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era*. 45.

⁵² De Angelis, "Catholic Activism: How Religious Identity Shaped College Peace and Anti-Rotc Movements in Philadelphia."

SJU were active in the anti-war movement. the Government Department at SJU was heavily involved in campus discussions about the war. In April 1967, *The Record* reported that the department had met with representatives of groups such as Young Democrats, Young Republicans, Students for a Democratic Society, and Young Americans for Freedom to discuss the Vietnam War. Discussion roamed over a variety of topics, such as land redistribution, freedom of conscience, the possibility of the draft applying to women, withdrawal from the conflict, and the possibility of victory in Vietnam.⁵³ Although the article itself does not indicate whether the faculty had an official position, the title of the article, “Govt. Dept. Critiques Viet Nam,” indicates that their position was not necessarily neutral.⁵⁴ The Government Department faculty included both lay and monastic members. In contrast to De Angelis’ contention regarding Catholic institutions, both lay professors and monastic community members were active in fostering discussion and activism.⁵⁵ De Angelis’ contrary findings could be explained by the different orders of Catholicism to which the clergy involved belonged. The Jesuits who operated St. Joseph’s College were an order under more direct influence of the generally pro-war bishops, so the most that they could do was support “open dialogue” on campus, while the Benedictines were under the authority of the Abbot, and then the Abbot Primate in Rome, who answered directly to the Pope. They did not have an official line they needed to toe, giving individual members more freedom, and allowing those who were so inclined to be able to be activists or spokespeople as they wished without fear of repercussions. In addition, the Benedictines from St John’s were already deeply committed to the Second Vatican Council, and were thus more likely to take cues from the dove-like Pope than the hawkish Spellman.

⁵³ “Govt. Dept. Critiques Viet Nam.” *The Record*, April 17 1967, 7.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ De Angelis, "Catholic Activism: How Religious Identity Shaped College Peace and Anti-Rotc Movements in Philadelphia."

Like the students studied by De Angelis and Ciernick, students at SJU had to consider Conscientious Objection and its partner, Selective Conscientious Objection. In 1966, Father Brice Howard, the SJU Dean of Men, agreed to act as a counselor for Conscientious Objectors.⁵⁶ According to *The Record*, “[Father] Brice is also ready to help interested persons... come to a better understanding of the backgrounds of Catholic thought and practice on the subject... Various books, pamphlets and guides can now be obtained from Father Brice, ranging from the *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* to the *Handbook for Conscientious Objectors*.”⁵⁷ Campus clergy on other campuses also set up Draft Information Centers to provide counselling for students in April of 1968, advising the students on conscientious objection and alternative service, similar to the options available at SJU, but two years later.⁵⁸ This gap in time could be seen as how the culture of the SJU campus required such guidance earlier, or the more pro-active stance of the Benedictine community in trying to play a role in the movement.

John XXIII had opened the possibility for Catholics to argue for Conscientious Objector status in the Draft by refuting the concept of Communism as an evil that had to be stopped at all costs, making a war against Communism not inherently “Just.”⁵⁹ However, Catholic men were often unsuccessful in convincing a Draft Board of this. Dr. Nicholas Hayes, who attended Saint John’s University during the Vietnam War and had a letter arguing for his Conscientious Objector (C.O.) status written by one of the monks. He recounted how, when summoned for the draft, he was asked “so you’re saying you object to the war because you’re Catholic?” and when he replied positively, he was asked to “explain the Crusades.”⁶⁰ He then was drafted, although he

⁵⁶ “Advice Given To Objectors.” *The Record*, December 16 1966, 3.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Heineman. *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era*. 185

⁵⁹ Carroll. *An American Requiem: God, My Father, and the War That Came between Us*.73.

⁶⁰ Hayes, Nicholas. “Interview with Nicholas Hayes”; By Stephanie Haeg.

never served.

As outlined by the experience of Nicholas Hayes, Catholic objection to Vietnam on religious grounds was part of a theological shift. Unlike numerous other religious organizations, such as the Society of Friends or the Jehovah's Witnesses who had traditional precedence for claiming Conscientious Objector status, Catholics had been supportive of prior wars. Previously, Catholics had supported war if it had fallen into one of the categories outlined in Catholic "Just War Theory," which allowed Catholics to argue that certain wars were ethical. But Pope John XXIII's 1963 encyclical *Pacem in Terris* had brought in the nuclear angle, arguing that because of the scale of human destruction that was possible in the age of atomic weapons, there could be no more Just Wars. Nevertheless, Protestants on the Draft Boards, and indeed many Catholics, could and did choose to ignore this. This Catholic theology against war and the modern schism in Catholic identity made it difficult to claim to be a Conscientious Objector while also being Catholic. This complicated attempts by Catholics to avoid the draft using religious faith.

In an interview, Father Rene McGraw OSB described the laborious process of helping Catholic students prove that they should be deferred on Conscientious Objector grounds. He often wrote letters to draft boards, using careful theological arguments. He said that Pope John XXIII and Paul VI's arguments, both against the Vietnam War and against war in general were helpful, although he admitted that questions about the crusades, such as the one asked to Nicholas Hayes, were very common. In some cases, he forwarded correspondence with students where they had expressed concerns about violence and the war to the draft boards.⁶¹

CSB and SJU were in a unique position, having a demographic that was predisposed to support the anti-war movement, being religiously affiliated institutions, being liberal arts schools

⁶¹ McGraw, Rene. "Interview with Rene McGraw"; By Stephanie Haeg.

with faculty support for the anti-war movement, and being part of a religious order that was not under the direct influence of any part of the Diocesan Catholic hierarchy, and indeed, the St. John's Abbey, in contrast to the anti-Second Vatican Council bishops, supported and contributed to Vatican II. The students at CSB and SJU had similarities to their fellow students across the nation and in other Catholic colleges, but they were emerging as Catholic students with their own unique perspectives and arguments, and a different point of origin. Although they would eventually find many points of agreement with the national anti-war movement, they would always retain their uniquely Catholic perspective on the Vietnam War. But even as they moved closer to the rest of the nation and became more focused on the personal rather than on the wider ethical questions, the anti-war movement at SJU retained its Catholic sensibility, which paralleled what was seen by Ciernick and De Angelis. They would also, due to the more accepting nature of the CSB and SJU campuses, differ from their fellow Catholic universities, and start their activism and opposition earlier.

Although there were indeed Peace Masses, demonstrations, sit-ins, and debates about the war, the main discussion about Vietnam at CSB and SJU took place in the student newspapers, *The Record* and *The Torch*. Initially, there were individual opinion columns about the war, but after 1966, these columns and articles became an open form of dialogue and debate, with many issues containing agreements and rebuttals to arguments posited in previous issues. The newspapers became the public forum for debate and discussions of the topic. It is also notable that, although most of the articles written in *The Torch* and *The Record* were concerned about local issues (such as poor food, the quality of housing, and events on campus) with few exceptions, the discussions and the debates about Vietnam were not grounded in personal experience, indicating that this was the most important aspect of public life for these students.

And the language, rhetoric, and arguments they used to discuss the war were firmly rooted in what was happening in the Catholic world during this time. The students of CSB and SJU would have been drawing on two separate strands of Catholic tradition and listening to certain prominent voices.

The College of Saint Benedict, Saint John's University, and the War in Vietnam

1965

Compared with the national movement, elements of the CSB|SJU community became involved in the anti-war movement early on. In March 1965, only a week after the first U.S. Marines landed in Danang, the Young Democrats from both CSB and SJU attended the annual convention of the Minnesota Federation of Young Democrats. There, they assisted in drafting and passing a resolution calling for “a negotiated peace in South Viet Nam.”⁶² The Young Democrats agreed on six major points, including that the United States should seek a cease fire and provide economic aid to both North and South Vietnam.⁶³ At the same time, the Young Republicans “left the enemy territory of predominantly [Democratic] St. John’s... for a weekend in a more friendly political atmosphere.”⁶⁴ The Young Republicans’ agenda, however, did not mention the war in Vietnam.⁶⁵ Two other St. John’s students attended a peace march in Washington D.C. in April of that year to call for an end to hostilities in Vietnam.⁶⁶ It is notable that SJU students attended this march; it was very early on in the anti-war movement, and it was one of the first major actions taken by the organized movement, drawing approximately 16,000 protesters, most of them students.⁶⁷ The presence of the SJU students indicate that at least some students were aware of the problems with the war significantly earlier than much of the nation. In August of that year, only 24% of Americans answered “yes” to “In view of the developments since we entered the fighting in Vietnam, do you think the U.S. made a mistake sending troops to

⁶² “Clubs Attend Conventions.” *The Record*, March 15 1965, 3.

⁶³ “Young Demos Pass Three Resolutions.” *The Torch*, March 9 1965, 3.

⁶⁴ “Clubs Attend Conventions.” *The Record*, March 15 1965, 3.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Drexel, Joe. “SJU Leftists Join March On Washington.” *The Record*, April 30 1965, 2.

⁶⁷ Jeff Leen, “Washington Comes of Age; the Vietnam Protests: When Worlds Collided Series: The Century; Occ,” *The Washington Post*, 09/27/1999 Sep 27 1999.

fight in Vietnam?”⁶⁸ One of the attending students, Joe Drexel, wrote a report on the march for *The Record* to criticize the general campus community, calling his fellow students “sheltered,” and saying that Roman Catholic universities were less aware of these social issues than the rest of the nation.⁶⁹ Although this belief might have been accurate in April of 1965, Ciernick and De Angelis showed that Catholic colleges were not monolithically ignorant for the duration of the war.

Individual students at CSB and SJU also held strong opinions about the war that were based in Catholic rhetoric but were not specifically stated to be theological in nature. In an opinion piece in October 1965, student Dennis Williams argued that the anti-war movement was naïve, fueled by a “wide-spread fallacy.” Instead, he argued, the war in Vietnam was necessary to prevent the engulfing of “underdeveloped nations... and eventually the traditional democracies.”⁷⁰ Striking a rather traditional pro-war line, such as that favored by Cardinal Spellman, he argued that the United States was on the defensive in the war against Communism, and so the war in Vietnam was a “Just” war. He did not feel the need to couch his language in specific religious terms, instead focusing on the dangers of Communism, and even more specifically the dangers of Asian Communism, which he considered to be a distinct entity from Soviet Communism. But while he was not specifically using religious language, he was still echoing the traditional language of pro-war Catholics as articulated by Cardinal Spellman. Instead of answering the secular legal concerns, Williams focused on answering the religious question of whether Just War Theory applied to the Truman Doctrine, which he concluded, resolutely, it did.

⁶⁸ Jerome Skolnick, “Anti-War Protest” in *The Politics of Protest (Report of the Federal Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence)*. (1969): 44.

⁶⁹ Drexel, Joe. “SJU Leftists Join March On Washington.” *The Record*, April 30 1965, 2.

⁷⁰ Williams, Dennis. “Asian Marxism Spurs U.S. Policy.” *The Record*, October 18 1965, 2.

In December of that year, CSB's Faculty-Student council advertised the sale of Christmas Cards by the National Student Committee for the Defense of Viet Nam, a group which was founded by the National Chairman of the College Republicans to oppose student societies such as the SDS, and sent them to American soldiers serving in Vietnam.⁷¹ This action seems to indicate that support for the soldiers was present at CSB, if not support for the war itself. The Faculty-Student Council also circulated a petition "giving students the opportunity to indicate their approval of U.S. foreign policy in Vietnam."⁷² The wording is important, as it seems to assume that students would express positive opinions, instead of the negative ones that would be observed in polls a few years later. The Council circulated the petition, but it "[was] not taking a stand either for or against the United States' policy."⁷³ Although there were monastic members on the Council, there appears to be no religious reasoning behind the action, at least not any noted in *The Torch*. But caring for soldiers was a traditional aspect of gender roles, which might explain the difference in the early approaches at CSB and SJU.

The students at CSB and SJU were generally in line with liberal Catholicism as embodied in *Commonweal*, even a few months ahead of it. In December of 1965, the editorial board had only just begun to call for a cessation in the bombing, a ceasefire, and negotiations.⁷⁴

1966

The CSB/SJU students' identities as Catholics and their attendance at Catholic universities was informing their opinions, writings, and activism on the war. These students were aware of Catholic anti-war conversations and clearly were, in general, choosing to align

⁷¹ Roushar, Margaret. "President Summarizes Council Aims For Year." *The Torch*, December 3 1965, 2. Hagopian, Patrick. 2009. *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Veterans, Memorials, and the Politics of Healing*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press. 205-206.

⁷² Roushar, Margaret. "President Summarizes Council Aims For Year." *The Torch*, December 3 1965, 2.

⁷³ "Group Spurs Viet Interest." *The Torch*, December 3 1965, 3.

⁷⁴ Van Allen, Rodger. *The Commonweal and American Catholicism*. U.S.A.: Fortress Press, 1974: 149-150.

themselves with anti-war Catholic figures such as Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, as well as the Berrigan Brothers and *Commonweal*, over pro-war figures such as Pope Pius XII and Cardinal Spellman.

But the conversation at CSB and SJU was not a one-sided support for the anti-war movement. Emerging from the pro-war side, in January of 1966, a graduate of the class of 1963 wrote to *The Record*, lashing out at pacifists and reasserting the importance of fighting communism. Lt. Bill Schiebler wrote:

How [could Americans help the Vietnamese] if our own countrymen back home weren't going to back us? I couldn't help but think about how "We Americans" had gained our freedom. We didn't win it by demonstrating or rationalizing against the Redcoats at Concord and Lexington! Instead we won it by the shot and powder and the blood of our fore-fathers who fired the shot heard round the world."⁷⁵

This characterization of the anti-war movement as unpatriotic and anti-American was common at the time, particularly in the pro-war Catholic movement that Cardinal Spellman had encouraged and Lt. Schiebler represented. Communism, to Lt. Schiebler, was a far greater threat than the horrors of war that the anti-war movement was protesting. Communism was not only a threat to America and the American way of life, he declared, it was a threat to religion and religious identity. "I have grown to know Communism as it really is... with its ruthless, deceiving and decaying effect on all human dignity and any value system that embraces God!"⁷⁶ Although he did not cite it directly, Lt. Schiebler seemed to draw greatly upon Just War Theory, arguing that the evils of Communism justified the action of war and framed fighting against the atheistic Communism was a form of Catholic duty. Lt. Schiebler clearly tied his own Catholic identity into his argument, praising the importance of Catholic education, and frequently calling upon

⁷⁵ Schiebler, Bill. "Johnny Soldier Lashes Out At Pacifists." *The Record*, January 20 1966, 2.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

and praising God and country alike. He compared the situation in Vietnam and Korea to World War II and argued that military action was absolutely necessary.⁷⁷

Despite the religious nature of CSB and SJU, there was still a great deal of secular activity on the campuses, where the students paralleled their secular counterparts in their methods of debating and discussing the war. The Young Republicans held a “Teach-in” in February of 1966, with panel discussions on military involvement and social issues surrounding the Vietnam War.⁷⁸ The Young Democrats and Young Republicans also sponsored a debate on Vietnam. The debater in favor of the war was Reverend Daniel Lyons, a Jesuit priest and journalist. Arguing against the war was a lay person, Doctor Burnham Terrell, a philosophy professor from the University of Minnesota.⁷⁹ These were similar to the methods of discussion utilized by secular colleges, as shown in Heinemann, although the presence of religious figures in the debate indicates that the students wanted to hear religious arguments on the subject.

CSB students also used Catholicism as part of their dialogue about the war. In February, College of Saint Benedict student “E.E.” discussed the war at length in an editorial. She quoted Secretary of Defense McNamara’s opinion that deserting Vietnam would be disastrous for America and concluded that women should be more committed to the war, and should take an interest in it, even if it was only through prayer.⁸⁰

Some anti-war students ended up taking their movement, with its explicitly Catholic values, beyond the pages of *The Record*, and to the roads surrounding the campus. In April of that year, students picketed the opening of Alcuin Library because of the attendance of pro-war

⁷⁷ Schiebler, Bill. “Johnny Soldier Lashes Out At Pacifists.” *The Record*, January 20 1966, 2.

⁷⁸ Salus, Steve. “YD’s, YR’s to Attend Conventions.” *The Record*, January 20 1966, 1.

⁷⁹ “Lyons, Terrell Set For Viet Debate.” *The Record*, October 28, 1966.

⁸⁰ Many of the columnists in *The Torch* chose to use their initials instead of their full names. There are a few instances of SJU also using this journalistic practice. E.E. “Women and War.” *The Torch*, February 4 1966, 2.

Vice President Hubert Humphrey. This protest was small, although articles in *The Record* from that time indicate it had been planned to be larger, but was ultimately scaled down.⁸¹ Although the CSB and SJU Young Democrats did not officially cite Catholicism as one of the reasons for their anti-war stance in March of 1965, the protestors themselves did, with one quoting Pope Paul VI on his sign.⁸² Joe Drexel, the student who marched in Washington in 1965 noted that the event took place on “Holy Saturday,” indicating his actions did at least have a connection to his Catholicism, and might have been behind his reasoning for attending the march. Compared to the national movements, this activism was getting started earlier, using specifically religious reasoning and language. The picketing of Alcuin Library to protest Vice President Humphrey’s presence on campus contrasts strongly with the way protests proceeded on the more radical, elite campuses. Elite schools during this time were raiding draft boards, intimidating military recruiters, and attacking Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara’s car.⁸³ These radical, violent protests were already underway in 1966 at those elite campuses, and such protests would spread to many public universities as the anti-war movement went forward. Even other Catholic campuses saw their protests turn to violence, with pro- and anti-war forces clashing physically.⁸⁴ Such violent activism is in contrast with the movement at CSB and SJU, since both campuses remained non-violent, if disruptive, throughout the war.

But even these peaceful protests on campus were criticized by *The Record* as being disruptive or unnecessary. Larry Haeg’s “Think Pink” column typically appeared in the Opinion Section of *The Record*, but on Vice President Hubert Humphrey’s 1966 visit to campus for the

⁸¹ Hunstock, Jon. “Demonstrating an Image.” *The Record*, April 29 1966, 2.

The reasoning for the protest being called off is very unclear. Hunstock describes it being “nipped in the bud”, and that it was planned by a “certain English professor and his fellow peace mongers.”

⁸² See Image A

⁸³ Heineman. *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era*. 129

⁸⁴ De Angelis, "Catholic Activism: How Religious Identity Shaped College Peace and Anti-Rotc Movements in Philadelphia."

groundbreaking of Alcuin Library, it was moved to the front page.⁸⁵ Haeg mentioned that Saint John's had "fermented a latent amount of Catholic pacifism."⁸⁶ It is interesting to note that Haeg considered these protests to be have specifically religious motivations stemming from this Catholic pacifism, and distinguished this activity from more general pacifism, indicating that from his perspective the anti-war Catholic voices were stronger than the pro-war ones, at least on the SJU campus. Although Haeg was critical of the war, and seemed to already view it as a failure, saying it "smacks of futility," he also argued that the protesters should "separate, if only for a few hours, the man from the issue—and pay him the respect which his position and splendid abilities surely demand."⁸⁷ This could point to an early-war era kind of ambivalence; the act of protesting was not so important that it was worth the disruption of day-to-day life, at least according to Haeg.

Pro-war Catholics found even more sinister possibilities in the demonstrations and disruptions brought on by the anti-war movement. Jon Hunstock, an SJU student, wrote a letter to the editor in the same issue of *The Record*, arguing that such protests would harm Saint John's image.⁸⁸ He mocked the appearance of those who would stand against the war, describing the would-be protesters as "unshaven, unkempt and unbathed individuals, wearing sandals, sweat shirts, and shorts," drawing upon stereotypical rhetoric about war protesters from the period, and using these criticisms to dismiss them.⁸⁹ He advocated that the faculty members involved in the protest "should be dismissed and that the students involved should be expelled."⁹⁰ Hunstock rejected the argument that free speech should protect the protesters, insisting that this behavior

⁸⁵ Larry Haeg is my second cousin, twice removed.

⁸⁶ Haeg, Larry. "Hubert and the Cornball Complex." *The Record*, April 29 1966, 1.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Hunstock, Jon. "Demonstrating an Image." *The Record*, April 29 1966, 2.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

was harmful to the community, and thus could not be tolerated.⁹¹ Hunstock's fears about the image of SJU being harmed by the anti-war movement might reflect the Catholic desire to be accepted in the wider Protestant society, and concerns that acting out against the hegemony, even to follow religious beliefs, might harm the overall social acceptance of Catholics. To protest the war as Catholics, in this time when the majority of Americans still supported the war, returned Catholics to the position of the "other," moving them out of the mainstream once again.

Hunstock's letter was highly controversial, and spawned numerous responses over the next few issues, all of them arguing against his statements.⁹² E. Michael Walsh criticized Hunstock's stereotyping of the anti-war students, and compared Hunstock's argument against the freedom of protest to be one made by dictators such as Franco.⁹³ Father Rene McGraw, a noted figure on campus, a philosophy professor, and a member of the Benedictine community, also wrote to discuss Hunstock's letter, arguing that his valuing of Saint John's "image" was un-Catholic. "Should St. John's not be an image of dedication to the truth[?]"⁹⁴ McGraw questioned. He compared those protesting the war to biblical prophets speaking the truth and standing up for what was right.⁹⁵ Although his position can hardly be held as "typical" of the monastic community, since he spoke for himself rather than for the community, it shows that there was at least a faction in the monastery that was against the war.

Pope Paul VI called for an end to war in Vietnam through negotiations on October 4, 1966, and campus Catholic groups began to organize in response.⁹⁶ In October, the Young

⁹¹ Hunstock, Jon. "Demonstrating an Image." *The Record*, April 29 1966, 2.

⁹² Walsh, E. Michael. "Conformity Is Too High Priced." *The Record*, May 13 1966, 2. McGraw, Rene OSB. "Continuation Of SJU Image Controversy." *The Record*, May 27 1966, 2.

⁹³ Walsh, E. Michael. "Conformity Is Too High Priced." *The Record*, May 13 1966, 2.

⁹⁴ McGraw, Rene OSB. "Continuation Of SJU Image Controversy." *The Record*, May 27 1966, 2.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ "Pope calls for end to the Vietnam War." History.com, 2009. <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/pope-calls-for-end-to-the-vietnam-war>

Catholic Student Movement organized a Peace Mass, a uniquely Catholic form of peace advocacy, and declared a “peace month.” According to *The Record*, the YCSM had been a dying element of campus life, with their membership decreasing every graduation and very few recruits taking their place, before this activism revived them. The YCSM believed that their involvement in the anti-war movement and actions was a statement of Christian responsibility and action.⁹⁷ In 1968, a Peace Mass would be organized by the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), showing that these Catholic methods of activism remained, even later into the movement.⁹⁸

But not all students held strong beliefs about Vietnam, and many felt that SJU was an apathetic institution, perhaps referencing the sheltered worldview found by the 1965 attendees of the peace marchers. In a letter to the editor in October of 1966, Jeff Keihn referenced a letter from another student, Greg Waters, that circulated on the Saint John’s campus. The letter apparently criticized the community for its lack of engagement. Keihn argued that Waters was ignorant, ignoring the “discussions and arguments concerning Viet Nam, civil rights and other topics. And it seems that Mr. Waters did not attend the student-faculty discussions held on Viet Nam in the last two years. It must also be noted that these two talks were attended by a large number of people.”⁹⁹

1967

The national anti-war movement is considered by many to truly begin in 1967, with large protests taking place across the country, bringing the issue to the national spotlight. Although the majority of Americans still approved of sending troops to Vietnam during the first part of 1967, in July of that year, approval dropped as low as 46%, but still remained higher than the rate of

⁹⁷ “Renewed YCS Begins Year by Peace Mass.” *The Record*, October 14 1966, 3.

⁹⁸ Manderfeld, Sandra. “Draft Info Concerns FOR.” *The Record/The Torch*, March 28 1968, 11.

⁹⁹ Keihn, Jeff. “Letter to the editor.” *The Record*, October 28, 1966.

disapproval.¹⁰⁰ An examination of Catholics showed that tides were changing there as well: by July 52% opposed further escalation, compared to 36% in favor of escalation.¹⁰¹

Student and ROTC cadet Mike Scherer, who would later serve in Vietnam as a First Lieutenant, used similar arguments to Lt. Schiebler in his own letter to *The Record*, in 1967, drawing upon Catholic tradition to argue for the war. He even mentioned *Commonweal*, saying that he had drawn ideas from an article included in the November 18, 1966 issue of the magazine, entitled “Religion and War” by James Schall.¹⁰² In his article, Scherer said that Catholics should seek not peace, but justice, and that the “paralyzing fear of war” in religious circles was destroying liberty and democracy.¹⁰³ This criticism of the specifically religious aspect of the anti-war movement indicates that Scherer felt as if the general Catholic feeling on campus was against the war. And once again, it might indicate the fears of pro-war Catholics that the anti-war movement threatened the national Catholic acceptance. Scherer was clearly knowledgeable about Catholic arguments at the time, quoting Pope Paul VI’s anti-war declarations and referring to *Commonweal*.¹⁰⁴ He did, however, separate himself from Lt. Schiebler and his rallying cry against pacifists, since Scherer believed that being a total pacifist was an acceptable position, but selective objection was not, as it was inconsistent, picking when and where violence was acceptable.¹⁰⁵ Scherer’s beliefs appear to be consistent with the more traditional, hierarchical American Catholic position during this time, but as noted, his combative

¹⁰⁰ Jerome Skolnick, “Anti-War Protest” in *The Politics of Protest*, 44.

¹⁰¹ Mark G. Toulouse, “Christian Responses to Vietnam: The Organization of Dissent,” in *Religion and Culture Web Forum* (2007).

¹⁰² Scherer, Mike. “The Many Faces of Modern War.” *The Record*, January 24 1967, 2-3.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Schiebler, Bill. “Johnny Soldier Lashes Out At Pacifists.” *The Record*, January 20 1966, 2. Scherer, Mike. “The Many Faces of Modern War.” *The Record*, January 24 1967, 2-3.

discussion of religious people who were against the war indicates that the rest of SJU might not have agreed with him.

In April of 1967, a CSB student, M.K.R, in the same vein as *Pacem in Terris*, argued that to find peace through war was contradictory, and thus impossible, and despaired over the deaths of civilians in Vietnam. She stated that students should heed the Catholic Church's call for dialogue and discussion instead of undertaking mere silent and prayerful support, and argued that the horrors of war were so common and so far away that CSB students were deadened to news of it.¹⁰⁶

Although some members of the St. John's Abbey community, such as Father Rene McGraw, were clearly positioned against the war, many people connected to the monastic community felt differently and voiced support for the war.¹⁰⁷ Several members of Saint John's Seminary wrote an open letter to President Lyndon Johnson, which was printed in *The Record* in October 1967.¹⁰⁸ In the letter, they thanked him for his efforts, endorsed military action when necessary, and called upon Johnson to "not become discouraged in the face of vociferous, adverse criticism against your policies."¹⁰⁹ It must be noted however, that none of the signatories identified themselves as a member of the Order of Saint Benedict, with most of them not being members of the monastic community, and thus they would not have been seen as religious leaders.

In an interview, Father Rene McGraw said that he felt at the time that most of the other monks agreed with him in his opposition to the war, although he occasionally, like the Berrigans,

¹⁰⁶ M.K.R. "Can War Bring Peace." *The Torch*, April 7 1967, 2.

¹⁰⁷ McGraw, Rene OSB. "Continuation Of SJU Image Controversy." *The Record*, May 27 1966, 2.

¹⁰⁸ Rev. Kahl, Donald, Rev. Mike Hoffman, Mike Conlon, James Sullivan, Phil Johnson, Larry Hansen, Lee Beitzel, John Maloney, Bill Lester, Daniel Hillen, Richard T. Lenz, Tom Peichel, Robert Butko, John Clark, James Trutwin, Edward Kalkman, Mark Peckham, Jack Davis, Rev. Ken Irrgang. "American Virtue Lauded." *The Record*, October 30, 1967, 5.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

was discouraged from protesting as a monk.¹¹⁰ Once again, a dislike of the idea of protesting while being Catholic emerged—it was acceptable for a Catholic to hold political positions, but people did not wish to see Catholic identity politicized, particularly not in a way that could threaten the cultural standing of Catholicism.

Rich Dietman, in his *Record* article “Should a Christian Object to War?” declared that to be selectively conscientious was unacceptable, but upheld C.O. status as “bear[ing] personal witness not only to Christianity but to life itself.”¹¹¹ He differentiated between Conscientious Objectors and pacifists, stating:

Technically, all that is required to be a C.O. is a rejection of war as a rational means of solving man’s problems. A pacifist is one who, in addition to rejecting war, personally refuses to employ physical force which would be directed at harming another individual... [A pacifist] feels that by allowing himself to be harmed or kill, he presents a more positive example to those living, much in the same way Christ did.¹¹²

Although he generally talked about Christianity in non-denominational terms, Dietman seemed to be talking about Catholicism specifically, referencing the two as nearly-interchangeable in one section of the article. “One baptizes himself into Christianity, Catholicism, into the human race, by freely accepting the responsibility of loving all those one encounters.”¹¹³ Dietman, apparently addressing growing anti-draft sentiments on campus, argued that if students were going to try to avoid the draft, they should do so out of genuine disagreement with the war, instead of simply trying to avoid service. Dietman’s argument seemed to be in line with the arguments espoused by the extremely anti-war Berrigans, although he did not go so far as advocating for draft dodging

¹¹⁰ McGraw, Rene. “Interview with Rene McGraw”; By Stephanie Haeg.

¹¹¹ Dietman, Rich. “Should a Christian Object to War?” *The Record*, October 30 1967, 5.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

or burning draft cards, acts which were illegal. And, as demonstrated by the case of Nick Hayes, even using Catholic beliefs to avoid the draft was not a guarantee.¹¹⁴

1968

The year 1968 was a significant period for the anti-war movement, with the Tet Offensive beginning in January of that year, and the war becoming steadily less popular among Americans as more information about the shape and scope of the war began to reach them. By August of 1968, there was a reversal of the majority opinion, with 53% saying that invading Vietnam was a mistake.¹¹⁵

The presence of the draft was a threat that hung over Saint John's campus, especially in the later part of the 1960s. Students at SJU were eligible for a student deferment, but after graduation, things would become less sure. The Peace Corps sought draft deferments for their volunteers, and *The Record* reported this practice. The presence of this report indicates that many students were looking for potential ways to avoid being sent to fight in Vietnam, and would be interested in this announcement.¹¹⁶ In his regular satirical column, Doug Ray mocked the culture surrounding this fear and uncertainty of the draft, saying that those who received deferments after graduation had no plans for their lives, while those who had plans and ambitions found themselves trapped by the draft, referring to the fact that graduate school (except schools of divinity) no longer guaranteed a deferment for students.¹¹⁷ The draft was generally perceived to be a menacing threat on campus, which, while there was clearly an element of personal fear, also indicated that the students widely disagreed with the war on moral or other grounds. The war

¹¹⁴ Hayes, Nicholas. "Interview with Nicholas Hayes"; By Stephanie Haeg.

¹¹⁵ Jerome Skolnick, "Anti-War Protest" in *The Politics of Protest*, 44.

¹¹⁶ "Peace corps Seeks Draft Deferments." *The Record*, January 23 1968.

¹¹⁷ Ray, Doug. "A Deferment and No Place to Go or a Place to Go and No Deferment." *The Record*, February 23 1968, 2.

was no longer far away and insubstantial; it was up close and personal, affecting students' lives on every level.

As the war dragged on, the regulations on draft eligibility began to change with some frequency, to the alarm of the students. Students with low class rankings could be forced to take a test and lose their student deferments, a practice which led many schools, including St. John's, to terminate their usage of class rankings.¹¹⁸ In late November of 1968, *The Record* warned that dropping too many classes could leave Johnnies eligible to be drafted, as students needed to be full-time and in good standing to keep their exemptions.¹¹⁹ Shortly after these changes, the Student Council of SJU established a Draft Counseling Service to try to help students find more information about their options. The Center was intended to "provide information and counsel concerning legal deferments with the Selective Service System."¹²⁰ The emphasis on legal deferment is worth noting; the Center was attempting to establish credibility and legality, suggesting that there were fears or suspicions about less-legal deferment options, such as draft dodging or lying about being homosexual.

Growing concern about the draft was one commonality that SJU students had with the rest of the nation. Previous campus dialogue had diverged from the national movement's rhetoric, focusing instead on ethical concerns about the war rather than legality, and religious debates rather than politics. Now the rhetoric and focus of the mainstream and SJU campus aligned. The students did not want to go to war and were increasingly likely to be drafted, as deferments dried up. This fundamental concern changed in many ways how they viewed the war, with the campus anti-war movement growing in popularity. This brought their concerns much

¹¹⁸ Baskir and Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance : The Draft, the War, and the Vietnam Generation*. 23.

¹¹⁹ Welle, Paul. "Draft Laws Constantly Change; Dangerous to Drop Courses." *The Record*, November 22 1968, 2.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

closer to that of the rest of the nation.

Beyond Peace Masses, which seemed to be accepted by the SJU community (possibly because they only involved prayer, an acceptable form of Catholic activism, and were non-disruptive), other Masses were used for activism in a more controversial way. In March of 1968, Saint John's student Rich Dietman organized for a collection to be taken at Mass and donated to the North Vietnamese Red Cross to help civilian victims of American bombing raids.¹²¹ This stance was notably more radical than any previous position taken, moving from pacifism into a possibly anti-American stance, and was pointedly criticized in *The Record* and *The Torch*.¹²² While in the past, the students had been opposed to the war, this was a clear instance of someone expressing sympathy and concern for *victims* of the war, and moving to assist (Vietnamese) people harmed by the bombings. Although the CSB and SJU students might have been active early compared to the national movement, they had never been particularly radical until this time. Student Steve Dirksen declared that any aid to North Vietnam would only be turned against U.S. soldiers, and vilified the Viet Cong, referring to them as "baby killers."¹²³ He mocked Dietman as a "humanist" and declared that Dietman was un-American.¹²⁴ Leo Ruberto, another student, joined Dirksen, declaring Dietman's sentiment as detached from reality and implied that to support a hospital to help North Vietnamese civilians was treasonous.¹²⁵

Student Thomas Dueber also criticized the collection in his own letter to the editors, but went further, expanding his criticisms to include other elements of the anti-war movement on campus, particularly the monastery.¹²⁶ He criticized the Dean of Men, Father Brice Howard, who

¹²¹ Dirksen, Steve. "Hospital Gift Benefits Doubted." *The Record/The Torch*, March 28 1968, 2.

¹²² This issue in question was a joint venture by both newspapers to promote campus unity and to call for the campuses to be joined.

¹²³ Dirksen, Steve. "Hospital Gift Benefits Doubted." *The Record/The Torch*, March 28 1968, 2.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Ruberto, Leo. "Love or Treason Questioned in Mass Offering." *The Record/The Torch*, March 28 1968, 2.

¹²⁶ Dueber, Thomas L. "More Guidance, Less Peace Talk." *The Record/The Torch*, March 28 1968, 4.

had given the homily for the mass in which the controversial collection was taken, accusing him of using his sermon as propaganda for the North Vietnamese.¹²⁷ Dueber also said that “if [Howard] would spend perhaps a little more time at [his] job as Dean of Men and a little less time in outside political activities, Saint John’s might become a better institution for educating men and profitably more concerned with that than various “draft deferments,” “stop the war” movements, and other such issues.”¹²⁸ Dueber claimed that those who sought draft deferments were not “good Christian American citizens” and believed that members of the monastic community, such as Father Brice were enabling and encouraging them.¹²⁹ This points to an increased polarization on campus, with Dietman’s radical approach allowing pro-war figures to criticize aspects of the anti-war movement that they already had issues with, including the monastery’s involvement and draft deferments.

Contrasting the jingoistic language often embraced by the conservative Christians of this era, James Gearity, a theology instructor at CSB, pushed back against the idea of making Catholic and American identities inseparable. He responded to the letters criticizing Rich Dietman, including Dueber’s. Gearity censured the letter writers for their vilifying of Dietman, corrected their facts (Dirksen had claimed that there was no North Vietnamese Red Cross, which was incorrect), and declared that it was their Catholic and Christian duty to assist civilian victims of war.¹³⁰ At the end of the letter, Gearity criticized the students, pondering “has war lust and chauvinism—a debased form of nationalism—so poisoned our minds and hearts that we have become immune to the human cry of need because it is uttered by “the enemy”? If so, then we

¹²⁷ Dueber, Thomas L. “More Guidance, Less Peace Talk.” *The Record/The Torch*, March 28 1968, 4.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Dirksen, Steve. “Hospital Gift Benefits Doubted.” *The Record/The Torch*, March 28 1968, 2. Gearity, James. “War Lust, Chauvinism.” *The Record*, April 23 1968, 3-4.

may retain the name of American, for what it will be worth, but we have surely forsaken the name Christian.”¹³¹ Gearity clearly differentiated between being American and being Christian or Catholic and valued Christianity above national identity, distancing himself from the more nationalistic, conservative form of Catholicism as embodied by the students criticizing Dietman and other figures such as Cardinal Spellman, who had just passed away.

Don Maher, a member of *The Record*'s editorial staff, specifically criticized the radical anti-war elements at Saint John's and their refusal to try to work within the system and used Catholic arguments to push back against it. Although Maher expressed anti-war values himself, he claimed that only by working *within* the democratic system, through political action, could real change be obtained, and deliberately drew a comparison to Jesus in doing so. “If change is the object, history has shown the way—beat “the establishment” within its “system.” The first hippie almost 2000 years ago used this tactic and the most effective men have since followed his example.”¹³² More broadly, Maher used religious imagery to speak out against anarchy and argue for political solutions such as political participation.¹³³ His criticism was harsh, but this issue of *The Record*, contextually, was published just a few days after the U.S. presidential elections, and many students apparently had chosen not to vote, believing that change within the system was not possible.¹³⁴ As such, Maher might have been attempting to use Catholicism to form an argument that these students had made a mistake in refusing to engage with the democratic process.

Another element of the SJU and CSB anti-war movement was coming to a head in 1968: the presence of the military on the campus. In 1965, the SJU faculty voted to end compulsory

¹³¹ Gearity, James. “War Lust, Chauvinism.” *The Record*, April 23 1968, 3-4.

¹³² Maher, Don. “Guerilla Warfare.” *The Record*, November 8 1968.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Vogt, Edward W. “The Other Side: To Vote or Not to Vote!” *The Record*, October 25 1968.

ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) enrollment.¹³⁵ The faculty had been presented with four options: to continue a mandatory four-year ROTC program, to reduce the mandatory time to two years, or to have a voluntary four- or two-year program.¹³⁶ Although the article did not report the exact reasoning as to why they chose to end the four year mandatory program, students praised the decision, saying that it was better to have a unit that did not contain unwilling members.¹³⁷ At the time, the presence of ROTC seemed to be generally accepted and not criticized, judging from *The Record*, which wrote that the students were generally ambivalent towards the decision, with their concerns being more about the state of the battalion.¹³⁸ Despite this, *The Record* noted that the contracts could be particularly harsh, especially if a student tried to break the contract, which could potentially result in near-immediate drafting.¹³⁹ Three years later, students were protesting the mere presence of ROTC on campus. Recent graduate of SJU Greg Barattini said in an interview that he felt that the presence of ROTC on campus was not Christian, and particularly criticized the contracts which ROTC students were required to sign. Most of the article went into Barattini's beliefs that the contracts violated the student's rights, but he did go out of his way to say that he "could not, as a Christian, justify the presence of a ROTC on this campus."¹⁴⁰ These contracts, signed at the beginning of Junior Year, were an agreement between the ROTC department and the cadet, requiring that the cadet would serve in the military after the completion of his education. Barattini said that:

If a cadet wishes to leave the ROTC program in his third or fourth year, he, himself, is not free to break the contract; doing so could have grave consequences for the cadet and his future. He could be drafted immediately, right out of school, no matter what his standing. The ROTC department, moreover, is free to break

¹³⁵ Haefliger, Don. "Faculty Votes to Drop '65 Compulsory ROTC." April 2 1965, 1.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Schneider, Jim. "Pacifist Decries ROTC Contract." *The Record*, October 11 1968, 3.

this contract at any time, with no binding consequence.¹⁴¹

In December 1968, student leaders of multiple groups signed a petition, published in *The Record*, to ensure that ROTC was not re-invited to SJU the following year. The petition declared that “as Christians, we vehemently protest this university’s complicity, by its sanction of the military recruitment, in the immoral, illegal, and imperialistic military adventures in Southeast Asia and the rest of the Third World.”¹⁴² Here they echoed their secular counterparts, calling the Vietnam War *illegal*, but retained their Catholic touch, emphasizing that their objection was that of Christians, and was tied to their Catholic identity. They also declared their intention to peacefully protest the presence of Air Force recruiters on campus.¹⁴³ Mike Black criticized the petition signers as being “selfish” and moralizing, and accused them of simply being against the war because it was trendy.¹⁴⁴ He also criticized Satya (a student group named for a Hindu word meaning truth or love) for using school funds to get anti-draft speakers to appear on campus, and dismissed them as a loud minority.¹⁴⁵ This idea that the anti-war movement was now trendy was echoed by Joel Turback, who described it as the “new ‘in’ on campus,” although he did not indicate whether he approved or disapproved of their work.¹⁴⁶ Satya celebrated National Draft Resistance Day in 1968 and also tried to spread information about avoiding the draft.¹⁴⁷

Ahead of CSB and SJU, the spring of 1968 saw protests against ROTC at Michigan State University which involved,

Eighty largely religious-pacifist protestors and their children, many of whom carried small white crosses, marched across campus... Spotting a mock Vietnamese hut, a cardboard structure wired with dynamite... circled around it and sat down, causing the parents of cadets to boo. Meanwhile, ROTC cadets

¹⁴¹ Schneider, Jim. “Pacifist Decries ROTC Contract.” *The Record*, October 11 1968, 3.

¹⁴² “Petition.” *The Record*, December 16 1968, 8.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Black, Mike. “An Open Letter To The Petition Signers.” *The Record*, December 16 1968, 2.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Turback, Joel. “Social Agitator That You Are.” *The Record*, December 18 1968, 2.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

staged a pitch battle, complete with Viet Cong dead. Every time an enemy cadet died, the children placed a cross on his chest... Green Berets came out on the field and twirled their rifles, bayonets unsheathed. To Larrowe's horror, the children ran in between the performing soldiers, playing ball and illustrating the danger young Vietnamese faced every day.¹⁴⁸

CSB and SJU's concerns about ROTC, although not quite as dramatic as those at MSU, were happening at almost the same time, only a few months apart, and many of the concerns are similar.

But the many of the criticisms leveled at ROTC were different than the ones that CSB and SJU had. National protesters opposed ROTC for how it represented the militarization of college campuses and the military industrial complex, but CSB and SJU students declared it to be antithetical to Benedictine and Catholic values, in a parallel of the Catholic schools examined by Lauren De Angelis, who witnessed similar concerns occurring at La Salle and St. Joseph's College.¹⁴⁹ Also like the conversations about the ROTC at SJU and CSB, the debate about the ROTC (and AROTC) would not come to a head until after 1968, when on-campus protests would begin.¹⁵⁰

Outside of these conversations, 1968, as it included a presidential election, was an important year during the Vietnam War. Eugene McCarthy, an SJU alumnus and prominent Catholic who was vocally anti-war, inspired many Catholics by appealing to religious identity. Unsurprisingly, both campuses fully embraced Eugene McCarthy's candidacy for president. In March of 1968, *The Record* ran his picture on the front page, proudly noting that McCarthy himself had been a staff member while he had been at SJU.¹⁵¹ The issue also contained a two-

¹⁴⁸ Heineman. *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era*. 186-187

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 86. "Petition." *The Record*, December 16 1968, 8.

¹⁵⁰ De Angelis, "Catholic Activism: How Religious Identity Shaped College Peace and Anti-Rotc Movements in Philadelphia."

¹⁵¹ Ray, Doug. "Gambling on a Long Distance Runner." *The Record*, March 12 1968, 4-5.

page spread featuring McCarthy and his anti-war campaign. The article was called “Gambling on a Long Distance Runner,” referencing the long-shot nature of McCarthy’s campaign.¹⁵² “There is a great deal of respect among the graduates for McCarthy, especially because he is speaking his mind and seemingly terminating his brilliant political career.”¹⁵³ The students of SJU, when surveyed for the article, referred to McCarthy as a political intellectual, but they were pessimistic about him actually winning the nomination.¹⁵⁴ The article did not give exact numbers, but Doug Ray asserted that the students closest to graduation (and the draft) were the most likely to vote for McCarthy, while freshmen were more apathetic, perhaps because they could not yet vote.¹⁵⁵ The article described the students as being pessimistic about the prospect of the war ending soon, no matter who won the election.¹⁵⁶

McCarthy’s popularity among college students was not limited to CSB and SJU. Heineman discussed the nationwide appeal of Eugene McCarthy for college Democrats, since his candidacy invigorated the element of the anti-war student movement who believed in the democratic system. Heineman said that “it gave [the students] a suitable place to channel their energies and anger with the war.”¹⁵⁷ Eugene McCarthy openly appealed to the anti-war student movements nationwide, calling for them to join his campaign to try to enact real change. *Time*

¹⁵² Eugene McCarthy was generally considered to be an underdog in the election of 1968. The Democratic Party had not yet fully embrace a primary system, instead having party insiders select a candidate, and when he had begun his presidential campaign, President Johnson had not yet decided not to run for President. Even when Johnson had stepped down, anti-war candidate Robert Kennedy seemed more likely to many anti-war voters, although McCarthy typically was more popular with college students, appealing to intellectuals in particular.

The article title also could be a reference to a popular movie at the time, “The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner,” the story of a man who sacrificed potential privileges to do what was right. This idea is echoed in the article.

¹⁵³ Ray, Doug. “Gambling on a Long Distance Runner.” *The Record*, March 12 1968, 4-5.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ The voting age was 21 until 1971. Ray, Doug. “Gambling on a Long Distance Runner.” *The Record*, March 12 1968, 4-5.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Heineman. *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era*. 185

magazine hosted a poll of college campuses, CHOICE '68, to determine what college students thought on issues, including the elections.¹⁵⁸ The results as reported by *The Torch* and *The Record*, showed that McCarthy was the first choice for Johnnies and Bennies, as well as students nationwide.¹⁵⁹

In the 1968 poll conducted by *Time*, .09% more students nationwide favored all-out war over pulling out entirely in Vietnam (12.96% for all-out war vs 11.05% over pulling out entirely) but 59.71% wanted to see a reduction of military presence.¹⁶⁰ On a more local level, Saint John's saw 18% wanting immediate withdrawal and 45% wishing to see phased reduction of military effort.¹⁶¹ When asked about the American campaign bombings, 29% of CSB students favored permanent suspension, 29% favored temporary suspension, and 4% favored nuclear bombing.¹⁶² *The Record* did not provide similar statistics for the Saint John's breakdown, only listing the nationwide statistics for the opinions, although they did have the campus statistics for the section of the poll regarding the presidential election.¹⁶³ This makes it impossible to do a side-by-side comparison of how the two student bodies thought about the war, but it does provide data about how Bennies thought of the war. The CSB polling data shows that most students wished to see a lessened if not completely curtailed presence in Vietnam, but a small percentage of the Bennie student body wished to see a total annihilation of the threat. Notably, CSB polled higher than the national average in favor of the nuclear option, despite the anti-nuclear Catholic sentiment that

¹⁵⁸ "Students, An Emerging Force In Shaping American Politics." *The Record*, April 23 1968, 1 & 4.

¹⁵⁹ Woodward, Thom. "Johnnies Favor Gene in 'Time' Poll." *The Record*, May 7 1968. "Bennies' Buddy Eugene McCarthy." *The Torch*, May 17 1968, 3. "McCarthy First Choice in Poll." *The Record*, May 17 1968, 3.

¹⁶⁰ "McCarthy First Choice in Poll." *The Record*, 1968, 3.

¹⁶¹ "Bennies' Buddy Eugene McCarthy." *The Torch*, May 17 1968, 3.

¹⁶² It is important to note that a temporary suspension was a tactic used hoping to drive the South Vietnamese to the negotiation table, and is not necessarily an indicator of anti-war beliefs. "Bennies' Buddy Eugene McCarthy." *The Torch*, May 17 1968, 3.

¹⁶³ Woodward, Thom. "Johnnies Favor Gene in 'Time' Poll." *The Record*, May 7 1968.

was already emerging during the 1960s, as evidenced by Pope John XXIII's statements on the subject.

After the death of McCarthy's fellow Catholic and anti-war candidate Robert Kennedy, the Democratic Party fell into chaos, culminating in the disastrous and violent Democratic National Convention in Chicago.¹⁶⁴ After the convention, the Democrats selected the relatively pro-war Hubert Humphrey as their candidate, but the reputation of the Democrats had been damaged on the national stage. After McCarthy failed to win the Democratic nomination, many CSB and SJU students felt disillusioned. Prior to the Democratic convention, many SJU students had said that if McCarthy did not win, they would vote for the Republican candidate rather than a pro-war or even a moderate Democrat.¹⁶⁵ Edward W. Vogt, a professor of government and graduate of SJU, wrote about students who were planning on not voting for president at all, in the wake of McCarthy's loss, with his interviewees claiming there was virtually no difference between Humphrey and Nixon.¹⁶⁶ The hopes for a Catholic, anti-war president were shattered, and CSB|SJU seemed to be more cynical about the values of the democratic system in the aftermath, a disillusionment that was shared with students around the country.

¹⁶⁴ The Chicago Democratic National Convention saw anti-war protestors, led by Jerry Rubin (not a Catholic activist, but instead the founder of the Youth International Party) who had a personal dislike for Eugene McCarthy and his "respectable" argument against the war. Protesters clashed with police, and demonstrations took place on the convention floor. Rubin, Jerry. "Interview with Jerry Rubin." By Joan Morrison (1986): 188.

¹⁶⁵ Ray, Doug. "Gambling on a Long Distance Runner." *The Record*, March 12 1968, 4-5.

¹⁶⁶ Vogt, Edward W. "The Other Side: To Vote or Not to Vote!" *The Record*, October 25 1968.

Conclusion

CSB and SJU had a unique position in the student protest movement. They were motivated religiously, like the universities looked at by Ciernick and De Angelis. But the students were not just rooted in pacifism and Just War Theory, like the students studied by Ciernick, nor were they as late into the conversation as the students studied by De Angelis. Unlike at the universities studied by Ciernick and De Angelis, the faculty frequently openly supported the anti-war movement, and the administration occasionally did so as well. Notably, unlike at La Salle, there is no indication that clashes between pro- and anti-war protesters ever turned violent, and indeed, the pro-war movement, while active, seems to be much less present at CSB and SJU than it did at La Salle and St. Joseph's. The students at CSB and SJU were notably moderate, but they were also involved earlier than polling numbers suggest they should have been.

So, what was it that made CSB and SJU different? A part of it may be the unique Benedictine Catholic environment that flourishes on these two campuses. Although Cardinal Spellman—who would have had some degree of influence over both of the colleges examined by De Angelis, one being Diocesan and one being Jesuit—vowed that Vatican II's influence would not reach America, members of the St. John's community were actively engaged in the Second Vatican Council, and that engagement might have carried over into a campus environment that was more prepared to tackle the questions of Catholic identity and what it meant for the Vietnam War.

The St. John's Abbey and St. Benedict's Monastery communities, and thus the monastic faculty and administrators at CSB and SJU, unlike the administrators of La Salle and St. Joseph's College, did not have to answer to an American bishop—bishops who, overwhelmingly, would

have supported the war until the 1970s. Instead the Benedictines answered to the Abbot Primate, who answered directly to the Pope. This meant that there was no pressure on the administration to suppress or at least not support anti-war movements, allowing the conversations to happen without fear of the institutions being shut down. It meant that Fr. Rene McGraw could voice his dissent of the war, and that the Dean of Men could work to ensure that students had information to avoid the draft. Furthermore, this ability to engage with the administration and faculty might have contributed to the more moderate tone of the conversations among the students, as they did not feel silenced, allowing debate and discussion to continue in a non-violent fashion.

The ready access to *The Record* or *The Torch* and the ability to write to it to express opinions about the war might have also been a factor. The students, having access to a public forum in which they could express their ideas and be heard by the entirety of campus, might not have felt the need to engage in public demonstrations or protests, as their conversations with each other were already being listened to and discussed. Only in 1966, when they are trying to engage with a non-community member, Hubert Humphrey, did the students feel the need to demonstrate and protest.

It could also be the geographic location and the culture of the surrounding community of St. John's and St. Ben's which allowed more students to explore their anti-war leanings: Stearns County is a notably German Catholic area, so the students might have had less to fear from anti-Catholic reactions. The schools that De Angelis examined were both near a major metropolitan area, but CSB and SJU were relatively isolated, away from potential WASP backlash against political Catholicism, and, as noted back in 1965, the locale was "enemy territory" for Republicans, perhaps. CSB and SJU students were secure in their own identity, because in the

isolated Catholic bubble of Stearns County Minnesota, they were the only ones who could decide if they were Catholic or American.

Catholicism clearly played a role in the campus discussions and debates about the war in Vietnam, and in forming the students' opinions of the war. CSB and SJU students read Catholic texts, quoted Catholic figures, and discussed and debated the war in terms of Catholicism and Christianity. Conservative students articulated the need to stop the spread of anti-Catholic Communism, while liberals discussed the ethics of warfare, the lives lost, and the un-Benedictine nature of ROTC's campus presence.

Just as Catholicism found itself pulled in two separate theological directions, so did Catholic Johnnies and Bennies during this time. And with the wide variety of resources to draw upon in the complicated period of early post-Vatican II Catholicism, both sides found strong theological arguments and role models. The anti-war movement at CSB|SJU was encouraged by the anti-war elements of Catholic thought and Catholic society as a whole, but the pro-war Catholics in the community were also able to find Catholic underpinnings for their arguments. Just War Theory, the role of Catholics in American society, and the threat of Communism were all things that Catholic students had on their minds during this time. But overall the anti-war movement had a stronger voice and presence at CSB and SJU among students, faculty, and the monastic community.

Despite the conflict and dialogue present in *The Record* on campus during the mid-to-late-1960s, it is difficult to say how many students held strong political beliefs during this time. The voices strongly for or strongly against might have been louder, but there seems to have been plenty of students who preferred the middle ground. *The Record* does not cover the entirety of

campus occurrences, often under-reporting certain events for a variety of reasons. And indeed, even the opinion pages can only publish the opinions of those determined enough to write in.

There were protests on campus, and widespread debates, particularly about the role of ROTC on campus. There were presentations and film showings, and all of these caused lively discussions in the opinion pages of *The Record*. But in comparison to the nationwide movement, the response to the war at CSB and SJU during this time seems small and calm. There were no fire bombings, no attacks on public officials, and no arrests. The students were not radicalized to the extent that their national counterparts were. Their discussions retained religious concerns, even when they were discussing topics, such as ROTC and the draft, that were also an issue for the secular movement. But when they talked about ROTC, they discussed Benedictine values, not the military industrial complex. Rather than being born out of communist sympathies or race riots, the CSB|SJU movement was born out of Catholic thought about peace and war in a nuclear age and were shaped by a particular Benedictine identity. These differing origin, perspectives, and priorities made the anti-war movement at CSB and SJU a unique one, born out of the specific elements of the local community and founded upon Benedictine Catholic values.

Appendix

Image A



(Courtesy of the SJU Archives.)

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